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Using Newspaper-Based Activities to Enhance Secondary Stage Students' EFL Writing Skills and their Motivation towards Writing

Préparée par

Rania Ali Ali Eldydamouny

M.A. Researcher

Sous la direction

Dr. Badran A. Hassan

*Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education, Mansoura
University*

Dr. Samah Rizk Hassan

*ASS. Professor of Curriculum and
Instruction
Faculty of Education, Mansoura
University*

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Résumé

This study aimed to investigate the effect of newspaper-based activities on enhancing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills and their motivation towards writing. The participants of the study were forty first secondary students at Manzala secondary School, EL-Dakahlia Directorate. Instruments of the study were an EFL writing skills checklist, an EFL pre and post writing test, an EFL writing scoring rubric and an EFL writing Motivation scale. In this study, pre post-test was used with two groups (Experimental and control, 20 students each). Results of the study revealed that the experimental group students outperformed their peers in the control group in their writing performance as validated through the post- test scores. Also, their Motivation toward writing improved considerably. The experimental group's gains in this productive skill and the enhancement in their motivation were attributed to using the newspaper-based activities.

Key words: newspaper-based activities, secondary stage, EFL writing skills, motivation.

- Introduction

Effective EFL teaching and learning assures the importance of using authentic materials to enhance student language skills especially writing as well as reading skills. As such, newspaper activities may help learners to communicate their ideas effectively and reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in their writing classes. *Writing* is one of the major English language skills which is considered a powerful instrument of thinking and comprehension. Writing skills help students to communicate and understand the relation between the parts of the language and how to use them to express themselves effectively.

The purpose of using **newspapers** in the classroom is to enhance the learning capacity of the students and make them engage in meaning with the language resources they already have. Kuncharapu (2018) considered newspapers as a worthy resourceful tool in English language classrooms that may be employed to enhance language instructions. Newspapers give students the opportunity to come in contact with language and knowledge

and make EFL students proficient English users (Al-Rashdi and Al Azri, 2014; Bucura and Posa, 2011).

Learners' writing abilities are affected by **motivation** as a psychological factor because it is associated with commitment, enthusiasm and persistence to achieve goals. Santrock (2007) described motivation as a process of encouragement, direction and persistence of behavior. Kong (2009) and Thompson (2017) classified motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic type is the deep desire to learn while the extrinsic type is the performance and seeking to accomplish specific outcomes. In addition, Ryan and Deci (2000) considered Motivation as a process of transferring the regulation of behavior from outside to inside the individual. Kober and Usher (2012) summarized dimensions of motivation as competence, control, interest, and relatedness that lead students to do their best. Students work harder and develop their writing skills to acquire the foreign language skills.

There is a relationship between low motivation and poor writing. Motivation has apposite effect on encouraging students to learn and achieve mastery of EFL writing skills. According to Stary (2008), teachers play a substantial role in this process as they should know how to motivate students and reinforce their desire to learning process effectively. If students have opportunity to express themselves and their creativity, their motivation to enhance their writing skills will be raised. Wardman (2010) conducted a project to motivate students' towards writing skills by making news. Findings revealed development in the quality of students' writings, motivation and self- confidence because students had the chance to choose what they write about and how they write it.

Newspaper-based activities in EFL classrooms

Newspaper-based activities, according to Mehta (2010), are powerful sources for sharing information and enriching students' knowledge. Chowdhury and Halder (2016) clarified that newspapers are a low cost informal learning source that makes student-centered and improve students' writing to sound logical, purposeful and meaningful.

Newspaper-based activities may help motivate students to be active participants in their learning processes and write purposeful and meaningful texts. Newspapers are regarded as an effective authentic sources that offer analysis of incidents and events. Tafani (2009) reported that newspaper activities help develop students' language skills at different levels from elementary to advanced. Also, students are encouraged to enhance their writing skills to show their article in the newspaper class.

Some studies (e.g., Byun, 2014; Abd El-Gawad, 2013 and Kortner, 2000) have examined students' perceptions towards using newspapers to enhance language skills. These studies proved that students have positive attitudes towards the usefulness of newspapers in improving their EFL reading and writing skills. Results also showed that newspaper-based activities aided students to be more motivated by providing study materials relevant to their lives.

Kumar (2009) and Shree (2016) considered newspapers a powerful teaching tool in the classroom to promote critical and analytical thinking skills. They help students to make connections and draw their own conclusions among different fields, subjects, topics, issues and events. Newspapers' different sections expand the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information that may serve as a powerful background in the learning process.

Newspaper activities are interesting and varied. They are about the headlines, articles, news flash, exchanging the news, news in brief, writing profiles, photo stories, advertisements, classifying ads and many others. Manasrah and Al khawaldeh (2014) indicated that teaching using English newspapers develops vocabulary learning and enriches adult students' knowledge about their country as well as about the world. In addition, Abbott (2005) reported that using newspapers may help students to master narrative, expository, descriptive and persuasive writing sub-skills.

In the light of the previously mentioned review of literature, it becomes vital for teachers to pay attention to the growing needs of the students to enhance their writing performance. Hence, the current study was established with an aim of developing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills and their motivation towards it by using newspaper-based activities.

Related studies

This is a review of some related studies that were directed towards enhancing writing skills using newspaper- based activities.

Ozkan (2015) conducted a study with 100 students at ELT Department of Cukurova University in Turkey taking English grammar classes by utilizing articles from both American and British news sources. Instead of conventional textbooks as a main focus, participants chose their texts from such sources prior to scheduled classes, and during sessions, they worked on texts highlighting structural points in the syllabus. The data of this study was gathered by two techniques: administering an open-ended written questionnaire, and an in-depth interview. Students developed their skills to

review targeted structures, be more creative use language creatively, relate form to meaning and provide comprehensible input.

Rohmatillah (2016) conducted an experimental research to discover the effect of *using* Jakarta Post newspaper articles in enhancing vocabulary of English for university students. The research methodology used was quasi experimental research. The sample of the research was two classes consisting of 31 students for experimental class and 30 students for control class. The experimental class was taught by using The Jakarta Post newspaper article, meanwhile in the control class was taught by using textbook. In collecting the data, the researcher used vocabulary test in form of multiple choice test. Both groups had pretest and after conducting three treatments, the researcher conducted posttest for both classes. The result of the research concluded that there is significant effect of using the Jakarta Post newspaper articles to enhance vocabulary of English for university students.

Wilkinson (2017) used a news-based activity to motivate EFL Students for deliberate vocabulary. A total of 27 freshman Japanese EFL university students, from one intermediate-level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course participated in this study. The course was a compulsory course for first-year students and met for one 90-minute class per week for 15 weeks. Data was primarily collected using surveys that was then subjected to statistical analysis using t-test. In addition to qualitative data collected from observations, interviews, and artifact checking was also analyzed. Therefore, under a pretest- posttest design. The final result was that the news report activity was both intrinsically and extrinsically motivating for most of the learners. On average, learners found the news stories enjoyable (intrinsically motivating) and largely expressed a desire to continue doing the activities after the initial five-week period (extrinsically motivating).

Tanjung (2018) investigated how the English newspaper articles could improve the students' vocabulary mastery. The method used in this study was Classroom Action Research. The participants were thirty students. The research was conducted as planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The data used in this research was Pre-test and Post-test, observation sheet, interview sheet, diary notes, and documentation. The result showed that there was an improvement in students' vocabulary mastery through English newspaper articles. The students were more active, and motivated in teaching-learning process. In addition, the students could develop their own personal vocabulary and get much variation of vocabularies.

Tuncer (2019) studied the newspaper headlines in EFL classrooms to develop EFL reading and writing skills. The researcher used a news story prediction activity. The participants were 45 pre-service teachers (33 females and 12 males) at the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in Turkey. Completed through two semesters (20 weeks), this study required the participants to predict the news story behind the headline before reading the original content, and written comparison of their prediction with the original news story focusing on matching or mismatching points of their guesses after reading the news story. The data used was a questionnaire and an interview to gather students' thoughts about reading and writing skills improvement and also the appreciation of the utilized technique. The results shows that the contribution of newspaper headlines for facilitating the reading and writing skills of pre-service teachers of EFL.

Vijayan and Zarei (2019) investigated the influence of Newspaper in Education (NIE) on students' motivation in learning English language. The researchers used qualitative method. The data was collected via semi-structured interview and open-ended questionnaire. The sample of the study involved 28 students in a private college in Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that the students were highly motivated to read newspapers for English language learning because this enabled them to develop their writing skills and learn a lot of grammatical structures which led them to improve their English language skills.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to assess the current level of EFL writing skills of 30 first year students from Manzala Secondary School for Girls. The following table reports pilot study results.

Table (1)
Results of the Writing Skills Test

Writing skills	Mean score	SD	Percentage
Using appropriate vocabulary	0.64	0.24	63%
Using grammar properly	0.63	0.31	58%
Having correct spelling	0.66	0.27	58%
Coherence and organization	0.56	0.37	45%
Using Punctuation marks correctly	0.62	0.36	45%
Total	3.11	1.55	54%

Table (1) shows the mean scores of the pilot study participants on the writing skills test as (M=3.11) that is considered an indication that secondary stage students need to enhance their writing skills.

Statement of the problem

Based on the review of literature and the pilot study results, first year secondary stage students need to enhance their EFL writing skills. Thus, the current study investigated the using of newspaper-based activities to enhance 1st secondary stage students' EFL writing skills and develop their motivation towards it.

Questions

The present study attempted to answer the following main questions:

"What is the effect of newspaper-based activities on enhancing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills and their motivation?"

1. What are the newspapers-based activities required for enhancing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills?
2. What is the effect of using newspapers-based activities on developing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills?
3. What is the effect of using newspapers-based activities in developing secondary stage students' motivation towards EFL writing skills?

Hypotheses

The current study attempted to verify the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental group students on the post writing test in favor of the experimental group
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both pre and posttest scores of the experimental group on writing skills test in favor of the post test.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-administration of the motivation scale in favor of experimental group.
4. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-posttest administration of the motivation scale in favor of the post administration.

Purpose

The present study aimed at:

- Developing secondary stage students' EFL writing skills through using newspaper-based activities in classroom.
- Identifying possible activities that can be based on newspapers to be used in the EFL writing classroom.
- Identifying the effect of using newspapers-based activities to enhance students' EFL writing skills.

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- Measuring the effect of using newspaper-based activities to develop EFL secondary stage students' motivation towards EFL writing.

Significance

The present study could be significant in a number of ways:

1. Raising the awareness of specialists about the importance of using newspaper-based activities in the classrooms to develop writing skills.
2. Directing the attention of EFL teachers and supervisors towards the importance of using newspaper-based activities for motivating students to learn language.
3. Enhancing students' different skills through raising their awareness about current events.
4. Providing a suggested model of how newspaper-based activities can develop secondary stage students' EFL writing skills and their motivation towards it.

Delimitations

The present study was delimited to:

1. Two classes from first year secondary stage students at Al Manzala Secondary School for Girls.
2. Some EFL writing skills necessary for first year secondary stage students (using appropriate vocabulary, use grammar properly, have correct spelling, use punctuation marks correctly, coherence and organization).
3. Using some Egyptian newspapers (e.g., AL Ahram Weekly, Egyptian Gazette, Egyptian Tribune, etc...) published in English.
4. Using some newspaper-based activities such as: guided writing, free writing, picture descriptions, and letters to the editor.

Methodology

Design:

In order to investigate the effect of using newspaper-based activities in enhancing writing skills and motivation, the researcher adopted the quasi-experimental design including two groups. The experimental group and the control group are subjected to pre- and post- administrations of the study instruments prepared by the researcher to determine the differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and control groups.

Participants:

The participants were two intact classes of 1st grade secondary school. The two classes were randomly selected and assigned to two groups. One class of 20 students comprises the experimental group and receives

newspaper-based activities (the treatment). The second class of 20 students serves as a control group and receives the traditional teaching methods.

Definition of the Terms:

Writing Skills

Ghaith (2004) defined writing as a complex process that allows students to express their thoughts and ideas. It encourages thinking and learning since it motivates communication and makes thoughts available for reflection.

In the current study, writing skills were operationally defined as “the ability to write well and organize ideas and thoughts into comprehensive meaningful sentences. The ability to use the appropriate words, form a meaningful sentence, write in different tenses, have correct spelling, use punctuation marks properly and coherently.”

Newspapers

Dinata and Ismiyati (2021) defined newspaper as a publication consisting of a of large sheets of folded paper printed and distributed in period of time such as daily, weekly and monthly that contains the news, articles, features and advertising.

For the purpose of this study, newspapers were operationally defined as periodically-printed publications that contain current news used as teaching resource inside the classroom. It focuses on the students doing meaningful tasks using the target language. Students will use local Egyptian newspapers published in English (e.g., Al Ahram Weekly, Egyptian Gazette, Egyptian Tribune, etc..) to enhance their EFL writing skills.

Activity

According to Merriam-Webster, Activity is a procedure designed to stimulate learning by firsthand experience.

In the current study, activity means the educational procedures students do to achieve a learning goal.

Newspaper- based activities

In the current study, newspaper-based activities means using newspapers as a teaching tool by involving it in classroom activities (such as: guided writing, free writing, picture descriptions, and letters to the editor.

Motivation

It is the internal and external factors which arouse desire and energy in people to make an effort to attain a goal (Dornyei, 2001).

In the current study, motivation is the power and the desire that lead 1st grade secondary students to higher achievement in enhancing their EFL writing skills.

Instruments and materials

The following instruments were designed and used:

- 1) An EFL Writing Skills Checklist.
- 2) A pre - post EFL writing test for assessing 1st grade secondary stage students' EFL writing skills with an accompanying Rubric.
- 3) A motivation towards writing scale.
- 4) A teacher's guide.

Results and discussion

Results were statistically analysed in terms of the hypotheses. They were discussed in the light of the theoretical background and related studies. Results of the study were separated according to the hypotheses.

1- Verifying the first hypothesis:

The first hypothesis stated that **“There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and the experimental group students on the post administration of the writing test in favor of the experimental group”**.

To verify this hypothesis, t-test was utilized for independent variables. Table (2) indicates the results.

Table (2)
The descriptive statistics of the control and experimental groups' score on the post- writing test

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df (n1+n2-2)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Content	Exp.	20	3.7000	.65695	6	38	Significant at 0.05
	Control	20	2.5000	.60698			
Organization	Exp.	20	3.3000	.73270	4.5		
	Control	20	2.1500	.87509			
Grammar	Exp.	20	3.6000	.59824	4.9		
	Control	20	2.6000	.68056			
Word choice	Exp.	20	3.7000	.57124	5.6		
	Control	20	2.4500	.82558			
Mechanics of writing	Exp.	20	3.3000	.86450	3.8		
	Control	20	2.4000	.59824			
Cohesion	Exp.	20	3.5500	.75915	6.5		
	Control	20	1.9000	.85224			
Coherence	Exp.	20	3.5500	.82558	5.999		
	Control	20	1.9000	.91191			
Total	Exp.	20	24.7000	3.79889	7.3		
	Control	20	15.9000	3.87842			

Table (2) shows a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the mean score of the post-test. This means that using newspaper-based activities enhanced EFL writing skills; thus, the first hypothesis of the study was accepted.

2- Verifying the second hypothesis:

The second hypothesis stated that “**there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group students on the Pre and post-administration of the writing test in favor of the post administration**”.

To verify this hypothesis, t-test was utilized to verify the mean scores of the pre and post-test of the experimental group as table (3) illustrates.

Table (3)
Comparing the writing performance of the experimental group on the pre-post writing test

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>D. f (n-1)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
content	Pre	20	2.1000	.85224	7.6	19	Significant at 0.05
	Post	20	3.7000	.65695			
organization	Pre	20	2.1500	1.03999	4.95		
	Post	20	3.3000	.73270			
Grammar	Pre	20	2.5000	.82717	5.1		
	Post	20	3.6000	.59824			
Word choice	Pre	20	2.5000	1.00000	6.4		
	Post	20	3.7000	.57124			
Mechanics	Pre	20	1.9500	.68633	7.4		
	Post	20	3.3000	.86450			
Cohesion	Pre	20	2.0500	1.05006	7.6		
	Post	20	3.5500	.75915			
Coherence	Pre	20	1.9500	.99868	8.1		
	Post	20	3.5500	.82558			
Total	Pre	20	15.2000	5.19717	10.5		
	Post	20	24.7000	3.79889			

It is evident from table (3) that the scores of the post- writing test were greater than that of the pre-test. Clearly, the total score of the experimental group on the pre-writing test was low (15.2000) and it increased in the post-test to become (24.7000). This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre and post- writing test in the seven sub-skills and its total level of the experimental group in favor of the post-administration.

All t-values also were statistically significant at (0.05) level. The enhancement in the mean value of the experimental

group in the post-test reveals that the level of students in overall writing had improved due to using Newspaper-based activities.

Eta square was calculated to estimate the effect size of the proposed Newspaper-based activities on enhancing the EFL writing skills.

Table (4)
The Effect Size of the Newspaper-based activities on the writing skill of the experimental group

<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>the dependent variable</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>D. f (n-1)</i>	<i>Value of Eta – square (η^2) *</i>	<i>Level of effect size</i>
The ewspaper-based activities	Content	7.6	19	0.75	Large
	Organization	4.95		0.56	
	Grammar	5.1		0.58	
	Word choice	6.4		0.68	
	Mechanics of writings	7.4		0.74	
	Coherence	7.6		0.75	
	Cohesion	8.1		0.78	
	Total score	10.5		0.85	

According to table (4), it can be clearly seen that there is a large effect of using Newspaper-based activities on the writing skill of the experimental group. Namely, 85 % of the total variance in the experimental group students' performance in the writing skill can be attributed to the effect of the proposed newspaper-based activities. The variance and the raise of the mean value can be interpreted that students in the experimental group developed their writing skills because of Newspaper-based activities.

3 – Verifying the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis stated, “**There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-administration of the motivation scale in favor of experimental group**”.

t- test was used to verify the difference between the mean scores of the control and the experimental groups on the post-motivation scale. Table (5) shows the results as follows:

* The effect size was estimated using the following formula: $\eta^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}$

Table (5)
Results of t-test of the control and experimental groups on the post-administration of motivation scale

	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df (n1+n2-2)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Total	Exp.	20	36.8000	2.83957	12.3	38	Significant at 0.05
	Control	20	26.8000	2.28496			

The table shows that the total level of the experimental group students in the motivation scale was higher than the control group. Also, the estimated t-value is significant at 0.05 level. This proves that there are statistically significant differences between the control and experimental group on the post administration of the motivation scale. These differences are in favor of the experimental group.

4- Testing the fourth hypothesis:

The fourth hypothesis stated, **"There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre and post administrations of the writing motivation scale in favor of the post administration"**.

The motivation scale level of students before and after using newspaper-based activities was measured through using the t-test. Table (6) shows the results of the t-value in comparing the experimental group students' motivation level in the overall pre and post motivation scale as follows:

Table (6)
Comparing the motivation level of the experimental group

	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>D. f (n-1)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Total	Pre	20	27.3000	4.10520	7.7	19	Significant at 0.05
	Post	20	36.8000	2.83957			

Results in table (6) illustrate that the estimated t- value is significant at 0.05 level. This reflects that there are statically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the motivation scale in favor of the post administration.

The table illustrates the effect size of the newspaper-based activities on motivation according to the difference between the pre- and post-administrations of the motivating scale. The results are as follows:

Table (7)
Value of (η^2) and Levels of Effect Size

<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>the dependent variable</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>D. f (n-1)</i>	<i>Value of Eta – square (η^2) *</i>	<i>Level of effect size</i>
Newspaper-based activities	Total score	7.7	19	0.76	large

The table shows notable significant difference between students' learning and motivation before and after the treatment. The increase in the motivation level is clearly due to using Newspaper- based activities that motivate students to enhance their EFL writing skills.

The results of the study

The present study led to the following findings:

1- Using newspaper-based activities were effective in enhancing EFL secondary stage students' writing skills. This can be assured by these points:

-The experimental group students outperformed the control group Students in the post writing test.

-The experimental group students' mean score in the post administration of the writing test were much better than their mean score in the pre-administration of the test.

2- The proposed activities were effective in developing EFL secondary stage students' motivation towards writing. This can be assured by these points:

-The experimental group students outperformed the control group students in the post administration of the motivation scale.

-The experimental group students' mean score in the post administration of the motivation scale were much better than their mean score in the pre-administration of the motivation scale.

Conclusion

After conducting the activities and administering the tests, t-test and Eta-squared formula that were used in analyzing the obtained data. Scores of the study group in the pre-and post-tests were analyzed and compared. Results revealed that newspaper-based activities proved to be highly

* The effect size was estimated using the following formula: $\eta^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}$

effective in enhancing students' EFL writing skills and their motivation towards writing.

Suggestions for Further Research:

The present study proposed the following topics for further research:

- Using newspaper-based activities in enhancing other language skills e.g., Speaking, writing or reading of other educational stages such as the primary, secondary and university students.
- Investigating the impact of newspaper-based activities on developing multiple intelligences of students in different language areas.
- Further research is needed to replicate the present experimental treatment with other samples at different stages for varied language skills.

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