The Impact of Using Process Writing Approach Versus a Free Writing Approach on 2nd year Students' Performance in Writing Composition

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Abstract

This study aims to discover if there is a significant difference between students' literary composition accomplishments using teaching methods that focus on a process writing approach, compared to a free writing approach. The study samples second-year students taught at the Department of English, College of Imam Al-Kadhum mainly consisting of two hundred (200) second-year students in the academic year of 2018/2019. Throughout this study, a group of ninety-nine (99) students, comprising of three classes of thirty-three (33) were monitored. This study employed a convenience sampling method, whereby the researcher implemented a quasi-experimental design, encompassing both a non-equivalent pre-test with post-testing. The data collection instrument applied to collect the data involved a written test. The administration of the test happened twice, to provide pre-test and post-test results for both control and experimental groups. Analysis of the results applied the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software. The findings of the pre-test and post-test applied to each the three groups indicate that written composition teaching using a process writing approach significantly impacts the ability of students to master writing. The achievement of the first experimental group (process writing group) was superior compared to the achievement of the second experimental group (free writing group) and the control group. The analysis of the results between post-test scores in the control and experimental groups calculated a t-value of (16,462), whereby the tabulated t-value is (3,01) at level (0.05), which indicates a significant difference. Therefore rejecting the null hypothesis leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis meant that there was a significant difference in students' writing achievement taught using a process driven writing approach compared to students taught using a free writing approach and is also dependent on the strategy used by the teacher.

Keywords (Process Approach, Free-writing, performance, Writing Composition)

اثر استخدام الطريقة التتابعية مقابل طريقة الكتابة الحرة على أداء طلبة المرحلة الثانية في كتابة الانشاء

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الملخص :

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى معرفة اثر استعمال الطريقه التتابعية مقابل طريقة الكتابة الحرة على اداء المتعلمين الجامعيين في كتابه الانشاء ولتحقيق غرض الدراسة تم طرح الفرضيات الصفرية الاتية: لاتوجد فروق ذات دلآله احصائية بين المجموعة التجريبة التي طبقت عليه الطريقة التتابعية والمجموعة التي طبقت عليه طريقة الكتابة الحره والمجموعة الضابطة في مرحله الاختبار البعدي اما الفرضية الثانية لاتوجد فروق ذات دلآله احصائية بين المجموعة التجريبة التي طبقت عليه الطريقة التتابعية والمجموعة التي طبقت عليه طريقة الكتابة الحرة في مرحلة الاختبار البعدي. لتحري صحة الفرضيات اعتمدت الباحثة النوع الاتي من التصميم التجريبي : هو أن يعطى الطلبة اختبار قبلي لتقيم كفائتهم الاولية ومن ثم تعرضهم لتجربة وبعدها اختبار بعدي من اجل قياس مدى تحسن ادأهم في كتابه الانشاء . إذ تألفت عينة الدراسه من (٢٠٠) طالب وطالبة في المرحله الثانيه قسم اللغة الانكليزية كلية الامام الكاظم (ع) للعلوم الاسلامية للفصل الاول من السنة الدراسية٢٠١٨-٢٠١٩ إذ تم أخذ (٩٩) طالبًا كعينة لبحث تم تقسيمهم إلى ثلاث صفوف(٣٣) طالب لكل صف تم التاكد من الصدق الظاهري لاختبار من خلال عرضه على مجموعة من المحكمين والخبراء في مجال تدريس اللغه الانكليزية ، علم اللغة والاحصاء التربوي وبعد اجراء الاختبار البعدي اظهرت نتائج الدراسه ان تحصيل المجوعة التجريبية اعلى من تحصيل المجموعة الضابطة بمعنى آخر إن اسلوب تعلم الطلبة باستخدام الطريقة التتابعية مقابل طريقة الكتابة الحرة في تكوين وكتابه الانشاء اكثر فاعليه من الطرق التقليدية المتبعة في المجموعة الضابطة

Introduction

When studying the five English language components, writing is a vital skill to master, which facilitates the dissemination of an idea, knowledge and experience. According to Pasand and Haghi (2013: 75), writing is an essential skill to learn a foreign language. It is clear today that the nature of writing involves the expression of ideas, and is a medium to portray mental imagery and to convey knowledge.

However, the majority of EFL students face difficulties in writing composition that is reflected negatively in their exam results and also in learning writing some students still have difficulties to start writing. Based on the researcher observation and informal researcher interview with the teachers of English subject and some students in the second year in Department of English at Imam Al-Kadhum University College, the researcher found many students had difficulties in learning writing skill. For example, some students lack knowledge of different text types or genres which make them face difficulties in starting writing and making a paragraph or a composition. Then, they are confused in selecting or deciding on a suitable grammar. Besides, the students have less vocabulary and like to imitate or rewrite the text which given in the book or rewrite their friends' work. Further, they lack the motivation to learn writing skills.

With consideration of these writing problems, the English teacher should appropriately choose a creative strategy or method to enhance students' writing aptitude to compose paragraphs for different text types or genres. A multitude of strategies or approaches can assist to teach writing. One of them is a Process-Writing Approach (henceforth PWA), which outlines the teaching methodology to emphasise the writing process rather than the quality of the writing. The researcher also uses a Free Writing Approach (henceforth FWP) , which means to write continuously for a set period without considering the grammar, punctuation, spelling, or even the logical sequence of the work. Therefore, the researcher is concerned with

finding solutions to the problems by implementing a combination of process and free writing approaches for students of the second year of English Department at Imam Al-Kadhum University College to teach written composition.

1.1 Significance of the study

Language learners often struggle with the complex task of writing in a foreign language. Mastery of writing skill is complex and needs substantial effort and training by the learner to achieve an adequate competence. That complexity alludes to a significant challenge for many students to produce an adequate piece of writing. Writing is an essential means to record and convey information throughout all academic disciplines and is the means to assess the level of student attainment, especially in higher education. Tertiary studies place the capacity to effectively convey written thoughts as being fundamental to success (Crème & Lea, 1997; Lee & Stierer, 2000; Segall & Smart, 2005). Higher education research pertaining to the concerns faced by students from many different academic disciplines identify various problems, which become apparent at different levels in academia. The student's writing may convey an inadequate linguistic meaning due to language shortcomings resulting from a limited subject-specific words , or due to unfamiliarity with idioms and subject-specific notation. Certain academic conventions may be unknown to them, such as how to structure an essay structure, format reports or reference information. Recent research reveals that critical difficulties faced by many students centre on the student writers' lack of awareness concerning the nature and process of academic writing. That manifests itself by a confusion expressed towards the writing assignment requirements in a chosen field of academia (Clerehan & Walker, 2004; Elander et al, 2006; Emerson, Rees & MacKay, 2005; Lillis & Turner, 2001). As such these research findings direct the writer to ascertain the relevance of developing both effective writing skills and a solid comprehension of the vital

principles of constructing academic texts and the subject-specific demands of their chosen field of study. Hence ; there is a necessity to adopt new methods and techniques to teach writing for academic disciplines. In this study the process writing approach and the free-writing approach have been used to teach writing composition, hoping that they will improve the ability of the students to master good writing skills and habits.

1.2 Aims

This study empirically investigates the effect of a process-writing teaching approach vs. free-writing teaching approach to determine the most effective methodology to improve the quality of student writing composition.

1.3 Hypotheses

The study aims to prove the following two formulated null hypotheses: (1) There is no statistically significant variance between the three experimental groups (process learning, free writing and control) with consideration of the of means of scores relating to the quality of their post-test writing composition and (2) There is no statistically significant variance between the process learning group and free writing learning group in the quality of their post-test writing composition.

1.4 The Procedures

In order to fulfil the aims of the present study, and to verify the hypotheses, the following procedures are followed:

(a) The representative sample is selected from the study population and then divided into three groups; (b) Describing the presentation of materials for the experimental groups and control group; (c) Investigative tools to constructing and validating pre-test / post-test are used; (d) Experimenting to apply the suggested approaches, a process writing approach, and a free-writing approach; (e) Using the appropriate statistical means to analyse the results of the test; and (f) Announce pedagogical recommendations and suggest a number of projects based on the findings of the present study.

1-5 Limitations of The Study

This study considers second year college students of Department of English in Imam Al-Kadhum University College (A.S) for Islamic sciences and took place during the first half of the academic year 2018-2019.

1-6 Definition of Basic Terms

1-6-1 Process writing approach

Process writing approach (PWA) is a writing teaching method that emphasizes the process in preference to the product. With that writing process, learners become introspective and cognizant of writing generation methods. Throughout the process, learners may explore appropriate strategies that measure up to their learning styles. (Applebee, 1986: 96).

1-6-2 Free- writing

It is a strategy or method of writing without cessation for a set period, and without consideration of grammar, punctuation, spelling, or even the logical sequence of ideas. Free writing engages the subconscious mind in facilitating word associations. Free writers compose texts without editing the words or thoughts as they manifest themselves in work. Free writing can be convenient to construct ideas not previously considered.

1-6-3 Composition

According to Al–Hassan and Razzak (1981: 49) in any prose composition, the sentences are grouped into paragraphs. Each paragraph begins on a new line and is usually indented. A paragraph is usually a group of sentences closely concerned with one idea. The purpose of paragraphing is to break up a composition into logical, interesting, and readable parts.

1-6-4 Performance

According to Borman (2003:87) the term' performance' can be defined as " the total expected value of an individual behaviour.

2 Literature Review

2-1 Approaches of writing

According to Tribble (2009) there are three main approaches to the teaching of writing: focusing on form, on the writer, and on the reader. In addition to the three approaches, there is another approach, which synthesizes the focus on the writer and the reader, which is called Process-Genre Approach (Badger and White, 2000:23).

2.2 Process Writing Approach (PWA)

Several stages of writing are included in process approach, which are prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing. Sun and Feng (2009: 150) state a process writing methodology should include several steps, namely, prewriting or invention actions, brainstorming and group discussion are examples of pre writing techniques to assess preliminary ideas. The next phase is drafting, which promotes ascertaining feedback from peers or instructors. Subsequently, revision of the draft ensues at a whole-text level, which is concerned with the overall focus of the text, the logical order of ideas and determining the evidence to support arguments. Finally, revision at the sentence level or paragraph occurs before fine-tuning by proofreading or editing the text.

2.2.1 Practical Guidelines for Using Process Approach

According to Dorothy and Lisa (2005: 3) writing is not a matter of putting words together to make senesces. Good writer goes through several steps to produce a piece of writing.

Pre-writing process:

Step one: **Choose a topic**. Beforehand try to determine what to write; either a teacher defines the assignment or ideas. If not, decide the topic yourself.

Step two: **Gather ideas**. Based on the chosen topic note down points concerning that topic.

Step three: **Organize**. Decided upon ideas and their use. Choose ideas to discuss first, subsequent ideas, and concluding ideas to ensure a logical progression of the work.

During writing:

Step four: **Write**. Construct the ideas into the text from start to finish.

Step five: **Review Structure and Content**. Check the writing. Look for places to add more information or omit unnecessary information. Consult with classmates and exchange texts. A classmate will review your text and you read your classmate's text. Getting another opinion ensures the writing is clear and effective.

Re writing process:

Step six: **Revise Structure and Content**. Rewrite the text and improve the structure and content. Based on the review, provide more clarity and better explanations of the ideas.

Step six: **Proofread.** Read the text over. This time, correct spellings and grammar and consider word choice.

Step seven: **Make final corrections**: check the correction of all errors discovered in steps five and six, and make any final changes. Now the text is complete. (Ibid: 4)

2.3 The Free-Writing Approach (FWA)

According to Elbow (1998: 4) ''The consequence of writing is that you must start by writing the wrong meanings in the wrong words; but keep writing until you get to the right meanings in the right words. Only in the end will you know what you are saying.''

To free write is to let your mind go and write spontaneously. The idea of this approach is based on that when students are allowed to

write freely and frequently, their ability in writing will be improved. Thus, this approach encourages students to write as much as possible and as quickly as possible without worrying about grammar and spelling mistakes because the emphasis is on content and fluency not on form and accuracy. " In this way, students feel that they are writing; not only performing an exercise of some kind; they write what they want to write and consequently writing is an enjoyable experience." (Byrne, 1988: 22). Once the ideas are expressed on a paper, teachers can interfere to respond to these ideas without making formal corrections. In this approach, teachers envisage their role to provide students with some space to define their ideas. Hence, without making any suggestions beforehand, or by imposing any specific views, or offering any models. (Weigle, 2002: 33).

Accordingly, it is up to students to choose their topics and write about them. Alternatively, some students may volunteer to read their writings aloud to the class and by doing so; they develop a sense of audience. In other words, they become aware of the reader to whom the piece of writing is addressed, and consequently, they can produce effective writing. In brief, content and audience are seen as the main parameters in this approach. (Elbow ,1998: 5)

2-3-1 Some Practical Guidelines for Successful Free Writing:

1. Strictly adhere to a set period from five to thirty minutes — don't overrun or complete prematurely.

2. Keep writing regardless of comments made by teachers, friends or relatives during composition and ignore your "inner critic"; that is fearless writing.

3. Never stop to correct grammar, spelling, or change the word choice; the initial thoughts are the best.

4. Always keep your writing hand moving. When thoughts escape you, repeat writing the last word until inspiration comes.

5.   Phrases to write when puzzled about what to write next include: · "I remember" · "I forget" · "I hate" · "I love" · "This book is about" · "This book is not about" · "I just want to say"

6.   Finally, when the set period ends, review your writing and highlight significant, meaningful, or thought-provoking ideas. These ideas can be used to formulate another free-writing exercise or use as preliminary research.

3. Methodology

3.0 Introductory Note

The purpose of this section is to display in detail the procedures, and the phases, or steps that were followed to conduct the current study. These procedures consist of (1) the experimental design of the study; (2) the population and sample; (3) the Experiment Application; (4) the Adopted statistical methods.

3.1 Experimental Design

To ascertain valid results an appropriate design must be objective and accurate. This study aims to realise this using a pre-test, post-test and non-equivalent group design. Gravetter and Forzano (2012: 282) assert that this is a robust design methodology. Krysik and Finn (2013: 238) and Rubin and Babbie (2013: 279) explain that this is a commonly used methodology applied to most educational research. This design methodology negates the threat of assignment bias. By pre-testing before finally post-testing at the end treatment period and by applying a control treatment, allows the researcher to assess whether the two groups are equivalent to the dependent measure or variable before the treatment is given to them, as in table (1).

Table (1) The Experimental Design (Abbot and McKinny, 2013: 76)

Group	Test	Treatment	Post test
Experimental	Pre test	PA	Post test
Experimental	Pre test	FW	Post test
Control	Pre test	---------------	Post test

3. 2 Population and Sample Administration

3.2.1 Population

Richard and et al. (1992: 282) assert that population denotes any set of items, individuals, etc. that are observably similar in terms of their sampling characteristics. The population of the present study covers the second year college students of English Department in Imam AL-Khadum collage in Baghdad for the first half of academic year 2018-2019.

3.2.2 Sample

A sample of students from four classes studying English, attending the college of Imam Alkhadum in Baghdad took part in this study. The complete number of students is (99), who were divided into three groups or sections: Section A comprises of (33) students who were chosen to be the first experimental group (PWA), and Section B consists of (33) students who were selected to be in the second experimental group (FWA). Section C comprises of (33) students assigned to be the control group. For this study, the classes are integrated into the three groups by randomly drawing lots, considering the complete number of students.

3.3 Experiment Application

The experiment started on 5th October 2018 and ended on 15th of December, of the same year. The experiment lasted for eight weeks. The lessons were arranged for both groups on Mondays. The students of the three groups had the same conditions except for one aspect; namely: the application of techniques to promote AWP and FWP. The researcher herself taught both groups. Students at the EG

were taught through AWP and FWP. As for the CG students, they were taught using the techniques recommended by the prescribed textbook ''introduction to academic writing''. The control group as a whole class received the full open process model of teaching writing. In every lesson, emphasis to one or more of the techniques is made. On 5 October 2018. The 99 students were requested to be ready and urged to take the test seriously. The allotted time for the test is 50 minutes. The pre-test students in all groups were asked to write a composition on any topic they want. The following two procedures maintained by the researcher to enhance the students' motivation: 1. To explain the value of the study and urge the students to participate and do their best in the test. 2. Students get an extra assessment bonus (by including the results of the tests as part of their class work evolution). Following the same procedures of the pre-test, the Students of both groups (the experimental and control ones) were post-tested on the 15 of the December 2018. The researcher gave them two topics to write about either the freedom of women in Islam, or a sunny day at the beach. The scores given for the post-test used the same conditions as those of the pre-test.

3.4 Face and Content Validity

It is worth mentioning that it is not enough to ensure that the test really tests what it is supposed to test, but it is also necessary to ensure face validity. In the words of Harris, face validity is "the way the test looks to the examines, test administers, educator, and the like" (Harris, 1969: 7) To ensure the face validity of the test, the test has been given to a jury of 5 teaching staff members and specialist in linguistics (ELT) (well-known for their long experience in the fields of TEFL and linguistics. Sharma and Petosa (2013: 123) argue that face validity can be established by exposing the test to a group of experts who examine the assessment and reach a consensus that it does or does not represent a particular concept.

3.5 Pilot Administration

The intentions of this pilot study are to estimate the required time for the examinees to complete the test, to check test instructions, to scrutinise the test items, to determine the level of difficulty and the discrimination influence of the test items and to calculate the reliability of the experiment. In order to conduct a pilot study, 20 students were chosen randomly from the English department, College of Imam Al-Kadhum. The findings of the pilot administration reveal the followings: 1. The students are able to answer all test items in 20 minutes as maximum 2. There is no serious ambiguity in the instructions of the test.

4. Presentation of the Results

4.1 Students Performance of the EG s on the Pre-test and Post-test in writing composition

The mean score of the EG1 (PWA) on the post-test is (7,33), whereas in the EG2 the post-test it is (5,06). The t-test formula applied to paired samples indicates any significant variation between the means of the EGS on the pre-test and post-test. The calculated t-value is (16,462), whereas the t-value denoted in the table is (3,01) at (0.05) giving rise to a level of significance, and indicating degrees of freedom (2,96); this shows that there is a statistically significant variance between the pre-test and post-test in favour of the post-test performance of the first experimental group as shown in the table (2).

Group	N	Means	SD	DF	T value Calculate	T value Tabulate	Significance
EG1(PA)	33	7,33	1,315	2	16,462	3,01	Is statistically significant in favour of EG1
EG2(FA)	33	5,06	2,0301	96			
Control	33	5.21	1,965	98	---------	----------	

4.2 Results of Hypothesis 1

To verify hypothesis 1 of this study, the ANOVA formula has been used. The means of the scores of the performance of three

groups are compared using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as it is shown in table (3)

Group	N	Means	Std. deviation	St. Error
EG (PA)	33	7.33	1.315	.229
EG(FP)	33	5.06	2.030	.353
CG	33	5.21	1.965	.342
Total	99	5.87	2.064	.207

Source of variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	Computed F	Sig.
Between Groups	106.566	2	53.283		
Within Groups	310.727	96	3.237	16.462	Significant in favour of EG1
Total	417.293	98			

4.3 Results of The ANOVA of The Achievements of The Three Groups on The Post-Test

It is clear from the table above that the calculated (F) value is (16,462) is substantially higher than the tabulated (F) value (3,01) at (0.05) level of significance under (2,96) degrees of freedom, this indicates a statistically significant achievement variation between the three groups in favour of the EG group. This study rejects the first hypothesis by achieving its primary aims. An alternative hypothesis should be: There is a significant variation between the achievement expressed as a notable difference between the EGs PWA, FWP and the CG scores.

4-4 Results of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 concerns the comparison between the performance of the PWA EG and that of the FWP EG to identify which technique has more effect than the other on teaching writing composition. Sheveyh test formula has been used to determine the direction of difference goes in favour of which group.

The results have shown that the performance of PWA group on the writing composition post-test has been higher than of the FWP group. This indicates that using PWP technique is more effective than using FWA technique to teach writing composition to second stage students. The details have been presented in table (4)

Table (4) Sheveyh Test

	Group	N	Mean	Difference between means	Sheveyh value	Significance
1	EG 1	33	7,33	2,21	.,768	Significant for EG1
	CG	33	5,21			
2	EG 2	33	5,06	0,15	.,768	Non Significant
	CG	33	5,21			
3	EG 1	33	7,33	2,27	.,768	Significant for EG1
	EG 2	33	5,06			

4-5 Conclusion

This experimental study asserts that both teaching methods improve the written skills of the participants. Both sets of participants who received writing composition instruction made significant writing skill progress compared to the control group. The control group made less progress except for a few class members, who were already proficient at writing, who incidentally scored almost as high as those receiving instruction. However, participants using a process driven methodology made the most notable achievement. Therefore,

one can confidently conclude that the process approach is an optimal approach to use. Although there may be merit in teaching a free writing methodology in some instances, since the basis of this study considers the quality of the final student compositions, and not based on other intangible metrics; one can assert that the process approach to teaching writing composition is ideal for different teaching models. Furthermore, the same process approach can apply to different models of writing instruction to optimally teach different students.

2.6 Recommendation

In light of the results obtained, these recommendations can be put forward:

1.   The process approach to teaching writing should be generalized and adopted by the teachers of written expression. In other words, teachers should be sufficiently trained until they master the different phases of the writing process.

2.   Teachers should devote enough time and effort when dealing with the numerous stages of the writing process.

3.   Teachers should not teach the various writing stages as a set of rigid and fixed steps; rather, they should bear in mind that these stages are recursive and dynamic. In other words, students can return to any stage of the writing process several times during the act of composing.

4.   Students should recognize the importance of using the writing stages and should be told regularly that the more they go through them, the better writing they produce.

5.   Students should also be aware of the fact that each writing task requires different portions of cognitive operations.

6.   Teachers should encourage students to complete the different stages of the writing process by creating activities that involve students to make use of these stages. For instance, a teacher may ask his/her students to write journals.

7.   Teachers should also motivate students to complete the several stages of writing by giving good marks to those students who apply these stages.

8.   Last but not least, students should be provided with enough time when they write so that they could complete all stages of the writing process.

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