Impact of Distance Learning on writing skills of EFL learners in the Arab Context

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Abstract
For both scholars and practitioners, the main issue has been the requirement for supporting the practice of teaching writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Since it helps students become better writers, peer evaluation has attracted a lot of attention. EFL learners in Arab countries face certain difficulties in their writing practices. However, the impact of distance learning practices on the writing practices of EFL learners has been found. The purpose of this research aims to find out the impact of distance learning on the writing skills of EFL learners in the Arab context. Also the study aims to implement distance learning approaches for EFL learners to improve their writing skills.
Keywords: distance learning, teaching writing, EFL context.

1 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, it is essential to be able to communicate in a variety of languages. Students in secondary schools and university courses are taught English as a foreign language in Arab nations where it is a widely used language (Mahyoob, 2020). Writing is a kind of communication that is significant in both academic settings and daily life. Everyone must write messages, forms, invites, letters, and directions at some time in their lives. Even natural speakers of a language may struggle to write effectively (Al-Nofaie, 2020). People learn to speak via exposure to their surroundings. Teachers must instruct writing skills because students cannot merely "absorb" writing abilities in English classrooms the same way they do other skills (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018).

Competent writing is sometimes regarded as the final language talent that both native and second-language learners must acquire among the four fundamental language acquisition abilities (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018). The majority of pupils, both those studying a second language and native speakers, receive little or no writing training. Writing proficiency is crucial for both first- and second-language learners. According to Lassoued et al. (2020), writing is a complicated cognitive process that necessitates the writer to manage several different factors at once.

These elements might include language, mechanics, substance, and grammar.

Effective writing is a process that takes time, a lot of practice, and occasionally good guidance. Teaching kids the language's structure first is the conventional method for helping them enhance their writing abilities (Alghizzawi et al., 2019). Teachers would give pupils essay themes and assume that they were well-prepared to produce a quality essay. Writing the process and teaching writing as a product has historically been the two methods used. The standard teaching approach uses conventional teaching materials and set, predefined class periods. Writing instruction is frequently delivered through student and faculty cooperation in colleges all around the world (Mahmoud, 2015). A writing assignment is given by the instructor, the student draughts it, the teacher edits it, and the student then submits it for review.

However, in the past 20 years, quick technological advancement has added a new component to the learning process: distant learning. Distance education, also known as distance learning, e-learning, and e-learning, is a type of education that emphasises the physical separation of the teacher and the student during the teaching and learning process (Mahmoud, 2015). It also makes use of a variety of technologies to make communication between the two groups of students and the teacher easier. Distance learning often caters to non-traditional students, such as full-time employees, military people, and students who live far away and are unable to attend in-person sessions (Al-Nofaie, 2020). The trend, however, is one of ongoing expansion as distant learning has established itself as a crucial component of education. Traditional approaches have been replaced by virtual ones as a result of the growth of web-based technology (Mahyoob, 2020).

New pedagogical tools and new modes of knowledge transmission have emerged as a result of the growth of information technology and distant learning via mass media. Rapid advancements in network technology and multimedia systems, including the Internet, accompanied this transition (Alrabai et al., 2016). The use of distance learning by institutions and students is for a good reason. Universities gain from the rise in enrollment since they don't have to build more dormitories and classrooms, and students may work whenever and wherever they choose. Without the need for more classrooms, the public education system provides specialised courses including pre-university courses and language classes for elementary school pupils (Quadri et al., 2017). Students who are homeschooled also have access to possibilities for centralised teaching and learning.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020, the majority of nations have embraced and pushed the use of technology in their educational systems to stop the disease's spread and safeguard their population (Alghizzawi et al., 2019). In reaction to the virus's covert

spread, Arab nations have closed their educational institutions since the pandemic's start. In order to guarantee that students, have access to the most recent knowledge in a secure environment, the governments of Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, have supported the use of e-learning in their educational systems. In order to do this, it has launched educational software programmes including Zoom, Madrassati (a platform created by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education), Blackboard LMS, and Microsoft Teams (Lassoued et al., 2020).

However, as the majority of the literature has focused on the drawbacks of online learning in an EFL environment, little attention has been dedicated to studying the advantages of online activities to support university students in enhancing their English learning (Mahmoud, 2015).

1.1 English Writing is a difficult skill for EFL learners in Arab countries

Alrabai et al. (2016) claim that writing is the hardest ability for EFL students in Arab nations to master. This is because it needs a foundational understanding of L2 (second language). It can be a difficult task that kids might not find enjoyable. These are but a few of the elements that might make teaching writing challenging, particularly in EFL classrooms, and entice teachers to ignore it, making writing the "Cinderella" of the four language skills in terms of language teaching history. Learners of Arabic are not an exception (Alghizzawi et al., 2019). They encounter several challenges when writing coherent English essays and paragraphs. It is uncommon for Arabic language learners of English to experience difficulty studying English as a second foreign language due to the distinct language and spelling systems of English and Arabic.

They typically take on Arabic's stylistic characteristics as their own. For instance, they frequently repeat and dispute using expressiveness and elaboration, and write lengthy sentences with coordinating connectors (Mahmoud, 2015). Before addressing the major arguments, they frequently circle the subject and use repeated phrases. Another distinction between Arabic and English styles is the amount of explicit and implicit information (Hossain et al., 2022). Arabic authors, for example, prefer to leave the reader to figure out what they are trying to say rather than overtly stating it. Additionally, they frequently carry over their thought patterns into their native tongue. Students from Arab countries, particularly Palestinians, typically struggle to write well-organized, fluent compositions in English that adhere to accepted norms of grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Quadri et al., 2017). Many of the EFL students majoring in the Bachelor of Education programme at the Normal School have studied English for at least eight years and obtained 85 points or above on the 4-point English Baccalaureate test or the 5-point exam, which also includes writing in English (Rass, 2015).

The fact that they had carried over their first language's writing style meant that they still struggled greatly with three components of English writing: sentence form, paragraph structure, and content and organisation. For instance, they frequently used lengthy phrases, repetition, elaborations, and semantic and phonetic parallelism to persuade the reader (Mahmoud, 2015).

1.2 Significance of writing

One of the four fundamental language abilities is writing, and it is given particular weight. It is a useful tool for communicating our ideas to others (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018). In addition to boosting self-esteem, writing serves as a vehicle for exchanging thoughts and emotions. Because most of the time we write to generate a positive image of ourselves, and because outstanding writing produces a positive impression of the writer, good and accurate writing might be compared to the writing of an original and correct person. According to Lassoued et al. (2020)," the difficulty resides not only in developing and organising ideas but also in translating these concepts into legible sentences," making writing the most challenging ability for language learners to acquire. They conclude that writing requires a complicated set of abilities, and second-language writers must focus on both higher-level skills like organisation and planning and lower-level skills like spelling, grammar, word choice, etc (Al-Nofaie, 2020).

The rules of spoken language are taught via conversation and don't require teaching, but the rules of written language are mostly learned through practice, which individuals find challenging. Hossain et al. (2022) have demonstrated that there are several strategies for teaching writing that may both assist teachers in their preparation and lead people into more secure terrain. These techniques may be used in both virtual and traditional writing instruction.

1.3 Regular methods of teaching writing

The learning objectives of their pupils must be understood by language instructors, and they must also be able to appropriately prepare their students to learn to write. Finding the best method to teach writing is a difficult undertaking (Alrabai et al., 2016). There is no one best strategy to teach writing since it relies on the function and goal of writing as well as the qualities of the writing process that English teachers respect. There is no one way to teach writing in an EFL class, as research has demonstrated, and it is reasonable to conclude that there are as many distinct teaching methods, learning settings, and teachers as there are ways to teach writing. However, the process-based approach and the product-based approach are the ones that are most frequently used in EFL classes (Alghizzawi et al., 2019).

Teachers that employ the product-based method frequently provide their pupils with an example to follow. The process that each student

goes through is typically not taken into account because this method actually concentrates on the outcome, which is the written text (Ghounane, 2020). With this method, the teacher assumes the role of the model's master. Ghounane (2020) demonstrates the significance of this strategy for exploration and analysis in addition to imitation. The research suggests that the product-based approach is the current conventional discourse; yet, there are several drawbacks to this strategy that have caused experts to investigate other strategies. A process-based approach has a substantial influence on understanding the nature of writing and how it is taught, according to Rass (2015)

This strategy emphasises that writing is not a linear process by being complicated and recursive. Therefore, the process-oriented approach emphasises the significance of writing's recursive processes, which include prescribing, creating, assessing, and rewriting (Quadri et al., 2017). The instructor takes on the role of facilitator in a class that uses the process method. Writing is largely acquired rather than taught in these classes. It is not seen to be vital for teachers to provide pupils with knowledge or examples because their primary responsibility is to encourage students to write and demonstrate their abilities. In contrast to a product-oriented strategy, a process-oriented approach might be characterised as learner-centered (Lassoued et al., 2020).

1.4 Introducing Distance learning approaches for the EFL learners

Researchers are now debating how to teach English to EFL students using a distant learning platform. The phrase "a spectrum of technology-mediated approaches that may be used to enhance student learning and include features such as evaluation, coaching, and mentoring" is frequently used to refer to distance education, online learning, or e-learning (Mahmoud, 2015). This definition provides a clear explanation of the characteristics of online education and how it fits into the teaching and learning process.

In terms of learning within time and geographic limits, distance learning is defined as formal educational learning in which there is no direct interaction between the educator and the student (Tosun, 2015). Electronic or printed material, spread out over time and location, may be used to offer all or part of the educational process. formal, institutional education in which the student and teacher communicate remotely throughout the learning process. Planned learning occurs when the learner and the educator are in separate places, and the media are solely organised by the education provider. Physical separation between the teacher and the student occurs throughout planned learning. Because learners are expected to choose their own learning objectives, distance learning is more suited to a eutagogical kind of learning theory (Ghounane, 2020).

Students need to grasp how a distant learning setting differs from a typical learning environment, according to research. The learner is highly independent and self-directed in a diverse learning method, and the emphasis is placed on building their skills and competencies in order to get them ready for the challenging demands of the modern workplace (Al-Nofaie, 2020). Any type of remote learning, or classes where the student is not physically present, is growing as a result of the Internet's power. Thanks to the large variety of course types, flexible and practical learning choices are increasingly becoming more and more popular. Indeed, there are several benefits to distance learning over conventional teaching methods. Technology will eliminate the physical distance between teachers and students while still being an essential component of every student's life (Ghounane, 2020).

Many schools now use distance learning in their curricula, and its significance to education will grow over time. Any learning that occurs without the student's physical presence is referred to as remote learning (historically, it was distance learning where the student communicated with the school or teacher via e-mail) (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017). Distance learning has increasingly shifted online, embracing a variety of platforms and techniques on nearly any networked device. A new environment for teaching and learning has emerged as a result of the virtual learning revolution (Mahmoud, 2015). The advancements in e-learning and virtual learning have completely changed how writing and reading are taught. Traditional university texts, carefully crafted lectures and courses, as well as, occasionally, audio and video cassettes, are all used as teaching tools. (Alrabai et al., 2016)

The usage of online classrooms, libraries, and lectures has made virtual learning and teaching more rapid in recent years thanks to the Internet (Al-Nofaie, 2020). A broad understanding of virtual formats and styles is one factor in choosing the best teaching technique for a virtual setting. Students may now work in more engaging and participatory ways thanks to technology. Through remarks and emoticons, they may more readily motivate their buddies to work (Malkawi et al., 2020). For instance, if someone makes a writing error, their companion can state that they are perplexed or are at a loss for words, or they might respond by expressing satisfaction or encouragement. Students get more chances to engage with their classmates, form relationships and learn from past mistakes as a result of this learning process (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018).

They can also reflect on their own knowledge and abilities while learning from the writings, remarks, and answers of others. Furthermore, students can edit and raise the calibre of their own unique work by examining and commenting on the work of their classmates as well as via comments and feedback (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017).

1.4.1 Electronic mail

This text message was delivered to a particular individual or group of people across a computer network. Emails may also have attachments. In order to improve learning, email may be utilised as an asynchronous mode of distant communication between classmates and professors (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017). The email has a significant impact on both on- and off-campus communication as a practical instrument for communication (Ghounane, 2020). It has also evolved into a way to find and use information sources. There isn't much information accessible for instructors who want to utilise email as a teaching tool, although the usage of e-mail for all sorts of communication is rising quickly. Students who use email discover that professors may be reached after hours.

Email makes it possible to extend reception hours at anytime and anywhere, which is convenient for both instructors and students (Malkawi et al., 2020). Outside of the walls of the school, there are instructional resources that students learn about and how to use. Email has established itself as a "genuine communicative writing activity," but hasn't had much of an impact on student's ability to write academically in general. The spontaneity and "casual conversational texts" of email communication, however, reflect the view of the majority of EFL experts that language acquisition is more likely when there is a communicative goal and no worry. This authentic audience promotes two-way communication (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017).

1.4.2 Options for Video and audio

Broadcasting can be part of the educational system through the widespread distribution of audio via radio and podcasts (Hossain et al., 2022). Video technology can also be part of virtual learning. Some countries, including ours, use pre-recorded television programmes to broadcast virtual learning. Some television channels are dedicated to showing this kind of pre-recorded video. Video technologies may also include VHS tapes, DVDs and streaming video from Skype, Teacher Tube, YouTube, webcams and Adobe Connect (Alrabai et al., 2016). Interactive video games can also be used as teaching tools in higher education institutions. Podcasts are another type of virtual learning that allows anyone to publish their own files on the Internet (Mahyoob, 2020).

Online videos are used for many educational purposes. Both teachers and students have access to numerous educational strategies and information to improve their understanding and the teaching and learning process (Hossain et al., 2022). The researchers noted that "video is defined as 'multimodal text', which means that the material is presented in both verbal and visual form". Virtual classrooms, webinars and self-directed streaming content provide students and teachers with dynamic visual resources that have been accepted as a framework for successful learning (Rass, 2015).

1.4.3 Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a free, web-based platform that seeks to help students who are unable to attend class develop their abilities through distance learning. It emphasises the idea of open learning and provides online courses on a worldwide scale (Malkawi et al., 2020). Open Learning is an online learning platform that prioritises community, connection, and student interaction in addition to material delivery. To involve students in an enjoyable and sociable experience, the platform adopts a social media approach by enabling users to connect through chat, like, and comment on one other's postings (Quadri et al., 2017). A teaching and learning-centred approach is accelerated by student involvement in online conversations, giving students the chance to practise and acquire information and skills in a motivating and supportive setting (Lassoued et al., 2020).

MOOCs feature integrated blog pages and galleries for enhanced comprehension, as well as a comments area where participants may share their opinions and insights on each post, all while preserving an environment where everyone can grow by completing modules (Hossain et al., 2022). Students who successfully finish the whole module and all required assignments are awarded an attendance certificate after the course. By displaying the proportion of tasks that have been completed, MOOCs enable professors to track the development of their students' work (Hossain et al., 2022).

Even though MOOCs provide students with complete autonomy over their behaviour and free time, professors cannot passively observe students' inaction (Malkawi et al., 2020). Making them work harder or asking them why they have questions might include them in the learning process. Compared to classroom instruction, where teachers must pay close attention to every student to make sure they are understanding, individual observation is more efficient (Tosun, 2015).

1.4.4 Computers, mobile phones and tablets

Applications like PDF, PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and pictures are regarded as essential and crucial for virtual engagement and communication on computers, laptops, and tablets (Hossain et al., 2022). More recently, because they allow the aforementioned apps and programmes, the majority of mobile phones and smartphones may be utilised for interactive feedback. Depending on their unique requirements and perceived areas of English language weakness, EFL learners can choose when, where, and how to practise their language systems and abilities (Al-Nofaie, 2020). In addition, kids have the chance to share their triumphs with their friends, do so without the use of books, pencils, or paper, and possibly even have fun while learning (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018).

Students are hesitant to use their cell phones for instructional reasons, although they use them for private purposes on a more frequent basis. However, perceptions of utilising cell phones for educational reasons have improved since the Covid 19 epidemic broke out (Al-Sobhi et al., 2018). Students who use their cell phones and applications appear to be more motivated to study and have reduced levels of anxiety both in and outside of class, according to Tosun (2015). Although many teachers and tutors already utilise technology in the classroom, when adopting mobile technology, they should think about changing existing activities to make them more interesting and useful for language acquisition (Mahmoud, 2015). This emphasises the need of using technology sensibly and successfully, integrate it with educational goals, and give tasks and activities purpose.

1.4.5 Social network

The use of a variety of social networks has recently spread across the world. Most people subscribe to at least one of these social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Slide Wiki, etc. Students can publish their thoughts, opinions and feelings on these social networks through blogs, chats, clips and meetings (Mahyoob, 2020). Today, these networks are increasingly used as communication tools and have created a new approach to virtual learning systems. These are daily discussions, conversations, interactions and exchanges between learners and are known as hashtags (Alghizzawi et al., 2019).

1.5 Advantages of Distance learning approaches to the writing practices of EFL learners

In Arab countries, where education is notoriously teacher-led, unlike education using new technologies, students participated passively in the learning process, without actively interacting. Written instruction, in particular, is considered the most important skill to master in Saudi Arabia and most Saudi students find it a difficult and challenging task (Alghizzawi et al., 2019). The methods used by students to learn to write in English are old and impractical. Therefore, it is important to explore Arab EFL learners' perceptions of teaching EFL writing through the use of blogs as an innovative approach to teaching EFL writing. Quadri et al. (2017) have shown that the use of blogs enables learners to access English language websites and improve their language skills by allowing them to express themselves interactively.

Research on distance learning and virtual teaching methods is extensive. (Alrabai et al. (2016) have found that students who use computer-assisted writing perform better than those who do not use it. Students who used computer-assisted language learning software showed more significant language results than students who used traditional methods. As per Al-Nofaie (2020), the use of virtual learning environments alone does not guarantee their effectiveness and must be combined with rich

teaching and learning scenarios. The study found that computer-assisted methods had a significant impact on Arabic EFL learners' writing skills in two main areas, namely paragraph writing and grammatical correctness. However, computer-assisted writing does not improve all elements of writing skills (Mahmoud, 2015). Although a large number of books emphasise the positive effects of virtual instruction, some researchers have also pointed out the shortcomings of this tool.

According to Alsubaie & Ashuraidah (2017), students may experience a sense of isolation in virtual classrooms. In addition, greater improvements in writing in traditional contexts were found than when using the Internet. However, as technology has developed rapidly, the results could change if the same research were conducted in the present (Rass, 2015). Overall, there are no significant differences between a technologically advanced environment and traditional face-to-face teaching. Some studies also show that students experience feelings of isolation, frustration, anxiety and confusion and that sometimes the virtual learning environment reduces students' interest in the subject matter.

In an online course, the virtual world can be used as a learning environment where language teachers and students, separated by distance, can engage in social activities. Interaction via text chat and audio modes can be used for communication and feedback (Hossain et al., 2022). Virtual worlds can also help learners gain confidence and overcome cultural barriers when learning a new language. By combining text chat and customised avatars, learners can communicate more effectively than through computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Mahmoud, 2015). For example, 'avatars' can display a wide range of non-verbal communication cues that are difficult to emulate in other types of synchronous CMC. Spatial simulation (the ability to project a three-dimensional space or spatial elements) is another feature of virtual worlds and an experiential space where students learn by doing and observing the results of their actions (Alrabai et al., 2016).

YouTube video lessons, Seesaw and Google Classroom interactive activities are useful virtual video resources for virtual language and grammar teaching. Teachers can use ViewPure to update all YouTube videos so that they can send links to students without having to worry about inappropriate ads or suggested videos (Tosun, 2015). Teachers can also use gamified websites for skills practice, virtual grammar and language learning, virtual language lessons with learning games and skills practice with learning games. Online courses should be designed in a creative, interactive, relevant, learner-centred and group-based manner to enhance EFL learners' English writing practice (Quadri et al., 2017).

1.6 Related challenges

The difficulties and advantages of online learning in EFL environments are subjects that researchers are becoming more and more interested in. Online EFL instruction in the Arabic setting of the COVID-19 pandemic: difficulties and advantages (Cakrawati, 2017). Although online courses are regarded as a "non-ideal learning environment" and may influence students' motivation in the face of technological difficulties, research has shown that they can assist timid and struggling students to become more active agents (Basal, 2015). Additionally, (O'Doherty et al. (2018) has shown that when teaching and learning take place virtually from students' homes, where technology is time- and space-efficient, learning can be hampered and impacted by other variables. For example, students' nervousness about studying online can be visible.

It is advised to keep giving the required technical assistance and educational inputs in order to fix this. Similar results were obtained from a study on EFL learners' attitudes in an Arabic-speaking setting, which revealed that online learning is viewed as less simple and that learners frequently run into technical difficulties such poor Internet access (Muali et al., 2018). However, his findings imply that e-learning boosts students' autonomy and confidence while also enabling flexible learning. Few studies have examined the difficulties and concerns EFL teachers and students in Arab nations confront, as well as how they see online learning (Basal, 2015).

Muali et al. (2018), looked at the difficulties Arab university students and EFL learners encountered during the COVID-19 epidemic. Because there were few opportunities to practise listening in the EFL setting, the study was only focused on listening, according to the authors. They requested that participants complete an online survey. Muali et al. (2018) concluded from the data that the children' listening problems ranged from mild to severe due to a lack of resources. In most online classes, they discovered that most students had trouble listening, sometimes as a result of obstacles of a physical or other kind. Additionally, they recommended that instructors be given the knowledge and training necessary to maximise online learning activities.

However, reading, speaking, and writing are not fully examined in their study, indicating that it is crucial to look at how online learning affects the acquisition of these abilities in this situation.

2 Implementation of distance learning approaches for EFL learners

2.1 Forming Groups

Setting up a collaborative writing session begins with this exercise. As was already indicated, groups can be created depending on the

teacher's choices, the students' preferences, genre combinations, language level combinations, writing skill combinations, common topics, or hobbies of the students (Zhu & Liu, 2020). Above important, the instructor helps groups develop so that agreement on group membership may be obtained through discussion between the teacher and the students or between specific group members (Muali et al., 2018).

2.2 Teacher scaffolding

This entails helping the students; the instructor takes on the role of a facilitator, attempting to simplify the writing assignment itself and encouraging the students to complete it with assistance (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). Teachers can offer various forms of assistance or support to homeschooled students via email for both individual and group process-based writing assignments. These forms of assistance consist of: (1) teaching/configuring writing, such as by giving students instructive statements, questions, or images; (2) observational activities, such as by asking students to identify common features of texts; (3) modelling writing by producing texts alongside students; and (4) disseminating knowledge about academic writing, such as by educating students on how to avoid plagiarism and make appropriate and ethical use of text. Other forms of support offered by the teacher include (a) using graphic organisers, such as mind maps or semantic maps, to list or present ideas; (b) facilitating peer responses; (c) modelling peer feedback, such as by demonstrating how to respond to students' draughts; and (d) providing feedback before assigning grades. Teachers can help students with their writing chores (such coming up with ideas, making outlines, and giving feedback on other students' draughts) during the essay-writing process (Sun & Chen, 2016).

2.3 Innovative idea generation

It is helpful to get students to apply their existing knowledge and find the information they need before they begin writing at home (Basal, 2015). Because of this, teachers encourage their pupils to come up with original ideas; one may perform this practise at home by brainstorming. Students can collaborate and discuss ideas in small groups. Students may utilise any strategy for brainstorming (e.g. listing, drawing, grouping or free writing). Students are required to select an interest-related topic, reduce the number of topics that are appropriate for the writing assignment, acquire as much information as they can, and produce as many ideas as they can during this phase (Gacs et al., 2020). In other words, by giving them the freedom to come up with and arrange ideas in a logical and imaginative manner, this phase gives children the chance to stimulate their thinking (Gacs et al., 2020).

2.4 Instructional design and procedure

Only one experimental group is created because all students are chosen to participate in the study on English writing abilities. The educational intervention uses an online technology for collaborative learning. All students are strongly encouraged to engage in the AR writing programme under the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) policy (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). Students' self-efficacy and writing abilities are examined before and after the test to see if the training had any consistent impact. Students' proficiency in four language areas— listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is evaluated on the GEPT test (Dorn et al., 2020). At the start of each lesson, students are divided into groups of three or four to collaborate on writing and revision.

2.5 Teaching Intervention

On an online writing platform, a lot of writing instruction and learning takes place. The Asynchronous Secondary Learning Network's forum serves as a collaboration space for students (Sun & Chen, 2016). Users log onto the site with a browser and password, and all online interactions are logged and tracked. E-learning, assessment and information, as well as the campus environment, are the three primary roles. The Learning Interaction area offers services including course registration, announcements/planning, study resources, individual and/or group online work, corrective feedback, and reviewer comments (Lee, 2016). Instead, it's a customised online forum where people may post ideas directly or attach files (e.g. MS Word). Writing instruction encompasses a variety of learning techniques, such as group writing, the process method, numerous revisions, peer evaluation, and both direct and indirect corrective input from the teacher (Bojović et al., 2020).

Due to the collaborative writing strategy's advantages in fostering language and writing traditions from a sociocultural standpoint, it is used in all classrooms. The conventional "product" approach, which emphasises the creation of writing, is fundamentally different from the process approach, which sees writing as a process of reflection and discovery (Dorn et al., 2020). Multiple revisions of the instructional materials and online collaboration are employed as an approach. Before turning in their work for evaluation, students must produce at least three draughts of an essay: the first, second, and third. Between the first and second draughts, they participate in further revision exercises, and the teacher provides comments between the second and final draught (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).

There is also a revision activity where each group member reviews the initial draught of their peers' writing and then fills out a revision form with suggestions and comments (Muali et al., 2018). Each student had to update their work after reading three feedback forms from their group mates. At the start of the semester, a four-hour training session is held

to help students improve their revision techniques. It includes supplementary readings and two hours of online coaching in addition to the two hours of lectures.

The peer assessment checklist includes 35 items in total and covers six aspects of the essay: (a) content; (b) topic and sentence completion; (c) discourse markers and transition words; (d) spelling and vocabulary use; (e) punctuation and word capitalization; and (f) grammar and sentence structure. This checklist is meant to help assessors when they are reviewing target essays. During the training, each item's definition and examples are examined. Examiners analyse each item using specified criteria in order to aid comprehension and application. They also, of course, solicit feedback from other examiners whenever available.

To give corrective feedback from the teacher, a hybrid model of indirect input from the coding system and direct feedback on student papers is employed. Indirect feedback is used to identify student faults and missed opportunities utilising the coding system (Bojović et al., 2020). This encourages students to actively seek solutions rather than just accepting the instructor's expertise. For instance, the teacher can mark the papers with a "S" for spelling faults, a "T" for flaws in meaning, etc. while providing feedback to students for the first time (Unger & Meiran, 2020). There is a code table with each code's definition provided at the conclusion of each assignment for the student to consult. Then, students must attempt to edit their work in accordance with the guidelines and search for solutions in potential sources (Sun & Chen, 2016). The teacher then provides immediate comments on the successive modifications, making it very obvious which flaws or blunders remained unfixed. There are five writing sessions. Each cycle of the first three tasks took three weeks, but when the students were accustomed to the procedure, it only took two weeks. Every writing prompt is taken from a GEPT history practise examination and is pedagogically centred on gender and language. Validity and reliability must be consistent in professionalism (Lee, 2016).

2.6 Measures

2.6.1 SRCT

The SRCT, or Scale for Rating Composition Tasks Both before and after the test, there are two written assessments given. Students' writing is evaluated using the SRCT in six categories: "content," "organisation," "grammar," "rhetoric," "mechanics," and "general (Dorn et al., 2020). The grammar test measures how well students can use grammatical rules like tenses and parts of speech, while the content component evaluates the author's ideas' logical progression. The appropriateness of the many essay components, including the topic sentence, the major body, the development of the sentence, and the conclusion, particularly the last sentence, is addressed in the organisational dimension. The

mechanical dimension deals with the use of punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and spelling, whereas the fourth dimension is concerned with the words used and how they are employed (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). The same writing expert, an experienced language instructor acquainted with the GEPT standards, evaluated both papers.

2.6.2 WSQ

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire Writing (WSQ). Using a questionnaire with questions assessed on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 (the highest score possible), students' perceptions of their writing self-efficacy are evaluated ("strongly agree"). By comparing the students' impressions of writing at two distinct times, the instrument monitors progress by having them complete it before and after learning to write (Zhu & Liu, 2020). It looks at how well students rate their own use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and paragraph structure and conclusions (Basal, 2015).

2.6.3 Writing Performance

The purpose of repeated assessments is to gauge how well the pupils could write and if they had improved. The outcomes and whether or not progress are indicated by the findings. In two of the six performance items—content and integrity—a post-test comparison utilising the multiple comparisons approach reveals the changes between the students' pre- and post-test scores (Gacs et al., 2020). The test results demonstrate if writing abilities of EFL students has improved following one semester of English language training. However, because the writing skills component of the GEPT is what standardises the exam at the entrance level, students' writing ability may generally be deemed adequate or unsatisfactory in terms of pre- and post-test scores. For the writing section, it is often advised that students receive at least three points (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).

2.6.4 Writing Self-Efficacy Latent Structure

The instructional strategies employed has a significant impact on the fundamental structure of students' writing self-efficacy beliefs (Cakrawati, 2017). Writing self-efficacy (WSE) and writing confidence are identified by factor analysis (FA) of the data taken from the pre-test on students' sense of efficacy (WSC). The WSC factor tends to describe students' beliefs regarding their level of confidence in writing in English, while the WSE factor refers to students' perceptions of their ability to write in English. The factor loadings for each item are listed by component and ranked according to the magnitude of the regression weights (O'Doherty et al., 2018). These two elements make up the self-efficacy theory definition and provide the theoretical foundation for this well-established latent feature (Muali et al., 2018).

2.6.5 Pre-Test Writing Self-Efficacy and Performance

This implies that, albeit negatively, students' perceived self-efficacy in writing might predict their performance. In other words, a student's performance following the study activity improved less the greater their felt self-efficacy. Academic performance did not considerably increase for students who feel comfortable while writing (Sun & Chen, 2016).

2.7 Giving feedback

Feedback can come from the teacher or the student and is thought to help pupils' writing improve. Feedback often focuses on the substance (such as an opinion), rhetorical structure, and form (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). For pupils to flourish as writers, these factors must be balanced. The latter has several advantages, even if students value instructor input more than student feedback. Peer review offers several benefits. Since their peers are possible readers and may help make the material more comprehensible, peer criticism and comments can help students develop a better sense of audience. Feedback from other students also encourages pupils to own the material. Students are more inclined to consider whether or not to take into consideration feedback they hear from their peers (Lee, 2016).

Peer feedback has certain benefits, but there are also some drawbacks. First, because they are not native speakers or have limited language proficiency, pupils might not believe their classmates' comments on their written work (Bojović et al., 2020). Second, students insist on viewing the instructor as the exclusive source of authority, preventing their classmates from having the necessary background to offer constructive criticism on their papers. Thirdly, because they may not know how to critique their peers' work, pupils may only notice minor grammatical faults. Another issue is that, in certain cultures, criticism is linked to sentiments, thus students might not want to criticise their friends' draughts out of fear of upsetting them (Bojović et al., 2020). Teachers must understand "how [students] really engage with and digest feedback, and why they utilise (or do not use) the input they get" in order to enable student feedback (Basal, 2015).

In light of these concepts, educators should instruct students in peer feedback as a means of assistance and give advice on peer evaluation (Muali et al., 2018). Teachers can demonstrate to pupils how to respond to the work of their classmates via peer review guidelines. Although it could take some time to successfully teach peer feedback, the instructor can at least help pupils adopt a helpful mindset. Teachers instruct students to "clarify the author's aims, identify the source of the problem, describe the nature of the problem, and give specific ideas" in order to enhance the project while they are peer reviewing it (Zhu & Liu, 2020). The capacity of the students to remark on the efforts of their peers, their desire to reply to these projects, and their attitude toward

their peers' criticism all play a role in how well the feedback goes (Dorn et al., 2020).

Teachers must prioritise encouraging peer review so that kids may learn to read critically. Teacher input is equally as crucial to the writing process as peer evaluation. According to some writers, peer feedback should come before instructor feedback so that students can freely comment on their works (Lee, 2016). Feedback procedures might differ from one teacher to the next. To assist students' self-expression and motivate them to work on the next draught and make significant improvements, teachers must, above all, "find the correct balance between intervention (useful) and appropriation (destructive) (Bojović et al., 2020)". In other words, teachers have a duty to assist students in concentrating on the broad subject matter of the text they are creating and in determining whether to alter their initial versions (Cakrawati, 2017).

2.8 Revising and editing drafts

Students need to edit their manuscripts after obtaining criticism, just like with their own work. Proofreading is a crucial step in the writing process, but whether it helps students improve their draughts relies on their writing abilities and the calibre of the peer comments they get (Bojović et al., 2020). Students' ability to preserve their authorial voice while improving successive versions will determine whether or not they pay attention to the comments. Reading the text, identifying the issue, selecting a solution, and then revising the text comprise the revision process (O'Doherty et al., 2018). According to the revision process, proofreading involves not only looking for grammatical mistakes but also organising ideas and the general material to help the reader understand the author's aims.

Proofreading is a crucial step in the creation of texts in the online classroom's collaborative writing process (Cakrawati, 2017). Typically, local writing issues are addressed (e.g. spelling or grammar errors). After authoring numerous versions and gaining input from classmates and the teacher, proofreading is typically viewed as the final writing task that students must accomplish in order to complete the final draught. Before students turn in their final draughts to the teacher who assesses the process, revision aims to fix small grammatical, lexical, and mechanical flaws without affecting the essential concepts (Sun & Chen, 2016).

2.9 Post-test activity

The teachers must grade the students' work after they have updated and edited their final products. Teachers must determine if they desire broad or analytical marking when grading the work. The first one is an all-purpose impressionistic marker (O'Doherty et al., 2018). In this style of evaluation, the teacher reads the student's project fast and assigns points or assessment criteria to it without creating criteria for specific

project components. In the latter sort of evaluation, teachers evaluate student work on a variety of writing-related factors, including content, organisation, coherence, consistency, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). Analytical evaluation, in essence, paints a thorough picture of pupils' writing abilities (read more about general and analytical assessment systems) (Dorn et al., 2020).

Both marking methods have benefits and drawbacks. For instance, it has been demonstrated that the holistic marking method is quicker and more efficient than the analytical marking system (Lee, 2016). The analytical marking approach, however, "is more helpful for pupils because the examination of different writing characteristics reveals them strengths and flaws." The decision between the two grading schemes relies on the teacher's preferences and goals, the number of students in the class, the amount of time available, and whether or not the course requires written assessments (Bojović et al., 2020). It is crucial that teachers view evaluation as a process that aids students in improving as writers rather than as a means in and of itself. Each collaborative writing cycle asks students to reflect on the lessons they have learned while writing after they have finished all of the collaborative writing assignments (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).

These considerations also apply to writing by yourself. These reflection exercises can help students evaluate their writing abilities, identify their areas of strength and weakness, and formulate improvement strategies (Muali et al., 2018). The instructor might offer a reflection guide to assist pupils narrow their reflection. Teachers may view the students' accomplishments and determine what needs to be done to support them with future writing assignments by using this reflection journal (Zhu & Liu, 2020).

3 Conclusion and recommendations for Future Research

It examined the efficiency of online instruction for learning the English language. This study shows that despite its drawbacks, online learning is more beneficial for EFL students. Online learning is preferred by EFL students over traditional classroom instruction because it is more convenient for them to watch lectures from home, saving time and money on travel to and from school. Additionally, online education helps students become more autonomous, driven, focused, and self-assured. It has been shown that e-learning aids pupils in improving their language and online study skills.

The study discovered that online writing exercises might boost EFL students' self-confidence and writing abilities. According to the paper, this method may have an impact on how learners' self-efficacy is structured below. Additionally, there was a correlation between student self-efficacy views and increases in their writing abilities, showing the

value of this collaborative method to teaching online writing to raise students' self-efficacy and writing abilities at the same time. Therefore, this multidisciplinary teaching approach seems to be recommended for English instructors.

It should be noted, however, that a different conclusion is that post-test self-efficacy plays a smaller role in a well-structured, process-oriented writing programme with multiple modifications because EFL learners redirect their learning efforts toward fulfilling the assessment requirements of such a programme, making it difficult for learners to not improve the content and writing skills of their texts. As the technique lays more attention on the substance and organisation of ideas and texts than on vocabulary and grammar, these qualities are less altered. There are also some prospective directions for further study. First off, alternative methods of testing the writing self-efficacy test's validity and reliability might be utilised to enhance the test's quality. Second, self-efficacy beliefs can coexist with other traits including anxiety, motivation, and gender-related concerns.

To build a more comprehensive model, it may be helpful to take into account metrics that incorporate more hidden variables. Third, the time allotted for writing instruction can be extended until there is a statistically significant rise in post-test scores relative to pre-test scores. The association between students' post-test results and self-efficacy beliefs may also require extra investigation once the intervention has produced the desired results. In order to better understand students' subjective experiences and uncover the ways in which their self-efficacy beliefs evolve during the teaching and learning process, qualitative research is lastly advised.

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