The Effect Of Corpora On Improving Secondary Stage Students' English language Narrative Writing

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of utilizing corpora in improving narrative writing skills among first-year secondary students. The study aimed at examining the impact of corpusbased instruction on enhancing students' narrative writing proficiency and their ability to effectively employ narrative elements. The research followed a single-group experimental design, with the experimental group receiving narrative writing instruction supplemented with corpus-based activities. The sample comprises first-year secondary students from a selected school, who were exposed to the experimental treatment for a specified duration. The pre- post-test was administered to both assess the students' initial narrative writing abilities and measure their progress following the corpus-based instruction. Additionally, a rubric is employed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the students' narrative writing quality, coherence, organization, language usage, and creativity.

The quantitative data collected through the pre-posttest and rubric assessments are analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and effect size calculations. The narrative written by the students in the group before and after the treatment were compared. The study's results have potential implications for language educators and curriculum developers, offering evidence-based recommendations for incorporating corpora into the teaching of narrative writing. The findings can inform instructional strategies

and materials that enhance students' narrative writing proficiency, fostering their linguistic development and creative expression.

Keywords: corpora, narrative writing, secondary education, corpus-based instruction, pre-posttest, rubric assessment, writing skills, language proficiency, instructional strategies.

1. Introduction

Writing is the most difficult skill as it goes through various processes including, Prewriting, writing, and editing to get the final product. Additionally, writing requires thinking and cognitive processes in order to be produced, that is why mastering the writing skill appears to be more difficult and demanding than mastering the other language skills.

Due to their lack of experience, lack of confidence, lack of ideas, lack of vocabulary, wrong grammar, and likely improper punctuation, the majority of EFL students make writing mistakes and become anxious when asked to speak or write.

For this reason, helping students successfully acquire the writing talent requires the analysis of errors and an understanding of their sources.

According to (JOHNSON, 2015), narrative is also employed to create descriptions of events that must follow a consistent, chronological, and logical sequence. Additionally, narrative writing is based on personal experiences, frequently takes the form of a story, and is told from a specific point of view, often in first

person, so, there is emotion as well as specific and frequently sensory details provided to engage the reader in the story's plot and elements. It gives authors a chance to consider and express who they are and their experiences.

When writing narratives, ESL students often struggle with issues such writing fluency, cohesive ties, accuracy, organisation, and mechanics. Thinking in another language and translating into English is one of the challenges in learning to write fluently. Another issue they consider when writing is worrying about grammar correctness.

(Halim, 2010) refers to the problem of cohesion and coherence in narrative essays as producing a coherent piece of writing is extremely difficult for EFL students who still struggle with cohesion and coherence in their English essay writing.

(**Diyyab**, **2013**) indicates that the focus of EFL classes is currently shifting from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Along with this change, language teachers have used a variety of resources to give their students the knowledge and abilities that will enable them to be more independent and autonomous in their learning. In order to help learners take control of their own learning, most recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have given them access to a variety of tools in the form of computer- or Internet-based resources. In addition to offering a variety of potential answers that help advance the teaching and learning of English as a foreign

language. The way individuals teach and learn has altered as a result of the integration of modern technology into conventional face-to-face classrooms.

With the development of information technology, the use of corpora would be one potential means of achieving this goal. The term "corpora" refers to the electronic authentic natural language database(s) that are accessible over the Internet or stored on personal computers (**Zoranic, 2015**). In this context, (**Chen, 2004**) illustrates that Language corpora are collections of spoken or written materials; for instance, collections of written texts can include passages from published or unpublished school essays, business letters, popular fiction, books, and periodicals. Collections of spoken texts can include any recorded formal or informal talks, radio shows, weather reports, business meetings, and more.

A student can use a corpus very easily by following a single, straightforward step in which they input a search term to have the machine create concordance lines. These listings show each instance of a word or structure in a database along with a brief description on each side. These are the lines via which data is examined (Dazdarevic, 2015).

2. Statement of the problem

The problem is that the EFL first year secondary students are poor writers, particularly, in writing narratives; therefore, this study seeks to use corpora to enhance the students' narrative writing.

3. Aim of the research

The research aims at improving students' narrative writing by providing an access for EFL learners to the adequate authentic language examples or contexts of how the word can be used in real life situation through using the corpora .

4. Research Questions

The Main Question

What is the effect of using corpora on developing secondary students' narrative writing?

In answering the above main question, the following sub-questions will be also answered.

- 1-What is secondary students' current level of EFL narrative writing?
- 2-What are the EFL narrative writing skills required for EFL secondary students?
- 3-What are the features of a corpora-based program designed for developing secondary students' narrative writing?
- 4-What is the effect of using the learner corpora on improving the secondary students' narrative writing?

5. Methodology

5.1. Research design

A mixed research methodology was used in this study, in other words, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was used in this one group pre-poat design study.

5.2. Participants

Thirty students were randomly selected at Cairo School in Marg, Qalyobeya Governorate, Egypt. All students are enrolled at the 1st secondary stage and their age ranges are between 14 and 16 years old. They are a mixed class selected randomly as one intact class. They have been studying English for 9 years and some of them came from a prep language school, but the rest of the participants finished their prep stage at private Arabic school.

5.3. Duration of the Treatment

The experiment lasted for four weeks, an equivalent of 30 hours approximately.

5.4. Instruments

The following instruments were used in this study:

- 1 .narrative writing pre-posttest test
- 2. A narrative writing rubric

Data sources

7. Implementing the experiment of the study

7.1 .Pre – Testing

Before teaching the program, the assigned participants were pretested using the writing test.

7.2 .Teaching the program

After the pre testing procedure, the researcher taught the suggested program. The overall duration of the experiment 24 hours, divided into 12 sessions, three sessions a week. Each session lasted for two hours.

The first session of the program was an introductory session. The researcher introduced herself to the students and tried to present the whole program, she explained in detail the aims of the program and told the participants how the study would go on. Nearly all participants had a negative attitude towards writing. The researcher knew well that was normal and predictable in this stage as they were struggling to write any type of writing properly. Therefore, she told them that the program would give them a chance to consider the importance of corpora activities on enhancing their abilities to write narratives properly and improve their level of English as a whole. She clarified how improving their narrative writing would help them in their study and in their lives after graduation. The researcher herself conducted the experiment. She did her best to help students to become autonomous and responsible for their learning.

Concerning the rest of the sessions, different activities were introduced to encourage students to reflect on their learning and develop the required narrative writing skills by critically viewing various corpus resources and easily use the concordance lines and analyze sentences and phrases in them collaboratively.

Some challenges were encountered during the experimentation; one of them was that students had no idea about what narrative writing meant or what narrative writing skills and components are, to solve this problem, the researcher gave extra time (two sessions) and explained narrative writing meaning, skills, techniques, and structure. The researcher provided the students with the narrative writing charts and explained each component of it. The researcher also explained the importance pre-writing stage and brainstorming.

Another problem was time. As the program completely depends on collaborative learning as learners need to write and explore the corpora on their own in addition to analyzing what they read in the corpora took a lot of time. Therefore, it was essential for the researcher to help participants to manage their time by timing every activity, performing some tasks as home assignments, monitoring participants' progress in fulfilling tasks and guiding them to solve problems.

During the program, the researcher encouraged the students to work collaboratively in pairs and in groups to do the tasks and activities and discuss ideas together without her interference unless a need to do so, especially when she observed that students not receiving the right feedback from each other and here she offered her view as an advisor.

7.3 .Post – Testing

After implementing the experiment, the post- test of narrative writing was administered to the participants, the differences between the mean of scores were identified by doing specific calculation.

8. Results of the Study

8.1. Quantitative results

8.1.1. Testing the validity of the first hypothesis

The first hypothesis of the current study is "There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students in the overall narrative writing skills of the pre-test and the post-test, in favor of the post-test".

To check the validity of this hypothesis, the researcher calculated students' narrative Writing scores in the pre/post-tests using Paired Samples T-test (SPSS, Version 27).

Table (2.2): Paired Samples Statistics for the overall narrative writing skill pre/post-tests

				Std.	t-	P-	
		Ν	Mean				Effect >=0.14
		Т		Deviation	value	value	
Writing	Pre	30	8.73	4.59			0.88
					15.07	0.000	
Skills							
SKIIIS	Post	30	22.28	5.40			Large

As shown in table (4-2), there is a significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=22.28, SD=5.40) and in the pre-test (M=8.73, SD=4.59); T(29) = 15.07, p = 0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there are statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in the overall narrative writing skills in favor of the post-test. This indicates that the objectives of the experiment were achieved in raising the level of the experimental group.

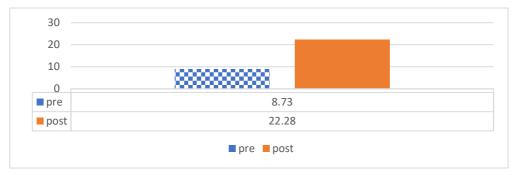


Figure (1) differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in narrative writing skills

8.1.1. Testing the validity of the second hypothesis.

The second hypothesis of the current study is "There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students in each narrative writing sub-skill of the pre-test and the post-test, in favor of the post-test."

Table (2.4): Paired Samples Statistics for the Writing pre/post-tests

Sub-skills		N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value T (29)	P-value (P)	Effect >=014
Content	pre	30	1.36	0.99	11.17	0.000	0.81
	post	30	3.33	1.21			Large
The progression of events in	Pre	30	1.33	0.95			0.80
chronological sequence	Post	30	3.40	1.27	10.17 0.00	0.000	Large
Vocabulary	Pre	30	1.10	0.80	11.48	0.000	0.82
v ocusum y	Post	30	2.93	0.98	11110	0.000	Large
Grammar	Pre	30	1.03	0.71	10.25	0.000	0.80
Grammar	Post	30	2.83	0.98	10.23	0.000	Large
Structure	Pre	30	0.93	0.63	12.63	0.000	0.85
Structure	Post	30	2.58	0.68	12.00	3.000	Large
Narrative features	Pre	30	3.03	1.47	14.46	0.000	0.88
1 (MII WITTO I COUNTY OF	Post	30	7.95	1.45	11110	3.000	Large

As shown in table ,(4.2)

-There is a significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=3.33, SD=1.21) and in the pre-test (M=1.36,

SD=0.99); T (29) = 11.17, p = 0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there are statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in the first section of the rubric "content" that measures (relevance of the content to the task) and (the storyline, characters development, the story beginning and ending, the climax and the story conclusion).

Thus, the corpora -based program was effective in developing content skill in the participants' narratives.

Table (4.2) displays that there is a significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=3.40, SD=1.27) and in the pre-test (M=1.33, SD=0.95); T (29) = 10.17, p = 0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there is statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in the second section of the rubric (The progression of events in chronological sequence), which measures (the logical order of the events to reach a clear conclusion) and ((the organization of events using well-linked sentences and paragraphs). Thus, corpora -based program was effective in developing the participants' ability to write well-linked sentences and paragraphs and to present the events in the order they happen and lead logically from one to another to reach a clear conclusion.

Thus, the corpora -based program was effective in developing the progression of events in chronological sequence skill in the participants' narratives.

Table (4.2) above indicates that there is significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=2.93, SD=0.98) and in the pre-test (M=1.10, SD=0.80); T(29)=11.48, p=0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there is statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in in the third section of the rubric (Vocabulary), which measures (lexis and correct use of sequence words) Thus, corporabased program was effective in developing the participants' ability to use more advanced lexis and sequence words correctly.

Thus, the corpora -based program was effective in developing vocabulary in the participants' narratives.

Table (4.2) displays that there is significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=2.83, SD=0.98) and in the pre-test (M=1.03, SD=0.71); T (29) = 10.25, p = 0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there is statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in the fourth section of the rubric (Grammar), which measures (using variety of complex and simple sentences with very few grammar mistakes).

Thus, corpora-based program was effective in developing the participants' ability to use a variety of complex and simple sentences with very few grammar mistakes in their narratives.

Table (4.2) above indicates that there is significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=2.58, SD=0.68) and in the pre-test (M=0.93, SD=0.63); T(29)=12.63, p=0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there is statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in the fifth section of the rubric (Structure), which measures (the story's organization in well-structured paragraphs using cohesive devices) . Thus, corpora-based program was effective in developing the participants' ability to write well-organized paragraphs and correctly employ conjunctive adverbs or other cohesive tools .

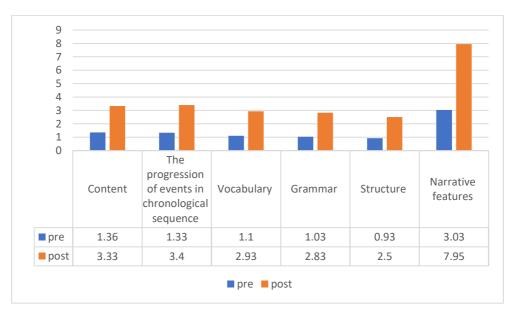
Thus, the corpora -based program was effective in developing structure in the participants' narratives.

Table (4.2) above indicates that there is a significant difference between the scores of the students in the post-test (M=7.95, SD=1.45) and in the pre-test (M=3.03, SD=1.47); T(29)=14.46, p=0.000. The significance of T is (0.000), which is smaller than (0.05), and this means that there are statistically significant differences between students' scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test in narrative features,

These statistical results suggest that the second hypothesis is accepted according to the scores given by the experimental group.

The above tables show that "t" calculated value of the narrative writing skills distributed on the five sections of the narrative writing rubric varied from each other but confirmed to be significant at the level of (0.05). Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the study participants' mean scores on the pre and posttests in each narrative writing skill in favor of the post test. Thus, the second hypothesis of the study is verified. This is clearly illustrated in figure.(4.2)

Figure (4.2) differences between students 'mean scores of the post-test and those of the pre-test of the narrative writing scoring rubric sections.



4.1.3 The Effect size

To measure the total effect of the suggested program (Corpora – based program) on developing the overall narrative writing skills, Eta square (Π 2) value was calculated.

skills	tc	ETA- Square	strength
As a whole	15.07	0.88	Large

The results of table (4-3) show that the effect size of the test was (0.88), which is greater than the minimum ETA squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an effect of the suggested program on improving the overall narrative writing skills.

skills	Тс	ETA- Square	strength
Content	11.17	0.81	Large

The results of table (4-4) indicate that the size of the impact of the content skill reached (0.81), which is greater than the minimum for ETA squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the content skills.

Skills	Тс	ETA- Square	strength
The progression			
of events in	10.17	0.80	Larga
chronological	10.17	0.80	Large
sequence			

The results of table (4-5) show that the size of the impact of the progression of events in chronological sequence skill reached (0.80),

which is greater than the minimum for Eta squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the progression of events in chronological sequence skills.

Skills	Тс	ETA- Square	strength
Vocabulary	11.48	0.82	Large

The results of table (4-6) show that the size of the impact of the Vocabulary skill reached (0.82), which is greater than the minimum for ETA squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the Vocabulary skills.

Skills	Тс	ETA- Square	Strength
Grammar	10.25	0.80	Large

The results of table (4-7) show that the size of the impact of the Grammar skill reached (0.80), which is greater than the minimum for Eta squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the Grammar skills.

Skills	Тс	ETA- Square	Strength
Structure	12.63	0.85	Large

The results of table (4-8) show that the size of the impact of the Structure skill reached (0.85), which is greater than the minimum for Eta squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the Structure skills

Skills	Тс	ETA- Square	Strength
Narrative features	14.46	0.86	Large

The results of table (4-8) indicate that the size of the impact of the Narrative features skill reached (0.86), which is greater than the minimum for ITA squared of (0.14), and this indicates that there is an impact of the suggested program on improving the Narrative features.

9. Discussion of Results

9.1. Quantitative results

Results of the present study showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group participants on the pre and posttest in overall narrative writing skills in favor of the scores of the students' posttest. Thus, corpora - based program helped to develop the participants' narrative writing skills. This might be attributed to the safe and enjoyable environment by using corpora. Also, corpora activities used during the sessions were engaging and that enabled the participants to write without anxiety in a communicative context that made them confident and open for participation using the target language. This result is consistent with the study of (Smirnova, 2017).

Among narrative writing skills rubric sections, structure took the first place in improvement with calculated "t" value (12.63) with (29) degrees of freedom at the (0.05) level of significance. This means that the structure skills represented in this rubric section (organizing the story in well-structured paragraphs and using cohesive devices) were the most developed skills. This might be because they were introduced

from the first sessions and that enabled participants to practise them more frequently than the skills presented in the subsequent sessions.

Vocabulary section took the second place in improvement with calculated "t" value (11.48) with (29) degrees of freedom at the (0.05) level of significance. This signifies that participants' use of advanced lexis and sequence words took the second place in improvement. This might be a justification for the idea that exposing learners to KWIC allowed them not only to identify the most frequent language phenomena but also to expand their vocabulary.

content came in the third place with calculated "t" value (11.17) with (29) degrees of freedom at the (0.05) level of significance. Participants got the chance to practise writing their narratives putting into consideration the narrative writing main elements (the storyline, characters development, the story beginning and ending, the climax and the story conclusion). Thus, the skill of writing a perfect content relevant to the task could have been more improved if give more time of practice.

Grammar that represents the skill of (using variety of complex and simple sentences), came fourthly in improvement with calculated "t" value (10.25) with (29) degrees of freedom at the (0.05) level of significance. Through concordance lines exploration, participants were exposed to the experience of analyzing sentences and phrases. This exposure followed by their analysis helped to improve their use of grammar. Thus, corpora-based program was effective in developing the participants' ability to use a variety of complex and simple sentences with very few grammar mistakes.

Finally, the progression of events in chronological sequence section was improved with calculated "t" value (10.17) with (29) degrees of freedom at the (0.05) level of significance. The progression of events in chronological sequence rubric section reflects the improvement in the skills of organizing of events using and paragraphs. Throughout well-linked sentences administration of the program, the researcher linked words according to the purpose to be explained to the participants explicitly. Using these skills needs more time for practice to be improved. And, consequently, this skill was not extremely developed. Thus, participants would have reached more improvement if exposed to more exposure to real narratives in the corpora.

The overall effect size of the corpora-based program is large (15.07). This might be attributed to increasing the search tasks mandated by students to perform at home, which resulted in increasing the time of the administration and the number of corpora search activities.

The statistical analysis results for the overall narrative writing skill between the students' mean scores on the pre and post-test in favor of the scores of the posttest. depict the effect of using corpora on enhancing 1st secondary stage students' narrative writing. Similarly, the statistical analysis results for the five narrative writing skills measured throughout this study indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in each of the narrative writing skills between the students' mean scores on the pre and

post-test in favor of the scores of the posttest. Therefore, using corpora can effectively enhance 1st secondary stage students' narrative writing skills.

9.2. Qualitative Results

9.2.1. participants' feedback

Qualitative data collected from participants included participants' feedback after each session. The participant feedback from each session assisted the researcher in adjusting the following sessions to the needs and preferences of the participants. The information gathered showed how the participants felt about the program overall and how they approached this learning opportunity. The researcher invited participants to submit their opinion about the session, stressing the aspects they appreciated the most and any suggestions they had for the next session, at the conclusion of each session. Participants' feedback revealed their general impressions of each session as well as their self-reflection regarding the new learning experience.

9.2.2. Observation

Throughout the sessions, the researcher noticed the following:

1. Students tended to use Arabic and unable to communicate in English during the sessions and that was obvious in the first session when the researcher introduced herself and asked each one to introduce themselves, they didn't understand what she said and she had to speak Arabic to give them a general idea about the program.

- 2. She asked them to try to understand her while giving instructions in English, they felt nervous, further, they said that their teachers used to give them instructions in Arabic and would not be able to understand the researcher if the session was completely in English, as a result the researcher had to use of the target language along with Arabic.
- 4. When asking students about their problems related to English, all of them mentioned the same problems such as grammar and writing, some consider lack of vocabulary was the greatest problem as it made them unable to translate into English.

To conclude, the following point summarizes the students 'attitude towards English before and at the first three sessions of the administration

- 1. They could not express themselves using English.
- 2. They felt shy and nervous to use English with their teachers or classmates
- 3. They thought in Arabic before writing English
- 4. They could not fully understand a teacher who spoke in English for five minutes.

10.Conclusion

There are few studies conducted in Egypt to develop EFL narrative writing skills using the corpora instruction. The current study aimed at investigating the effect of a program based on corpora on developing EFL students' narrative writing skills . To investigate the effectiveness of the program, the researcher implemented several instruments to the study.

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that:

- Using corpora was highly influential in enhancing first-year secondary students' narrative writing. This was obvious after administering the post narrative writing test. It was also apparent through the students' gradual development throughout the experimentation. Furthermore, skills have not been equally developed due to a number of factors. Additionally, participants showed satisfaction about the proposed program and expressed their intention to apply corpora with their future studies.
- Using enjoyable corpora collaborative activities ensured that all students actively participate in the learning process as they felt that their learning was valuable and authentic.
- Integrating ICT skills into students' collaborative writing activities motivated students and increased their willingness to participate in the learning process. Additionally, interpreting and evaluating concordance lines resources enabled them to raise their awareness of corpora as an instructional tool in EFL.
- This study highlights the potential of using corpora as a valuable resource for language analysis, vocabulary enrichment, and enhancing narrative techniques.
- It is worth mentioning that the program could be more effective if applied for a longer period

Findings obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the corpora were effective in developing the first-year secondary narrative writing skills.

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