

Developing Third-Intermediate Grade English Language Learners' Mechanics of Writing Using Word Processor

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Abstract :

The purpose of the study is to determine how word processors affect EFL students' mechanics of writing in Iraq and to clarify any discrepancies in writing proficiency between the experimental group, which used word processors, and the control group, which was taught using the regular method. The study followed an experimental and descriptive methodology to determine how word processing software affects EFL students' mechanics of writing in Iraq. In the first semester of 2023/2024, thirty students from the third grade at Dar El-Ilm intermediate school for boys made up the randomly selected study sample. The study concluded that the use of word processors in the classroom significantly improved the writing achievement of the experimental group students. The usage of word processors in education has been found to have a considerable favorable impact on students' spelling and grammatical achievement. This shows how well the word processor helped the third-grade students developing their writing abilities. Based on the findings, the study suggests using word processors in the classroom because of its impact on third-grade students' writing proficiency.

Keywords: (Word processor, mechanics of writing skill).

Introduction

Elttayef (2021), states, English is now genuinely a world language. English is utilized on the Internet, in science, medicine, worldwide trade, and travel. One of the four language

skills is writing. Writing is defined as ideas on paper; therefore, its significance comes from the fact that it represents the writer's culture and thought (Khudair, 2016). From this vantage point, writing is not an impromptu endeavor but rather a highly sophisticated process that presents a challenge to the writer upon completion of any written piece. Students can generate letters, reports, bulletins, tables, form letters, brochures, and web pages using word processing software. With the help of this tool, students can embellish their documents with images, tables, and charts. Additionally, students can review grammar and spelling (Ryan, 2004).

According to Riyadi and Wulandari (2017), word processors can vary the font on the screen and move the document page up or down, fold the screen up or down one line at a time, and other controls that affect how a document appears on the screen. Furthermore, it facilitates word or text searches within the file or document and allows for word or text replacements. By adjusting the margins, page start and finish, export and numbering of the page footer, whether to show the printed page, and the quantity of lines and spaces between lines and the print line, you can also better control the shape of the document.

Problem Statement

Many students struggle with writing. Instructors work very hard to improve the volume and caliber of student writing. Writing has always involved pupils applying their understanding of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure through a painstaking pen and paper exercise. On the other hand, word processors on computers come equipped with support features designed to help writers. The author should therefore have more time to devote to content development as opposed to writing mechanics.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) Identifying the impact of utilizing word processor software in teaching mechanics of writing among third-grade English language learners.

- 2) Measuring differences (if any) in mechanics of writing (grammar and spelling) between the control group who will study using regular method and the experimental group who will study using word processor.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it focuses on a contemporary teaching approach that will help educators, learners, and educational institutions enhance the learning environment and increase third-grade students' academic performance in writing skill. The results of the current study may help English teachers understand how to better utilize a contemporary teaching strategy to help third-grade students write better and reach higher academic standards.

Limitation of the Study

Members of the experimental group edited documents and checked for faults using Word 2013 during this investigation. Since Word 2013 is the only version of this facility used in the study, some of the conclusions may not apply to prior versions of this program. Besides, the study instrument, study population, and study results cannot be generalized.

Questions of the Study

- 1) What is the impact of utilizing word processor software in teaching mechanics of writing among third-grade English language learners?
- 2) Are there differences in mechanics of writing between the control group who will study using regular method and the experimental group who will study using word processor?

Theoretical framework

According to Ibrahim and Maniam (2020) and Al-Abdali and Maniam (2021), and Maniam & Al-Abdali, (2021), learning English has become essential in order to communicate with the outside world due to the language's significance in people's lives today and its status as a worldwide language. Therefore, the researchers emphasized how crucial it is to support English language teaching curricula so that language learners can acquire and correctly apply the language's rules as well as memorize new meanings, which will eventually allow them to speak the language fluently.

Technology in Education

After fifty years of integrating computers into the classroom, the rapid development of technology is introducing a completely new realm of learning opportunities. The importance of technology in the development of English as a foreign language has been highlighted by researchers, Abbas & Elttayef (2019), Al-Abdali & Al-Temimi (2018), Al-Dulaimi & Al-Abdali (2021), Julaid & Al-Abdali (2020).

In the same vein, Julaid & Al-Abdali, (2021), and Julaid & Al-Abdali (2022) states, it is generally accepted that utilizing contemporary technology in English language instruction involves creatively applying techniques, instruments, supplies, machinery, systems, and tactics that directly connect to teaching English and help students achieve their objectives.

Furthermore, Ahmadi (2017), Al-Fahadawi, and Al-Abdali, (2023), Naji and Al-Abdali (2024 a) said that one of the key components of learning is the approach teachers take in their classrooms to support students' language acquisition. In an Arabic-speaking setting, learning English requires much work from teachers and students. It may be deduced that technology aids language learners in acquiring the language necessary for them to communicate with native speakers; we have firsthand experience with a range of

applications and websites. Technologies for information and communication are an effective tool for combining data from different sources (Al-Abdali, 2024 b).

The way that students learn has drastically changed because of technological advancements. Because of how technology has changed how teachers deliver knowledge, kids are learning and studying in different ways. The days of laboring over library books and taking notes on paper are long gone. According to Gilakjani (2013), Al-Abdali and Alzayadi (2020), Al-Abdali (2016 a), Bataineh and Al-Abdali (2015) with the use of technology, students can become active learners rather than passive recipients and can immerse themselves in language more deeply. With the help of extensive apps that function synchronously and even offline, students finish their English courses.

Bruce and Levin (2021) argue, any technology that obtains, transfers, restores, processes, and distributes information using computers and contemporary communication methods is considered modern technology. In terms of teaching English, classrooms are now using contemporary technology like computers and networks to teach composition, literature, decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and use (Elttayef, 2016, Habeeb and Al-Abdali, 2020, and Al-Abdali, 2016 b).

Word processor

Among the useful tools that educators can use in schools today are word processors. There are numerous advantages for both educators and learners when using computers for coursework. Word processors, according to many educators, lead to easier and more successful rewriting as well as higher writing motivation. In addition, compared to writing on paper and pencil, word processors can produce writings that are more organized and error-free. All of these are possible advantages of word processing for young writers.

Smith (1985), emphasizes on the importance of the writing skill as a component of literacy skill. It is very important and effective tool in communication. As more people throughout the world begin to use computers and word processors in their daily lives, written communication has become increasingly more crucial. The technologically literate communicate on a daily basis via the Internet, fax machines, and electronic mail (email).

Word processors are useful tools for writers. It is frequently utilized to make writing easier at all writing stages. Many people believe that word processing software currently on the market has the ability to improve EFL students' writing and editing skills beyond what they could do with a standard paper and pencil.

The reason the word processor works so well is that many students can create slightly lengthier texts in the same amount of time while using it once they have mastered the fundamentals of keyboarding. According to certain theories, utilizing a word processor while writing might make changes easier and even motivate pupils to write more (Scrimshaw, 1993).

According to Smith (1985), students who use word processors for all writing stages have better attitudes toward writing overall, compose longer papers, make more changes, and pay closer attention to detail. As they create and rewrite their writing using word processors, students are more inclined to take chances and "play around" with text (Laidley, 1991).

Word Processor and:

Spelling

There is an electronic spell checker built into word computers. Quick feedback is given to the student writer regarding misspelled words. The student must decide which of the artificially generated spellings is appropriate given the circumstances. Spelling mistakes

no longer need to be red-marked by teachers. They might concentrate on the small number of exceptions that elude the spell checker.

Security

There is a sense of security for both teachers and students regarding assignment loss. By saving her work, the student reduces the chance that it will be misplaced or lost. It is simple to print a replacement assignment in the event that one is missing.

Legibility

Educators gain from having a copy that is easy to read and grade. Improved handwriting can help students with their grades by producing papers that look better. It is important to advise students to submit copies of their work in a legible typeface.

Publishing

Word processing-generated content can be posted on a bulletin board with ease. Instructors have the ability to compile student writings into electronic anthologies. An electronic copy of published works is available to any student at no cost for printing.

Mobility

Word processor stores work online and it is available from any computer with an Internet connection. Online, dogs do not consume papers. 'I forgot it at home' is not a valid excuse. Simply sign in to the closest computer and your work will be shown on the screen.

Mechanics of writing

Mechanics of writing includes capitalization, gerunds, participles, numbers, numerals, and pronouns, units of measurement, acronyms, technical abbreviations, and punctuation.



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Capitalization

Although incorrect capitalization does not necessarily change the meaning of the words you employ, it does keep your sentences more structured. Capitalization highlights for the reader the key points in a sentence.

Capitalized words provide them with an indication about the meaning of those words. Because capitalization indicates the start of each sentence, it also improves the flow of your paragraphs and sentences.

Punctuation

There is a joke that makes the significance of punctuation clear. A mere comma separates "Let's eat, Fred" from "Let's eat Fred," however this distinction has a big impact on meaning. A dinner invitation is one thing, but cannibalism is the other! You can communicate your ideas to the reader just as you planned by using appropriate punctuation. Even while punctuation makes up a little portion of the text overall, its influence is significant.

Spelling

Poor spelling is something no one really wants to see, especially not a perceptive reader. Spelling mistakes detract from your work and make the reader less inclined to read it through. Spell checkers in the majority of contemporary text editors can detect mistakes. However, you really should not become too comfortable. Words that are spelled correctly but misused can elude spell checkers as well.

Abbreviations

Unless you are deliberately attempting to conceal the message, you should never employ acronyms that your readers are unfamiliar with. The ideal procedure would be to put the abbreviation right after the complete title. After finishing this, you could utilize the acronym in its place. Make sure the reader understands the meaning of the acronyms you employ by introducing them to them.

Literature review

Aladwan (2021) aimed at determining how word processors affect secondary students' writing instruction in Jordanian private schools using word processors. The results of the study showed that the use of word processors in the classroom by the experimental group of students produced notable improvements in their writing achievement. The study also discovered that the use of word processors in instruction has a significant favorable impact on the spelling and grammar achievement of students (experimental group). This suggests the word processor's usefulness in helping ninth-grade students improve their writing abilities. Given the impact of word processors on ninth-grade students' writing proficiency, the study suggests using them in the classroom based on the findings.

Kocaman (2022) aims at exploring the use of word processing software to improve writing abilities while learning English. One factor that could influence the outcome is the incapacity of students to use word processors.

AbuSeileek (2006) determines how using a word processor affected the growth of EFL learners' writing abilities as well as how they felt about using computers to assist with writing. According to the study findings, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the writing test. The study also showed that the experimental group's attitude toward computer-based writing was favorable. Ultimately, the research findings indicated that teaching writing skills using a word processor was a practical approach.

Yilmaz and Erkol (2015) investigate how Turkish EFL learners' performance in essay writing changed when they switched from using paper and pencil to a word processor. It was discovered that the experimental group's members fared better than the control groups, indicating that the use of word processors in writing helped pupils write better when compared to handwritten methods. Furthermore, the questionnaire's results showed that word processing was a useful tool for helping students adopt a positive writing mindset. Better learning results in writing are predicted if computer-based writing education is customized to meet students' requirements, according to the study's pedagogical implications.

Beck and Fetherston (2003) investigate the use of word processor to enhance writing skills. In this study, the inclusion of a word processor in a writing curriculum helped the students write more creatively, stayed engaged, improved their writing style, and produced a longer, more detailed story. The word processor encouraged pupils to write, involved them in editing, helped with proofreading, and resulted in longer writings being created by the students. Using the word processor, the students in this study generated work that was superior to that which was accomplished with the conventional paper and pencil approach.

Yulanda (2023) the author's goal is to determine how utilizing Microsoft Word, a program, affects students' ability to write in English during hybrid learning. To sum up,

employing Microsoft Word as an ICT tool in an EFL classroom can be highly advantageous for students in a variety of ways.

Azizaturrohmi (2019) evaluates how well eleventh grade students could learn writing skills with the aid of a computer word processor. After conducting the study, the researcher discovered that teaching writing skills to eleventh grade students at MA Muallimat NW Pancor was much aided by the use of an assistance computer word processor.

Dalton and Michael (2015) according to an examination of writing samples collected at the end of the study, word processing by itself had minimal impact on students' writing performance.

Results

The Results of the Question One

- 1) What is the impact of utilizing word processor software in teaching mechanics of writing among third-grade English language learners?

In order to respond to this question, means and standard deviations of the study sample marks were calculated (Table 1).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the study sample marks on writing skill's scale.

Group	No.	Pre-test	
		Means	St.d
<i>Experimental Group</i>	15	11.43	4.18
<i>Control group</i>	15	11.12	4.96

Table 1 reveals the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-test, which were 11.43; whereas the mean scores of the control group students were 11.12. This means that both group have equal level in the writing performance on the pre-test.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the study sample marks on writing skill's scale.

Group	No.	Post-test	
		Means	St.d
<i>Experimental Group</i>	15	17.88	3.07
<i>Control group</i>	15	13.57	4.60

Table 2 reveals the experimental group members' mean scores on the post-test using word processor, which were 17.88. In comparison with the mean scores of the control groups', mean scores, which were 13.57. It clear that the experimental groups got higher scores on the post-test. This might be attributed to the method of teaching, which the experimental group used which is word processor.

Based on the variable of the teaching technique, an ANCOVA analysis of the study sample marks was conducted on the post-writing skill scale to ascertain if the difference between the two averages was statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$). This was carried out after tagging into consideration their pre-test scores, which served as an auxiliary variable. Table 3 displays the findings of the analysis.

Table 3. One-way ANCOVA analysis of the results of the post- test

Source	Total squares	Df	Average squares	F	Significant
<i>Pre-test</i>	578.01	1	578.01	132.02	0.00
<i>Teaching method</i>	138.45	1	138.45	19.77	0.00
<i>Error</i>	243.10	40	5.01		
<i>Total</i>	1332.01	41			

Table 3 demonstrates that the means of the experimental group's marks, which were obtained through using word processor method, and the control group's marks, which were obtained through using conventional method, differ statistically significantly at ($\alpha = 0.05$) on the writing skill scale in the post-test (f) value reaching 19.77. At 0.00, this number demonstrates statistical significance. The experimental group was found to have these differences (17.88), which is greater than the mean of the experimental group marks that were taught using the traditional technique (13.57), based on the means of the study sample marks on the post-test, as shown in Table 1.

This outcome indicates that the students who used word processors to study writing skills exceeded students who used traditional approaches.

The Results of the Question Two

- 2) Are there differences in mechanics of writing between the control group who will study using regular method and the experimental group who will study using word processor?

Table 4. One-way ANOVA differences between groups concerning spelling and grammar

ANOVA						
		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
<i>Spelling</i>	<i>Between groups</i>	15.911	1	15.911	114.223	0.00
	<i>Within groups</i>	6.250	39	.187		
	<i>Total</i>	22.161	40			
<i>Grammar</i>	<i>Between groups</i>	10.215	1	8.654	43.222	0.000
	<i>Within groups</i>	9.201	39	.232		
	<i>Total</i>	19.416	40			

A One Way ANOVA was performed on both groups to see if there were any significant differences in spelling and grammar between the control and experimental groups at ($\alpha =$

0.05). The One-Way ANOVA produces one-way analysis of variance for a quantitative dependent variable by a factor (independent) variable. The One-Way ANOVA is an extension to the two-sample t test. Table 3 presents the findings. Table 3 demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences in spelling and grammar between the means of the two experimental groups at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Thus, the second question of the study 'Are there differences in mechanics of writing between the control group who will study using regular method and the experimental group who will study using word processor?' F value related to mechanics of writing (spelling) reached 114.223, and which was statistically significant at 0.00. Whereas f value related to mechanics of writing, (grammar) reached (43.222), and which was statistically significant at 0.00.

Discussion

The study discovered that, as compared to the control group, which received instruction in the conventional manner, the experimental group's writing skills significantly improved as a result of their use of word processors. This result is in line with Beck and Fetherstons' (2003) and Yulanda's (2023) findings, which demonstrated the many benefits of adopting word processing in writing instruction.

The results of the study showed that the experimental group's spelling and grammar performance significantly improved as a result of receiving instruction using a word processor. This result contradicts the findings of Michael and David (2015) who found no discernible difference between students' writing on computers and paper when they used word processors. According to Michael and David, an examination of writing samples collected at the end of the study, word processing by itself had minimal impact on students' writing performance.

Based on the findings, the study suggests that word processor instruction be used since it has an impact on ninth-grade students' writing proficiency. Given that word processors can enhance students' comprehension and social skills in the classroom, more research on this topic is necessary.

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