

The Role of Creative Writing in Promoting Critical Thinking and Self-Expression Among Secondary School Students in Osun State

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of creative writing in promoting critical thinking and self-expression among senior school students in Osun State. Quasi-experimental research design was used for the study, 200 Senior Secondary II learners (100 in the experimental class as well as 100 in the control) picked from four government secondary schools. The experimental class were introduced to innovative writing approach (poetry, story writing, thoughtful essays, and drama), also, the control class were exposed to traditional method with the use of prevalent comprehension and grammar-form teachings for six weeks. Facts were gathered with the use of Innovative Writing Test (IWT) and Reflective Reasoning and Expression Scale (RRES). The tools registered an extreme reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.81$ for CWT; $\alpha = 0.78$ for CTES). Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were utilized to analyze the research questions, while t-test and ANCOVA were make use of to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both critical thinking ($M = 72.46$, $SD = 6.81$ vs. $M = 61.22$, $SD = 7.13$; $t = 8.32$, $p < 0.05$) and self-expression ($M = 74.13$, $SD = 6.25$ vs. $M = 62.47$, $SD = 7.09$; $t = 9.04$, $p < 0.05$). The hypotheses were rejected, which shows that innovative writings remarkably improve the reflective reasoning and personal-expression of the students. The findings conclude that innovative writing is an productive instructional device for evolving digital age proficiency among senior secondary school students in Osun state, Nigeria.

Keywords: Creative Writing, Critical Thinking, Self-Expression, Secondary Education

Introduction

The universal claims for contemporary skillfulness like reflective reasoning, innovative, conversation, and troubleshooting has enhances the demand for creative strategies to teaching and learning. Educational development is no longer resisted to the inactive transmission of wisdom but affirm the functioning involvement of students in procedure that encourage reflection, thinking, and inventiveness. Amidst these skills, reflective reasoning and personal-expression are essential for students, particularly at the senior secondary school classes where learners are trained for higher learning and functional engagement in the public.

Creative writing proffers a productive didactic route for realizing these educational objectives. It includes insightful and thoughtful utilization of language amidst pursuit such as storytelling, poetry, drama, and personal essays. All of these undertakings gives the students chances to compose meaning, eloquent individual experiences, and involve in analytical skill through descriptive investigation. In line with Lipman (2003), involving learners in imaginative and thoughtful writing arouse cognitive improvement by encouraging profound thinking and probe. Likewise, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory point out the function of language in evolving higher-level intellectual roles like conceptual thinking and innovation.

In Nigeria, English Language teachings is always preoccupied by grammar drills, comprehension passages, and examination-focused strategy. Hence, creative writing is underestimated, leaving learners with little chances to explore invention, express oneself unreservedly, or advanced evaluative and rational skills. This actuality has steered to worries about the capability of Nigerian learners to reason autonomously, examine issues analytically, and communicate their intention boldly. Researchers like Olatunji (2021) and Adeyemi (2022) have revealed that creative writing promotes ingenuity, develops optimistic, and enrich analytical skills. Yet, there remains a gap in experiential documentation from Osun State as regards how creative writing clearly add to critical thinking and self-expression among senior secondary school students. This research, thus, examined the functions of creative writing in evolving these important skills.

Learning in the modern age requires more than rote cramming; it demands the advancement of higher-level reasoning skills, analytical potentials, and productive communication. Critical thinking and self-expression are part of the highly essentials competencies for learners, especially

at the senior secondary school class where students are making ready for tertiary education and the world class learning.

The universal desire for modern age skills such as analytical reasoning, imagination, cooperation, conversation, and problem-solving has changed the direction of teaching from rote learning to student-centered approach that affirm invention and rational reasoning. According to OECD (2021), the imminent manpower demands students who can reason analytically, adjust to new problems, and enunciate concepts efficiently. As part of these skills, reflective thinking and personal-expression are essential at the senior secondary school class, where students are hoped to develop both academic and social proficiency that equipped them for tertiary education and involvement in civic duty.

Creative writing works as an optimistic didactic strategy to attaining these targets. It encircles undertaking like poetry, tales, drama, thoughtful essays, and narrative writing, which involves students in imaginative and critical processes. Through these means, learners not only practice language use but also evolve the capability to devise meaning, examine thoughts, and express self ideas. Lipman (2003) affirms that contemplative and creative writing enhances cognitive growth by advocating investigative and in-depth thinking. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) pointed out the functions of language in moderating advanced level intellectual roles, which makes creative writing an important learning object.

In Nigeria, the teaching of English Language has traditionally asserts grammar, comprehension, and examination-based coaching. While this method may strengthen short-lived efficacy in standard exams, it often restricts chances for learners to achieve inventiveness, self-assurance, and analytical reflection. This gap has brought serious worries about the readiness of Nigerian learners for presents desire that involve autonomous reasoning and eloquent proficiency. Current research has pointed out the revolutionary plausible of creative writing. Olatunji (2021) affirm that creative writing promotes analytical thinking and issues-resolving capabilities, also Adeyemi (2022) asserts that learners shown to creative writing exercise are capable to displayed an advanced novelty and personal-confidence. Recent empirical findings, such as Adebayo (2023), also recommends that creative writing fosters not only language fluency but also learners' psychosocio skills, such as flexibility and affinity. Likewise, Eze & Okafor (2024) state that rooting creative writing in English Language teaching is essential for evolving both intellectual and attitudinal direction of studying in Nigerian schools.

Creative writing, which involves poetry, short stories, drama, and essays, provides a special instructional method to plants these skills. Through creative writing, students involve in creativity, exposition, and interpretation while classifying ideas in logical and eloquent ways. In line with Lipman (2003), creative and imaginative exercise fosters intellectual procedure that promote analytical reasoning, while Vygotsky's social cultural theory pointed out that meaningful exercise such as writings are significant for developing advanced cognitive roles.

In Nigeria, especially in Osun State, the tutoring of English Language continually prioritizes grammar, comprehension, and examination readiness. Consequently, creative writing is underused in schools, restricting learners' prospects for individual-expression and autonomous thinking. Yet, findings report (e.g., Olatunji, 2021; Adeyemi, 2022) has revealed that creative writing promotes reality, issues-solving, trust, and enhanced expression skills. This research, therefore, examine how creative writing can be used as a teaching strategy to enhances analytical reasoning and personal-communication among senior secondary school students in Osun State. In spite these contributions, there remains limited empirical evidence within the context of Osun State on how creative writing specifically contributes to critical thinking and self-expression. Most studies focus broadly on writing competence or examination outcomes, neglecting the broader cognitive and expressive dimensions. This study, therefore, addresses the gap by investigating the role of creative writing in promoting critical thinking and self-expression among senior secondary school students in Osun State.

Despite of the significance of imaginative writing, little experimental research in Nigeria, and Osun State specifically, have investigates its efficacy in improving rational reasoning and personal-expression among senior secondary learners. Most recent studies centered on students' achievement in examinations instead of the wider intellectual and eloquent benefits of imaginative writing. This research fills this gap by examining how imaginative writing can be a workable device for fostering both rational and eloquent capabilities.

Though previous research recognized the significance of imaginative writing, most have centered widely on writing proficiency and educational performance rather than particularly investigating its effects on reflective reasoning and individual-expression. In Osun State, there is inadequate experimental studies on how imaginative writing approach influences these two skills among senior secondary learners. This research bridges this gap by exploring the association between imaginative writing, rational thinking, as well as self-expression in a Nigerian context.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of imaginative writing in improving rational reasoning and personal-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Evaluate the effect of imaginative writing on learners' rational reasoning capabilities.
2. Find out the impact of imaginative writing on learners' capability to express themselves appropriately.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does creative writing promote critical thinking among senior secondary school learners in Osun State?
2. How does creative writing influence self-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun State?

Research Hypotheses

H01: Creative writing has no significant effect on the critical thinking abilities of senior secondary school learners in Osun State.

H02: Creative writing has no significant influence on self-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun State.

Methodology

The research adopted a quasi-experimental research design type of pre-test and post-test control groups. This design was appropriate because it allowed for a comparison of the achievement of students taught with creative writing strategies as well as those exposed to conventional approaches. The population comprised all Senior Secondary School II (SS II) learners in government owned secondary schools in Osun State. Sample of 200 learners was selected from four randomly chosen schools across the state using a multistage sampling technique. Stratified random sampling was used to ascertain gender balance. Two self-designed research instruments were employed for collection of data: Creative Writing Test (CWT) designed to measure originality, coherence, and fluency in students' written work. Critical Thinking and Expression Scale (CTES) adapted from the Watson Glaser Rational Thinking Appraisal and modified for the Nigerian context to test the critical thinking and expression level of the students. Face, content and construct validation of the instruments was ensured through expert in English Education, Test and Measurement and Educational Psychology. Reliability of the research

instruments was ensured using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.81 for CWT and 0.78 for CTES, which were considered highly reliable. The experimental class was exposed to creative writing strategies such as story writing, poetry, reflective essays, and drama activities, while the control class were taught with the conventional grammar and comprehension lessons. The treatment lasted for six weeks. Pre-tests were administered to both groups before the intervention, and post-tests were administered afterward. Data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to analyze the research questions and inferential statistics such as t-test and ANCOVA were employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results Analysis

Research Question I

To what extent does creative writing promote critical thinking among senior secondary school learners in Osun State?

Table 1: Analysis of the extent creative writing promote critical thinking among senior secondary school student

Group	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Mean Difference	Remark
Experimental	100	72.46	6.81	11.24	Higher
Control	100	61.22	7.13		

The table I above shows that the experimental class had a significant high post-test mean score (M = 72.46) than the control class (M = 61.22), showing that creative writing significantly promoted critical thinking among senior secondary school students.

Research Question II

How does creative writing influence self-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun State?

Table 2: Analysis of the creative writing influence self-expression among senior secondary school students

Group	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Mean Difference	Remark
Experimental	100	74.13	6.25	11.66	Higher
Control	100	62.47	7.09		

Table II above shows that students in the experimental group demonstrated greater fluency, originality, and confidence in self-expression than those in the control group.

Hypotheses Analysis

Hypothesis I

H01: Creative writing has no significant effect on the critical thinking abilities of senior secondary school learners in Osun State.

Table 3: ANCOVA Analysis of creative writing significant effect on the critical thinking abilities of senior secondary school students

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value	Decision
Critical Thinking	Experimental	100	72.46	6.81	8.32	0.000	Reject H0
	Control	100	61.22	7.13			

Hypothesis I revealed that exposure to creative writing activities (poetry, storytelling, reflective essays, and drama) will not produce any measurable improvement in students' ability to think critically compared to traditional instructional methods. However, the statistical results ($t = 8.32$, $p < 0.05$) show a significant difference, meaning the hypothesis is rejected. Thus, creative writing does significantly enhance critical thinking among the senior secondary school students.

Hypothesis II

H02: Creative writing has no significant influence on self-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun State.

Table 4: ANCOVA Analysis of the creative writing significant influence on self-expression among senior secondary school learners

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value	Decision
Self-Expression	Experimental	100	74.13	6.25	9.04	0.000	Reject H0
	Control	100	62.47	7.09			

Hypothesis II shows that students' self-expression (fluency, originality, and confidence in communication) will remain unaffected by creative writing instruction. The findings ($t = 9.04$, $p < 0.05$) showed a statistically significant enhancement in personal-expression among the experimental class, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that, creative writing does significantly improve self-expression.

Discussion of Findings

The study shows that imaginative writing significantly enhances learners' rational reasoning capabilities and personal-expression skills. This finding is in tandem with Vygotsky's social cultural theory (1978), which affirm that language serves as a moderating device for higher-order reasoning. Learners who involved in storytelling, poetry, and reflective essays had to assemble ideas systematically, examined views, and make expressions effectively, thereby promoting rational reasoning.

The outcomes also align with the research of Olatunji (2021), who asserted that imaginative writing enhances critical and rational thinking skills, also, Adeyemi (2022), found out that learners exposed to creative writing display enhanced factual and personal-confidence. Additionally, these results corroborate with Lipman (2003), who reports that imaginative writing cultivates thinking and issue-resolving skill.

The presumptions are essential for the Nigerian education settings. By ranking high examination-oriented instruction, schools often neglect imaginative approaches that can develop lifetime aptitude. The research shows that incorporating imaginative writing into the syllabus not only magnify academic performance but also prepares learners for social involvement, issue-resolving, and efficient expression in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

The research concludes that imaginative writing is a strong teaching device that enhances both creative reasoning and personal-expression among senior secondary school learners in Osun

State. It offers a platform for learners to think independently, evaluate ideas, and articulate thoughts confidently. This emphasize the reasons for tutors, curriculum developers, and government stakeholders to restructure imaginative writing as a foremost approach in English Language teaching.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the research, the following recommendations were raised

- English teachers should incorporate imaginative writing exercise into their instructional strategies to enhances learners' reflective reasoning and communication capabilities.
- Curriculum planners should underscore imaginative writing as an important part of English Language classroom teachings in Nigerian secondary schools.
- School supervisors should inspire literary clubs, writing workshops, and competitions to improve learners' creativity.
- Government and NGOs should sponsor training and make available the resources to enable teachers to adequately teach creative writing.

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