Learners' Perceptions of Online Writing: Simultaneous Implementation of Standard Textbook and Wikis in a Blended Learning Setting

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Abstract: Acquiring writing proficiency in English is considered as one of the most challenging skills for foreign language learners. Among the various methods, the researchers have discovered Wikis worthy enough in developing English language writing competency. The present study investigates the Arab undergraduate male EFL learners' perceptions of using the standard textbook and Wikis to improve English writing skill proficiency. The purpose of examining both approaches will enable EFL teachers to choose the appropriate classroom method. The questionnaire has been prepared based on some previous studies. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared and distributed among the two separate male undergraduate EFL learner groups, and each consists of 25 students. Next, based on the students' valid responses, a quantitative analysis has been done using SPSS 26 software. Further, a comparative chart has also been prepared to show the students' existing perceptions about the two methods for English writing.

Keywords: EFL learning, standard book method, Wikis method, writing skill.

Introduction

Broadly language skills are divided into two categories i.e., receptive and productive. Out of the four kills, listening and reading are receptive skills since the learner is not required to produce language, instead gets a comprehensive input. On the contrary, speaking and writing skills are considered productive as learners are required to produce language to carry out the communication (Emrah and Selami, 2014). Using writing as a productive skill, one can share their complex thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions to its addressee in a written form (Brown, 200: 334). Further, Myles (2002) say that generally writing skill is taught through a different set of practices in a formal setting like school. In current time writing is seen as one of the crucial productive language skills. Further, writing also enables students to control their several learning activities: determines students' level of knowledge, enhances language competence, synchronizes vocabularies along with the language patterns which students have learned, enables error amelioration technique, enhances use of punctuation, creative and critical thinking, and also revolutionizes learners' competence to performance (Çakir, 2010). Therefore, it is believed that to be able to write, the learners need to have a strong desire for it. Considering this notion, motivation and positivity become a must-have factor among learners to develop good writing skills. Furthermore, a study claimed that the students with a positive attitude perform well in

second language writing than those who bear a negative attitude (Hashemian and Heidderi, 2013). Silva and Nicholas (1993) revealed in their study about the perception of college adult learners that writing well is directly proportionate to the learners' innate motivation towards it. According to Dilts (1998), motivation is such a force or stimulus which influences a person to act towards achieving a particular goal or target.

Similarly, Kleinginna and Kleinginaa (1981) illustrated motivation as *an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behavior and give it direction.* Notably, Gardner (1985) divided motivation into two different categories; *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation. Integrative motivation is described as the desire of a learner to communicate with the audience of the target language community, maybe to become a member of that community or to get assimilated into that culture. While instrumental motivation refers to the pragmatic desire, one may aim to attain several things; a better job, passing exams, getting a salary hike, etc. Therefore, based on the motivation level of learners, their writing gets affected. If the motivation is high, the performance of writing will automatically increase. As a result, the more the learners are interested in writing, the better they perform in the subject (Albin et al., 1996). Thus, a learner with a higher motivation level uses writing as a powerful tool of communication. A study also reveals that learners with high motivation are more confident in writing (Boscolo and Gelati, 2007).

The term Wiki is of Hawaii language origin, a web portal designed from seeking numerous information related to the society, science and technology, literature, human culture, and many more that a human can imagine. This can be viewed/used/accessed and modified by anyone through the internet using electronic devices like laptops, mobiles, tablets, etc. It also offers group collaboration to both authors and editors over the internet platforms (Kavaliauskiené, 2010). As a result, this helps learners in numerous ways in achieving their educational goals. Therefore, Wiki is seen as a useful tool that promotes collaborative work among learners across the globe (Doolan, 2006; Wheeler et al., 2008). Hence, the learners may work by enjoying the Wiki, the most popular facility anywhere and anytime without any classroom restrictions or school and college timings (Soloman and Schrum, 2010). Further, Yadegaridehkordi et al. (2013: 293) say that "It simply means that knowledge creation and ideation, which are the formation of new ideas and knowledge through interactions between human minds, is the most important part of the collaborative learning process." In modern times, Wiki is used as a powerful communication tool while assisting learners with writing skill tasks.

On the contrary, the standard book approach for writing skill process lagging based on the fact that it does not support collaborative and anywhere and anytime learning function. Additionally, the other factors that students tend to avoid using a standard book for writing like the book's level are complex, and the textbook does not provide attention to student background.

Therefore, this paper aims to make an empirical comparison to determine the undergraduate EFL learners' actual perception towards the use of the two approaches to their writing skills, i.e., the standard book approach and Wiki approach.

Related Works

The field of writing skills was pre-dominated with the standard book approach, and several studies have been conducted that revealed its significant role in the development of writing skills. However, with the course of time, increasing demand for technology has revolutionized human life in every aspect. Therefore, people take the help of technology to attain their academic goals. As a result, the penetration of technology has also been noticed in writing skills. Therefore, this section further expands on the reporting of such studies that undertakes Wikis as a writing tool for EFL learners and their attitude and perception. Notably, the literature reveals a positive bend of mind or perception among EFL learners towards the use of Wiki as a writing tool. Li et al. (2012) is believed as the first study that aims to check the effects of Wiki on 59 Chinese EFL learners "Wiki-based collaborative process writing pedagogy (WCPWP)". The study centrally aims to determine writing performance using Wiki as a tool. This study's results reveal a positive effect on the performance, and students claimed that Wiki had improved their writing skills. Another early study is Duncate et al. (2011), which had investigated three different Wiki projects (namely; Macromedia, branching story, and prereading) concerning the students of three different foreign languages (namely; French, Spanish, and German) to determine the nature of collaboration that Wiki promotes and the perception of learner towards the impact of Wiki in writing. The results state that students found it helpful and acknowledged Wikis's role in the development of foreign language writing skills. Further, Nakamaru (2011) reports in her study that Wikis helped students overcome negative feelings towards the writing.

Lastly, the literature shows numerous researches that have been done on both the approaches for foreign language writing skills, i.e., standard book approach and Wikis but in isolation. Therefore, a dearth is noticed for such a study that aims to compare the two approaches in one study to determine the study's actual perception in contrast with each other. Thus, the platonic thought for this study has originally evolved from the existing research gap.

Purpose of this study

This study aims to make a quantitative analysis; therefore, a descriptive account of the presentation has been made. The current study's central aim remains to investigate the EFL learner's perception towards the use of both the standard book method and Wikis as a writing skill tool. Nevertheless, this study only considers one aspect of the method i.e., traditional one (standard book approach), and aims to determine the perception towards modern techniques, i.e., Wikis. Further, designing and collecting responses from the two different sets of EFL learners

will enable the teacher to figure out the right perception trend about each method. Additionally, this study's findings will also enable teachers to use the appropriate method for the students in Arab universities.

Methodology

A mixed-method is employed to conduct this study, i.e., both standard book method and Wikis as a writing tool for Arab EFL learners.

Study sample
This study's total sample is 50, which is further divided into two groups, and each group consists of 25 (males) and 25 (males). The respondents are the undergraduate level students of Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia.

The Questionnaire
There are two separate sets of questionnaires prepared with slight modification. The first set of questions aims to determine EFL learners' perception towards the use of standard book method for writing skill. On the contrary, the second set of questions aims to determine EFL learners' perceptions of using Wikis as a writing tool. It has been used by keeping in view in measuring the difference and diversity in students' views. The questionnaire's formulation is divided into two parts: the first part deals with general questions like gender, education, and age for demographic purposes. While the second deals with the real or main questions on which the current study is based on. The questions have been scaled on the 5 points Likert-scaling system where 1 is strongly agree (SA), 2 is agree (A), 3 say neutral (N), 4 is disagree (D), and finally, 5 stands for strongly disagree (SD).

Steps followed
This study aims to make a quantitative analysis; therefore, questionnaires were distributed using random techniques among 50 EFL learners. For the distribution of the questionnaire, the electronic medium was used. Further, a quantitative analysis is done using SPSS 26 based on the valid responses received from the students against the total items of each set of questions. Frequency, percentage, and a comparative statistical chat have been presented to sum up the study's findings.

Data analysis and interpretation

The following sub-section enumerates the data analysis and interpretation of the study. Figure 1 presents the demography of the students in terms of gender and groups. For a better illustration of the results, the 5 point scaling has been merged into three groups, agree (includes both

strongly agree and agree), disagree (includes both strongly disagree and disagree), and neutral. It is done in view to present the average frequency indicating towards agree, disagree, or neutral.
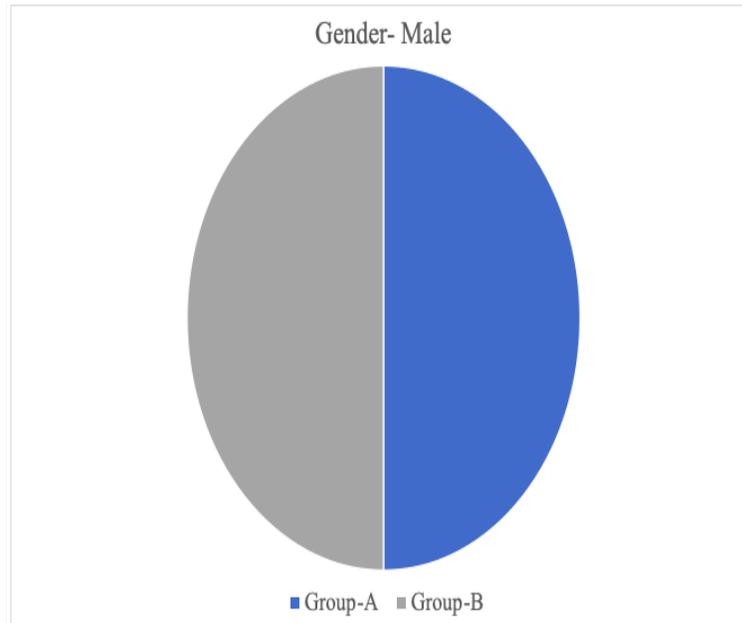

Figure 1: *Shows the demography of the students*

Learner's perception and discussions

The two sets of questions are presented below in tables 1 and 2, respectively. The table is created in such a way that the first column shows the questions from 1 to 4 (as the questionnaire includes a total of 4 close-ended items), and the following columns present the valid response of the items against each item in linear sequence **SA** to **SD**. The response column is further devided into two sub-columns, where first show the total number of response and the following one includes its frequency.

Now presenting the learner's response against each question (in table-1, below) from group A towards the use of the standard book method for English writing skill, Q1 has received total responses like 2 say strongly agree (8.3%), 13 agree (52.7%), 9 neutral (36.8%), 1 disagree (4.2%), and none say strongly disagree. Further, Q2 has got, 5 strongly agree (20.7%), 9 agree (36.5%), 8 neutral (32.5%), 3 disagree (12.5%), and no response for strongly disagree. Q3, 2 strongly agree (8.2%), 10 agree (40.7%), 11 neutral (44.3%), 1 disagree (4.2%), and 1 strongly disagree (4.2%). Finally, the Q4 has got a response like 4 strongly agree (16.7%), 9 agree (36.5%), 10 neutral (40.7%), 2 disagree (8.3%), and none say strongly disagree.

Table 1: *EFL learner's response towards the use of standard book method for writing skill*

Questions (Items)	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Do you agree that the standard book approaches help EFL learners to improve writing skills?	2	8.3	13	52.7	9	36.8	1	4.2	-	-
2. Do you agree that the standard book approach provides more materials to improve writing skills?	5	20.7	9	36.5	8	32.5	3	12.5	-	-
3. Do you agree that the standard book	2	8.2	10	40.	11	44.	1	4.2	1	4.2

approach provides more materials to improve writing skills?			7		3				
4. Do you agree that content that is developed using a standard book approach invites less critique on your writing?	4	16.7	9	36.5	10	40.7	2	8.3	-	-

Table 2: *EFL learner's response towards the use of Wikis for writing skill*

Questions (Items)	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Do you agree that Wikis helps EFL learners to improve their	3	12.3	16	64.7	5	20.8	1	4.2	-	-

writing skills?								
2. Do you agree that Wikis provides more materials to improve writing skills?	4	16.5	11	44.5	9	36.7	-	-	1	4.2
3. Do you agree that Wikis has a positive impact on EFL writing skills?	5	20.8	13	52.2	6	24.5	-	-	1	4.2
4. Do you agree that content that is developed using Wikis invites less critique on your writing?	4	16.5	8	32.2	12	48.0	-	-	1	4.2

Table-2 above shows the perception of EFL learners from group B towards using Wikis as a tool for English writing skills. The response in the column against each item is as follows: Q1 has got

total responses in such a way that 3 choose strongly agree (12.3%), 16 agree (64.7%), 5 neutral (20.8%), 1 say disagree (4.2%), and none choose strongly disagree. Similarly, Q2 receives 4 strongly agree (16.5%), 11 agree (44.5%), 9 neutral (36.7%), none say disagree, while 1 say strongly disagree (4.2%). Q3 says that 5 strongly agree (20.8%), 13 agree (52.2%), 6 neutral (24.5%), none choose to disagree, and 1 strongly disagree (4.2%). Finally, the Q4 has received responses, 4 strongly agree (16.7%), 8 agree (32.2%), 12 neutral (48.0%), none disagree, and 1 say strongly disagree (4.2%).

Comparison of two different groups of EFL learners (Group A and B)

The following figure 2 shows a comparison of the students' perceptions from two groups (Group A and B) on their total responses against each item. Where the blue line shows the standard book method responses, and the grey line denotes Wikis responses. Further, the figure-2 is a combined presentation of the data shown in the tables 1 and 2, where 1 presents the total number of strongly agree responses, similarly 2 total number of agree responses, 3 shows total neutral responses, 4 total disagree, and 5 total strongly disagree, respectively. The results reveal that the perception of students differs from the two approaches. The two lines clearly show that students lineage towards the wikis method and finds it more authentic and reliable.
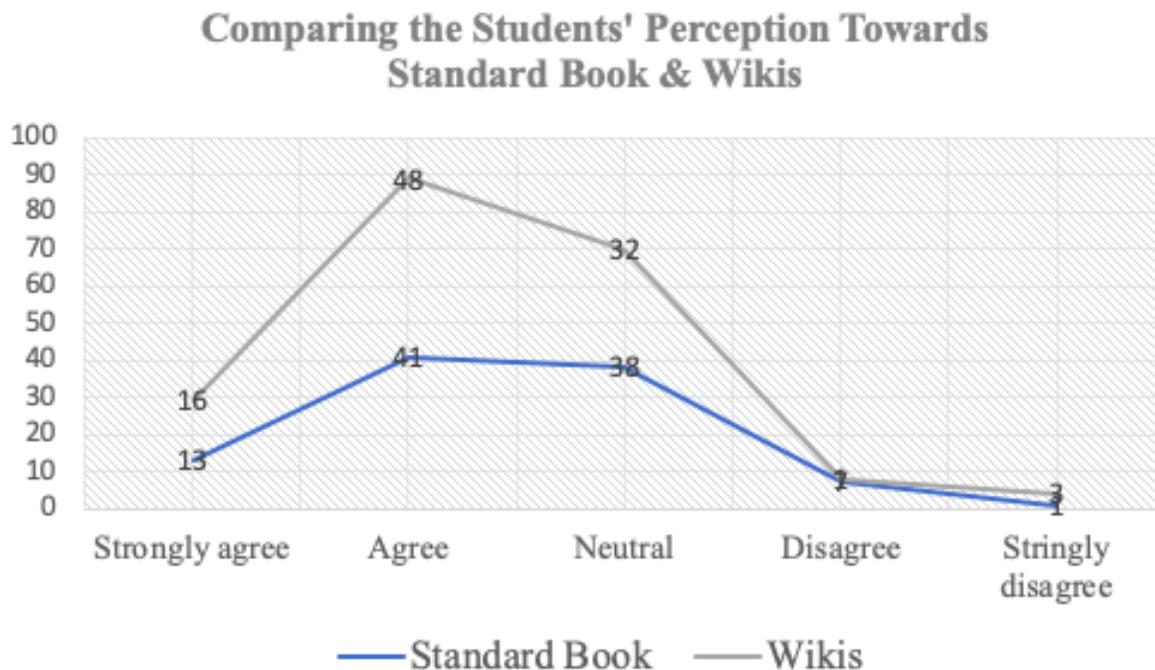

Figure 2: *Comparison of student's perception towards the use of standard book and Wikis*

Conclusions

Based on the findings of students' responses towards the use of two approaches (standard book and wikis), it can be concluded that the perception of students has a clear lineage towards the wikis over the stand book as a writing tool. Additionally, students' responses also show a fairly positive impact of wikis on students' writing skills compared to the standard books. Further, based on the results of this study, a few practical recommendations can be outlined. Firstly, the teachers must act as a catalyst to motivate students towards the use of wikis for their writing skills. In this way, the learners can easily be motivated based on the fact that every student use electronic gadgets with internet services so easily they can use wikis for their writing process. Secondly, the teacher should provide prior training to the students about the functionality and scope of wikis in writing; additionally, the whole process can easily be monitored by the teachers. Finally, this is pertinent to note that the researcher needs to study more on the wikis effects, challenges, etc. for its better and systemic use for the writing process.

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