

Humor and Creative English Writing in Hong Kong Elementary School Children

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Abstract

The effects of humorous rhymed stories on children's English writing were examined in an elementary school in Hong Kong. A creative Reading Program using a series of humorous rhymed stories written by authors like Dr. Seuss as texts was integrated into the English language curriculum to motivate children (6-8 years old) to love reading, to develop a response to imaginative literature through identifying and discussing themes, understanding and appreciating the effect of sound patterns, as well as enhancing their skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing. The creative English writing of children from Primary 1 to Primary 3 was assessed before the Program was implemented by giving a sentence starter and then another starter after the Program had run for two school terms (i.e. 10 months). Paired t-tests showed that children used significantly more words ($p < .01$ to $.001$) and less pictures ($p < .001$) in their English writing except in the pictures of primary one. As the Reading Program continued in the following year, the creative thinking (TCT-DP, Urban & Jellen, 1996) and reading motivation (MRQ, Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) of children from Primary 1 to Primary 4 were examined in the same school at the beginning and again at the end of the school year (i.e. 10 months). With respect to children's creative thinking, paired t-tests revealed a significant increase ($p < .01$) in Primary 1 and a significant decrease ($p < .01$) in Primary 3 at the end of the school year. Children's reading motivation has also revealed significant changes in children's intrinsic, extrinsic and social motivation, particularly in Primary 1 students and among girls. The findings have suggested that the English Reading Program with humorous rhymed stories had indeed motivated children to read, think, and write.

Introduction

These few years, Hong Kong has been undergoing an education reform. (The Curriculum Development Council, 2002). Schools in Hong Kong were encouraged to create a “language-rich environment by making greater use of literary or imaginative texts to promote critical thinking and encourage free expression and creativity.” Schools were also encouraged to develop students’ creativity. Teachers were asked to lead students to “go beyond the given information, allow them time to think, strengthen their creative abilities, reward their creative efforts, value their creative attributes, . . . and create a climate conducive to creativity” (p. 45).

The development and nurturing of creativity is, indeed, important, as Urban and Jellen (1996) wrote, “the development and nurturing of creativity in and by education is a most relevant task for societies as well as for educational systems, institutions and individual educators, professionals and parents” (p.7). In order to develop and nurture creativity in children, creative writing can be used in elementary schools. According to Harris & Mahon (1997), writing is the “creation of meaning in visual language”. It can be a “fulfilling, exciting and motivating activity,” but it can also be “boring, anxiety-ridden and futile”. In classrooms where writing in a second language is being taught and practised, there is “added danger that the negative aspects will dominate practice, particularly with young learners at primary level”. Some learners may come to see writing in English as “the least acceptable aspect of learning English – which is, in any case, for many, a part of the primary curriculum that has no immediate sense of purpose and is certainly one that gives no sense of enjoyment” (p. 9-10).

The poet, Ted Hughes (1981) wrote that the main principles for students who wanted to learn creative writing were “practice from the apprentice, example from the master.” (p. xi) Harris and Mahon (1997) also thought that “language input is vital to language learning and this is achieved through listening and reading.” (p. 9-10) According to Tyrrell (1997), pleasure is a “key factor” for reading success in any language. (p.53). In the introduction to Seuss’ retrospective exhibition (1987), Steven Brezzo, Director of the San Diego Museum of Art, wrote, “every page [of Dr. Seuss’ stories] was a new and stimulating visual adventure with an endless variety of amusing creatures and expressionistic sets. Like his stories, his text illustrations were a poke in the eye of literary and artistic convention.” Other writers in the series, like Dr. Seuss, also wrote engaging stories with outrageous illustrations and playful sounds to teach basic reading skills. Texts like these could inspire and stimulate children’s imagination and creativity (Cornett, 1986) and ultimately motivate children to read, and then to write creatively.

The link between humor and creativity has been reviewed by both theory and research (O’Quin & Derks, 1997), in particular, their cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral similarities (McGhee, 1979, 1980; O’Quin & Derks, 1999). An indication of their relevance to each other was the recurrent inclusion of humor or funniness as a criterion in the scoring of creativity tasks (Guilford, 1967; Urban, 1996). According to McGhee (1980), “as with all great discoveries, then, a higher level of creativity should be required to create a joke, cartoon or other humor situation, than simply to understand the same event when it is initiated by another person” (p. 122).

As such, it was hoped that by using a series of humorous rhymed stories for the children in a creative English Reading Program: Happy Learning Program, children could go through similar creative processes (Honig, 2000). First, they would be inspired and motivated by reading this series of humorous rhymed stories. Then, they would express their creativity first by drawing pictures (because English was their second language, and they might not have enough words to express themselves), and

then by pictures and words, and finally, when they had more confidence in verbal expression, by words only. According to Auray and Mariconda (2000), a picture “inspires words – words that are descriptive, evocative and convincing. For children, this art/writing connection is particularly powerful, especially when the artwork is their own creation”. Students will “move from books to their art to their writing, and back again, each component enriching and strengthening the others – all of which will translate into better writing” (p. 5-6).

We also hoped that this Program could help students to be completely self-motivated because “successful and sustained learning is more likely to occur if motivation is intrinsic” (Falvey, 1997). When the tasks of reading, and creative writing proved enjoyable and challenging, “more effort and concentration is expended on it. This type of motivation, positive intrinsic motivation, is clearly what we should be aiming for in the language learning classroom” (p. 32). Kids who loved writing, and wrote frequently for pleasure, also read with better comprehension (Leonhardt, 1998, p. 19).

Method

Participants

Altogether 104 students from one morning section of a primary school participated in two English writing exercises in the academic year 1999-2000. The number of participants from Primary 1 to Primary 3 was 34 (boys=19, girls=15), 36 (boys=18, girls=18), and 34 (boys=20, girls=14), respectively.

In the following academic year 2000-2001, there were 583 students from Primary 1 to Primary 4 from both the morning and the afternoon sections of the same primary school. They responded to a series of measures in September 2000 and then again in June 2001. The number of participants from Primary 1 to Primary 4 was respectively 148 (boys=90, girls=58), 145 (boys=81, girls=64), 147 (boys=83, girls=64) and 143 (boys=80, girls=63).

These students were taught with a traditional educational approach with restricted seating arrangements in a class size of 40 and with a class teacher throughout the school year (September – July). Most lessons were conducted in the same classroom except for computer, physical activities, music, arts or crafts. While the class teacher is in charge of a few subjects and classroom management, other teachers came to the classroom to teach other subjects.

In this school, the medium of instruction was Cantonese, but English was used as a medium of instruction in English lessons. There were English language lessons everyday, and English story books were taught. The story books were used more as additional texts to teach English comprehension. After going through the stories with the children, the teachers set context questions to test comprehension. And then, students were taught to pronounce the words, to understand the meaning of the words, and then to spell the words in the stories.

Creative English Program

This study is based on a creative English Reading Program, “Happy Learning”, designed for children from Primary 1 to Primary 3 (6-8 years old) of a Catholic elementary school in 1998. The Program was designed in a way such that the objectives that were written in the *English Language Education: Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide: Primary 1 – Secondary 3* (The Curriculum Development Council, 2002) could be met. This Program was integrated into the English Language Curriculum, using a series of humorous rhymed stories to motivate the children to

love reading, to develop a response to imaginative literature through identifying and discussing themes, understanding and appreciating the effect of sound patterns, enhancing children's skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing.

In general, around ten classes were taken from the English Language subject to run this Program. In the Program, the children were taught *Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb* (Perkins, 1969) and *Ten Apples Up on Top!* (Lesieg, 1961) in Primary One, *Put Me In the Zoo* (Lopshire, 1988) and *It's Not Easy Being a Bunny* (Sadler 1983) in Primary Two, and *Green Eggs and Ham* (Seuss 1988) and *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* (Seuss 1960) in Primary Three. These stories were taught very thoroughly, and with one book per term. A topic that concerned values and moral issues was the core of each book. This was brought out through the stories themselves, and consolidated by group discussions, projects, activities, etc. After the children had read the texts, creative writing was also taught. Through writing stories and poems, children were encouraged to express their imaginative ideas. In this study, we hope to see how the Program could help in the developing and nurturing of young children's creativity.

During the implementation period, the consultants and designer of the Program trained the English teachers through a teacher's manual that was written for every text (a manual that clearly guided the teachers on the ten classes, with the topic; context and discussion questions, projects, activities, etc. for each class; and a creative writing assignment), meetings and sharing sessions with teachers at least once per term, and feedback for every teacher who was involved in the Program after classroom observation (once per term).

Measures

Two English writing exercises (i.e. two sentence starters) in 1999-2000 and two standardized measures in 2000-2001 were used for the study. The two measures, the Questionnaire Measure of Children's Motivations for Reading (MRQ, Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) and the Test for Creative Thinking-Drawing Production (TCT-DP, Urban & Jellen, 1996) were presented in Chinese. They had been translated and back-translated to ensure that clarity and appropriateness of wordings were used in the measures.

English Writing Exercises

Children's creative English Writing was assessed by a sentence starter "One day, when I opened the cupboard in my kitchen" before the onset of the creative English Reading Program, and then "One day, when I opened the fridge in my kitchen" after the Program had run for two school terms.

Each piece of work was assessed twice by the researcher: *only pictures* (and the words that label the pictures) and *only words* (the words that connect with the sentence starter). The assessment criteria of the art form and the verbal form have come from the interpretations of The Test for Creative Thinking: Drawing Production (TCT-DP) by Urban and Jellen (1996) by means of their "Components Model of Creativity" as frame of reference. The model showed "different areas that had to be considered and kept in mind while trying to educate for creativity or assess creative potential, or while providing the best (environmental) conditions for developing and assessing creativity in individuals" (p. 7). TCT-DP was chosen as a basis of this study because this test was "suitable for studying and examining effects of training and learning as a pre-and post-test" (p. 5). Since this is a study on creative writing, the criteria for the evaluation were modified to assess the children's creative thinking as

expressed both in art form and in verbal form.

The following 14 categories were used as the criteria for assessment of the art form and the verbal form with modifications on the interpretations and the assessment.

1. Continuation (Cn):

For pictures, a continuation was not only the direct extension of a given fragment, but also any utilization of the fragment. (see illustration 1) The scoring was from 0 to 6 (0=a closed cupboard or fridge, 6= "I" "see/do" more than 5 things inside the cupboard/ fridge).

For words, like pictures, a continuation was not only the direct extension of a given fragment, but also any utilization of the fragment. (see illustration 2) The scoring was from 0 to 6 (1=mere repetition of the sentence starter, 6=more than one sentence).

2. Completions (Cm):

For pictures, continued fragments were added, and very detailed. (see illustration 1) The scoring was from 0 to 6 (0=nothing could be seen inside the cupboard/ fridge because it was closed, 6= "I" "see/do" more than 5 things described in detail inside the cupboard/ fridge).

For words, like pictures, continued fragments were added, and very detailed. (see illustration 2) The scoring was from 0 to 6. (1=unchanged repetition of the sentence starter or words that were related to the sentence starter but not written in a sentence form, 6=more than one complete sentence).

3. New elements (Ne):

New elements were new supplementary figures added.

For pictures, this category was divided into two parts: pictures (did not include pictures mixed in words) and color. (see illustration 1) The scoring was 0 to 6. For pictures, 3 points were given when words were used to label pictures, and 6 points were given when speech bubbles, etc. were used). For color, 3 points were given when the words/ pictures were colored, and 6 points were given when more than six colors were used to color the words/ pictures.

For words, this category was also divided into two parts: pictures (only include pictures mixed in words) and color. (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 to 6. For pictures, 2 points were given when pictures were used to represent words, and 6 points were given when six colors or more were used to color the sentence (pictures and/or words). For color, 2 points were given when the picture or the sentence was colored, and 6 points were given when six colors or more were used to color the whole sentence (picture and/or words).

4. Connections made with lines (CI)

For pictures, this was connection between two continued fragments, and/or new elements, and figures/elements outside the large square frame. (see illustration 3) The scoring was 0 to 6. (2=something inside, 6= "I" open the cupboard/fridge and see something inside/ things falling out)

For words, this was also connection between two continued fragments, and/or new elements, and elements outside the large square frame. (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 to 6. (1=there was a subject "I" or just words only, and 6=more than one related sentence).

5. Connections made that contribute to a theme (Cth):

For pictures, all the elements/figures were “connected” in order to produce a theme. (see illustration 4) The scoring was 0 to 6. (2=only something inside, and 6= “I” see something inside the cupboard/ fridge; holistic)

For words, all the elements were connected in order to produce a theme. (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 to 6. 3 points were automatically given for the sentence starter. (4=all words were related to the topic, and 6= “I” see something inside the cupboard/ fridge; holistic)

6. Boundary-breaking being fragment-dependent (Bfd):

For pictures, this was breaking the boundary but logical or earthly. (see illustration 3) The scoring was 0 or 6. (0=kitchen utensils or food, 6=things logical, e.g. fire, a mouse, flies, cockroaches).

For words, this was breaking the boundary but logical or earthly. (see illustration 5) The scoring was 0 or 6. (0=kitchen utensils or food, 6=things logical, e.g. a girl, a mouse, a cat)

7. Boundary-breaking being fragment-independent (Bfi):

For pictures, this was breaking the boundary but illogical or unearthly. (see illustration 6) The scoring was 0 or 6. (0=kitchen utensils or food, 6=things illogical/unearthly, e.g. a superman, a poke ball, a sun)

For words, this was also breaking the boundary but illogical or unearthly. (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 or 6. (0=kitchen utensils or food, 6=things illogical/unearthly, e.g. ET, Rainy and Cloudy)

8. Perspective (Pe):

For pictures, this was three-dimensional. (see illustration 4) The scoring was 0 or 6. (6=three-dimensional, e.g. a picture of the kitchen)

For words, this was also three-dimensional, using action words (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 to 6. (0=words only, 6=I see something in action, e.g. playing, flying)

9. Humor, affectivity/ emotionality/ expressive power of the drawing (Hu):

For pictures, these were the pictures that gave humorous response, e.g. elements that were combined in a funny way or drawn in a witty fashion (see illustration 4) or just had feeling. (see illustration 1) This category was divided into two parts: humor (the scoring is 0 to 6) and emotion (the scoring is 0 to 6). For humor, 3 points were given to funny or illogical pictures, and 6 points were given to very funny or very illogical pictures, e.g. animals smiling or singing. For emotion, 0 point was given to pictures that had no people in them, and 6 points were given to pictures that had people showing feeling, e.g. frightened, calling “help”.

For words, these were words that gave humorous response (see illustration 2) or just showing feeling (see illustration 5). This category was divided into 2 parts: humor (scoring 0 to 6) and emotion (scoring 0 to 6). For humor, 3 points were given to words that were funny/ illogical, and 6 points were given to words that were very funny/ illogical, e.g. ET in the fridge, chicken leg flying. For emotion, 3 points were given to feeling that could only be deduced from the picture or sentence, and 6 points were given to feeling that was described in words, e.g. hot, cold.

10. Unconventionality A (Uca) – Unconventional Manipulation:

Pictures were those that were drawn in an unconventional way (e.g. upside down, outside the frame) (see illustration 1) The scoring was 0 or 3. (3= pictures that had a thought bubble, water dripping, the person fell down, etc.)

Words were those that were written in an unconventional way. (see illustration 7) The scoring was 0 or 3. (3= pictures between words, etc.)

11. Unconventionality B (Ucb) – Symbolic, abstract, fictional:

Pictures were those that had a fictional or surrealistic theme. (see illustration 6) The scoring is 0 or 3. (3= e.g. monsters queuing, etc.)

Words were also those that had a fictional or surrealistic theme. (see illustration 2) The scoring was 0 or 3. (3= e.g. the ET theme, etc.)

12. Unconventionality C (Ucc) – Symbol-figure-combination(s):

For pictures, they were combinations of figures with symbols, signs, words, numbers, and/or cartoon-like elements (see illustration 1). The scoring was 0 or 3. (3=pictures that had words (English or Chinese words)

For words, they were words and pictures in a sentence. (see illustration 6) The scoring was 0 or 3. (3=words and pictures in a sentence)

13. Unconventionality D (Ucd) – Non-stereotypical utilization of given fragments/figures:

For pictures and words, the scoring was 3 to 0 points. 3 points were given for a non-stereotypical utilization of the given fragments. Stereotypical elements were kitchen utensils and food.

14. Speed (Sp):

The scoring was 0 to 6 points. If the piece of work (pictures or words) were completed in less than 12 minutes, they got the following additional points by rewarding speed:

Under 2 minutes: 6 points; under 4 minutes: 5 points; under 6 minutes: 4 points; under 8 minutes: 3 points; under 10 minutes, 2 points; under 12 minutes, 1 point; 12 to 15 minutes: 0 points.

Preliminary analyses of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha of the writing-drawing exercises were high. In writings, the overall pre- and post-program alphas were respectively .93, .89; in drawings, respectively .78, .89.

Test for Creative Thinking-Drawing Production (TCT-DP)

This drawing instrument was shown to be a culture fair (Jellen & Urban, 1986, 1989), simple and economic assessment of a person's creative potential (Urban & Jellen, 1996). It is designed from *A Components Model of Creativity* that consists of six interactive components working together for and in the creative process (Urban, 2003). The first three represent the cognitive components: divergent thinking and acting, general knowledge and thinking base, specific knowledge base and area specific skills; the other three represent personality components: focusing and task commitment, motivation and motives, openness and tolerance of ambiguity. A set of 11 criteria was conceptualized for the evaluation of the drawing productions: Continuations (Cn), Completions (Cm), New elements (Ne), Connections made with a line (C1), Connections made to produce a theme (Cth), Boundary-breaking that is fragment-dependent (Bfd), Boundary-breaking that is fragment-independent (Bfi),

Perspective (Pe), Humor (Hu), Unconventionality (Uc), & Speed (Sp).

The summed up total score gives an estimate of an individual's creative potential. The test is available in two forms A and B. The interrater reliability coefficients of TCT-DP were found in the range of .89 to .97 in the scorings of two trained scorers (Urban & Jellen, 1985 in Urban & Jellen, 1996). In the present study, the TCT-DP interrater reliability coefficient was .74 and .77 in the pre- and post-test respectively while the overall internal consistency of the pre- and post-test coefficient alpha was .69 and .71 respectively. When Brocher (1989, in Urban & Jellen, 1996) used the TCT-DP as a pre- and post-test on a creativity training study, the re-test reliability was $r = .81$ & $.71$ in the control and training group respectively.

Questionnaire Measure of Children's Motivations for Reading (MRQ)

The 53-item questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) is designed at the National Reading Research Center (NRRC) to assess 11 dimensions of children's reading motivation with emphases on competence and efficacy in reading, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and social aspects of reading. The 11 dimensions/scales include: reading efficacy (3 items), reading challenge (5 items), reading curiosity (6 items), reading involvement (6 items), importance of reading (2 items), reading recognition (5 items), reading for grades (4 items), social reasons for reading (7 items), reading competition (6 items), compliance (5 items) and reading work avoidance (4 items). Each item was scored on a 1 (very different from me) to 4 (a lot like me) scale; higher scores mean stronger endorsement of the item.

The internal consistency reliabilities (i.e. Primary 4 & 5) of values greater than .70 had included: reading challenge, reading curiosity, reading involvement, social reasons for reading, reading for competition, and reading recognition (Wigfield, Guthrie, & McGough, 1996). In the present study, the overall internal consistency reliabilities (i.e. Primary 1 to Primary 4) of pre- and post-test values greater than .70 had included: social reasons for reading, reading competition, reading involvement, reading work avoidance, reading recognition, and importance of reading.

Procedures

The participants, pupils of Primary 1 to Primary 3 (i.e. 1999-2000) of this elementary school worked on a writing exercise in September 1999, and then another one in July 2000. These exercises were conducted as games outside the regular school curriculum to eliminate test anxiety. In the writing exercise in September 1999, the children were given a sentence starter "One day, when I opened the cupboard in my kitchen," and in the writing exercise in July 2000, the children were given another sentence starter "One day, when I opened the fridge in my kitchen." Instructions to the writing exercises were given as follows:

"What you have to do is to write down what you think. Your writings must be expressed in English. Do not have to worry about spelling. If there are words you do not know, you can substitute with pictures (translated from Chinese).

In the following year (2000-2001), students of Primary 1 to Primary 4 of the same elementary school responded to a drawing test (TCT-DP, Urban, 1996) and a 53-item reading motivation questionnaire (MRQ, Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). These assessments were conducted in class following the standard procedures given by two test administrators. One of the administrators gave a brief introduction about the purpose of the exercise and then followed by instructions. The other test administrator responded to any query raised by individual participant who raised his/her hand.

Results

The effects of humorous rhymed stories in the Creative English Program on students' creative English writing, their creative thinking and reading motivation were examined by pre- and post-test comparisons.

English Writing Exercises

Students' creative English writing (i.e. Primary 1 to Primary 3 of 1999-2000) was examined by comparing scores obtained before the onset of the Creative English Program with those obtained 10 months after the implementation (i.e. end of the academic year 1999-2000). Paired t-tests revealed significantly higher scores in students' English writing and significantly lower scores in their drawing (see Table 1). Results revealed that 10 months after the Program implementation, students' score in the creative English Writing Exercise was significantly higher than that obtained before the onset of the program ($p < .001$). Similar patterns were shown in Primary One, Two & Three. At the same time, their scores in pictures were significantly lowered. Similar patterns were also shown in Primary Two & Three.

Creative Thinking

Students' creative thinking (i.e. primary 1 to primary 4) was examined by comparing scores obtained in their drawing productions in September 2000 with those obtained in July 2001. Paired t-tests revealed higher mean scores of creative thinking in the drawing productions of Primary One and Two; the significance was shown in primary one. However, the contrary was shown in Primary Three and Four; lower mean scores of creative thinking in the drawing productions were shown in Primary Three and Four; the significance was shown in Primary Three (see Table 2).

Reading Motivation (MRQ)

Paired t-tests were run on each of the 11 scales of the MRQ given in the beginning and the end of the school year (2000-2001) to assess whether the mean level of students' responses (i.e. Primary 1 to Primary 4) on the different motivation scales changed over time (see Table 3). There were significant decreases in reading efficacy, reading curiosity, reading recognition, reading for grades, social reasons of reading, reading competition, and reading work avoidance but significant increase in compliance.

For boys, significant increase in the mean scores was found in compliance but significant decrease was found in reading work avoidance. More significant changes were shown in girls. Specifically, significant decreases were shown in reading efficacy, reading challenge, reading curiosity, importance of reading, reading recognition, reading for grades, social reasons for reading, and reading competition. For Primary 1 students, significant decrease occurred in reading efficacy, reading recognition, social reasons for reading, reading competition and reading work avoidance but significant increase occurred in compliance. For Primary 2 students, significant decrease occurred in reading efficacy, reading for grades, reading competition and reading work avoidance. While no significant change was observed in Primary 3 students, significant increase in compliance was shown in Primary 4 students (Table 4).

Discussion

The study showed that the creative Reading Program had successfully motivated children to read, think and write.

In the two writing exercises, the second one had more words and less pictures except for Primary 1 because the children were only 6 years old, and they knew very little English words to express themselves. The result showed that students were not intimidated by English words. They tried very hard to use the limited vocabulary that they had learnt to express themselves. The humorous rhymed stories written by authors like Dr. Seuss, with their amusing illustrations, expressionistic texts and playful sounds had certainly inspired and motivated the children. Besides, the teachers' lively approach to the texts, with projects, discussions and activities had made reading lessons enjoyable. Giving each text a topic concerning moral and ethical issue for discussion had also drawn the story closer to the children's lives, thus drawing them closer to the story's world, thus motivating them to enjoy the stories more.

In the study, students' creative process could be seen clearly. They would first be inspired and motivated by the humorous rhymed stories, then they would express their creativity first by drawing pictures, and then by pictures and words, and finally, by words only (Auray & Mariconda, 2000). Also, when the task of reading was enjoyable, students would put more effort on it, having positive intrinsic motivation (Falvey, 1997). When students love to read, they would love to write, and when they found pleasure in writing, they would read with better comprehension (Leonhardt, 1998).

Since not many creative programs/activities were run by this elementary school before 1999 (a "Powerful Learning Day," sponsored by the Hong Kong Chinese University was organised for Primary 3 students to promote creativity and multiple-intelligence in that year), when the Creative English Program was introduced, there was an immense change in the teaching method for the teachers, and a big adaptation for the children. It was not easy for the teachers to suddenly know how to teach "creatively" or for the students to think and write "creatively." It takes time for both the teachers and the children. When a school adopts a new creative program like "Happy Learning," particularly an English creative program (when both teachers and students had to cope with a language and a culture that was foreign to them), Primary 1 students were often easier to adapt to this Program than students from higher levels because the Primary 2's, 3's, and 4's had to adapt to the change more than the Primary 1's who were fresh to the school, and were ready to take any method of teaching.

During the period of implementation of the Program, the school (the principal, together with the English teachers and other supporting staff) had actively motivated the Program. Awards on "Good Participation," "Good Performance" and "Creativity" were granted to the students when the academic year ended. The school had published newsletters to inform the parents and the public concerning the Program, and they had published the children's creative writing in the form of a booklet. All these did encourage the children to be creative, to enjoy the Program, to read happily and write creatively.

It is hoped that the Creative English Program will benefit the children of this school in the long run, and the humorous rhymed stories will motivate them to love reading English, and then to think and write creatively.

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Appendix

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Creative Writing

Grade	Words				t
	Pre-test		Post-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Overall	7.83	16.39	28.96	20.85	-9.71 *** (<i>df</i> = 97)
Primary 1	4.28	11.84	13.88	18.94	-2.94 ** (<i>df</i> = 31)
Primary 2	4.55	11.63	29.52	18.65	-7.13 *** (<i>df</i> = 32)
Primary 3	14.55	21.74	43.03	13.80	-7.56 *** (<i>df</i> = 32)

Grade	Pictures				t
	Pre-test		Post-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Overall	26.73	14.41	16.31	16.98	.55 *** (<i>df</i> = 97)
Primary 1	25.95	12.01	25.75	15.14	-.07 (<i>df</i> = 31)
Primary 2	31.39	15.44	14.00	17.02	4.72 *** (<i>df</i> = 32)
Primary 3	23.18	14.64	9.45	14.81	4.64 *** (<i>df</i> = 32)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of Creative Thinking (TCT-DP)

Grade	Pre-test		Post-test		t	
	M	SD	M	SD		
Overall	18.39	8.24	18.36	7.88	.07	(<i>df</i> = 573)
Primary 1	15.43	7.93	17.98	8.14	-2.67 **	(<i>df</i> = 147)
Primary 2	18.55	7.93	19.39	7.57	-.89	(<i>df</i> = 144)
Primary 3	18.99	8.47	16.29	7.42	3.08 **	(<i>df</i> = 146)
Primary 4	20.81	7.73	19.92	7.96	.92	(<i>df</i> = 133)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3**Means and Standard Deviations of MRQ Subscales by Sex**

Subscales	Test				t
	Pre-test		Post-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	
	Overall				<i>df</i> = 573
Reading Efficacy	2.93	.95	2.81	.71	2.54 *
Reading Challenge	3.09	.93	3.03	.69	1.19
Reading Curiosity	3.18	.81	3.07	.63	2.60 **
Reading Involvement	3.14	.87	3.15	.68	-.27
Importance of Reading	2.85	1.15	2.73	.95	1.79
Reading Recognition	3.11	.92	3.00	.73	2.22 *
Reading for Grades	3.19	.94	3.08	.75	2.30 *
Social Reasons for Reading	2.91	.94	2.81	.76	1.98 *
Reading Competition	3.05	.84	2.94	.69	2.59 **
Compliance	2.93	.59	3.04	.52	-3.27 ***
Reading Work Avoidance	2.40	1.13	2.13	.88	4.65 ***
	Boys				<i>df</i> = 328
Reading Efficacy	2.87	.99	2.81	.71	.95
Reading Challenge	3.01	.90	3.06	.65	-.79
Reading Curiosity	3.16	.87	3.06	.57	1.62
Reading Involvement	3.13	.94	3.16	.59	-.33
Importance of Reading	2.80	1.20	2.78	.90	.23
Reading Recognition	3.01	1.03	3.03	.67	-.24
Reading for Grades	3.14	1.02	3.08	.72	.88
Social Reasons for Reading	2.85	1.05	2.80	.74	.89
Reading Competition	3.01	.88	2.94	.65	1.16
Compliance	2.87	.61	3.04	.52	-4.00 ***
Reading Work Avoidance	2.49	1.12	2.12	.83	5.00 ***
	Girls				<i>df</i> = 244
Reading Efficacy	3.02	.88	2.81	.72	2.77 **
Reading Challenge	3.20	.97	.30	.74	2.55 *
Reading Curiosity	3.22	.71	3.08	.71	2.11 *
Reading Involvement	3.15	.76	3.15	.77	-.03
Importance of Reading	2.91	1.09	2.67	1.01	2.43 *
Reading Recognition	3.23	.73	2.95	.79	3.84 ***
Reading for Grades	3.25	.81	3.07	.77	2.54 *
Social Reasons for Reading	2.98	.76	2.83	.79	2.04 *
Reading Competition	3.11	.80	.29	.74	2.58 *
Compliance	3.03	.55	3.04	.52	-.29
Reading Work Avoidance	2.27	1.13	2.14	.94	1.49

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of MRQ Subscales by Grade

Subscales	Test				t
	Pre-test		Post-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	
	Primary 1				<i>df = 147</i>
Reading Efficacy	3.32	1.31	3.00	.77	2.58 *
Reading Challenge	3.29	1.33	3.13	.75	1.24
Reading Curiosity	3.34	1.13	3.15	.61	1.78
Reading Involvement	3.32	1.29	3.17	.75	1.26
Importance of Reading	3.17	1.41	2.99	.97	1.17
Reading Recognition	3.46	1.26	3.20	.71	2.19 *
Reading for Grades	3.47	1.27	3.30	.66	1.48
Social Reasons for Reading	3.26	1.24	2.87	.74	3.39 ***
Reading Competition	3.35	1.14	3.06	.59	2.68 **
Compliance	2.91	.65	3.15	.49	-3.66 ***
Reading Work Avoidance	2.97	1.51	2.21	.89	5.44 ***
	Primary 2				<i>df = 144</i>
Reading Efficacy	3.00	.77	2.70	.72	3.34 ***
Reading Challenge	3.11	.76	2.97	.65	1.65
Reading Curiosity	3.17	.74	3.02	.56	1.92
Reading Involvement	3.01	.70	3.08	.55	-1.00
Importance of Reading	2.80	.97	2.67	.91	1.15
Reading Recognition	3.04	.78	2.91	.69	1.51
Reading for Grades	3.20	.70	3.01	.73	2.17 *
Social Reasons for Reading	2.86	.75	2.73	.72	1.67
Reading Competition	3.02	.62	2.87	.66	2.00 *
Compliance	2.96	.51	3.01	.48	-.93
Reading Work Avoidance	2.30	.95	2.08	.89	2.11 *
	Primary 3				<i>df = 146</i>
Reading Efficacy	2.77	.70	2.82	.71	-.57
Reading Challenge	2.99	.68	3.02	.70	-.34
Reading Curiosity	3.19	.64	3.06	.78	1.56
Reading Involvement	3.10	.68	3.17	.77	-.77
Importance of Reading	2.83	1.09	2.67	1.02	1.24
Reading Recognition	3.00	.70	2.99	.82	.21
Reading for Grades	3.17	.86	3.00	.84	1.69
Social Reasons for Reading	2.81	.78	2.87	.89	-.68
Reading Competition	2.95	.72	2.96	.81	-.09
Compliance	2.99	.62	2.96	.56	.48
Reading Work Avoidance	2.15	.92	2.14	1.01	.06
	Primary 4				<i>df = 133</i>
Reading Efficacy	2.64	.68	2.71	.60	-1.13
Reading Challenge	2.96	.75	3.00	.63	-.55

Reading Curiosity	3.02	.54	3.05	.54	-.53
Reading Involvement	3.13	.59	3.21	.60	-.92
Importance of Reading	2.57	1.01	2.58	.83	-.12
Reading Recognition	2.89	.70	2.88	.63	.07
Reading for Grades	2.89	.71	2.98	.70	-1.12
Social Reasons for Reading	2.68	.78	2.76	.67	-.90
Reading Competition	2.87	.71	2.85	.66	.27
Compliance	2.86	.58	3.05	.52	-3.00 **
Reading Work Avoidance	2.15	.76	2.08	.67	.73

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001