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**Enhancing EAP students' Academic Writing Skills
and Self Efficacy Through Online Creative Writing
Skills based program**

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Abstract

This research investigated the impact of Moodle cloud program on enhancing the academic writing skills of prep year students, Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University and their Self -Efficacy towards learning. Participants of the research were two groups of students (one served as experimental and one control). Instruments of the research were an academic writing skills' checklist, an EFL Academic writing test, an academic writing skills rubric and a self-efficacy scale. The experimental group was taught using the online Moodle Cloud program and the control group was taught using the regular method. Both tests and scales were post-administered to both groups after the program have been implemented. The results of the research indicated that experimental group outperformed the control one. This showed that the online Moodle cloud program was effective in improving the academic writing skills and developing the Self-Efficacy of the participants. Therefore, it is concluded that applying Moodle cloud is effective in improving the academic writing skills for Engineering Students and enhancing their Self -Efficacy towards learning.

Key words: Moodle cloud – Academic Writing Skills – Self-Efficacy

Introduction

English for academic purposes (EAP) is typically regarded as a branch of ESP. EAP can be focused on acquiring the language and communication skills needed to access subject content related to students' future or current studies (Kennedy, 2001). Thus, EAP can focus on the particular cognitive, linguistic, social, and academic demands of postsecondary contexts, with special attention paid to students' various academic disciplines. The broad aim of EAP courses is to improve the language proficiency of learners as a whole and help them to become competent in the academic skills that will be required in their studies at the university stage (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011).

Writing is regarded as one of the most challenging language skills among EFL students. Archibald (2001, p. 155) said that writing is a skill that needs knowledge and proficiency in many areas. It is a

multidimensional skill. It is a complex skill that results from the interaction of the writer's knowledge, experience, skills and the cognitive demands of the task.

Academic writing is one of the types of writing, it is a particular style used in formal essays and other assessments for a course. It requires formal language, a logical structure and should be supported by evidence. It is a skill that a student will need to learn and develop across the time at university Akkaya, & Aydin, (2018). Academic writing" is a type of writing that starts with the determination of a problem. It applies planning and has technical rules. Academic writing has various types including theses, articles, papers, projects and posters. Deniz and Karagöl, (2017, p. 148).

Harmer (2008) mentioned two purposes for teaching writing as a foreign language to students of English. These two purposes are: first, language development because the process of writing helps the students to learn as they go along. Moreover, constructing proper written texts through mental activities is a part of the long terms learning experiences. Second, writing as a skill because the most basic reason for teaching writing is that, it is an essential language skill like speaking, reading and listening. Students need to know how to write letters, essays, reports and composition.

Investigations have shown that Engineering Students have poor writing proficiency, the reasons for this is that those students encounter problems in most of the academic writing skills i.e. Paraphrasing, summarization, cause and effect and argumentation. The challenges and problems in academic writing faced by engineering students in universities are due to their linguistic and literacy settings. In this research, it was observed that prep - year Engineering Students at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University encounter difficulties in writing academically and have low level of self-efficacy. Thus, the researcher uses the online creative writing program that may contribute to improving their academic writing and self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy plays a significant role in the choices and actions a person may make. People's behaviors can often be predicted by their beliefs about their capabilities of doing something (Bandura, 1989). Research into Self- Efficacy has found that there is a positive relationship between one's level of Self-Efficacy and academic achievement. Pajares (2003). Usually, proficient learners feel more confident and demonstrate a higher level of self-Efficacy than that of less proficient learners. Writers with higher writing Self- Efficacy tend to possess stronger confidence and are more likely to challenge the difficult writing tasks through making greater efforts

needed to resolve the problems (Lavelle, 2006). In academic settings, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in learners' cognition, motivation and actions (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Woodrow (2011) examined the relationship between Chinese EFL learners' writing performance and self-efficacy and found that there was a significant correlation between participants' self-efficacy level and their L2 writing performance.

Creative writing is any form of writing which is written with the creativity of mind: fiction writing, poetry writing, creative non-fiction writing and more. The purpose is to express, whether it be thoughts, experiences or emotions. The purpose of creative writing is not simply giving information: it is a form of writing poetry or prose which is written with the creativity of mind, the purpose is to express something, in a most unusual way, to show the flow of feelings, thoughts, or emotions. But the two kinds of creative writing/good or bad/may affect the reader positively and negatively. Good creative writing should contain all the mentioned qualities, bad creative writing lacks those qualities (Menand 2009).

Finally, creative writing is one approach of teaching writing which has become more familiar in recent era, and is used in most of the English Language classrooms in recent times. According to Maley (2009), some benefits of creative writing for learners are that: It aids language development at all levels, such as grammatical, vocabulary, phonology and discourse. Also, creative writing tends to develop self-confidence and self-esteem among learners. Also

The application of modern technology represents a significant advance in contemporary English language teaching methods. (Nasser, 2017) mentioned that E-learning is a teaching process that integrates any form of technology, it describes an educational setting in which teaching and learning takes place within an internet-based environment. E-learning makes the process of learning interactive and collaborative. The use of modern technology in teaching English is broadly understood to encompass an innovative application of methods, tools, materials, devices, systems, and strategies which are directly relevant to English language teaching and lead to the achievement of the desired goals. Ahmadi (2018). The purpose of both traditional and modern technologies is to maximize students' English skills and provide a space where learning can be best facilitated. One of the ultimate goals of using modern technology is to actively engage them students in language learning and motivate them to acquire English language skills in a practical and realistic way, Alqahtani (2019).

Review of Literature and Related Studies

Academic writing was defined as a tool of communication that conveys acquired knowledge in a specific field of study. It helps students to analyze, summarize, convey understanding, think critically and focus on technique and style. It is a means of producing, codifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge in academic disciplines. Academic Writing (AW) is any written work or assignment given to students in any academic setting and is a central component of teaching and learning in any higher education context. Some studies have examined the effectiveness of using online creative writing skills program to enhance Engineering students' academic writing and self-efficacy. Some studies have encountered some challenges of academic writing; some studies have displayed creative writing as a good strategy for developing academic writing and self-efficacy. Studies also showed self-efficacy as a significant method in sustaining students' achievements, motivation and perception in various subjects where teacher employed it as an alternative for the traditional methods.

Ellen (2006) explored the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance. The researcher used low self-efficacy scale. The sample was evaluated according to two measures: a holistic rubric and a surface rubric. Results indicated that there is a positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance according to the two rubrics.

Al-Khasawneh (2010) investigated the academic writing problems of the Arab postgraduate students of the College of Business at University Utara Malaysia and provide solutions to these problems. For this purpose, four research questions were posed and the answers to these questions were provided and discussed. The data for the study were collected via (face-to-face) interviews. The informants of this study were postgraduate students from the College of Business at University Utara Malaysia for the academic year 2008-2009. The findings of the study revealed that the students faced problems in relation to vocabulary register, organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, and referencing.

Randolph (2011) suggested using creative writing as a bridge to enhance academic writing; the study concluded that students in level four, the intermediate level, had difficulty in developing their ideas in paragraphs and making the ideas coherent, clear, and organized. With the help of creative writing, these three difficulties are addressed and students seem to overcome their former issues with writing stylistics, critical thinking and the development of ideas.

Abu Steit (2011) explored the effectiveness of a suggested self - efficacy based program in developing EFL writing skills with its four components (content, organization, language and mechanics) and reducing writing apprehension among preparatory school students. The participants of the study were 42 prep school female students. Results revealed that the students achieved more gains in their EFL writing skills with its four components and reduced their writing apprehension. To sum up, the self - efficacy based program was effective in developing students' EFL writing skills and reducing writing apprehension.

Sarkhoush (2013) conducted a study in order to investigate whether pupils' writing performance was related to self-efficacy in writing. Three instruments were used to collect data (writing apprehension test, self-efficacy writing scale, and a questionnaire on attitudes towards writing). The results indicated that self-efficacy is related to writing performance and pupils with high self-efficacy perform better in writing than those with lower self-efficacy.

Shumow (2014) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and writing achievement. Nine classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. Questionnaires and measures were the instruments used in the study. Results indicated that there is a positive correlation among writing self-efficacy and writing achievement. Lien (2015) aimed to enhance students' writing skills through Moodle-based blended EFL writing course, a group of forty-one students, second-year English majors at Hue University of Foreign Language was chosen to implement the research. From the results, it can be concluded that the Moodle-based blended course plays a significant role in enhancing students' writing skills. The Moodle-based blended writing course plays a useful role in improving students' writing.

Rus (2015) conducted a study on developing technical writing skills to engineering students. The objectives of the study are to introduce, define and explain the task of writing technical documents and highlight the importance of types of texts in the activities related to an engineer's specific responsibilities. The results of the study showed that by ensuring that students can constantly exercise their writing skills in a variety of real contexts, starting from guided writing (note completion, summaries, fill- in, closes) to more complicated tasks, the students will acquire the necessary experience, both theoretically and practically, which will enable them to function adequately in a professional environment.

Pawliczak (2015) conducted a study on the importance of using creative writing tasks in the academic environment. The sample group

consisted of 33 students (both male and female) at the age between 19 and 22. They were at their first year of BA degree full time studies. University of Lodz, Poland. The study concluded that creative writing activities are really the best way to improve writing skills of the students.

Ibrahim (2017) conducted a study on teaching academic writing for engineering students. The study looks into some of the problems and challenges facing engineering university students in Malaysia in academic writing. It also proposed recommendations and strategies which will alleviate these problems. The respondents in the research are students in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University Teknologi Malaysia. The results of the study showed that the engineering students' academic writing had been improved. Because of being a productive skill, which sometime seems difficult to acquire to the learners. There are many approaches to teach writing. Creative writing is one approach of teaching writing which has become more familiar in recent era.

ŞENEL (2018) conducted a study to prove that creative writing is an effective way in terms of improving academic success. The sampling of this study consisted of 15 students who were studying in B2 module (Vantage) at English Preparation School at Beykent University. The study revealed the fact that students' academic writing skills developed to a great extent when they received creative writing training. The increase in the rate of academic success leads to boost self-esteem and contributes to students' personal development. the study also revealed that creative writing approach significantly increased students' academic success and creative writing training had a positive effect on students' writing skills. The students gained confidence in their writing. They could start to see how ideas build off of one another and how ideas support each other in a tight and logical fashion.

El-Maghraby (2021) conducted a research; the main purpose is to investigate the effectiveness of implementing blended learning using Moodle to enhance writing skills. Sixty-first-year Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation students at Misr University for Science and Technology (MUST) participated in the research, in which the experimental group was taught writing skills using Moodle-based blended learning methods, while the control group – without blended learning (traditional face to-face class). The findings showed that student responses and attitudes to blended learning activities in the writing course were positive, and gradually the performance of students in writing has generally improved as a result of the Moodle-based blended learning.

Siti (2022) designed a research to assess the impact of Moodle based on academic flow on EFL learners' writing skills. The study recruited 69 second-year English Education Department as the sample population. This study used an easy writing test. The findings revealed that EFL students' writing skills were improved by using Moodle in an EFL virtual classroom rather than using conventional methods. These findings consistently favored the experimental groups. Moodle helped EFL university students to improve their writing skill.

Statement of the problem

Based on literature review, results of the pilot study and the researcher experience, it was found that the prep year students, Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University, had many difficulties in academic writing in addition to having low-level self-efficacy. Thus, students need improvement in their EFL academic writing skills and self-efficacy. Accordingly, the current study suggests an online creative writing skills program to enhance students' academic writing skills and self-efficacy.

Questions

The current research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the academic writing skills necessary for the prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University?
2. What are the features of the online creative writing skills' program to enhance academic writing skills and self- efficacy among the prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University?
3. To what extent will the online creative writing skills program enhance academic writing skills of the prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University?
4. To what extent will the online creative writing skills program enhance self-efficacy among the prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University?

Hypotheses

In order to reach the purpose of the research the following hypotheses were formulated:

- There is a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group on the post administration of the academic writing test in favor of the experimental group.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level between the mean scores of the experimental group pre and post administrations of the academic writing test in favor of the post

administration.

- There is a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level between the mean score of the experimental group pre-post administrations of the self-efficacy scale in favor of the post administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group on the post administration of the self-efficacy scale in favor of the experimental group.

Significance

The current research would contribute to:

- 1- Help the students to learn new strategies based on the online creative writing skills program.
- 2- Raising the awareness of English instructors about the necessity of training students in strategies that improve their academic writing skills.
- 3- Introducing an online creative writing skills-based program to enhance academic writing.
- 4- Directing the attention of EFL specialists to the importance of using online creative writing skills -based programs in enhancing self-efficacy.
- 5- Providing preparatory year teachers with a teacher's guide on how to teach AW using an online CW skill -based program.

Delimitations

The current research will proceed within the following delimitations:

1. A sample of sixty prep year students, Engineering Students at Faculty of Engineering, Mansura University.
2. Some academic writing skills such as paraphrasing, summarization, argumentation and discussions and compare and contrast that should be mastered among prep year, Engineering Students at Faculty of Engineering, Mansura University.
3. A text book (ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS).
4. Moodle Cloud E. Learning platform.

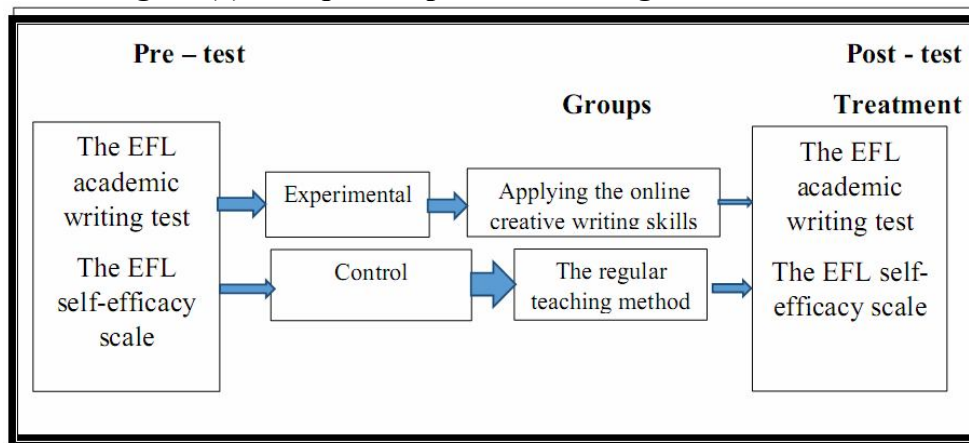
Methodology

Design

The research adopted the quasi-experimental design using two groups; an experimental and a control group. The experimental group received the online creative writing skills program, while the control group received the regular training. Both groups received the pre and post –

administration of the writing test and self –efficacy scale. The following figure illustrates the quasi-experimental design of the research:

Figure (1) The quasi-experimental design of the research



Participants

The participants are sixty (N=60) prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansura University. The age of those students ranges from (18-19 years.).

Instruments

The following instruments were designed and used:

1. An academic writing skills' checklist to identify the required academic writing skills that should be mastered by prep year, Engineering Students at the Faculty of Engineering, Mansura University.
2. An EFL Academic writing test to assess the students' level before and after the treatment.
3. A rubric will be designed to score and assess students' writing performance.
4. A self-efficacy scale to estimate the students' academic writing self-efficacy before and after the treatment.

Definitions of Terms

Academic writing

Academic writing is a type of writing that starts with the determination of a problem. It applies planning and has technical rules. Academic writing is often written about discussing cause and effect, comparing two points, discussing a solution, introducing a project, summarizing information, reporting a research or experiment (Boardman and Frydenberg, 2002, cited

in Bayat, 2014). In this research, academic writing can be operationally defined as the students' ability to write an academic paper in a proper way using appropriate academic writing skills i.e., Summarization, paraphrasing, argumentation and discussion, and cause and effect.

Self-efficacy

Richards and Schmidt (2010) defined Self-efficacy as “a person's beliefs in their own capabilities and ability to attain specific goals. The learners' sense of efficacy affects their motivation to learn, the goals they set, the effort they devote to attaining these goals and their willingness to persist in facing difficulty”. Bong & Skaalvik (2003) pointed out that self-efficacy is what people believe they can do with whatever skills and abilities they possess. In this research, Self-efficacy can be operationally defined as the students' positive beliefs about their writing capabilities regarding their mastery of ideation and organization skills, writing conventions skills, and self-regulation skills that enable them to complete the writing task with the acceptable level of performance.

Creative writing

Harmer (2001) defined creative writing as a term which implies “imaginative tasks, such as writing poetry, stories and plays.” Creative writing normally refers to the production of texts which have an aesthetic rather than a purely informative, instrumental or pragmatic purpose. Letters, journal entries, blogs, essays, travelogues, etc. can also be defined as creative writing. Creative Writing can be defined as the writing that expresses the writer's thoughts and feelings in an imaginative, often unique, and poetic way. This type of writing is guided more by the writer's need to express feelings and ideas than by restrictive demands of factual and logical progression of expository writing (Lukiv, 2006). Creative writing refers to the production of texts which have an aesthetic rather than a purely informative, instrumental or pragmatic purpose. Most of the time, such texts take the form of poems or stories. Creative writing texts have a great deal with intuition, imagination and personal memories (Maley, 2009). In this research, creative writing can be operationally defined as a form of writing that expresses feelings, thoughts or ideas in an imaginative way. It provides the learners new ways to play with the language. It enhances not only the writing skills of the learners but also it helps learners to improve all the language skills.

Creative writing is characterized by originality, clarity of focus, well-organized, clear ideas and relevant topic and unique writing style.

Results of the Research

The findings of the research can be summarized as follows:

1. The experimental group students have performed higher compared to their counterparts of the control group on the academic writing skills test. This was revealed by the significant differences between the mean scores of the groups. Thus, the Moodle Cloud program improved the prep year, Engineering Students' academic writing skills.
2. The experimental group students' mean scores in the post administration of the academic writing skills test were higher than their mean score in the pre-administration of the test.
3. The experimental group students have performed better compared to their counterparts of the control in the post administration of the Self- Efficacy scale towards learning academic writing skills.
4. The experimental group students outperformed their counterparts of the control group in the post administration of the Self- Efficacy towards academic writing skills.
5. The experimental group students' mean scores in the post administration of the Self -Efficacy scale towards learning writing skills were better than their mean score in the pre-administration of the scale. This showed that training students through Moodle Cloud program has developed their Self -Efficacy towards learning writing skills.

Conclusions

The current research concluded that improving the academic writing skills are possible through Moodle Cloud method. This research through the treatment that was conducted, has established the fact that the Moodle Cloud program has generally showed significant impact on the academic students' Self- Efficacy. Therefore, Moodle Cloud program is an effective way of teaching academic writing skills to prep year students, at Faculty of Engineering, Mansoura University. Thus, it also improved their Self- Efficacy towards learning these skills.

Applying Moodle Cloud in education is also an essential way for teachers to activate their students' schemata in the class, and avoid putting them to learn in duress and class boredom. This provides a stress free learning environment where they can improve their skills, have fun for learning and develop their Self -Efficacy towards learning the skills.

Finally, the Moodle Cloud program provided a various learning environment for the students. It helped them with conductive and favorable

learning environment that was seen in academic writing skills. Also, the Self-Efficacy level of the students was improved due to the different activities. Moodle Cloud also encouraged low achievers and shy students to embrace learning tasks with enthusiasm to contribute and participate actively during the session.

Recommendations

In the light of the results and conclusions of this research, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1- Academic writing skills should receive more attention by EFL instructors.
- 2- Instructors should be trained to use online programs in teaching and testing.
- 3- Appropriate e-teaching tools ought to be selected carefully while teaching academic writing.
- 4- Educational courses of academic writing skills should be enriched with means of handling the difficulties that students face.
- 5- Students' needs of academic writing skills should be discussed in detail to define the weaknesses and strengths to be considered in building future academic writing curricula.
- 6- Course designers should define the course goals, select content, teaching methods, tools and other materials, plan to use instructional technology or multimedia equipment, plan assignments and exams. Finally evaluate and revise the course.

Suggestions for Further research

The following researches could be suggested:

- 1- Similar researches can be applied using other academic writing skills.
- 2- Adopting other web tools in enhancing academic writing skills.
- 3- Designing other courses for developing other language skills.
- 4- Further studies and researches are needed about online testing and providing online feedback to learners by their instructors.
- 5- More attention should be given to more EFL computer programs which can be applied to academic writing skills and other EFL skills.

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