

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE INTERACTION

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Abstract. *This paper discusses what online tool is the most effective for developing students writing skills and the method of observation is used to define which parameters in writing are the highest and the lowest. The results revealed that the most comfortable instrument for students is Word document; observation showed that the grammar and developing idea are the lowest parameters.*

Introduction. Writing is one of the basic skills used and fostered in educating students. In this respect, it can be employed both as a means of learning and of persuading others [1]. A text may need rewriting again and again to reach the intended writing level [2]. This indicates that writing is a cognitive and metacognitive process in the study we used metacognitive strategy to teach writing to students in terms of communicative teaching method and such activities as planning, drafting, monitoring, evaluating and revising were used at the lessons.

Writing has always been seen as an important skill in English language acquisition. This importance is due to the fact that it reinforces grammatical structures and vocabulary that educators strive to teach their students. It is the area in which learners need to be offered adequate time to develop their writing skill, therefore more time should be devoted to it in classrooms containing ESLs so that they will be prepared to effectively communicate in real life as well as academic situations [3]. Exposing them to the writing process itself through various venues is an excellent way to reach this goal. Additionally, writing skills can be developed when the learners' interests are acknowledged and when they are given frequent opportunities to actually practice writing [3].

Reaching a skillful degree of literacy is a general goal of all students in the classroom. This aim turns out to be even more challenging for English language learners in terms of developing writing skills. Writing is considered to be one of the most necessary skills as the world has become so text-oriented. Due to the pandemic situation, the way the lessons are conducted was changed and online writing lessons have become a habitual part of the education process.

The purpose of this study is to provide research investigating the effectiveness of online and offline lessons to figure out which way of interaction is the most effective from students' and teachers' point of view. During the start of the year in September 2020, it was noticed that the writing skills quality has decreased significantly due to the online regime in the third and fourth terms of the previous year. It was decided to find out what was the reason of it and to find some solutions to increase the quality of students' writing skills.

Literature review. Recently some articles have been released touching upon the importance of developing writing skills in secondary education. In 2019 Erkan Cer an assistant professor in Amasya University has conducted a research studying how metacognitive strategy of teaching writing increases the efficiency of writing tasks. In our research we also used the metacognitive strategy such as planning, monitoring, controlling, evaluating, self-regulating. [4]

In 2015 Chinese American Educational Research and Development Association has conducted a research "Effective strategies for improving writing skills of English language learners". [5] The authors of this article are Jenny Cole and Jay Feng, in their article state that one of the effective strategies for writing development is e-journal writing as it reminds notebook writing. "Using e-journals, much like a composition notebook, gives students a safe venue for expressing their ideas without having to worry about handwriting or spelling mistakes." [5] So having considered these and other recourses, it can be concluded that metacognitive strategy was also used in this research. However, there were no researches found concerning the effectiveness of the platforms of online writing lessons.

The aim of the study is to compare the results of writing works done by students in online and offline modes, figure out which of the regimes is the most effective for developing writing skills and find out the reasons of ineffective lessons.

The relevance of the topic. In September 2020, due to the shift in usual lessons held in the classrooms and switching to offline learning, it has been noticed that the writing skill quality, unlike other skills, has experienced a slight improvement, despite the cutdown in lessons time and summer break. I wondered if students really considered writing online as more effective and fruitful.

The question of the research. What is more effective in developing writing skills: offline or online writing lessons?

Methodology and participants. In the study both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, the quantitative one was implemented in the form of several questionnaires and qualitative one was used in the form of observation. The students' performance was observed among 10 graders during the first, second and third terms of the academic year 2020-2021. With the aim of knowing students' attitudes toward online and offline writing lesson a questionnaire was developed. The first survey was conducted among student via Microsoft Forms and the second one was conducted among teachers so as to know their opinion about students' performance in online setting. The answers of students and teachers were analyzed.

The observation was held from September to February, the quality of students' writing works online was compared to the quality of essays conducted offline. The writing works were measured by several criteria. They are the ones that are usually used while writing assessment: topical vocabulary, development of ideas, grammar structures, linking devices and style of the writing. The highest point students could get for each criterions was 6.

The results of the survey and analysis.

During the period from September to December, the essays written in different online platforms were analyzed and compared. The students' writings were assessed by five criteria such as: style, linking devices, lexical resources, ideas development, and grammatical range. The maximum point students could receive for the writing was six. The average mark students scored in three different platforms were compared and contrasted.

Table1. The results of the offline lesson observation

| | Style | Linking | LR | Ideas | GR |
|----------------------|-------|---------|-----|-------|-----|
| PADLET | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| MIRO | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 3.8 |
| WORD DOCUMENT | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.1 |

According to the results we received in the process of the survey, the platform with the least effective outcome was Padlet with the minimum point of 3.4 in ideas development. As it can be observed from the table, the area students had the lowest marks in Padlet, MIRO and Word were idea development which encountered 3.4, 3.6 and 3.8 respectively. However, it still had a rise of 0.4. The difference in quality among the online tools varied between 0.1 and 0.5. The area students have improved the most was grammatical range with a total growth of 0.5 starting from 3.6 in Padlet and finishing at 4.1 in Word document.

Survey results. The survey conducted among students of 10 grades had 6 questions. There were the following questions in the questionnaire:

1. **Question 1:** What was comfortable for you to use while writing essays online?
2. **Question 2:** How comfortable was using the online interactive board MIRO?
3. **Question 3:** Do you think online interactive boards (MIRO, PADLET) are effective for writing skill development?
4. **Question 4:** Why is word format so convenient?
5. **Question 5:** Do you think offline writing lessons are more effective for writing skill development?
6. **Question 6:** What is more effective: online or offline writing lessons?

The results of the questionnaire can be seen in the diagrams below:

The majority of students, when asked about the comfortable platform to use, answered that Microsoft Word was the most comfortable tool for them. The slice of Microsoft Word had significant 85% percent. Online interactive board MIRO and photo of a copy book had modest 10% and 5% respectively. Despite the opinion among teachers that Padlet is user-friendly and easy to use, it had no preference among 10 graders.

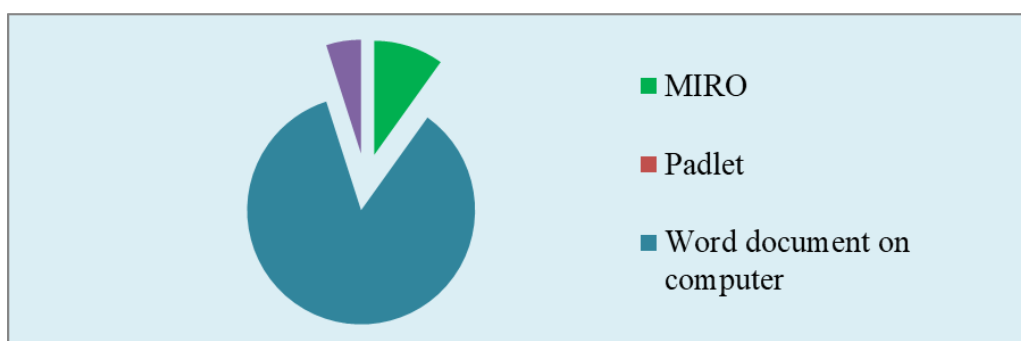


Diagram 1. What was comfortable for you to use while writing essays online?

Also, the students were asked if they thought that online interactive boards like MIRO and Padlet were effective for writing development. For this questions there was no definite answer, as almost a quarter of students answered “yes” (24%), nearly one fifth disagreed (19%) and the majority answered indefinitely “in some cases” which was 57 percent. However, the survey, does not clarify in what cases it is effective.

One of the most important questions in the survey was the opinion of students about what mode of writing lesson is more effective. It was expected that a massive majority would prefer offline writing lessons however in reality a third of students considered online lessons to be more effective than the offline ones (33%). Still, a prevailing number of respondents think that offline writing is more resultative.

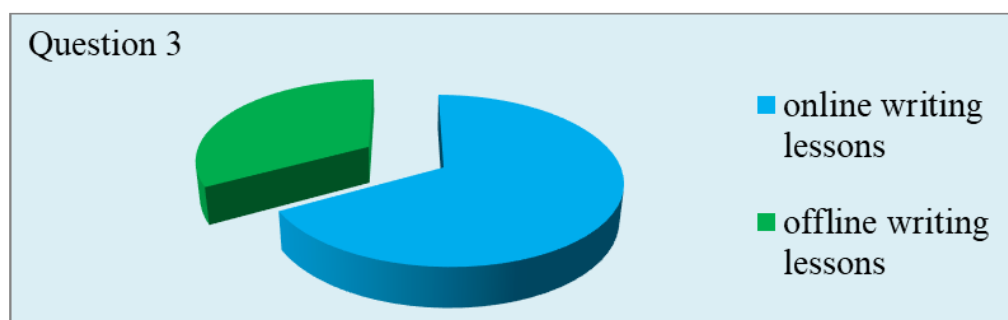


Diagram 2. The results of the questionnaire

So as to compare the quality of writing works online and offline, we compared the essays written in the 1st and 2nd terms with the essays written in the third term of the year (January, February and March). The essays were assessed by usual criteria such as: style, linking devices, lexical recourse, idea development and grammatical range. The highest point for each section was 6. After that the arithmetic average for each of the criteria was calculated. The exponents of online and offline writing were then compared and analyzed. After switching the lessons to offline mode, it was decided to analyze the quality of writings at face-to-face lessons. The students had several pieces of writing to do as a part of their general curriculum and in terms of preparation to external examination. Several problem/solutions essays and three types of reports were written by them during the 3rd term. Then we compared the results of offline and offline writings.

Table 2. The comparative table of online and offline observation

| | Style | Linking | LR | Ideas | GR |
|------------------------|-------|---------|-----|-------|-----|
| PADLET | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| MIRO | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 3.8 |
| WORD | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.1 |
| Offline writing | 5.0 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.3 |

As it can be seen from the table the essays done in the classroom have higher results in all the skills mentioned. However, while the development of ideas remained the lowest level, grammatical accuracy has become one of the lowest ones.

Conclusions. If students are to be successful in school, at work, and in their personal lives, they must learn to write. This requires that they receive adequate practice and instruction in writing, as this complex skill does not develop naturally. A basic goal of schooling then is to teach students to use this versatile tool effectively and flexibly. Many schools across the world do not achieve this objective, as an inordinate number of students do not acquire the writing skills needed for success in society today. One reason why this is the case is that many students do not receive the writing instruction they need or deserve. The investigation conducted revealed the weakest points in developing writing which is grammar skills and developing of the ideas. So, the further research will be concentrated on developing the above mentioned skills.

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