

# The Impact of Technology on Students' Creative Writing: A Case Study in Jordan

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**Abstract**—Creative Writing (CW) is a crucial skill for foreign language learners as it helps them develop their writing and language abilities. It also enhances their thinking skills. Nevertheless, CW is difficult to master due to traditional ways of teaching and a lack of experience. Therefore, there is a need to examine the use of technology in developing learners' CW skills in an attempt to improve their writing and develop their creativity. This study aims to investigate whether the use of technological tools can improve students' CW skills. Data was collected from a sample of university students in Jordan, before and after using technological tools, and analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of technology in improving students' creative writing. The findings revealed that the use of technological tools had a positive role in improving students' writing performance, lexical abilities, and imagination. As a result, this study recommends the effective use of technological tools in teaching CW activities. It also recommends that the writers of language materials include technology-based activities to improve the learning and creativity of their students.

**Index Terms**—technology, technological tools, creativity, creative writing, language learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

For various reasons, writing is one of the most challenging skills for foreign language learners. The main reason is that learners have limited exposure to the language, which is mostly used inside the classroom. Language learners use writing in order to communicate their thoughts, ideas and emotions in a creative manner (Almelhi, 2021; Abu-Hussein et al., 2020). To enhance students' writing skills, teachers should encourage and motivate students to practise in order to become familiar with writing in English as a foreign/second language (Pentury et al., 2020). There is a tendency for learners to rely on their first language when they practise writing skills, owing to the low level of their English (Alkhalidi & Benagoun, 2015).

To master writing skills in a foreign/second language, the learner must have a solid knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, as well as the self-knowledge needed to express thoughts and ideas (Ali & Ramana, 2018). This may be a challenge for foreign language learners because they may know the ideas and lexical items in their first language, but when they write them in English, they translate them literally or write them wrongly. Therefore, it is necessary to find interesting methods of encouraging students to improve their writing skills. One of these methods is Creative Writing (CW), which helps students develop their writing skills effectively. Alkhalidi et al. (2022) argue that "Creative Writing is an important skill that helps students achieve progress in learning English as a Foreign Language. It also helps them improve fluency, motivation, confidence, and creativity" (p.136).

The writing process consists of several steps, such as planning, drafting and revising. The teacher's role is to give students feedback and enable them to master such techniques and improve their learning autonomy (Barkaoui, 2007). According to Pentury et al. (2020), planning, drafting, revising and editing constitute the four steps in creative writing. These steps can also be used in other types of writing, including academic work.

Writing skills are associated with creativity, which means the ability to produce new ideas that are high in quality and task-appropriate (Sternberg, 2000). Similarly, Boden (2001) opines that the creative skills entail generating novel ideas that are intelligible, valuable and surprising. Writing has an impact on the development of creative thinking skills and the language learning process itself (Alkhalidi, 2019), and technological tools can facilitate the learning process and provide students with opportunities to improve their thinking skills (Masterson, 2020) and other language skills, such as writing, grammatical items and lexical items. However, there are likely to be challenges that hinder students from writing creatively, such as lack of motivation and engagement, and lack of experience or awareness of the benefits of using technological tools in CW. Therefore, using technology can improve the students' motivation by increasing their participation, engagement and social interaction in the classroom.

### Rationale of the Study

CW plays an important role in developing learners' writing skills, for academic purposes and for communication in general. However, it may not be taught well in the English textbooks because it is a daunting task that requires learners to be familiar with content, organisation, vocabulary items and punctuation marks (Mohammed, 2019). Learners struggle with CW, and it is not utilised or taught well in the language learning process. As a result, this study investigates the importance of technology in improving creative writing in English language learning. The study is also significant as, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, it is one of the few studies to investigate the effectiveness of

using technology to improve creative writing in Jordan. This will assist researchers and teachers to pinpoint the teaching practices that are applied in the classroom. This study can also raise awareness among teachers and learners of the effectiveness of using technology on developing the CW skill.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Creativity and Creative Writing*

Creativity is the inclination to produce or recognise alternatives, possibilities or ideas that might be beneficial in communicating with others and solving problems (Hensel, 2018). It is the ability to produce innovative and unique products or ideas. Clearly, creative writing also requires creativity (Pentury et al., 2020). According to Maley (2015), creativity can help students to deal with changes in language learning by providing more creative solutions. Therefore, creativity is an essential component of the educational process and curriculum that should be taken into consideration in teaching, writing and developing language materials.

Creative writing (CW) is a product of creativity because its process includes productive and expressive language skills. CW activities need an ongoing process and guidance (Santosa et al., 2019). Creative writing activities help the learners to translate their ideas into meaningful and purposeful words, and the creative writing process involves flexibility, elaboration, proficiency and fluency (Karuri, 2012). Starko (2010) expands on these characteristics briefly as follows: “fluency (thinking of many ideas), flexibility (thinking of different categories or points of view), originality (thinking of unusual ideas), and elaboration (adding detail to improve ideas)” (p. 127).

Creative writing helps learners to express their thoughts effectively (Cramer, 2003). In other words, it is a skill that helps students to interpret their ideas in new and creative ways in writing. It can be employed in schools and universities to improve the creativity of students (Barbot et al., 2012). Imaginative thinking is the basis for creative writing as it allows learners to use their mental skills in an attempt to generate new, novel ideas, both fluently and flexibly (Chandio, et al., 2013).

Undoubtedly, writing is a challenging task due to the difficulties in producing, organising and transferring such ideas into words (Richards & Renandya, 2002) and students’ lack of background knowledge about writing (Al-Mukdad, 2019). Moreover, writing requires a lot of hard work and effort (Wulandari, 2016). There are a number of reasons that are associated with such challenges, such as the lack of vocabulary knowledge that hinders the students from writing a paragraph; the lack of grammatical knowledge, which hinders the cohesion and connectedness of ideas; the lack of motivation; and the belief of the majority of students that writing is a complicated task. Furthermore, students become demotivated to write because of the traditional teaching methods that are applied in the classroom (Ali & Ramana, 2018). A solution to this challenging task is developing the students’ CW and creativity, which will be reflected positively in the development of other language skills.

To make language learning active and creative, teachers and the people developing materials should connect the activities with their students’ real life and experiences (Alkhalidi, 2014). The language activities which are involved in the materials should help in creating a positive emotional environment for learners to let them “feel at ease, develop self-confidence and self-esteem, develop positive attitudes towards the learning experience and be involved intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally” (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 140). Therefore, there is a need to include writing activities in the materials, which can be completed by using technology to improve the students’ writing abilities. In other words, using technology can motivate the students and improve their CW (Almelhi, 2021). If CW activities are enjoyable and practical, the students will improve their fluency and confidence (Heathfield, 2015) in learning the foreign language.

### B. *Technology*

Technology has a powerful impact on learning generally, and it can have an impact on developing the learners’ CW skill and other language skills. It allows students to interact, communicate and connect with other students and teachers in order to facilitate product prototyping, cooperative projects and joint learning (Jiang et al., 2019). Technological tools provide teachers and learners with opportunities to “operate with a large array of information, so an important skill of future teachers is the ability to organise information quickly, determine its value, application in professional activities” (Fursykova et al., 2022, p. 85). This has been proven since the COVID-19 pandemic when all teaching and learning processes around the world relied completely on online education using different platforms. However, now that life is back to normal and classes are back to the traditional way of teaching, there is still a need for more research into using specific technological tools to develop specific types of language skills and to allow students to engage with the learning process and develop their language skills and other thinking skills.

The integration of technology into the teaching-learning process is essential for improving students’ creative writing skills (Tahsaldar & Semaan, 2018) because technology is very useful in facilitating the students’ understanding of complex knowledge and fostering greater engagement and motivation (Veiga & Andrade, 2021). Moreover, the use of technology in the classroom increases students’ participation and engagement in writing assignments and improves their peer collaboration and social interaction (Williams & Beam, 2019). In other words, technology should be researched and, if it is effective, teachers and learners should use it in the classroom.

Based on the related research, technology can improve the learning process and motivate learners to engage with it. Moreover, rapid technological advancement has had a positive impact on the process of learning English language skills. In other words, using technology improves students' creative writing and creative thinking (Nurmieva & Soboleva, 2018). Moreover, augmented writing systems (grammar and spelling checks) are generally tailored to promote human productivity and writing performance (Singh et al., 2022). Karyuatry et al. (2018) also conclude that using the Grammarly online application has a positive impact on improving students' creative writing.

Information and communication technology and social media also play a pivotal role in improving students' writing skills because they increase students' satisfaction and motivation towards learning English (Bakeer, 2018). In other words, they can play a pivotal role in improving students' skills in different types of writing (e.g., CW, academic writing, technical writing and personal writing).

Technological tools, such as laptops, computers, and mobile phones, along with media, including Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, can improve students' writing (Khan, 2016) if they are used properly and guided by professional teachers to correct the language and provide feedback whenever it is needed. Khan adds that both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards using technology in the classroom to improve students' writing. Abu-Hussein et al. (2020) have found that online reflective journals improve students' creative writing. They underscore the importance of creative writing in turning students' imagination into words and allowing them to reflect on their experiences in a different manner.

In their study, Tahsaldar and Semaan (2018) used questionnaires to investigate the impact of Toondoo Comics on improving the creative writing of Lebanese students. Their findings revealed that the incorporation of technology into both learning and teaching processes had positive effects on improving learners' achievement and their writing creativity. The study concluded that Toondoo Comics not only improved students' creative writing, but also motivated them to engage with university courses. In this study, the impact of technological tools on improving Jordanian university students' creative writing is investigated.

Due to the dearth of studies that have been conducted on the impact of using technology to improve students' creative writing in Jordan, the researcher aimed to bridge this gap in the literature. This study addresses the impact of using technological tools – namely Reverso Context, Grammarly and Hemingway Editor – on improving the creative writing of students.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. *Sample of the Study*

The participants of the study consisted of 20 first-year students who study English in the Department of English at Al Al-Bayt University in Jordan. Their ages ranged between 19 and 21.

#### B. *Data Collection*

The participants attended a writing class in their department. They were taught creative writing without using technological tools and they were tested. Then, after two weeks, they were taught creative writing using technological tools and they were tested again. The students were introduced to the advantages of using technology in developing their CW skills. The technological tools which were introduced were Reverso Context, Grammarly and Hemingway Editor to investigate their impact on students' performance. In other words, the writing test was conducted on students before applying the treatment, in order to investigate the challenges that students face when writing a paragraph without using technology. Then the writing test was administered again after students had used technological tools to assess their ability to write creatively after using them.

#### C. *The Assessment Instrument*

This study seeks to assess the creative writing skills of the students by utilising the CW analytical scoring scale by referring to the literature (Mohammed, 2019; Goos & Salomons, 2017). According to Mohammed (2019), using "a standardised assessment scoring scale makes the tests more reliable" (p. 240). This study adapted Mohammed's (2019) scoring scale, which consisted of 10 main criteria, with 10 points for each criterion; the overall score is out of 100. It is worth mentioning that the scoring scale combines the essential features of writing skills and creative writing competences because both have common elements.

TABLE 1  
THE SCORING SCALE CRITERIA AND THE RUBRIC OF THE CW

No.	CW Items	Points
1-	Content	10
2-	Organisation	10
3-	Lexical items	10
4-	Sentence skills (Grammar)	10
5-	Imagination	10
6-	Voice and tone	10
7-	Images	10
8-	Style	10
9-	Mechanics of Writing	10
10-	Structure and adding details	10

#### D. Data Analysis

The students were given instructions during the class to write two paragraphs (see the instructions in the Appendix). Then the technological tools were introduced to the students, and they were allowed to use them in their writing activities in the class. After two weeks, the students were asked to write again using the technological tools. The researcher graded the writing using the above scale. Afterwards, he analysed the data of the CW test, as illustrated further in the section below.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study used a writing test in order to identify the students' writing level before using technological tools, and then the test was distributed to the participants after using technology in order to examine the areas of improvement in their writing.

The students were given the writing test before using technological tools. Their writing was graded and analysed by the researcher. Table 2 presents the students' writing test results before using technological tools.

TABLE 2  
THE WRITING TEST RESULTS OF STUDENTS BEFORE USING TECHNOLOGY

Student	Content	Organisation	Lexical items	Sentence skills	Imagination	Voice and tone	Images	Style	Mechanics of Writing	Structure and adding details	Total
	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	
1	8	6	4	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	55
2	6	7	5	5	7	6	7	6	7	7	63
3	6	5	5	6	6	5	6	5	5	7	56
4	7	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	7	60
5	8	6	5	7	6	6	7	6	6	6	63
6	8	7	6	6	8	6	7	7	7	7	69
7	7	6	5	5	7	5	6	8	6	5	60
8	6	8	6	6	8	6	7	8	7	7	69
9	6	6	5	7	8	6	6	8	5	7	64
10	6	5	5	5	6	7	8	7	5	7	61
11	7	7	5	5	5	6	8	6	5	7	61
12	8	7	4	5	7	8	6	6	6	7	64
13	7	6	4	6	7	6	6	6	7	8	63
14	7	6	7	7	8	8	6	7	7	7	70
15	7	8	8	8	7	6	6	8	6	6	70
16	7	9	6	6	6	8	6	6	7	8	69
17	6	7	6	5	6	7	8	7	7	7	66
18	7	8	7	5	6	6	8	6	6	7	66
19	6	7	5	6	6	6	7	7	5	7	62
20	8	7	7	6	7	7	8	8	6	7	71
Averages	6.90	6.70	5.55	5.85	6.60	6.30	6.70	6.65	6.05	6.80	64.10

As shown in the above table, the overall average is 64.10, which means that achievement was generally low. The students' performance in lexical items and sentence skills was the lowest, with an average of 5.55 and 5.85 (out of 10 points each) respectively, whereas their performance in other aspects was better. The results show that the students' performance might generally be acceptable, but they may not meet the expectations of their instructors, and this might be ascribed to the nature of writing and its difficulty and/or lack of good experience in creative writing. Moreover, the motive for students to write in a foreign language is the grades, and this task is written for research purposes. Therefore, students might lack the stimulus to write effectively.

The findings of the students' CW test before using technology show that creative writing constituted a challenge for the students, who were not using technological tools to assist with their creative writing. This might be attributed to their lack of vocabulary knowledge, and incorrect word order and sentence structure. For instance, they wrote a noun

before an adjective, such as writing “eyes big” instead of “big eyes,” a lack of imagination and visualisation, such as improperly describing the quality of a good person by writing “his heart is good,” rather than “he is a good-hearted person,” problems caused by incorrect grammar, i.e. wrong subject verb agreement, such as “he don’t”, rather than “he doesn’t”, sentence fragments, using incorrect punctuation marks, and verb tense errors, such as using the present tense to indicate something that occurred in the past. More importantly, the majority of students performed inadequately. None of the students performed adequately in the CW test before using technological tools.

Subsequently, the students were given the writing test after they had used the technological tools for two weeks. The students’ writing was graded and analysed by the researcher. Table 3 presents the writing test results of the students after using the technological tools.

TABLE 3  
THE STUDENTS’ WRITING TEST RESULTS AFTER USING THE TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

Student	Content	Organisation	Lexical items	Sentence skills	Imagination	Voice and tone	Images	Style	Mechanics of Writing	Structure and adding details	Total
	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	
1	9	8	9	9	8	8	7	8	8	8	82
2	8	8	10	10	9	8	9	8	9	9	88
3	8	7	9	10	7	7	8	8	9	9	82
4	9	8	9	9	8	7	8	8	9	9	84
5	8	7	8	9	8	7	7	8	9	8	79
6	9	9	9	10	9	8	9	9	10	10	92
7	9	8	10	9	9	7	8	9	10	10	89
8	8	8	9	10	8	8	9	9	10	8	87
9	8	8	9	9	8	8	8	8	9	9	84
10	8	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	9	9	79
11	8	9	9	9	7	8	9	8	8	9	84
12	9	8	8	8	7	8	6	6	9	8	77
13	7	7	8	9	8	7	6	6	9	8	75
14	8	7	9	8	8	9	8	8	8	9	82
15	9	9	10	10	8	7	7	8	10	10	88
16	8	9	9	9	7	8	7	7	9	8	81
17	7	8	8	8	6	7	8	7	9	9	77
18	8	9	9	8	9	9	8	8	9	8	85
19	8	9	8	10	8	8	8	7	10	9	85
20	9	9	8	8	8	8	9	8	8	9	84
Averages	8.25	8.10	8.80	9.00	7.85	7.75	7.85	7.75	9.05	8.80	83.20

Table 3 shows that the majority of the students performed well, and the overall average was 83.20. The following elements of CW: “lexical items”, “sentence skills”, “mechanics of writing”, and “structure and adding details” are high, with 8.80, 9.0, 9.05 and 8.80 out of 10 for each element. This shows the considerable progress of students in these items. Interestingly, none of the students performed poorly in the CW test after using technological tools. The results also showed that there was an improvement in the students CW in the other aspects: imagination, content, tone and style. In other words, the findings of the students’ CW test show that the students performed well in the writing test after using the technological tools.

Regarding the use of technological tools, the students used Reverso Context to find out the meaning of the challenging words they sought to add in their creative writing. Similarly, the students were able to improve their grammatical and spelling errors by using Grammarly. Additionally, Hemingway Editor improved students' phrasing and writing concision. Based on the use of the aforementioned tools, students improved their CW and engagement with learning. Moreover, technology enhanced students’ autonomy because they were able to access a variety of learning materials and resources that promoted this. The tools enabled the students to write in a creative manner.

The technological tools improved students’ writing performance and enabled them to write in a creative, concise and clear manner. Technological tools improved students’ vocabulary knowledge and increased their imagination. For instance, the students used such adjectives to describe the quality of a person, such as ‘attractive,’ ‘stunning,’ ‘thoughtful,’ ‘easy-going’. Moreover, they wrote well-structured and coherent sentences and paragraphs.

This might be attributed to the fact that technology enhances students’ writing because it expands their imagination, arranges their ideas, and corrects their grammatical and spelling errors. This finding agrees with Singh et al. (2022), who maintain that augmented writing systems check grammar as well as spelling and promote human productivity and writing performance.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that using technological tools can improve students’ creativity in writing. It is possible that technological tools, such as Reverso Context, facilitate the process of finding the meaning of challenging words. Moreover, Hemingway identifies students’ errors and corrects their mistakes, particularly in writing long and complicated sentences. In addition, Grammarly enabled the students to correct their grammatical mistakes and their

sentence fragments. This finding is in line with the study by Karyuatry et al. in 2018, which concluded that using the Grammarly online application had a positive impact on improving students' creative writing by reducing students' errors and improving their writing quality.

Furthermore, the use of technological tools improves students' motivation and writing skills. In other words, technological tools play a pivotal role in improving students' writing skills because they increase students' satisfaction and motivation to learn English, as found by Bakeer in 2018.

The use of technological tools in the classroom enabled the students to write well-structured sentences and paragraphs and improved their imagination (Abu-Hussein et al., 2020). Using technological tools in CW helps students to turn their imagination into words and allows them to reflect on their experiences in a different way. The technological tools are not only useful tools for CW, but they are also useful for other types of writing, such as academic writing and technical writing (based on the researcher's experience).

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends using different technological tools to investigate a broader range of facets of CW. This study is also beneficial for the developers of materials who might include the use of technology to improve students' CW and other language skills, as well as their thinking skills. Furthermore, educators might benefit from the use of technology as an alternative method to help language learners to enrich their vocabulary knowledge and to improve their writing skills.

APPENDIX. WRITING TEST

**Dear students,**

This test is designed for research purposes. Accordingly, you are kindly requested to write a paragraph that contains approximately 150 words. Your participation, time and efforts are highly appreciated. The writing test consists of two writing paragraphs.

1. Imagine that you went camping in the desert, and you got lost: Write a paragraph expressing your feelings and expectation of survival.

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2. Based on the previous paragraph, write another paragraph describing the challenges that you may face in the desert if you got lost for three days with a shortage of food and water.

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