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The Effectiveness of Interactive Strategies Program on Developing Preparatory Students' English Writing Skills

**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master's Degree in Education (Curriculum & Instruction)**

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed at investigating the effect of using some interactive strategies on developing the writing skills of students of prep schools. The study adopted the quasi experiment .The study was conducted in Hend Takyellah prep School in Giza where the researcher works as an English teacher. Participants seventy second prep graders randomly divided into experimental group (35) and control group (35). The proposed interactive writing strategy program was implemented on the experimental group, whereas the regular method was used with the control group. To collect the data, the researcher conducted a pre-post test. The pre-test was administered before and after the implementation of the purposed program. Results were statistically analyzed. Results indicated that the two groups were equivalent in their previous learning and general achievement. Results indicated that the experimental group who was highly satisfied with the program outperformed the control group. They also indicated that the interactive writing strategy proposed program was effective in enhancing the students writing skills and in developing their ability in learning.

Key words: EFL writing skills, Interactive strategies, prep school students

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii

Chapter One

Background and Problem

1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Context of the problem	5
1.3 Statement of the problem	8
1.4 Study questions	8
1.5 Hypotheses of the Study	8
1.6 Delimitations of the Study	9
1.7 Significance of the Study	9
1.8 Definition of Terms	10
1.9. Organization of the Reminder of the Thesis	11

Chapter Two

Review of Literature and Related Studies

Part One: Review of Literature	13
Section One: The Interactive Writing Strategy	13
2.1. The concept of interactive writing strategy	13
2.2. Values of Interactive writing	15
2.3. The Steps of Interactive Writing	16
2.4. The Benefits of Interactive Writing	16
2.5. Examples of Interactive Writing in the Classroom	17
2.6.Helpful Hints to Help Make Interactive Writing Successful	19
Section 2 : Writing	19
2.7. Writing skills:	19
2.8.The importance of writing	21
2.9.Problems in ESL Learners' Writing	22
2.10. Teaching Writing	22
2.11. Writing as a Process	23
2.12. Purposes for Teaching Writing	26
2.13. Writing Approaches :	28
2.14. Writing a Paragraph	30
2.15. Qualities of a Good Paragraph	31
2.16. The Role of the Teacher in Writing Lessons	32
Part two : The previous studies	34
Section 1 : Interactive strategies (interactive writing strategy)	34

Section 2 : Writing Skills	38
2.17.Commentary	46
2.18.Conclusion	47

Chapter Three

Method	48
3.1 Research design	49
3.2 Participants	49
3.3 Instruments	49
3.3. 1.The writing skills checklist	50
3.3.1.1.purpose of the checklist	50
3.3.1.2. sources of the checklist	50
3.3.2. The pre-post writing test	50
3.3.2.1.The purpose of the test	50
3.3.2.2.Test description	50
3.3.2.3.Test duration	51
3.3.2.4. Test reliability	51
3.3.2.5 .Test validity	51
3.3 3.The program	52
3.3.3 .1.Aim of The program	52
3.3.3 .2.Objectives of The program	52
3.3.3 .3.Content of The program	53
3.3.3.4. Program duration	55
3.4. Procedures of the Study	55
3.5.Assesment procedures	56
3.5.1.self-assement	56
3.5.2. formative assessment	56
3.5.3.summative assessment	57
3.6. Conclusion	57

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results	58
4-1 The used statistical technique	59
4-2 The results of the study and its interpretations	60
4-2 -1.Verifying the first hypothesis	60
4-2 -2.Verifying the second hypothesis	62
4-2 -3.Verifying the third hypothesis	64
4-2 -4.Verifying the forth hypothesis	68
4.3. Discussion	69
4.4.conclusion	71

Chapter Five	
Summery, Conclusion and Recommendations	72
5.1 Summary	73
5.2 Findings	75
5.3 Conclusion	76
5.4 Pedagogical Implications	77
5.5 Recommendations	78
5.6. Limitations of the study	80
5.7. Suggestions for Further Studies	81
References	82
Appendices	92
1- Appendix (1) Jury members	93
2- Appendix (2) The pre -post test	94
3- Appendix (3) The pre-post test specification	98
4- Appendix (4) The writing skills checklist	99
5- Appendix (5) Writing rubrics	101
6- Appendix (6) The content and duration of the program	102
7- Appendix (7) The proposed Program	104

List of Tables

Table (1) :	Results of the writing skills pilot exam	7
Table (2) :	The consistency coefficient of the test	52
Table (3) :	The coefficient correlations between the total scores and the sub contents	53
Table (4) :	The content and duration of the Writing Skills Program	54
Table (5) :	The referential framework for identifying the effect size of the t value	61
Table (6) :	The results of the first hypothesis	62
Table (7) :	The results of the second hypothesis	63
Table (8) :	The results of the pre-post test of the experimental group	66
Table (9) :	The results of the pre-post test of the control group	69

List of Figures

Figure 1 :	The difference between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group	72
Figure 2 :	The difference between the mean scores of the pre-post test of the experimental group	77
Figure 3 :	The difference between the mean scores of the pre-post test of the control	78

Chapter one

Background and Problem

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1.1. Introduction

Writing-as one of the language skills- is the process of translating thoughts and ideas into written messages. As Smith (2001, p. V) observed that ideas and language are essential to clear written communication, and so are the related skills of forming intelligible sentences and recognizable words. They added that the writing of students probably gives teachers best insight into the words students want to use and the kinds of difficulties they experience .

Writing requires special attention as it is a productive language process. Writing proficiency plays a great role in conveying a written message accurately and effectively. Moreover, writing is necessary in everyday life, in business, in creativity, and in scholarly pursuits. The more clearly one can write, the more easily one can survive and navigate the world. (Ismail,2013)

Concerning English, writing as a skill becomes extremely important because it is a means of communication by which every branch of human thought is made available (Kailani and Muqattash ,1995. P8).

Many researchers such as Celce-Murcia, (2001) ,Olshtain,(2001) agreed that "writing is essential but a difficult skill for EFL students to accomplish. Unlike speaking skill, writing imposes greater demands on the text as written interaction lacks immediate feedback from the writer who has to try to write a clear, relevant, and interesting text."

It is vital for teachers to employ effective methods of teaching that enhance students' ability to communicate ideas and feelings via writing. Monaghan(2007)found that improved teaching techniques are needed, as

shown by a lack of student improvement in writing in both elementary and secondary levels. He also states that students are weak in writing because teachers concentrate on teaching grammar, spelling drills and punctuation rather than involving students in the writing process. In spite of the fact that these are means that help students learn language in general and writing in particular, students need to be taught how to produce language communicatively.

Woolley(2005) Observed that communication through writing is considered to be a complex human task to incorporate cognitive, perceptual and motor aspects. This skill is developed to become a crucial tool in the learning process and in people's daily life; for writing serves as a means of communication used to express and report ideas and opinions. Writing is a thinking process which needs a lot of effort to rearrange ideas and thoughts. So, the researcher in this study tried to focus on the writing skill.

Accordingly, writing demands conscious intellectual effort which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time. The learner should master this skill through writing correct sentences grammatically, structurally, syntactically and contextually (Hamad, 2005)

Therefore, the conference of (Nile TESOL/AUC Conference XVI :2012) has presented some related recommendations such as:

1-focusing on developing the academic writing skills for students in order to familiarize them with the genre of academic writing and to enable them to practice the rhetorical methods of writing development that are common in academic writing.

2-Presenting language teaching practices, such as classroom spatial utilization and classroom communication, are disseminated through different teaching styles. classroom interaction patterns expected to bring

about language learning outcomes is an under-researched field that needs more attention. This presentation should explore teaching styles and their effects on language teaching practices in two EFL settings.

3- Implementing collaborative tasks in writing classes by presenting practical writing activities, which if done collaboratively, aid students with ideas that they can ultimately develop into meaningful writing.

So, new teaching methods are strongly needed that can be used to support the development of writing skills and help students attach meaning to print, to help teachers develop a lesson that allows whole group instruction and individual attention at the same time, to help the teacher practice skills without losing the excitement and enthusiasm of the class. And to learn to read and write and still have fun. we need interactive learning strategies.

Schreiner (2014) confirmed that "the interactive learning strategies can provide opportunities for students to engage with content in the classroom. These strategies can provide instructors with immediate feedback about student learning, helping identify student misconceptions, confusions, etc. They can also be used as practice exercises that help prepare students for formal assessments such as homework assignments, exams, etc. And there are many strategies that can affect interactively such as Brainstorming, Concept Map, active learning, problem-based learning, interactive writing, etc."

Hence Forth : The researcher intended to apply one of these strategies (the interactive learning strategies) in his study . He intended to investigate the effectiveness of this strategy on developing students' writing skills .

Interactive Writing is a cooperative event in which teacher and students jointly compose and write text. not only do they share the decision about what they are going to write, they also share the duties of scribe. The teacher uses the interactive writing session to model reading and writing strategies as he or she engages students in creating text.

Interactive Writing is a powerful tool for beginning writers; children learn concepts of print, spelling, phonics, and strategies for reading and writing. As students become Early Transitional Writers (generally late first-grade and second grade), they become more adept at writing independently. At this time, interactive writing may be used for specific purposes to meet the challenges of more complex writing (i.e., complex punctuation, complex sentence structure, vocabulary). The teacher may also use interactive writing to establish a community of writers through some activities (e.x, Group Thank-you Letter) (McCarrier, 2000: p.73)

During the interactive writing process, students and the teacher talk about what they are going to write. The teacher serves as the facilitator of the discussion-guiding, modeling, adding, summarizing, confirming, combining, and synthesizing the Students' ideas. As the actual writing begins, many opportunities for specific teaching are available.

The aim is to get the Students' thoughts on paper, discussing the topic and the process of writing, dealing with the conventions of print, and working on grammar, spelling, punctuation, letter formation, phonics, and voice. As Students become more proficient writers, lessons can focus on style and writing for different purposes.(Swartz, et al., 2001)

1.2.Context of the Problem

Through the researcher's work as an EFL teacher, he observed that most of the students who are learning how to write correctly face some

difficulties in learning writing skills . These difficulties might be as a result of ineffective traditional teaching methods, which finally affect their writing skills such as grammar ,spelling and punctuation . Thus, the researcher feels that there is a need to use new strategies to solve the students' learning problems .

The students' writing skills weakness in English requires a serious research for alternative techniques that may improve our students' writing skills level .

Moreover, teachers focus only on reading most of the time believing that in this way they help their students. Therefore, students do not have the chance to write.

Accordingly, most students are not able to express themselves in an acceptable way.

To validate this assumption the researcher carried out the following pilot study:

Pilot study:-

A pilot study was conducted in October,2015 on (34) second year students in Hend Takyellah Preparatory school- Monshat Al kanter administration in Giza .They were asked to write two paragraphs , one of them through controlling and the other is free writing. The aims of the pilot study were to:

- 1- Identify the weak points in students writing .
- 2- Survey the needs of the learners in designing the interactive strategies program through asking students and some teachers about students' needs to write .

The questions of the pilot study were the following :

- 1-Write a paragraph about you including name, age, hobbies and favorite subject and planning for the future

2-Write a short story about any strange situation that happened to you .

The following features were observed :

1-There were a lot of grammatical and punctuation errors .

2-60 % of the students couldn't write a correct sentence .

The evaluation part of the pilot study included three elements ; spelling, punctuation marks and some grammar rules. The mean of the evaluation items was as follows:

Table (1)

Results of the writing skills pilot exam

No.	spelling	punctuation	tense	ideas	percentage
Question 1	3.3	3.36	3.3	3.6	%40
Question 2	3.13	3.08	3.44	3.39	%33.3

The table shows the averages of the students who wrote correctly in each sub-skill. It also shows the percentage of the students who could write a correct paragraph

Through conducting oral discussion with students about what they need to develop their writing skills they suggested that they need to communicate and cooperate together in small groups .

Through investigating the results of the pilot study, the content of the suggested interactive strategies program should include :

1-The most grammatical rules used in writing such as sentence ,questions ,tenses, adjective and adverb .

2-The punctuation marks.

3-The correct spelling.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

As stated before there is a weakness in the 2nd year prep students' writing skills .the students can not write a simple sentence following the principals of good handwriting and that is because of the opportunities to practice the skill interactively. So ,this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using the interactive writing on developing writing skills .

1.4. Study Questions

The study tried to answer the following main question:

“What is the effectiveness of Interactive Strategies on developing second Preparatory students’ English writing skills?”

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions needed to be answered:

- a- What are the writing skills need to be developed for second Preparatory students ?
- b- What are the components of the suggested interactive strategies program to develop second preparatory students’ writing skills ?
- c- How far is the program effective in developing second preparatory students writing skills ?

1.5. Hypotheses of the Study

To solve the study problem , The researcher tested the following hypotheses: .

- 1-there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group on the writing skills in the pre-test.
- 2-there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group in favor of the experimental group on the writing skills in the post-test.