

**The Effectiveness of a CoRT Based Program in Developing English
Language Creative Writing Skills in Light of Constructivism Theory
for University Students**

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Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using a CoRT- based program in developing university students' creative writing skills. The targeted creative writing sub- skills were (fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration). The study utilized a one-group pre-posttest design in which data was collected to investigate the effectiveness of a CoRT-based program in developing English language creative writing skills in the light of constructivism theory for university students. Participants of the study received a training based on CoRT 2 in light of constructivism theory. Instruments designed and used in the study were a creative writing test and a rubric for scoring the students' creative writing performance. The treatment was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022- 2023. The results showed that there was a statistical significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre and post application of the creative writing test in favor of the posttest. The results indicated that The CoRT- based program developed students' EFL creative writing skills.

Key words: EFL creative writing skills, the CoRT program, EFL university students, Egypt.

فاعلية برنامج قائم على النظرية البنائية والكورت في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الابداعية لدى طلاب الجامعة متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

مستخلص البحث:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من فاعلية استخدام برنامج قائم علي الكورت لتنمية مهارات الكتابة الابداعية باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الجامعة متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. لهذا الغرض تم اختيار ٣٠ طالب وطالبة (N=30) عشوائيا من الصف الأول الجامعي بكلية التربية- جامعة عين شمس بمحافظة القاهرة ليمثلوا عينة البحث. وقد صممت الباحثة أدوات الدراسة وهي : قائمة ببعض مهارات الكتابة الابداعية، اختبار قبلي/ بعدي لقياس مستوى الطلاب في مهارات الكتابة الابداعية قبل وبعد تطبيق البرنامج ، مقياس تقدير متدرج لمهارات الكتابة الابداعية وبرنامج قائم علي الكورت من تصميم الباحثة. وقد تم تحليل درجات الطلاب في الاختبار القبلي والبعدي إحصائياً باستخدام اختبار (ت). وقد أثبتت النتائج فاعلية استخدام برنامج قائم علي الكورت لتنمية مهارات الكتابة الابداعية باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الجامعة متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ووفقا للنتائج التي تم الحصول عليها ، قدم البحث العديد من التوصيات والمقترحات لإجراء مزيد من الأبحاث المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات الكتابة الابداعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، برنامج الكورت، طلاب الجامعة متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مصر .

Introduction

Nowadays, advantages in technology such as the internet increased the usage of English worldwide. English is the key language in education and students use it for communication. The four basic language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing are divided into two categories: productive; speaking, and writing & receptive; listening, and reading. Academic success is measured by the student's achievement in written communication. Writing is considered the most difficult skill to be produced by students. The emphasis is put on the ongoing assessment of writing through the learning process. Moreover, Writing is comprehended in the context as the writer combines his thoughts, recent knowledge, and previous experiences in a comprehensive meaning to deliver his message. (Harmer, 2007, p.265) & (Sparks, J. R., Song, Y., Brantley, W., & Liu, O. L., 2014) & (Burke, 2010)

Writings may be functional or creative. Creative writing is the use of our complex mental models to convey meanings and express inner feelings in an attractive style through writing poems, essays, stories, and plays. Students use creative writing to express their thoughts, opinions, and solutions in an attractive literary style by taking into account writing mechanics. Creative writing is the ability to move on and think creatively to produce original, self-expressive writings which attract readers although they are not academic or technical, they are essential to cope with the requirements of their society. (Ibnian, 2009) & (Licciardi, 2015) & (Ganiaris, 2018)

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded that we understand the world by reflecting on our experiences which we acquire by our mental models (Resnick, 1989) & (Elliott, 2000, p. 256) & (Phillips, 2000). Constructivism states that learners construct meaning only through active engagement with the world (such as experiments or

real-world problem solving) and this is the main purpose of the CoRT thinking program. Learning is a social activity - it is something we do together, in interaction with each other, rather than an abstract concept (Dewey, 1938). For example, (Vygotsky,1978), believed that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning." and the environment in which children grow up will influence how they think and what they think about. (Arends, 1998) & (Phillips, 1995).

Many programs, methods, and approaches have been used to improve language learning in general and the creative writing skill in particular. The CoRT tools broaden perception of students to see beyond their normal reasoning and help them to investigate and think about problems, issues, and topics. The CoRT program is one of the most famous thinking programs across the world. (CoRT) stands for (Cognitive Research Trust) an institution of cognitive study that was established by De Bono, a theorist, at Cambridge. The CoRT program is an educational curriculum for direct teaching of thinking skills, divided into six modules each consisting of ten lessons.

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using tools of CoRT 2 (Organization) in developing the English language creative writing skills of first year university students in the light of constructivism theory. CoRT 2 consists of two parts; the first includes five lessons that deal with five common thinking operations focusing on the subjects of deliberate attention so that students can use them in an organized manner: asking specific questions and looking for specific answers. The next five lessons of the second part deal with the overall organization of thinking so that it can be used in a productive manner. The intention was to treat thinking as an organized operation rather than a discursive ramble in which one thing leads to another. They include **Recognizing, Analyzing, Comparison, Selection, Finding other ways, The start, Organizing, Focusing,**

Consolidating, and, **Concluding**. The essence of CoRT 2 is organizing thinking and focusing attention directly on different aspects of thinking and to translate these aspects into definite concept tools that can be used deliberately. (Debono, 2009)

Statement of the Problem

EFL university students encounter significant deficiency in creative writing performance. Therefore, the researcher adopted a CoRT- based program to improve EFL university students' creative writing performance.

Questions of the Research

To address this problem, the current research was trying to answer the following main question:

What was the effectiveness of a CoRT based program in developing English language creative writing skills in light of constructivism theory for university students?

In order to answer the main question, the following sub-questions ought to be answered:

1. What was the current level of first -year university students in English language creative writing skills?
2. What were the difficulties of developing English language creative writing skills for those first -year university students?
3. What were the features of a CoRT-based program that was used to develop English language creative writing skills for first-year university students in the light of constructivism theory?
4. How far did a CoRT-based program develop English language creative writing skills for first-year university students in the light of constructivism theory?
5. To what extent were the students satisfied with the program?

Aim of the Research

This research aimed to develop English language creative writing skills for first-year university students in the light of constructivism theory and identify the learning strategies they follow and prefer. Moreover, in which certain areas they were facing the difficulties mostly and whether there was any impact or effect regarding those difficulties among them or not.

So, the aims of the research were determined as follows;

1. Developing English language creative writing skills for first -year university students in light of constructivism theory.
2. Providing EFL teachers with the rationale of using a CoRT-based program for developing English language creative writing skills in light of constructivism theory for university students.
3. Determining the effectiveness of a CoRT-based program in developing English language creative writing skills in light of constructivism theory for university students.

Significance of the Research

This research is expected to be of importance to:

Students

1. Developing first -year university students' English language creative writing skills through a CoRT-based program in the light of constructivism theory.
2. Enjoying English writing classes through the activities used during the application of the CoRT-based program in light of the constructivism theory.
3. Motivating first -year university students to learn English generally and to learn English language creative writing skills especially.

EFL Teachers

Providing EFL teachers with a rational and a detailed description of using a CoRT-based program for developing English language creative writing skills in light of constructivism theory for university students.

Curriculum Developers and Designers

Providing curriculum developers and designers with a research based on using a CoRT based program for developing English language creative writing skills in light of constructivism theory for university students with taking into consideration that students' English language creative writing skills develop while they learn English continuously which helps in designing and developing curricula in a better way based on students' needs in specific ages with various levels of abilities and experiences.

EFL Researchers

Directing future EFL researchers' attention to investigating the effectiveness of CoRT-based programs in developing other English language creative writing skills for students of different ages or in developing or improving other English language skills.

Limitations of the Research

Findings of this research are restricted to university students. However, EFL/ ESL educational edifices can benefit from these findings. Also, the researcher exerted efforts to convince first graders about the value and importance of teamwork, and she helped them when they faced any problems. Eventually, the researcher noticed their positive participation and cooperation with their peers, and they gradually became able to write creatively and successfully.

Literature Review

Constructivism, which emphasizes learning as a personal activity, serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. According to this hypothesis, people will attempt to comprehend all the information they take in, and each person will afterwards "construct" their own meaning from it. One of the key concepts in education is constructivism. It has huge effects on how educators educate students and train new instructors. (Driscoll & Marcy, 2000) Implications of constructivism for teaching and learning Central to the tenet of constructivism are that learning is an active process. Information may be imposed, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from within. Constructivism requires a teacher to act as a facilitator whose main function is to help students become active participants in their learning and make meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning.

Maley (2012) considers creative writing as an aesthetically motivated, highly disciplined, and personal activity that deals less in facts than in the imaginative representation of emotions, events, characters, and experiences. The inclusion of creative writing in the language teaching practices is justified due to several reasons: First, 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. (Cook, 2000).

Many new strategies have been developed to enhance the concept of creativity so the learner could be able to think creatively to solve the problems. (Hamid.M,2005). Hamid M. Systems and Creative Thinking.

Cairo. (CAPSCU); 2005. One of these strategies is CoRT (Cognitive Research Trust) in which students will:

- 1- Think critically and clearly in a certain way, with accuracy and precision.
- 2- Think carefully, with logic and depth.
- 3- Think open-mindedly, by examining points of view and acknowledging assumptions and biases within a given viewpoint
- 4- Use critical thinking tools in everyday life. (Leon Joseph, 2016)
- 5- Focus attention directly on different aspects of thinking and crystallize these processes into definite concepts and tools that can be used deliberately to move our thinking along. (Blue sky, 2013)
- 6- Broaden their perception beyond the obvious reasoning. (Leon Joseph, 2016)
- 7- See beyond their normal reasoning. The further investigation and thinking about a problem/topic/issue. (Leon Joseph, 2016)

Edward de Bono is the originator of the concept - and formal tools - of Lateral Thinking, which is now a part of language enjoying an entry in the Oxford Dictionary. Edward de Bono is regarded by many as the leading authority in the field of creative thinking, innovation and the direct teaching of thinking as a skill. He is equally renowned for his development of the Six Thinking Hats® technique and the Direct Attention Thinking Tools™ (D.A.T.T.™) framework. Dr. de Bono established the World Centre for New Thinking which acts as a platform and channel to make visible New Thinking from any source. His techniques and work focus on improving the elements that constitute a perception and the formal design and application of the frameworks required towards innovative and creative action. One may easily say that all the recent (past thirty years) focus on thinking, on creativity, on innovation, on frameworks beyond 'x-storming' etc. has taken its lead from Edward de Bono's work.

Method of the Research

This study utilized a one-group pre-posttest design in which data was collected to investigate the effectiveness of a CoRT-based program in developing English language creative writing skills in the light of constructivism theory for first-year university students. Participants of the study received a training based on CoRT 2 in light of constructivism theory. A pre-posttest was applied to assess the participants' English language creative writing skills before and after the application of the CoRT-based program in the light of constructivism theory.

Participants

Participants of the study were 30 students selected randomly from first-year university students at faculty of Education- Ain Shams university.

Procedures of the Research

By reviewing literature and related studies, the program was built and its characteristics were determined, as follows:

1. Designing a list of first-year university students' English language creative writing skills which must be developed by a CoRT-based program in the light of constructivism theory. This was done through:
 - Reviewing literature and the previous related studies on the English language creative writing skills of the university students.
 - Designing the list of first-year university students' English language creative writing skills which must be developed by a CoRT-based program in light of constructivism theory.
 - The English language creative writing skills list must be displayed to jury members and professionals in the field of curricula and EFL instruction for investigating its consistency and reliability.

- Modifying the English language creative writing skills list under the supervision of the jury members and putting it in the final form.
2. Designing the CoRT-based program for developing the English language creative writing skills in the light of constructivism theory for first-year university students. This was done through:
 - Reviewing literature and the previous related studies about constructivism, the CoRT program, and English language creative writing skills.
 - Selecting some topics which were suitable to be used for developing the university students' English language creative writing skills in the light of the principles of constructivism theory and using a CoRT-based program and consulting a number of English teachers for selecting the most suitable ones.
 - Designing the CoRT-based program in the light of the selected topics and the constructivism theory.
 3. Designing a pre-posttest for measuring English language creative writing skills of first-year university students and investigating the validity and the consistency of the test and determining the time needed for it to be applied.
 4. Designing the analytic rubric for assessing first year university students' English language creative writing skills in the pre-posttest.
 5. Identifying the impact of a CoRT based program on developing English language creative writing skills in the light of constructivism theory for first year university students. This was done through:
 - Selecting the study group randomly from the first year university students.
 - Applying the pre-test for measuring first year university students' English language creative writing skills.

- Applying the CoRT based program in the light of constructivism theory.
 - Post application of the English language creative writing skills test.
 - Analyzing the data statistically.
6. Writing the results and interpreting them in the light of the objectives of the study.
7. Giving recommendations and suggestions for further studies in the light of the results of the present study.

Data Collection Instruments

- A list of the creative writing skills necessary for first graders.
- A pre-post creative writing skills test to assess first graders' performance before and after the experiment.
- An analytic creative writing skills rubric to score the participants' performance in the creative writing skills pre-posttest.
- Teachers' Interview Questionnaire (Appendix B)
- Participants' Satisfaction Questionnaire.
- Self-assessment checklist.
- Peer- assessment checklist.
- Observation Card.

Data Analysis

The research hypotheses were verified through analyzing the data of the pre/ post-test applications. To do that, the appropriate statistical techniques (t-test and η^2 'Eta squared') were used.

Descriptive Statistics

The scores of the pre and post application of the **creative writing skills** test in (fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration) were analyzed and paired samples t-test & η^2 'Eta squared' value were used to

measure the effect size of the CoRT- based program on the creative writing performance.

The following table points out the results:

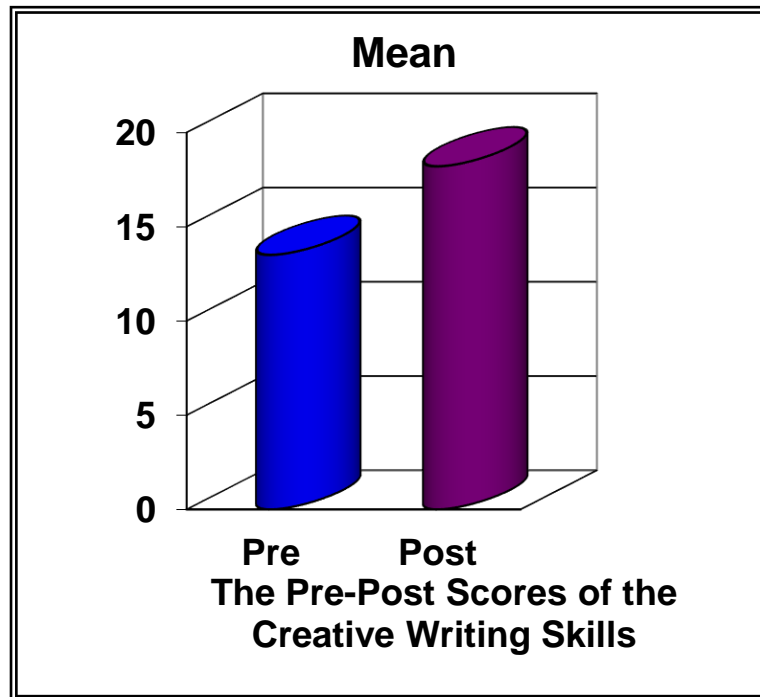
Results of the Pre-Post Application of the Creative Writing Skills Test

| | The study group | N | Mean | Standard deviation | Calculate d 't' | Significance | Effect size |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----|------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Creative Writing Skills | The pre application | 30 | 58 | 12.4 | 14.43 | Sign at 0.05 | 0.87 |
| | The post application | 30 | 77 | 11.2 | | | Large |

The table shows the following:

The mean score of the study group in the post-test application was (77) higher than their mean score in the pre- test application (58). The t value was (14.43) significant at (0.05) level, while the effect size was (0.87) Large. Based on the results reported in table (5), it is clear that there is a statistical significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre and post application of the creative writing skills test in favor of the post-test. Therefore, in light of these results, it can be concluded that the CoRT- based program was effective in developing the **creative writing performance** of the study group (first graders).

The following figure points out the difference between the mean score of the pre - post application of the creative writing skills test:



The figure shows that there is a statistical significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the **overall creative writing skills** in the pre and post application of the creative writing skills test in favor of the post- test. Accordingly, hypothesis one is verified which means that students' overall creative writing skills have developed due to the CoRT based program. Also, it can be said that the program had a large effect in developing first graders' creative writing skills.

Result of the Research

Through analyzing the data and results, it can be stated that the recent program was effective in developing first graders' creative writing skills and the following hypotheses were verified:

- 1.6.1 There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the overall English language creative writing skills in the pre- post application of the test in favor of the posttest.

- 1.6.2 There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre-post application of the English language creative writing skills test which has reached 22.3 in (**Fluency**) in favor of the posttest.
- 1.6.3 There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre-post application of the English language creative writing skills test which has reached **18.1** in (**Flexibility**) in favor of the posttest.
- 1.6.4 There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre-post application of the English language creative writing skills test which has reached **18.5** in (**Originality**) in favor of the posttest.
- 1.6.5 There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study group in the pre-post application of the English language creative writing skills test which has reached **18.2** in (**Elaboration**) in favor of the posttest.
- 1.6.6 There are statistical significant differences between the mean score of responses of the study group that ranged from 1- 3.9 (Disagree-Agree) at level of (0.05) with a percentage that reached 87 – 90.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to document the effectiveness of the CoRT based program in improving first graders' creative writing skills and the first of the findings relevant to the first study question was that the overall creative writing skills of the study group have developed as the four selected skills (fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration) have developed according to the following order: (starting with the most developed skill and ending with the least developed one) fluency ,elaboration, originality then flexibility.

Intervention Effectiveness

In light of the findings of the current study, the following conclusions could be stated:

1. The present study provided evidence for the effect of the CoRT based-program in developing first graders' overall creative writing skills as the effect size of the program was 0.87 large.
2. The present study provided evidence for the effect of the CoRT -based program in developing the following four sub skills: flexibility, originality, elaboration, and fluency in particular.
3. The study group stated that Using CoRT thinking tools helped them to think and write creatively.
4. Most of the study group strongly agrees that CoRT thinking tools and activities used in the CoRT based program enhanced their self-confidence by giving them the opportunity to express their viewpoints meaningfully and organize their ideas logically.

Implications of the Research

In close lines with the findings of related and previous studies Hmeadat (2016); Zaiyadi, Abdullah, Muhamad, and Mustaphas's (2015); Ramdan (2015); Tarqe (2014); Hanan (2014); Cupta (2014); Al Faoury (2014); Melhem (2013); Al-Edwan (2011); Abewickrama (2011); Al-Muhtaseb (2010); Alzyuadi (2009); Nofel (2006); AlJallad (2006); Khatab (2004), those of the current study can be justified by the fact that:

- 1- Using communicative activities and thinking exercises had a positive effect in developing first graders' creative writing skills.
- 2- As highlighted in the current study, students' pair work and group work proved to be influential in enhancing students' involvement in different creative writing tasks, and this in turn encouraged them to develop their creative writing skills.

- 3- Integrating CoRT based program with different writing activities proved to promote students' active participation in creative writing tasks and various thinking activities and this consequently, enhanced their creative writing skills.
- 4- Using CoRT thinking tools as authentic materials assisted students to communicate and interact with each other eagerly and as a result think and write creatively.
- 5- Using CoRT thinking tools attached first graders to the authentic language.
- 6- Using questioning strategies embedded in the CoRT - based program provided first graders with good opportunities to deepen their thinking and self-expression. Moreover, these strategies provided the researcher with significant insight into the degree and depth of first graders' level of understanding.
- 7- Making discussions during sessions and observations of the researcher helped her to gain an understanding of what students know and do not know in order to make responsive modifications in teaching and learning.

Recommendations of the Research

In light of the results of the present study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. EFL teachers are recommended to use CoRT thinking tools in teaching writing to various educational stages. When students are engaged with deeper levels of thinking, this engagement will subsequently help them organize and generate original and creative thoughts in their writings.
2. EFL teachers should encourage their students to learn through various activities such as learner engagement, critical consciousness,

outlining, brainstorming ideas, character building, world-building, plotting, research, and also pre-writing.

3. EFL teachers should give students enough time and opportunity to practice creative writing in order to encourage them to be active writers.
4. EFL teachers should encourage interaction between students and their peers in order to exchange experiences and knowledge and broaden their thinking.
5. EFL teachers should give students enough opportunities to express their opinions, unique ideas, and viewpoints freely. Also, students should be provided with opportunities to share, discuss, and evaluate their writings and what their peers have written.
6. EFL teachers should give students supportive feedbacks during the learning process, not only to assist the students while identifying their weaknesses in their writings, but also to enhance their strengths.

Suggestions for Further Research

According to the results of this study, the researcher suggests the following topics for further research:

1. Investigating the effectiveness of the CoRT- based program in developing students' creative writing skills in various educational stages.
2. Investigating the effectiveness of the CoRT- based program in developing university students' speaking skills.
3. Investigating the effectiveness of the CoRT- based program in developing university students' listening skills.
4. Designing courses for training EFL teachers on using CoRT- based program into their classrooms for enhancing students' overall English language skills.

5. Conducting more studies on using CoRT- based program in EFL classrooms, since the studies relevant to this program are very rare.

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