

**Evaluating the development of writing
skills through creative writing
instruction in an ESL high school
classroom.**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study observes the development of student's writing skills when exposed to creative writing, and how the focus solely in prose creative writing influences the areas of adequacy, cohesion, coherence, lexicon, morphosyntax and spelling. Three classes of 4° de ESO Spanish-Catalan students were split into two experimental groups and one control group, and the two experimental groups engaged in creative writing sessions. The teacher-researcher guided the students through the drafting and redrafting process of creative writing, with one of the two groups focusing exclusively in prose writing, whilst the other group faced no restrictions when producing texts. Data was collected through a pre-test and post-test that evaluated the writing competence of the students before and after the three weeks of creative writing instruction took place. Results suggest that the presence of creative writing in the classroom is more beneficial for the development of student writing skills than a creative writing-free curriculum. However, it failed to reach a conclusive answer regarding whether instructing creative writing prose exclusively resulted in substantially better performances when compared to the data collected from the group who faced no restrictions in their creative writing sessions. The researcher concludes that insight into student motivation could better explain the significance of creative writing in the ESL classroom and reinstate its significance as a performance and skill enhancer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Justification, Background & Objective

In the past decade the field of EFL has witnessed significant developments regarding the implementation of creative writing into the classroom. During this time, academic discourse seems to have reached a consensus on the benefits of creative writing in the ESL/EFL classroom, albeit with a notable lack of quantitative research on the many benefits attributed to it. Observations of improved grammar, vocabulary acquisition, self-esteem, motivation and creativity to name a few have been mentioned in many works and articles. However, whilst the recurrence and widespread acceptance of this positive feedback seem to strengthen their validity, a shadow of doubt can't help but be casted when considering the novelty and limited presence that creative writing still has within the EFL field. Additionally, the significance of form in the instruction of creative writing has not received the adequate attention it deserves. It is my belief that by focusing on specific aspects regarding the results of the presence of creative writing in the ESL classroom we can collect and analyse data to contrast with these widely accepted observations. To be precise, this study will focus on the development of morphosyntax, spelling, lexicon, adequacy, cohesion and coherence whilst questioning whether creative writing prose instruction is more effective than a form-free instruction.

Despite being underrepresented in the ESL classroom and only starting to gain traction in the past decade (Bussinger, 2013), creative writing has received a moderate amount of academic coverage, but mostly in the form of qualitative studies. The relevant studies that veered into the usage of quantitative data were grounded in either the perception of creative writing in the ESL classroom (Avramenko, Davydova, & Burikova, 2018), or how to enhance the student's skills relevant to creative writing (Nasir, Naqvi, & Bhamani, 2013). These studies are of great value, as

they shed light on the promising role of creative writing in the ESL classroom and discuss the most effective way to implement it. However, through my literature review I was able to identify a significant lack of data-based research on the effects of creative writing in the students' performance.

Conversely, this study seeks to approach the development of the student's writing skills through quantitative research in an outcome-oriented, objective manner. What this entails is carrying out a study that is removed from the data, as the existing research presents a subjective lens tied to the highly personal and intimate features ingrained to the notions surrounding creative writing. Such is the case of the following observation, which notes how creative writing stimulates the "student's sensitivity [as] the vocabulary use in fiction writing appears to be more varied and of higher quality than academic writing produced by the same students" (Smith, 2013, p.15). Another example would be Kirkgöz (2014), who claimed that "creative writing aids language development at the level of grammar, vocabulary, and discourse. As learners manipulate the language in interesting ways to express uniquely personal meanings, they necessarily engage with the language at a deeper level of processing, which leads to significant gains in grammatical accuracy and originality of lexical choice" (p.395). What these studies impress on me is that the benefits of creative writing in language development have been observed across a multitude of studies, but the limited quantitative research has led to mostly ungeneralizable studies that form a chorus of broad conclusions. In order to reach an objective and narrow conclusion, this study seeks to track and map the writing skills of a group of Catalan high school students, evaluating their performance with a pre-test and post-test. As a result, this study will seek to replicate the observations highlighted across other studies but in a quantitative manner, whilst researching the

relationship between form-specificity in creative writing teaching with grammatical and lexical development.

1.2. Research Questions & Hypotheses

This paper will examine the outcome to the following three questions:

- **RQ1:** To what extent are writing test scores influenced by the presence and type of creative writing in the ESL classroom?
 - **H1:** On average, test scores will be higher for the experimental groups. Subjects that were exposed to creative writing will improve their written ability when compared to those that weren't exposed to it. Subjects who engaged solely with prose creative writing will score higher.
- **RQ2:** How is the development of L2 vocabulary and lexicon and grammatical ability influenced by the inclusion of creative writing and type of creative writing in the syllabus?
 - **H2:** Subjects that were exposed to creative writing will on average improve both their written lexicon and grammatical expression regardless of what form of creative writing they were exposed to.
- **RQ3:** How does the approach to teaching creative writing influence the subject's ability to produce adequate, cohesive and coherent texts?
 - **H3:** Subjects that were exclusively exposed to creative writing exclusively in prose will develop a better sense of adequacy, coherence and cohesion when writing texts when compared to the other experimental group.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter contextualises existing research on second language writing, exploring the development of writing and the process behind, and how it benefits the ESL student. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the presence of creative writing within ESL writing instruction, and how the observed benefits it has had on learners.

2.2. Writing Instruction & Feedback

Being a complex skill comprising many subskills (ranging from spelling to word choice to structure) writing requires careful instruction, especially when being taught to those acquiring the skill in a second language (Byrne, 1991; Hedge, 2005; Hyland, 2003). Byrne considers that as a skill, writing lacks some of the tools that aid oral communication, the central being interaction, as writing finds itself having to consider adequacy, coherence and cohesion: “we have to keep the channel of communication open through our own efforts and to ensure, both through our choice of sentence structure and by the way our sentences are linked together and sequenced, that the text we produce can be interpreted on its own” (Byrne, 1991, p.4). A common misconception by students is that they can achieve perfect writing with word processors, that they don't need to be taught the skill as technology will aid them in correcting their mistakes. However, Hyland and Hyland (2006) postulate that "in the automated context, writing is not evaluated as real interaction designed to achieve different communicative purposes with different audiences but as a performance artefact of student mastery of grammar, usage, and organization" (p. 95). We can thus see how in order to teach writing, a teacher must ensure that

their students are capable of managing the multiple areas of language needed in successful written expression and communication.

Feedback has been highlighted as a core instrument in developing writing skills (Krashen, 1983; Seow, 1996; Sommers & Collins, 1984). Readers responding to the text has been highlighted as the main stimulator of revision (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In writing instruction it is no different, as feedback and response guides along the writing process and skill development (Straub, 2000). Sommers (1980) argues against linear models of writing, where feedback is delivered at the end of each draft instead of during each step of the process. In fact, Seow (1996) upon noticing how feedback in writing instruction was often equated to evaluation incorrectly, developed an demonstrative model on how the teacher could provide feedback throughout the process of developing a piece of writing (See Figure 1).

This model emphasises how feedback can be carried on after the completion of the focal piece. However, to ensure this, feedback and evaluation do not suffice, as students could struggle to understand it and find themselves unable to put it to use beyond the activity, thus attending to communication and context is vital to ensure the unhindered development of the skill (Goldstein, 2006). Teaching students how to write is thus a proactive endeavour, where the teacher can provide input at many stages and students can develop and practice a varied set of skills.

STAGES/LEARNING EXPERIENCE	UNDERSTANDING THE WRITING PROCESS	TEACHING “PROCESS WRITING”
1. Planning (Pre-writing)	Students are motivated to write because they feel like they have something to say.	Teacher engages with students in generating ideas, in sourcing for information (content) and in collaborative discussion.
2. Drafting (Writing)	Students organise their ideas and develop some form of writing.	Teacher guides the students in the composing process.
3. Responding (Sharing)	Students look to the teacher for support and feedback.	Teacher and peers provide initial reactions to student’s first drafts.
4. Revising (Redrafting)	Students capitalise on audience feedback to re-examine their drafts for clarity of intention and meaning and make necessary changes.	Teacher takes students through the revision stage to help students shape and reshape their texts into a viable (final) form.
5. Editing	Students refine their texts for linguistic accuracy, organisation of ideas and overall presentation.	Teacher employs a checklist to assist students in the editing process.
6. Evaluating	Students seek final feedback.	Teacher uses certain evaluation criteria for assessing students’ overall written performance.
7. Post-writing	Students realise the significance of their finished products and have a deep sense of pride and ownership of their writing.	Teacher shares students’ finished written assessment with an audience.

Figure 1: The Writing Process and “Process Writing” (Seow, 1996, p.79)

2.3. Second Language Writing

Since the turn of the 21st century, the field of Second Language Writing has been born from a considerable development in the research of the production of texts in a foreign language (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Manchón & de Haan, 2008). The discipline traces its origins to the 1960's, where issues with L2 writing issues attracted the attention of specialists, even though the field was not entirely neglected before that time, yet it wasn't until the 1990's that the study of Second Language Writing shifted and consolidated towards its current state (Matsuda, 1999; 2003). In this shift at the turn of the century has been linked to challenges pertinent to a shift within the classroom, as classroom sizes of upwards of 30 students have been described as creating logistic tensions at the time of teaching writing as a means of reinforcing grammar, amongst other challenges (Leki, 1992). However, it is noted that the teaching of writing in a SL/FL context despite these logistic tensions is a vital means through which teachers can equip and prepare students for the future (Ibid). Hyland (2007) suggests that to further the development of the student's written skills, a framework is required, as he suggests a genre-focused pedagogical approach when it comes to the teaching of writing. He states that SLW "instruction must help demystify prestigious forms of discourse, unlock students' creative and expressive abilities, and facilitate their access to greater life chances. To accomplish these goals, we require a systematic means of describing texts and of making our students' control over them more achievable" (Ibid, p.163).

Meanwhile, when it comes to the research of Second Language Writing, Manchón (2012), compiles a multifaceted range of theoretical perspectives through which said research is approached, presenting dynamic usage-based theory informed by dynamics systems theory, sociocultural theory, multicompetence theory, goal theory, genre theory, and system functional

linguistics. Research methods in this field have been observed to include: elicitation (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests), introspection (think aloud protocols, diaries), observation (recording of behaviour, keystroke logging) and text data itself (Hyland, 2016). These methods are noted to be accessible to teachers, but methodologies used in Second Language Writing research are noted to be less visible, as they include:

“Experimentation: Controlled context to discover the effect of an intervention[;]
Ethnography: Prolonged engagement with a community to capture participant perspectives[;] Auto-ethnography: author reflects on personal experience and social meaning of writing[;] Critical analysis: Study connections between situated writing and wider socio-political contexts[;] Discourse analysis: Study of authentic examples of writing used for communication in natural settings[;] Meta-analyses: An empirical synthesis to provide an overview of results of studies in an area” (Ibid, p.119).

We can thus see that the field of Second Language Writing has developed a diverse and expansive range of pedagogical theories, research methods, and methodologies. Whereas this allows instructors and researchers to engage with a plethora of approaches within the field, in order to ensure a thorough and explicit approach they must narrow down these approaches to what best fits their pedagogical and inquisitive needs.

2.4. Creative Writing

A significant number of instructors have discussed and cited the narrow and unadventurous institutional structure that afflicts the ESL classroom, noting the limited or nonexistent engagement with the act of creative writing, criticising this and calling for more viable means for the inclusion of creative writing (Maley, 2012; Robinson, 2011 among others). This is as a result of the many benefits that have been observed in creative writing, as it has been noted to assist in

key aspects of SLA such as grammar, vocabulary acquisition and discourse (Kirkgöz, 2014; Avramenko et al, 2018; Tin, 2013). It is noted by Long (2000) that grammar can be challenging to instruct in the ESL classroom due to the problems of focus on form, linked to syllabus and textbook designers that also difficult creative writing in the classroom. However, Smith (2013) argues that creative writing is an appropriate means for grammar to be approached, as it “provides a means of combining meaning-focused and form-focused tasks” (p. 13). That being said, one study notes how parameters have to be set as part of creative writing exercises, as looser constraints do not enable both L2 forms and meaning to co-evolve (Tin, 2011).

Creative writing has also been noted and praised for its ability to help and stimulate students in areas such as ‘playfulness’, curiosity, self-esteem, motivation and introspection (Cook, 2000; Maher, 1986; Maley 2015). It is indicated that creative writing assists students in escaping the structured repetition to be found in textbooks and stimulates them on an individual level (Bussinger, 2013). Vocabulary acquisition or building through creative writing has been linked to this break from monotony as the students experience higher motivation and are incentivised into discovering and using new vocabulary (Ying, 2008). This approach to vocabulary acquisition can be contrasted with the previous list-making and memorisation approaches, which have been panned for their monotony (Huang & Gu, 1996). That being said, some scholars have also negatively commented and even opposed the inclusion of creative writing, with it being believed to be no more efficient than other forms of writing (Light, 2002), nor “academically valuable” (Chamcharatsri, 2009, p. 18). However, it should be evident when viewing these scholarly perspectives in contrast with the clear shift in favour of creative writing in the past decade that discourse has shifted in favour of creative writing. Nonetheless, throughout this literature review

it has been thoroughly evident that most of these studies regarding creative writing have been qualitative, emphasising a void in the domain of quantitative research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will present a description of the study's participants, together with a description of the setting and how this experiment was conducted whilst conforming to the limitations and restrictions that arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the instruments for the collection of data, together with said process will be detailed in this chapter in addition to an explanation of how the data will be analysed. This chapter will also cover the difficulties that arose whilst carrying out the study, and how these led to the experiment receiving changes halfway through.

3.2. Approach, Setting and Participants

With the aim of identifying the answers to the research questions and providing objective data to track the development of the written skills of students, this study was carried out through a quantitative approach. The setting where the experiment was conducted was Sagrat Cor School in El Vendrell, Spain. The experiment in itself took place across the months of April and May 2021, and as a result, was adapted to conform with the COVID-19 normatives in place at the time. It had originally been designed to last from the 20th of April to the 4th of May, but as a result of one of the groups being quarantined for a week, the experiment was extended until the 11th of May to ensure equal test conditions for all groups. Another pandemic-related factor that influenced this study was that the groups for this experiment had to be set in stone due to the inability to mix pupils pertaining to different year groups. As a result of this, because of how the groups had been divided at the start of the school year together with other factors such as absences, all three groups had an unequal number of participants that nonetheless averaged out.

The subjects of this experiment were the 92 4° de ESO students of Sagrat Cor School. They were divided into three groups, with one being a set of 31 students and the two other groups containing 30 students each. As previously mentioned, these groups were created according to the year groups they were assigned at the start of their academic year and could not be mixed up. The group that originally had 31 students was Class C, whilst the other two groups were Class A and B.

Out of the three groups, one was designated the control group and the other two were the experimental groups. The control group received their English education just as their curriculum and their usual teacher instructed it, with creative writing being absent from their instruction. Meanwhile, the two experimental groups had creative writing workshops and instruction replaced part of their English lessons, with some of them focusing entirely on creative writing and discussion of the work they outputted. Both experimental groups were exposed to creative writing an equal amount of time and through approaches that mirrored one another. However, one experimental group was taught and requested to write entirely in prose for their classroom assignments, whereas the other group was taught and encouraged to carry out their writing assignments in forms not solely restricted to prose. These included poetry, scripts and lyrics, but students were encouraged to try out any type of creative writing they could think of and were attracted to. All three groups were taught the same number of hours and covered equal amounts of their curriculum, however the experimental groups had creative writing be present throughout sections of their lessons as part of the experiment's sessions. The control group followed their regular curriculum, which included writing activities and practice. However, these writing activities were part of their coursebook and workbook. A random draw the day before the start of the experiment decided that Class B would be the control group, Class C would be the group that

was taught creative writing exclusively through prose, and Class A would be the group that was taught creative writing without being restricted to any one type of written form.

3.3. Procedures and Limiting Conditions

The experiment was carried out in four different sessions in the span of three weeks. Outside these four sessions, all English lessons for the students were taught according to the curriculum and discretion of their usual teacher. The students of the control group were taught as usual with the exception of when they were to partake in the pre- and post-tests. All three groups were provided with equal learning input and material, but the two experimental groups had some of their lessons complimented by creative writing. The three groups were taught the same number of hours and covered equal amounts of their curriculum, however, Classes A and C had creative writing woven into their lessons as part of the experiment's sessions.

In the first session, after reviewing some material from the previous lesson, all groups partook in the twenty minute long pre-test. It should be noted that a pupil from Class B was absent from school that day and did not join the class through Google Meets, as a result, this group had 29 pupils total at the start of the experiment. After the pre-test took place, the two experimental groups were introduced to creative writing and given the task to work on the first draft of a piece that could be as long or short as they liked in either pairs or by themselves. Class C were told that they had to exclusively work on a prose project, whereas Class A were not given any limitation, being allowed to work on anything ranging from poetry, to scripts, to short stories, to rap lyrics. Those who wanted began to work on their first drafts. Class B did not gain any additional learning material during that session, as their session happened to take place at the start of the school day, which tends to be slightly shorter as a result of the morning roll call. However, this was balanced out by the fact that throughout the experiment Classes A and C also

had one of their weekly English lessons first thing in the morning, so all three groups received the exact same number of tuition hours throughout the duration of the experiment.

The second session took place at the start of the following week, as students had to turn in their first drafts at the end of the lesson, and as all learning material had been covered in the first half of the lesson they were allowed to finish off their first drafts in the second half, with both teachers giving feedback. Meanwhile, the control group were allowed to study for a test they had the following period.

The third session took place two days later, when the students were returned their first drafts with corrections and written feedback. They were given feedback in a one-on-one basis whilst they were carrying out some workbook exercises, and were told to make a final draft for the following week.

The following week, the students were to hand in their final drafts and partake in the post-test. However, as a result of Class A being quarantined due to a potential coronavirus outbreak, the post-test was delayed to the Monday of the following week, were they were expected to all return if they all tested negative for COVID-19. Had they tested positive, the study had prepared to carry out the post-test telematically, using Google Meets, having them all turn on their webcams and giving them the same time conditions, at the end of which they had to use the app CamScanner to upload their attempts to their virtual classroom. However, as the entire classroom tested negative, the post-test took place on Monday. Albeit, there were some absences in Classes A and B, which further rendered the group numbers as unequal. As a result, the data considered in the results section will feature 28 out of 30 students from Class A, 28 out of 30 in Class B, and 31 out of 31 in Class C.

3.4. Materials, Instruments and Research Design

The instruction of creative writing featured a presentation on the subject, class activities such as timed writing activities, and the non-committal encouragement to attempt creative writing in English outside of class. All work completed in class was collected, and together with any creative writing pieces that were completed outside of lessons, received written feedback and were returned to their authors with corrective feedback. During the first session the students of Class A were allowed to work either individually or in pairs to create short stories, poems, songs, raps and scripts, whilst Class C were instructed to work individually or in pairs to write a short story or any other type of prose narrative, with the entire group choosing to work on short stories exclusively. Both classes began working on the first draft of their work, receiving feedback on their ideas, grammars, and doubts. A second session was dedicated to the creation of this first draft, with the work of both groups being collected at the end of this session. Between sessions the drafts were marked and given written feedback, highlighting grammatical and lexical errors, and suggesting new and varied vocabulary. These drafts were then returned to the students and they were told to rewrite their draft into a final draft for the next session.

Being the control group, Class B followed their regular curriculum, which included writing activities and practice. However, these writing activities were part of their coursebook and workbook. Throughout the experiment, all three groups were taught the same number of hours and covered equal amounts of their curriculum, however, Classes A and C had creative writing woven into their lessons as part of the experiment's sessions.

The data for this study was collected from a pre-test and a post-test that were originally scheduled to be set two weeks apart but ended up being set three weeks apart. Between the two tests the treatment described above took place. The pre-test and post-test are adaptations of

writing exercises designed by the Generalitat de Catalunya for the evaluation of quart d'ESO students. Particularly, the pre-test and post-test will be modelled after the written portion of the 'Competència lingüística: Llengua anglesa' exam. This portion, which evaluates written expression, has students create a piece of writing. The grading of the pre-test and post-test has also been modelled after the grading rubric provided by the Generalitat de Catalunya, having been adapted in such a way that it will help us quantify the focal items of the research questions. The pre-test and post-test will task students with producing a piece of writing ranging from 80 to 95 words and answering to a situational prompt. To ensure fairness, the prompts for these written pieces will be randomly selected and not tailored to some topics that may arise during the experiment. All three groups will receive the same prompt in both the pre-test and post-test. Students will have 20 minutes to complete the written piece.

The grading of the written pieces will be out of 10 points split across three sections:

- Adequacy, coherence and cohesion (worth a maximum of 4 points).
- Morphosyntax and spelling (worth a maximum of 4 points).
- Lexicon (worth a maximum of 2 points).

The grading of the sections will be in whole numbers, without any decimals.

Adequacy, coherence and cohesion:

- **Adequacy:** The type of text, the information it contains and the linguistic register with which it is written being apt to the communicative objective. The text responds adequately to the task and specified word length of 80 to 95 words. Points will be lost if the written pieces are deemed to be inadequate and not the requested type of writing, if the register is not appropriate for the situation or context.

- **Coherence:** The information in the text is relevant and presented in a logical, clear and well organised manner. The text can be understood easily. Points will be deducted if the structure is not clear and/or disorganised, when contradictions are present, ideas are repeated unnecessarily, when irrelevant information is present, and when the content is confusing and the development of ideas is hard to track.
- **Cohesion:** Ideas are presented in a logical and interconnected manner. Cohesion is achieved through a good usage of attributes such as punctuation, connectors, and basic temporal expressions. Points will be deducted if there is a lack or erroneous usage of connectors that harm reading comprehension, the lack of necessary pronouns, or the lack or erroneous use of punctuation.

Morphosyntax and spelling:

In order to receive the maximum score of 4 points the text has to demonstrate grammatical correctness and the control of structures pertinent to quart d'ESO. It will be expected for students to make use of vocabulary relevant to the task, such as the use of the past tense of regular and irregular verbs, the order of different elements within a phrase, the placement of adjectives ahead of nouns, the placements of adverbs within sentences and the basic use of prepositions for time and place.

For this grading section, the following will be penalised:

- Words and phrases that are poorly linked.
- The omission of the subject, lack of concordance between subject and verb, incorrect basic verbal forms.
- Not capitalising proper nouns, the pronouns "I", the letter following a full stop, at the start of a sentence, or the name days or months.

- Mixing up *They're/there/their, it's/its, he's/his*.
- Misspelling commonly used words such as *live, daughter, with, etc*.

The score won't be affected by:

- Isolated mistakes in texts featuring remarkable discursive competence, such as: "In Monday" instead of "On Monday".
- Spelling mistakes in words that aren't used frequently: "sightseeing".
- Mistakes made in complex structures: "meet with Paul".

Lexicon:

To score both available points the text must demonstrate a varied lexical richness pertinent to quart d'ESO standards. In this text the usage of a lexicon relevant to the prompt is expected.

The following things will deduct from the score for this section:

- The erroneous usage of "false friends".
- Mistaking categories (very/a lot).
- Making up words.
- Making use of Spanish or Catalan words.

3.5. Data analysis

The collected data was analysed using the statistics program JASP. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the results of the pre- and post-test in order to discern any noticeable differences in the total scores, together with variability of the isolated scores of the three sections that comprise the grading criteria. In order to assist us in answering the research questions poised in this study, the data will be compared and contrasted as to answer whether the inclusion of creative writing in the ESL classroom is beneficial to the student's written abilities,

and how restrictions of written form can reinforce or undermine the performance of students in the areas of adequacy, grammar and lexicon.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings through which the three research questions can be answered. It will unveil the changes in scores across the groups from the pre-test to the post-test representative of their written proficiency development through the evaluation of their adequacy, coherence, cohesion, morphosyntax, spelling and lexicon.

4.1. Quantitative data

4.1.1. Pre-Test Results for Classes A, B and C

At the start of the experiment a pre-test was carried out not only to track the evolution of the student's writing skills per the established rubric, but to also ensure that all three groups had similar levels. The descriptive statistics in pre-testing for measures of adequacy, coherence and cohesion; morphosyntax and spelling; and lexicon for each group are presented in tables 5.1 (Class A), 5.2 (Class B), and 5.3 (Class C).

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.750	2.250	1.393	6.393
Median	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Mode	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Variance	0.343	0.491	0.247	2.099
Standard deviation	0.585	0.701	0.497	1.449

Table 5.1: Pre-Test Results for Class A

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.714	2.286	1.500	6.500
Median	3.000	2.000	1.500	6.000
Mode	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Variance	0.878	0.360	0.259	2.852
Standard deviation	0.937	0.600	0.509	1.689

Table 5.2: Pre-Test Results for Class B

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.806	2.129	1.387	6.323
Median	3.000	2.000	1.000	7.000
Mode	3.000	2.000	1.000	7.000
Variance	0.628	0.649	0.312	2.826
Standard deviation	0.792	0.806	0.558	1.681

Table 5.3: Pre-Test Results for Class C

As can be seen across all three tables, for their total scores, Class A had a standard deviation of 1.449 with a mean score of 6.393, Class B had a standard deviation of 1.689 with a mean score of 6.5, and Class C had a standard deviation of 1.681 with a mean score of 6.323. These tables thus show that there was no significant difference between the three groups. Furthermore, an ANOVA was conducted on the three group's total scores. This statistical analysis confirms that all three groups had relatively consistent scores in their pre-test ($F=0.084$ and $p=0.919$). Thus, these results allow us to see that both experimental groups (A and C) and the control group (B) were equivalent prior to the experiment. With all subjects being from a mostly homogenous

socioeconomic background and receiving the same English-learning opportunities in their curriculum, any change in their writing performance can be attributed to their exposure to creative writing.

4.1.2. Post-Test Results for Classes A, B and C

Upon the completion of the experiment and production of creative writing pieces by the experimental groups, a post-test was conducted to evaluate their writing performance in English.

The results for all three groups are presented through tables 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6.

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.929	2.357	1.464	6.750
Median	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Mode	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Variance	0.439	0.534	0.258	1.824
Standard deviation	0.663	0.731	0.508	1.351

Table 5.4: Post-Test Results for Class A

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.500	2.357	1.393	6.250
Median	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Mode	3.000	2.000	1.000	6.000
Variance	0.778	0.683	0.321	2.713
Standard deviation	0.882	0.826	0.567	1.647

Table 5.5: Post-Test Results for Class B

	Adequacy, coherence & cohesion	Morphosyntax & spelling	Lexicon	Total
Mean	2.871	2.452	1.516	6.839
Median	3.000	3.000	2.000	7.000
Mode	2.000	3.000	2.000	7.000
Variance	0.783	0.656	0.258	2.740
Standard deviation	0.885	0.810	0.508	1.655

Table 5.5: Post-Test Results for Class C

The total scores have a standard deviation of 1.351 and mean of 6.750 for Class A, a standard deviation of 1.647 and a mean of 6.250 for Class B, and a standard deviation of 1.655 and a mean of 6.839 for Class C. When compared to the results from the pre-test, it can be observed that the scores from experimental groups A and C increased, whereas the score in Class B went from being the highest score to the lowest, the mean score having decreased by exactly 0.250.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This study's purpose was to evaluate how the instruction of creative writing in an ESL classroom influences the development of writing skills, and whether the instruction of prose writing over broader aspects of creative writing delivered higher scores in the post-test. In this chapter, the collected data will be rationalised, compared and contrasted in relation to the hypotheses presented earlier in this study, making use of existing literature to ascertain and extrapolate whether creative writing is a useful tool for the development of writing skills.

5.2. Key Findings

By comparing the mean total scores of both post-tests and pre-tests, we can view how in relation to **RQ1**, both experimental groups improved their mean total score, whereas the control group strangely enough had a lower mean total score in their post-test than their pre-test, going against the trends showcased by the other two groups. When it comes to **RQ2**, the lexicon/vocabulary developed in the experimental groups and slightly decayed in the control group, but all three groups showcased a slight improvement in morphosyntax and spelling, with that of the experimental groups coming ahead of that of the control group. Lastly, findings relating to **RQ3** showcased that the experimental groups improved when it came to producing adequate, cohesive and coherent texts, but Group A who weren't limited to prose scored slightly higher mean scores than Group C.

5.3. Discussion

Reviewing these findings we can see that this study agrees with a considerable amount of prior research that favoured the use of creative writing to develop the writing and language skills of ESL students. This favours the broader findings and observations of Avramenko et al (2018), Kirkgöz (2014) and Tin (2013) that suggested that the inclusion of creative writing in the ESL classroom could foment the development of grammar, lexicon and discourse. This study contradicts Light's (2002) claim that creative writing is no more efficient than other forms of writing instruction, as it appears that indeed creative writing produced more satisfactory results than a standard ESO curriculum's writing instruction.

The study itself proves that creative writing can exist in the ESL classroom, and co-exist with a curriculum whilst assisting the language ability and acquisition of students. Even though Maley (2012) and Robinson (2011) have pointed out that creative writing is an activity that can often be at odds with curriculums, this study's exposure of creative writing was able to enhance the curriculum and produce satisfactory results, thus emphasising how teachers can go beyond the curriculum with creative writing in order to benefit their students.

Smith (2013) claimed that creative writing could facilitate the development of grammar. The findings of this study showcase how the grammar, as seen in the scores for morphosyntax and spelling, improved throughout the experiment. However, the control group also found success in this area, even if to a lesser extent, as this also reinforces Leki's (1992) argument that writing instruction as a whole reinforces grammar.

Ying (2008) explored the vocabulary-building abilities of creative writing, rationalising that the activity encouraged students to grow their lexicon. The study showcased that indeed the students that had been in contact with creative writing improved their lexicon to an extent, whilst those

whose lessons adhered to their traditional curriculum stagnated or declined according to their scores in the post-test.

The findings of this study suggest that creative writing can help improve the adequacy, cohesion and coherence of ESL students when writing. Furthermore, it was noted that limiting students to exploring creative writing in the form of prose did not pose a significant advantage, with the experimental group that was untethered and free to explore other forms of writing having scored higher in this section of the grading rubric. This in fact contradicts Tin (2011), who argued that creative writing instruction in the ESL classroom should be done with parameters and a narrower focus, yet in this study it was the more unrestrained of the two experimental groups that produced the more coherent text. Albeit, the experimental group that focused on prose creative writing demonstrated a more significant test score experiment throughout this experiment overall.

When viewing the post-test's results, the overall improvement of the experimental groups' scores and the slight decline of those pertaining to the control group could be justified through observations found in previous research. The higher motivation towards expanding one's lexicon through creative writing is a factor that Ying (2008) emphasised, as motivation has been a benefit of creative writing highlighted and observed in many other studies such as Cook (2000), Maher (1986) and Maley (2015), amongst others. Additionally, Bussinger (2013) argues that creative writing breaks the monotony that can be found in textbook writing exercises and enables the development of the writing skill to happen at an individual level. The findings can be interpreted as the students pertaining to the two experimental groups having been able to explore writing in a more motivating and routine-breaking manner. Meanwhile, the students in the control group had to practice their writing skills in a manner that could be considered monotonous and

motivation-reducing by studies in favour of creative writing. When presented with the post-test, it is likely that the experimental groups were feeling refreshed and motivated when it came to tackling a writing activity, whereas the control group weren't so much. However, it is impossible to state this with full certainty considering how this study does not track or evaluate student motivation.

The role of feedback throughout the creative writing exercises can also be viewed as a significant factor, as Straub (2000) has highlighted feedback as a catalyst for the development of writing skills. However, it could be argued that the control group also received feedback upon the completion of their textbook exercises, yet this could be viewed as feedback being handed at the end of a linear process of writing, which is disapproved by Sommers (1980). It could be hypothesised that the feedback throughout the drafting and writing processes that the experimental groups underwent could have set them at a disadvantage for their post-test, yet I believe that having their work scrutinised several times before completion and having to redraft it, must've helped students be able to revise their texts under timed conditions. This could be in opposition to the control group, where feedback can very much be equated to evaluation, to Seow's (1996) dismay.

The finding of both experimental groups being arguably equally matched raises doubts about hypotheses that indicated that Group C would consistently score higher than Group A. Hyland (2007) argues for a genre-focused approach to writing instruction, however when an attempt to translate this to creative writing instruction was carried out in this study, it doesn't seem to produce that big of a difference in the evaluated writing performance of students to focus on prose creative writing solely. Considering how the group focusing on prose had their mean score progress from 6.393 to 6.750, whereas the group focusing on prose had theirs rise from 6.323 to

6.839, we can see how indeed Group C with their sole focus in prose, performed better, but the difference between the two wasn't as significant as the difference with control group Class B, who scored a mean score of 6.500 in their pre-test and 6.2500 in their post-test, showcasing markedly negative development in contrast to the other two groups. In fact, despite the looser framework used in the experiment's exposure to creative writing, as referencing Hyland's own words, it can be argued that it's "instruction [helped] demystify prestigious forms of discourse, unlock[ed] students' creative and expressive abilities, and facilitate[d] their access to greater life chances" (Ibid, p.163). This study thus argues that creative writing has an overall positive effect on the learner and helps improve the skills needed to engage in writing.

5.4. Limitations and Weak Points

When planning the study, the researcher decided to go for a purely quantitative research that focused explicitly on the linguistic gains of students. This was done to set this study apart from the more qualitative observation-based studies in the field of creative writing in ESL, as a result this study was only able to focus on the collected data in the pre- and post-tests. It would've benefited from incorporating a questionnaire to keep track of student motivation and their opinion towards writing in a second language, or keeping track of qualitative observations such as some students from the experimental group drafting, revising and rewriting their texts during the post-test.

Additionally, it should be considered how the study only lasted three weeks, originally intended to be a two week study, which greatly limited the scope of the study, as it resulted in a rushed execution of the writing process, and reduced the opportunities for feedback. In the previous section it is argued that motivation increased in the experimental groups thanks to the break in their monotonous schedule provided by creative writing, so it raises the question if the effect of

creative writing on students would've been dampened had its exposure to students had been prolonged further, or even incorporated throughout a whole school term.

After viewing the findings it became clear how instead of focusing on a group that specialised in prose creative writing, one that focused on creative writing in a broader sense, and a control group that followed their curriculum, the experiment should've instead designed the groups differently. The lack of a group that focused on a non-linear writing process in a non-creative writing context, became evident. This study can argue that creative writing instruction is better than the writing instruction already included in ESO ESL textbooks and curriculums, but it cannot prove that creative writing is better than non-creative writing instruction sessions following non-linear models.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study seeks to provide the much needed quantitative data supporting claims of creative writing being beneficial for ESL learners. Upon deconstructing what comprises the writing skills, identifying the subskills of adequacy, coherence, cohesion, lexicon, morphosyntax and spelling, a rubric was adapted to track the development of high school students' writing abilities before and after being exposed to creative writing. It also set out to discover if students being instructed in a single form of creative writing, such as prose, would be more beneficial than a more open instruction of creative writing.

The findings in this study have backed up many observations and existing pieces of research that encourage the inclusion of creative writing in the ESL classroom, and validates suggestions of creative writing being a tool through which grammar, vocabulary and discourse can be refined (Bussinger, 2013; Cook, 200; Smith, 2013; amongst others). However, it showcased that even though the group focused exclusively on creative writing prose showcased a better improvement in the study, it was still remarkably close to that of the other, more unrestricted experimental group. This is at odds with Hyland's (2007) push for genre-focused writing instruction, or Tin (2011), who argued against an unfocused instruction of creative writing. Nonetheless, this might ultimately be due to the flawed design of the experiment.

Even though this research showcases with quantitative data how creative writing benefits ESL high school students, it fails to reach a conclusive answer when it comes to how focused on a specific writing form an ESL creative writing exercise should be. The experiment was limited, as it had to take place in the span of under a month, and as a result it doesn't track the long-term influence of creative writing on students. Additionally, a key factor in previous studies on creative writing was completely omitted: motivation. The failure to include a questionnaire or

interviews with students, prevents this student from making claims of motivation being one of the main elements that influenced the student's performance in the post-test.

Future research should track the relationship between the motivation of students and their performance in writing assignments, as to establish how creative writing being a motivation-raising activity, directly influences results. Additionally, it should be contrasted with more traditional writing instruction, and if motivation plays a significant role in it.

The data in this study shows how creative writing can be incorporated into a high school ESL classroom, and how students will improve their writing abilities through it. Teachers who seek to incorporate creative writing to their classrooms should ensure that the activity's text production is reinforced with feedback throughout the process, following a model such as the one presented by Seow (1996). Overall, creative writing is a robust activity that will stimulate and challenge students, putting to test and engaging their developing language skills.

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ANNEX

Pre-Test (20th of April, 2021):

A teacher has asked you to write an entry for a blog they help run. The blog contains the opinions and experiences of students from all over the world. You have been asked to write an entry with your thoughts on the use of technology in the classroom. Mention what type of technology is included in class, how it is used, and weigh out the benefits and disadvantages of making use of it.

Write 80-95 words within the next 20 minutes.

Post-Test (11th of May, 2021):

You were fortunate enough to receive an all-inclusive invitation to the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics this summer. You are writing an email to a friend or relative in order to tell them what you plan to do on this trip. Is there a sport or athlete you want to follow up close? Do you know anything about Tokyo or Japan you'd like to check out? If not, what places can you visit to explore and learn about the country?

Write 80-95 words within the next 20 minutes.