



Using flashcards for English second language creative writing in Grade 1



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Background: English Second Language (ESL) learners have difficulty constructing sentences due to internalising information in their home language and thereafter translating it into English. Learners who have difficulty speaking English generally encounter problems writing it, which hampers their creative writing ability.

Objectives: The purpose of the research was to identify a teaching strategy to facilitate ESL learners with creative writing. This study explored the influence of flashcards on the creative writing skills of Grade 1 ESL learners and improved the researchers' teaching practice.

Method: This qualitative study depicted an action research design and utilised an inductive approach to data analysis. Convenience sampling was used when selecting the participants who were 31 Grade 1 learners in a school in Pietermaritzburg. The flashcards were used during the implementation stage of the action research process as an intervention to enhance learners' creative writing skills.

Findings: The findings indicate that learners who participated in the study had improved in their written assessments. There were three themes identified, which included misspelt words, incorrect use of tenses and ungrammatical sentence construction. Flashcards revealed the correct sentence writing techniques by depicting sentences. Learners' written pieces were more logical and they participated actively during lessons. This enhanced the researcher's teaching practice, which catered to both visual and auditory learners.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that the use of flashcards had a positive effect on ESL learners' creative writing skills. This encouraged participatory teaching and learning, which can be of benefit to many teachers seeking to engage learners using alternate learning styles.

Keywords: visual aids; language development; sentence construction; language of learning and teaching; English Second Language.

Introduction

Teachers have the challenging task of developing learners cognitively and linguistically (Haerazi & Irawan 2019). The issue facing many teachers in South Africa is the difference between the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and learners' home language (Jordaan 2011a). For this reason, it is imperative that teachers devise appropriate teaching strategies that are applicable to both English Home Language and English Second Language (ESL) learners. The LoLT impacts both teachers and learners, as teachers are required to bridge the gap for ESL learners who have difficulty understanding concepts taught in English (Probyn 2008). Jordaan (2011a) established that South African teachers found it difficult to teach at different linguistic levels for ESL and English Home Language learners in their classes. This resulted in time pressures when they had to pre-teach the vocabulary and concepts required in a particular subject (Jordaan 2011a). Teaching English is not only transmitting knowledge to the learners; instead, it is enabling learners to read, speak and to write with fluency (Rasheed, Zeeshan & Zaid 2017).

In South Africa, the Foundation Phase refers to Grades R–3. This includes learners between 5 and 9 years of age, with learning areas focusing on literacy, numeracy and life skills (Western Cape Education Department 2013). The English Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) stipulates four categories of English that should be covered in the Foundation Phase. These are listening, speaking, reading and writing (Department of Education 2011:8). The section of writing consists of shared writing and individual writing (Department of Education 2011:11). Shared writing focuses on learners copying captions or sentences off the board and whole class or group writing. Individual writing is developed further in the year in Grade 1 and consists of learners writing their own captions and sentences relating to events, such as news or stories. It is

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challenging to adopt appropriate teaching strategies within the classroom when teaching learners creative writing skills. 'Children begin Grade 1 by "writing" using pictures but as they master the skills of letter formation they can start to copy individual words, captions and full sentences' (Department of Education 2011:18).

In Grade 1, creative writing is entry-level story writing, which falls under individual writing outlined in the CAPS document. 'The idea of creative writing should foster children's background; it should inspire them to use their own experience to create and to convey themselves' (Nino & Paez 2018:104). Creative writing becomes meaningful when learners understand the concept of story writing, as well as the vocabulary needed to accomplish this task (Mukoroli 2011). The challenge is when ESL learners have difficulty in understanding the LoLT when it is not their home language (Jordaan 2011a). This challenge is more pronounced in an English medium school with the majority of the learners being ESL learners. The participants in this study consisted of both ESL and English Home Language learners, while the research site is an English medium school. To address this challenge, teachers should try to relate new vocabulary needed for creative writing activities to everyday life or present visual aids to assist the ESL learners' understanding process. Jordaan (2011b) mentioned that there is limited research on the development of language skills of South African learners, particularly in the Foundation Phase. In line with this statement, Sitompul (2013) found that research on using flashcards to teach young learners' vocabulary was still rare. Flashcards can be used as visual prompts to promote the recognition of sight words in reading and vocabulary extension, and to improve learners' creative writing skills by providing context for new words introduced to learners (Muhammad, Almas & Muhammad 2016; Mukoroli 2011; Nugroho, Nurkamto, Sulistyowati 2012). Vocabulary or word flashcards can be used to teach the spelling of newly learnt words, which can aid learners' reading and writing skills (Komachali & Khodareza 2012). Flashcards encourage active participation in lessons by both learners and teachers, which fosters an interactive learning environment (Nugroho et al. 2012).

A number of external professional development initiatives are available for South African teachers such as short courses, workshops and university qualifications. However, there is still a need for research that supports teacher inquiry as a form of professional development (Manfra 2019). Teacher inquiry as a form of professional development involves teachers taking responsibility for their own learning, situating learning in their own classrooms and linking it to their practice (Manfra 2019). Teacher inquiry is a 'transformative model' (Kennedy 2014:347) of professional development that provides a platform for teacher learning. Teacher learning in an inquiry perspective deals with the challenges related to teacher learning from cognitive and practical perspectives including the need for teachers to implement problem-solving skills and rethink practices that have proven to be unsuccessful in the classroom (Manfra 2019). This article thus

presents an action research on how flashcards were used to teach creative writing to ESL learners in Grade 1.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this action research was to explore the influence of flashcards on the creative writing skills of ESL Grade 1 learners. Using flashcards in the classroom as a tool may aid writing and be of benefit to learners. Using action research was beneficial to identify a viable teaching strategy to improve instructional practices. The research question addressed by this action research study was: How does the use of flashcards as a teaching strategy enhance writing skills of ESL Grade 1 learners?

Literature review and the theoretical framework of the study

Writing is a skill that is developed at an early phase of language education and is vital in the teaching and learning process (Muhammad et al. 2016). Similarly, Nino and Paez (2018:111) mentioned that 'writing is a skill that can be developed from different creative ways as children enjoy games and use their imagination to contrast with reality'. When writing, students activate their 'cognitive, linguistic and cultural aspect in their mind' (Haerazi & Irawan 2019:10). Creative writing is introduced in Grade 1 and the foundation is laid for learners' future academic writing. Writing proficiency can be hindered or enhanced by both teachers and learners (Muhammad et al. 2016). Teachers need to prompt learners and provide adequate motivation and feedback, while learners need to be enthusiastic about their learning (Muhammad et al. 2016). For the purpose of the study, the prompts that were used to aid learners' writing were flashcards, consisting of words that can be used to make sentences. An example is the beginning words of the sentence 'I went to' or 'I have a'. These phrases served as prompts for learners when they started their creative writing process.

Flashcards are cards that contain either pictures or words, which serve as visual aids for learners (Adas & Bakir 2013; Baleghizadeh & Ashoori 2011; Komachali & Khodareza 2012; Sartika 2020). They can be used to help learners identify spelling and contexts of words and in this way aid learners in their writing abilities (Bloch 1999; Sartika 2020; Skarr et al. 2012). As stated by Adas and Bakir (2013), repetitive exposure to material is beneficial to ESL learners. Learners can store words that they have been repeatedly exposed to and retrieve these words from their memory immediately (Miles & Ehri 2017). Having knowledge of the vocabulary needed and being familiar with it can make the task of writing easier (Mukoroli 2011). Studies (Aulia 2018; Harisanty et al. 2020; Skarr et al. 2012) on teaching creative writing using flashcards suggest that it has many advantages in language teaching. These include consolidating vocabulary, and motivating learners by gaining interest. They can be used for any age group or ability group of learners, are portable and can be used at any time, can be arranged to create logical grouping of the target words, are cost effective, provide a visual link to

second language learners and can be used for practising structure and word order or for a variety of games (Haycraft 1978; Nugroho et al. 2012; Skarr et al. 2012). 'Besides increasing student vocabulary, flashcards can also be used to improve foreign language understanding' (Harisanty et al. 2020:4). Flashcards containing pictures have the ability to provide meaning to abstract concepts encountered by ESL learners (Sartika 2020). According to Aulia (2018), flashcards allow teachers to explain concepts and provide a variation in teaching strategies in a classroom setting. Using flashcards may enable teachers to present learning materials in interesting ways, while aiding learners' understanding of teachers' explanations (Sartika 2020).

This study is informed by situated learning theory. Several researchers such as Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989); Scardamalia and Bereiter (1985); Durning and Artino (2011), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Putnam and Borko (2000) have supported this theory. The theory is underpinned by three cognitions, namely 'cognition as situated, cognition as social and cognition as distributed' (Putnam & Borko 2000:4). Putnam and Borko argued that the situated learning theory allows for multiple conceptual perspectives and multiple (individual and sociocultural) units of analysis. These multiple perspectives thus provide powerful tools for understanding student learning in a classroom setting. This theory suggests that learning is constantly taking place in the classroom, due to teachers learning through practice, as well as social and cultural factors that influence learning and teaching (Putnam & Borko 2000). A study based on writing done by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1985) used this theory to develop prompts they called *procedural facilitation* which aided learners in their writing process (Collins, Brown & Newman 1987). This approach provided prompts and modelling of expert processes for the learners, while gradually minimising support and allowing learners to write without guidance. In this study, flashcards were used to prompt learners in their elementary stages of writing by providing the basic words utilised in creative writing. This facilitated learners' creative writing process and promoted confidence in word recognition.

When using situated learning theory, the context in which learning occurs is fundamental, and the manner in which learning takes place is based on the situation (Anderson, Reder & Simon 1996). This theory is relevant to this study due to the fact that learners' social contexts determine their home language. The location of the school determines teachers' LoLT when teaching writing, as this is dependent on the surrounding residents and the common spoken language. As stated by Anderson et al. (1996), emphasis needs to be placed on what is learnt in the classroom and what is required outside the classroom. During the research, flashcards were used in reading groups, as this allowed for more focused sessions, with smaller numbers. Reading groups are based on learners' academic ability and therefore learners of similar intellectual capacity were grouped together. This enabled the researcher (Author 1) to identify

learners who had difficulty with word recognition and creative writing.

Methodology

Research paradigm

Considering that action research is used for improving teaching practice as part of a process of change (Koshy, Koshy & Waterman 2010), this study is thus located within the critical paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) explain that the critical paradigm acknowledges ideological and political contexts of educational research and aims to emancipate individuals. This action research study is thus emancipatory due to changing conditions which hamper desired improvement in classroom practices. We argue that conducting this action research is a 'transformative professional development' (Kennedy 2014:689) activity which is liberated from the imposed activities of the school management team or Department of Basic Education officials. Furthermore, the first author of this article reflected on her teaching practice and designed an intervention that aimed to change and transform her teaching practice. Bertram and Christiansen (2014:27) state that 'the critical paradigm sees reality as shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and other dynamics'. In relation to this study, social and cultural backgrounds foreground learners' language. Learners' home language is also dependent on their socialisation and upbringing. By changing teaching strategies, learners' academic writing improved, which was beneficial to both the educator and the learners. Using flashcards was of benefit to those learners who learn visually, as the words were seen and associations made. By experimenting with a new teaching strategy in order to assist Grade 1 ESL learners and change the focus of standardised writing approaches, the researchers' teaching practice was improved.

Research site

This action research study was conducted in a primary school located in the uMgungundlovu district in KwaZulu-Natal. The school in which the study was undertaken is classified as a quintile 5 school. This is also one of the ex-Model C schools, which accounts for the school being well-resourced, due to the majority of school funding being received from school fees and fundraising activities, with minimal funding from government. A large number of the learners at the school, where the action research was conducted, are ESL learners from surrounding urban areas in Pietermaritzburg, with the majority speaking isiZulu as their home language. The LoLT of this school is English and therefore all lessons are delivered in English.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was used in this study, due to members of the target population meeting certain criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016).

This method of sampling is used for the benefit of the researcher, as the sample is easily accessible (Bertram & Christiansen 2014). The sample consisted of 31 Grade 1 learners within the age range of 6–7 years. The researcher (Author 1) intended to use flash cards to enhance their creative writing skills.

Method

Action research consists of four steps, namely (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection (Bertram & Christiansen 2014). *Planning* includes the preparation of all the materials needed for the action research, including lesson plans and materials (Nugroho et al. 2012). The planning stage included a week of observation of learners' sentence construction and the preparation of flashcards to facilitate their writing skills. The lesson plans for the 6 weeks of research were also planned during the first week. A baseline assessment was carried out in the form of a written task, where learners had to write four sentences based on their June holiday experience. The learners who did not understand the concept of sentence writing merely wrote words, some of which were unidentifiable. Flashcards were printed in text boxes, and thereafter cut out and pasted onto cardboard, which was then laminated. *Implementation* requires the researcher to take action and execute the plan formulated in the previous step. Within the second stage, flashcards were used 3–4 times a week to help learners grasp the spelling and identification of words that can be used in their creative writing. Learners were given creative writing activities to complete each week. During week 5, learners did not complete a written activity due to a public holiday and time constraints. *Observation* is defined as the researcher monitoring the effects of the action research in its context (Nugroho et al. 2012). In step 3, the learners' sentence writing skills were observed again, at the end of the 6-week cycle, to identify if any improvements had occurred. The flashcards were also evaluated within the fifth week of the research and new words were added due to a need that was identified. These words were common words that are used in creative writing tasks. The function of *reflection* is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the research and whether it has been successful (Nugroho et al. 2012). Within the last stage, reflection on the efficacy of flashcards on improving ESL learners writing was carried out and the determination of whether this method should be employed or changed in future, as well as whether a new cycle of action research needed to be carried out.

Data collection

The data collection methods that were utilised for this study included unstructured observations and document analysis. Unstructured observations allow the researcher to observe the situation and review observational data before making assumptions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). Observations were carried out within the first week and across all the stages of the implementation of the teaching strategy. Through observation, the learners' level of writing capabilities

was identified and a baseline assessment was conducted. Informal assessment was also conducted in each week while learners were performing their creative writing tasks, as well as while the flashcards were being used in the classroom. The observations, research notes documented, and evidence gathered from learner books determine whether the words flashed to learners generated any change in their writing patterns. Document analysis included learners' work books, tests and exercise books, which were analysed to compare sentences written before and after the use of flashcards.

Data analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis was used in this study. Inductive analysis begins with observations, raw data collection and pattern detection to reach the development of general conclusions (Bertram & Christiansen 2014:117). The first step of the analysis involved observation of learners during lessons. Within the second step, which is the raw data collection, the initial baseline assessments of learners' writing were inspected and thereafter the creative writing activities performed by learners each week were assessed to identify if any patterns occurred with the words being flashed and the words used by learners within their creative writing. Within the third step of the analysis, themes were detected and identified after comparing learner books and finding common mistakes.

Designing an action research project raises complex ethical issues (Nolen & Putten 2007:402). In line with Nolen and Putten (2007) principles of ethical issues (informed consent, protecting the confidentiality of participants, autonomy of participants) and the South African Council for Educators (SACE) ethical standards for teachers were followed. Relevant gatekeepers' permission for the study to be undertaken was obtained and autonomy of participants were considered, as permission from the school principal was obtained along with permission from parents for learners to participate in the study. In place of names, pseudonyms were used to ensure that the school and participants remain anonymous. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014) beneficence refers to research being of benefit and therefore it is reflected in this study, as the findings benefited learners and the researcher.

Results and discussion

During the observation, it was noted that some learners were unable to construct a single sentence, even with guidance, while others were able to write sentences without much added help. Figure 1 displays learners' assessment results of four tasks.

Figure 1 indicates the results achieved by learners for four creative writing assessment tasks. These tasks were, *My holiday*, *Ushaka excursion*, *My pet* and *Fun in the sun*. Learners were marked on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest, based on their punctuation, spelling and spacing, and creativity. The number of learners who scored a mark of 1 decreased during the research period, while the

number of learners who scored a mark of 4 increased by the fourth assessment. This clearly points to the positive effects that flashcards had on learners' writing abilities.

The assessment results suggest that the use of flashcards was of benefit to learners who were spelling words incorrectly, as the repetitive visual representation of the words aided with familiarity and identification of words. These results correspond with a study based on flashcard use by Nel and Nel (2016). The flashcards incorporated words in the past tense, such as 'bought' and 'played', which exposed learners to words that can be used in their writing within the correct tense. Many learners were found to be using the word 'played' in their creative writing pieces, which signposts the positive effects of using flashcards. When addressing grammatical errors, it is important to make learners aware of the language that can be used and how it can be utilised. For this reason, flashcards containing parts of sentences were made to help ESL learners with the initial process of constructing a sentence and the vocabulary needed. Figure 1 displays the words selected for the flashcards. Similarly, in an action research study based on flashcards, Sartika (2020) found that exemplary sentences printed on flashcards should be related to learners' everyday life.

The findings of the study revealed that learners who participated in the study had improved in their written assessments, as compared to the results previously obtained in their baseline assessment (Figure 1). Many learners used the words that were flashed to them, as these were conventional words used during their written news and sentence writing activities. Vocabulary flashcards allow learners to encounter and learn words, while storing these words in their memory due to repetition (Komachali & Khodareza 2012; Miles & Ehri 2017). Learners' familiarity with the words allowed them to express confidence when writing, given that they were exposed to these words on a regular basis and the context of these words were explained

in detail, with examples provided. Mukoroli (2011) refers to this process as personalisation, when words become better understood through relation to context or experience.

Figure 2 indicates the flashcards containing starting points of sentences which were made to help learners who were struggling to construct sentences, for example 'I went to'. This enabled learners to identify what a sentence should look like, namely a string of words together. Figure 4 illustrates the writing skills of an ESL learner, in comparison to that of an English Home Language learner in Figure 4.

Figure 3 shows the work of an ESL learner who had difficulty grasping the concept of sentence writing. This learner could not write a single sentence during this task. The letters put together did not form a word, let alone a sentence.



FIGURE 2: Flashcards for Grade 1 learners' creative writing.

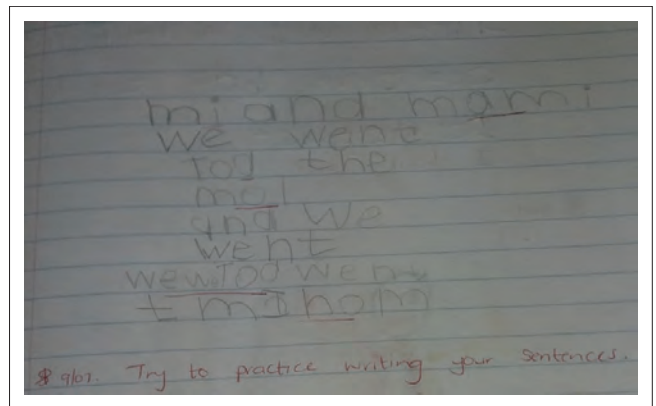


FIGURE 3: Baseline assessment task of an English Second Language learner.

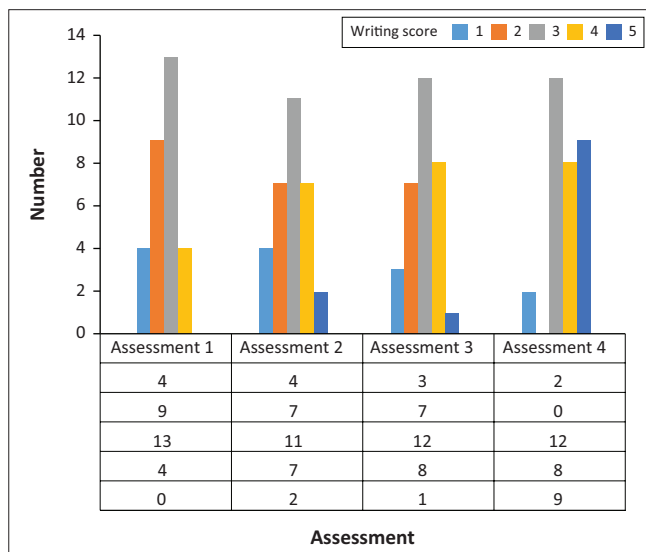


FIGURE 1: Analysis of creative writing assessment tasks.

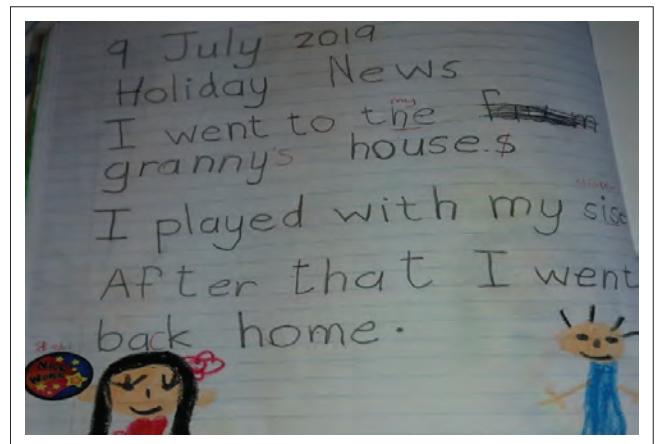


FIGURE 4: Baseline assessment task of an English Home Language learner.

Figure 4, on the other hand, displays the creative writing task of an English Home Language learner. This learner was able to write three sentences without much assistance. Although there were spelling and grammatical errors, this is common within the Foundation Phase and even more so in Grade 1, as this is where sentence writing is officially introduced. Due to creative writing being a new concept to Grade 1 learners, it is expected that spelling and grammatical errors may occur.

The research was aimed at using flashcards to help learners identify that by stringing words together, one can make a sentence, provided that it makes sense. For example, from the flashcards in Figure 1, the cards 'I went to', 'the', 'mall', 'with', and 'grandpa' were displayed on the board to show learners how to construct a sentence using these words. The themes identified during the observations included commonly misspelt words, incorrect tenses and ungrammatical sentence construction. These themes are elaborated on below.

Misspelt words

During observation of learners undertaking their creative writing tasks, there were common words that were misspelt. A list of the words identified, as well as frequently used words in creative writing, was drafted. This list comprised 14 words, which were then added to the flashcards previously made. Figure 5 displays the words that learners regularly misspelt.

The most common of the misspelt words is 'some' which learners often spelt as 'sum' due to the phonetic sound of the word. Learners at a young age often sound their words before writing them and hence spelling errors are common at this stage of writing. This is referred to as phonemic awareness (Muhammad et al. 2016). Most learners only fully develop phonemic awareness by the end of Grade 1 (Durwin & Moore 2019). Nicholson (1998) asserts that when learners' spelling improves, they become confident in story writing. Figure 4 indicates an English Home Language learner who spelt the word 'some' as 'sum' due to sounding the word first and thereafter writing it.

Incorrect tenses

The second theme identified was incorrect tenses in creative writing. Learners were found to write in the future tense when the correct tense of the news written is the past tense. A study carried out by Toba, Noor and Sanu (2019) revealed that, ESL university students struggle with spelling, tenses and grammar due to limited knowledge and exposure to English. Likewise, many of the participants had limited prior English exposure. A popular word found to be used in the wrong tense was 'eat'. For example, learners wrote sentences such as 'We eat some food' (L¹). Figure 6 displays an ESL learner's creative writing with the incorrect tense.

¹ L¹ refers to learner 1, as learner identities are not revealed.



FIGURE 5: Commonly misspelt words by English Second Language learners.

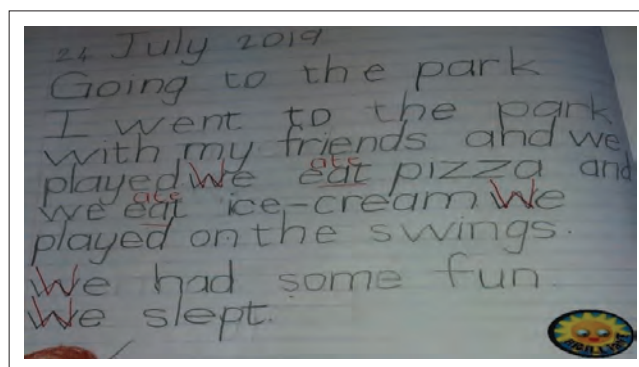


FIGURE 6: Incorrect tenses in creative writing.

Ungrammatical sentence construction

The third theme detected during the research was ungrammatical sentence construction. This included learners writing sentences that did not make sense to the reader, due to a lack of grammatical knowledge in the language in which the sentences are expressed. An example of ungrammatical sentence construction is depicted in Figure 5. Second language English learners have the difficult task of mastering the grammatical rules that encompass a second language (Mukoroli 2011).

The three themes discussed above have provided clarity on the areas that are lacking in the development of Grade 1 ESL learners' creative writing skills. Learners do not have adequate grounding in English for them to express their ideas in writing. Writing of sentences, which is what creative writing entails, is only introduced in Grade 1 and therefore is an unfamiliar task to learners at this stage of schooling. In spite of these hampering factors, learners were still able to produce improved results during creative writing assessments.

While many ESL learners seemed to have improved, this was not the case with all learners. A selection of ESL learners who had difficulty grasping the English language still encountered problems during their creative writing tasks. One learner in particular seemed to have no visible improvement, even with the flashcards containing the initial formation of a sentence being placed on the board for her to identify what a possible sentence could look or sound like. In contrast, some ESL learners demonstrated minimal, but visible improvement due to their calibre of writing, prior to the research, being so poor. The fact that the learners in the study displayed noticeable changes in

their creative writing patterns revealed that the research was successful and ESL learners have benefitted from the use of flashcards as a teaching strategy. Similarly, various studies undertaken by researchers such as Skarr et al. (2012), Sitompul (2013), Komachali and Khodareza (2012), and Durwin and Moore (2019) all yielded positive results when using flashcards to improve ESL learners' spelling and vocabulary.

Parents of ESL learners who had difficulty were encouraged to use flashcards at home to aid these learners with their word recognition and the process of creative writing. English is a global language that is used at primary and tertiary levels in education, as well as in many professions around the world (Adas & Bakir 2013; Flanegin & Rudd 2000; Pakir 1999). The study revealed that learners who are exposed to English in the home environment dexterously grasp the concept of creative writing and are able to write clearer, more detailed sentences. Learners who were not exposed to English outside the classroom environment generally had greater difficulty understanding the LoLT and therefore struggled with creative writing tasks. Homework and reinforcing learning that occurs in the classroom is another factor that contributes to learner progress and development. The ESL learners who unremittably perform homework tasks generally excel in the classroom, as juxtaposed with those learners who do not do homework or practise their sentence writing.

Apart from verbal explanations, flashcards enhanced learners' creative writing. The research was conducted to assist in improving the researcher's teaching practice, which it has accomplished. By utilising flashcards as a teaching strategy, the researcher was able to connect with learners and encourage them to actively participate in lessons. The ESL learners were more confident as the words flashed became familiar to them with increased exposure. Putnam and Borko (2000) stated that situated learning plays a crucial role for teachers to learn new, innovative ways to improve on their teaching practice. In line with the situated learning perspective, using flashcards has enabled the researchers' teaching methods to cater to different learning styles, which included audio and visual learners, while also developing academic writing skills of ESL Grade 1 learners. The classroom grew to be interactive and more pleasant for the researcher, as well as the learners. This correlates with the 'cognition as distributed' (Putnam & Borko 2000:5) aspect of the situated learning theory which was applied to the research. The theory further stipulates cognition as situated, implying that learning is co-dependent on the environment in which it takes place. Flashcards allowed for the classroom to become an interactive platform of learning.

Lastly, the flashcards were found to be effective when put into operation in learners' reading groups. These groups are based on learners' reading ability and therefore learners were more comfortable saying the words with peers of a similar competence level, as their recognition of the words

corresponded. Reading groups allow for a manageable number of learners for teachers to work with. Flashcards are versatile and have proved to be of benefit to ESL Grade 1 learners in aiding their creative writing process, while also improving the first author's teaching practice.

Conclusion

The study aimed to determine the effect that flashcards as a teaching strategy had on ESL Grade 1 learners' creative writing skills. The main findings indicate that many learners had benefitted from the use of flashcards and their writing skills had improved. The learners were receptive to this technique and willingly participated in lessons, which made the learning process a participatory and enjoyable one. Since ESL learners are required to learn to read and write in English, using this approach was found to be effective in aiding this development. Some learners may not have shown visible improvement during the study, but that could be due to learners having different developmental paces, which cannot be avoided. The action research undertaken overall proved to be successful in determining that the use of flashcards enhanced the creative writing skills of Grade 1 ESL learners. This study may prove to be of benefit to teachers who have multiple linguistic groups in their classrooms or ESL teachers around the world. Further research is recommended to determine the impact of flashcards on other learning areas.

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

S.M. conducted the action research in her Grade 1 class as an honours research project under the supervision of F.-Q.B.Z. who provided input on the methodology and ongoing support with corrections and feedback regarding the article structure and information.

Ethical considerations

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Disclaimer

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