

The Impact of Teaching Clustering Prewriting Strategies on Writing Self-Efficacy among EFL Learners in Turkey

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Abstract: Within this study, the researcher investigated the impact of teaching prewriting strategies on improving the writing self-efficacy of EFL learners while doing writing activities. This research was conducted on English preparatory level students in Turkey through 8 weeks period of time. A quantitative research method is used in this research which was based on the writing self-efficacy scale and students' written essays in order to examine the 40 students. Participants were chosen from Istanbul Aydin University Preparatory School. Accordingly, they were divided into two groups, 20 students within the experimental groups and 20 students within the control group. Each group was taught by different teachers. As this study was conducted to examine the impact of implementing the prewriting strategy of clustering on students' writing self-efficacy, the students responded to the writing self-efficacy scale before and after writing their essays. There was no significant difference in the writing performance of the experimental group compared to the performance of the control group. Accordingly, the researcher found that the implementation of the clustering prewriting strategy in particular did not influence the writing self-efficacy among students. Thus, the researcher concluded that EFL students in both groups had similar levels of writing self-efficacy.

Keywords: writing self-efficacy, essay writing, prewriting strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a method of communication and a system of different sounds that have several meanings (Ellis, 2012). Language is a natural endowment which is obtained conventionally (Saussure, 1998). In terms of language efficiency, it is a distinctive feature for humans in which it permeates deeply to their conception in correspondence to their biological nature (Chomsky, 2009). Therefore, mastering certain skills in language especially reading and writing is an important element to enhance one's communicative skills.

Writing is the transfer of information through symbols in an understandable manner (Bright, 1996). Writing is considered as a difficult task because it requires several skills which have to be learned. The difficulty of the writing skill rises as it relates to one's cognitive abilities (VanKooten, 2016). Therefore, teaching writing demands on the application of various approaches because written and spoken languages differ in many aspects such as pointedness, intensity, objectivity, arrangement, the use of standard language, and permanence (Penny, 1998).

Self-efficacy is defined as the individuals' beliefs in their ability to behave in a specific manner which enables them to accomplish a certain task (Bandura, 1994). Moreover, self-efficacy influences how a person performs a task and how he is motivated to achieve a certain goal (Iroegbu, 2015). In this sense, self-efficacy is a doctrine which is influenced by the teacher-student interaction. As a result, teachers can improve students' writing self-efficacy through the application of certain intrusions during classroom instruction; and that would excess learning achievement (Jackson, 2002).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

English language learning has been taking a good attention all over the world for many decades. In some countries people learn English as a second language since English is used as a means of communication in daily life in those countries, such as India, Pakistan and Nigeria. On the other hand, in many other countries, people learn English as foreign language as is the case in the Turkish context. Within the Turkish educational context, people used to learn English in the secondary level, while in 1997, English language learning started in the primary level (Braine, 2005).

By diving deeply into the particular issue, Kizildag (2009) revealed that English language teachers in Turkey lacked the efficiency in teaching listening and speaking skills compared to grammar and reading due to the lack of the supporting materials such as CDs, computers and projectors. Besides, the lack of teaching proficiency had been associated with the poor design of the textbooks. Therefore, in the following sections, this literature review will handle the subject under three topics namely: theories of writing, writing strategies and writing self- efficacy.

A. Theories of writing

Writing is described by Susser (1994) as a cognitive process which is based on recurrence as the writer generates ideas through several stages of prewriting, writing, revising and editing till reaching the level of satisfaction (Susser, 1994). Moreover, Raimes (1991) stated three writing approaches which include: **genre approach, process approach and product approach**. The purpose of the **genre approach** is to focus on the role of the student as a reader. On the other hand, **the process approach** sheds light on the role of the student as a writer which means that writing is a learner centered task. Accordingly, the process approach is in line with the theory of constructivism which claims that each learner has control over the writing process. For the **product approach**, it focuses on the production of written texts from a linguistic point of view (Raimes, 1991).

B. Writing Strategies

Writing strategies involve eight main categories: planning, global planning, rehearsing, repeating, pre-reading, questioning, revising and editing. The first category of planning means the stage in which writers make a decision about what to write. The global planning category is about the overall organization of a text. Rehearsing category is about the writer' trial of ideas. In the repeating category, writers express their enthusiasm to continue writing. Through the pre-reading category, writers check what they have already written while within the category of questioning they categorize and rectify their ideas. The last two categories, revising and editing, writers are responsible for the overall product in terms of illustrating meaning and validating spelling and syntax (Arndt, 1987).

In addition, Ghufon (2014) conducted a study on the effect of clustering as a pre-writing strategy on improving students' skills while writing descriptive skills. The results of this study indicated that students' writing skills changed positively when the clustering strategy was implemented (Ghufon, 2014).

C. Writing Self- Efficacy

1. Definition of Self- Efficacy:

Self- efficacy is one of the Social Cognitive Theory's motifs, which is a paradigm of psychological behavior that aroused initially from Bandura's work (Bandura, 1977). According to the Social Cognitive Theory, people's behavior is influenced by their social factors as well as the environmental factors (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008).

Writing self- efficacy can be defined as the students' confidence in their abilities to accomplish an English writing task in a successful manner; the task includes correct grammatical structure of sentences, correct punctuation and good composition (Bandura, 1994).

2. Sources of Writing Self Efficacy

There is a variety of self- efficacy sources that influence an individual's performance in a certain task. The first source of self -efficacy releases from the individual's excellent performance in a difficult task which has an influence on increasing self- efficacy (Pajares, 2003). The second source of self- efficacy is gained from the vicarious experiences, which means the observation of others' performance in a certain task and the realization that they have performed in a better manner than others do (Magogwe, Ramoroka & Mogana- Monyepi, 2015). The third source of self-efficacy is acquired from the

social persuasion which is the convincing comments received from others; positive comments increase self- efficacy while negative comments decrease it (Bandura, 1977). The fourth source of self-efficacy is the effect of physiological states such as anxiety.

Writing self- efficacy can be defined as the students' confidence in their ability to succeed in performing an English writing task such as good composition, correct punctuation and correct grammatical creation of written samples (Hashemnejad, Zoghi & Amini, 2014).

Early studies have investigated the relationship between writing strategies and writing self- efficacy and their influence on the process of writing. In this realm, a study was conducted on the effects of the use of writing process on the students' performance in writing. By using the content analyzing procedure, the results revealed that studying writing by implementing the writing process allows students to perform better than studying according to the traditional method (Wahdan & Buroghain, 2018).

In addition, a study investigated the relationship between writing strategies, writing apprehension and writing achievement within the Saudi context (Al Asmari, 2013). In this study, the participants were asked to complete a writing strategies inventory and a writing anxiety inventory. The results showed that the rate of anxiety influenced students' performance since students with a low rate of anxiety performed better than the others.

Within the Turkish EFL context, a study was done on the self- efficacy in English writing (Bektaş, 2020). Through using the foreign language writing self-efficacy scale, the study revealed that students' writing self- efficacy is related to their perceived level of language proficiency. This result is in contradiction with the results of a prior study which had also been done within the Turkish context (Tilfarlioglu & Cinkara, 2009). The study concluded that there are certain differences between pre- intermediate and upper- intermediate students in terms of their self- efficacy levels. It was found that students' levels of self- efficacy increased as their levels of language proficiency increased.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The questions that would be discussed in this paper are the following:

1. Which writing self- efficacy strategies are commonly used among the Turkish EFL learners?
2. How does teaching clustering prewriting strategies influence the students' generation of ideas in their written texts?
3. What challenges do learners face to become more efficacious in writing essays?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

40 learners participated in this study and they were randomly selected from Istanbul Aydin University Preparatory School in Turkey. Accordingly, the experimental group included 20 students and the control group included 20 students. Furthermore, the students' English language proficiency level is A2 which is considered as an elementary level according to the Common European Framework for Languages.

B. Instruments

1. Writing Self- Efficacy Scale

A scale of Writing Self – Efficacy was used to grade the students' levels of self- efficacy and to distinguish their confidence in their writing abilities. The Writing Self- Efficacy scale was developed by Dilek Yavuz Erkan (2013). It includes 21 items; and each item is graded according to four- points Likert type scale (4.I do it very well, 3.I do it well, 2.I do not do it well and 1. I do not do it). Therefore, the higher the total scores were, the higher the writing self- efficacy possessed by the participants was. According to Erkan & Saban (2011), it is stated that “The scale was found to be Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Erkan & Saban, 2011:174).

2. Students' Written Essays

In order to get in depth into the research's topic and collect more thorough data, the second phase of the research was essays writing. Therefore, students in the experimental and control groups were asked to write cause and effect essays.

The purpose behind choosing the cause and effect essays is that it was the students' final assignment during the course of the third track, so they had the chance to work on their essays, and practice what they were taught through the course. According to Hall and Axelrod (2014), examining students' writing attitudes focuses on students' sensations towards writing and their sense of motivation to write; in addition, it examines their writing predilections (Hall & Axelrod, 2014).

C. Procedure

The first phase of the study was done through employing the Writing Efficacy Questionnaire, which was developed by Dilek Yavuz Erkan (Erkan, 2013). Accordingly, the questionnaire was distributed among the experimental and the control group students before and after the intervention. The purpose of this phase was to examine the difference in the performances between the experimental group which implemented only the prewriting strategy of clustering and the control group which was not asked to implement the clustering strategy.

The second phase of the study was the process of essays writing. Within this phase of the study, students of both groups were asked to write essays. Since students of both groups have been taught all of the prewriting strategies before the beginning of the research, the researcher asked the teacher of the experimental group to remind the students with the clustering prewriting strategy to implement it before they start writing. The teacher of the control group asked the students to write their essays without referring to the clustering strategy in particular. Accordingly, the essays were assessed based on a rubric designed by the researcher which was developed based on the information presented in the website of the (Centre For Enhanced Teaching and Learning).

V. FINDINGS

A. Findings from the Writing Self – Efficacy Scale:

This section represents the findings related to the first research question: *Which writing self- efficacy strategies are commonly used among the EFL learners?* The data of this part of the study was collected through the Writing Efficacy questionnaire developed by Erkan (2011). The questionnaire contains 21 questions which are divided into five subscales of content, design, unity, accuracy and punctuation. Furthermore, the questionnaire has a grading scale which is as follows: 1. I cannot do it at all, 2. I can't do it well, 3. I can do it, 4. I can do it very well. Accordingly, Table 1 shows the data revealed from the questionnaire during the pretest and posttest phases. Students of the experimental group had the highest levels of writing self- efficacy in terms of punctuation while students of the control group had the highest levels of self- efficacy in writing in terms of content which is related to the ability to generate ideas.

Table 1: Pre-test and Posttest Results of the Writing Efficacy Questionnaire

Subscale	Group	Pretest Results				Posttest Results			
		Mean	SD	T-test	P	Mean	SD	T-test	P
Content (Questions 6,9,12,17,21)	Experimental	2.72	0.80			2.96	0.82		
	Control	2.63	0.86	0.3414	0.7347	2.9	0.74	0.24	0.81
Design (Questions 2,5,8,11,16)	Experimental	2.62	0.71			3.04	0.82		
	Control	2.56	0.62	0.2846	0.7775	2.89	0.8	0.6	0.56
Unity (Questions 3,4,10,13,19)	Experimental	2.88	0.70			3.1	0.810		
	Control	2.83	0.71	0.2240	0.824	2.8	0.8	1.13	0.26
Accuracy (Questions 1,7,14,18)	Experimental	2.75	0.68			3.05	0.83		
	Control	2.68	0.70	0.2846	0.7775	2.72	0.76	1.3	0.20
Punctuation (Questions 15,20)	Experimental	3.3	0.72			3.27	0.816		
	Control	3.025	0.80	1.1402	0.2613	2.85	0.8	1.7	0.10

B. Findings from the Students' Written Essays:

The findings represented within this section clarify the answers for the second and third questions of the research. The first question "How does teaching clustering prewriting strategies influence the students' generation of ideas in their written texts?" The second question "What challenges do learners face to become more efficacious in writing essays?"

1. Findings from the Experimental Group Essays:**Table 2: The Assessment of the Experimental Group's Essays Based on the Rubric**

Skills	Acceptable 5-10	Target 11-15	Exemplary 16-20
Chronological Order	15 %	10%	75%
Language Use	15 %	35 %	50%
Grammar & Spelling	0.00	30 %	70%
Ideas Development	0.00	15%	85%
Use of Punctuation	5%	0.00	95%

Table 2 presents the data revealed from the assessment of the essays written by the students of the experimental group. The essays were assessed according to the rubric designed by the researcher. Based on the data presented in table 2, students of the experimental group had the highest level of performance in terms of the use of punctuation as 19 students out of 20 presented a correct use of punctuation. Therefore, the grades of this group of participants ranged between 16 and 20. On the other hand, they had a low ability in terms of the use of language since 7 students out of 20 tended to write structurally incorrect sentences. Accordingly, their grades ranged between 11 and 15 out of 20.

2. Findings from the Control Group Essays:**Table 3: The Assessment of the Control Group's Essays Based on the Rubric**

Skills	Acceptable 5-10	Target 11-15	Exemplary 16- 20
Chronological Order	25%	30%	45%
Language Use	15%	45%	40%
Grammar & Spelling	5%	55%	40%
Ideas Development	5%	20%	75%
Use of Punctuation	0.00	50%	50%

By considering the assessment of the control group's essays which is presented in Table 3, participants had the best performance in terms of ideas development since 15 students out of 20 showed an exemplary level for ideas development. In accordance, the grades of this group of participants ranged between 16 and 20. In the contrary side, students showed a low level of performance in terms of the use of grammar and spelling as 11 students out of 20 got an average grade between 11 and 15.

VI. DISCUSSION

Regarding the first research question, it was clarified that the commonly used writing self- efficacy strategies by EFL learners were the use of punctuation and content which is related to generation and development of ideas. This findings which are related to the use of punctuation contradict the finding represented by Etinurwati (2016) who found that Indonesian EFL learners had a weak ability in writing due to their mistakes represented in using punctuation marks (Etinurwati, 2016). For the findings related to content and ideas development, a study was conducted by Crossley, Muldner and McNmara (2016) who found that the generation of ideas is highly connected to the use of complex vocabulary items which enhance the quality of the written essays(Crossley, Muldner & McNamara, 2016). Therefore, the findings of this study support the findings of the current research.

For the second and third research questions, it was found that reminding the students of the experimental group about the clustering prewriting strategy influenced the students' generation and development of ideas as 17 students out of 20 performed ideally in the process of ideas development. On the other hand, 15 students from the control group performed perfectly in the development of ideas. This is to say that invoking the students of the experimental group about the use of the clustering prewriting strategy did not excel their performance in ideas generation and development while comparing

them with the control group. Accordingly, this research finding contradicts the findings of several previous studies done on the effect of the prewriting strategy of clustering. The first study done by Raharjo (2018) revealed that applying the strategy of clustering within the experimental group and the other prewriting strategies in the controlled group positively influenced the students writing achievement in the Cambridge Checkpoint test (Raharjo, 2018). Furthermore, Inal (2014) discussed the impact of the pre-writing strategy of clustering on Turkish students' writing achievement as well as their writing attitude. The results indicated that clustering has a positive impact on students' attitude in writing (Inal, 2014). Additionally, a study within the Indonesian EFL context revealed that applying the clustering strategy improved the students' performance while writing narrative essays (Adriati, 2013). Moreover, the findings of a study within the Ecuadorian context supported the positive influence of the clustering prewriting strategy on the students' writing performance (Olivres & Andres, 2019). Moreover, the findings from the essays' assessment revealed that students of the experimental group were less efficacious in language use which is related to unity. In relation to this finding, Fajri (2016) conducted a research regarding the assessment of unity, coherence and use of words in writing among Indonesian EFL learners. The study revealed that students' mistakes in unity were commonly related to the misuse of words because of their inference to their mother language (Fajri, 2016). However, the study of Anggraini (2019) contradicts the findings of this study regarding the area of unity and language use. The study concluded that most students had high levels of performance in terms of unity as they tended to state a clear thesis statement in addition to their precise use of connectors (Anggraini, 2019). Accordingly, 7 students out of 20 were at a moderate level in terms of using language as they tended to present inaccurate sentence structure that display noticeable confusion. Therefore, students of the experimental group need to strengthen their knowledge about the different types of sentences to avoid creating distracting sentences. For the students of the control group, 11 students out of 20 were less efficacious in the use of grammatical rules and spelling. Consequently, students presented sentences that lack subject verb agreement. Furthermore, they tended to misuse capitalizations and they presented various spelling errors within one paragraph. This finding is in line with the findings of Shweba and Mujiyanto's (2017) study which was conducted to examine the mistakes employed by first year students in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The study concluded that the most frequently occurred mistakes were capitalization errors while the least occurred mistakes were spelling errors (Shweba & Mujiyanto, 2017). Furthermore, Siddiqui (2015) concluded that the most significant errors occurred within the essays of the Saudi EFL learners were related to capitalization (Siddiqui, 2015). As a result, students of the control group need more instruction to enhance their ability to write error free sentences.

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