



## USING PEER TUTORING STRATEGY IN DEVELOPING IRAQI EFL STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN COMPOSITION WRITING SKILL

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**Abstract.** The present study aims to investigate empirically the effect of Peer Tutoring Strategy in developing Iraqi EFL Students' performance in composition writing skill.

To achieve the aim of the current study, a two-month experiment was performed using pre-test, post-test, control and experimental group design. The research population comprises the fifth-year students in the academic year (2019-2020) at Al-Faws preparatory school for girls in Baghdad. The new Google Classroom (GC), research site and the Telegram App. Were mentioned in this study. Two sections of Al-Faws preparatory school were randomly selected to represent the study sample. One of these groups, with (40) students, was randomly allocated as the experimental group using the Peer Tutoring Strategy and the other with (38) students as the control group using the traditional method. In the first course exam of the same academic year, both classes were compared in terms of the age of students (measured in months), the educational level of parents and the scores of students in English. It is worth remembering that the researcher herself taught the same topic to both classes. Using a T-test formula for two separate samples, the responses of the testees were statistically analyzed after conducting the tests (pre- and post-test). Many statistical methods such as Pearson Coefficient, One Sample T- Check and Chi-square were mentioned. وفي

**Keywords:** Peer Tutoring; Strategy; Iraqi EFL Students; Performance; Composition ;Writing Skill.

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### INTRODUCTION

English as an international language is used all over the world for communication. It has become the first foreign language taught in Iraq from elementary to university. A learner is required to master the four basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing while learning English. Such skills are divided into two types: receptive and productive. The receptive skills are listening and reading, while speaking and writing are productive ones. Writing is a process whereby emotions, ideas and feelings are translated into written forms. This means that writing is one of the significant skills students need to learn. In general, the purpose of writing is to communicate and provide information indirectly to others, to explain what something is and how or why it happens, to convince a reader to act on the basis of what the author has written, to express his thoughts, ideas and feelings about a particular subject. The students' writing aim is to communicate their ideas on a particular subject, expand their knowledge of vocabulary, and write a composition properly. Writing is the most critical talent for learners of the foreign language (FL) to master as the skills involved are extremely complex. FL learners need to pay attention to higher-level preparation and organizational skills as well as lower-level grammar, punctuation and word choice skills. The challenge is more pronounced when their one-skill level is poor and they lack the ability to measure their own success (Stylianides & Childs, 2019:28). Students often struggle with writing because they do not know the writing process and the techniques and skills to help them write well.

They often focus on the written product rather than engaging in the writing process. Reviewing related literature on composition writing and evidence-based classroom practice, the researcher suggests that the compositional teaching techniques and methods used to evaluate students' writing in Iraqi secondary schools are neither effective nor appropriate to develop compositional writing skills (Chi lap, et al . , 2020). What was adopted in the previous curriculum (The New English Courses for Iraq Series) is that teachers follow the grammar-based language approach of the textbooks rather than the development of the writing process

as a whole. The latest curriculum focuses on improving language fluency within the communicative method (Kareem, et al. , 2019). The researcher attempts to use the peer to peer technique as one of the communicative approach principles. A brief look at this series reveals that teaching and evaluation of composition writing focus on the mastery of discrete-point language objects and linguistic precision (Ali, et al., 2019). This is clearly seen in both teachings using the types of activities presented to students including gap filling, matching, and open-ended questions that require a specific response

This is evident in the exercises that are described in some lessons. It could have been much better if Iraqi students had engaged in techniques that would help them interact freely in life-like situations. This technique centers on the composition of the 'learner' to 'produce.' The composition will cover all writing skills from higher to lower skills. One of such ways is to use peer tutoring techniques to teach and assess the ability of learners to write a composition of Iraqi English as a foreign language (EFL) (Zahraa, et al. , 2019). One of the earliest approaches of teaching writing is a product-based approach, in which, as stated by Tangpermpoon (2008:2), students will begin composing and correcting from pre-writing. What is emphasized in this approach is raising awareness amongst students, especially in grammatical structures. According to Nunan (1999), the emphasis is on the final product in this approach, which should be a coherent, error-free text, and students should initiate, copy and turn models given by textbooks or teachers. Anyway, language teachers and educators will disagree with the observation that the FL writing instruction has essentially shifted from having a static product orientation to one that emphasizes writing as a fluid, non-linear, recursive operation. The writing process involves, as a mental process, a series of steps that include several drafts: pre-writing, writing, editing, and rewriting. It underlies the act of writing as a whole, rather than merely the product. The writing process is "while writers move their thoughts back and forth between stages and components, they always return to and redefine their higher objectives" (Barnett, 1989:35).

Hairston (1982: 84) states that, in writing teaching, if teachers want to influence what students have written (i.e., the product), they need to help their students understand how this product came into being and why it took such a form. They must try to stress what happens during the writing act. The significance of the issue is that it addresses writing skills that are considered one of the most important skills that EFL learners need. EFL teachers and textbook designers in Iraq do not pay attention to this skill. This study may hope that some students would find a solution to this problem and difficulties in writing their composition.

### **Peer tutoring**

Guler (2018:277) describes peer tutoring as "a class of practices and strategies employing peers as one to one teachers in order to provide individualized guidance, practice, repetition and principle clarity". Guler ( ibid) claims that the word "peer tutoring" is used for various tutoring activities but often applies to students who typically study or learn in pairs to support one another. Peer tutoring typically leads to a deeper understanding of academic principles, but when students of different ability levels collaborate with each other, it becomes more successful (JitendraKunsch & Sood, 2007:236). They (ibid) add that peer tutoring typically applies to the students studying or learning in pairs to support each other. It leads to a deeper understanding of an academic concept and it is more successful when the students of various levels of skill work together. Cooperative learning techniques include peer tutoring. The peer tutoring approach is explicitly designed to influence the pattern of interaction between students. In traditional classroom, the structure is developed as an alternative technique. Peer learning is one of several successfully implemented strategies in the classroom. When we think of a traditional classroom, we have in mind the picture of a teacher facing a class of students.

The teachers direct most of the instructions at the classroom. The image is primarily centered on the teacher. Some efforts to break this tradition are made through the

implementation of group activities, individual activities and projects. However, teachers do both the planning and instructions. Peer tutoring (PT) is the only way that really changes this trend (Ullah et al , 2018). In a classroom setting, as training passes into the hands of learners, the picture changes a great deal. There is no question that the traditional classroom has its own advantages, but a need to bring about a shift is felt, particularly one that would shift the emphasis from teacher to learner and teaching to learning. This trend is in line with the current education studies. PT has triggered some significant changes in teaching in the classroom. .

- The learners are engaged more actively in the process.
- Apprentices are offered the chance to become information providers.
- They are given a chance to develop new teaching skills .
- They experience the constant challenges and difficulties that teachers face.
- They take on greater responsibility
- They know that teaching is in line with learning .
- PT results in pupils becoming independent.
- They understand that teachers will learn from the students.

Pupils are engaged in the domains of cognition, social and emotional behavior. It offers active, interactive, and individualized learning options. PT provides insight to study styles. PT is all inclusive where anyone can take part. Ullah et al (2018: 2) claim that peer tutoring helps students improve their ' skills in organizing and preparing learning events, engaging in collaborations, giving and receiving feedback to their activities and eventually assessing their own learning. It can be mentioned that the conventional classroom needs to bring about a drastic shift. PT succeeds in bringing about that change. Though PT cannot replace traditional teaching systems, it breathes a breeze of refreshing a change that proves inspiring learners and plays a different role.

### **COMPOSITION WRITING AND PEER TUTORING**

Thoughts and emotions are conveyed in written form through composition. Pupils get mastery over language because of the practice of written composition. They can use vocabulary items and structures in their writing. They attain the mastery of writing and spelling. Written composition has the pupils acquainted with the punctuation marks. Pupils practice in the construction of paragraphs and arrange the ideas in a logical sequence. Written composition is final. Several years later, it can be read in every part of the world. It is an interdisciplinary shared responsibility (Husin & Abdul - Azis, 2004).

The general aims of teaching how to write composition are as follows:

- Enabling students to express themselves systematically and in an organized manner.
- Helping them to develop their writing skills for different purposes.
- Encouraging them to objectively present the facts and ideas.
- Logically enabling them to present the facts and ideas.
- Developing their communication skills.

Even today in this age which witnessed the occurrence of emails and social media, writing is an important skill. One is expected to write in business or social life, in profession or occupation. One must perform a range of writing activities, such as filling out forms, rating documents, writing papers, writing project proposals, writing summaries, circulars, directions, notes, texts, and emails.

All of these can be controlled if students are effectively qualified in certain types of writing such as poetry, short stories, novels, plays and engage in literary genre fiction. This is not possible without the basic composition-writing skill.

## Composition writing

Writing is the most advanced, and also the hardest, language skill. It is difficult to launch writing unless the remaining three language skills are mastered. Writing includes a number of sub-skills and it is necessary to attend each sub-skill step by step before attempting to write the composition. Composition writing is an optional task for learners to carry out. Students always master the vocabulary by means of reading skills. One has to start on a blank page when writing. Teachers are unable to assign a subject and place the students on the blank page and expect good results. It is impossible to fill the blank page with nonsense. It requires time, practice, patience and determination to fill it with suitable meaningful words. (Stylianides & Childs, 2019:28).

Students cannot pull on, repeat, add examples and increase the bulk of the material without sacrificing with consistency. In order to lead the learners to the competent stage of independent learning, they must be directed in the process of writing initially. Students are given pictures or points in the early stages which act as prompts. Teachers talk with them about the given topics which must be appropriate for their ages. There are various compositional forms such as secretive, narrative, and reflective. At the primary level, concise compositions are appropriate. Gradually, we should add narrative subjects, accompanied by reflective ones. Compositions may also be biographical or autobiographical.

There is a general apprehension about composition writing in the students minds. They fear they can commit spelling or grammatical errors. These are on paper and the teachers mark out the red errors. There are, however, certain benefits over other language competences. For instance, one can make a mistake in speaking ability which cannot be removed. If the mistake is realized, one has to apologize. Speech is spontaneous and one does not get time to consider, to pick terms, alter, modify, cancel and rewrite. All these things, in fact, are possible (Husin & Abdul - Azis, 2004).

One has time to reflect, arrange the text, make adjustments, update, edit, take the opinion of somebody or, at times, rewrite the whole composition. The writing of compositions also needs much practice (Rahoomi,2019).

The students who write composition will learn to understand who will read the composition, for what reason, what their needs are and how they will benefit from it. In short, they have to learn to think from the viewpoint of the readers. Writing compositions involves a certain degree of flexibility, space and time. It is important to have an open environment which is in PT.

Although the subjects are allocated to teachers, a number of options can be offered. Students will debate and choose a subject among themselves. Students writing on the same topic can be grouped together, and they can select a tutor to lead them from their group. Not every student can have all of the topic knowledge. The tutor can generate a healthy discussion, and a peer tutoring arrangement can share information or ideas about the topic. Compared to a normal classroom, the environment is informal so it does not create any kind of pressure on students' minds. They openly approach the tutors, should they have any difficulties. Many students face a block in composition writing, and are unable to continue (Stylianides & Childs, 2019:28).

Definitely tutors will help them conquer the barrier, not teachers. The block is more psychological than technical; therefore in such cases peers can do a better job. Peer tutors will help the students make the initial rough outline of the composition, making it easier for the students to do more tasks. Tutors may have the essential function of providing feedback. Students can exchange their compositions, review their peer-written compositions, point out errors, correct spellings and grammatical errors and give a general opinion. They will make suggestions, as well. Can student change the compositions as necessary? This peer review practice will considerably enhance the quality of the compositions. It serves as a first filter, until the teacher enters the composition.



The teachers have an almost completed product and don't have to waste a lot of time fixing the fundamentals. The designated tutors may also test and confirm the students making the suggested changes, reducing more teacher load. Writers need to learn how to explore tools, collect information, formulate a thesis, organize support, construct arguments, quote proof, develop effective voice, review ideas, and edit for correctness. We may discreetly teach each of these skills but writers must internalize them in order to become second nature. Peers or cross-age tutors can be of assistance to peers at each stage of the process.

### **The Relation between Classroom Teaching and E-learning**

Upon implementation of e-learning in the classroom, the relationship between students and teachers will change considerably. This will not be accepted by many teachers in the future. But those, with foresight and scientific spirit, will realize e-learning's significant value in English teaching. Language learning is a demanding and dynamic activity. In order for students to acquire the required skills in a foreign language, their institutions need to spend time ,energy and enormous resources to match various learning styles .In order to be cost-effective, language-teaching institutions are striving to provide intensive instruction in foreign language ( FL) to reduce the time needed to learn the target language (Ying (2005).

This explains the keen interest in combining different methodologies with learning technologies that promise to motivate learners and respond to their needs effectively. In fact, technology utilization in learning environments has generally presented itself as a necessity for continued lifelong learning with research suggesting that institutions that are lagging behind in technology integration "Will be unable to meet the needs of knowledge-based communities and hence will not survive the change in the educational paradigm" (O'Neill, Singh, & Donoghue, 2004,p. 320). E-learning or learning technology has become a buzz in the education industry and today it addresses the needs of modern-day learners. Infusing innovations in classroom learning have added stimulation and increased the engagement of learners within the classroom.

E-learning has an extensive presence in nearly every sector. Language teaching is one of those fields where technology has taken over and improved the learning methods. Take in English, for example. Today teachers use various techniques, such as film clippings, advertisements, commentaries, drama and more. Not only does it make the session much more interesting than the teaching of the old book style, it also keeps the learner attentive throughout the course. The perspective of distance learning has also changed with e-learning. The modernization enables the students to be as involved as anyone physically present. E-learning will transform student-centered pedagogical approaches, concentrating on cultivating linguistic awareness and improving listening comprehension and expressive capacity to allow students to master English as quickly as possible. Language learning is not based on grammar and invalid exercises but on the daily practice of the student herself (Ying ,2005).

That is the Pedagogical Technique for e-learning. Students are required to write down the material after listening , reading, translating, and speaking to describe the event itself, and their own feelings, comments, etc. Write a review for every single content. In this way, students can develop their English-language information output capability. Students input English information by listening to the sound, reading the text, understanding the material by translating, and then, by speaking and writing, giving out information. If all of these items were done, the entire learning process of a language could be considered complete (Husin & Abdul - Azis, 2004).

Ying (2005) points out that "Language cannot be mastered if there is only language input but no language output". In addition, the use of communication tools such as cell phones, tablets , and laptops to access the internet is widely used as a way of indirectly linking the teaching and learning process. Every university course normally creates a 'gang' in WhatsApp or Telegram. Students and lecturers are often engaged through this medium on a subject related to

the course. Thus, informal learning has occurred, indirectly. The Telegram framework has been chosen in this study to act as a mobile learning platform because of the conveniences it provides (Abbas et al.,2018) (O'Neill, Singh, & Donoghue, 2004,p. 320)..

For example, the Android users can easily download the application from the Play Store for free. Not only is Telegram easy to manage, it can also provide users with the ability to access it from any kind of communication devices such as smart phones, tablets and computers. They may also upload documents , photos, audio and videos (Hammad, et al.,2018).

Teachers serve as facilitators in e-learning programs while students should be completely engaged in the teaching and learning process. Instructors will initiate the learning process by introducing an open question that is followed by spontaneous and guided responses from the students. Students will provide statements based on their viewpoint before new knowledge is created (Ying ,2005).

The learning method is consistent with the constructivism philosophy in which the students gain and develop their own knowledge. Knowledge is not easily distributed by individuals or teachers in this way (Husin & Abdul - Azis, 2004). Constructivist approach often aims to shift passive to active learning climate, in which students are subjected to open-ended questions that allow them to think at higher levels.

### **Methodology**

The researcher follows these measures in order to achieve the goal of the study and prove his hypothesis:(1) The choice of experimental design, depending on the nature of the study, (2) the selection of population and sample,(3) the sampling, (4) the monitoring of external variables,(5) the design of the tests,(6) the administration of the experiment, and (7) the statistical analysis of the results.

### **The population**

In the academic year 2019-2020, the population is the 5th grade students in secondary schools for girls in the governorate of Baghdad. The present study sample comprises (81) students of AL-faws Preparatory School for girls. Such a sample is divided into two categories. Group 1 (A) which is a control group. It consists of (39) students ,while the second group (B) consists of (42) students as the experimental one. The sample is decreased after exclusion to (78) students, (38) to the control group and (40) to the experimental one. The study group has provided a solution to the study problem in the second term of 2019-2020, based on Peer Tutoring exercises conducted by the researcher over nine weeks. During this period of time the researcher herself taught the experimental and the control groups.

### **Equivalence of Subjects**

The two groups were equalized by monitoring certain variables that can influence the outcome of the experiment. These variables are: age of students (measured in months), educational level of parents, and the grades of students in English in the first course of the same academic year.

### **Controlling Extraneous Variables**

The researcher tries to manipulate the effect of these variables. Extraneous variables are independent, unpredictable variables.



## The Instructional Material

The researcher has followed the English material for Iraq, 5th preparatory. In both classes EG and CG, units 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the student's book and activity book are included in the experiment. She has taught them unit 4, 5 and 6, not as a segment on composition writing, as she conducted the experiment as an instructor not as a researcher.

## Validity of the Tests

The validity of a test is one of the most important factors to consider when choosing or designing a test. Validity is the degree to which conclusions drawn from the results of a specific assessment are acceptable, descriptive, and important. In other words, the degree to which an evaluation assesses what it aims to analyze is valid. It means you must check what and how you are teaching. As far as classification is concerned, Brown (2010) classifies validity as criterion-related, face-related, consequential, construct-related and finally content-related validity. Face validity refers to: the degree to which a test looks accurate and tends to assess the information or skills it seeks to measure, based on the subjective judgment of the examinees who take it, the administrative staff who decide on its application, and other psychometrically unsophisticated observers. A jury of twenty linguistics and TEFL-methodology specialists saw the test to ensure its face validity. These experts were asked to determine the face validity of the test and to state their suggestions regarding the suitability of the test and its items to the level of the students. The members of the jury agreed that the test is valid in its face and that its items are suitable for the level of the students except for certain modifications which are taken into account.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To achieve the aim of this research, which is looking for the effect of peer tutoring strategy on fifth grade performance in preparatory school to improve EFL students' writing composition skills and evaluate their null hypothesis, pre-test and post-test data are statistically analyzed. This research will be performed to assess if there is a significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test and the post-test. The researcher used the T-test for two separate samples to evaluate the analysis to determine the importance of the discrepancies between the average scores of both groups. The mean scores of the experimental group is (37.525) and that of the control one is (32.000), according to the findings obtained from the two groups. This means that the experimental group scores in composition writing skill growth are higher than those of the control group. The estimated t-value is (3,117), which is higher than the tabulated t-value (2,000), 0,05 meaning level and (76) freedom point. This shows that the study's null hypothesis notes that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students being taught writing skills using peer coercion method and those being taught writing skills using the technique recommended by the Teacher's Guide. This is denied, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In the light of the statistical manipulation of this study's data, the results show that the technique suggested and adopted by the researcher in her experiment has proven successful in improving the writing skills of the student. The results of the present study are as follows:

The researcher has incorporated a new technology in teaching such as telegram and Google classroom to create an enjoyable and far from boredom learning environment. The researcher has followed routine steps to deliver the lesson, where she starts warming up the students and then presenting information about the previous lessons asking students about them. Then she presents and explains a new lesson to her students.

**Table ( 1) T-test results for two independent samples to identify the significance of the statistical differences between the two groups on the post- test**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-value		Level of significance	Judgment
				Computed	Tabulated		
EG	40	37.525	8.846	3.117	2.000	0.05	For the Experimental Group
CG	38	32.000	6.580				

### CONCLUSION

Based on the study of teaching and learning using Telegram and Google Classroom, the results of this research, theoretically and practically, lead to the following conclusions: The peer tutoring strategy gives students the ability to engage actively in the learning process. It is more effective in improving the students' writing skills within the experimental community than the prescribed form. It is an important technique for teaching writing skills to students of Iraqi preparatory schools .The prescribed approach where teachers are the primary source of questions and answers limits the imagination of the learners as they obtain a repetitive pattern of questions. Apprentices working in a socially structured group can learn substantially better than individual learners. In order to use peer tutoring strategy effectively, instructors need to invest more time in developing the writing skills study, in which the instructor delays the correctness of the errors the students make in punctuation, grammar , spelling, and so on until they take some writing skills practice. At the end of each peer tutoring strategy lecture, the incentives offered inspire to both groups to work hard to become the winning party. The researcher claims the teacher plays very important roles in writing classes and different tasks. The instructor will be a planner, facilitator, input source, organizer, supporter, monitor and participant from the perspective of the researcher. The researcher believes that more practice is required for EFL learners to concentrate on these stages and thus improve their writing skills. Peer tutoring has proven successful in improving the writing skills of learners in Iraqi EFL Preparatory Students Colleges. Peer tutoring assists learning technique to play an important role in improving EFL learners compositional skills and making learning more effective. It also increases the ability of learners to use language expressions and vocabulary and develop their grammar and written texts knowledge. The use of peer punishment technique increases learner engagement and provides incentives for self-correction and non-embarrassment recognition of errors. Compared to other old fashion approaches, the use of Peer tutoring decreases the effort and time required to improve writing skills. Students in both groups face difficulties in writing English composition, where the mean of EG score in the pre-test is (31.375) and that of CG score is (30.763), whereas the mean of EG score in the post-test is (37.525) and that of CG score is (30.763). E-learning using Telegram and Google Classroom has a positive effect on the study participants as they have to record an audio on their opinion as a teacher in order to apply the values among students. All students can share the values that should be nurtured within them through the audio recorded in the Telegram, as well as their hope and resolve as an educator. E-learning can also ensure that students are always ready before the lesson, and that they are 100 % focused during the classes conducted. Contrary to face-to - face lecture, when the instructor lectures, the students can lose concentration. E-learning using Telegram is more contextual and significant, because all students can achieve the learning goals at the end of the teaching and learning process. If the study is conducted in a regular face-to - face lecture, those positive impacts cannot be fully guaranteed.



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