

Do Students' Creativity and Reading Ability Influence Their Writing Ability?

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ABSTRACT

Although there have been several research attempts to identify the relationship between reading and writing skills, most of them do not address the students' creativity, mainly in Indonesian university students' context and online learning setting. This quantitative study intends to investigate the students' creativity level and the impact of students' creativity and reading on their writing skills. One hundred students completed a creativity questionnaire and online reading and writing test. Creativity styles questionnaire, reading comprehension test, and a story writing test were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, ANCOVA, and linear regression methods were used to analyze the data. The results indicate that generally, students' creativity is high. The results also suggest a significant difference between female and male students' creativity. Furthermore, both creativity and reading ability were statistically significant to predict writing ability with the creativity scale a higher beta value than the reading scale. It can be concluded that creativity and reading ability influence students writing ability. The finding contributes to knowledge on the influential roles of creativity and reading in writing.

Keywords: Creativity, reading, writing.

INTRODUCTION

People are forced to alter their lifestyles during times of crisis. The way students consume media, particularly how they absorb the information, was one of the first and most visible shifts during the COVID-19 lockout. For individuals with caring responsibilities, the increasing reading volume created problems. Online environments have extra constraints. Teachers cannot pace the room, glance at student work, and monitor progress. If a student is experiencing network or visual slowness, they may be hesitant to request a pause from the teacher while they repair their technical concerns. Moreover, teachers have little control over students distracted by their siblings or a television playing in the background. The teacher reads posts in the virtual room and collects comments to ascertain students' comprehension of the topic matter and discover

any barriers preventing them from participating.

Reading frequency was further compounded in the post-pandemic era by a quality and quantity issue. While individuals spent more time reading and seeking escape, their inability to concentrate resulted in less progress than usual. In short, they spent more time reading, but it was a small amount of time. Previous studies stated no statistically significant differences were shown between the two groups of gender on their reading comprehension levels. Still, females outperform males to a statistically substantial critical level (Oda & Abdul-Kadhim, 2017). Another study demonstrated that academic achievement and creative thinking were substantially connected at younger ages, but this association weakened as the children aged (Gajda, 2016). The relationship between information resources and processing fluency, on the one hand, and reading ability, on the other, is not as linear and straightforward as previously assumed. Cognitive processes are interdependent. In that case, the total reading performance may decrease, and highly advanced metacognitive knowledge may no longer be beneficial when reading essential texts (Schoonen, 2019). Reading and writing abilities share similar components, such as rhetorical structure and linguistic traits and lexical and stylistic aspects unique to written speech.

One of the guiding questions in the prior educational studies is whether reading skills aid in the development of writing ability. This question is congruent with the assumption that reading ability precedes writing ability or with the notion that writing skill enhances reading ability. Naturally, the most plausible answer is that reading and writing develop in parallel. The study mentioned above reported moderately significant autoregressive relationships, i.e., reading and writing performances, showing robust regressions on the previous year's version of the same skill, but only poor cross-skill regressions, i.e., weak from reading writing and weak from writing to reading. However, they discovered some cross-skill regressions between spelling and word reading at the word level (Schoonen, 2019). These studies adopt a developmental approach. They examine if, for example, reading ability predicts a student's improvement in writing ability, and they use relatively young children in the early stages of their literacy development as their target group.

Reading and writing foster a sense of independence, the ability to articulate ideas, self-discovery, and individual attention, all of which are crucial characteristics for

developing creativity (Segundo Marcos et al., 2020). Writing is a form of applied metacognition in which one reconstructs or associates notions to create new ideas and texts. Thus, creativity can be traced through writing. Writing habits such as thinking, remembering, reasoning, being curious, investigating, and exercising contribute significantly to the emergence of something new. Through innovative education, students' writing quality and creativity can be improved. The creative act of writing may comprise connections, meaning, and communication. Divergent and convergent stages of creative thinking encompass all that students do in writing, from brainstorming and freely developing as many ideas as possible to assessing and communicating their findings (Wang, 2007).

Students' creative-imaginative thinking skills will be formed when the learning process provides space. In the era of information and communication technology, where learning resources are abundant, teachers and students can creatively teach and study English. Creativity is inextricably linked to the abilities necessary for reading and writing. The features fostered by reading and writing appear to have many characteristics associated with creativity, such as freedom and the capacity to articulate ideas, stressing self-discovery (Amabile, 1996). Additionally, when the association between creative abilities and test scores in other disciplines was examined, it was discovered that the innovative capacity of elaboration was significantly and positively correlated with English reading and writing scores, but not with math scores (Wang, 2007). Creativity is a complex ability consisting of the many components of thinking skills. For example, analyze, compare, remember information, think flexibly, think independently critically, think logically, make a synthesis, make generalizations difference, infer, plan, predict, detect cause and effect consequences, and evaluate them. Creativity is the ability to make combinations based on existing data, information, or elements. Creativity is the ability to find many possible answers to a problem based on available data or information, emphasizing quantity, effectiveness, and various solutions. Furthermore, creativity can be formulated as an ability that reflects fluency and originality in thinking and elaborating an idea.

According to previous research, males exhibit more significant variability than females and are overrepresented in the lowest and highest ranges of cognitive ability. Numerous research studies have discovered the Greater Male Variability Hypothesis

about creative performance (GMVH). Nonetheless, nearly all have employed the same assignment, relegating creative ability to a single area and medium. The GMVH was used to assess adults' (Study 1; N = 120) and teenagers' (Study 2; N = 529) performance on creative writing, creative drawing, and figural and verbal divergent thinking activities. However, the pattern of males and girls in various parts of the score distribution was uneven across functions.

Another study indicates that internally perceived learners are more likely to analyze and explore issues when they believe they influence their environment. Externalizers, on the other hand, think that they have no influence over their environment and that their success and failure are uncontrollable (Khoshsima & Izadi, 2015; Kim, 2017). However, there seems to be little evidence about the correlative link of creativity to reading and writing. Few studies discussed the creativity of university students, particularly in the context of the first year of Indonesian EFL context.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the student's creativity level and the effect of students' creativity and reading on their writing ability. Its purpose was threefold: (1) to explore the creativity level of Indonesian university students, (2) to ascertain the difference between male and female students' creativity, and (3) to estimate the degree to which these students' creativity and reading influence their writing ability. Does it address the following issue: (1) What is the creativity level of Indonesian university students? (2) Does the creativity level of female students differ from the male students? (3) Do students' creativity and reading ability influence their writing ability?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity

Creativity is the capacity of the human mind to think, modify, discover, and create. Creativity is frequently used in both the scientific community and the general public. Creativity and human life are two distinct entities. Both are inextricably linked, affected, and interrelated. Existence and without innovation, civilization will stagnate and become a vacuum. Creativity is a constant presence and manifestation. in the rhythms of space and time as a reflection of the level of thought and human needs (Pishghadam et al., 2012). Based on the literature, creative people have the following characteristics: (1) they observe situations and problems that others miss, (2) they

frequently have numerous alternatives to a particular issue or subject, (3) they frequently defy the status quo and the clichés that stifle their way of thinking, (4) they have a high level of mental flexibility, (5) they have a high level of imagination through the use of the subconscious and then make it happen in actual copyright. (Yunus, 2015). It can be inferred that creativity is the capacity of humans to think, modify, discover, and create. Form and process can transform the following situations from nothing to life, from inferior to superior, and empower the helpless.

Reading, Creativity, and Writing

Reading and writing activities have always been intuitively linked to creative pursuits. This situation is mainly because reading and writing frequently require critical, analytical, and self-expression abilities, as well as an awareness of one's self. Reading literature provides a wealth of resources for developing creative thoughts. It is necessary to promote the habit of learning new things, seeking constructive criticism, thinking and incubating, and applying knowledge. These components are a natural part of ordinary reading. Creativity in the writing process offers four teachable skills that foster creativity during the writing process, including the following: (1) fluency, (2) adaptability, and (3) uniqueness (4) elaboration (Wati, 2018). Creativity is a necessary component of how authors produce ideas until they publish the text. The writers' originality will impact it.

METHOD

This quantitative study explored the student's creativity level and the effect of students' creativity and reading on their writing ability. A self-administered creativity questionnaire was adopted for data collection, and this investigation utilized a convenience sampling method. In their first semester, the participants were 100 prospective active students from the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. All participants (17- 20 years) enrolled in the English Intensive Program held by the Language Centre of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The survey was divided into two components. Section A asks respondents to provide information about their gender and semester. In contrast, Section B presents the instruments of creativity, which were adapted from (Kumar et al., 1997) and distributed online through Google

form and were designed on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The initial questionnaires consisted of 6 subscales, but one was eliminated because the alpha reliability is .40. Therefore, the instrument about creativity scale comprises five subscales out of 6 subscales.

The measurement of the questionnaires consists of 5 subscales. The first subscale consists of 2 items exploring the students' creativity capacity. The alpha reliability is .76. The second subscale consists of 17 items and explores the belief in the unconscious process as part of the creative process. An example from this subscale is "I have been able to use many ideas for creative work that have occurred in my dreams." The alpha reliability is .70. The third subscale consists of 18 items and explores techniques to facilitate creativity. The alpha reliability is .81. The statement "I typically create new ideas by combining existing ideas" is an example from this subscale. The fourth subscale consists of 9 items exploring other people's use to consult or share ideas about the creative product. An example from this subscale is "I typically show my creative products to other people." The alpha reliability is .76. Finally, the fifth subscale consists of 18 items and examines the behavioral regulation to facilitate creative work. The sample items of the alpha reliability are .72.

Reading scores were obtained from the campus institutional English readiness assessment (CIERA) test. CIERA is an online assessment intended for higher education institutions to measure a person's English language skills and the extent to which they are prepared to take international standardized tests, especially TOEIC. Each text was followed by five questions that probed students' interpretations. Various literature reading activities could be covered by loosely altering the question. A Google form link was created to access the online form and a shortened link to participants.

Additionally, it was assumed that individuals performed the online test independently. Next, students were instructed to produce a 400-word narrative text and submit it via Google form the following day. The data collection process took around three weeks. After downloading all data in an excel file format, all data were transformed into numbers. Following that, the data set is imported into a statistical package. Finally, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to evaluate the quantitative data. The two different inferential statistical tests were chosen because one of the independent variables was represented by ordinal data collected using a single

five-point Likert item.

In contrast, the dependent variable (writing) comprised continuous data collected using a test. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25). First, we performed descriptive statistics test and a normality test to determine whether the study variables showed a normal distribution. Next, the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) method evaluated male and female students' creativity.

Additionally, the ANCOVA included creativity as a dependent variable. Thus, age was incorporated as a covariate to ensure external validity, as age might be a significant predictor of the development of creativity. Finally, regression analysis was administered to examine the effect of creativity and reading on writing ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical program SPSS was used to organize and compile the collected data. In this study, the creativity survey was collected. There were 60 female and 40 male students who participated from the English and non-English departments, as highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Participants

Major	Male	Female	Total
English Department	11	39	50
Non-English Department	29	21	50

The background information on the participants is summarized in Table 1. Additionally, most participants from English departments were female, whereas the majority of participants from non-English departments were male. The description of the participant's creativity level can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Creativity Level

Subscale	Items	Mean	SD
1	the students' creativity capacity	7.54	1.452
2	the belief in the unconscious process as part of the creative process	81.75	11.999
3	techniques to facilitate Creativity	116.11	22.788

Subscale	Items	Mean	SD
4	other people's use to consult or share ideas	56.14	12.249
5	Behavioral regulation	23.48	4.873

Table 2 describes the mean and the standard deviation of each subscale from the survey. It can be inferred that the data from subscale 3 has the highest mean and standard deviation among the other subscale (M=116.11, SD=22.788). Table 2 also shows the lowest mean and standard deviation is on subscale 1 (M=7.54, SD=1.452). The creativity, reading, and writing were normally distributed as assessed by inspection of a boxplot and histogram. Overall, the creativity level of the sample as a whole was high (M = 320.45, SD = 24.76). After the descriptive statistics were done, the level of students' creativity was analyzed regarding gender. To measure the difference, ANCOVA was used to portray the differences between the result as it is portrayed in Table 3.

Table 3. ANCOVA Output Result

Dependent Variable: Creativity

Source	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	399.373 ^a	2	199.687	.190	.040	.003
Intercept	9961095.040	1	9961095.040	6.030E3	.000	.984
age	254.294	1	254.294	.154	.696	.002
gender	145.080	1	145.080	1.90	.040	.001
Error	158580.586	96	1651.881			
Total	1.012E7	99				
Corrected Total	158979.960	98				

a. R Squared = .003 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

Table 3 shows that the ANCOVA analysis demonstrated a significant difference in creativity between female and male students [$F(2, 98) = 1.90, p = .04$]. The mean score for creativity was substantially higher for female students (adjusted M= 9.33, SE =.43) than for male students (adjusted M= 8.03, SE =.42).

Furthermore, multiple regression was used to assess the ability of two control measures (creativity, reading) to predict writing ability. Preliminary analyses were

conducted to ensure no violation of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity assumptions. After entry of the creativity and reading scale, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 3.1%, $F(2, 98) = 3.533$, $p < .001$ as it is reflected on the following table.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Output Result

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.131 ^a	.017	-.003	35.954

a. Predictors: (Constant), creativity, reading

b. Dependent Variable: writing

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2180.325	2	1090.163	3.533	.0005a
	Residual	125389.865	98	1292.679		
	Total	127570.190	100			

a. Predictors: (Constant), creativity, reading

b. Dependent Variable: writing

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
		1	(Constant)	388.363			53.068		3.318	.000	283.039	493.688		
	reading	-.32	.137	-.11	-1.854	.000	-.443	.100	-.123	-.126	-.126	.994	1.4006	
	Creativity	-.22	.090	-.12	1.931	.000	-.140	.218	.034	.044	.043	.994	1.306	

a. Dependent Variable: writing

Table 4 shows that both the two control measures were statistically significant, with the creativity scale a higher beta value ($beta = -.12, p < .001$) than the reading scale ($beta = -.11, p < .001$). It can be concluded that reading and creativity influence writing ability. As evidenced by the results, the students had a high level of creativity, which they have a bigger creativity capacity and some techniques to facilitate creativity. Even though this concept is supported by the literature (Gajda, 2016), it is evident that university students do not have, and are not expected to have, a complete theoretical background understanding of creativity in writing. It was hoped that by viewing it via their own learning experiences, the students would relate to it more. In practice, creativity and human life are two distinct entities that are inextricably linked, impacting and influencing one another. Without innovation, life and society will stagnate in vacuum. Creativity is always present and manifests itself according to the rhythms of space and time and the level of thought and human needs. Experience, education, and social environment, among other aspects, may influence the individual to have a stronger ability for creativity. Therefore, each evolutionary stage provides its qualitative qualities during the development of the creative processes (Restrepo et al., 2019).

The possible challenges of internal and external factors are inhibiting factors in creativity (Yunus, 2015). The internal impediments could be overcome by eliminating negative habits that stifle the innovation of subordinates and pupils. It is a practical approach for setting a real example of leadership and instructor creativity, which can subsequently be passed on to subordinates and pupils. Regarding the external factors, the combination of climate and suitable social environment to develop a student's creativity is accomplished by selecting the students' milieu, minimizing punishment, and not restricting the student's creativity (Schaefer & DiGeronimo, 2000).

The second finding, that significant difference between the creativity level of males and females, may indicate that students' creative thinking abilities may vary according to their gender at various educational levels. These findings are somewhat consistent with prior research, which revealed that creative performance increased significantly in favor of girls (Besancon & Lubart, 2008). However, some of the findings of this study contradict those of other studies, which found that male students outperformed female students on the elaboration subscale of creative thinking (Piaw,

2014). One probable explanation for the disparities in male and female authors is uniqueness in word choices.

A study requested the female and male students, 25 persons each, for writing 100 words that appear spontaneously in their minds in a limited time. Interestingly, of the 5000 words collected, females produced 1123 different words, whereas males spelled 1,375 other words more numerous various words than guys choose. Then, among the 1,266 single words listed, 20.8 percent and 29.8 percent were written, respectively. Moreover, more unique terms were found by the male. Regarding the focus of interest: on the choice of female, several words related to values and garments while in males, it is more associated with animals (Jespersen, 1998). It can be inferred that creativity is a multifaceted process that entails educational possibilities, practice opportunities, supporting family and family environment interaction, and interaction. Each evolutionary stage of the subject has distinct qualities in the ability to undertake creative tasks.

Thus, this performance is not identical between children and adults. Thus there are differences between similar ages, as experience provides additional elements for generating more elaborate and innovative alternatives. However, these differences could also be due to different strategies. In light of the current finding, it is possible to add the cultural component in engaging in creative thinking with gender disparities since many welfare programs for adults in old age are based on performing creative tasks such as painting, writing, or acting. This program improves health conditions and overall quality of life; many programs for adults in old age are based on performing creative tasks such as painting, writing, or acting to improve health conditions and overall quality of life (Restrepo et al., 2019).

Based on the statistical evidence presented above, this study demonstrates a favorable influence between reading and creativity on students' writing skills. Literature instruction focuses almost entirely on sensory activities, such as reading, comprehension. When students write in the literature classroom, they write about literature in reviews or book reports (Broekkamp et al., 2009). Upper-level students rarely get the opportunity to develop original work. Reading can be regarded as a part of the writing process in and of itself. Writing strategies draw on linguistic and non-linguistic resources; however, the directionality of the information flow is different,

traveling from meaning to language rather than language to sense, as seen in reading processes. The quality of the stories or articles read may cause this finding to be essential. Students who had read higher-quality articles that were more sophisticated and diverse in style and vocabulary created better stories. Reading and listening to stories or fairy tales may help students overcome their fear of writing.

Furthermore, creativity can make combinations based on existing facts, information, or elements. A writer must have excellent creativity to dominate the literacy market. Spontaneity is typically reserved for writers who work long hours. A spontaneous writer comes up with an idea simply by wandering around, without intending for it to emerge (Yunus, 2015). Inspiration strikes at inconvenient moments, and it can strike while contemplating, sipping a calm cup of coffee, or simply sitting around ordinarily. On the other hand, systematic writers use a precise sequence that must be followed to obtain an excellent writing style. Typically, the writer begins by brainstorming, then writes a list of questions, and finally compiles a unique story.

Writing requires practice. Knowing what to write is necessary; creativity should become a writing habit. Usually, a person cannot write if he does not have a reading habit. The author gains language experience by reading enhancing our creativity and building a distinct writing style. Begin by writing about the nearest object you can think of, such as pets. Then, write about stuff that no one else is aware of. There are two systematic ways in which a precise sequence must be followed to obtain an excellent writing style. Typically, the writer begins by brainstorming, then writes a list of questions, and finally compiles a unique story.

Based on the acquired data, pedagogical implications are presented. In light of the result that reading and creativity could predict writing ability, teachers should aggressively urge their students to seek opportunities to develop reading and creativity inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, teachers may construct classes that incorporate creative activities outside of school. Further, they can assist their pupils in developing reading habits in their ability to complete writing activities and employ suitable learning strategies successfully. Teachers, for example, might provide extensive reading programs to assist them to increase their reading. Students who have creative writing exercises are especially beneficial for young students just beginning their foreign language studies. However, this work contains various limitations that must be

addressed in further studies, so paving the way for additional research. While discussing creativity, it is necessary to specify the specific trait we refer to facilitate comparisons.

CONCLUSION

The primary objectives of this study were to determine the creativity level of the university students, the difference between male and female creativity levels, and the influence of reading and creativity on the students' writing ability. The findings indicated that students have a high level of creativity. The second aim of this study was to investigate the difference between male and female creativity. This investigation shows that there is a significant difference between male and female creativity in which the mean score of female students' creativity is higher than male. Finally, the main goal of the current study was to determine the influence of reading ability and creativity on the writing ability of university students. This study has found that reading ability and creativity generally influence writing ability.

Furthermore, this study has identified that creativity has a more significant influence on writing than reading skills. Thus, the current findings contribute to our understanding of the crucial functions of reading and creativity for writing skills, which had previously been undocumented in the literature. Although the results were acquired from Indonesian university students, they may apply to other countries where similar traits exist. Additional research focusing on listening, speaking, and creative process is also essential, whether through self-reported questionnaires, think-aloud protocols, or other suitable data gathering techniques. Finally, the findings of such studies may have a more direct application to the improvement of English Language Teaching in the digital era.

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