



Development of Creative Writing Assessment Test at Elementary School Level

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Abstract: *Creative writing assessment test helps teachers in identifying the writing ability of students, which is planned to enhance students' understanding of writing. The main aim of the research was to develop an assessment test for the students of elementary school to check three concepts as descriptive, narrative and persuasive in writing. The methodology for constructing an assessment test comprises three main phases. The validity of the developed test was ensured by five experts, including three school teachers and two educational experts. The reliability of the test was checked by using item analysis, using two soft wares. For pilot testing of the developed instrument, 62 students of elementary school were selected. After pilot testing, the test was finalized, containing 6 items of essay type test. Findings of standardized test enable English teachers to comprehend the weak areas of students. More tests using other concepts can be developed to know the feeble areas of the students.*

Key Words: Creative Writing, Assessment, Elementary School Level

Introduction

In Pakistan, although creative writing is extensively acknowledged in schools and English is taught eagerly, but the learners are not actually delivered adequate practice in class in different types of 'Creative Writing'. It is perceived that the assessment system in Pakistan has stained students' ability in creative writing. Consequently, the planned research discovers the reasons that influence classroom practice. It is obvious that in Pakistani schools, the teaching, the curriculum and the assessment system do not give liberty for expressiveness that is a requirement for writing creatively. It is essential to find out why and to what extend 'Creative Writing' is being ignored in institutes, in spite of having a great literary legacy and the prerequisite to change with time. In Pakistan, there are many causes that are answerable for the decay of creativity in writing in schools. There are some remarkable constrictions upon teachers' struggles to develop creative writing. In Siddiqui's (2007) view, they are: "large-size classes, lack of resources, untrained teachers, fixed syllabus, rote learning, forty minutes duration for English teaching and external

examination bodies". Similarly, [Uzoma and Ibrahim \(2018\)](#) narrated that teacher often use the same manner to teach, which their teachers have practiced to teach them in schools. The teacher, instead of polishing the students' skills by involving

Them in the learning process kills their talent. The teacher is responsible for discovering and nurturing the ability of students. But in a Pakistani teaching environment, such a prospect of developing student's talent is not found. It seldom ensues by chance or good luck, especially in Government Schools.

Literature Review

Creative writing can be fiction, non-fiction, or a combination of the two and can be used to educate or instruct. The major distinction between 'Creative Writing' and 'Technical Writing' is that Creative Writing holds an entertaining quality and shows the perfectness of mind whereas Technical Writing focuses on conveying a message in a formal way to attract the reader towards the product which the writer wants to sell ([Jones,](#)

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[Reutzel & Fargo, 2010](#)).

According to [Chou \(2011\)](#), the 'Graphic Symbols' based on letters and alphabets are actually the tool for conveying the message in the form of writing. To write something, letters and alphabets are given the shape of words and words are converted into sentences. The focus is not on handwriting because it only depends on physical exercise as arranging the letters, words and sentences, using a piece of paper. It does not also mean copying the words expressed by other writers, neither note-taking type nor any kind of dictation; rather, it is something creating new ideas on a specific topic, along with arranging those ideas in the logical order and writing them on a page.

[Burke \(2010\)](#) defined writing as the conceptual frame of producing new ideas through expressing the mind, thinking and organizing the ideas which can be easy to comprehend by others who want to read. In this way, one can develop many suitable sentences following the logical order and arranging the written work properly. [Uzoma and Ibrahim \(2018\)](#) presented their view about the implementation of communicative language teaching by teachers to help the learners in performing good attempt adopting creative writing skills and to train and retrain the teachers applying various methods to teach letter and essay writing skills, specifically along with general English.

According to [Amarsinh \(2014\)](#), there are four skills that are basic to learn English and other languages. They are reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the early years, a child can learn a language informally, which is taught to him or her through listening and speaking. Later on, for the growth and development of an individual's mind, something extraordinary is required, which arises from the development of writing skills. [Zafar \(2009\)](#) debated regarding the promotion of skills of writing in the learners. He has further underlined that in the schools of Pakistan, the emphasis is on cramming; writing is also thought a skill-based on rote learning because an examination system requires such type of writing, but with the passage of time trend is changing. Nowadays, PEC (Punjab Examination Commission) conducts elementary exams based on creative writing to some extent. Therefore, the learners should focus on their own ideas. They should know the way of expressing their views in

descriptive and narrative form of writing. They should know how to compose reports, letters, essays, paragraphs and stories according to their level of age, interest and mental capability.

[Maley \(2012\)](#) stated when the learners have command of the pattern of sentences; then they can be easily taught the writing lessons like descriptive, narrative and persuasive writing, which means providing the pupil with an opportunity to write on a vital topic. These types of composition guide and prepare students for the exams.

The kinds of writing mainly focused on teaching creative writing skills are the following:

1. Descriptive Writing
2. Narrative Writing
3. Persuasive Writing

For writing, there is a strong need of connecting the ideas and the arrangement of those ideas in the shape of sentences that form a unified text. This type of writing process ascends from drafting to organizing and from revising to editing ([Maley, 2012](#)). This is the reason that the pupil has to encounter many more problems while learning the skill of writing as compared to other skills. Writing is considered a difficult skill to learn and to teach as well because of not being easy cognitive activity; further, it is an intricate creation of the mind that involves vigilant thought, self-control and meditation ([Grami, 2010](#)).

Years have passed over that the main purpose of assessing the writing has been extended, but writing assessment has not paid much consideration to the day, especially to creative writing ([Kaufman, Plucker & Rusell, 2012](#)). It is the need of the 21st century to include creative thinking in teaching and learning. The several causes of the sensation are implicit theoretically and from the applied level. There is actually a deficiency of investigation at a conceptual or theoretical level which describes the ways how creativity in writing can be assessed ([Austen, 2005](#)). Instructors consider the measurement of creative writing as difficult due to its subjective nature. They consider it hard to convey fair results ([Morris & Sharpin, 2013](#)). That is the main reason which is a hindrance in proper assessment of schoolchildren's creative writings in Pakistan and in many other countries. Secondly, in instructive measurement terms, reliability and validity issues in test construction are the alarming concepts that

stop the teachers to evaluate the creative writing of students. Tutors feel difficulty in developing a valid and reliable test that can evaluate the learners' creative writing ability. However, the article discusses that if writing creatively is appreciated in the 21st era of teaching, then reliable and valid test procedures must be reconnoitred, presenting the English teaching and culture.

In the assessment of English language teaching and learning, contradiction and tension are always found. For instance, according to [Deng and Carless \(2010\)](#), there are inconsistencies among English tutors regarding English assessment and teaching process. However, he provides motivational support to communicative language teaching (CLT) curriculum and task-based language teaching (TBLT) as the best methods in the teaching of English. They lean towards responding to the demands for variations bestowing on the philosophies made by them. Education and assessment revolutions have not much space for the application.

According to [Scarino \(2013\)](#), there are two "Contrast Paradigms" in the English evaluation procedure. The first is "Traditional Assessment", which inclines to be associated with the interpretations of cognitive testing and learning. The second one is the "Alternative Assessment", that have a tendency to affiliate with the learning of sociocultural opinions. Specialist of assessment often takes in consideration the first paradigm because it is considered as more reliable being best for assessing pupils' learning. In contrast, learning based on the sociocultural point of view favors the evaluation, which has been acknowledged for a long time period and conducted in different manners. Observably, the complementary paradigm produces difficulty for instructors while guiding educational programs and evaluation. Teachers usually suffer from the situations in which they try to resolve what kinds of teaching and assessment to use. Mostly schools and tutors

Depend on the prevailing 'National Examinations' instead of encouraging creative thinking and creative ideas in the relevant subject taught to students.

First of all, in order to ponder over the criteria that can be used to assess students' creative writing ability, educators should actually develop a structure for creative writing assessment. In the United Kingdom, [Blamires and Peterson \(2014\)](#)

have presented a very worthy specimen of in what way teachers can describe and improve creativity in writing, along with displaying evaluation.

The instruction and assessment of creative writing rest on very how teachers understand and delineate "creativity" in education using several contexts. On the other hand, explaining creativity is at all times difficult for educationists due to which its nature is still confusing ([Craft, 2005](#)). Several researchers have tried to express creativity in writing using different ways. [Goodwin and Miller \(2013\)](#) have concise many united definitions of creativity. They opine that both opposing and convergent thought can be cherished in schools. Certainly, both views are amicable and appropriate for a classroom setting. They are two reasons. The one is, schools are believed to be subject-dominated these days, and relaxed knowledge has reduced the burden of the syllabus and education. Pupils appreciate content knowledge of the subject, which activates convergent thinking. Convergent thinking means the focus on fixed answers to questions. Its aim is to look at single or frequently correct or regular answers ([Cropley, 2006](#)). Mostly, at the elementary levels, subjects like social studies, language arts, science and mathematics are taught following the new methodology of instruction. The above-mentioned subjects may also develop the base for innovative instruction and education if they are properly designed. According to [Brookhart \(2010\)](#), one of the most noticeable features of creative writing ability in learners is their capability of connecting things together using new manners. Pupils want to learn about new things in order to study to some degree formerly so that they may organize the ideas in an innovative manner.

[Brookhart \(2013\)](#) has suggested using rubrics for measuring creative writing, for it is helpful both for teachers and students to make the criteria clear in learning and production of creative writing. The rubrics determines the variety of creative presentation and also show how the closing product appears, from copied to very creative. Explaining in simple words, they are pointers towards the results that came out of learning. [Brookhart \(2013\)](#) pointed out that a rubric is taken as a comprehensible set of principles for pupils' work in which it contains explanations of stages of concert quality on the benchmarks. Rubrics are usually developed to evaluate pupils' performance in the teaching of

language writing, speaking and assignments.

[Blomer \(2011\)](#) has explained the view about the utmost valuable notion in the evaluation of 'Creative Writing', which is to assimilate the special tools of evaluation. As far as the difficulty of partiality is troubling, she believed that it might resolve with the use of a rubric and by classifying a work that is preminent in association with class companions and teacher's comments. [Griffin and Anh \(2005\)](#), [Burroway \(2011\)](#), [Mozaffari \(2013\)](#), [Morris and Sharpin \(2013\)](#) and other researchers have also suggested the use of rubrics to evaluate 'Creative Writing'.

Following the definition related to the essentials of creative writing assessment, along with the confirmation of previous work, the analytical rubric for assessing creativity in writing can be established.

Statement of the Problem

No one can deny the importance of the subject of English. It is a sign of prestige these days, but even after learning English throughout school and university period, there are very few who are able to write few sentences of English on their own. So, there is a need to teach creative writing from the early classes to enhance the thinking and writing power of the students. To teach English effectively, it is necessary to assess it effectively. Undoubtedly, it is hard to assess the 'Creative Writing Ability' of the learners. Most of the teachers cannot evaluate the 'Creative Writing Ability' of pupils properly. Keeping in view these needs, the researcher has decided to give attention to the problem that teachers face while developing a test having different concepts. The research is about developing the creative writing test to find out the student's creative writing skills in English at the elementary school level.

It is observed by the researcher as an English teacher that most of the teachers are not able enough to attest and check the English writing ability of students; as a result, the gap exists between students' assessment and ability in comprehending the subject. The study may be beneficial for teachers in a real context as it arises from the researcher's motivation to narrow down the gap of controversial views about developing a creative writing assessment test.

Objective

The main objective of the study was to explain the methodology for developing a creative writing assessment test to identify students' creative ability in English writing at the elementary school level. A test having three parts is developed to assess grade VII students' creative writing ability in the subject of English.

Research Method

The creative writing assessment test was developed to recognize the creative ability of students in a particular subject area, which is based on three concepts of English writing.

Description of the Content

The first part was about descriptive writing, the second part was about persuasive writing, and the third part consisted of narrative writing. All the parts were according to the level of grade VII. The content was selected from the Punjab Text Book Board from grade seven to eight and a book written by Morley (2007) "The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing."

In the study, a criterion-referenced test is used as it measures set standards following a rubric. Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) grade 8, English paper, in its subjective part, assess the thinking skill of students. Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) mainly focused are:

- How effectively a student can develop and express his/her ideas in writing.
- How clearly a pupil can express his /her opinion.

The model paper of grade 8 is a reflection of the National Curriculum. Six open-ended questions are given in the subjective part (PEC 8th Model Paper, 2019). Similarly, the test will be developed to assess the writing ability of students. Open-ended questions like essay writing and paragraph writing are developed to check students' creative ideas and opinions. Christian (2002) has mentioned criteria for an essay question which has been developed by Stalaker in 1951.

Formulating a Table of Specification

Following the essay test development method by Christian (2002), a sketch was established on the concepts which were included in the test. This

exercise of formulating the table of specification enables the researcher to ponder over all the content material of concepts cautiously.

Table 1. Table of Specification for Creative Writing Assessment Test

Descriptive Writing Skills: 1. Grammar 2. Vocabulary 3. Mechanics 4. Form

Persuasive Writing Skills: 1. Grammar 2. Vocabulary 3. Mechanics 4. Form

Narrative Writing Skills: 1. Grammar 2. Vocabulary 3. Mechanics 4. Form

Concepts	Creative Writing Skills from All the Questions	Total
Descriptive Writing Skill		
Essay writing 1	1	1
Essay writing 2	1	1
Persuasive Writing Skill		
Paragraph Writing 1	1	1
Paragraph Writing 2	1	1
Narrative Writing Skill		
Story Writing 1	1	1
Story Writing 2	1	1
Total	6	6

The table above shows the number of items against each concept which was specified concepts of the subject of English.

Connecting Table of Specification to the Declarations of Test Items

Questions selected in the first part clearly associated with the table of the specification to make sure that all selected content has been included in the test development process. It was a verification of reliability that the primary principles and questions essentially examine the subject area to be tested. To make sure whether the particular concepts are effectively chosen, it is essential to have a demonstrative exposure to concepts and questions.

Content Validity

Questions from the content and table of the specification were conversed and approved by three English teachers. A correction was made in the list of related test items and the table of specification as per the recommendation of the experts. In this way, the material being tested was wisely documented.

Attaining Information about Students' Weakness in Creative Writing

A comprehensive review of the related literature about the practical and conceptual weakness of the students in creative writing ability and in attempting open-ended questions was the

extensive field for designing creative writing assessment test to identify the weaknesses of students and to check their creative ideas.

Exploring Related Literature

It is vital to review the relevant literature and the researchers who have worked to assess the creative writing ability before developing new criteria for the creative writing assessment test. Extensive research has been conducted on the creative writing ability of students, but very little work is found on creative writing test development.

Developing a Test based on Three Concepts

The development of the test was based on essay type test including three different concepts like descriptive, persuasive and narrative writing. There is a difference in starting and conveying the ideas in the piece of writing. The process of Creative Writing Test Development is as under:

1. Pre-writing: create a situation on which writing is based.
2. Writing: give it the shape of a question
3. Revision: revise the questions keeping in view possible ideas
4. Editing: add or cut the material if necessary

All three concepts consist of two questions; a total of six questions was prepared in light of the literature review. The questions in the test were prepared by keeping in view the age and ability of the group of students. Sixty-two students of grade

VII, from the one secondary school, were selected, and the test item was evaluated. Every student's response was checked by following the scoring criteria. Hughes (1989), in his book 'Testing for the

Language Teachers', has been highlighted 'Analytic Scoring', specifically used to assess the creative writing skills.

Table 2. Scoring Rubrics

S. No	Skills	Checking of sentences				Total Marks
		G	V	M	F	
1	Descriptive	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10
2	Persuasive	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10
3	Narrative	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10

Key: G= Grammar, V= Vocabulary, M= Mechanics, F= Form

Face Validity

To make sure whether the test accomplishes the need and it measures what is intended to measure, the face validity of the test was checked by two school teachers and two experts of the field.

Construct Validity

To check whether the established test is assembled according to the variables, it is going to measure construct validity which was assured by a psychometrician.

Item Analysis

After the development of the test, it was applied on sixty-two students; the test item analysis was carried out by measuring the complexity and the uniqueness of the test Questions, the validity and reliability survey was carried out, and improper questions were removed. To standardize test items, analysis of the test items was done as

presented below in table 3 and table 4.

Item Difficulty Description

The difficulty level of test items was also measured according to the criteria. In each item range from 0.75 to 1.0 were reflected as very easy, 0.25 to 0.75 considered as average and below 0.25 were deliberated as hard test items.

Item Discrimination Index

Discrimination ranged from 0.30 and above is considered good, 0.10 to 30 is considered fair whereas equal to 0 means all students got the equal right answers and negative stands for poor.

There were only 15 items and 62 students. Total marks were 10. So, the item analysis properties are following:

Table 3. Results of Item Difficulty Description

Item No.	Item	Item Difficulty	Comment	Item Discrimination	Comment
1	Subject type item	0.5	Average	1.0	Fair
2		0.4	Average	1.0	Fair
3		0.4	Average	1.0	Fair
4		0.4	Average	1.0	Fair
5		0.4	Average	1.0	Fair
6		0.4	Average	1.0	Fair
7		0.5	Average	.21	Fair
8		0.3	Average	.12	Fair
9		0.4	Average	.30	Fair
10		0.23	Hard	-.20	Poor
11		0.24	Hard	-.21	Poor
12		0.80	Easy	-.10	Poor
13		0.40	Average	.10	Fair

Item No.	Item	Item Difficulty	Comment	Item Discrimination	Comment
14		0.84	Easy	-.23	Poor
15		0.23	Hard	-.22	Poor

The results attained from the students were resolute and organized by the highest and lowest grades. The thorough values of item analysis on item difficulty of items 1,2,3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13 ranges from 0.50 to 0.68. Results of item analysis revealed that these items were average in difficulty level for the measurement of a planned variable at the elementary level students.

Conclusion

To conclude, the article highlighted the ways that can be developed generally in creative writing assessment, specifically in English teaching writing—using secondary school, grade VII students as subjects of the experiment. The article

shows and argues the possible solutions of developing the Creative Writing Assessment test to overcome the problems of measuring creativity in writing. Besides the validity of the rubric, it is the methodological

Quality of evaluation provides assurance to the teachers and the other educational participants in the performance of creative writing assessment. The article also added that instructors' evaluation or testing knowledge is important to confirm the methodological superiority in evaluation, and its time and resources are also needed. Educators' active contributions in training programs for improvement in this regard are also necessary

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