

The Effectiveness of a Suggested Student-Centered Programme in Developing Writing of Faculty of Education Students

Prepared by :-

Dr. Mahmoud Abd Al-Naser Nasr
(Assistant Professor)

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to design a student-centered programme and to test its effectiveness in developing writing of Faculty of Education students in Egypt. The sample of the study consisted of 140 students including both males and females distributed randomly between the experimental and control groups. Statistical analyses of the data indicated that there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the students of the two groups in the pre-administration of the writing test. Significant differences were found between the mean scores of the two groups in the post administration of the test in favour of those of the experimental. There were significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental-group students in the pre and post administrations of the test in favour of the post. No significant differences were found between the mean scores of the control-group students in the pre and post administrations of the test. Similarly, no significant differences were found between the mean scores of males and females in the experimental group in the post administration of the test. The programme proved to be effective in developing writing with a gain ratio of 1.15.

Keywords:- Writing, Developing Writing, Writing Programme, Student-Centered Programme

فعالية برنامج مقترح متمركز حول الطالب في تنمية مهارة الكتابة لدى طلاب كلية التربية

استهدفت الدراسة الحالية تصميم برنامج متمركز حول الطالب واختبار فعاليته في تنمية مهارة الكتابة لدى طلاب كلية التربية بمصر. اشتملت الدراسة على ١٤٠ طالباً وطالبة. أوضح التحليل الإحصائي عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطات درجات طلاب المجموعة التجريبية والضابطة في التطبيق القبلي للاختبار. وُجدت فروق دالة إحصائية بين متوسطات درجات طلاب المجموعتين في التطبيق البعدي للاختبار لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. كما أوضحت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطات درجات طلاب المجموعة التجريبية في التطبيق القبلي والبعدي للاختبار لصالح التطبيق البعدي، في حين لم توجد فروق دالة إحصائية بين متوسطات درجات طلاب المجموعة الضابطة في التطبيق القبلي والبعدي للاختبار. كما لم توجد فروق دالة إحصائية بين متوسطات البنين والبنات في المجموعة التجريبية في التطبيق البعدي للاختبار. أثبت البرنامج فعاليته في تنمية مهارة الكتابة.

كلمات مفتاحية: مهارة الكتابة، تنمية مهارة الكتابة، برنامج لتنمية مهارة الكتابة، برنامج متمركز حول الطالب

The Effectiveness of a Suggested Student-Centered Programme in Developing Writing of Faculty of Education Students

Introduction:-

The writing process evolved from economic necessity in the ancient near east. Archaeologists determined the link between previously uncategorized clay "tokens" and the first known writing, cuneiform (Richard, 2000:48). The clay tokens were used to represent commodities, and perhaps even units of time spent in labor, and their number and type became more complex as civilization advanced. A degree of complexity was reached when over a hundred different kinds of tokens had to be accounted for, and tokens were wrapped and fired in clay, with markings to indicate the kind of tokens inside. These markings soon replaced the tokens themselves, and the clay envelopes were demonstrably the prototype for clay writing tablets (Robinson, 2003:23).

Writing is an extension of human language across time and space. It most likely began as a consequence of political expansion in ancient cultures, which needed reliable means for transmitting information, maintaining financial accounts, keeping historical records, and similar activities. Around the fourth millennium BC, the complexity of trade and administration outgrew the power of memory, and writing became a more dependable method of recording and presenting transactions in a permanent form. In both Mesoamerica and Ancient Egypt, writing may have evolved through calendrics and a political necessity for recording historical and environmental events (Richards, 2000:50).

From a linguistic and a pedagogical point of view, writing comes last in the hierarchical order of the four skills. It is a complex skill that requires improvement in all language skills. Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, teachers and students were commonly taught about the tools of the craft of writing - grammar, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting- but not about the craft itself. In truth, however informal it may be, writers use a process that typically includes the stages of prewriting and planning, writing a first draft,

responding and revising, editing and proofreading, and writing a final draft. In this way, writing can be described as a task that no two people do the same way. One should keep in mind that the steps followed in writing are not exclusive of each other, and at times, they can be rather liquid. Moreover, most of these steps are reciprocal; that is, work done in one area may necessitate returning to a step that has already been completed.

Developing writing skills has been for long a target for so many ardent teachers who gave vent to their efforts in the form of new methods and strategies (Ahmad, 2015). Student-centered learning has come to loom large in this juncture. Learner centeredness is a learning model that places the student in the centre of the learning process. In this kind of learning, students are active participants in their learning. They learn at their own pace and use their own strategies. Student-centered learning develops learning-how-to-learn skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and reflective thinking.

Research efforts have concentrated on examining the active and interactive nature of writing skills and the processes involved beneath writing as a global skill and its inherent sub-skills. Similar efforts were exerted investigating the active role of the student in the learning process. The plethora of the results of such efforts (e.g. Abd Al-Fattah, 2003, Mekhemer, 2005, Al-Harby, 2008, Shirely, 2009, Youngjoo, 2010, Ahmad, 2015, Ostovar-Namaghi and Safaee, 2017, Hsiao, et al., 2017, Zeiser, et al., 2018, Thipatdee1, 2019, Hassan, et al., 2019, among others) pinpoint the integral role writing plays in the mainstream of language learning and teaching, as well as the active role played by the learner in the learning situation.

Problem of the Study:

The problem of the present study arose in the first place from the low level of Faculty of Education students in writing as a result of the weak emphasis writing receives in the courses taught as well as using methods and strategies in teaching and learning which are not in accord with the nature of that skill. This state urged the

researcher to design a student-centered programme and to test its effectiveness in developing writing of Faculty of Education students.

Context of the Problem:

Writing plays an essential role in the process of learning a foreign language. It gives a tangible manifestation of the productive aspect of language. However, it hasn't been given due care in Egyptian faculties of education. To the researcher's best knowledge, no study has been conducted to design a student-centered programme for developing writing of Faculty of Education students in Egypt at the level chosen by the researcher.

The researcher was impelled to conduct the present study by the following:-

1-A thorough review of pertinent literature revealed that there is a noticeable dearth in research conducted to develop writing of Faculty of Education students in Egypt using student-centered programmes.

2-The wide experience of the researcher in the field of English language teaching for a long time indicated that writing doesn't receive the attention it should have in our faculties of education. It became evidently legible for the researcher that more research is needed to devise methods and strategies that are apt to develop students' writing skills.

3-Recommendations of other researchers in the field (Abd Al-Fattah, 2003, Mekhemer, 2005, Karen et al., 2006, Monte-Sano, 2008, Al-Harby, 2008, Shirely, 2009, Youngjoo, 2010, Ahmad, 2015, McCormack-Colbert, et al., 2018, Thipatdee1, 2019, Behizadeh, 2019, and many others) the majority of which lay great stress on the significance of writing, and suggest that more studies should be conducted to devise methods and techniques in order to develop it.

Purposes of the Study:-

The present study had a two-fold purpose:-

- 1.An instructional purpose, that is designing a student-centered programme intended to develop writing of Faculty of Education students.
- 2.A research purpose, that is testing the effectiveness of the suggested programme in developing writing of Faculty of Education students.

Questions of the Study:-

The present study tried to find answers to the following questions:-

- 1.What is the present level of Faculty of Education students in writing?
- 2.What are the bases for designing a student-centered programme intended to develop writing of those students?
- 3.What are the features of the suggested programme?
- 4.To what extent is the suggested programme effective in developing writing of Faculty of Education students?

Hypotheses of the Study:-

The present study tested the following hypotheses:-

- 1.There will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the pre-administration of the writing test.
- 2.There will be statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post administration of the writing test in favor of the experimental.
- 3.There will be statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental-group students in the pre and post administrations of the writing test in favor of the post.
- 4.There will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control-group students in the pre and post administrations of the writing test.
- 5.There will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of males and females in the experimental group in the post administration of the writing test.
- 6.The suggested programme will be effective in developing writing of Faculty of Education students.

Significance of the Study:-

- 1.The significance of the study arises from the fact that it may lead to shed light on the role played by writing in developing language competence of Faculty of Education students.
- 2.The current study may lead us to view writing as an active skill of language which needs development.

3.The study may lead to change the false conceptions about writing as a mechanical process.

4.The study offers a suggested student-centered programme intended to develop writing of Faculty of Education students. The study offers also a standardized writing test which proved to be valid and reliable.

5.The study may help students, teachers and programme designers via a) helping students to develop their writing, b) guiding English teachers by improving their teaching practices of writing, and c) providing programme designers with what's needed to develop writing of Faculty of Education students.

6.To the best knowledge of the researcher, no study had been conducted to design such a type of programme in Egypt for the stage chosen. As a result, the present study tried to fill in this gap.

Limitations of the Study:-

1.The study was undertaken in the Governorate of Beni-Suif where the researcher lives and works.

2.The study was conducted on a sample of 140 students selected randomly out of the Faculty of Education at Beni-Suif. Students were distributed equally between the experimental and control groups. The sample included both males and females.

3.The researcher administered a student-centered programme that he proposed consisting of eleven lessons.

4.The experimental study lasted for 11 weeks, approximately four hours per week. The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018.

Variables of the Study:

The present study manipulated the following variables:-

1)Dependent Variable:-

This variable was represented by writing of Faculty of Education students as represented by the sample selected randomly by the researcher. It was measured by a writing test prepared by the researcher.

2)Independent Variable:-

This variable was represented by a suggested student-centered programme prepared by the researcher intended to develop writing of Faculty of Education students.

3)Control Variables:-

In order to investigate the effect of the independent variable on the dependent one, the researcher attempted to control the following variables:-

- a) students' level in writing before administering the programme.
- b) age
- c) socio-economic level
- d) gender
- e) teacher

Methods of the Study:-

In conducting the current study, the researcher made use of:-

1.The Descriptive Method:-

This method was used while reviewing pertinent literature and identifying the general design of the suggested student-centered programme and the writing test.

2.The Quasi-experimental Method:-

This method was used while conducting the experiment, administering the suggested student-centered programme and the writing test, analyzing data and interpreting results.

Experimental Design:-

The researcher depended on using two groups:-

1.Experimental Group:-

Its students studied a suggested student-centered programme prepared by the researcher intended to develop their writing.

2. Control Group:-

Its students did not receive such treatments. Instead, they had their regular classes.

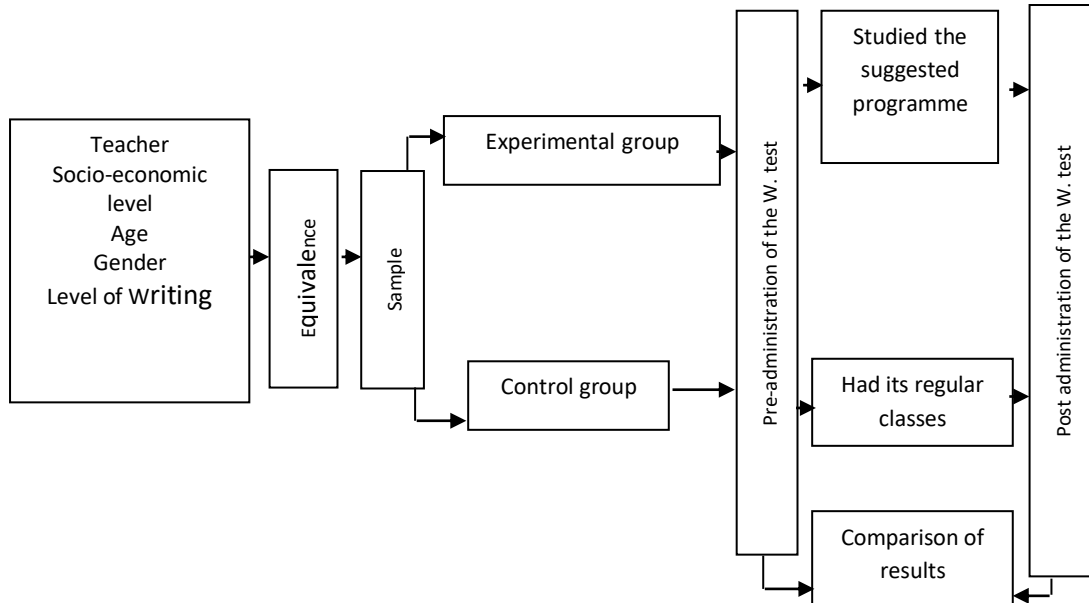


Figure (1) Experimental Design of the Study

Instruments of the Study:-

In conducting the current study, the following instruments were used:-

1. A writing test prepared by the researcher.
2. A questionnaire designed by the researcher in order to detect skills of writing deemed by the students as suitable and crucial.
3. A suggested student-centered programme prepared by the researcher aiming at developing writing of Faculty of Education students.

Definition of Terms:-

Writing is the fourth in the hierarchical order of the four skills. It comes last since it requires development in all language skills. Writing is the tangible manifestation of our thoughts. It enables our ideas and thoughts to be seen.

For the purpose of the present study, the researcher defines the term "writing" as a complex skill subsuming beneath it a number of sub-skills, which are:-

- a)-identifying the meaning of the "paragraph".

- b)-recognizing the structure of the paragraph.
- c)-identifying the meaning, position and parts of the topic sentence.
- d)-identifying the steps involved in the prewriting stage.
- e)-identifying the steps involved in the outlining stage.
- f)-identifying the steps involved in the writing and revising stage.
- g)-identifying the meaning of and how to achieve unity.
- h)-making an outline for a paragraph.
- i)-achieving coherence in a paragraph.
- j)-organizing ideas in a paragraph.
- k)-defining the term "essay" and identifying its basic structure.
- l)-organizing paragraphs in an essay.

Such sub-skills were assessed using a standardized writing test prepared by the researcher.

Student-centered learning (SCL) is an approach to education which aims at overcoming some of the problems inherent in more traditional forms of education by focusing on the learners and their needs, rather than being centered around the teacher's input (European Higher Education Area, Bologna Process, 2010).

As for Collins and O'Brian (2003), (SCL) is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the learner in the center of the learning process. Since this definition stresses the important role of the student in the SCL, it will be used in the present study.

Procedures of the Study:-

In conducting the current study, the following procedures were followed:-

- 1-Conducting a thorough review of pertinent literature.
- 2-Identifying writing skills which are suitable for Faculty of Education students in the light of reviewing related literature, consulting some specialists in the area, administering a questionnaire to the students and making use of the researcher's experience in teaching English at the Faculty of Education.
- 3-Preparing a pre-post writing test.
- 4-Validating the test by submitting it to a jury committee.

5-Piloting the test.

6-Preparing a student-centered programme. This step involved:-

a)Determining bases for designing the programme.

b)Determining programme rationale.

c)Determining programme document. This step involved:-

*-Determining goals of the programme.

*-Specifying instructional objectives of the programme.

*-Preparing the content of the programme.

*-Designing the strategy of teaching the programme.

*-Selecting teaching aids of the programme.

*-Preparing activities of the programme.

*-Determining a suitable means for evaluating the programme.

*-Computing the time needed for conducting the programme.

*-Validating the programme by submitting it to a jury committee.

*-Piloting the programme.

*-Producing the final form of the programme.

7-Selecting a sample distributed randomly between the experimental and control groups including both males and females.

8-Administering the pretest to the two groups.

9-Administering the programme to the experimental group.

10-Administering the posttest to the two groups.

11-Analyzing the data statistically, interpreting results, forwarding recommendations and suggestions for further studies, and then concluding.

Review of Related Studies:-

Although there is a noticeable dearth in research on student-centered writing programmes for university students in Egypt, it is apt and profitable to browse some of the research efforts in the area.

Cohen and Riel (1989) examined the quality of students' writing in two audience conditions: to their teacher for a term assessment and to a distant peer audience to share ideas. Seventh-grade students wrote two compositions on the same topic, one addressed to peers in other countries via a computer network and the other to their teacher for their semester grade. Findings suggest that

the development of functional writing environments to contextualize students' work can lead to improvements in the quality of students' classroom writing.

Englert et al. (1991) examined the effects of an intervention that attempted to improve students' expository writing abilities through an instructional emphasis on teacher and student dialogues about expository writing strategies, text structure processes, and self-regulated learning. Findings suggested that the dialogic instruction was effective in promoting students' expository writing abilities on two text structures taught during the intervention, and in leading to improved abilities on a near transfer activity, in which students wrote using a text structure not taught during the intervention.

Zellermayer and Salomon (1991) tested the general hypothesis that ongoing computerized procedural facilitation with strategies and writing-related metacognitions during writing improves learners' writing. Three groups of 20 ninth to eleventh graders participated in the study. One group wrote five essays while being guided by unsolicited continuous metacognitive-like guides presented by a specially designed computer tool; a second group received the same guidance but only upon the writer's voluntary solicitation; and the third group received no guidance and wrote with only a word processor (control group). The study's main hypothesis was confirmed with respect to the unsolicited-guidance group, which wrote better training essays, showed evidence of having internalized the explicitly provided guidance, and demonstrated significant subsequent improvement in writing when no computerized tool was available anymore.

Jones and Pellegrini (1996) examined the effects of social relationships, writing media, and microgenetic development on first-grade students' written narratives. In the within-subjects design, children's written products and verbalizations were compared across different writing contexts, computer-supported writing and pencil-and-paper writing. Participant relationships were also manipulated to determine the influence of friendship on the outcome measures in the two writing contexts. Results indicated that students' narratives

composed with a word processor were lexically denser and more cohesive than their narratives composed with pencil and paper. Students' talk during computer-supported writing episodes included more metacognitive terms than their talk during pencil-and-paper writing.

Abd Al-Fattah (2003) conducted an empirical study the main intent of which was to investigate the relative effect of different writing techniques on improvement in writing skills of university students. The researcher prepared a writing programme using the techniques under experiment. Two groups took part in the experiment; an experimental group that studied the suggested programme, and a control group that had regular classes. A pre-post test was prepared and administered by the researcher. Statistical analyses of the data proved the effectiveness of the programme in developing writing skills specified by the researcher.

Mekhemer (2005) experimented with avant-garde technology via employing emailing and web questing in teaching writing. The researcher designed a programme in which students had access to various web sites aided by constant contact with the researcher. Statistical analyses of the data verified the effectiveness of the programme in developing writing skills of faculty of education students.

Karen et al. (2006) examined the effectiveness of self-regulated strategy development (SRSD). Statistical analyses of the data indicated that SRSD had a positive impact on the writing performance and knowledge of struggling second-grade writers attending urban schools. In comparison with children in the writers' workshop condition, SRSD-instructed students were more knowledgeable about writing and evidenced stronger performance in the two instructed genres (story and persuasive writing) as well as two uninstructed genres (personal narrative and informative writing).

Monte-Sano (2008) explored the practices of two high school teachers of U.S. history and their students' performance on evidence-based history essays over 7 months. Data included pre-and-post test essays, interviews, observations, teacher feedback, assignments, and readings. Qualitative and quantitative comparisons

of 42 students' work revealed that one class improved in writing evidence-based history essays whereas the other did not. Qualitative analyses of the teachers' practices suggested that different opportunities to learn to read, write, and think historically were not equally valuable.

Experimenting in the electronic arena, Al-Harby (2008) conducted a comparative study between two ESL writing approaches: computer processing Microsoft Word versus handwriting of two freshmen college Saudi student groups. Analyses of the data indicated that there were significant differences based on gender and method, whereas in interaction there were not.

Shirely (2009) investigated the peer construction of metacognition in 5-7-year-old children engaged in collaborative writing tasks. Six year 1 and year 2 classes were involved in the project (n = 172). 25 hours of video observation data, teacher and researcher reflections and structured field notes were analyzed qualitatively using ATLAS software. The written texts produced in these sessions were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis, looking specifically for evidence of the process of text construction and metacognition. Findings provided evidence of young children's ability to engage in metacognitive talk and to use metacognition intentionally in the co-construction of written texts.

Within a social view of literacy, Youngjoo (2010) conducted a two-year ethnographic case study of an adolescent multilingual writer, with respect to her transitions across in-school (i.e., creative writing class) and out-of-school writing contexts. The study aimed at addressing two specific gaps in the fields of (L2) writing and literacy studies, by examining one of the most underrepresented groups (i.e., adolescent multilingual writers) and by exploring possible relationships between her voluntary, non-academic writing outside school and her academic writing practices. Findings revealed that a research participant greatly drew upon her voluntary, out-of-school writing for her creative writing class; and at the same time, her in-school writing activities and assignments were mentioned in out-of-school writing practices.

Salim (2013) conducted a study investigating the effects of using a program based on the writing workshop approach on developing basic writing skills of prospective teachers of English in Hurgada Faculty of Education. The sample of the study was forty students, English Division. The experimental-group students were taught writing using the writing workshop approach after they had basic writing skills pretest. Findings of the study indicated that the writing workshop-based program had significant effects on improving the subjects' basic writing skills.

Ahmad (2015) designed an empirical study to investigate the effectiveness of using the student-centered learning (SCL) approach in developing some writing skills for the secondary stage students. The sample included (47) second year secondary students. The one-group design was used. Statistical analyses showed that the SCL approach showed high gains and better results on the posttest and post survey. It also had a good effect on the students' attitudes and motivation towards writing.

Kassem (2017) launched a study investigating the effect of using wikis on developing business writing skills and reducing writing anxiety of business administration students at Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University, KSA. Sixty students participated in the study. Two main tools were devised to collect data: Test of Business Writing Skills (TBWS) and Writing Anxiety Inventory (WAI). Findings showed statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-TBWS in favor of the experimental. In addition, the writing anxiety level of the experimental group was significantly less than the control group.

Implementing student-centered learning in hybrid/online settings, Hsiao, et al. (2017) offered students solid learning supports. Four types of scaffolds and multimedia modules were used in one hybrid and four online business course sessions. At the end of each course session, a survey was used to investigate student perceptions of the scaffolds and multimedia modules. Results showed that the scaffolds and multimedia modules used were helpful to student-

centered learning but that additional guidance might be needed to meet the needs of diverse learners and facilitate the group-work process.

Nino and Paez (2018) designed a study for developing writing skills of a group of twenty eight fifth graders of primary level in a public school in Colombia in a creative way, based on qualitative and quantitative methods by using surveys, checklists, field notes and a final interview to collect data. Findings revealed that writing mistakes were diminished after each one of the sessions application. Additionally, children were motivated to write in English and to assume different positions about topics of their interest from the advantages provided from new knowledge acquired about diverse topics related to their lives.

Carlson (2018) launched a study, the purpose of which was to identify the resources necessary in the design of a comprehensive professional development program to ensure implementation of student-centered teaching and learning strategies into daily activities. The data collected included surveys from 89 faculty members and three focus groups from an American-International school in Latin America. The study found out notable areas to address in teacher professional development, especially in the domains of conceptual knowledge of student-centered learning, collective efficacy, value, and organizational influences.

Thipatdee1 (2019) launched a study to develop English writing skills through techniques of sentence skeleton and signpost word analysis for English major students. The sample consisted of 43 English major juniors at Faculty of Education, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University. The research instruments were a performance test of writing skills, and writing drills. The data analyzed showed that the students had better writing skills with 40.63 percent of average score than those with 14.80 percent before the study. The individual average score was at a weak level with 38.90 percent, while the small group's was at a fair level with 69.78 percent. The individual writing skills were significantly higher than those before

the study at the .01 level, and the small group writing skills were significantly higher than those of the individual's.

Hassan, et al. (2019) investigated the extent to which teachers can play an effective role to develop students' writing skills through classroom interaction at the Arab countries universities. The sample of this study comprised non-specialized students who study English as a requirement at the Arab countries universities as a representative sample. Results revealed that classroom interactional activities played a great role in developing students' writing skill.

General Comments on Related Studies:-

Through browsing related studies, it looms legibly that the plethora of such studies agreed explicitly and implicitly that:-

1. Writing plays a paramount role in acquiring language and developing other language skills.
2. Writing can be a crucial determiner in defining the rate of foreign language learning progress. Fast and slow learners can be distinguished patently in terms of the writing skills they possess and are apt to make use of.
3. Writing encourages learner-autonomy and active involvement. It reduces, to some extent, passive inattention.

The experimental design in most of the previous studies used two groups: an experimental group and a control one except in a few cases in which more than one experimental group were used. In some cases, only one group was used.

Most of the previous studies have focused mainly on students of English at school level and so none of them, according to the researcher's present knowledge, has designed a student-centered programme for developing writing at the level chosen by the researcher.

Theoretical Background:

Writing in the Matrix of Language Acquisition and Learning

Writing: Process and Product

Since the "process" approach to composition studies has come to replace the older traditional "product" rhetoric that focused on correctness, the teaching of writing has incorporated invention

techniques. Invention heuristics and pre-writing exercises addressed a problem common in L1 writing courses. L1 students were at a loss for something to say. Without some way to generate meaning out of their own experience, they often produced stultifying texts in response to the directions imposed upon them by their textbooks (Meyers, 1997:3). These directions were based on prescriptive grammar instruction, literary criticism, and an oral rhetoric stretching back to the time of Aristotle. Instruction was not based so much on the psychological processes of writing, but rather on an analysis of texts after they were produced (products). In its extreme form early on, the process approach led some teachers to give their students assignments in freewriting and personal narration uncluttered with the demands of error correction or formal register. While this produced livelier text truer to the authors' voices, it did not enable university students to produce the fluid, formal, documented academic writing their instructors are expected to get them to produce (Horowitz, 1986).

Writing from a New Perspective

Traditionally, composition was investigated as a cognitive process and as a social process. Studies led to discussions about the pedagogical role of reading, the demands of different discourse communities, and the layers of cognition based on class, race, and gender folded into the process of writing (Nation, 2009:11). One of the most valuable perspectives to come out of this work and to be incorporated into classroom teaching is that of the recursive nature of writing (Reid, 2008:23). Students are introduced to invention techniques to help them discover and engage a topic. Rather than being expected to turn in a finished product right away, students are asked for multiple drafts of a work and taught that rewriting and revision are integral to writing, and that editing is an ongoing, multi-level process, not merely a hasty check for correct grammar (Leki and Carson, 1994:23). Our understanding of writing processes has been enriched and the teaching of writing much improved through this "process" approach. The ability to write academically correct

English is a required skill. In order to write good English, it is necessary to read a range of texts that expose learners to varied uses of academic English so that they are provided with “more focused teaching and learning with cross-learning opportunities” (Hudson, 2007: 286). In order to develop a connection between reading and writing skills, students have to read and write about various types of academic texts closely connected to their experience of the world (Brems, 2008:12).

Writing Skills

It is critical to understand the development of children's fine motor skills in order to understand the reasoning behind why they complete certain tasks in a certain way. For example, it is important to understand the development of fine motor skills when a paper is handed in by a child in grade one and the writing is large, malformed, with little evidence of control of the pencil. If the teacher were to know the stages that children go through to develop these skills, then he may be more considerate and provide the child with appropriate adaptations in order to help him improve his writing skills. Also, as children refine their motor skills, they are able to communicate by written expression. Starting off with scribbling and moving on to printing and writing, scribbling has been described as a type of "motor babbling" and as the child matures, the forms that arise from scribbling gradually become transformed into printing and writing (Kermis and Digdon, 2001). Writers seeking to improve their academic writing skills should focus their efforts on two key areas. First, strong writing: Thinking precedes writing. Good writers spend time distilling information from their sources and reviewing major points before creating their work. Writing detailed outlines helps many authors organize their thoughts. Strong academic writing begins with solid planning. Second, excellent grammar: Students have to learn the major and minor points of grammar, to spend time practicing writing and to seek detailed feedback from teachers, professors or writers they respect. English grammar can be detailed and complex, but strong writers command the major points after many years of study and

practice. Proper punctuation use and good proofreading skills improve academic writing as well.

Via the researcher's experience in the field of English language teaching, he has come upon many benefits that learners can gain if skills of writing are sharpened and developed. Writing can contribute to intelligence by requiring analysis and synthesis of information. It develops initiative by requiring that the student supply everything himself. Writing develops academic courage by asking the student to give up anonymity. It can increase the student's personal knowledge and self-esteem. Writing encourages learning in all subject areas, by employing auditory, visual, and kinesthetic systems all at once. It contributes significantly to improvement in other language skills.

Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning targets at empowering students' performance in language skills and helping students to actively and positively share activities in the learning process. When students contribute to acquiring knowledge, they become responsible for it. The SCL makes it possible for the teacher to follow up everyone in the class taking into account that everyone matters as sharing in activities of the SCL makes students concentrate well on what they are doing and try to do their utmost to excel.

The SCL approach broadly counts on the principle that teaching depends not only on instructing but also on letting the students discover and do things by themselves, individually, in pairs or in groups. It helps students to communicate well inside the classroom and in real life situations. It frees students from feeling panic when they make mistakes; but rather allows them to take "making mistakes" as a step forward to learn. Students are not to be seat-bound or tongue tied by worrying about making mistakes, losing face or getting low marks. Students need to learn to be independent learners step by step (Ahmad, 2015). "The student-centered approach helps students to develop a "can-do" attitude. It is effective, motivating, and enjoyable." There is

something of partnership that shapes the teacher-student and the student-student relationships. They all collaborate to create a healthy non-threatening language environment to get the utmost of their learning course and time. The SCL approach is a worldwide recommendation for teaching and learning whether at school or university (Jones, 2007:1). In student-centered learning situations, everyone involved in the situation is included as everyone matters. Students are the doer and the teacher is a facilitator. SCL provides learning which offers the possibility of a new relationship between teachers and learners and emphasizes an activity-based learning and teacher-student collaboration rather than instruction. (Brandes and Ginnis (2001: 17).

SCL has to encompass certain components to be effective.

Attard, et al., (2010: 3-6) stress the following:-

- Teachers' responsibility for student empowerment;
- A continuous ongoing improvement process;
- A positive attitude by teachers and students with the aim of improving the learning experience;
- Flexibility and freedom in terms of the time and structure of learning;
- More and better quality teachers who strive to share their knowledge;
- A clear understanding of students by their teachers;
- A relationship of mutual assertiveness between students and teachers;
- A flat hierarchy within higher education institutions; and
- A focus on learning outcomes which enable genuine learning and deep understanding.

As a unique teaching-learning approach, SCL is prominent for its inherent characteristics. McCombs and Whistler (1997) pinpoint some of these characteristics:

- 1-**The student-centered classroom facilitates learning by increasing motivation and effort.
- 2-**The student-centered model requires that instructors see each learner as distinct and unique.
- 3-**In this model, learning is a constructive process that is relevant and meaningful to the learner.

4-In the student-centered classroom, the learner requires some kind of individualization, interaction, and integration.

5-The student-centered classroom involves changes in the roles and responsibilities of learners and instructors.

To conclude this section, it is legible to set forth a crop of principles underlying the effectiveness of SCL:-

- Total involvement and participation by all students are necessary for learning.
- Inherent relationships between students are so crucial.
- The role played by the teacher is just a facilitator.
- Students experience confluence in their learning.
- The student should have full responsibility as per her/his learning.
- Students start viewing themselves differently as a result of the learning experience.
- Students can help each other by:-
 - sharing ways of solving writing problems.
 - responding to one another's work.
 - brainstorming together to find topics.
 - listening to one another's ideas.

Instruments and Procedures:

****Sample of the Study:***

The sample was selected randomly from first year Faculty of Education at Beni-Suif. The sample consisted of 140; divided between the experimental and control groups. The sample included both males and females.

****Instruments of the Study:***

I-The Suggested Student-Centered Programme:

A)Bases for Designing the Programme

The researcher designed the programme in the light of:

- 1-Reviewing related literature in the area of student-centered programme design.
- 2-Reviewing related literature in the area of developing writing.
- 3-Specifying developmental characteristics of first year Faculty of Education students.

4-Determining writing skills which are suitable for first year Faculty of Education students.

B) Considerations in Designing the Programme:

In designing the programme, the researcher put the following points into consideration:

- 1-The nature, values and attitudes of the Egyptian society.
- 2-The nature of the subjects taught at the Faculty of Education.
- 3-Students' developmental characteristics.
- 4-Objectives of the English department as specified by the Faculty of Education.
- 5-Objectives of the present study as specified previously by the researcher.
- 6-Emphasizing the student's role in learning a foreign language.

C) Programme Document:

1-Goals of the Programme

The major goals of the programme were to:

- a-Develop writing of Faculty of Education students.
- b-Foster the interactive nature of writing in English.
- c-Give momentum to students' role in the learning situation.

2-Instructional Objectives of the Programme:-

The major objectives of the programme were to develop writing as for:-

- a)-identifying the meaning of the "paragraph".
- b)-recognizing the structure of the paragraph.
- c)-identifying the meaning, position and parts of the topic sentence.
- d)-identifying the steps involved in the prewriting stage.
- e)-identifying the steps involved in the outlining stage.
- f)-identifying the steps involved in the writing and revising stage.
- g)-identifying the meaning of and how to achieve unity.
- h)-making an outline for a paragraph.
- i)-achieving coherence in a paragraph.
- j)-organizing ideas in a paragraph.
- k)-defining the term "essay" and identifying its basic structure.
- l)-organizing paragraphs in an essay.

3-Content of the Programme:

The content consisted of eleven lessons of comparable lengths dealing with various topics intended to develop writing of Faculty of

Education students. The material has been gathered from different sources including textbooks and websites.

4-Strategy of Teaching the Programme:

The researcher proposed a teaching strategy subsuming beneath it many teaching methods and techniques. The following are some of them:-

- *-Think-pair-share
- *-Minute papers
- *-Problem-based learning
- *-Inquiry-based learning
- *-Jigsaw
- *-Collaborative writing
- *-Brainstorming
- *-Using realias
- *-Working in pairs and groups
- *-Student projects
- *-Free writing practice
- *-Whole class discussion
- *-Round-table
- *-Student presentations
- *-Challenge-based learning
- *-Role play
- *-Instant writing
- *-Extensive writing
- *-Concept mapping
- *-Contextualizing language
- *-Warm-ups
- *-Controlled writing practice
- *-Peer correction
- *-Teacher/peer feedback

5-Teaching Aids Used in the Programme:

The researcher made use of the following aids:

- a-The student's book (prepared by the researcher).
- b-Handouts.
- c-Visual aids (pictures and flash cards).
- d-The blackboard.
- e-Websites, data show and multimedia.

6-Activities Used in the Programme:-

The researcher made good use of the following activities:-

- a-Working in pairs and groups.
- b-Drawing and studying concept maps.
- c-Brainstorming ideas about the topic.
- d-Using lexical relations in meaningful contexts.

7-Methods of Evaluation Used in the Programme:-

Three types of evaluation were used:-

- a-Pre-evaluation before administering the programme through administering the pretest.

b-Ongoing evaluation while administering the programme via the writing exercises following each lesson.

c-Post evaluation after administering the programme via the posttest.

8-Timing of the Programme:

The programme lasted for 11 weeks, approximately 4 hours per week. The total time spent in conducting the programme was 44 hours. The programme was conducted in the academic year 2017/2018.

9-Validating the Programme:

The programme was submitted to a jury committee to show their opinions. The researcher put the juries' observations into consideration while preparing the final form of the programme.

10-Pilot Administration of the Programme:

The researcher piloted the programme prior to the real experiment. The pilot study lasted for two weeks. Forty students participated in this pilot study.

II-The Writing Test:

a-Goal of the Test:

The test aimed at testing writing of first year Faculty of Education students. It was used as a pre-post test in order to determine the effectiveness of the suggested programme.

b-Objectives of the Test:

The test aimed at assessing students' skills in:

- a)-identifying the meaning of the "paragraph".
- b)-recognizing the structure of the paragraph.
- c)-identifying the meaning, position and parts of the topic sentence.
- d)-identifying the steps involved in the prewriting stage.
- e)- identifying the steps involved in the outlining stage.
- f)- identifying the steps involved in the writing and revising stage.
- g)-identifying the meaning of and how to achieve unity.
- h)-making an outline for a paragraph.
- i)-achieving coherence in a paragraph.
- j)-organizing ideas in a paragraph.
- k)defining the term "essay" and identifying its basic structure.
- l)-organizing paragraphs in an essay.

d-Description of the Test:

The researcher designed the test in the light of the goals, objectives and skills previously specified. The test consisted of seven questions. Students were given blank spaces to write their answers on the same page.

e-Validating the Test:

The test was submitted to a jury committee to show their opinions. The jury members agreed upon the validity of the test. Thus, content validity was assured. Moreover, the researcher proved self validity of the test which reached 0,90.

f-Reliability of the Test:

The researcher used the test-retest method with a time span of 15 days. Reliability coefficient reached 0.81.

g-Facility, Difficulty and Discriminability Indices of the Test:

Facility, difficulty and discriminability indices were computed. They were 0.72- 0.28- 0.21 respectively.

h-Pilot Administration of the Test:

The researcher administered the test to a pilot sample of 40 students not taking part in the experiment. The purpose was to make sure of the suitability of the test, calculate the mean time needed, compute reliability and to diagnose problems that might arise while administering the test.

1)Timing of the Test:

While piloting the test, the researcher calculated the time by computing the time taken by the first student to finish answering the test as well as the last one. The time required was 120 minutes.

Results of the Study:

The First Hypothesis:

Concerning the first hypothesis which states that "there will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the pre-administration of the writing test", the researcher used t. test as follows:

Table (1) Terminal Means, Standard Deviations and t. Test Results for the Scores of the Two Groups in the Pre-administration of the Test

Group	Number	Means	Standard Deviations	Difference between Means	Free Score	Calculated t.	Tabulated t.	Level of Significance
Exp.	70	13.98	4.55	0.12	138	0.05	2.61	Insig.
Con.	70	14.1	4.35					

It is obvious from the above table that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups. This means that the first hypothesis was accepted.

In an attempt to provide a plausible interpretation for this result, the researcher assumes that the methods and strategies employed by the majority of English teachers when teaching writing may provide a key answer in this respect. Such methods and strategies may be responsible for the low level of students' writing. Out of the researcher's long experience in E.F.L, he has noticed that teaching writing proceeds through certain predetermined steps which teachers (novice as well as old-hand) have become accustomed to, and this is the rub.

Throughout the researcher's examination of students' written papers as well as teachers' practices, he has come upon the Cinderella status of writing in our schools as well as universities. Quantity and mechanicality predominate as the foremost outstanding features of teaching-learning practices when it comes to writing. Students are concerned so much with giving as much information as possible about the topic regardless of the value, technicality or aesthetics of writing. The poor result will be, for sure, a flabby paragraph or essay that cannot stand the test of academic writing. In like manner, teachers' main emphasis is on such an amount of information as long as it is clothed in good spelling, grammar and punctuation. Whenever the two poles of the learning-teaching situation, the teacher and the student, come to this poor concept of writing, it is not amazing at all to reach the result of the current hypothesis.

The Second Hypothesis:

Concerning the second hypothesis which states that "there will be statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post administration of the writing test in favour of the experimental", the researcher used t. Test as follows:

Table (2) Terminal Means, Standard Deviations and t. Test Results for the Scores of the Two Groups in the Post Administration of the Test

Group	Number	Means	Standard Deviations	Difference between Means	Free Score	C.t	T.t	Level of Significance
Exp.	70	32.33	6.09	18.27	138	29.7	2.61	Sig. at 0.01
Con.	70	14.06	3.26					

From the above table, it may be noticed that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental. In this way, the second hypothesis of the study was accepted.

This result may be attributed in the first place to the programme which the experimental-group students studied. The programme helped to develop students' writing via the strategies used.

Students' taking responsibility for their own learning put them in a proper position to make the best use of the suggested programme for the purpose of developing writing skills, the main target of the present study. Students' awareness of these skills in advance provided them with opportunities to get ready for such a confrontation, between them and the arduous tasks of writing. Moreover, providing students with the objectives of each lesson may be said to have upgraded their potentialities beforehand as a manner of getting ready. This, in coordination with the strategy proposed in the present study aided by its main methods and techniques, can be said to have placed the students in a better position to tackle writing skills.

The Third Hypothesis:

Concerning the third hypothesis which states that "there will be statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental-group students in the pre and post administrations of the writing test in favor of the post", the researcher used t. test as follows:

Table (3) Terminal Means, Standard Deviations and t. Test Results for the Scores of the Experimental-Group Students in the Pre and Post Administrations of the Test

Test	Number	Means	Standard Deviations	Difference between Means	Free Score	C.t	T.t	Level of Significance
Pre	70	13.98	4.53	18.35	138	27.4	2.61	Sig. at 0.01 level
Post	70	32.33	6.36					

It can be noticed from the above table that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental-group students in the pre and post administrations of the writing test in favor of the post. This means that the third hypothesis of the study was verified.

To complement what has already been said in the interpretation of the result of the second hypothesis, it may be assumed that background knowledge provided, instantiated and reinforced via the strategies employed in the suggested programme may be said to have aided students to deal with writing skills at higher levels of processing.

The Fourth Hypothesis:

Concerning the fourth hypothesis which states that "there will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control-group students in the pre and post administrations of the writing test", the researcher used t. test as follows:

Table (4) Terminal Means, Standard Deviations and t. Test Results for the Scores of the Control-Group Students in the Pre and Post Administrations of the Test

Test	Number	Means	Standard Deviations	Difference between Means	Free Score	C.t	T.t	Level of Significance
Pre	70	14.1	4.033	0.04	138	0.46	2.61	Insig.
Post	70	14.06	3.08					

It can be noticed from the above table that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control-group students in the pre and post administrations of the test. This indicates that the fourth hypothesis of the study was confirmed.

The interpretation given to the result of the first hypothesis may aptly function here. The control-group students did not study the suggested programme. Instead, they had their regular courses. As a result, it may be said that those students dealt with the test in the same way. They may be said to have been attempting to come up with something off-hand in order to fulfill the requirements encountered in the test.

The Fifth Hypothesis:

Concerning the fifth hypothesis which states that "there will be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of males and females in the experimental group in the post administration of the writing test", the researcher used t. test as follows:

Table (5) Terminal Means, Standard Deviations and t. Test Results for the Scores of Males and Females in the Experimental Group in the Post Administration of the Test

Group	Number	Means	Standard Deviations	Difference between Means	Free Score	C.t	T.t	Level of Significance
Males	35	32.25	3.7	0.6	68	0.50	2.65	Insig.
Females	35	32.19	5.4					

It can be observed from the above table that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of males and females in the experimental group in the post administration of the test. This provides a proof for accepting the fifth hypothesis.

Such a result may indicate that difference in gender did not render difference in writing. Writing as a cognitive process may be said to depend on the coordination of other cognitive, psychological, technical and methodological variables that may be rarely affected by difference in gender. Since information processing and cognitive processes may be similar in males and females, writing skills may be affected by other factors rather than difference in gender.

The Sixth Hypothesis:

Concerning the sixth hypothesis which states that "the suggested programme will be effective in developing writing of Faculty of Education students", the researcher used Blake's formula as follows:

Table (6) Mean Scores of the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post Administrations of the Writing Test, Total Score and the Gain that Occurred

Test	N	X	Total Test Score	Gain
Pre	70	13.98	40	1.15
Post	70	32.33		

It is obvious from the above table that the ratio of gain lies within the range defined by Blake which is (1-2). This indicates the effectiveness of the programme in rendering what it was intended for.

The effectiveness of the programme may be attributed to a number of reasons. First, following a scientific method in designing the programme. Second, identifying writing skills needed by students beforehand. Third, getting students acquainted with the objectives of each lesson before starting it. Fourth, providing the programme with various activities. Fifth, using various suggested strategies in teaching the programme. Sixth, using different kinds of teaching aids which helped to make the programme quite interesting. Seventh, using various kinds of evaluation before, during and after teaching the programme.

Discussion of Results:-

Results of the statistical analyses of the data indicated legibly that the suggested student-centered programme is effective in developing writing of the students to whom the programme was administered. Low level of students' achievement in writing before administering the programme and in the performance of the control

group after administering the programme may be attributed to a crop of reasons, the first of which is the inappropriate position writing holds in our learning/teaching processes and traditions. Throughout our educational stages, teachers and students have got accustomed to dealing with writing as a mechanical process. Ordinarily, students merely copy ready-made texts or write short pieces of fragments which lack many basics of writing. Traditionally, writing was often left to look after itself and received only incidental attention in many textbooks and language programmes. Although the course was often quite specific about aspects of teaching such as grammar or reading, no systematic attention was given to writing.

In terms of the subsystems of language, in most language learning/teaching approaches, writing has played second fiddle to grammar. This is particularly true where principles of structural linguistics and audiolingualism have a consensus upon the fact that foreign language learning is most effective if learners concentrate their attention on mastering the basic sentence patterns of the language. Once these patterns have been memorized, what is left is easier.

Another issue influencing the effectiveness of teaching writing relates to the competence of the English language teacher, still another is associated with the communication-oriented approach which is gaining prominence in Arab countries.

It may be assured that the process of teaching writing requires good planning, effective presentation, demonstration, and adequate practice. In the light of the main drawbacks identified in the traditional methods of teaching writing, and based on the main findings of research in modern methods and strategies of teaching writing, the present programme was suggested.

Recommendations of the Study:

In the light of what has been revealed in the present study, the researcher recommends that:-

1-More and more attention should be paid to the teaching of writing throughout our educational stages. Writing should be looked at as an

active skill of language learning/teaching and as a crucial factor in the development of other language skills.

2-Traditional methods of teaching writing should be revised and minimized to the barest minimum.

3-E.F.L students should be given enough theoretical background about writing, its importance, types, methods of learning, methods of improving, etc. Such a background can give momentum in the mainstream of teaching writing.

4-Active writing should be sought. Students should be cautioned against passive and mechanical writing.

5-Students should be involved in situations which require an active and interactive use of writing skills.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

Following in the same vein of the present study, the researcher thinks that more studies are needed to:-

1-Investigate the effect of cooperative learning on development in writing of university students.

2-Investigate the effect of intensive/extensive reading on developing writing skills of university students.

3-Investigate the effect of certain teaching/learning strategies on developing writing of students of a certain educational stage.

4-Design similar programmes using different kinds of strategies for developing writing at different levels.

5-Replicate the suggested programme for other educational stages.

6-Further investigate the difference between males and females in (writing).

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