The Effect of Instruction on Writing Performance of Intermediate EFL Persian Students

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of instruction on writing performance of EFL Iranian learners. For this purpose, a group of 33 Iranian learners studying at an English language school located in Isfahan, Iran, took part in this research. They attended an L2 writing course for 16 sessions and were instructed on how to develop their skill of writing in English. Prior to the instruction, they were asked to write a pretest on the topic of "Immunity against Infectious Diseases ". The same topic was given to them at the end of the course as a posttest. The participants' writings were exactly typed as they were in Microsoft office 2003 and the number of words and spelling errors were counted. Using ESL composition profile, their performance on both pretest and posttest were scored. The participants' scores on each

subcategory of the ESL profile together with their quantitative scores were entered into the statistical program of SPSS 16. Using a matched t-test, the researchers investigated the mean differences between the pairs. The results indicated that the difference between the means is significant and the writing instruction has made a difference. The calculated effect size also showed a very large effect.

1. Introduction

Writing, regarded as the last, but not the least, of the four language macroskills acquired by learners, is generally regarded to be the most difficult skill among the four skills of language; and it is the skill which receives little, if any, treatment in language learning classes in Iran although its importance for academic work in higher education and academia is highly acknowledged by researchers in the field. However, teachers of language have often postponed the instruction of writing to the merit of the other three skills. With regard to the huge number of learners who rush to foreign language schools to acquire oral skills in their favorite foreign language, few learners are willing to invest time and money to improve their writing ability. One reason is that it actually takes much more time, in comparison with the other three skills, to develop writing ability to a desirable degree as it is a slow process which expands over years of hard work and continual practice. To compound the problem, the number of skilled teachers who can systematically approach the instruction of writing in L2 writing classes, especially at an advance level, is not large.

Furthermore, research has mainly investigated the value and effect of certain types of WCF (written corrective feedback) on learners' accuracy level in writing courses that put much emphasis on grammar correction, which has resulted in a controversy in recent years. Not so many studies, to our best of knowledge, have examined how qualitative aspects of learners' writing are influenced as a result of instruction. Therefore, this study aimed at probing how writing instruction influences participants' performance in writing quantitatively and qualitatively.

2. Literature Review

According to Chastain (1988), "writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language," (p 244). However, since the introduction of audio-lingual method, writing has received less importance and has been regarded as the least useful of the four language skills. Teachers all over the world have for long considered writing as an independent construct in foreign language courses and have often sacrificed it to spend more time on practicing the other three skills. However, writing helps: to provide a welcome change of pace during class period, to entail a profound knowledge of the grammar system, to serve as a medium for conscious attention to language forms, to naturally provide opportunities for more individual practice, to give a concrete result or product for students to examine and study which provides excellent practice in the use of monitor. Furthermore, the field has recently taken into account the plausibility of allying the macroskill of writing with other skills (Hinkel, 2006; Hirvela, 2004; Plakans, 2010).

A dichotomous distinction is made between writing as *product* and *process*. While the former emphasizes the "one-shot" effort completed in one sitting (Hink, 1985), the latter stresses the process of brainstorming and generating ideas, outlining and organizing them into a logical sequence, and finally putting them on paper. Teachers who held a product perspective, also known as "the traditional paradigm," (Hairston, 1982; cited in Kroll, 2001), toward writing insisted that the written product be the emulation of a model which: meet standards of rhetorical style, have a conventional organization, and be accurate in terms of grammar,

mechanics, and vocabulary use. In contrast, the proponents of process approach to writing state as their primary considerations the need to see learners as creators of language, to allow their intrinsic motives play a role, to put emphasis on the content and the message learners want to convey, to give student writers time to draft, write and rewrite, and to give them feedback, from both instructor and peers, throughout the composing process (Brown, 2001; Shih, 1986). Thus, writing is seen to be an interactive process between the perceived reader audience and the writer, an act of communication which occurs by way of the text (Olshtain; 2001). In short, the writing-as-process position underscores the necessity of redirecting the orientation toward composition, from product to process (Donovan & McClelland, 1980; Murray, 1980; Zamel, 1983). In this way, teachers can elevate the quality of learners' written communication skills by emphasizing that they should write thinking of the message they want to convey rather than grammar, that writing involves a continuous attempt to explore thoughts in the process of putting them on paper, and that it is unrealistic to try to produce a perfect paper right the first time (Elbow, 1981).

By the same token, researchers distinguish between *writing* and *composing*, the former referring to graphic representation of spoken language and the latter referring to a long process of thinking, drafting, writing, and revising which requires specialized skills. As a result, writing pedagogy, the outcome of this compositional nature of writing, aims at helping learners with generating and organizing ideas, putting them into a text using rhetorical devices, and revising and editing the text to clarify meaning (Brown, 2001). This continuous progress toward finding the most readable way to express the exact meaning includes, according to Chastain (1988), the processes of *composition* and *revision*, the processes which Elbow (1981) refers to as *creating* and *criticizing*. In fact, writing involves, Elbow avers, a sequential and interrelated process of creating and generating ideas and then criticizing and revising thoroughly what has been written. Therefore, learners should be encouraged to refrain from "the one-shot, all-night, last-gasp approach to composition writing," (Chastain, 1988; p. 256) and realize that writing and rewriting is a hands-on approach to help express ideas more clearly.

To put it in a nutshell, Brown (2001) asserts that, "writing is indeed a thinking process," (p. 336), which corroborates Elbow (1973) who similarly thinks of writing process, "not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message," (p. 16). Brown urges writing teachers to observe the balance between process and product, cautioning them not to take an extreme perspective. While he admits that the product is the ultimate goal, he also emphasizes that the process is the means to the end.

Researchers also make another dichotomy of writing activities. In the first place, writing is considered as a means of learning language forms or in Paulston and Bruder's (1976) words "writing as a service activity which serve to reinforce and consolidate the other language skills." (p. 204). Secondly, writing is thought of as a means of communicating a message. Paulston and Bruder (1976) state that this type of writing is customarily known as composition which they define as "writing beyond the sentence level, putting together words in a grammatically acceptable form and ordering the resultant sentences in an appropriate way," (p. 205).

In writing pedagogy, it is also necessary to distinguish between *real* and *display* writing. In real writing, the reader has no idea of what the answer would be and he/she actually asks for new information. Display writing, on the contrary, occurs when an instructor, maybe as the sole reader, asks for the display of the writer's knowledge, similar to what happens in most test situations (Brown, 2001). In short, real writing has an authenticity that is difficult to duplicate in the classroom. Writing in the real world usually incorporates words or phrases rather than complete sentences. Real writing done by native speakers also addresses a limited audience and is motivated and has a communicative purpose. No one in the real world writes so that the target audience would respond to its linguistic quality by grading it (Chastain, 1988).

As there is an increase in learners' knowledge of the L2 system, the focus in advanced composition courses must be on writing as communication or on conveying the message, in contrast to the practice sense at the elementary level which puts emphasis on writing as a means to learn L2 or to practice form. In other words, although the goal of writing on the linguistic level is to accurately manipulate grammatical forms, the goal on the communicative level is to adapt writer's goals to the reader's needs (Spack, 1984). Emphasizing that these two aspects of writing (service and communicative) are not mutually exclusive, Chastain (1988) urges teachers to include both types of writing in their classes. However, in order to provide variation according to individual abilities, teachers should make conscious efforts to balance types of writing with students' levels of skill (to learn about different classroom activities for each skill level see Magnan, 1985; cited in Chastain, 1988).

To produce writing that is linguistically accurate is, according to Hinkel (2002; 2004), one of the most notorious hurdles for ESL learners. However, the degree of linguistic accuracy expected of the learners has caused much controversy. If the teacher believes that the goal is to communicate ideas to a native speaker, he or she tolerates students' imperfect writing inasmuch as native speakers almost always understand faulty writings of second language learners. If, on the other hand, the teacher puts emphasis on linguistic accuracy in addition to communicating ideas, he or she regards grammatical correctness as an indispensable component of learners' writing ability. In choosing different standards of performance and an appropriate level of grammatical perfectibility, writing teachers, thus, have to take into account learners' giftedness, specialization, willingness to be corrected, learners' needs and goals, and their level of self-esteem.

If it is a bitter fact that it is a tedious task to express thoughts in writing, even in one's native language, teachers should do their best to primarily deal with the affective aspects of writing in ways that provide the most supportive and natural circumstances in which students' psychological and emotional attitudes to writing activities are considered. In this way, teachers most probably would be able to reduce learners' negative attitudes and their effects on learners' writing outcomes.

To manage the writing process and provide learners with more assistance, teachers should include a variety of classroom activities at the prewriting, writing, and post-writing phases (Chastain, 1988). The prewriting phase is mainly concerned with motivating students to write

about a topic which they find interesting and fit into their existing schemata (Hafernik, 1984). In the writing phase, the most difficult stage is getting started as Elbow (1981) clearly states, "much writing time is spent not writing: wondering, worrying, crossing out, having second thoughts," (p. 13-14; cited in Chastain, 1988). And finally teachers in the post-writing phase aim at providing learners with cognitive feedback to give them some hints on the quality of their writing as well as positive affective feedback to keep learners highly motivated.

The teaching of writing in L2 contexts has been influenced by the same trends and principles which undergirded the teaching of other skills. During the 1970s, it was assumed that the composing processes in both L1 and L2 writing were similar and writing teachers were often advised to adopt practices from L1 writing in their classes (Brown, 2001; Silva, 1993). However, in an investigation of second language writing, Silva (1993) discovered that writings in L2 were not so organized, accurate, effective and fluent as those in L1, necessitating to adopt appropriate approaches to the instruction and the assessment of L2 writing.

Kroll (2001) considers the writing assignments written by students and the methods of feedback given by the teacher as the two basic components of any writing course. Traditionally, learners received feedback on their written product through correcting the drilled grammar points and grading the product, an approach which did little to develop learners' writing ability, and which caused the frustrations of dedicated teachers, and the alienation of students (Donovan & McClelland, 1980). Consequently, researchers have tried to develop different writing techniques and strategies from a process approach to teaching writing (Brown, Cohen, & O'Day, 1991; Brown, 1991). Emphasizing that writing as a process is the byproduct of CLT, Brown (2001) considers CLT an appropriate place for process writing in which "the role of teacher must be one of facilitator and coach, not an authoritative director and arbiter," (p. 340). By the same token, Reid (1994) took issue with teachers who have retreated to a hands-off approach to commenting on student writing and asks them to enter the conversation of composing and drafting and to provide useful feedback which does not switch off learners' motivation. Thus, in order to make commentaries more effective and productive, teachers can, instead of posing questions, ask for specific information and offer constructive comments (Ferris, 1997).

Moreover, a teacher's writing lesson may not reflect learners' cultural positioning or their psychological reality (Lantolf, 2000; Maguire, 1999a; Maguire & Graves, 2001). It is in line with Ivanic (1998, 1994) who postulates that writing not only conveys information but also reveals something about the writer. Likewise, Maguire and Graves (2001) assert that, "languages reflect and refract speakers' and writers' evaluative orientations and mediate their social relationships and sympathetic understanding with the world," (p. 590). Therefore, to understand the complex nature of L2 writing in multilingual contexts and to adopt an appropriate approach to its instruction, it is necessary to hold a sociocultural-historical constructionist perspective to language that takes into account the interactional aspect of language and identity (Hall, 1995; Ochs, 1993).

Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson (2010) believe that the

writing ability of many matriculated university students remains underdeveloped although the ability to write accurately and clearly is considered to be an important upshot of higher education. Thus, different writing courses have aimed at fostering writing ability of learners. However, research on the influence of instruction on L2 writing has mainly focused on whether certain types of error feedback facilitate the accuracy of L2 learner writings. In this way, researchers have tried to examine the effects of error correction or written corrective feedback (WCF) on L2 writing and the issue of how to evaluate and provide feedback on learners' writings and on different linguistic categories has caused much controversy among researchers (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1995a, 1999, 2002, 2004; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Ferris, & Roberts, 2001; Frantzen, 1995; Kepner; 1991; Lee, 1997; Master, 1995; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 1996, 1999). While some researchers claim that WCF is ineffective (Truscott, 2004; 2007), others maintain that it fosters the improvement of some aspects of L2 writing in certain contexts (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson, 2010; Ferris, 2006; Sheen, 2007), which is in line with the growing evidence that negative feedback drawing learner attention to linguistic form plays a significant role in nurturing L2 development (Ayoun, 2001; Gu & Wang, 2008; Iwashita, 2003; McDonough, 2005). It is believed that the lack of similar gains in other contexts can be due to research methods (Ferris, 1999, 2004; Truscott, 1996, 2004), to instructional methodologies (Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson, 2010), and to neglecting to account for individual differences (Ferris, 2006; Guenette, 2007).

Above all, some researchers concluded that common approaches to teaching L2 writing which are based on models for L1 writing pedagogy seems to be inadequate for helping ESL learners to maximize the accuracy of their writing (Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson, 2010; Grabe, 2001; Hinkel, 2002, 2004). Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson (2010), for example, describe two problems of utilizing WCF in L2 writing contexts. First, utilizing WCF is, they state, overwhelming and time-consuming for the teacher and the student alike and second, "the learning cycle is seldom completed in that instruction and feedback often fail to result in observable improvements in the linguistic accuracy of the writing that ESL learners produce" (p.86). To overcome such problems and to help individual students to write more accurately, they propose their *dynamic WCF* which makes the task of error correction more manageable through limiting the length of the student writing.

Graham (2006) in a review of the writing literature corroborated the idea that there is a positive correlation between writing knowledge and writing performance. Graham stipulated that a writer's strategic behaviors, basic writing skills, knowledge, and motivation are instrumental to the development of learners' writing skill. Thus, if knowledge influences writing development, it is plausible, Graham suggests, to hypothesize that writing instruction aimed at enhancing learners' knowledge will improve their writing performance.

According to Saddler and Graham (2007), different kinds of knowledge including knowledge about the writing topic, audience, genre, and linguistic elements come to help writers as they

compose. Writing knowledge has also been one of the major elements of many writing models (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Kellog, 1996; cited in Saddler & Graham; 2007); however, few studies have explored the role of knowledge in writing development. Among the studies done, reference can be made to Fitzgerald and Teasley (1986); Fitzgerald and Markham (1987); Graham, MacArthur, and Schwartz (1995); Holliway and McCutchen (2004); Saddler and Graham (2007). All these studies confirmed the positive effect of instruction on some aspects of learners' writing.

Most of the studies done on WCF have been carried out in academic settings with advanced learners. It seems that the studies investigating the effect of instruction on the nature of learners' writing have been done in L1. According to Saddler and Graham, few studies have studied the role of knowledge in shaping writing development and evidence in this regard is relatively thin. Furthermore, few studies, to our best of knowledge, have attempted to investigate what aspects, qualitative and quantitative, of EFL student writing would be improved more as a result of classroom instruction in which the learners would become familiar with the writing process and the writing skills they need to express their ideas and intended meaning clearly and accurately. This study, hence, is an attempt to investigate:

RQ: How would L2 writing performance of EFL learners be improved as a result of classroom instruction aimed at enhancing learners' knowledge of writing?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The subjects of this study were 33 learners studying English in an English language school located in Isfahan, Iran. The participants had studied English for about 8 terms and were regarded to be at the upper intermediate level of English proficiency. They were both female and male students ranging from 19 to 30 years old, presumably insuring that they had enough of world knowledge in dealing with social issues.

3.2 Materials

The instruments used in this study were one pretest and posttest on the topic of "Immunity against Infectious Diseases", ESL composition profile, and the statistical program of SPSS 16.

3.3 Procedure

The participants of this study took part in an English writing course for 16 sessions, two sessions a week and each session lasting for an hour and a half. The course was intended to be an introduction to the practical writing process and to develop the writing skills adult language learners need to express their ideas clearly and concisely. Throughout the course, learners completed writing activities which enabled them to fully understand the nature of writing process and to actively participate in it. The fundamental elements of a good paragraph, such as topic sentence, central idea, body of the paragraph and its conclusion, were fully explained to them. Also the participants became quite familiar with how to organize multiparagraph compositions in order to prevent it from looking a patchwork or an

untidy mass of information. The importance of grammar, sentence construction, mechanics, diction, and choice of vocabulary were also emphasized.

In the first session, the participants took a writing pretest on the topic of "Immunity against Infectious Diseases". During the course, the learners wrote three other compositions on which they received some brief general comments. A few learners volunteered and their writings were analyzed in depth and detail in the classroom so as to provide learners with how a composition develops step by step. In the last session, the participants were again asked to write a composition on the same topic, that is, "Immunity against Infectious Diseases", as they did in the pretest but this time observing all the details they had become familiar with during the course.

3.4 Data Analysis

Both pretest and posttest compositions were scored. For the quantitative characteristics of compositions, the learners' writings on both pretest and posttest were exactly typed in Microsoft office word 2003 and the number of words, words per sentence, and spelling errors were calculated.

For the qualitative aspects of the learners' performance, the researchers, using the ESL Composition Profile, scored learners' pretest and posttest based on such criteria as content, organization, sentence construction, voice and mechanics. To ensure that scores on qualitative aspects were consistent and reliable, the researchers rescored learners' performance 3 weeks after the first round of scoring. We negotiated the scoring by means of discussion and resolving disagreement. Through a simple percentage agreement technique, the researchers calculated interrater reliability which was 84%.

The participants' performance on both pretest and posttest was analyzed using the statistical program of SPSS 16.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Having scored the learners' performance on both pretest and posttest, the researchers obtained the following results.

Table 1. Learners' Writing Scores

Name	Number of words pre	Number of sentences pre	W Per Sentence pre	Spelling Errors pre	Content pre	Organization pre	Sent-construction-use pre	Voice pre	Mechanics pre	Number of words post	Number of sentences post	W Per Sentence post	Spelling Errors post	Content post	Organization post	Sent-construction-use	Voice post	Mechanics post
A	67	6	11	4	15	12	13	4	11	91	7	13	5	18	14	15	6	17
B	61	4	15	5	16	13	14	3	15	112	10	11	7	21	17	17	5	17
C	100	6	17	6	18	12	12	4	17	119	8	15	7	19	13	14	8	19
D	100	7	14	3	18	16	15	3	18	130	7	19	4	16	14	12	3	20
E	103	5	21	2	16	10	15	4	16	116	7	17	2	17	12	17	3	18
F	60	4	15	3	17	13	15	6	20	174	8	22	6	25	19	20	10	24
G	80	5	16	4	19	13	12	3	15	96	7	14	1	19	15	14	3	17
H	110	6	18	10	21	15	13	3	15	110	8	14	6	23	20	17	5	23
I	87	7	12	6	14	12	10	2	11	84	9	9	7	17	12	16	3	19
J	137	8	17	3	18	13	16	7	16	123	9	14	3	22	18	19	4	20
K	85	8	11	4	20	14	17	8	21	143	12	12	6	25	20	19	9	23
L	82	7	12	5	17	13	14	4	18	139	10	14	5	18	16	14	9	20
M	121	9	13	8	16	13	14	2	12	157	11	14	8	19	19	15	4	18
N	59	6	10	2	11	10	11	2	12	71	6	12	5	14	14	13	3	13
O	52	2	26	3	11	11	14	3	13	149	11	14	6	21	18	16	7	19
P	50	2	25	5	12	10	12	2	12	146	10	15	8	22	18	17	6	21
Q	82	6	14	3	18	12	14	3	12	142	11	13	6	24	20	17	7	22
R	49	3	16	7	14	10	13	2	18	113	8	14	3	19	18	16	4	20
S	84	5	17	4	16	10	11	3	11	139	8	17	4	20	17	14	6	17
T	124	6	21	0	22	15	15	6	20	131	8	16	1	23	18	16	8	21
U	91	9	10	6	17	13	12	2	11	94	9	10	6	18	17	12	3	17
V	67	6	11	4	15	13	13	5	11	91	7	13	5	18	15	15	8	17
W	100	6	17	6	18	12	12	4	17	119	8	15	7	19	13	14	8	19
X	103	7	21	2	16	10	15	4	16	116	9	18	2	17	12	17	3	18
Y	61	5	16	4	18	14	16	7	21	175	9	23	6	25	19	20	10	24
Z	110	6	18	10	21	15	13	3	15	110	8	19	6	25	20	17	5	23
A2	85	8	11	5	20	14	17	10	21	143	13	12	6	25	20	19	9	23
B2	83	7	12	5	17	13	15	4	18	139	11	14	5	20	16	15	9	20
C2	59	8	11	3	12	11	12	3	13	72	6	15	5	16	16	15	5	15
D2	52	2	26	4	11	11	13	3	13	149	11	15	6	21	18	16	7	19
E2	82	5	14	3	18	12	14	3	13	142	11	13	6	24	20	17	8	22
F2	124	6	21	0	22	15	15	6	20	131	8	16	1	23	18	16	8	21
G2	62	5	16	6	18	15	16	5	17	114	12	13	9	22	18	18	6	18

As can be seen from Table 1, there is a difference between the participants' performance on both occasions, not only in terms of quantitative aspects but also in terms of qualitative ones.

As illustrated in Table 2. below, the range, minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of all variables on both pretest and posttest were calculated. Considering the standard deviation of all variables, it becomes clear that the participants were homogenous in their performance for almost all variables with the exception of the number of words used.

Table 2. Statistics of Writing Scores across Pretest and Posttest

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre.no.words	33	88.00	49.00	137.00	84.0000	24.16351
pre.no.sent	33	7.00	2.00	9.00	5.8182	1.84483
pre.w.per.sent	33	16.00	10.00	26.00	15.9091	4.54398
pre.spell.error	33	10.00	.00	10.00	4.3939	2.29046
pre.content	33	11.00	11.00	22.00	16.7273	3.05443
pre.organiz	33	6.00	10.00	16.00	12.5758	1.75054
pre.sent.const	33	7.00	10.00	17.00	13.7273	1.75486
pre.voice	33	8.00	2.00	10.00	4.0303	1.92816
pre.mechanic	33	10.00	11.00	21.00	15.4242	3.35438
post.no.words	33	104.00	71.00	175.00	1.2364E2	26.22596
post.no.sent	33	7.00	6.00	13.00	9.0000	1.83712
post.w.per.sent	33	14.00	9.00	23.00	14.6970	3.02577
post.spell.error	33	8.00	1.00	9.00	5.1515	2.06339
post.content	33	11.00	14.00	25.00	20.4545	3.10333
post.organiz	33	8.00	12.00	20.00	16.7879	2.60717
post.sent.cons	33	8.00	12.00	20.00	16.0303	2.06889
post.voice	33	7.00	3.00	10.00	6.1212	2.32859
post.mechanic	33	11.00	13.00	24.00	19.5152	2.62347
Valid N (listwise)	33					

A close examination of the two tables reveals that the participants have progressed minimally in the areas of vocabulary and sentence construction. This is perhaps because the improvement in these areas needs practicing over a much longer period of time and we should not expect radical improvement in learners' performance in short term courses. On the other hand, the participants' performance on the content, organization and mechanics has been improved much more, revealing the fact that instruction in these areas seems to be effective and help learners express themselves in writing much better.

Table 3 Shows the statistics of the participants' total qualitative (subjective) scores which were obtained according to ESL composition profile.

Table 3. Statistics of Total Qualitative Scores across Pretest and Posttest

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre.qualitative.total	33	36.00	46.00	82.00	62.4848	9.81109
post.qualitative.total	33	41.00	57.00	98.00	78.3333	11.39261
Valid N (listwise)	33					

According to Table 3, the mean of the total score of pretest was 62.48 and the mean of the total score of posttest was 78.33 and thus there is a significant difference between the means of learners' performance on pretest and posttest. Comparing the two sets of statistics generally and considering the mean of their total score for both pretest and posttest particularly, we can understand the participants have shown overall improvement in their performance.

4.2 Interpretive Statistics

As stated above, this study aimed at investigating what aspects of EFL students' writing performance would be influenced as a result of classroom instruction. Therefore, through using a matched t-test, the significance of the difference between pretest and posttest writing score means (Table 4) was investigated. It follows from the table that the difference between the means is significant for all pairs except Pair 3 and Pair 4. In other words, the reported significance levels in the table show that the writing instruction has made a difference. For Pair 4, the difference is significant only at .05 level. However, for Pair 3, the difference between the means is not significant at both .01 and .05 level.

In order to know how big the difference between the means was, the effect size (Eta) was calculated. The effect size shows the relative magnitude of the difference for all the pairs whose difference between the means was significant. As the reported Eta in Table 4 indicates, the calculated effect size for all pairs is more than 0.54, which shows, according to Cohen (1988), a very large effect. In other words, more than 54% of the variance in the writing scores can be explained by the variance in the writing instruction.

Table 4. Matched T-Test Analysis of Writing Score Means

		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Eta squared
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	pre.no.words - post.no.words	-3.96364E1	35.44787	6.17068	-52.20563	-27.06710	-6.423	32	.000	0.56
Pair 2	pre.no.sent - post.no.sent	-3.18182	2.62743	.45738	-4.11347	-2.25017	-6.957	32	.000	0.60
Pair 3	pre.w.per.sent - post.w.per.sent	1.21212	4.44239	.77332	-.36308	2.78732	1.567	32	.127	
Pair 4	pre.spell.error - post.spell.error	-.75758	2.01603	.35095	-1.47243	-.04272	-2.159	32	.038	
Pair 5	pre.content - post.content	-3.72727	2.93974	.51174	-4.76966	-2.68489	-7.283	32	.000	0.62
Pair 6	pre.organiz - post.organiz	-4.21212	2.53424	.44115	-5.11072	-3.31352	-9.548	32	.000	0.74
Pair 7	pre.sent.const - post.sent.cons	-2.30303	1.68606	.29351	-2.90088	-1.70518	-7.847	32	.000	0.65
Pair 8	pre.voice - post.voice	-2.09091	1.95837	.34091	-2.78532	-1.39650	-6.133	32	.000	0.54
Pair 9	pre.mechanic - post.mechanic	-4.09091	2.79915	.48727	-5.08344	-3.09837	-8.396	32	.000	0.68
Pair 10	pre.quali.total - post.quali.total	-1.58485E1	9.39788	1.63596	-19.18083	-12.51614	-9.688	32	.000	0.74

5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study by and large confirms that writing knowledge correlates with writing performance and that the instruction could influence and improve the learners' performance in general and benefit learners a lot to better cope with their problems while writing in English. The improvement is visible in all areas except spelling errors and the length of sentence which need practicing much more. Regardless of the learners' increased strength in using grammatical structures and appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas in a clear content with more organized format, instruction on macro skill of writing needs to be geared towards the importance of spelling and how sentences are combined to move from simple sentences to compound, complex, and in a more advance level to compound-complex ones.

The results of this study corroborate the findings of Saddler and Graham (2007) that skilled writers are more knowledgeable than less skilled writers as writing knowledge serves as a

catalyst for writing development. This is in line with Graham' s (2006) review of literature that basic writing knowledge is instrumental to writing development. The findings are also consistent with previous research that good writers enjoy a more refined and elaborate conception of writing than poor writers (Graham, Schwartz, & MacArthur, 1993), and that skilled writers have more strategies at their disposal to perform different writing processes (Englert, Raphael, Fear, & Anderson, 1988).

Also, the results provide support for the argument that instruction designed to enhance writers' knowledge improves learners' writing performance (Graham, 2006). There are several other studies which confirm that instruction in writing positively correlates with writing performance, for example, Fitzgerald and Teasley (1986); Fitzgerald and Markham (1987); Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, (1995); (Holliway & McCutchen, 2004); and Couzijn, (1999). The findings also concur with Saddler and Graham's (2007) study that it is necessary to promote young writers' knowledge of writing, especially those that are less skilled. To do this one way is directly teaching specific kinds of writing knowledge (Fitzgerald & Teasley, 1986), which needs to be a part of a larger program designed to promote writing skills (Graham, 2006).

This study may be significant for teachers and syllabus designers as they should pay more attention to the instruction of writing skill and include much more practice on writing in their courses and textbook materials. It may also be significant in that it can provide useful guidelines as how a focused L2 writing course should be organized and what areas should be emphasized more in order to better develop learners' writing ability. Teachers should make learners aware of the importance of writing for their academic work and give more exercises on this area.

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