

The Effect of Using Note Taking on EFL Students' Writing Improvement

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Abstract – The purpose of the research reported in this paper was to investigate the effect of the use of note taking on EFL students' writing improvement. For this purpose, Twenty students studying English as a foreign language in an Institute at high level in Khoramabad, Iran were chosen, and assigned randomly in 4 groups, all in the experimental group. An experimental design was utilized for the present study. All students were male, at the same social class, aged between 16 and 17. The researchers played the CD of listening text for all groups. The researchers applied Paired and independent sample t-tests to capture differences, to determine the possible effect of using note taking on EFL students' writing improvement. Results showed higher writing improvement in the groups who used note taking.

Keywords: note taking, cooperative learning, content-based instruction

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing for foreign language learners has always been a difficult task to accomplish. Writing instructors, on the other hand, oftentimes find it difficult to understand their students' work, if the learners use all of their time to write, they won't have enough time to edit their writing. During the studies at the schools learner will produce many pieces of written work and he will be expected to write clear and precise English. Writing well at university will help learner to demonstrate his growing understanding of his subject. Writing is a process that involves using a range of skills and qualities. It takes time to become skilled and confident in this area and, even then, most people find writing a challenge. It can feel a messy and frustrating process at times, as well as a creative one. Making notes in the class will help to make sense of what the learners are learning and to remember it later. Note making is a skill that grows with practice and during the studies and learners will have the opportunity to develop this skill further. The important thing about taking notes from printed sources is understanding of the material, so it is essential to write down what learner understands in his own words. They cannot retain all of the information. The act of writing something down can help learner to focus on it and remember it. Learners can refer back to it later to check their memory. Taking good notes during class is an important part of the learning process, even when the instructor provides lecture notes, outlines, or power point slides.

The process of note taking actually helps learner learn and cognitively store the material in addition to providing him with something to review later. Taking notes in class and reviewing those notes later positively impacts student learning (for instance, Bligh, 2000; DeZure, Kaplan, & Deerman 2001; Kiewra et al., 1991). Perhaps when many of learners were college students, taking notes in class meant one thing: listening to lectures and writing down

whatever learners thought was important. If learners were lucky, their professor might write something on the chalkboard. Taking notes was something learners learned how to do because learners had to (Allison Boye, 2010). Research shows that students recall more lecture material if they record it in their notes (Bligh, 2000), and ultimately perform better on tests of recall and synthesis than students who do not take notes (Kiewra et al., 1991). Effective note taking is more than just writing quickly. Research indicates that students tend to record verbatim notes without much evidence of generative processing (Bretzing & Kulhavy, 1981; Huxham, 2010; Kiewra, 1985).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Note Taking

Note taking is an important academic task that helps you to remember what you have learnt and helps you to review materials for reuse in revision and assignment. Writing is not solely about gathering data, memorizing facts, or restating what others believe but it is more about vigorous involvement of every individual to comprehend the topic well enough which primarily is a learned proficiency. According to research by Robert Kaplan, English-speaking writers organize their thoughts in a linear pattern. This means that they think in a straight line. Details and examples must relate to the main points.

B. Cooperative Learning

Face-to-face promoted interaction (helping each other learn, applauding success and efforts). Hertz-Lazarowitz, Baird and Lazarowitz (1994) and Wise (1996) indicate that cooperative learning creates a classroom learning environment which contributes to the positive perception pupils have towards social and cognitive aspects of the learning process, since learners are able to make more friends and practice more helping behavior. In the effect of activities and cooperation discussion in critical thinking class, Silverman and Smith (2003) stated that: the interaction among learners has the important role in activation of critical thinking that hold as group discussion in the class. Kagan (1989) provides an excellent overview of various cooperative learning structures:

1. If getting to know each other is the objective of the lesson, then team building is a technique that can be used. Including Class building, and Communication Building, team building has three structures: Round robin, Corners, and Match Mine.
2. If focusing on mastery of information is the objective of the lesson, then one of the mastery structures would be an excellent choice. (Color-Coded Co-op Cards, Pairs Check, and Numbered Heads Together.)
3. When a lesson emphasizes understanding concepts, then a concept development structure should be used. (Three-step Interview, Think-Pair- Share, and Team Word-Webbing.)

4. Multifunctional structures are used for students getting to know each other better, mastering information, and understanding concepts. (Roundtable, Inside-Outside Circle, Partners, Jigsaw, and Co-op Co-op.)

C. Content-Based Instruction

Content-based instruction (CBI) is a teaching method that emphasizes learning about something rather than learning about language. Although CBI is not new, there has been an increased interest in it over the last ten years, particularly in the USA and Canada where it has proven very effective in ESL immersion programs. CBI is an effective method of combining language and content learning. Content-based instruction is defined as the integration of content learning with language teaching aims. It is the “concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content materials” (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). In the United States and Canada, content-based instruction first arose from the need to teach the standard curriculum in ESL immersion programs while focusing on the instruction of the language (Allen & Howard, 1981; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1990; Duff, 2001; Early, 2001; Mohen, 1986; Reilly, 1988; Swain, 1999). Studies have shown that, besides reinforcing school curriculum and serving as a foundation for relevance to the overall school programs, content-based instruction promotes natural language learning and higher-order thinking skills (Met, 1991). In content-based foreign language instruction, the activities in the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are designed to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

For the purpose of the study, 20 high school students from institute in Khoramabad were selected and assigned as experimental groups of the study. There were four groups involved in the study. All students were male, at the same social class, and their ages were between 16 and 17. In this study, the groups attended English class two sessions, and received two months of instruction, of course after correcting the papers by three raters the researchers divided the students to four groups of five members to ensure that the students in four groups were in the same language proficiency level and had similar experience in learning English as a foreign language.

B. Measuring Instruments

At the beginning of this study, the participants were given a pre-test of writing their notes to assess their initial differences in note taking. Then the researchers had a group writing as a post test in this part the students wrote their notes in their groups each group mate wrote his notes and then all the teammates put their notes on one paper and delivered it to the teacher, of course, the researchers had three raters to correct the drafts after each session. So, at the end of each session the teacher asked each group to deliver their notes, and the expert of each group

brought their notes to the teacher and they read them in front of the class if there was time if not they just delivered them to the teacher to assign and correct.

C. Design and Procedure

The one class involved in the study was randomly chosen from intermediate students studying English at the institute, in Khoramabad, Iran. Then, the classes was randomly assigned to one experimental group. The researchers had an individual writing test and told the time they had to write their drafts alone of course their writing started after broadcasting the sound of the text. Then they started taking notes about a specific topic that they are listening, after finishing the time of writing then the teacher collected the individuals' paper and gave all of them to the three raters to correct them and recorded the scores in a chart.

In the second session, the teacher plays the sound of a specific lecture and then asked the students to take notes and write about main point of the text. Each group started to take notes and write about the CD as much as possible that they listened. The teacher told them, in this part of the class there was important what they wrote because they should just write the main point not the details. At the end of this session the teacher asked each group to deliver their notes, and they delivered them to the teacher to assign and correct. The researchers conducted the research for some weeks. In content-based foreign language instruction, the activities in the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are designed to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language.

IV. RESULTS

As stated previously, to answer the research question, *Does Note Taking have any specific effect on EFL Students' Writing Improvement* , the researchers applied paired t-test using SPSS software version 22 to ensure the assumption of normality, and to analyze probable differences between using note taking and not to use. The pretest result used an individual note taking during listening the sound of the specific lecture.

Table 1. Pre-Test: Group note taking statistic at session 1

1st session	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Rater1	15	14	12	14
Rater2	15	13	13	14
Rater3	14	13	12	13

The above table 1 shows all of the learners' scores in the first group writing. By using this table the researcher could put the learners in the groups and it helped that all of the groups had the same teammate it means that in all of the groups we had top, middle, and weak learner and of course we used it as pre-test.

Table 2. Post-Test Group statistic at last session

last session	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Rater1	17	16	15	17
Rater2	17	16	15	16
Rater3	17	15	14	17

Table 2 demonstrated the scores of posttest on which the paired t-test analysis of the note taking among groups was conducted. It could be inferred from the observed group note taking post-test results that the learners' writing improvement was significantly correlated with note taking and cooperative learning. Therefore, the null hypothesis, *Using note taking doesn't have any specific effect on EFL Students' Writing Improvement*, is rejected and there was significant difference using note taking individually and in a group.

V. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this study an attempt was made to further our understanding of the significant relationship between using note taking on EFL Students' Writing Improvement. As seen above, the results obtained from the analysis of the data revealed that there is a significance difference using note taking individually and in a group. In other words make students' improvement in writing.

In following, the results of the analysis are discussed regarding the relationships between and among the variables of the study. We can conclude that there are high and positive inter correlations among the scores of all sessions depends on the raters' scores. In this study we understood that all of the students liked to work in a group work and complete their works by helping and using teammates' help, they said that it caused to make them be more eager and it increased their confidence.

As stated earlier, most students make limited use of techniques such as abbreviations, diagrams, and symbols that can increase their note taking efficiency and improve their ability to record more information (Badger et al., 2001; Sutherland, Badger, & White 2002). Writing is viewed as the result of complex processes of planning, drafting, reviewing and revising and some approaches to the teaching of the first and second language writing teach students to use these processes. While the note taking process is important for student learning, new research also reveals that providing student with guided notes does not harm performance on exams and can help students more accurately record critical points and examples (Austin, Lee & Carr, 2004; Marsh & Sink, 2010; Rayver & Maydosz, 2010). Most importantly, after taking effective notes, it is important to organize and store the notes effectively. Effective note taking should reduce learners' study time, should increase learner retention of knowledge, and should provide them with a summarized list of resource for their future projects. Kiewra (1985) reported that students who review detailed instructor notes generally outperform students who only review their own notes on fact based tests and others (Babb & Ross, 2009) observe that guided notes

could help improve student participation. Finally, students in general can demonstrate a lack of self-awareness, believing that they do take suitable notes (Bonner & Holliday, 2006).

A. Research Implications

Several pedagogical implications emerged from the results of the present study. To begin with, this study could be an attempt to make learners to cooperate during their learning and learn more. Taking notes in the class will help to make sense of what learners are learning and to remember it later. Note taking is a skill that grows with practice and during their studies and they will have the opportunity to develop this skill further. Note taking is an important academic task that helps learner to remember what he has learnt and helps him to review materials for reuse in revision and assignment. The instruction of this research could help students as follow; (a) Organize their ideas (b) Keep focused while listening (c) Think critically about what you are listening (d) Help himself analyze a text (e) Help you engage with the text (f) Enable you to draw conclusions from the text (g) Highlight areas that he needs to develop further. Moreover this way of teaching is less time and energy consuming and help teacher to save the time and as far as it is interactive, motivate students, and hold them aware in a process of learning.

B. Suggestions for Further Research

In order to complete the findings of present study, some research can be suggested:

1. Much empirical research is needed to ensure the positive effect of using group note taking on EFL students' writing improvement.
2. This study was administered in an institute so the researchers recommended that it will hold in the schools or colleges too and the teachers use this method in their schedule.

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Appendix A

Results of Inferential Statistics

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics of the pre and post test

T-Test

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 pretest	13.5000	4	1.29099	.64550
posttest	16.2500	4	.95743	.47871

Table 4 Paired Samples Correlations Group note taking

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 pretest & posttest	4	.944	.056

Table 5 Paired Samples Test of group note taking

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 pretest - posttest	-2.75000	.50000	.25000	-3.54561	-1.95439	-11.000	3	.002