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Integrating the Reading-Writing Skills as an Approach to Teaching Writing to Yemeni Students at a University Level

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Abstract

The present study aims at teaching writing by integrating reading and writing for developing writing skills through using a “reading-to-write method” in comparison with the traditional methods of teaching writing. To accomplish the mission, a quasi-experimental research design was adopted. Tools comprised a survey questionnaire and a pre-post test in essay writing. The sample involved two groups of the third-level students of English in the Faculty of Education- University of Aden. The experimental group was taught by a reading-to-write method, whereas the control group was taught by the traditional way of teaching without any additional treatment or extra reading materials. The results showed that all the candidates perceive the importance of integrating reading and writing in developing writing skills and that the students encounter difficulties in writing coherent texts in English. The results also showed that there were significant variations between the control and the experimental groups’ writing performance after treatment in the five aspects of writing in favor of the experimental group.

Keywords: Reading-writing integration, schemata, EFL writing.

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List of Abbreviations

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
FL	Foreign Language
FLA	First Language Acquisition
FVR	Free Voluntary Reading
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LA	Language Acquisition
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
LT	Language Teaching /Language Teacher
M	Mean
NES	Native English Speakers
SD	Standard Deviation
Sig.	Significance
SLC	Second Language Classes
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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Introduction

Introduction

0.1 Introduction

The present study attempted to explore the impact of integrating reading and writing in developing Yemeni students' writing performance. In other words, it aimed to investigate the extent to which the teaching of reading and writing integratively can help EFL Yemeni students to write coherent texts in English and find out relevant solutions for the problems they encountered by in writing coherent texts. There has been a long-standing debate as to whether the exposure to target language materials can significantly affect the students' writing performance.

“Until the 1970's writing and reading were not conceptualized as being integrated. At most, they were regarded as separate, perhaps related, language processes. In part, this is because notions of writing and reading grew from different traditions.” (Langer & Flihan, 2000: 113).

According to Parodi (2007: 227), no attempt at linking comprehension and written production was made before the 90s. “Reading was essentially conceived as a receptive skill, while writing was a productive one, so they were taught independently.”

Because reading and writing have been treated as separate contents to be taught, there has been little systematic exploration of the extent to which reading and writing instruction may be part of a common enterprise of literacy learning (Langer & Applebee, 1986: 172). In writing, a student uses his background knowledge to express his ideas and this is related to his previous knowledge of the world and things around him, which is supported by schema theory. The development of schema theory also provided a promising new direction for examination of interrelationships between reading and writing. Inspired by this schematic notion, some researchers began to conduct correlational studies on

reading and writing. This schematic notion also inspired the researcher in carrying out this study.

Furthermore, the growing interest in communication and communicative competence, instead of a mere linguistic competence, led to the emergence of new approaches to the study of reading and writing and the relationships between them. During the 1980s and the 1990s more interest was given to communicative competence rather than linguistic competence, which resulted in the studying of the relationships between language arts especially reading and writing and the extent to which each skill affects the other. There is a common belief that the four main skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are related to each other as each helps in the development of the other. It is also impossible to develop or use one skill without using the other skills. These skills are commonly divided into receptive and productive skills on the belief that learners first receive knowledge or the language and decode the meaning to understand the message, and then they use the language that is acquired and produce a message to express themselves, their feelings and desires.

According to Schleppegrell (1986:50), “reception precedes production”, which means that students can not communicate anything effectively without understanding it. Thus, reception of knowledge either through listening or reading is important for oral or written production. The two terms of receptive and productive skills are also related to Krashen’s (1984: 15-17) terminology of information as input and output respectively. In this sense, what is acquired or received is called input and what is produced or expressed either orally or in a written form is called output. For the researcher, the development in receptive skills (listening and reading) leads to a parallel development in the productive

skills (speaking and writing), which reflects the communicative view of language or using language for communication.

In real classroom teaching and as a result of their separation in teaching materials, reading and writing were looked at as separated skills. They were viewed as:

“language sub-skills that could be taught separately and as technical skills until the learners master all of the component skills. In this context, reading typically played a limited role, serving as a linguistic model for rhetorical patterns and as content materials for a writing assignment” (Kim, 2005: 62).

However, recent research in L2 reading-writing relations has recognized a complementary role of reading and writing in the composition classroom, which contradicts the traditional narrow view of the role of reading in developing writing skills. Krashen (1984), asserts that writing competence can be best acquired through what he calls comprehensible input ($i+1$), that is reading materials of the target language, which is above the existing knowledge of the learner. For Krashen, the most valuable input for acquisition is “language that goes just a step beyond the structures which second-language students have already acquired, or in Krashen's terminology ($i + 1$), where (i) represents language at the students' current level of competence” (Krashen, 1984: 177, & Krashen, 1985: 80). This view implies that for the teaching of writing to be effective, a comprehensible input should be provided for the learner. Since Krashen was talking about language structures, it means that reading should be included in the teaching of writing. Krashen & Lee (2004) also assert that “reading provides writers with knowledge of the language of writing, the grammar, vocabulary, and discourse style writers use. Thus, reading anything at all will help all writing, to at least some extent.” (Krashen & Lee, 2004: 10)