

Impact of Reading-to-Write Tasks on EFL Learners' Use of Grammatical Accuracy

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Received: September 09, 2023 Accepted: April 16, 2024

Abstract

This study aimed to assess how reading-to-write instruction affected Iranian intermediate EFL students' discourse traits. To achieve this aim, sixty EFL learners were selected through OPT. They were divided into two groups: a reading-to-write group and a writing-only group, respectively. Pre- and post-writing exams were administered to both groups before and after the intervention. For intervention, reading-to-write tasks were assigned to both the writing-only task and the reading-to-write task group. The treatment lasted ten sessions in which the procedures for this inquiry were completed. The results derived from the analysis of the obtained data demonstrated that the grammatical accuracy of the post-test performance was significantly impacted by reading-to-write tasks. This study has some implications for teachers and syllabus designers to design appropriate grammatical accuracy reading to write tasks.

Keywords: Reading-to-write, Writing-only tasks, Grammatical accuracy

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of teaching English to non-native speakers (ESL/EFL), the enhancement of writing skills is an undisputed subject among scholars. Writing proficiency is seen as a model that employs various forms of language for effective interpersonal communication, holding a tangible impact on our lives (Weigle, 2002). Steinlen (2018) suggests that learners should strive to master and cultivate this skill, as it serves as a yardstick for academic achievement and success in higher education. To augment interpersonal communication, it's crucial to consider discourse aspects when aiming to refine writing abilities.

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Educators employing integrated reading-towrite programs can aid in advancing students' language proficiency, particularly in writing. The creation of accurate, coherent, and substantial text is a highly intricate and demanding task (Biria & Jafari, 2013). Proficiency in writing is an indispensable and integral facet of language learning. The reading-to-write task serves not only as an exemplar of adept writing (Turbill & Bean, 2006) but also as a means to enhance writing education (Qin & Liu, 2021), making it a valuable tool. This approach has recently gained substantial attention in the realm of second language acquisition (SLA). Consequently, the interaction between readers and authors isn't passive monologue,



traditionally perceived, but rather an interactive dialogue wherein thoughts and messages are reciprocally transformed (Chastain, 1988), diverging from the conventional view of readers and writers as passive listeners. Proficiency in reading and writing is thus a vital prerequisite sustaining for today's interconnected global communities that heavily rely on swift information exchange (Weigle, 2013). Competent reading and writing are imperative for the functioning of our interconnected world. These proficiencies are pivotal in L2 education and are acknowledged as vital skills for educational, professional, and personal purposes (Gebril & Plakans, 2013; Koda, 2005; Weigle, 2013), a sentiment shared by Gebril & Plakans (2013), Koda (2005), Weigle (2013).

In the context of second language learning, reading and writing are designed to achieve two overarching goals: enhancing language comprehension and production, and improving interpersonal interaction and lifelong language acquisition. To establish semantic and logical connections within discourse, conversational elements are useful in linking prior and current information, fostering coherence between sentences and paragraphs (Kalajahi & Abdullah, 2012). These discourse elements also create valuable links between sentences and paragraphs. Coherence and cohesion are essential for well-organized text construction, akin to arranging bricks to form a coherent structure. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), a text encompasses various sentence and grammatical units, extending beyond a mere string of phrases (p. 291).

The current study explores four primary aspects of language use: fluency, syntactic complexity, grammatical accuracy, and lexical sophistication. Writing fluency denotes the ability to generate extensive and well-structured content, measured by production duration. Syntactic complexity pertains to the variety and intricacy of sentence structures (Ortega, 2003; Pallotti, 2015); grammatical accuracy involves precise application of sentence structure; and lexical sophistication is gauged by the frequency of uncommon words in a sample (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Kyle & Crossley, 2015).

Given the significance of writing skills, limited research exists regarding effectiveness of integrated and independent writing tasks on discourse elements (Brown, et al., 1991; Gebril, 2009). These studies highlight the superiority of integrated writing tasks over isolated ones. For instance, Cumming, et al. (2005) compared product-oriented and processoriented writing tasks, discovering that taskbased writing is more effective in promoting grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity. Task impact on language performance, particularly on grammatical accuracy as a discourse feature, remains largely unexplored (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012). In fact, studies focusing on discourse during readingto-writing tasks are scarce, and there's little contrast between reading-to-write and writingonly tasks' effects on Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy (e.g. Davatgari Asl & Moradinejad, 2016). Thus, the present study aims to assess the potential effect of readingto-write and writing-only tasks on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' grammatical accuracy, bridging research gaps.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, the perception of reading and writing has evolved from passive or product-centered tasks to purpose-driven, engaged, and socially embedded pursuits, as indicated by contemporary research (Bernhardt, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Moreover, it's widely recognized that reading and writing are communal rather than solitary endeavors, taking place within a broader community context (McKay, 2002). Therefore, placing greater emphasis on the communicative and social aspects of reading and writing can result in enhanced language proficiency and more effective communication skills.

Rosenblatt (2018) contends that reading and writing are social tasks marked by collaboration and conversation between the reader and the author. This dynamic process facilitates the exchange and creation of meanings between both parties. Active participation and the integration of unique experiences and goals from both sides are vital to comprehending and producing meaning through reading and

writing. Hyland (2009) echoes this sentiment, asserting that the value of written texts is derived from the collaborative efforts of creators and readers. Additionally, a learner's performance in reading and writing within a second language context, be it English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL), is shaped by their sociocultural background, literacy in their first language (L1), and sociocultural grasp of the target language (Canagarajah, 2002).

In the realm of academic literacy, reading and writing are seen as interconnected skills due to their shared principles and information bases, both functioning as acts of communication. The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing has been acknowledged by Ochoma and Atemie (2022), rooted in their common underlying processes and communicative nature. Grabe and Kaplan (2014) propose that frequent readers tend to be better writers, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the two skills.

Delaney (2008) introduces the concept of reading to write, which involves an interactive process between reading and writing, seen from a constructive perspective. During reading, individuals actively engage with the text by making predictions, drawing conclusions, and leveraging prior knowledge to construct meaning (Van Waes & Schellens, 2020). Similarly, writing employs techniques such as planning, drafting, and revising to effectively communicate thoughts and generate meaning. Reading and writing are intricate cognitive tasks that entail various intertwined abilities and methods (Hyland & Jiang, 2019).

Recent research underscores the significance of analyzing the textual attributes of reading-to-write products to uncover how writers' structure, select, and connect material in their writing. These studies have emphasized the value of examining the textual aspects of reading-to-write outputs, focusing on product characteristics rather than the mental processes involved in the activity. The process involves readers writers utilizing and their comprehension of discourse patterns and textual cues. creating framework, recombining, recognizing, and forging

connections—a process referred as organizing. The selection of information is driven by the reader's or writer's intent in creating content, along with their perspectives and ideas on the subject matter. Ultimately, the connection phase requires integrating acquired textual information with existing knowledge, allowing for inferences and the application of prior understanding (Bernhardt, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; McKay, 2002; Rosenblatt, 2018; Hyland, 2009; Canagarajah, 2002; Ochoma & Atemie, 2022; Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Van Waes & Schellens, 2020; Hyland & Jiang, 2019).

Research on Reading-to-write and Writingonly Tasks

In the context of second language acquisition, numerous studies have explored distinctions and similarities between readingto-write tasks and writing-only assignments. These investigations have delved into several dimensions, including written output, topic impact, language proficiency, and evaluator consistency. Despite the absence of significant differences in overall scores between the two tasks (Brown, Lewkowicz, 1994), the resultant written content demonstrates qualitative distinctiveness (Watanabe, 2001).

Various studies have been conducted to examine the reading-to-writing task in EFL/ESL settings. These studies primarily aimed to identify challenges encountered by learners and potential remedies to enhance their performance. For instance, Liu and Yu (2017) investigated the cognitive processes involved in the reading-to-writing assignment among Chinese EFL students. Results indicated that students' reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and ability to organize ideas significantly impacted the quality of their written work. To enhance writing ability, the authors suggest direct instruction on vocabulary enhancement and reading strategies within EFL classrooms.

Similarly, Zhang and Yang (2020) explored the impact of a pre-task preparation technique on the performance of Chinese EFL learners in a reading-to-writing task. Findings demonstrated that pre-task planning improved learners' writing performance by aiding idea organization and reducing cognitive load. The authors recommend incorporating pre-task preparation tasks into EFL writing instruction to bolster students' writing capabilities.

In a similar vein, Al-Harbi (2018) investigated the reading-to-writing task among Saudi EFL students. The study unveiled challenges related to generating innovative ideas and effectively structuring them in writing. It also highlighted the benefits of explicit training in writing strategies and providing feedback to enhance learners' writing skills. The author underscores the importance of EFL teachers focusing on explicit instruction and feedback to augment writing abilities, as well as integrating reading tasks to stimulate idea generation and enhance organizational skills.

Given the study's aims, the following question was addressed for investigation:

RQ. Does reading-to-write tasks have any significant impact on EFL learners' use of grammatical accuracy?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The present investigation comprised both qualitative and quantitative components, both of which were executed. Out of the total of one hundred students registered in the class, sixty participated in the quantitative segment of the examination. These students were attendees of the Iran-Europe Language Institute, a private language institution in Tehran. By the time of their graduation, they had attained an upperintermediate level of proficiency in the English language. The selection of participants was based on their upper-intermediate classification, primarily due to their stronger writing skills requiring evaluation. Utilizing the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Syndicate, 2001), individuals for the study were identified. They were subsequently divided into two experimental groups: a) those engaged in reading-to-write tasks (comprising 30 participants), and b) participants involved in writing-only tasks (also comprising participants).

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the present study:

Oxford Placement Test: This test was developed in 2001. Its purpose was to standardize students' levels of language competence. The OPT comprised a total of sixty different examinations broken down into three primary categories: reading, grammar, and vocabulary. The examination was given in not one but two modes: cloze tests and multiple-choice examinations.

Writing Pre- and Post-tests

To fulfill the demands of this study, both the pre-test and post-test were structured as essays. Each student was tasked with composing two essays—one for the pre-test and another for the post-test, administered subsequent to the intervention. The written submissions provided by the students underwent evaluation by two distinct raters to establish satisfactory interrater reliability. This approach facilitated an examination of the consistency in learners' scores.

Weigle's Analytic Scale

To analyze the writings completed by the participants, we employed Weigle's analytical scale from 2002. This criterion included the assessment of appropriateness and relevance of the content, along with considerations for accurate spelling, coherence, writing structure, punctuation, and vocabulary usage. Furthermore, raters were instructed to employ this rubric during their assessment process.

Data Collection Procedure

After administering the OPT, students with scores falling one standard deviation (SD) below and above the mean were selected as participants for the study. These chosen participants were then randomly assigned to either the experimental group, consisting of students working on reading-to-write tasks (N = 30), or the control group, consisting of students engaging in writing-only tasks (N = 30).

Prior to commencing their writing tasks, both the teacher and students in the experimental group, also referred to as the reading-towrite group, completed a designated reading assignment. The participants in this group were provided with a reading text to finish before embarking on the writing task.

For the control group, the process was identical, with one exception—the reading component was excluded. Instead, this group participated in a 15-minute brainstorming activity, which substituted the scheduled reading portion. In this activity, students generated ideas and structured a discussion around a topic of their knowledge and interest.

Upon completing the 10-week training program, students underwent a post-test in writing to assess their progress. During this post-test, participants were allotted a total of seventy-five minutes to compose an essay on the given topic.

Data Analysis Procedure

For data analysis, we employed SPSS software version 24. Grammatical accuracy was assessed on a scale of 1, indicating a substantial number of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice per T-unit (Hamp-Lyons & Henning, 1991).

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for the two groups' pre-and post-tests of discourse aspects are presented in Table 1, which can be found here. On the pre-tests, the reading-to-write group and the writing-only group had nearly the same mean score, but the reading-to-write group had a higher mean score on the post-test. When discussing the findings of the simple effect analysis, these findings will be reported and discussed in further detail.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-tests and Post-tests of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

Group	Time	Test	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		
	Time	Test		Stu. Elloi	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Reading to write	Pre-test	Grammatical Accuracy	5.383	.093	5.197	5.569	
	Post-test	Grammatical Accuracy	7.017	.079	6.858	7.175	
Writing only	Pre-test	Grammatical Accuracy	5.167	.093	4.981	5.353	
	Post-test	Grammatical Accuracy	6.167	.079	6.008	6.325	

Table 2 below displays the results of the Between-Subjects Effects. The results (F (1,58) = 23, p<.05, p η^2 = .284 representing a large effect size)

indicated that there was a significant difference between the reading-to-write and writing-only groups' overall means disregarding Time and Test.

Table 2
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	17214.063	1	17214.063	17076.360	.000	.997
Group	23.188	1	23.188	23.003	.000	.284
Error	58.468	58	1.008			

The findings of the first simple effect analysis are presented in Table 3 below. These results compare the groups' means on the pretests in order to illustrate that the two groups were similar in terms of their knowledge of discourse aspects prior to the administration of treatments. This was done so as to show that there was no significant difference between the groups. The findings indicated that there were no significant differences between the means of the reading-to-write and writing-only groups on grammatical accuracy as a discourse feature.

Test	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Grammatical accuracy	Reading- to-write	Writing only	.217	.131	.104	046	.480

Table 3
Simple Effect Analysis Comparing Groups' Means on Pre-tests of Grammatical Accuracy

The results of the simple effect analysis displayed in Table 4 below can be employed to explore the research question; that is to say, to investigate any significant improvement in the reading-to-write group's means from pre-tests to

post-tests of grammatical accuracy. The results indicated that the reading-to-write group had significant improvement in their means from pretests to post-tests of grammatical accuracy (M pretest= 5.38, M post-test= 7.01, MD= 1.63, p<.05).

Table 4
Simple Effect Analysis Comparing Reading-to-write Groups on Pre-tests of Grammatical Accuracy

Test	(I) Time	(J)	Mean Difference	Std.	C:~	95% Confidence Inter- val for Difference	
	(I) Time	Time	(I-J)	Error	Sig.	Lower Upper Bound Bound	
Grammatical Accuracy	Post-test	Pre-test	1.633*	.112	.000	1.408	1.858

^{*.} The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The results of the simple effect analysis displayed in Table 5 below can be employed to explore the second research question; that is to say, to investigate any significant improvement in the writing-only group's means from pre-tests to post-tests of

grammatical accuracy. The results indicated that the writing-only group had significant improvement in their means from pre-tests to post-tests of grammatical accuracy (M pre-test= 5.16, M post-test= 6.16, MD= 1.00, p<.05).

Table 5
Simple Effect Analysis Comparing Writing-only Groups on Pre-tests of Grammatical Accuracy

Test	(I)	(\mathbf{J})	Mean	Std.	G! -	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
	Time	Time	Difference (I-J)	Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Grammatical Accuracy	Post-test	Pre-test	1.000^{*}	.112	.000	.775	1.225

^{*.} The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

DISCUSSION

Based on the acquired results, the reading-towrite task exhibited a significant impact on grammatical accuracy as a facet of discourse. Recent scholarly inquiry has delved into the potential of reading-to-writing tasks to enhance language proficiencies, specifically concerning grammatical fluency. In a study akin to the present investigation, conducted by Li and Li (2020), it was unearthed that engaging in reading-to-write assignments positively impacted the grammatical accuracy of Chinese students undergoing English language acquisition as a foreign medium. The study's findings indicated that participants who partook in the reading-to-write exercise demonstrated

notably higher levels of grammatical accuracy compared to those who engaged in standard writing tasks. This confluence of results parallels the current study's findings, which similarly disclosed a substantial impact of the reading-to-write task on participants' adeptness in employing accurate grammar.

Another study, carried out by Wang and Cheng (2017), conducted an inquiry examining the impact of reading-to-write assignments on the writing performance of Taiwanese students pursuing English language proficiency. The study's findings indicated a favorable effect on writing quality, particularly concerning the utilization of intricate sentence structures and grammatical precision.

Nonetheless, several other studies have suggested that reading-to-write tasks wield a relatively modest impact on grammatical performance. For instance, Deng and Zhang (2019) found that while the reading-to-write assignments enhanced overall writing performance, the effect on learners' grammatical precision was not statistically significant. Similarly, Shen and Yuan (2020) conducted research among Chinese students learning English as a foreign language and observed a minimal effect of reading-to-write tasks on writing quality. Another study by Cummings et al. (2005) explored the impact of reading-to-write assignments on the writing skills of ESL students, reporting results divergent from the present study. Their findings indicated an improvement in participants' use of cohesive devices due to the task, although explicit details regarding its impact on participants' grammatical accuracy were not provided.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the potential impact of reading-to-write tasks and writing-only tasks on the grammatical proficiency of students engaged in English language learning as a foreign endeavor. The findings suggest a positive impact of the reading-to-write strategy on enhancing the grammatical accuracy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This positive effect is attributed to the integration of

reading activities within the writing process, indicating that incorporating reading tasks into writing curricula can contribute to the development of students' grammatical competence. Furthermore, the findings indicate that infusing elements of discourse into writing assignments stands out as a highly effective approach for learners to significantly enhance their writing capabilities.

In a broader context, the findings of this study underscore the critical significance of adopting a reading-to-write approach within EFL education. Instructors and curriculum designers are encouraged to consider the inclusion of reading tasks within the writing curriculum to foster students' grammatical proficiency. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing discourse elements in writing instruction, suggesting that educators should prioritize teaching these aspects to enhance students' writing prowess. This research result constitutes a substantial contribution to the existing body of knowledge surrounding the efficacy of integrating reading and writing skills in EFL writing education.

The pedagogical implications of the reading/writing strategy hold the potential to significantly impact various stakeholders engaged in the language acquisition process. The successful implementation of this strategy necessitates a shift in the role of teachers from conventional lecturers to facilitators and coordinators of learning. This transition requires an enhancement of their capabilities in crafting effective lesson plans and curricula that seamlessly integrate reading and writing components. Furthermore, educators must possess a comprehensive understanding of how to adeptly leverage reading materials to elevate the writing capabilities of their students.

Students stand to benefit comprehensively from this approach, as it facilitates a holistic enhancement of their language proficiency. Through the amalgamation of reading and writing, students can refine critical thinking skills, textual analysis abilities, and effective written expression. This approach fosters simultaneous advancements in both reading comprehension and writing proficiency, as well as the cultivation of writing skills. Additionally,

learners have the opportunity to refine their vocabulary, grammar, and language structure within a context that is relevant and meaningful to them.

However, the implementation of this strategy demands significant effort meticulous planning, particularly in the domains of curriculum development and language pedagogy. At every educational phase of a student's language journey, the cultivated reading and writing competencies should be seamlessly integrated into the classroom experience. Accomplishing this objective entails a revision of the existing curriculum to align with the objectives of an integrated reading-to-write approach. Furthermore, the creation of novel pedagogical resources and evaluation methodologies that effectively intertwine reading and writing components becomes imperative to support this approach.

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