

The Power of Haiku in Literature Classes: Enhancing Creative Writing Skills to Undergraduate Students at the Faculty of Education / Janzour

Dalla, Fatma

Department of English, Faculty of Education, Janzour, University of Tripoli

F.Dalla@uot.edu.ly

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how haiku can enhance the creative writing skills of undergraduate students in the English Language department at the Faculty of Education, Janzour, University of Tripoli. Haiku, a Japanese form of poetry, consists of three lines and 17 syllables. Its themes often revolve around nature and emotions. The researcher employed a mixed-methods approach, involving quantitative techniques in pre- and post-tests to assess students' writing abilities before and after participating in haiku tasks. And a qualitative technique via focus group discussions to capture students' perceptions. Findings indicate a significant improvement in students' creative writing skills, as evidenced by their ability to generate vivid imagery and emotions within a limited word count.

Keywords: Haiku, Creative Writing, Literature.

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الورقة البحثية كيف يمكن للهايكو أن يعزز مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية - جنزور، جامعة طرابلس. الهايكو، وهو شكل من أشكال الشعر الياباني، يتكوّن من ثلاثة أسطر وسبعة عشر مقطعًا صوتيًا. غالبًا ما تدور موضوعاته حول الطبيعة والمشاعر. استخدم الباحث منهجية مختلطة، شملت تقنيات كمية عبر اختبارات قبل وبعد لتقييم قدرات الطلاب الكتابية قبل المشاركة في كتابة الهايكو وبعدها، بالإضافة إلى تقنية نوعية تمثلت في مناقشات لرصد تصورات الطلاب. تشير النتائج إلى تحسن ملحوظ في مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية لدى الطلاب، ويتجلى ذلك في قدرتهم على إنتاج صور حية وحسية ضمن عدد محدود من الكلمات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهايكو، الكتابة الإبداعية، الأدب الإنجليزي.

Introduction:

As an art form, poetry has been used by teachers as a tool to motivate students to become more creative. Haiku specifically fulfills this job for its brevity yet expressive depth. It has a 5-7-5 syllable structure and uses the themes of nature and emotions to depict a thought or a feeling. This structure allows students to express themselves while practicing their writing skills. Haiku is not very challenging for students as it can be adapted to suit many language levels. In addition, it increases their appreciation for literature as they get a sense of accomplishment after composing their haiku. This is important for undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, Janzour, who only study English literature in two courses and feel hesitant about mastering it fully.

Statement of the Problem:

Undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education / Janzour struggle to express their thoughts creatively when writing. Moreover, literature teachers find keeping students motivated and interested in literature challenging. This study highlights the benefits of incorporating haiku into the literature class to ignite students' originality and enhance their creative writing proficiency.

Research Question:

1. How does incorporating haiku into literature classes contribute to developing creative writing skills?

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to investigate the impact of integrating haiku as a poetry form on the development of students' creative writing abilities.

Significance of the Study:

This study adds to the field of literature education by presenting new perspectives on the pedagogical value of haiku. It displays how haiku can enhance students' creative writing skills. This study offers language educators, in general, and literature teachers, specifically, the potential gain that students will obtain through haiku.

Literature review:

What is a Haiku?

"The name *haiku* was established by Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) at the end of the nineteenth century. Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) is revered as

the father of haiku and is probably the most famous haiku writer of the past 400 years. This poetry form has been prevalent among the educated elite in Japan, and haiku is also taught in schools in many countries" (see Yasuda 1957; Hakutani 2009: 7–36; Higginson 1985: 7–47; Addiss 2012; Stahlberg2021) Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry, it consists of three lines with a syllable form of 7-5-7, 17 syllables in total. Haiku allows students to express themselves freely, and it usually has a theme of nature and the change of seasons. According to Lida (2017), "The essence of haiku is to describe, as it is, what the poet sees and feels in their life".

Educational Benefits of Haikus:

Crafting haiku requires reading other haiku and looking them up in dictionaries, enabling students to learn vocabulary and grammatical structure while writing their poems. Furthermore, due to the fixed haiku form and syllable structure, students are encouraged to compose their poems creatively within the limited word choice and economy of language, to capture vivid images and emotions in a controlled space. Francisco (2016) states, "Haiku can be a wonderful tool in education; it is a powerful genre, alluring, intriguing, at the same time highly concrete". Haiku activates students' sensory engagement and heightens their observational skills as they try to observe, catch, and record fleeting moments. Haiku also enhances students' critical thinking skills as they recall their memories and reflect upon which moments are worth documenting. Through haiku, students gain cultural education as they learn about a Japanese form of poetry. This will broaden their insights and deepen their appreciation for world literature.

Creative Writing Skills:

Creative writing skills signify whatever tools, instruments, and skills a writer can utilize to create novel pieces of work. Such skills require not only advanced writing abilities but originality, style, and innovation. Creative writing incorporates a selection of genres, such as fiction, poetry, drama, satire, and more. Here are some components of creative writing skills:

Creativity:

Literature writers must be innovative and think outside the box. As Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) assert, "creativity is fundamental to writing. It allows writers to push boundaries and find innovative solutions to narrative problems, fostering engagement both for the writer and the reader."

Imagination and originality in writing:

These two factors are vital in any literary text; a good writer can generate original ideas and find unique angles to form a storyline to capture readers' attention, according to *Oatley (2011)*. "The role of imagination in writing cannot be overstated. It provides the necessary fuel for constructing narrative worlds and developing character dynamics, which leads to deeper cognitive engagement for both the writer and the audience."

Structured Thinking:

A good creative text requires several factors. A writer should know how to make the plot credible and link it well with other story factors. *Simonton (2012)* states, "In creative writing, structured thinking serves as the skeleton that supports imaginative ideas. Without such frameworks, narratives risk becoming disjointed, making it difficult for readers to follow or invest emotionally in the story."

Creative Writing Theory and Haiku

From a theoretical standpoint, haiku aligns with the principles of constraint-based creativity (Gross, 2000), which argues that limitations, such as fixed forms or themes, can enhance imaginative expression. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports this, suggesting that structured tools (like poetic forms) scaffold cognitive development. The rigid structure of haiku becomes a cognitive tool that enhances students' ability to reflect, imagine, and revise.

Overview of Previous Studies:

Haiku has been an interesting topic for educators for years. However, the studies that were conducted on this topic varied accordingly. The areas of difference were mainly about content, age group, type of writing, and teaching strategies. Hence, these variations prove that haiku is such a powerful tool that ought to be utilized to teach many topics and serve different purposes and age groups.

The study, "The Influence of Haiku Composition Tasks on the Development of Academic Writing Skills," by J. Santillón-Icigüez et al. (2023) investigates how academic writing skills can be improved through haiku among EFL learners. It concludes that students became more engaged and confident after participating in haiku activities. A qualitative analysis showed that haiku aided students in showing creativity and achieving language proficiency.

In the article "Developing Voice by Composing Haiku," Iida, A. (2010) stresses that haiku should be taught in a social-expressivist approach.

The social-expressivist approach, as advocated by Iida (2010), emphasizes the dual role of personal expression and social interaction in writing. This approach encourages students to explore their voice while engaging with others through peer feedback and shared interpretation. The central idea is that students not only express themselves creatively but also participate in a collaborative process that enriches their understanding of the text and enhances their emotional connection to their writing.

The study highlights that through writing haiku, students can develop their voice in writing. The findings suggest that writing haiku poems will keep students engaged, enabling them to express themselves properly through poems.

Moreover, in the article, "Haiku: Teaching the Art of Brevity in Writing," Whittingham, J. L. (2003) addresses the advantages of incorporating haiku in elementary education. He suggests that due to haikus' brevity and clarity, learners' cognitive skills and writing abilities can be enhanced drastically. He also argues that once writing skills are improved, overall language proficiency is improved.

Furthermore, the study "Emotions in Second Language Poetry Writing: A Poetic Inquiry" by Iida & Chamcharatsri (2020) investigates the emotions Japanese EFL students experience while writing haiku. It shows that by writing poetry, students get a chance to express themselves fully, resulting in a deeper understanding of language and identity in a second language. The study's writers concluded that students writing poetry, including haiku, can make language development easier as well, and they will explore their feelings and thoughts throughout the process.

Finally, Lida (2011) in his dissertation "The Contribution of Composing Haiku to L2 Academic Literacy Development" explores how haiku composition can facilitate students' second language learning. He argues that the benefits of writing haiku are numerous, both cognitively and emotionally. The findings also recommend employing haiku as it can be a powerful teaching method for all language skills.

Gaps in the Literature:

As mentioned before, there have been studies on the effect of haiku in teaching languages. They targeted elementary students and ESL or EFL learners. These studies focused on haiku in academic writing, expressing emotions, developing voice, literacy development, and writing composition in general. However, there is limited research on the integration of haiku specifically in creative writing. Also, there is a noticeable gap in research on undergraduate students, particularly Arabs

and Libyans. This is a critical oversight given the cultural, linguistic, and curricular differences these students face. In many Arab universities, literature is often treated as a peripheral component of English studies, leaving students with minimal exposure to creative expression in the classroom. Their potential for benefiting from poetic forms like haiku remains underexplored.

This study aims to address these gaps by studying the impact of teaching haiku on the creative writing skills of undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, Janzour. Adding a new dimension to the existing literature on creative writing pedagogy.

Theoretical framework:

Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky primarily developed the Constructivist Theory. It evolves around the concept that students learn more effectively when they are part of the process rather than passively receiving information. In the context of haiku, this theory provides learners with hands-on materials where they use their vocabulary, themes, and memories to express their feelings and thoughts while crafting haiku poems. In addition, this theory encourages group work, so peer feedback and self-reflection make the learning process more rewarding and engaging.

Methodology:

- **Participants:**

Fifteen undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education / Janzour enrolled in the Introduction to World Literature course.

- **Data Collection:**

A mixed-methods approach was adopted. Quantitative data came from pre- and post-writing tests. Qualitative insights were collected through focus group discussions.

- **Pre-Test Procedure:**

Students wrote three-line poems on nature, emotions, or seasons. Peer feedback followed. Then, using examples from classic haiku poets, haiku structure and themes were introduced.

- **Post-Test Procedure:**

Students wrote a second poem using the 5-7-5 haiku format. While the traditional structure was encouraged, minor flexibility was allowed for non-native speakers, promoting inclusivity. Peer feedback was again incorporated.

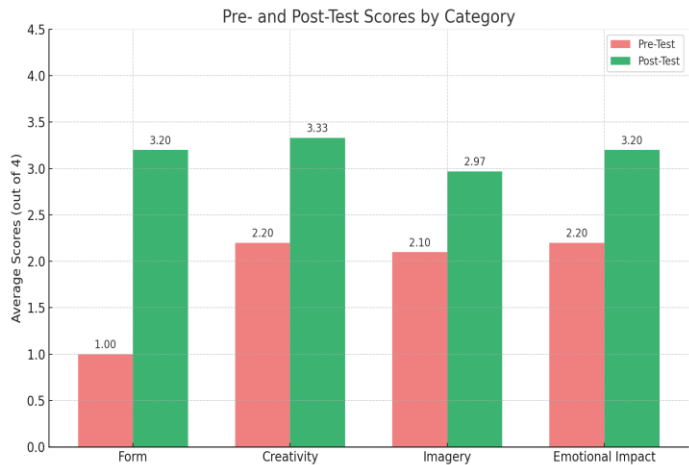
- **Rubric and Inter-Rater Reliability:**

A rubric assessed form, creativity, imagery, and emotional impact (max 16 points). To ensure the reliability of the haiku assessments, inter-rater agreement was measured using Cohen's kappa. The resulting value was $\kappa = 0.82$, indicating almost perfect agreement between the two raters (Landis & Koch, 1977).

- **Pre and post-test Score Table:**

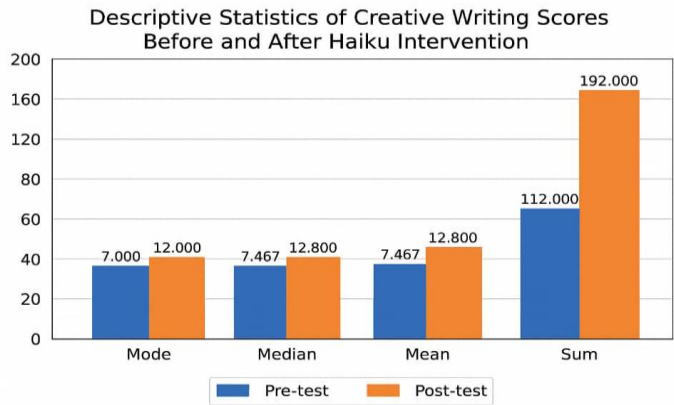
Category	Average Pre-Test Score	Average Post-Test Score	Average Improvement
Form	1.0	3.2	+2.2
Creativity	2.2	3.33	+1.13
Imagery	2.1	2.97	+0.87
Emotional Impact	2.2	3.2	+1.0

The following chart compares average pre- and post-test scores in form, creativity, imagery, and emotional impact, highlighting consistent gains across all categories.



Quantitative Results:

The mean score increased from 7.467 (pre-test) to 12.800 (post-test), with a median shift from 7.0 to 12.0. The mode increased from 7.0 to 12.0. The total score rose from 112 to 192. These changes signify a strong positive impact of haiku instruction.



Qualitative Results:

Focus group discussions revealed an initial fear of haiku's complexity, followed by increased enjoyment and confidence. Students reported enhanced creativity, emotional expression, and appreciation for peer feedback.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Students' writing evolved from simplistic to more vivid, emotional, and structured forms. The intervention positively affected both their technical and expressive abilities.

Conclusion:

The rubric and statistical analysis confirmed significant improvement in creative writing skills after haiku instruction. Students moved from basic descriptions to emotionally resonant and imaginative compositions. Focus group data reinforced this development.

Educational Implications:

Haiku, as a poetry form, can be utilized in education in numerous ways, more than just activities and assignments. For example, through competitions and challenges, students can work individually or in groups. Their unique haiku can be showcased in journals or public displays. It can be used as a tool to practice reflection, both personally and in groups. Haiku can be integrated digitally to engage young learners through images and videos. Thus, educational faculties should make the most of it to enhance language skills and foster creativity and originality in students.

Limitations of the Study:

The study was conducted with a limited number of students at the Faculty of Education in Janzour and was carried out over a short period. The findings cannot be generalized to all undergraduate students in other faculties. A larger sample over a longer period may result in a more reliable conclusion about the impact of haiku writing on creative writing skills. Furthermore, the study's assessment methods (e.g., pre- and post-test scores) may not fully capture the complexity of creative improvement. Finally, the enthusiasm and instructional style of the educator could have enhanced student engagement independently of the haiku intervention itself. Future research should include multiple instructors with varied teaching approaches to control for this effect.

Recommendations for Future Research:

There are several potential areas for future studies. For example, other poetry forms can be investigated, like limericks, sonnets, narrative, and free verse poems. More research can be conducted on haiku's impact on students' critical thinking skills and other language skills, such as

reading and vocabulary development. It can also be applied to different levels of students, larger samples, and multiple faculties. Exploring these areas can broaden the understanding of the power of poetry on different language abilities across various levels.

Recommendations:

According to the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Organize Haiku writing workshops.
- Incorporate Haiku into the teaching curriculum.
- Use Haiku for reflection.
- Encourage students to work on Haiku projects.
- Assess creativity via innovative rubrics.
- Provide professional development for educators.
- Encourage interdisciplinary methodology to teach Haiku.
- Facilitate publication opportunities.

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Appendices:

Rubric for Scoring Pre and Post-Tests:

Criteria	Excellent (4 pts)	Good (3 pts)	Fair (2 pts)	Needs Improvement (1 pt)
Form (5-7-5 Syllable Structure)	Perfect 5-7-5 syllable count in all lines.	Minor errors in syllable count, but generally follows 5-7-5.	Noticeable errors in the syllable count.	Does not follow the 5-7-5 syllable structure.

Creativity and Originality	Unique, creative, and unexpected perspectives or ideas.	Some original ideas with familiar themes.	Lacks originality and uses clichéd or predictable themes.	No evidence of creativity or original thought.
Use of Imagery and Sensory Language	Vivid, engaging imagery that evokes sensory experiences.	Good use of imagery, though not as strong or consistent.	Some imagery, but vague or inconsistent.	Little or no imagery, lacks sensory details.
Emotional Impact	Evokes a strong emotional response in the reader.	Evokes some emotion, but not very strong.	Weak emotional engagement.	No emotional depth fails to engage emotionally.

Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. What were your initial thoughts about writing haiku?
2. How would you describe your experience with haiku writing?
3. What challenges did you face while writing haiku?
4. How has writing haiku influenced your creative writing skills?
5. What techniques or skills did you find useful in writing haiku?
6. Did composing haiku affect your emotional expression in writing?
7. Did feedback from classmates impact your writing?
8. What were your main takeaways from the haiku writing instruction?
9. How do you plan to apply what you learned in your future writing?
10. Do you have any suggestions for improving haiku writing instruction?