استخدام مجتمعات التعلم الصغيرة لتنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية باللغة الإنجليزية لدي طلاب المرحلة الثانوية

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Using Small Learning Communities to Develop Creative Writing Skills in English Language for Secondary Stage Students

بحث مقدم فى
المناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

إعداد الباحث

أشرف حامد محمد علي
مُعلم خبير لغة إنجليزية بإدارة البساتين ودار السلام التعليمية

أ.د/ منال فاروق محمد	**أ.د/ سهير إبراهيم محمد سليم**
أستاذ مناهج وطرق تدريس	أستاذ مناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية اللغة الانجليزية المساعد
كلية التربية ـ جامعة حلوان	كلية التربية ـ جامعة حلوان

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Seleim, Soheir. Professor of Curriculum and EFL instruction, Faculty of Education, Helwan University

Farouk, Manal. Assistant Professor of Curriculum and EFL instruction, Faculty of Education, Helwan University

Hamed, Ashraf. An Expert Teacher, Governmental Language Schools, Cairo Educational Directorate

1. Abstract:

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of using small learning communities on developing creative writing skills for secondary school students. 200 students were randomly chosen and divided into two groups: the experimental group (150 students - three small learning communities) and the control group (50 students) after being sure that they were equivalent. The experimental group students were trained in creative writing skills through the use of small learning communities, while the regular instruction was used with the control group. To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers designed a creative writing skills pre-post test to measure the participants' creative writing skills. It was administered to them before and after the experiment. The mean scores of the pre-post administrations of the test were treated statistically. The result of data analysis indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the overall required creative writing skills. In the light of the findings of the study, the researchers recommended the use of small learning communities for developing creative writing skills in secondary stage. .

Key words: Creative writing, Small learning communities

2. Introduction:

Language is a means for the transfer of information, feelings and opinions. English language is the first international language in our modern world not only in terms of the number of speakers, but also in terms of its spread all over the world and its use in various fields. In fact, it should be learned nowadays by all peoples. So, if we want to keep in touch with scientific progress, we must be interested in teaching English, and mastering all its four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.1. Writing:

Although writing skill is usually ordered as the last of the four main skills in English language, it is the most important one. It has a great impaction helping students develop their language proficiency. It is a mental complex process based on creation and creativity (Buhrke, 2002,p.140). So, it has a great interest by professionals in languages, including specialists in the EFL instruction in the world such as Doland (2002), who emphasized the importance of writing as a good means to help in developing students' intelligence, the spirit of proactive they have, their self-confidence and encouraging them to understand the aim of their writing. In addition, other researches showed the importance of writing skills in general and the need to be interested in them in particular, such as (Hafez and Atia,2006) and (Tangpermoon, 2008).

Some researchers, such as El-Garf (2008) and Ahmed (2010) studied different writing skills. They mentioned different types of writing skills such as; choosing content skills, article building skills, paragraph building skills, syntax skills, spelling skills, handwriting skills, punctuation skills, text organization skills and choosing and organizing ideas skills.

Despite the importance of English writing skills, there are some problems that prevent students from being good at these skills such as the effect of the mother tongue on the English language and the lack of motivation to write in English (Atkinson, 2003, p.213). Many obstacles

also face the Egyptian students in writing English such as obstacles related to the teachers of English, obstacles related to the students who avoid writing in English for many reasons, obstacles related to the disability to employ the English language skills and obstacles related to the circumstances of learning English in general and writing skill in particular (Khalaf, 2008, p. 89). Some researchers have confirmed that these obstacles may cause lack in the development of writing skills such as, (Hassan and Ali, 2004) and (Saad, 2008).

2.1.1. Types of writing skills:

Writing is divided into two types؛ functional writing and creative writing.

2.1.1.1. Functional Writing:

Functional writing connects people to each other; to supply their needs. This kind of writing is not the subject of imagination, such as writing reports, official letters and e-mails (James and Amy, 2000, P.2).

2.1.1.2. Creative writing:

Creative writing is writing whose purpose is to express thoughts, feelings and emotions rather than to simply convey information. It is the expression of emotions, feelings and thoughts in an exciting literary manner such as writing poetry, stories and literary articles (Basal,2005,p.10).This kind of writing is important for secondary stage students and so its skills should be developed for them.

Ali (2010) mentioned the following types of creative writing skills:

a. **Skills of displaying components of the subject** which are the ability to organize the paragraph in a logical format by collecting ideas about one main idea in a visible grouping of sentences. Ali, (2010) mentioned many skills of displaying components of the subject such as;

selecting the objective of the topic, displaying it according to sequential steps, the sequence and variety of ideas, highlighting the technical unity and the unity of the psychological atmosphere of the subject and choosing a suitable and attractive title to the subject which expresses its content.

b. **Content skills** which are the abilities to contribute directly to the performance of the creative writing within an organization. Abd Elazez (2002) and Abd Alla (2010) mentioned many content skills such as; using figures of speech that highlight the main idea such as similes and metaphors, creating new fictional image that support the subject, using elements of creative writing such as: originality, fluency, flexibility and details enrichment, taking into account the variety and clarity of the style, and avoiding using, ambiguous terms and putting quotations and citations in their right place to serve the context and emphasize the idea, representing the student's character and his culture through his writing.

c. **Taking out the general shape of the subject** through improving handwriting, using correct punctuation, ensuring correct subject order and developing the writer style (Basal, p.63.2005). Some studies and researches have indicated the importance of creative writing skills and the necessity for developing them through good learning environments especially in the secondary schools such as El-Geshi (2010), Temizkan, (2011) and Nasir & Syeda, (2013).

2.2. Small Learning Communities:

A Small Learning Community (SLC), a School-Within-A-School, is a school organizational model that is a common form of environmental secondary schools to subdivide large school populations into smaller, autonomous groups of students and teachers (Cotton, 2001, p. 56).

Darling, (2001, p. 68) mentioned that the primary purpose of restructuring secondary schools into SLCs is to create a

more personalized learning environment to better meet the needs of students. Each community will often share the same teachers and student members from grade to grade. Teachers in these units usually have common planning time to allow them to develop interdisciplinary projects and keep up with the progress of their shared students.

Oxley, (2002, p.88) added that the most fundamental aspect of the small learning community is the opportunity for teachers to believe they have an opportunity to have an impact on the success of the students in their community and the belief that their actions make a significant contribution to the community. In the researchers' view, the most significant motivator a teacher can give a teacher is the opportunity to make a difference. Because teachers work collaboratively with other teachers and counselors, and because they can engage with their students beyond one period a day for one semester or year, they believe their ongoing work can have that impact. They establish relationships that reflect a concern for their students beyond the short period of time the student may be in their class. This, in turn, changes the way the students think about their teachers.

Additionally, SLCs provide teachers with more varied opportunities to lead and be part of the school community. Each small learning community creates an assortment of roles and responsibilities for teachers. These include facilitation of SLC meetings, chairing a career day or awards celebration and monitoring parent contacts. Giving teachers roles and responsibilities for the betterment of their community connects teachers to the overall community success (Darling & Ort, 2002, p.639).

Finally, American Institutes for Research (2004, p. 34) assured that small learning communities make teachers and students less anonymous. In a large school some teachers and many students believe

they can exist unnoticed. For both, this can mean feeling like you can get away with doing less than your best. It is much more difficult to pass unnoticed, when you collaborate with colleagues on regular basis and each student knows that each teacher knows all of their other teachers. This breakdown of anonymity is the first step toward accountability.

2.2.1. Types of Small Learning Communities:

Oxley (2001, p. 15-16) mentioned some forms of SLCs, as follows:

- Theme-Based Smaller Learning Communities or Focus Schools are usually formed around a specific curricular theme. Examples might include "Success Academy" or "Humanities".

- Houses may be themed or non-themed or separated by grade levels.

- Career Academies are generally a three- or four-year structure developed around a career theme or career clusters. Characterized by career-related electives and integration of career theme across entire academic curriculum.

- Freshman Academies are structure designed to support 9th grade students as they transit into high school.

- Magnet Schools are a career-themed SLC that includes accelerated course-work for Gifted & Talented students.

The researchers decided to use the first form of SLCs because this type of SLCs usually attracts learners that have the same goals and the same tendencies. So, learners usually have strong motivation to achieve goals they have already decided.

2.2.3. Components of Small Learning Communities (SLCs):

According to Oxley (2007), there are two components of small learning communities:

A- Physical Environment:
- Unifying Identity.
- Satellite small learning community administration to provide leadership and counseling.
- Flexible/general purpose spaces.
- Core curriculum spaces integrated within each small learning community; not by department.
- Conference work space to accommodate all teachers.
- Collaborative spaces for students.
- Shared spaces also accommodate small learning community joint use.
- Outdoor gathering spaces (p.44).

B- Social Environment:
- Unifying Vision

• Access to a rigorous curriculum emphasizing instruction in:
• English language arts
• Science
• Mathematics
• History, government, and economics.
- Emphasis on preparation for college entrance.
- Personal, individual contact with instructional and support staff.
- Continuity of instruction.
- Continuity of student-teacher relationships.
- Increased communication and collaboration.
- Increased accountability.
- Parent involvement.
- Community-based participation.
- Incentive to innovate.

- Flexibility for varying curriculum.
- Professional development for staff.
- Recognition of student and staff accomplishments.
- Development of community dedication to small learning communities (p.45).

2.2.4. Five Domains of SLC Best Practices:

In New Small Learning Communities, Cotton (2001, pp. 59-60), identified several conditions and practices that distinguish successful small learning communities:

1. Self-determination-Autonomy in decision making, physical separateness, self-selection of teachers and students, and flexible scheduling must all be present to allow small learning community members to create and realize their own vision.
2. Identity-Small learning communities profit from developing a distinctive programme of study that originates in the vision, interests, and unique characteristics of their members.
3. Personalization-Small learning community members know each other well. Teachers are able to identify and respond to students' particular strengths and needs.
4. Support for Teaching-SLC teachers assume authority as well as responsibility in educating their students. School leadership does not reside only in the administrative staff; administrators teach, and teachers lead.
5. Functional Accountability-SLC teams use performance assessment systems that require students to demonstrate their learning and the SLC to demonstrate its success.

A SLCs programme should be designed to convey how small learning communities are organized and operate within a multilevel educational system. It should help to answer questions both about what constitutes SLC practice and what is needed to support SLC practice at multiple levels of organization.

The best practices are drawn from a review of research (Oxley, 2007) on a variety of approaches to small unit organization: small schools and career academies; small learning communities; houses; and schools-within-schools. SLCs strategies that are qualified as best practices were features of SLCs found to have positive effects on student achievement in at least two research studies. The research base does not demonstrate that the best practices have independent, causal effects on student achievement, only that they are associated with effective SLCs (p. 55).

The diagram shown in Figure 1 illustrates the nature of the relationships among the five domains. The structural supports for a tree's foliage are its branches. In SLCs, teaching and learning teams-the interdisciplinary teams of teachers and the students they instruct-are the basic structural supports for SLCs work that results in student learning. Each branch supports three clusters of leaves, the oxygen-generating element of the tree. One leaf cluster includes rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction practices; a second leaf cluster encompasses inclusive programme practices; and a third, continuous programme improvement strategies. The branches stem from the tree trunk, the structural support for the entire tree. In like fashion, SLCs depend on school/building and district-level policies and practices to support their growth and sustain their operation (p. 56).
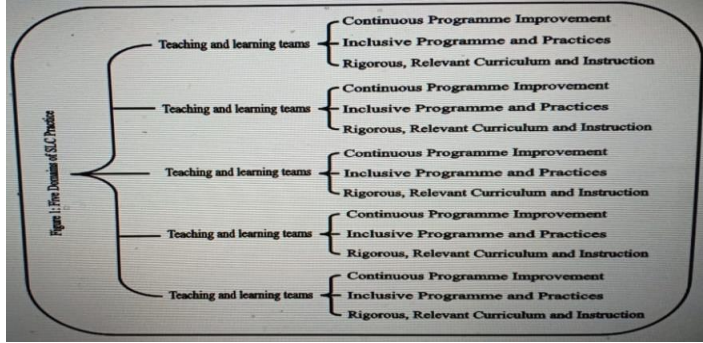
Source: Original

Each domain-and set of SLC practices belonging to it-are described briefly below. The effectiveness and implementation of particular practices depend on the implementation of others, and it is their combined action that most likely produces a meaningful impact. Consequently, as the tree image suggests, it is important to consider the five areas and the individual practices as pieces of a larger whole (p.57).

2.2.5. The Cycle of Continuous Programme Improvement:

Mercer (2016) Implementing effective small learning community practice involves a cyclical process of programme improvement. All quality educational programmes require continual reassessment to remain vital. Moreover, by regularly examining their practice, teachers model openness to learning that is important for students to observe and absorb (p.101).

Programme improvement cycles may be short or long. They can occur on a daily, weekly, quarterly, or annual basis depending on the desired depth and breadth of review. Regardless, a complete cycle involves the seven basic steps depicted in Figure 2 and described below.

Figure 2: Continuous Improvement Cycle
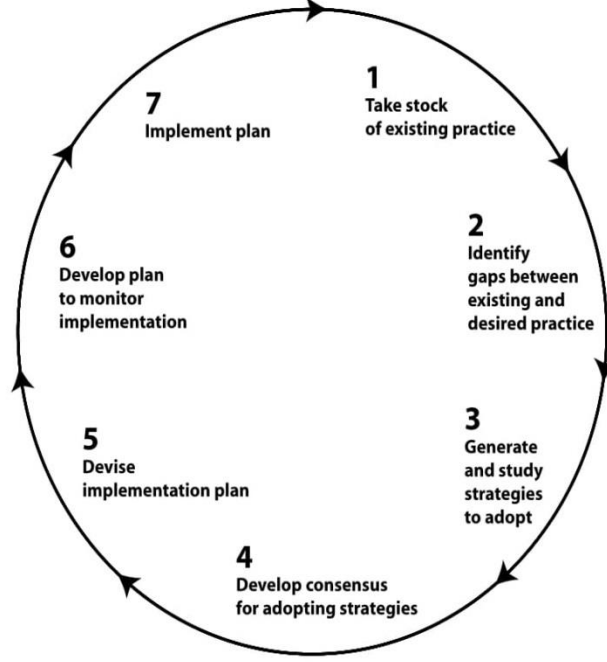
Source: Mercer (2016, p.102)

The tools for following the steps to improvement are included in this section and in Appendix (III). The particular tools to be used at each step are indicated in italics below. A set of tools tailored to each domain of practice is also included in this publication; go to the Tools tab at the end of each section to find the set for that domain. The seven steps of continuous programme improvement as suggested by Mercer (pp. 103-104) are:

1. Take stock of existing practice.
2. Identify gaps between existing and desired practice.
3. Generate and study strategies to adopt.
4. Develop consensus for adopting strategies.
5. Devise implementation plan.

6. Develop plan to monitor implementation.

7. Implement plan.

Finally, many authors have confirmed the importance of using small learning communities to improve English Language skills especially in the secondary stage such as the study of James A. (2005) and Oxley (2007). Many Studies have indicated the effectiveness and efficiency of small learning communities in the development of EFL writing skills. However, these communities have not been used to develop the creative writing skills in English (James, 2005, p. 76). Yet, from the present researchers' point of view, they are suitable for developing the creative writing skills of secondary stage students.

3. Context of the Problem:

The researchers of the present study especially the first and the third ones, due to their long experience in teaching and supervising EFL teaching in the secondary stage, felt that the secondary stage students lack the creative EFL writing skills required for them. So, they interviewed (21) EFL secondary school students and (11) EFL secondary school teachers and asked them some questions about this problem.

After the interviews, they became convinced of the existence of the problem they felt, then they reviewed the related studies. Thus, they became sure of the existence of the problem and that the problem was serious and in bad need of good and appropriate solution. Then, they thought of using the small learning communities to solve this problem for the students of the secondary stage especially that they were not treated before to develop the creative writing skills in English as confirmed by James (2005, p. 70). Thus, there was an urgent need for conducting the present study.

4. Statement of the Problem:

The problem of the present study could be stated in the weakness of the required English language creative writing skills for the second year secondary school students. So, the present study attempted to investigate the effect of using small learning communities to develop those skills.

5. Questions of the Study:

The present study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of using small learning communities on developing 2nd year secondary school students' required EFL creative writing skills?

Two sub-questions were derived from the main question:

1. What are the required EFL creative writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students?
2. To what extent will the small learning communities affect each of the main required EFL creative writing skill for the 2nd year secondary school students?

6. Aim of the Study:

The present study aimed at:

Investigating the effect of small learning communities on developing 2nd year secondary school students' required EFL creative writing skills.

7. Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups on the post- administration of the EFL creative writing skills test, in favour of the experimental

2. group.

3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre - and post administrations of the EFL creative writing test, in favour of the post administration of the creative writing test.

8. Delimitations of the Study:

This study was confined to:

1. developing the required EFL creative writing skills for second year secondary school students.

2. two groups of 200 students were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups (150 students for three small learning communities that form the experimental group) and (50 students for the control group). Therefore, the results of the present study can be generalized only within that population.

9. Variables of the Study:

1- The independent variable: Small learning communities.

2- The dependent variable: Developing EFL creative writing skills.

10. Significance of the Study:
The present study is expected to help in the following areas:

1. Helping the Ministry of Education EFL inspectorate to develop the outcomes of the EFL teaching / learning process in Egypt.

2. Providing supervisors and curriculum planners with the required EFL creative writing skills to be taken into consideration while planning EFL curriculum for the 2nd year secondary schools in Egypt.

3. Helping senior teachers construct and use small learning communities and the other learning communities for developing students' EFL creative writing skills in the secondary stage.

4. Paving the way for other researchers to conduct further studies on developing students' EFL creative writing skills using small learning communities in the other educational stages and in other EFL skills.

11. Procedures of the study:

In order to accomplish the aim of the present study, the researchers of the study went through the following procedures:

1) Reviewing the related previous studies in the field of EFL creative writing skills and small learning communities.

2) Designing a checklist for the EFL creative writing skills required for 2nd year secondary school students.

3) Submitting the checklist to specialized jury members to ensure its validity and so to identify the EFL creative writing skills, required for 2nd year secondary school students.

4) Preparing an EFL creative writing pre-post test for 2nd year secondary school students.

5) Submitting the test to specialised jury members and ensuring its validity before using it.

6) Ensuring the reliability of the test before using it.

7) Choosing a random sample of 200 2nd year secondary school students and dividing it into two groups: 50 students for the control group and 150 students for the experimental group (three small learning communities each community consists of 50 students).

8) Pre-administering the creative writing test to all the participants.

9) Using small learning communities with the experimental group (150 students) and the regular instruction with the control group (50 students) in teaching EFL creative writing skills.

10) Post-administering the creative writing test to all the participants.

11) Collecting and analysing the obtained data.

12) Displaying the results of the study.

13) Presenting conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

12. The Creative Writing Checklist:

Before developing the pre-post test, the following checklist was designed to decide the required EFL creative writing skills that should be tested and developed, for the 2nd year secondary school students.

12.1. Aim of the Checklist:

The checklist aimed at identifying the required EFL creative writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students.

12.2. Content of the checklist:

Having reviewed the related literature on developing students' creative writing skills, the researchers designed a creative writing skills' checklist and submitted it to specialised jury members in the English Language Teaching (ELT) so as to determine the degree of importance of each skill in the checklist. The first form of the checklist consisted of 20 skills classified under five categories: content, organization, language, mechanics and style.

The jury members stated that the skills in the checklist would be generally adequate and appropriate to its purpose, after deleting two skills which were considered above the level of the 2nd year secondary school students. The checklist became valid, after it had been modified

according to the jury members' suggestions and contained (18) skills only, as shown in Appendix (I). Thus, the first sub-question of the study about the required EFL creative writing skills for the 2nd year secondary school students was answered.

13. The Instrument of the Study:

A pre-post creative writing test was designed by the researchers. To ensure the validity of the test, the researchers submitted it, in its initial form, to a number of specialised jury members. The test became valid when it was modified according to the jury members' slight comments and suggestions. One question only was changed to suit the level of students as suggested by the jury members. The final form of the test is shown in Appendix (II).

To establish the reliability of the test, it was administered to a sample of (35) 2nd year secondary school students other than the sample of the experiment of the study. Then, the same test was administered to the same group under nearly similar conditions after two weeks. The reliability coefficient of the test was estimated using Cronbach Alpha Formula. The estimated value (0.86) was considered reliable for the purpose of the present study.

Timing of the creative writing test was estimated by calculating the time taken by all the tested students, divided by the number of the same students. Thus, the time allotted for the test was counted as shown in the following formula:

The time of the test =   summation of the time taken by all the tested students

the number of the students

The time of the test = $\dfrac{2210}{35}$ = 70 minutes

Thus, the time allotted for the test was (70) minutes.

14. The Programme:

14.1. Aim of the Programme:

The proposed program aimed at developing the creative writing skills necessary for the 2nd year, secondary school students, through using small learning communities. The creative writing skills belonged to five main categories namely: (content, organization, language, mechanics and style). By the end of the programme, the students were expected to:

1. identify purpose of writing.
2. present a topic sentence that contains a clear main idea for each developmental paragraph.
3. write about topics from a new perspective.
4. write easily about a topic of interest without being stuck or blocked in writing.
5. have the ability to vary one's writing style from simple to complex, descriptive to narrative …. etc.
6. write a creative introduction that attracts the readers' attention.
7. use different text structures such as: narrative, argumentative or expository.
8. write a creative conclusion that engages the reader's thinking.
9. use words and phrases that suit the topic sentence of the paragraph.

10. apply grammatical rules to present well-constructed sentences.
11. use cohesion devices such as transitional expressions to guide writers and show how the parts of the paragraph relate to one other.
12. use a title that centers at a top line of the page.
13. use correct spelling.
14. use an indentation at the first sentence of the paragraph.
15. use and correct capitalization and punctuation marks.
16. use figures of speech that highlight the main idea such as similes.
17. avoid unnecessary repeated linking, verbs and pronouns.
18. use idioms to describe the morals of the paragraph.

14.2. Duration of the Programme:

The programme consisted of five sessions. Each session took two periods (45 minutes for each period) in addition to two orientation sessions that lasted for four periods at the very beginning of the programme. The implementation of the proposed programme on the experimental group started on the 10th February 2019 and ended on the 26th March 2019. It was taught in twelve (12) periods, in addition to two orientation sessions for forming the small learning communities, in six (6) weeks, two classes a week.

14.3. Content of the programme:

Before implementing the programme, its content, materials were slightly modified according to the jury's point of view as follows:

1. The paragraphs were shortened to suit the time allowed for the activities in each session.

2. A balance between the different types of activities was made to cover all the five categories of main creative writing skills and sub-skills.

Also, the teacher gave two orientation sessions to present small learning communities used in the proposed programme; the aim of the programme, its content and its materials to get the experimental group students acquainted with what they were supposed to do throughout the programme. The content materials of the programme were distributed on six sessions using small learning communities. The six sessions contained rich activities that help enhance students' creative writing skills.

The materials of the programme were developed using authentic paragraphs which were selected from the student's book of secondary schools - year two. The researchers selected the topics that attract the students' attention and motivate them to write on them willingly. These topics could help 2nd year secondary school students develop their creative writing skills.

14.4. Evaluation:

Two types of evaluation were used in this programme. Formative evaluation during the programme, and summative evaluation by the end of the programme.

14.5. The Scoring Scale:

After reviewing a number of creative writing scoring scales, the researchers prepared the current study's scoring scale to evaluate each skill on the pre- post creative writing test. Students' creative writing scoring scale was scored out of (45) points divided by the three passages to be summarised i.e. of the (15) points (3) marks devoted to each main category of creative writing skills.

To ensure validity of the scale, the researchers submitted it, in its initial form, to seven of specialised jury members in the field of curricula and EFL instruction.

The jury members were asked to comment on the suitability of the scale to assess secondary school students' performance on creative writing pre-post test two administrations. The scale was modified according to the jury members' few comments and suggestions which were slight ones.

15. Results of the Study:

The results of the study will be displayed through verifying the hypotheses and answering the questions of the study.

15.1. Verifying the Hypotheses of the Study:
The First Hypothesis:

In order to verify the first hypothesis of the study stating:

"There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post administration of the test in creative writing, in favour of the experimental group,"

In order to verify this hypothesis, ANCOVA test was used. The result of ANCOVA test on Table (1) was statistically consistent with the hypothesis. So, Turkey LSD test was also used to verify the first hypothesis in particular.

Table (1)
Tukey LSD post-hoc multiple comparison test results comparing the post-administration of the test mean ranks for the experimental group and the control group in the creative writing skills.

Skills category	Groups	Mean difference	Sig. level
Content	Experimental & Control	9.650*	0.05
Organization	Experimental & Control	6.468*	0.05
Language	Experimental & Control	5.937*	0.05
Mechanics	Experimental & Control	7.248*	0.05
Style	Experimental & Control	5.696*	0.05
Total	Experimental & Control	34.999*	0.05

Table (1) above showed that the estimated (F) value was statistically significant at 0.05 level. Thus, it could be said that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on the post administration of the test, in all creative writing skills and in each category of skills, in favour of the first experimental group. So, the first hypothesis was verified.

The Second Hypothesis:

In order to verify the second hypothesis of the study stating:

"There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test in creative writing skills, in favour of the post administration,"

In order to verify this hypothesis, ANCOVA test was used. Its results were consistent with the hypothesis. So, Turkey LSD test was also used. This test aimed at comparing the mean ranks of the experimental group on the pre and post administration of the test in the creative writing skills as a whole and in particular in table (2) below:

Table (2)
Turkey LSD test results comparing the pre-test and post-test mean ranks
of the experimental group in the creative writing test (N=40, df=39):

Skills	group	Pre-administration test - M (SD)		Post-administration test - M (SD)		MD	t-value	Effect size (η2)
Content	Exp. G.	6.480	(0.96)	17.381	(1.231)	10.880	50.182**	0.98
Organization	Exp. G.	4.050	(1.11)	10.628	(0.870)	6.575	39.250**	0.98
Language	Exp. G.	4.082	(0.76)	10.799	(0.882)	6.725	32.217**	0.96
Mechanics	Exp. G.	5.932	(1.02)	13.802	(1.319)	7.875	31.046**	0.96
Style	Exp. G.	4.329	(0.73)	10.878	(0.879)	6.549	39.967**	0.98
Total	Exp. G.	24.852	(2.20)	63.480	(3.672)	38.625	72.780**	0.99
Note: Tabled t value: 2.639 (** significant at 0.01)								

Table (2) indicated that there were statistically significant differences at (N=40, df=39) in each of all the creative writing skills category between the mean ranks of the experimental group on the pre and post administration of the test in favour of the post administration of the test. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed.

Statistical Analysis of the Second Part of the Creative Writing Test:

In order to determine the effect of the suggested programme on developing the required creative writing skills on writing a paragraph for the experimental group, ANCOVA test was used. This test aimed at comparing the mean ranks of the experimental group on the pre-test and the post-test in last part of the test. (Table "3")

Table (3)
the t-test results comparing the pre-post paragraph writing means for students of the three experimental groups (N=40, df=39)

group	Pre-test M (SD)		Post-test M (SD)		MD	t value	Effect size (η2)
Exp1	26.853	(2.352)	63.902	(3.321)	37.050	57.939**	0.99
Tabled T value: 0.939							

The students of the experimental group was asked to write a paragraph. The experimental group used small learning communities. Table (3) indicated that there were statistically significant differences at (N=40, df=39) in pre-post paragraph (last section of the test) between the mean ranks of the experimental group. It also showed that there was a large effect size of the suggested programme (0.99) on the creative paragraph writing as a whole for the experimental group. Thus, it could also be said here that the ANCOVA test results showed a large effect on developing the required creative writing skills on writing a creative paragraph as a whole.

15.2. Answering the Questions of the Study:

The first sub-question of the study was answered before when the required creative writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students were determined in the checklist mentioned before and also in appendix (I).

The second sub-question of the study as shown in table (3) the effect sizes on each of the EFL main creative writing skills were large. Thus, the second sub-question of the study was answered. At the same table the effect size on the overall EFL creative writing skills was 0.99. Thus, the main question of the study was also, in turn, answered. Therefore, the questions of the study were answered.

16. Discussion of the Results:

On displaying the results of the study, the researchers presented an account of the development of the experimental group students' creative writing skills due to the use of small learning communities. This is shown in the difference between the pre and post administrations mean scores of the experimental group students. The difference between the students' mean scores in the pre and post administrations of the test was statistically significant. This is because the students became aware of the importance of small learning communities in creative writing. The research has shown positive results as small learning communities brought about significant improvement in enhancing the creative writing skills of the students.

The researchers believe that the use of small learning communities had highly contributed to enabling learners find out main ideas of what they read and summarised, exchanged opinions and crystallise new thoughts about the raised topics, a fact that positively affected their performance on the creative writing test post administration. Moreover, much attention was given to the development on of all the skills on equal footing in the proposed programme. That is why, each of the required skills gained a large effect size.

In addition, using small learning communities motivated learners to get involved in the learning process and express themselves freely without hesitation, since they were told that their ideas should not and would not be judged during small learning communities' session. Thus, they felt free while co-operating and generating their ideas and came up with unique and unexpected ideas and unique thoughts that were completely different from one community to another.

Finally, the present study results match with the results of some previous studies such as Abdel-Salem (2000), Abd Elazez (2002),

Waheed and Gamal (2006), El-Garf (2008) and Tangpermoon (2008) on the importance of training students well on creative writing for enhancing its skills. Also, the results of the present study support the results of some previous studies, concerning the improvement of students' performance due to the use of unique thoughts, such as James (2005), Oxley (2007) and Mercer (2016).

The study findings can be beneficial for the other researchers in future research as well, especially those who deal with obstacles pertaining to develop EFL creative writing or eagerness to use small learning communities for developing the performance of the students in EFL or ESL.

17. Conclusion:

Results of the current study supported the two hypotheses presented by the researchers. They showed that the experimental group achieved higher scores on the post administration of the creative writing test than the control group. Thus, small learning communities had a positive result i.e. a large effect size of (0.99) on developing 2nd year secondary school students' overall creative writing skills and in terms of content (0.98), organization (0.98), language (0.96) mechanics (0.96) and style (0.98) of creative writing skills. Moreover, small learning communities motivated students to get involved in the learning process, express the ideas they generated freely, and come out with new ideas of unique thoughts as was joyfully reported by the experimental group students after the experiment.

18. Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that the responsible personnel for teaching English in the Egyptian Ministry of Education should:

1. Place more emphasis on developing students' EFL creative writing skills in general and in secondary stage in particular.
2. Take small learning communities into account while designing English language curriculum due to its importance in motivating the students to get involved in the learning process and depend on themselves.
3. Place more emphasis on teaching EFL creative writing as a process not only as a product.

19. Suggestions for Future Research:

The researchers of the present study suggest that future research should be conducted for:

1. Developing creative writing for students in other stages rather than the secondary stage.
2. Using small learning communities to develop their EFL creative skills in all the educational stages.
3. Using small learning communities to develop their EFL other skills such as listening, speaking and reading.

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