

Title: The Effect of Using the Whole Language Approach on Developing Some
Composition Writing Skills in English for Experimental Secondary Students in
Egypt

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Publication Year: 2006

Abstract

Background

There is limited research on the FL composition writing of Egyptian experimental secondary students.

Aims

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of the Whole Language Approach on developing the required composition writing skills in English for experimental secondary students.

Sample

A sample of (70) first year experimental secondary students, is randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control one, (35) students each.

Method

The present study is mainly quasi-experimental as it used the analytical, descriptive method for reviewing related literature and previous studies and the quasi-experimental method for implementing its experiment. The pre-test/post-test control group/experimental group design was used as an appropriate experimental design to the present study.

Results

Comparing the students' mean scores in the pre and post administrations of the test, it is proved that the experimental group students made a remarkable progress in their composition writing skills due to the use of the suggested programme based on the Whole Language Approach.

Conclusion

Thus, using the Whole Language Approach proved to have a very large effect size on developing the required composition writing skills in English for the experimental secondary students. The Whole Language Approach with its unique tenets that proved in previous studies to be very useful to the students' learning of the English language in different aspects in general, proved its success in the present study in developing the composition writing skills in particular through motivating the students to write pieces of composition that are good in terms of both quality and quantity. (i.e. writing two or three well organized paragraphs).

Summary of the Study

Introduction

English nowadays is the medium of international communication and the language of modern age. Like any language, English is composed of four main skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although all of these skills are important, interrelated and can not be separated, yet developing the writing skill with all its difficulty has been neglected for a long time due to the adoption of traditional approaches of language teaching that mainly focus on speaking and listening. So, in spite the importance of the writing skill in our life, it received little attention. This in turn, resulted in the students' weakness in the main writing skill in general and in the composition writing skills in particular. As a result of this, the researcher conducted the present study to investigate the effect of using the Whole Language Approach on developing the required composition writing skills for first year experimental secondary students. So, the problem of the present study is manifested in first year experimental secondary students' weakness in composition writing. Thus, there was an urgent need to handle this weakness in composition writing through using the Whole Language Approach and investigate its effect on developing the composition writing skills required for those students. Consequently, the present study was conducted with the purpose of designing a composition writing programme, based on the WLA, that meets the needs of first year experimental secondary students was designed to develop the composition writing skills required for them.

Research Questions

The present study tried to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the required composition writing skills that should be developed for first year experimental secondary students?
- 2- To what extent does using the Whole Language Approach affect developing the composition writing skills required for first year experimental secondary students?
- 3- How far does the effect of using the Whole Language Approach to develop the required composition writing skills vary from one category of skills to another?

To answer the first question, the researcher reviewed the pertinent, composition writing books and periodicals to precise the needed composition writing skills for first year experimental secondary students. After that, he made a checklist of all the skills of all the required composition writing skills for those students. The skills were classified into four categories as follows:

(I) The Content Skills:

- 1- Writing a topic sentence for each paragraph.
- 2- Presenting well - developed paragraphs.
- 3- Writing a concluding sentence for each paragraph.

(II) The Organization-Skills:

- 4- Writing relevant supporting details to the main idea of the paragraph. (i.e. paragraph unity).
- 5- Writing logically sequenced sentences related to the main idea of the paragraph. (i.e. paragraph coherence).
- 6- Using transitional words that are semantically and syntactically correct. (i.e. paragraph cohesion)

(III) The Language Use Skills:

- 7- Writing grammatically - correct sentences.
- 8- Using vocabulary meaningfully and functionally.

(IV) The Mechanics Skills:

- 9- Writing well- punctuated sentences and paragraphs. (i.e. capitalization [capital letters, full stops, commas, colon, semi. colon, apostrophe], paragraphing and margins).
- 10- Writing correctly - spelled words.

In this way, the first question of the study was answered.

In order to answer the second question, the researcher counted the effect size of the suggested programme on developing the required composition writing skills. The effect size came to be (4.20) which is more than the large value of the effect size (0.8). This clarifies that suggested composition writing programme had a very large effect size on developing the required composition writing skills for first year experimental secondary students. Thus, the second question of the present study was answered.

To answer the third question of the study, the researcher counted the effect size of the suggested programme on all the four categories of the composition writing skills. The effect size of the suggested programme on each of the four categories came as follows:

The Organization Skills (3.91)

The Content Skills (3.44)

The Mechanics Skills (3.05)

The Language Use Skills (2.10)

So, the suggested composition writing programme proved to have a very large effect size not only on the composition writing skills in general, but also on each of the four main categories of the composition writing skills in particular, but at different rates. Thus, its effect varied from one category of composition writing skills to another which may be due to the difference of the nature of the skills in each category. Thus, the third question of the present study was answered.

Hypotheses of the Study

The present study also hypothesized the following four hypotheses:

- 1- There is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group students at the level of (0.01) on the post administration of the composition writing test in favour of the experimental group students.
- 2- There is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of (0.01) on the pre and post administrations of the test in favour of the post administration of the composition writing test.
- 3- There is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group students at the level of (0.01) in each category of skills on the post administration of the composition writing test in favour of the experimental group students.
- 4- There is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in each category of the composition writing skills in favour of the post administration of the test.

To verify the first hypothesis of the study, the researcher compared statistically between the experimental and the control groups on the post administration of the test. Since the value of the estimated "t" (9.75) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.65), therefore there is a statistically-significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of (0.01) on the post administration of the test, in favour of the experimental group students. Thus, the first hypothesis was verified.

To verify the second hypothesis of the study, the researcher compared statistically between the pre and the post administrations of the experimental group. Since the value of the estimated "t" (12.27) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01), in favour of the post administration of the test. Thus, the second hypothesis was verified.

To verify the third hypothesis of the study, the researcher compared statistically between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in each category of the required composition writing skills on the post administration of the test.

(1) The Content Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (8.625) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.66), therefore there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of (0.01) in the content skills on the post administration of the test in favour of the experimental group students.

(2) The Organization Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (9.71) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.65), therefore there is a statistically-significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of (0.01) in the organizational skills on the post administration of the test, in favour of the experimental group students.

(3) The Language Use Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (4.47) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.65), therefore there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of (0.01) in the language use skills on the post administration of the test, in favour of the experimental group students.

(4)The Mechanics Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (7.89) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.65), therefore there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students at the level of (0.01) in the mechanics skills on the post administration of the test, in favour of the experimental group students. This shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students, in favour of the experimental group. Thus, the third hypothesis was verified.

To verify the fourth hypothesis of the study, the researcher compared statistically between the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administrations of the test in each category of the required composition writing skills, in favour of the post administration of the test:

(1) The Content Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (10.05) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in the content skills, in favour of the post administration of the test.

(2) The Organization Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (11.40) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in the organization skills, in favour of the post administration of the test.

(3) The Language Use Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (6.13) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in the language use skills, in favour of the post administration of the test.

Since the value of the estimated "t" (8.90) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically- significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in the mechanics skills, in favour of the post administration of the test. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was verified.

(4)The Mechanics Skills

Since the value of the estimated "t" (8.90) is higher than the value of the tabled "T" (2.73), therefore there is a statistically-significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the test at the level of (0.01) in the mechanics skills, in favour of the post administration of the test. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was verified

Answering the study questions and verifying its hypotheses proved that the suggested composition writing programme, based on the whole language approach, has a very large effect size on developing not only the composition writing skills in general, but also on developing each of the four main categories of the composition writing skills for first year experimental secondary students.

Conclusions

Having analysed and discussed the results of the present study, the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

- 1 - Secondary school students need to use English communicatively and not to study it just for examination requirements. So, they have to deal with the English language as a whole.

- 2- Composition writing is a complex skill that encompasses many sub-skills each of which is indispensable for a highly organized piece of writing. On developing this main complex skill, each of the included and required sub-skills must be developed.
3. Learning in Whole Language is viewed as integrative, so that learning in anyone area of language helps learning in other areas.
- 4 - Using a composition writing programme, based on the whole language approach, has a very large effect size (4.20) on developing the composition writing skills required for first year experimental secondary students in general and a very large effect size on each of the categories of the composition writing skills.
- 5- The effect size of the WLA composition writing programme on the four categories of the composition writing skills varied from one category of skills to another as the effect size came as follows: the organization skills (3.91), the content skills (3.44), the mechanics skills (3.05), and the language use skills (2.10). This variation may be due to the difference in the nature of the skills and the time and effort needed to develop them well.
- 6- Correcting the students' written pieces of composition analytically and writing portfolio are decisive factors in improving the students' level of composition writing as they provide the students with the sufficient feedback needed for their gradual progress in composition writing.
- 7 - The Whole Language Approach with its unique tenets that proved in previous studies to be very useful to the students' learning of the English language in different aspects in general, proved its success in the present study in developing the composition writing skills in particular through motivating the students to write pieces of composition that are good in terms of both quality and quantity. (i.e. writing two or three well organized paragraphs).
- 8 - Creating positive learner-teacher relationship in the whole language classroom is considered an ideal one as it helps the learner to participate freely in a non-threatening learning environment. The teacher's role as a facilitator and a co-learner with his students creates a warm climate that helps both the teacher and the students fulfil their aims of implementing the suggested WLA programme.
- 5- Choosing and using language learning activities and tasks that should be meaningful, motivating, challenging and purposeful for the students.

Recommendations

As the results of the present study were encouraging, the following recommendations seem pertinent:

- 1- Improving the content of the English language courses taught in the experimental secondary schools in the light of the present study results.
- 2- Using learner-centred materials in any language course. In other words, students should, have the opportunity to take part in choosing their learning materials.
- 3- Using appropriate suggested WL strategies by the English language teachers to help learners become more proficient in composition writing and other language skills.
- 4- Training the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers in workshops on how to use the WL strategies to teach composition writing at different stages.
- 6- Using multi-media in the classroom as they are considered decisive factors in language learning as they stimulate more than one sense while learning.
- 7- Using authentic instruction which provides learners with positive attitudes towards learning due to the close relationship between the learners themselves and their cultural backgrounds.
- 8 - Making use of the composition writing checklist of the present study and the suggested programme, based on the WLA. In teaching composition for students at the experimental secondary schools.
- 9- Adapting the suggested programme for the public secondary schools taking into consideration the students' level and needs.
- 10- Taking into consideration the identification of the students' needs and pace of work while designing programmes for the students.
- 11- Using the students' L₁ to support learning in L₂.
- 12- Providing students with the freedom of action (the very specific characteristic of WL).

Suggestions for Further Research:

Based on the results of the present study, the following studies are recommended for further research:

- 1- Designing composition writing programmes based on the WLA for the pre-university stages.
- 2- Replication of the present study should be developed to investigate the effect of using Whole Language on developing essay - writing skills at the university level.
- 3- Designing programmes based on the whole language approach for developing listening and speaking skills at different stages of education.
- 4- Further studies are needed to investigate the effect of the Whole Language Approach on developing the students' critical and creative thinking skills in the different educational stages.