



The Effect of using Online Websites in EFL classroom on Writing Ability of Iranian intermediate Learners

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Abstract

The use of Technology has become an important part of the learning process in and out of the class. Every language class usually uses some form of technology. Technology has been used to both help and improve language learning especially writing. Technology enables teachers to adapt classroom activities, thus enhancing writing ability. This research aimed to find out students' writing at high school (Razi high school) and knows how websites improve students' writing of tenth – year students at high school. This current study was experimental research which was held at the high school. The experimental research involved two groups of students. They were experimental group and the control group. The research participants were the tenth – year students of high school. The participants of this research were taken randomly. The experimental group included 20 students, and the students of the control group were 20 students too. The findings show that the experimental class experiences improvement in their writing test. It can be concluded that using websites was effective for enhancing learning writing and providing a positive learning experience.

Key words: ability, learning website, writing

I. Introduction

Why Writing Is Important? Most contexts of life (school, the workplace, and the community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place. In the school setting, writing plays two distinct but complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001).

Despite the real-world need for flexibility in writing skill, classroom instruction sometimes overemphasizes certain forms of writing over others. For example, many students are taught a specific and quite rigid structure for writing an essay, commonly known as the “five-paragraph essay.” Skilled writers, however, have more than that single structure to draw on when approaching a writing task. They have a variety of forms, strategies, knowledge, and skills at their disposal that they can apply flexibly to achieve their writing goals. Further, some teachers may overemphasize correct grammar or spelling at the expense of the expression of ideas. Excellent instruction in writing not only emphasizes correctness of forms and conventions, but also instills in writers the command of a wide variety of forms, genres, styles, and tones, and the ability to adapt to different contexts and purposes.

The use of different genres deserves special mention. Research has shown that, to the extent that teachers require writing in the early grades, they tend mainly to ask students to write stories, descriptions of personal experiences, and other kinds of narratives. However, in the middle and high school years, writing assignments typically involve expository tasks, such as reporting, summarizing and analyzing factual information, and expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Sixty percent of writing assignments in 4th grade, 65% in 8th grade, and 75% in 12th grade are expository in nature (Persky et al., 2003). Moreover, expository writing is the most frequently assigned writing task at the college level (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984).

Writing plays two distinct roles in school. First, it is a skill that draws on subskills and processes such as handwriting and spelling; a rich knowledge of vocabulary; mastery of the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and grammar; and the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text). All are necessary for the production of coherently organized essays containing welldeveloped and pertinent ideas, supporting examples, and appropriate detail (Needels & Knapp, 1994). This role can be characterized as “learning to write.” Second, writing is a means to extend and deepen students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). This role is called “writing to learn.” In fact, the roles of learning to write and of writing to learn are interdependent. It was for this reason that Biancarosa and Snow (2004) recommended that language arts teachers use content-area texts to teach reading and writing skills and that content-area teachers provide instruction and practice in discipline-specific reading and writing. Using writing tasks to learn content offers students opportunities to expand their

knowledge of vocabulary; to strengthen the planning, evaluating, and revising process; and to practice grammar, spelling, punctuation, modes of argumentation, and technical writing (Yore, 2003).

writing is one of the four language skills that have to be mastered by the students in learning English, and writing is one of the subjects considered problematic by the students (Wahyuni, 2017). It is often regarded as complicated learning because it is required some media. Writing should be practice, and the students also need time and particular tasks to improve their ability. Wahyuni (2015) stated that writing is a productive skill and natural activity taught in a structured way. On the other hand, writing ability is critical to be acquired the students.

From the experience of practice at “Razi” high school, the researcher found some writing problems. Most of the students had difficulty writing, such as when students made a short paragraph, they did not know how to build grammatically correct sentences. Some students felt confused ways got an idea, and lack of vocabulary made students unhappy and difficult to made short paragraphs. The researcher thought it was necessary to find the solution to the teaching and learning process problems. Therefore, the students’ writing ability should be improved.

One of the ways of teaching writing that can help students is using online learning. (Sahin& Baturay, 2016).

In this classroom, the learning process becomes interesting that given by the teacher. The teacher should create creative activities and make an enjoyable classroom situation to help students generalize their ideas and automaticity improve their writing ability. The websites guide the students to write systematically (Akhand, 2015).

These days, computers, smart phones and other gadgets can connect to the internet and be an alternative learning tool (Sung et al, 2016). However, resources on the internet should be carefully selected by teachers to include a different perspective on the topic that is investigated. The material must follow the curriculum and syllabus mandated in school (Ghavifekr&Rosdy, 2015).

II. Research Questions and Null hypotheses

To investigate the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1- Do online learning websites have any significant effect on writing ability among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners?
- 2- Is there any significant difference between the effect of online learning websites on writing ability among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners?

To statistically test the hypotheses, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

- 1- Online learning website do not have any significant effect on writing ability among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners.
- 2- There is not any significant difference between the effect of online learning websites on writing ability among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners.

III. Participants

The study was conducted between October 2021 and February 2022. The current study design was experimental research, focus on a quantitative approach. There were two variables. Independent and dependent variable. In this case, using website was independent variable to know whether it influences the dependent variable or not. The dependent variable of this research was students writing ability. The experimental class was given treatments through website. The participants of the study were 40 Iranian female EFL learners at “Razi” high school in Tehran, who were selected based on “PET” test. The present study was conducted on the female participants within the age range of 15-16. The selection was made out of 55 participants on the basis of their position. Then, the participants were divided randomly to two groups of Experimental and Control, that each one consists of 20 students. This research was conducted within 10 sessions.

IV. Results and Data Analysis

Before starting the treatment, the participants in both groups received the pretest. It was held to determine whether the Experimental and control groups at the same level in writing ability before applying a new strategy for the experimental group. The pretest consisted of a writing test with a topic. Scoring in this test was analytic scoring not holistic. It means that the researcher considered all features such as content, organization, cohesion, vocabulary and grammar. Analytic scoring schemes thus provide more detailed information about a test taker’s performance in different aspects of writing. The time allotted for this test was 60 minutes. The impact of online websites can be seen in the difference of writing ability between the experimental and control group.

Table 4.1 The comparison between experimental and control group in pre-test

Group	Mean	SD
Experimental	16.5	10.06
Control	15	5.82

Table 3.1 suggested that the students who got treatment in the experimental group and the students treated in the control group have proportionally equal ability. It can be seen that the mean score of experimental group is 16.5 while the mean of control group is 15.

For the purpose of the posttest study, various online writing materials and text retrieved from webpages at <http://www.storybird.com>, www.writingA-Z.com and www.boomwriter.com were used in the experimental class. These websites are designed for learning English online and also provide various resources for teachers and students. In experimental class (group) students read the first chapter of a story, then write, edit and revise the next chapter themselves online. As a class project, teachers can assign all students the same story starter. Once all the stories are written, students can anonymously read other entries and peer assess and vote for the best version of the story. The textbook was printed forms of the text taught in another group with the same topics and contents and writing taught conventionally. During each session, the students of the Control group received the related texts of the same session in the experimental ones. The posttest consisted of writing test with a topic and scoring in this test was analytic. The time allotted for this test was 60 minutes. After studying for almost a semester, the post test was administered to both groups and the result can be seen in the following table.

Table 4.2 The comparison between Experimental and Control groups in posttest

Group	Mean	SD
Experimental	18	4.3
Control	15.5	3.47

Table 4.2 pointed out that the students who studied in the experimental class performed better than the students who studied in the control group. It is obvious that the mean score of experimental group is 18 while the mean of control group is 15.5. Furthermore, the formulated hypotheses were tested to investigate whether there is any significant difference of writing ability between experimental and control group. The result of hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table.

Table 4.3 The computation of independent t-test.

Writing ability	Mean Difference	t	df
equal variance assumed	2.66	3.03	79
equal variance not assumed	2.63	3.01	78

Table 4.3 shows that the experimental and control group are different significant. Also, it is noted that the mean difference between the two groups is 2.63 with the degree of freedom 79. Based on this result, the null (H₀) hypothesis was rejected and in other words, there is a significant difference of writing ability between the experimental and control group.

V. Conclusion

The results of data analysis determined that online learning had a significant effect on writing ability of Iranian intermediate learners. The results here were supporting the positive impact of using online writing on how students could improve their writing ability. The same results could be found in Busch (2003) research that reported the effective role of online. Learning websites in developing the writing skill. The effectiveness of using online learning on writing ability in this study was compatible with the result of Binnur's Study (2011) on the effectiveness of computer instructions in improving the reading comprehension of EFL learners.

Based on the result of data analysis and research findings, the researcher concluded that there was a significant effect between the control and experimental group. Students were enhanced and relaxed in the learning process when taught through websites in experimental group. Therefore, it implies that using websites can keep interaction between students and teachers. It also helps the students to explore and transmit their ideas on writing text. In summary, the use of websites during the research can improve the students' writing ability. Therefore, the use of websites can be effective to help the student's writing ability.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study reaches its end with this section that makes some suggestions for future work in this area.

- The present study focused on teaching writing skill by using on line learning websites. Though based on the results of this study they proved as an effective online and electronic in writing skill, further investigations need to be done focusing on other skills, and other tools such as video learning tools.
- The present study was limited to the Iranian Intermediate EFL learners, but other research studies can be conducted with regard to other language levels such as novice, upper – intermediate and advanced learners.

- The present study was done on female participants at high school within the age of 15 to 16. For better results, it is suggested that other research studies can be conducted with learners at institute, with different ages, both male and female participants and different educational backgrounds.
- Other studies need to be done with other learning technology such as Mobile learning, and the results must be compared to see the effect of such tools on writing ability of language learners.

This study was conducted on learners of English as a foreign language. Therefore, it is hoped that it will help those who are involved in the educational processes in gaining insights into the new computer- assisted EFL instruction experience and seeking to improve it over time.

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