

Fostering EFL Students' Paragraph Writing Using Edmodo

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Abstract

The present study sought to investigate the effect of using Edmodo, a Web 2.0 tool, as a supportive blended learning tool in developing EFL Saudi students' paragraph writing skills at Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University, KSA. Eighty students majoring in English at the college level one participated in the study. The participants were randomly selected for an experimental group (taught by using Edmodo) and a control group (taught without using Edmodo). Two main tools were devised to collect data: Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and Test of Paragraph Writing Skills (TPWS). The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially by running a *t*-test, using SPSS 16.0, to calculate the differences between the mean scores of the two groups pre- and post-intervention. The results showed statistically significant differences in the post-test in favor of the experimental group. Integrating Edmodo into the writing class was found to be highly beneficial in developing EFL students' writing abilities, up to paragraph level. The use of Edmodo also enriched students' knowledge and increased their motivation to learn.

Keywords: Edmodo, writing performance, process writing, EFL classroom

1. Introduction

1.1 Teaching and Learning Writing in EFL Context

The teaching of writing to L2 learners, including EFL students undertaking English courses, has been the subject of investigation by many researchers (e.g. Choi, 2013; Fauziati, 2015; Li, 2012; Olanezhad, 2015), and while they are generally agreed about the complexity of writing and its crucial role in supporting other skills in L2 learning, the teaching of it is not nearly as settled as an issue.

Writing must not be thought of as a solely productive skill. It is rather a three-stage discovery process that involves pre-writing, writing, and post-writing (Harmer, 2001). Lindsay and Knight (2006) suggest that the pre-writing stage can be addressed through brainstorming, collecting data and planning an outline of the content. The writing stage is where learners do the task of writing such as a story, a report, a letter, etc., either individually or collaboratively. The post-writing stage is where teachers follow up students' work and provide sufficient feedback on how flourishing their work has been. These stages help students complete the writing task successfully and foster the process of writing. This process approach to teaching writing superseded a traditional approach that considered writing the producing of a product that was the result of a teacher-focused instruction in rules, from the physical act of writing to spelling, grammar, composition, and so on. While the process approach sees writing as a social and collaborative activity, the traditional approach saw it as a silent and solitary activity.

Writing is not easy since it requires a number of processes to be carried out before the writer can "put pen to paper". Furthermore, a writer needs to write not only coherently but correctly, which requires more time and effort (Liu & Braine, 2005). These stages are even more challenging for EFL freshmen students especially if they have not been acquainted with these strategies in their own language or if they lack the basics of writing a standard paragraph. This complicated operation of writing makes students more vulnerable to make mistakes and more anxious when writing.

Teachers have a very significant role to play in attempt to overcome students' writing problems. They need to identify useful techniques and select appropriate methods to help EFL students develop their writing competence. One method used to teach writing to EFL students is found in a range of Web 2.0 tools, which means a range of web sites and applications that enables everyone to generate and share online data or material produced by

EFL learners, e.g. wikis, blogs, podcasts, and folksonomies, most generally put to engage in social networking and content hosting services. Technology has turned out to be one of the fundamental components of a successful educational environment in recent decades. McKeeman and Oviedo (2013) state, “technology is becoming an essential instructional tool that can be applied to enhance teaching in a language classroom” (p. 68). It advances students’ dynamic engagement through collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication. In other words, technology encourages learners to be actively involved in the language classroom and build up their soft skills better. Many language instructors believe that technology has potential advantages for EFL learners in various fields (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000, p. 12).

Edmodo is one of the newest technological tools to provide simple ways and innovative features for both educators and language learners to connect and collaborate in a virtual class. It is one of the many Web 2.0 technologies available today that can be used as a free and secure medium for online language teaching that connects teachers and students around the world. Edmodo aims to help educators utilize social networking facilities in accordance with the conditions of learning in any classroom. It looks like Facebook but is far more private and secure as a teaching platform as only educators can build and handle accounts and only students receiving a group code and registering in the group can access and join the group (Majid, 2011). In the current study the researcher used paragraph writing as the targeted skill to be developed via using Edmodo, as found on the website www.edmodo.com.

There are many advantages to be gained by teachers, students and even parents in using Edmodo. Supporting teachers’ writing instruction, Edmodo can serve as online language practice which can in turn enhance students’ writing performance and motivate them to write in English. Teachers can upload tasks, send out quizzes, provide feedback, allocate grades, obtain finished assignments, store and share content in a format that includes both files and links, keep a class calendar, perform surveys, as well as send notes and text alerts to individual learners or to the class as a whole. Respecting students, Edmodo promotes cooperation and active interaction among them. It allows them to contact each other easily and helps to build confidence for those who have difficulty in expressing ideas face-to-face or in the classroom. It provides rich opportunities for sharing information, exchanging thoughts and delivering homework, using writing as the medium of communication, at any time and in any place. Parents are also offered accounts on Edmodo which let them view their children’s homework assignments, keep an eye on due dates, and receive updates on class and school events. All this information can be accessed from a computer, a tablet computer like iPad, a smartphone or any other type of gadget with an internet connection. In 2011, Edmodo was recognized as one of the top 25 websites by the American Association of School Librarians to promote innovation, creativity, active participation, and collaboration within the “Social Networking and Communication” (Kongchan, 2012).

Several researchers have documented the potential effects of using Edmodo as a supplementary learning tool giving students independence in learning, attracting their attention and enhancing their language abilities, particularly their writing competence, the primary focus of the current study (Stroud, 2010; Alfian, 2013; Balasubramanian, Jaykumar, & Fukey, 2014; Shams-Abadi, Ahmadi, & Mehrdad, 2015). In supporting to the teaching of writing, Edmodo has some distinctive features compared to other social networks: (1) it offers quick access to writing materials and assignments, (2) it helps students become better organized in their writing, by promoting a specific approach or technique, (3) it facilitates both the process of giving feedback on students’ writing compositions by teachers and peers, and of receiving input on part of students, and (4) it makes students more interested in the process of revising and editing their writing.

Although studies examining the impact of using Edmodo as an effective social networking tool for fostering language abilities have documented significant results than the teacher depending solely on face-to-face instruction, and although Edmodo has become a popular application to assist university learners and EFL teachers around the globe in sharing their educational experience and cooperating on pedagogical issues, its utilization in Saudi universities is still scarce. To the researcher’s best knowledge, there is no study that has explored the use of Edmodo in teaching paragraph writing to Saudi university students with this large sample of participants, as the present study, let alone freshmen EFL learners. Given the significance of writing and the advantages that could be gained by using Edmodo in paragraph writing instruction, the present study aims to examine the effect of using Edmodo in the development of Saudi freshmen EFL undergraduates’ paragraph writing skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Teaching English writing is one of the fundamental objectives and basic courses of the Department of English at College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Alkharj, Saudi Arabia. The

significance of writing is due to the fact that commanding it will likely lead to high academic achievements in all other courses that depend primarily on writing (Alghizzi, 2017; Alshumaimeri, 2011). Being a faculty member in the department of English, the researcher noticed that freshmen EFL students generally lack the basic skills required to compose a standard paragraph, failing in matters of capitalization, punctuation, organization, spelling and grammaticality due to a lack of attention given to their writing. In the pre-university stage, English language is taught just like any other school subject to help students pass exams, and not as a foreign language used for the purpose of communication. Students simply memorize some passages written by their teachers without having the opportunity to reflect on what they're doing and why (Aljafen, 2013; Jahin & Idrees, 2010). Taking into account the inactive role of English outside the classroom as the Saudi cultural context relies mainly on Arabic, the students' mother tongue, in all domestic and governmental sectors. Hence, students who major in English at a later stage suffer from serious weaknesses in all language skills particularly in writing due to its complexity. Furthermore, in many college classes, writing is merely a testing tool. Teachers give students a title or a topic. Students then produce a text either individually or in groups and the teacher marks it for grammar, vocabulary and spelling errors. As a result, students generally lack any interest in writing. Even senior students at higher levels perform weakly and lose marks as a result of their writing performance in other subjects.

Considering that writing is very important as it impacts students' achievements in other subjects and at later stages of their studies, the researcher considered that it was necessary to create a strategy that would involve both teacher and students to participate in the learning activities as "A mixture of teaching and learning methods will always be the most efficient manner in which to support student learning because only then it is possible to embrace all the activities of discussion, interaction, adaptation and reflection, which are essential for academic learning" (Towndrow & Cheers, 2003, p. 57). This goal was considered best met through the use of Edmodo as it involves both teachers and students in developing the students' writing competency. In fact, Edmodo has a reputation not only for helping learners make progress in their writing but also in helping to motivate them by drawing their attention to the importance of learning writing.

1.3 Questions of the Study

The current study seeks answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the effect of using Edmodo on helping Saudi EFL students develop their paragraph writing performance?
- 2). Are there any statistically significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in their post-test paragraph writings?

1.4 Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were advanced to answer these questions:

H1: There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the pre-test of paragraph writing (PWT).

H2: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test of paragraph writing (PWT) in favor of the experimental group.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is expected that the study will contribute to the following aspects:

- 1) The study will give insights into the application of Edmodo as a supplementary blended learning approach in attempt to developing college EFL students' writing abilities. This, on one hand, will motivate students to use Edmodo to earn knowledge, and on the other hand, will pave the way for future studies to be conducted using web 2.0 tools to enhance other writing aspects and language learning skills.
- 2) Results of the study will attract the attention of English language teachers to the importance of the Edmodo technology as a means of developing writing skills and getting rid of non-beneficial traditional methods. It will also help EFL writing instructors in creating a deeper understanding of the potential effect of blended learning environments on students' writing competency.
- 3) The outcomes of the present study will enlighten curriculum planners and designers to the benefits of integrating Web 2.0 tools into language teaching in general and writing classes in particular.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study lie in the fact that its participants were college level one students, and that these were all females as the study was conducted in girls' college. In addition, the teaching was limited to writing descriptive

paragraphs as the focus of the writing course was to train students how to write descriptive short paragraphs and sentences where they should refine topics, brainstorm ideas and thoughts, develop supporting ideas and finally edit the paragraph.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Paragraph Writing

Writing is an essential communicative language skill that needs a mental effort to plan the sentences and the ways of joining them to be meaningful and communicative. It cannot be learned away from the other language skills. It is an approach to express one's feelings, thoughts and experiences, make them visible and concrete. It is a method through which writers ought to build balance between a couple of issues such as content, organization, intent, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (Elbow, 1998; Harmer, 2001, 2004; Jahin & Idrees, 2012). Writing is a reflective activity that requires spare time to think about the particular topic, and to analyze and break down information. It stimulates reflection, forces learners to focus and organize their thoughts, and fosters their capacity to summarize, evaluate, and criticize them. It further includes various cognitive and metacognitive operations, such as brainstorming, organization, outlining, preparation, and revision (Bruning & Horn, 2000). As a result, learners have to perform multiple cognitive procedures in the writing process to efficiently express their emotions and ideas effectively and communicate meaningful messages to the readers.

The primary focus of the present study is to be able to express and form ideas and thoughts on the paragraph level. A paragraph is one writing unit expressing one main idea and comprising of two types of sentences; a topic sentence and a series of supporting statements (Rajatanun, 1988). A paragraph usually contains between five to eight sentences about that one main idea or topic and concluded with a sentence that reaffirms the principal concept in a different way. All of these supporting detail sentences are supporting the writer's main idea, that is the key concept of the paragraph. The author builds bigger writing units from smaller ones, using words to create sentences, sentences to make paragraphs and paragraphs to make fully structured texts such as letters, reports and university topics (Hart & Reinking, 1990). This process of writing as a classroom activity includes four basic writing phases – planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing. It is carefully planned because it needs to teach process abilities in a structured way. Such complex activity makes it difficult for students to acquire it easily and tends to turn the writing class into a bored one. In response to such issues, Harmer (2001) asserts that teachers have to perform a number of significant roles during the writing class, those of motivator, resource and feedback provider in an attempt to help language learners experience and absorb the techniques of process writing for the sake of enhancing their writing performance. First, teachers should encourage students to generate suitable ideas and thoughts relevant to the topic. Second, they ought to provide their students with the necessary information and resources for the topic under investigation including offering advice and suggestions in a productive and thoughtful way. Third, teachers must eventually provide sufficient feedback on the writing tasks to attract students' attention to the pros and cons of their work.

The above discussion indicates that writing is a complicated and difficult skill to learn particularly for EFL students. It requires students to undertake a number of steps including brainstorming, drafting and revising that require specialized skills on how to produce thoughts, organize them coherently, revise their text for clearer meanings and edit it for appropriate grammar in an effort to develop a final, well-written text (Brown, 2001, p. 335). Teachers are therefore challenged in two aspects; first, they need to plan appropriate classroom activities to improve learning definite writing skills at each stage (Seow, 1995). Second, they ought to develop innovative approaches and tasks to teaching writing to enhance their students' writing competency. The popularity of social networking sites has given both EFL teachers and language learners fresh possibilities to communicate in authentic ways that can be used to shape their writing capacity. By implementing these technologies in the teaching environment, language learners can easily interact in meaningful practice that promotes language acquisition and motivation with their peers. Activities that make use of Web 2.0 interactivity can greatly attract students' attention to generate meaningful output and stimulate their interest in language learning. Edmodo is a powerful and successful exemplar of the technological advances in teaching (Chartrand, 2012; Fauzi, 2015).

2.2 Using Edmodo in Paragraph Writing Instruction

Edmodo is a social educational network with the elements of Web 2.0. designed primarily to maintain individuals in contact with those who have similar interests and objectives. Edmodo was initially developed by Nic Borg and Jeff O'Hara (2008), who recognized the need to evolve the classroom atmosphere to meet the connectedness of the 21st century world. It is a supportive blended learning tool to develop a digital class. It is an exceedingly secure learning environment for teachers and students where its data is stored on its server so that it can be kept safe and accessible at any time and from any place. Users can access this information by any

common tool used to access the internet, from personal computers to any other gadget providing access. Steven, (2014) describes Edmodo as a social learning platform for teachers and students using a microblogging format. Like Facebook, Edmodo is a site created to keep people connected with those who have similar interests and aim. It is a free and safe learning environment where students can only login with a special code provided by teachers. It seeks to facilitate the process of learning and teaching in a virtual classroom setting as well as helping educators make use of social media to create a customized learning environment that assist with plugging pedagogical gaps and learning problems. Using Edmodo, teacher and students can reach out to one another and stay connected wherever they are, share ideas, upload files, access course content, turn in assignments, set homework deadlines and join online discussions. Similarly, Luaran (2012) states that Edmodo is a powerful technological tool that can bring various benefits to the learning process through meaningful interactions that can address pedagogical problems in class. First, it can measure and track students' progress during the term. Second, it promotes students' motivation and self-efficacy. It enhances autonomous learning through the various platforms provided on its website.

Several researchers have documented the positive effects of social networking as a potential learning tool in English language teaching and learning contexts, particularly in writing classes. Fifth and Raya (2008) investigated whether using Edmodo as an online tool in an EFL writing class would increase students' ability to produce argumentative essays. Fifteen EFL students participated in this classroom action research. Data obtained through qualitative and quantitative methods showed that utilizing Edmodo in the teaching of EFL writing can significantly increase students' ability in writing argumentative essays. In addition, Alfian (2013) explored the effectiveness of utilizing a micro-blogging tool, Edmodo in particular, in teaching writing to tenth grade students of Al-Azhar. Data collected via questionnaires and interviews showed that the implementation of Edmodo in the process approach to writing, led to increased peer reviewing, self-editing and revising, thus enhancing students' writing quality.

In his study of social networks, Thongmak (2013), using the case of Thailand, aimed to examine the benefits of adopting social networks as a classroom collaboration tool such as Facebook in comparison to Edmodo. Results indicated that Edmodo was perceived as being superior in being beneficial, user-friendly and effective in educational settings of social networking. Fauzi (2015) conducted a research investigating the effectiveness of Edmodo in increasing students' ability in composing a recount text. The study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design in which nine students were tested before and after the experiment. Findings showed significant differences between the results of the pre-test and post-test in favor of the post-test. Further, students' motivation to write was much increased because they could share their ideas freely in a secure learning environment.

The effect of Edmodo on the writing work of EFL learners was examined by Shams-Abadi, Ahmadi and Mehrdad (2015). A quasi-experimental design was used with 40 EFL students attending advanced writing classes at an Iranian English Institute. The students have been allocated randomly to two groups, experimental and control groups, with Edmodo used in the experimental group. Results indicated that the integration of Edmodo in writing can provide useful opportunities for improving students' writing ability as it provides easy access to online sources and enables students to compare their written essays with those of their peers and to keep in touch with the teacher and other classmates at any time. In addition, Purnawarman et al. (2016) conducted their research observing Edmodo as a virtual learning platform combined with a genre-based approach to teaching writing to 17 participants from the eleventh grade of a senior high school in Bandung, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach, the results showed that using Edmodo as a blended learning approach to GBA writing cycles was most effective. This implementation of Edmodo further facilitated students' engagement cognitively during classroom sessions and learning activities.

In sum, it can be said that Edmodo can offer EFL teachers an active platform for enhancing their learners' writing abilities. On the other side, students have a range of possibilities that guide them through every step of the writing process. They can obtain a range of feedback, corrections and recommendations to improve their writing efficiency while generating their tasks.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

The study sample included 80 pre-intermediate Saudi English language student majoring in college level one of the English Language Department in the College of Sciences and Humanities at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. Participants enrolled in the writing skill course Eng1220 (4 credits), in the first term of the academic year 2018-2019, which aimed at enhancing students' writing abilities in the target language. Being university

students, the samples were selected from two classes who were assigned randomly to two groups: an experimental group (n=40) and a control group (n=40). Prior to any treatment, a demographic survey and an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 2004) were distributed to participants to ensure the homogeneity and comparability of the two groups in terms of English language proficiency, age, and computer skills. Furthermore, to ensure that the two groups were equivalent in their paragraph writing skills, a test of paragraph writing skills was carried out before the beginning of the experiment. Results of the test indicated that the control group and the experimental group were equivalent in their paragraph writing skills prior to the intervention. Following the test, the experimental group was taught in a face-to-face learning environment in class supported by the online learning tool Edmodo whereas the control group studied the same course material in class without any recourse to Web tools. The course required students to meet once a week for four hours over 14 weeks during the semester.

3.2 Design of the Study

The study utilized a pre-test/post-test experimental and control design in an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of using Edmodo in promoting Saudi EFL students' development of paragraph writing. The paragraph writing test was administered on both groups before the start of the experiment. The experimental group was taught the process of writing in class followed by using Edmodo as a follow-up activity in a blended learning environment, whereas the control group followed the traditional method of teaching writing in studying the same material without using Edmodo.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

Because participants belonged to two intact classes and random selection of participants to two groups was not possible due to institutional constraints, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 2004) was administered at the beginning of the study to all participants. The aim of this test is to determine the English proficiency levels of all learners and ensure comparability of groups in terms of language equivalence. The test was chosen in particular because it is highly economical, easy to administer and objectively scorable.

Participants' performance in the OPT test showed that they had an elementary level of proficiency in English since they achieved a mean of 116.63 for the control group and 117.37 for the experimental group out of a total of 200 as defined by the OPT test manual. Participants were at some point between lower-intermediate modest users with a score range of 120-134 and basic-extremely limited users with a score range of 90-104. A very small proportion of scores ranged between 120-134 out of 200 which is defined as lower-intermediate modest users by the OPT test. For the purposes of the current study, the participants in both groups were sufficiently proficient to take part in the study.

3.3.2 Paragraph Writing Test (PWT)

The aim of the Paragraph Writing Test (PWT) was to measure the paragraph writing skills of first year English language majors at the College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia. The PWT comprised of two descriptive writing tasks, developed by the researcher with the help of the course textbook "Effective Academic Writing: intro" by Alice Savage (2012), assigned for this writing course in the curriculum. Two EFL experienced instructors validated the writing tasks. The first task was to write a paragraph about "My personality", describing oneself, and the second task was to write about "My hometown", describing the students' hometown. Both writing tasks were done on Edmodo. Students' writings were assessed based on a 4-point marking rubric and the average mark was computed (see Appendix 1 for details of the marking rubric). The paragraph writings were evaluated with respect to content, organization, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

To decide content and face validity, the writing test and the 5-point scoring rubric were submitted to a jury of seven writing experts. In the updated test version, the jury's comments, recommendations, and modifications were taken into account. The test was therefore approved as a valid and suitable instrument to measure the paragraph writing of learners. The reliability of the test was evaluated using a test-retest technique. The experiment was piloted on a group of 25 students who represented the target population and were subsequently excluded from the research sample. The Pearson product moment correlation formula was used to predict the coefficient of stability of the test at $r=.80$. This shows how reliable the test is.

3.4 Procedure

Prior to intervention, the instrument of the study, PWT, was piloted with a group of students representing the target population. Based on the results, the final PWT version has been amended. The experiment was carried

out during the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019 and lasted for fourteen weeks (four hours a week). The objectives, instruments and procedures of the study were known to the participants before the test began. In addition, they were introduced to the PWT rubric to increase their awareness of the criteria for evaluating their writings. Before introducing Edmodo to the experimental group, the Paragraph Writing Pretest was distributed to all participants. After the conduct of the experiment, both groups, experimental and control group, were post-tested. The students in the experimental group did their post-test paragraph writing in the lab under supervision of the instructor whereas the control group did it in class. Students were given 30 minutes to plan, write, edit and submit their writing.

Over 14 weeks, all participants were introduced to the steps of the writing process and the characteristics of a short paragraph, highlighting the main idea sentence, supporting detailed sentences, topic, controlling idea as well as grammar, punctuation and spelling. Students were presented to the writing process via organized tasks of brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and editing following their course textbook “Effective Academic Writing: intro” by Alice Savage (2012) assigned in the curriculum for this writing course. They were trained on how to compose a well-written and organized paragraph consisting of five sentences on a specific topic in each class. The main objective was to raise students’ awareness of the components that contribute to a good piece of writing. For the experimental group, students were introduced to the Edmodo website in the first week in order to create accounts, logins to the Edmodo writing group created by the instructor, learn the main features and services of the website (writing and responding to posts, submitting assignments, uploading materials, viewing scores, answering quizzes etc.) and download the Edmodo app to their mobile devices to receive notifications.

The use of Edmodo came as a follow-up activity in which only the students in the experimental group were trained to do their paragraph writings via Edmodo in the lab. Students would first brainstorm their ideas and thoughts together with their classmates on the website discussion board under the supervision of the teacher. Afterthat, they were requested to submit their first draft paragraph writings (postings) in sequence. Students benefited from the spell-check or auto-correction feature on the website. Each posting was followed by peer revision based on the Peer Editor’s Worksheet. Assistance was provided for each and every student when needed. The final draft was eventually submitted using the assignment feature in Edmodo where the teacher revised, corrected and sent the paragraphs back to the students. Students were further requested to create a folder in their Edmodo backpack that contained their paragraph writings during the whole semester. This online backpack was used to record grades, reflect on their writings and keep track of where a student was in the process. In addition, a variety of activities and quizzes were uploaded for students as an extra-curricular online practice after each class to measure their knowledge and comprehension of what had been delivered in class. On the other hand, the control group followed the traditional method in studying the same course material.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of the study predicted that there would be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the Pre-application of PWT. To ensure that both groups were similar in terms of writing abilities prior to any intervention, a Pre-PWT was distributed among all participants aiming to assess their writing skills. Results were further compared through an independent samples t-test in an attempt to explore whether the Control Group (n=40) and the Experimental group (n=40) were at the same probability level ($p < 0.01$) before conducting the experiment. The results, displayed in Table 1, reveal that the mean scores of the pre-test of both groups were nearly the same (32.80 and 32.34, respectively) with respect to their writing skills. The p-value detected ($p = .844$) is greater than the pre-determined significant level ($p < 0.01$). Hence, the first research hypothesis, which predicted that there is no significant difference between the groups prior to the treatment based on the probability values obtained for the two groups, is affirmed.

Table 1. Independent samples T-Test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on Pre-PWT

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Control	40	32.80	10.845	.1965	78	.844
Experimental	40	32.34	10.195			

4.2 Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis of the study anticipated statistically significant differences between the mean results of the experimental group and the control group on the post-application of PWT in favor of the experimental group. The mean scores of the experimental group and control group on post-application PWT have been compared with independent samples t-test. The findings, shown in Table 2, showed statistically significant difference in the scores for the experimental group (M =70.15, SD =11.9) and the control group (M =61.17, SD = 15.5) in favor of the experimental group. The p-value detected ($p=.007$) is smaller than the pre-determined significant level ($p<0.01$). Hence, the second research hypothesis, which predicted that there would be statistically significant differences between groups after the experiment, is also supported. The significant increase in the mean score of the experimental group shows that there is the potential for an accelerated development of students' writing skills through the implementation of Edmodo in EFL classrooms.

Table 2. Independent samples T-Test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on Post-PWT

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Control	40	61.17	15.516	-2.723	78	.007
Experimental	40	70.15	11.966			

4.3 Discussion

The present study investigated the potential effects of using Edmodo as a supplementary tool in attempt to enhance EFL students' writing skills particularly descriptive paragraph writing. The findings of the study demonstrated several issues. First, Edmodo was found to be effective in enhancing students' writing performance as a major development existed significantly with regard to paragraph organization and content, spelling and punctuation, grammar and sentence structure. When students' paragraph writings were tested prior to the intervention, main idea sentences introducing paragraphs were not clearly stated and some supporting detail sentences were not related to the topic sentence. This indicated that students didn't brainstorm ideas and thoughts enough in the pre-writing stage to enable them write related and well-structured sentences. Furthermore, misspelling and punctuation were found as students didn't edit their paragraphs as a post-writing procedure. After the intervention, the interaction of students with Edmodo has enabled them to brainstorm ideas collaboratively, write well defined sentences independently, share their descriptive writings with their peers and teacher using the distinctive features of Edmodo. Students used the comment box of Edmodo for thinking loud and brainstorming together with their teacher and peers, and immediate feedback was received. The quiz feature was used to train students to identify topic sentences and supporting detail sentences. The assignment feature was used to upload their final draft of paragraph writings and revise submissions when needed. Gradually, students became more aware of the writing process and the steps that should be followed prior to any writing task. These findings go in harmony with the results reported in other studies implementing Edmodo to develop students' writing abilities (Miftah & Raya, 2018; Purnawarman et al., 2016; Shams-Abadi et al., 2015; Fauzi, 2015). The beneficial impact of using Edmodo on students' writing performance can be ascribed to the collaborative nature of Edmodo (Hankins, 2015). Edmodo enabled EFL learners with ample opportunity to build a solid ground for their collaboration and increased their motivation. Through Edmodo, students supported each other with the goal to produce quality paragraph writing.

Second, this study has also proved that Edmodo offered a very secure and friendly atmosphere particularly for shy and less active learners who were more daring to interact, comment and share any ideas or suggestions via Edmodo compared to face to face in-class interaction (Thongmak, 2013). In addition, the easy interface of Edmodo motivated students to enrich their knowledge outside the classroom and enhanced autonomy in the learning environment. This boils down to Ellis (1994) who acknowledged learners' motivation as a significant factor to affect second/foreign language learning rates and achievements. This finding is similar to other studies that addressed the same issue (Kongchan, 2013; AlNaibi et al., 2018)

5. Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that using web-based social learning applications has a vital role in enhancing learners' language skills, prompting positive changes in their roles in learning and improving their writing performance. The present study has provided important data on the use of Edmodo as an assisting

method to create major development in the teaching and learning of EFL writing classes, which in turn resulted in a general improvement in students' writing performance in general and in their process writing skills in particular. Edmodo demonstrated to be an ideal tool for exchanging thoughts, raising remarks, taking feedback from others, and, finally, creating high quality writing texts.

6. Recommendations and Suggestions

In accordance with the finding of the present study, the researcher introduces the following recommendations. First, EFL university instructors should be trained on using Edmodo to develop EFL learners' paragraph writing skills. This training should draw their attention to the significance of the Edmodo technology as a means of enhancing students' writing abilities and offer them with valid approaches and techniques on how Edmodo can be effectively incorporated into writing classes. Second, curriculum planners and textbook designers should be alert to the advantages of integrating Web 2.0 tools into language teaching in general and writing classes in particular, and hence include activities and tasks using Edmodo. Third, EFL instructors should be provided with publish instructions and research papers on how teachers can utilize Edmodo to enhance EFL undergraduates' writings.

Furthermore, the researcher suggests some areas that need more investigation. First, the current study can be replicated with a greater number of participants from different educational levels to generalize more outcomes. Second, gender differences may be investigated with respect to using Edmodo. Third, examining students' perceptions and attitudes towards using Edmodo in the classroom can also lead to more accurate pedagogical decisions.

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Appendix A. Paragraph Writing Marketing Rubric

Criteria	Points			
	4	3	2	1
The writer begins the paragraph with a complete main idea sentence.				
The writer uses at least four supporting detail sentences. Each gives new details and matches the topic.				
The writer uses accurate grammar and complete sentences.				
The writer uses correct spelling.				
The writer uses proper punctuation and capitalization.				
Total score	_____ /16			
Marker's name and signature				

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