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The Effect of Critical Reading (CR) on Developing 1st Year Preparatory Students' Creative English Writing (CW) Skills.

**A research submitted in fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master degree in Curriculum and English language teaching
(Curriculum and EFL Teaching)**

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2016

Acknowledgments

Praise to be to Allah who helped me throughout the implementation of this research. The researcher wishes to express her deep appreciation and regards to many people for helping her in conducting this study. She cannot mention all of them except the following who supported most in bringing this thesis to light.

My special thanks and gratitude go first to my advisor Prof. Magdy Mahdy Ali who guided me with patience and inspiration throughout the study. His step-by-step guidance, availability, motivation and vast knowledge helped me a lot in achieving this study. His supervision and useful suggestions enabled me to complete my work.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude and thanks to Dr. Dalia Ibrahim Yahia whose guidance, support, and encouragement were the reason behind the completion of this work.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go to the members of the Examination Board for accepting to judge this thesis and for their kind approval to discuss this study.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go to the jury members who provided me with their help and advice when I needed their consultation to complete this work.

Finally, I feel deeply thankful to my family, particularly my mother, whose motivation and patience provided me with love and support which were very necessary throughout my academic field. I cannot forget to express my hearty gratitude and thanks to my father who guided me since I was a child and encouraged me throughout my study.

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| Title | The Effect of Critical Reading on Developing 1st Year Preparatory Students' English Creative writing skills. |
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Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effect of a proposed program based on using some critical reading skills on developing first preps students' creative writing skills. A quasi-experimental design study depending on the voluntary basis of choosing the groups of the study was used. The sample consisted of 55 first prep stage students randomly chosen from an (official) experimental language school who were classified into two groups, one served as an experimental group and the other as a control group. The proposed program was implemented on the experimental group while the control group did not receive this kind of creative writing teaching. The researcher developed and used some instruments which included a checklist of the creative writing skills needed for first preps students in the current study's chosen genres; namely short story and essay, a pre- post creative writing test and its scoring and a critical reading skills checklist mostly used for the first preps students. A creative writing pre-post test was administered to evaluate the effect of the creative writing program on the first preps students. The researcher developed and used a questionnaire to evaluate the students' and teachers' views on the program. The experiment lasted for one academic semester, two sessions a week. Paired t-test statistics was used to measure the difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental group. Results revealed a positive effect of the proposed program in developing the first preps students' creative writing skills. It was recommended that using the critical reading skills may be integrated in the program of developing creative writing skills of prep stage.

Key words: Creative Writing skills, Critical Reading skills, 1st prep students.

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Chapter One

Background and Problem

Chapter one

Background and Problem

1.1. Introduction

The main objectives of English language acquisition and learning as a foreign Language is to enable the learners to develop communication skills and to provide the society with graduates who can fluently read, learn and write English whether to work for foreign associations or to carry out researches in various fields.

English teaching methods have been developed greatly due to the necessity of teaching and learning of this language to the extent that the relationship between the students and the language became changeable when it is developed, so teachers should carry out a lot of teaching operations inside their classrooms. Teaching methods should present a way to change the state of boredom into stimulation and excitement and searching for new interesting content necessary for learning classes of English as a foreign language, to stimulate students not only for learning English language, but for using it in various situations of daily life and qualifying students to use the English language in the political, tourist, media and other knowledge fields.

Creative Writing (CW) skills consolidate concepts and ideas that allow people to write down their ideas and innovations. It helps to determine how to arrange actions in the innovative works. Throughout writing, one can translate his concepts and be able to logically persuade others. It is easier to test and evaluate the development of the individual's level when the student achieves noticed progress in written context than depending on other skills such as reading or speaking.

By Creative Writing (CW), various ideas can be discovered, clarified and reformulated. The more learners continue developing writing, the more they could find new ideas to express themselves and have much awareness of the necessity of developing their thinking patterns. Constantinides (1996) claimed that creativity has four abilities: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. She pointed out that fluency is the ability to produce lots of ideas, flexibility is the ability to imagine and produce ideas of various types, originality is the ability to create uncommon and new ideas, and elaboration is the ability to embellish and expand existing ideas with more details. Furthermore, she indicated that these four abilities are usually used to measure students' creativity especially in the English language.

Regarding creativity in EFL, writing could be viewed as the main area in the curriculum that we associate with creativity, noting that writing is one of the most tasks that we can be asked to perform. Thus, considering the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), creativity could be clearly observed and measured, especially in the productive skills which are speaking and writing that their performance depends on the receptive ones: listening and reading.

Moreover, Students should differentiate between Creative Writing (CW) and other kinds of writing. In terms of its topics, Shorofat (2007) pointed out that writing could be classified into two kinds: functional and creative. Creative Writing (CW) is that kind through which individuals can convey what they have in their minds to others in an attractive literary style. It includes several genres such as writing stories, poems, plays and essays. On the other hand, functional writing is that kind which aims at conveying a direct, clear, and specific message to a specific audience.

Critical reading has its positive effects on developing FL skills that it can provide learners with rich content that can be fruitful and useable in enhancing other skills particularly the productive skills such as Creative Writing (CW). Generally it can be noted that better readers tend to be better writers. It is noted that when students experience reading in conjunction with their own writing, transference from one process to the other is more likely to occur. Furthermore, Schmitt and Carter (2000) argued that especially reading particular topics with different genres and perspectives facilitates language development, as the vocabulary and ideas are repeated. They asserted that, looking for clues that help students make predictions about texts written by others will help them to see the importance of providing those clues in their own texts and so on.

Many scholars investigated the critical reading significance and put many definitions to it they indicated that it isn't a restricted term that refers to the highest level of understanding in reading. Furthermore, Critical reading is a pattern of critical thinking that can be applied on a written page. According to Harris (2000), it's a process of issuing judgments during reading.

Teaching methods scholars should pay attention to the reading content and techniques and make use of them to enhance other EF skills. Bruton and Alonso (2004), argued that "In specific places that teachers teach, it should be interesting to find out what students' perceptions are of what they read and might read. In addition, teachers might use the evidence given here, and evidence they glean from their own students, to consider the type of discourse that is read under instruction, and to reduce discrepancies between teacher and student perceptions. It is especially at the level of particular interests, whether academic, professional or personal, that different reading needs might be

identified. At the school level, teachers of language, both L1/L2 and FL, might consider it convenient to reflect on reading practices and priorities across the board in their institutions, both for pleasure and for more instrumental purposes.”

As long as Reading content is made use of, it could reflect to some extent in other language skills that Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) believed that reading and writing instruction for ELLs should heavily focus on the development of background information and cultural schema for reading. August and Shanahan (2006) asserted the significance of reading on developing language proficiency and believed that "having well-developed language proficiency in English is associated with well-developed reading comprehension skills in English". So, this argument leads to the benefits that can be achieved through making use of critical reading skills.

EFL teachers used to focus throughout their writing classes on grammar and usage which can negatively affect their students' writing skills progress. Weaver(1996) supported the conclusion that grammar and usage should not be taught in isolation and added that instruction devoted to discussing the rhetorical and holistic aspects of writing is more meaningful and productive.

Many studies assured the significance of reading texts for enhancing students' EF skills. Kobayashi (2007) believed that "From an educational point of view, it is important that students are capable of reading expository texts critically". According to Goldman and Wiley (2002), for example, a critical approach to scientific information presented in various genres of text (e.g., journal article, textbook, newspaper article, or website) is a basis of science literacy. Douglas (2000) stated "Today, increasing exposure to a flood of texts through mass media and the

internet heightens the importance of critical reading. Kobayashi(2007) believed that "Despite the importance of critical reading in literacy education, little is known about how students use strategies while reading a text critically".

From all the above-mentioned views, it can be inferred that the critical reading skills may have an effect on improving the whole language skills among of which are the Creative Writing (CW) skills, particularly that most ESL/ EFL students suffer a general weakness in this skill and need some helpful means to improve the writing skill to enhance their English acquisition.

1.2. Statement of The study problem

Working as a teacher of English, the researcher viewed a problem concerning the 1st year preparatory students' skills and performance of Creative Writing (CW) skills in general.

Throughout teaching 1st year preparatory syllabus at language schools, the researcher noticed a general weakness of students in their ability to share in classroom written activities in English language that appears in:

- The students' lack of tendency to in general or share in different communicative written situations inside English learning classrooms.
- Weakness of linguistic written progress.
- Disability to properly construct written statements.
- The students' lack of confidence in their ability to write in English.

To make sure that the problem of Creative Writing (CW) weakness existed, the researcher applied a questionnaire (see appendix 1) of two parts through which students and teachers of various language schools

were asked to submit its items according to their views on the students' Creative Writing (CW) abilities and needs.

Accordingly, this research suggested that critical reading can to some extent share in enhancing students' Creative Writing (CW) skills.

1.3. The study questions:

The problem of this research is determined in the weakness of the English language Creative Writing (CW) skills as a result to the attitudes weakness in general. To face this problem, the researcher tried throughout this research to answer the main question of the study:

"What's the effect of critical reading on developing 1st year preparatory students' English Creative Writing (CW) skills?"

This main question can be divided into various sub-questions as follows:

- 1- What are the suitable critical reading skills which affect the development of the students' learning of English language in general?
- 2- What are the features of the proposed program that aims to develop the 1st preparatory students' Creative Writing (CW) skills?
To what extent is the program effective in developing their Creative Writing (CW) skills?

1.4. Hypotheses of the Study:

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test in the overall Creative Writing (CW) skills in favor of the experimental group.