

The Effect of Using Mind Maps to Enhance EFL Learners' Writing Achievement and Students' Attitudes Towards Writing at Taif University

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Abstract

Writing in general, second language writing in particular, can be an obstacle for some students. The reason why writing can be hard to learn is that writers face many challenges the moment they start writing. The challenges could be from gathering the ideas to be written, planning of the outline, focusing on sentence structure, choosing the appropriate expressions, and also making sure of the organization. Moreover, these challenges can cause students to have negative attitudes towards writing. Previous studies suggest that using writing strategies can help student control the writing process which have a positive effect on their writing achievement and their attitudes towards writing. The strategy of mind mapping is used as a pre-writing strategy to help writers visualize the structure of their writing. However, the researcher proposes using mind mapping strategy not only to organize ideas, but also to organize grammatical and linguistic knowledge. This study investigates the effect of using this mind mapping strategy as a pre-writing strategy to enhance female language learners' writing achievement and their attitudes towards writing in English at Taif University, Saudi Arabia. In a quasi-experimental design, a mixed methods approach was adopted by collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The study population is 128 students in an experimental group ($n_1= 57$) and a control group ($n_2=71$). The former received the treatment of

instruction using mind mapping strategy and the latter received traditional instruction. The objectives of this study are first, to identify any differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on post-tests of writing attitudes and writing achievement; second, to identify differences between the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests of writing attitudes and writing achievement for the experimental group; third, to explore students' views concerning difficulties to write in English. fourth, to identify the strategies they used to overcome these difficulties; fifth, to investigate if students thought that mind mapping helped them write better and, if so, how. The researcher prepared a test to measure the writing achievement of female first-year EFL students, and a questionnaire by Sturm (1996) to measure writing attitudes. An interview was conducted with a focus group from the experimental group to achieve the third, fourth and fifth objectives. Independent samples and paired sample t-tests were performed to quantitatively analyze data from the writing achievement test and the writing attitudes questionnaire. Data collected from the interview were qualitatively analyzed. The finding of the current study are first, there exists differences between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group on the post-tests of the students' writing achievement and writing attitudes, in favor of the experimental group; second there exists significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group's pre- and post-tests in writing achievement and writing attitudes, in favor of the post-test; third, students' difficulties to write in English include lack of vocabulary, organization, spelling and grammar; fourth, students are accustomed to memorizing, practicing, and self-correcting, which indicates they are not used to planning their writing; finally, students also positively perceived the strategy of mind mapping and thought it helped them to better write in English.

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