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The Effect of Citizen Journalism on Writing Skill on Advanced EFL Students of BandarAbbas Azad University

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ABSTRACT: This study tries to investigate the effect of citizen journalism on writing skills on advanced EFL students of BandarAbbas Azad University. This study was done in a quantitative method. In this study, the researcher used advanced students from the BandarAbbas Azad University. He chose them by random sampling. He used a test for this research. He had 35students for the control group and 31students for the experimental group. At first, he homogenized the students and then had a pre-test for both groups. Then he taught the experimental group the techniques of journal writing during the 7weeks. After this time, he had a post-test for both groups. He used SPSS (22) to analyze the data. The results of the test show that the students of the experimental group could increase their skills in writing by learning some journalism techniques.

Keywords: Citizen journalism, Writing skills, Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language is a complex way for all learners with different levels. The students have a lot of challenges when they start to learn a new language. In Iran, English is learned as a foreign language (EFL), and students start to learn it from Elementary to Senior High School. They try to learn four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four items are related to each other, and they cannot be separated.

Iranian students learn English as a foreign language. Then they learn according to some curriculums which were prepared before. Most of the teachers in Iran work on reading, listening, and speaking skills, and finally, if they have time, they may teach writing skills. Even though writing comes as the last skill, it can't be neglected and needs a lot of attention from the teacher and the student because it is necessary for daily academic life. Students are expected to learn how to be good writers. If they can't write correctly and logically using appropriate language and style, life will be difficult for them not only at school but in adult life, too (Neville, 1988).

Writing skills offers a way of communicating one's thought and feelings on paper. So the message must be loud and clear between the teacher and the students. According to Clifford (1991, p.42), "The teacher has to encourage learners to write for communication. They should focus on the ideas and meanings they wish to convey rather than on the mechanics of writing, such as spelling, and handwriting." The teachers play an important role in teaching writing and they are the only ones who could help prevent problems of writing that could slow the process of learning English, specifically writing. It can be done by encouraging students to write to communicate student to student, student to teacher, or student to a foreigner. According to Reid (1994), "shared knowledge" (p.2) helps communication.

One of the hardest parts of learning is writing. Trimmer and Summes (1983:10) defined that writing is one way to convey something about ourselves or to communicate ideas to people beyond our immediate vicinity, to learn something you do not

know. Like all student problems, difficulties in writing can be demotivating the child's education and decreasing self-esteem. As children grow up and learn new parts of the second language, they are expected to express what they know about many different subjects through writing. If a learner fails to develop certain basic skills in writing, he will be unable to write with the speed and fluency required. Most of the learners face a lot of problems when they start to write, but they have enough motivation to learn how to write.

Writing is one of the language skills that are very important to be mastered in learning English as a foreign language. According to Sokolik (2003), writing is a combination of process (The process refers to the act of gathering ideas or the steps we take when we produce a piece of writing) and product (the product is known as a final piece of writing). While writing as a productive skill, it requires high demands to do it. According to Zhang and Chen (1989), writing is a comprehension ability involving grammar, vocabulary, conception, rhetoric, and other parts of the language. By developing the writing skill, young language learners are making a valuable investment for their future studies. Writing gives learners the opportunity to find ways of expressing their ideas in a foreign language.

Nevertheless, learning how to write, requires more extra work than any other skills. Compared to other skills, writing requires more prior knowledge and preparation before producing written English. Learners should have competences of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics. According to Brown (2001:335), "the process of writing requires an entirely different set of competencies.

There are a lot of methods and techniques which teachers use in their classes to teach better. One of these new methods is "citizen journalism." Duffy, Thorson, and Jahng (2010) have defined "a citizen journalist" as an individual, who is not a trained professional, but who nonetheless may report on his or her neighborhood or community. Shandu (2019) indicated that: "Citizen Journalism is a concept in media that refers to journalistic activities of ordinary people. It means citizens themselves report the issues confronting them. Citizen journalism has enabled people to raise their voice on what they feel need attention. Nurul(2014) states that the method of citizen journalism is one of the techniques in writing news that develops just now. In this method, learners achieved some information from society and showed themselves. Because of the development of technology, learners can do it more rapidly. Learners can use smartphones to exchange, send e-mails, and to publish the news. Here, there are some problems of the students in writing such as,

1) Lack of vocabulary

Vocabulary is the most significant aspect of writing because it's to be a basic component of successful writing skills. Lack of vocabulary may be a problem that always occurs during class.

2) Lack of Grammatical Knowledge

Grammar is incredibly helpful for effective language skills. Grammar, in writing skills, determines how a paragraph builds-up and the way the ideas may be understood. The teacher often finds their students lack during this respect. It is important to elucidate any given topic as clear as possible and assure that every one of them fulfills the target that the teacher wants.

3) Lack of Motivation

According to Barham, Mohammad, Miqdadi, (2019) in his journal about the effect of motivation on student's writing skills, motivation in education affects how students learn and the way they behave towards a subject matter. It can direct behavior toward particular goals, because of increased effort and energy.

4) Learning Environment

The environment encompasses a special role within the learning process. The study found that students, especially in an exceedingly remote area, don't seem to be supported by people around them even their parents. Not only the scholars but teachers also often found difficulty to show in an exceedingly remote area where most people think English decreased for his or her children. Of course, if all the facility remains within the hands of the teacher, we have got a conventional approach of dictation, but dictation can be otherwise. Dictation taking as a possible practical teaching activity for writing has some advantages, among them:

- Improve spelling
- Students are active during and after the exercise.
- Foster unconsciousness thinking when they hear important things.
- Copes with mixed-ability groups.
- Gives access to interesting texts

The study is expected to give contributions to English teachers of schools and institutes and students. For teachers, hopefully, it will provide information about the influence of citizen journalism techniques in writing skills. Moreover, this study provides

an implementation of a strategy to teach writing which is hopefully can be an inspiration for teachers to apply this activity in writing class or as homework. Meanwhile, for the students, from the motivational benefits of this activity, it is suggested that citizen journalism technique writing can be a media for them to share ideas, express feelings, record learning experiences, practice and improve their writing. Citizen journalism is a new technique to teach how to write better in English. There are a few studies on this new technique.

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the following research questions as follow:

1. Can the use of the Citizen Journalism Technique improve the writing skills of the advanced EFL students?

The researcher classified three kinds of limitations for this study. The first limitation is about the participants. There are not enough participants to do this research. The next limitation is time. The time is short and the last limitation is about teachers and students. Both of them are so restricted to change their way of teaching and learning.

There are two kinds of delimitation for this study. The first delimitation is about sampling. The researcher, himself tries to use students who study at Azad University. The next limitation is about the city which the researcher will use. This city is Bandar Abbas, in the south of Iran.

1. Literature Review

Meyers believed that (2005: 2), "Writing is a way to produce language you do naturally when you speak. Writing is speaking to others on a paper or a computer screen. Writing is also an action, a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on a paper and reshaping and revising them". According to White and Arndt (2001:5) in Harmer (2008) "writing is re-writing that revision, seeing with new eyes, has a central role to play in the act of creating text". In their model, process writing is an interrelated set of recursive stages which includes:

- Drafting
- Structuring (ordering information, experimenting with arrangements, etc.)
- Reviewing (checking context, connections, assessing impact, editing)
- Focusing (that is making sure you are getting the message across you want to get across)
- Generating ideas and evaluation (assessing the draft)

Wynford Hicks (2013) claimed that writing can also be a pleasure in itself: finding the right word, getting it to fit together with other words in a sentence, constructing a paragraph that conveys meaning and creates delight, and having the accuracy grammar. There is pride in a well-written piece, in the positive feedback from editors, readers, fellow journalists. If you want to succeed as a writer, you must be prepared to read a lot, finding good models and learning from them; the writer must be ready to think imaginatively about readers and how they think and feel rather than luxuriate inside his comfortable world; the writer must be ready to take time practicing, experimenting, revising. The writer must be prepared to listen to criticism. He should develop confidence in his ability but not let it become arrogant.

Hun & O Donnell (1970) found that all the educational schools knew about the importance of writing. During teaching, the teachers sometimes find that some students are able to articulate their thoughts quite well while the others are not. This is mainly because writing is a skill that some students are more proficient in than the others. As we all know, writing is an important skill especially in settings where English is taught as a foreign language.

Syrene Forsman (1985) claimed that, by using writing-to-learn strategies, the teacher can get students thinking, shows them how to record the ideas that crop up, how to organize the wealth, how to sort out and select the one gem they want to polish, and the teacher can give them a critical, yet supportive audience to help them to clarify their ideas in writing. Writing is learning to think, on paper, about what the students already know and how that fits with new information being studied in their curriculum. Students also mention thinking processes frequently in their evaluations, and their comments confirm teachers' belief that writing to learn develops their ability to work. Their comments reflect that they see speculation as a human activity of which they are capable of. The students describe their learning as "finding more questions" and clarifying what they think.

Kauffmann (1996) believed that effective writing skills support performance in individual content areas. In order to write about a specific content area, students need relevant vocabulary and specific structures that relate to the field so they can communicate better. Besides, they need to be aware of the conventions and genres or text types of the field so that their written work is appropriate for that specific discourse community. There are many differences between different genres of writing such as, say, a science report and a business report. He suggested that there are two aspects of writing to learn which are very important: it helps students to understand the content better, and it shows them that writing is a process with various stages. When students have a full understanding of the material and can use the stages of writing to develop their ideas, they become better thinkers. The students are active receivers of information. What is gained by allowing students to draw on their resources and experiences is ownership of ideas. This ownership of ideas provides the foundation for quality in writing and thinking because of the students' investment in ideas.

Using citizen journalism to teach writing is a new method, and the researchers did not pay attention to this part. Sari (2016) tried to find that whether or not the use of Citizen Journalism Technique can enhance the writing skill and to examine the students' interest in the use of Citizen Journalism Technique in learning writing skills. The research result has shown that: (a) The use of citizen journalism techniques could improve the students' ability in learning English writing, and (b) using citizen journalism techniques is interesting to the students, so they are motivated to write a paragraph.

Puspa Dewi Ayu Kurniyasari(2016) had researched about using the Journalist Question technique for teaching writing in junior high school. The researcher tried to investigate the effectiveness of the Journalist Questions technique to improve students' writing skills in narrative text. The researcher used a T-test to investigate the differences between the control group and the experimental group. The results indicate that the Journalist Question technique is effective in improving the writing skill of the experimental group. It remains uncertain as to where did the term "citizen journalism" comes from (Gillmor, 2008). Tilley and Cokley (2008) mention that the terms "citizen journalist" and "citizen journalism" arose when individuals or groups who were not aligned with publishers as "professional journalists" began to collect, edit and provide publishers with (or publish directly.) news material that was out of the publishers' reach. Courtney C. Radsch (2013) defines the same definition of "citizen journalism." They define it as an alternative and activist form of news gathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to the shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism.

Ming Huei Lin (2015) tried to find whether or not classroom blogging can be safely recommended as an effective approach to teaching writing in the ESL classroom. The researcher used the experimental group (EG) was taught how to write in English using a blog-based approach, while the control group (CG) was taught using traditional paper-based materials and methods. The results of the study show that the experimental group could improve their writing skill and they also could increase their motivation to write.

Murray and Hourigan (2008) have been claimed that blogs may successfully promote self-expression where the L2 learner/blogger is creating and developing personalized content dealing with their own particular language learning strategies. Blogs are both individualistic and collaborative (Rourke and Coleman 2009), they may also transcend linguistic barriers and be employed for language learning purposes, where bloggers: "become part of a discourse community in a complex multimodal setting" (Raith 2009, 276), learning together in "collaborative spaces where people negotiate and construct meaning and texts" (Richardson 2006, 74). Other researchers have reported more successful efforts in using blogging for improving L2 writing (Downes 2004; Gabaudan 2016; Leja 2007) for significantly increasing student 'reflective learning processes' (Xie et al. 2008, 18) and for effectively developing an L2 community of bloggers (Sollars 2007). Some researchers (Arslan and S, ahinKızıl 2010; Sayed 2010) have made the attempt to conduct an experimental comparison between students taught using blogs and those taught with a non-blogging approach, the methodological drawback of delivering more resources to the blog-supported group than the control group, as acknowledged and observed in those studies, is likely to have discredited their results. The need to reassess the effects of the classroom blogging on students' writing performance is further confirmed as an essential task in the face of the inadequate writing assessments used.

2. Methodology

The participants in this research were chosen by random sampling between 151 students. The participants were studying in the fourth term of University, and their field is teaching English. They are advanced students of EFL learning from Bandar Abbas Azad University. Bandar Abbas is located in the south of Iran in Hormozgan province and Bandar Abbas Azad University is one of the biggest universities in Hormozgan province. The researcher divided students into two groups of students. The total number of control group participants was 35 including 18 males and 17 females and the total number of experimental group participants was 31 including 17 males and 14 females, but the gender of students is not important in this study. The range of their ages was between 19 to 23 (M=21). 45 students went to institute regularly before coming to university, then they had good knowledge in writing and 12 students went to institute irregularly, then they did not have enough knowledge about writing, and 9 students never went to an institute, then they did not have knowledge in writing. In the fourth term, the study "the practical writer with readings" book by Bailey and Powell for an advanced writing course and they try to improve writing skills. The researcher used a t-test to measure whether the writing skill can improve by citizen journalism technique or not. He used The CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) which is a standardized writing test that measures a students' ability to do college-level writing in English.

The CATW asks you to write an essay in response to a reading passage you are given and to show competency in five categories. The five categories, listed here, are discussed in depth starting on page 3. They are (1) critical response to a text; (2) explanation and support of ideas; (3) organization of a response that has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and two elements of language use; (4) sentence construction and word choice, and (5) grammar, usage, and mechanics. The CATW uses an analytic scoring guide, called a rubric, to evaluate student writing samples. Each test is scored independently by two faculty raters and both raters assign scores in each of five grading categories. After pretest the researcher taught some techniques of writing in

journalism for the experimental group and taught old techniques for the control group. After seven weeks, the researcher again took an exam from both groups. He used again CATW test for the post-test. The data collected from the writing assessments and the questionnaire on both pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests. First, the t-test examined whether or not each group improved its performance in writing after the experiment.

3. Results

Essay scores by both control and experimental groups were read by two EFL teachers. Inter-rater reliability was not significant (.36) with a very low correlation (.42). Because of this, for the essays whose score difference was different than .5 points (on a 6-point scale); a third reader was asked to read those essays. The mean from the three scores was taken. Finally, the new scores were used to calculate the means for the t-tests.

Table 1 shows pre- and post-test means and standard deviations on both control (M = 75.14, SD = 11.32; M =80.37, SD = 12.64) and experimental group (M = 82.47, SD 10.76; M = 89.52, SD = 10.86). On the pretest, the mean scores of the control and experimental groups were not significantly different (p < .05). Therefore, the two groups began with a similar proficiency level. The difference between the pretest and post-test means was significant for both the control group (p < .01) and the experimental group (p < .001). Within groups, the difference between the pre- and post-test scores was significant for both the control (p < .01) and the experimental group (p < .001). Finally, the mean score gain of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group (14.05 vs. 5.23).

Table 1. The CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) T-tests for Mean Gain in Control and Experimental Groups

Group	N	Pretest mean	Pretest SD	Posttest mean	Posttest SD	Gain score means	Gain score SD	T	Sig.
Control	35	75.14	11.32	80.37	12.64	5.23	8.17	-4.31	0.02
Experimental	31	75.47	10.76	89.52	10.86	14.05	7.85	-4.16	0.005

As you can see in table1, both the control and experimental group can improve the writing skills, but there is a great difference between the pre and posttest of the experimental group. They could increase their ability by using citizen journalism techniques in their writing.

4. Discussion

The researcher has examined the effects of citizen journalism in the EFL writing classroom and compared this approach with a traditional teaching method in terms of subjects' writing abilities. First, he believed that both approaches helped student writers to improve all of their writing skills at a statistically significant level. The significant achievement for the experimental group alone may support the assumption of Pinkman (2005), Noytim (2010), Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011), and Taki and Fardafshari (2012) in that citizen journalism and blogging may serve as a platform to motivate students to write and to improve their confidence in ESL writing. This finding is also consistent with the belief among students involved in a study by Sun (2010) that citizen journalism and blogging can help them to write better, and it further supports the claim that students' writing proficiency improved after using citizen journalism (Pinkman 2005; Fellner and Apple 2006; Sun 2010; Arslan and S, Ahin-Kızıl 2010; Sayed 2010; Chen et al. 2011). Given the result of this study, which corresponds so closely to the aforementioned studies, it would seem fair to conclude that the experimental group's progress over time justifies the use of citizen journalism in the writing classroom.

The control group treatment did not have a similar statistical effect like the experimental group on the overall performance of the participants. This finding seems to argue promoting the use of citizen journalism in the ESL writing classroom, in particular in conjunction with the following ANCOVA result: participants taught traditionally did not have a statistically similar performance in their overall writing abilities to that of the students taught using citizen journalism-supported treatment. While these results would seem to suggest that citizen journalism approaches are more effective.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Writing as a foreign language is a very lengthy and complex process. It develops through stages that may take long periods for learners to achieve proficiency (Pienemann, 1984). Writing skill in this study was measured by test scores from the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) test and ratings from a descriptive essay. After analyzing data on both instruments, mixed results were obtained. Findings in the essay scores revealed that the two groups began with a similar proficiency level, both groups significantly improved at the end of the seven weeks. Nevertheless, the writing proficiency gains by the experimental group were significantly greater than the control group.

Firstly, the computation of the students' improvement showed that in the experimental group, the average score of the pretest was 75.47 and the post-test was 89.52. The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was 14.05. The post-test score was higher than the pretest score, it meant that there is an improvement of students' skill in writing narrative text. Also, the improvement of students' skills in writing narrative text can be seen at the t-test of the gain score between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental and the control groups. The t-test was 4.16, it was higher than the t-table (1.998). It meant that there

is a significant improvement in students' skill in writing narrative text. Secondly, the effectiveness of using citizen journalism techniques could be drawn by looking at the significant differences between the experimental and the control groups. The average score of the pre-test in the experimental group was 75.47 and the post-test was 89.52. The improvement of the experimental group was 14.05. While, in the control groups, the average score of the pre-test was 75.14 and the post-test was 80.37. The improvement in the control group was 5.23. The means of both groups increased in the post-test but the mean of the post-test in the experimental group was higher than the control group. It means that there is a significant difference mean between the experimental and control group. It can be concluded that it is more effective to teach writing narrative text by using citizen journalism techniques to improve students' skills compared to teach writing narrative text without using it.

Findings in this study have yielded relevant pedagogical implications for second or foreign language teaching and learning. Because citizen journalism addresses learning writing and emotional states, the teacher was fully aware of certain students' physical, cognitive, linguistic, and behavioral elements.

If teachers know how their students' preferences for processing information helps them learn, they can make necessary changes in the strategies for curriculum delivery. Thus, students' learning writing, and emotional needs may be more effectively met. There may not be one right way to teach, and most learners benefit from variety. Consequently, teachers should consciously include opportunities for them to process information visually, auditory, and kinesthetically.

Students, for instance, would be able to create pictures in their minds, which allows them to see details not stated in the text they hear or read. Thus, students could improve their listening and reading comprehension abilities. Writing skills and vocabulary building could also be scaffolded by visualization. Finally, educators can easily apply these concepts while working on activities in class, language drills, or test-taking strategies.

In conclusion, citizen journalism played an important role in increasing writing proficiency in the experimental group since it provided students with useful tools, they used to improve their English skills according to results in this experiment. This skill is easy to learn and helps students of all ages become more creative with their ideas in the classroom.

Findings revealed that citizen journalism has contributed in part to relevant and promising supplemental teaching benefits supported by these research findings, even though more research would be needed to test the efficiency of this new supplementary teaching approach in FLA. This study has found important outcomes to allow future researchers to continue investigating the use of citizen journalism in the areas of language motivation, and language proficiency.

The researcher recommends two studies in which citizen journalism will be tested. These studies include a) The effects of citizen journalism on adult second language acquisition and b) Classroom management. For example, a future investigator could replicate this study with adults.

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