The Effect of Edmodo on EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract

Writing as a productive skill in EFL classes is outstandingly significant. In writing classes there needs to be an efficient relationship between the teacher and students. The teacher as the only audience in many writing classes responds to students' writing. In the early part of the 21st century the range of technologies available for use in classes has become very diverse and the ways they are being used in classrooms all over the world might affect the outcome we expect from our classes. As the present generations of students are using new technologies, the application of these recent technologies in classes might be useful. Using technology in writing classes provides opportunities for students to hand their written work to the teacher without the need for any face-to-face interaction. This present study investigates the effect of Edmodo on EFL learners' writing performance. A quasi-experimental design was used in this study. The participants were 40 female advanced-level students attending advanced writing classes at Irana English Institute, Razan - Hamedan. The focus was on the composition writing ability. The students were randomly assigned to two groups, experimental and control. Edmodo was used in the experimental group. Mann-Whitney U test was used for data analysis; the results indicated that the use of Edmodo in writing was more effective on EFL learners' writing performance participating in this study.

*Keywords***:** writing performance, Edmodo

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I. INTRODUCTION

Writing well is an art at which everybody may be successful. According to Hinkel (2011), learning to write in English as a second language means also learning how to function in a new culture. Writing involves an interaction between three elements that interact in getting to the final product: 1) the text, 2) the writer, 3) the reader. In a writing course three goals are distinguishable based on teachers' views; some focus on the language itself, some focus on communication, and some focus on forms and the message. According to Spack, (1984, cited in Chastain, 1988) on the communication level, the goal is to adapt the goals of the writer to

the needs of the reader. Writers should consider the reader and the effect they want to achieve; the relationship they want to establish with the reader; the "creation of meaning"; and the use of language and the correctness of grammar (Chastain, 1988). Writing to communicate can be possible only when students have sufficient control of the writing system and the grammar (Chastain, 1988). Teachers in writing classes as the only audience are the readers of the students' writing performance. Teachers try to help the students overcome the difficulties, encourage them, responds to their writing, provide feedback and score the final products during the writing process (Uso-Juan, & Martinez-Flor, 2006)

In the early part of the 21st century, the range of technologies available for use in classes has become very diverse and the ways they are being used in classrooms all over the world. As the present generations of students are using new technologies, the application of these recent technologies in classes might be useful. Using technology like Edmodo in writing classes provides opportunities for students to hand their written work to the teacher without the need for any face-to-face interaction, and an easy collaborative work by the teacher and other learners at any time during the week makes them more motivated and creative than before and can increase their self-efficiency and success and help decrease their anxiety in the process of writing. Some teachers have welcomed these developments enthusiastically, seeing the integration of new technology-based pedagogies as a means of enlivening instruction, improving students' writing skills, and facilitating collaboration and interaction both within and beyond the classroom (Hyland, K & Hyland, F, 2006) Thus, the present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of Edmodo on EFL learners' writing performance.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. Writing

As cited in Assessing Writing by Sarah Cushing Weigle (2002, p.4), according to Grabowski (1996) "Writing as compared to speaking, can be seen as a more standardized system which must be acquired through special instruction. Mastery of this standard system is an important prerequisite for culture and education participation and the maintenance of one's rights and duties. The fact that writing is more standardized than speaking allows for a higher degree of sanctions when people deviate from that standard." In this study, writing is defined as a paragraph/paragraphs that students write as an assignment introduced to them every session.

In teaching writing, teachers can either focus on the product of that writing or on the process itself. When concentrating on the product, teachers are only interested in the aim of a task and in the end product. Many educators, however, advocate a process approach to writing. This pays attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. Learners spend time on pre-writing phases, edit, re-draft and finally produce a finished version of their work. A process approach aims to get to the heart of various skills that most writers employ when writing in foreign language.

A process approach asks students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work. In reality, the writing process is more complex than this, of course, and the

various stages of drafting, reviewing, re-drafting and writing. At editing stage, students may feel the need to go back to a pre-writing phase and think again; they may edit bits of their writing as they draft it.

It is better to see writing as a kind of process 'wheel', where writers move both around the circumference of the wheel and across the spokes. And even when they have written what they think is the final version of their work, they may still, at the last moment, go back and re-plan or re-visit stages they had thought they had completed.
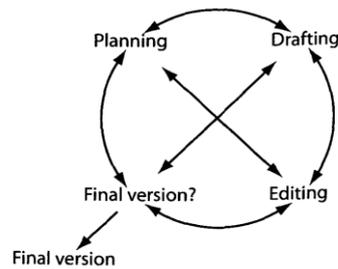
Figure 1: The process wheel

Adopted from Harmer (2007, P. 326)

One of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time, time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some way; time to draft a piece of writing and then, with the teacher's help, perhaps, review it and edit it in various ways before, perhaps, changing the focus, generating more ideas, redrafting, re-editing, and so on (Harmer, 2007).

B. The Roles of the Teacher

According to Harmer (2007), the teacher needs to deploy some or all of the usual roles when students are asked to write, the ones that are especially important are as follows:

- Motivator: one of the principle role in writing tasks will be to motivate the students, creating the right condition of ideas, persuading them of the usefulness of the active and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit.

- Resource: teachers should be ready to supply information and language where necessary.

- Feedback provider: giving feedback on writing tasks demands special care. Teachers should respond positively and encouragingly to the content of what the students have written.

C. Edmodo

According to Cauley (2012), "Edmodo is an educational website that takes the ideas of a social network and refines them and makes it appropriate for a classroom. Using Edmodo, students and teachers can reach out to one another and connect by sharing ideas, problems, and helpful tips."

In this study, Edmodo refers to online environments accessible on the World Wide Web at http://www.edmodo.com.

Edmodo was created by Nic Borg and JeffO'Hara (2008), who realized the need to evolve the school environment to meet the connectedness of the 21st century world. Edmodo is a safe environment and free of advertisements, games and other distractions that might interfere with students learning. Teachers post announcements and assignments for their students. Students use Edmodo to communicate with their teachers to ask questions about lessons and homework, and collaborate with other classmates on activities and project ideas. Using Edmodo, students and teachers can reach out to one another and connect by sharing ideas, problems, and helpful tips. A teacher can assign and grade work on Edmodo; students can get help from the entire class on Edmodo (Mills & Chandra, 2011).

D. Experiences Using Edmodo in Education

The following experiences have been shared on using Edmodo in different eras of education. Vanesa Durán Lara (2013), in his study, tries to find a solution to the learners' negative attitudes towards writing tasks and to the substantial amount of time that teachers need to devote to the teaching of writing. (*See, cdigital.uv.mx/bitstream/123456789/35143/ 1/duranlaravanesa.pdf*)

Also the following people reported their experiences using Edmodo:

Dr Mary Ellis and Mr Mark Wilkinson from the English Language and Literature Academic Group (ELL) share their experiences using Edmodo in their teaching.

Dr Ellis: that it had a Facebook format (which students found attractive) together with useful tools for teachers, such as polls and an assignment feature which allows comments.

Mr Wilkinson: Edmodo is found in schools in USA and is used in some schools in Singapore. An Edmodo Singapore conference was held at Nanyang Girls' High School in March 2012. Two Edmodo groups here are the Edmodo Singapore group and the NIE Educators group.

Dr Ellis: We've used it in English language enhancement, communication skills, and academic writing courses. Our students have used it to peer review each other's writing and audio files. As teachers we've used it to give feedback on project work, conduct polls, and support course tutors.

Mr Wilkinson: They are mostly positive about it, though there are occasional comments that they have another log-in to remember. But when they use it in our tutorials they gain useful take-away experience. And they can access their course groups even after they graduate so Edmodo and their course resources can remain useful to them (retrieved from the Net at:http://www.nie.edu.sg/nienews/dec13/?q=contents/learning_with_edmodo)

III METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The Participants in this study were 40 female Advanced-level students attending Advanced Writing Classes at Irana English Institute. The age range of the participants was between 14 and 24. One of the researchers took part in the study as the teacher. A quasi-experimental design was used in this study. Students were selected using Nelson Test D300. One hundred students who had registered for a new term at this institute were required to take the Nelson Test. Then students whose scores were one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected and were randomly assigned in two groups, one group as control and the other as experimental. There were 20 students in each class.

B. Materials

The material used in this study was the same for both groups with the exception that the experimental group worked with their Edmodo pages to upload their assignments in their pages and used it for receiving and providing recast. The Edmodo account was created by the teacher to make group in Edmodo. Then, the learners were invited to Edmodo group by their E-mails. Each learner had its own page to load the assignments in Edmodo pages, the group contained of 20 students. These books were used for Advanced-Writing in two classes, *Paragraph Writing* (from Sentence to Paragraph) by Zemach and Islam (2005) published by Macmillian and *Stepping Stones* (A Guided Approach to Writing Sentences and Paragraphs) second edition by Juzwiak (2012) published by Bedford/St.Martin's.

C. Procedure

This study was conducted on two advanced-writing classes at Irana Institute in Razan-Hamedan. Students in the experimental group used Edmodo during 12 sessions to present their assignments in their Edmodo pages during the week. The other class, which served as a control group presented their assignments in the class. The focus was on composition writing. During those 12 sessions, the elements of paragraph and different patterns of paragraph writing such as narration, description, definition, classification and division, exposition or examples, and comparison and contrast, were thought. And the teacher asked the students to write compositions based on the raised topics.

The members of the experimental group shared their paragraphs (weekly assignment) with each other. The other members in group wrote their comments, asked questions, and sometimes received and provided feedback, and shared links, with each other and their teacher during the week whenever they wish. Also students in Edmodo group can join the other groups in Edmodo, who use Edmodo in every community such as Science, Computer, Math, Literature, and so on.

IV. RESULTS

A. Data collection and Data Analysis

The data for the present study were obtained from a pretest and a posttest. To measure the writing ability of the students in two groups, the writing test (pre-test) taken from Cambridge IELTS 9 (2013) was administered to all the students attending in the classes.

The results of the pretest showed no significant differences between the groups. After 12 sessions of treatment, all the participants took part in the final exam in which the writing test (post-test) taken from Cambridge IELTS 9 (2013) was used. The writing samples were scored based on IELT'S Holistic Scoring Rubric for Writing.

The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS statistical package version 22 (SPSS Inc., 2013) by running a Mann-Whitney U Test.

B. Hypothesis

"Edmodo does not have any significant effect on EFL learners' writing performance."

C. Assumptions for the Hypothesis

Descriptive statistics tests of normality (Kurtosis and Skewness) were checked along with inferential test of normality to see if the obtained data were normal. The normality of obtained data was not observed. So, the differences between the pre-test and the posttest results (gain score) were computed. Inferential test of normality for gain score indicated that the normality of data was not observed. Therefore, the non-parametric test of Mann-Whitney U was used.

D. Testing the Hypothesis

In order to use Mann-Whitney U test, as observed in Table 1 below, the obtained data were transformed to ranks (which are non-parametric statistics). The mean ranks and the sum are given in Table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Gain Scores in Non-Edmodo and Edmodo Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gain scores w	40	1	5	2.75	1.080
Valid N (listwise)	40				

**Table 2: Mean Ranks and Sum of the Ranks for the Writing Gain
Scores in Non-Edmodo and Edmodo Groups: Ranks**

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Gainscoresw	Non-Edmodo	20	16.58	331.50
	Edmodo	20	24.43	488.50
	Total	40		

The description of ranks showed a higher mean rank for experimental (Edmodo) groups (24.43) as compared with the control (Non-Edmodo) groups (16.58). Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was run to check it's significant.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U Test for the Writing Gain Scores in Non-Edmodo and Edmodo Groups: Test Statistics[a]

	Gainscoresw
Mann-Whitney U	121.500
Wilcoxon W	331.500
Z	-2.221
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.026

The Mann-Whitney U test (Table 3) showed a significant difference in writing performance of the experimental (Edmodo) and the control (Non-Edmodo) groups (U = 121.500, Z = -2.221, P < .026), which means the experimental group outperformed the control group.

V. DISCUSSION

As engagement with these digital tools is being recognized as a separate field called computer assisted language learning (CALL), their use is becoming central to English Language Teaching (ELT), too. As scholars (Beatty, 2010; Davies et al.; 2013; Levy, 1997) noted, CALL has its origins in the development of the first mainframe computers and articles about the use of computers in language education started appearing in the 1980s (Motteram 2013).

The research question was whether Edmodo had any significant effect on EFL learners' writing performance. The data obtained indicated that Edmodo created a significant difference in EFL learners' writing performance. As the result shows, it seems that Edmodo acted positively to support the writing ability. The results of the obtained data seem to be in line with

findings by other scholars like, Ahmadi and Marandi (2014), Bagheri, Yamini, and Behjat (2013), Bromley (2010), Khoii and Arabsarhangi (2011), Lara (2013), Li (2012), as well as Martinsen and Miller (2012).

As the result of the study showed, it seems that using Edmodo as a technology tool has acted positively to support the writing ability. The results showed that the use of a different color in providing feedback like recast helped learners to be aware of their errors to understand the point of feedback. As Edmodo provides the opportunity to make the learners interested in writing and it is possible provide collaborative environment for learning where learners help each other. Edmodo allows them to keep in touch with their teacher and other classmates every time during the week out of class. Learning is not limited to the time of class during the week make them more motivated and creative than before and increase their self-efficiency and success and help decrease their anxiety in the process of writing.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the result obtained from this study it was found that learners who participated in Edmodo advanced-writing class outperformed those who attended the paper-based class regarding writing performance.

Therefore, it can be observed that access to the online tool of Edmodo can provides opportunities to improve the writing ability, as it provides easy access to online sources and enables learners to compare their written essays with other classmates in their group and other groups, to have collaborative activity, and to keep in touch with the teacher and other learners any time they wish. Collaborative learning can increase students' interest in learning (Dooly, 2008, P. 22) especially when the students are actively exchanging and negotiating ideas, engaging in discussion and taking responsibility for their learning. According to Swain (1985, cited in Motteram, 2013) social interaction can lead the learners to language development through interactional exchanges and negotiation of meaning. As the results of the present study indicate, technology can facilitate this by making it easier for different groups of learners from different parts of the world to talk to each other, especially through tele-collaboration (Swain, 1985).

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