



The impact of using argumentative podcasts as a brainstorming in argumentative essay writing at the tertiary level

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Abstract

Writing, as one of the most complex skills of the four skills is considered that its teaching method has a special interest, and EFL learners find writing skills quite confrontational and unpleasant. In this study, the researchers want to examine whether argumentative podcasts can affect argumentative writing or not. To this end, 30 students participated in this experimental study and the study employs a pre-test and post-test. The calculated data showed that there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, therefore argumentative podcasts have affected the argumentative writing skill of students in a positive way.

Introduction

The development of literacy is one of the important goals in all human societies and recent years it has been encouraged in the Fundamental Transformation Document. The Fundamental Transformation Document has a set of goals, one of which is related to strengthening language skills because language learning is the basis of learning and progress in society. At the same time, it is one of the fields that can help a person to communicate effectively in the field of language and literature. The four main skills in this field include speaking, listening, reading, and writing, which are the most important language skills (Rahman Var and Nili, 2015) ^[2].

Previously, writing skills belonged to scribes and researchers in educational centers, and almost all aspects of the daily life of ordinary people were done orally. But nowadays, the ability to write has become an essential skill in the global society and is a necessary condition for employment in many professions. In the field of second language education, experts believed that writing is only a contract to record words and strengthen the grammatical and lexical features of the language, but now the uniqueness of writing as a skill with independent features is accepted by everyone. Familiarity with writing skills implicitly includes familiarity with reading skills. But someone who can read in one language cannot necessarily be said to have the ability to write in that language. Writing is a mental and physical skill (Brown, 2006). Therefore, writing skill is another important language skill that should be paid attention to and evaluated in education.

Writing skill means a person's choice of words and structures to express personal meaning (Reverse 1981). He considers writing both the main skill and a helping skill that complements other language skills.

Argumentative writing

Information and communication technologies have been widely used in higher education (including improving academic writing

skills and constructing argumentative knowledge), among which academic writing skills are very important for students. Professional academic success in all specialized fields is at least partly dependent on academic writing skills (Chooshan 2007).

Scientific writing in higher education has different forms. Among these, the short article is particularly important because of its special features. The short essay, which is usually between three and five paragraphs, is used to assess high-level learning objectives, such as analysis, evaluation, synthesis, as well as reasoning and critical thinking (Perbingan, Rubin, and Kells-Nelson 2007).

A five-paragraph short essay (especially a short argumentative essay) with introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs provides a suitable format for explaining and supporting a topic, such as scientific reasoning. Therefore, a short argumentative essay is a claim that is supported by a set of reasons and evidence (Krohest 1990).

Mayland, 1990, considers the short argumentative essay as a convincing article and believes that a short essay consists of three stages: claim, argument, and conclusion. According to these definitions, the important and fundamental issue in writing a successful short argumentative essay is the development of the argument (Nisi and Gardner 2006).

Even though writing short essays has many benefits for students, many students have problems with the conclusion in such writings (Baja 2010). Researchers have proposed many reasons regarding the causes of students' problems in writing short argumentative essays, including students' lack of knowledge about the description and elaboration of arguments as one of the important elements of a short essay, the cognitive complexity of this type of writing compared to other genres, the lack of sufficient training of students before university and even in university about argumentation and finally The lack of agreement between experts and researchers regarding the characteristics of short articles.

Podcasting

Noticeable progress in education is due to new information and communication technologies. The development and expansion of the internet have provided new approaches for educators to communicate with learners (Evans 2008) and on the other hand, it has also created the possibility of using various media to achieve this goal. An example of these media that different people can learn or share their content through the Internet is podcasts (Kappler 2007).

Podcasting refers to any approach of sending audio or video content based on the simultaneous broadcast protocol on the web (Abdus *et al.* 2012). Although the sharing of audio and video files on the World Wide Web has been possible since the previous decade, podcasting has entered educational technologies as a new method since 2004 (Eskira 2006).

A podcast is a form of mobile learning in which a device is used to play an audio or video program (Ivaz 2008). The closest analogy to podcasts is television and radio shows, with the difference that you can watch or listen to podcasts wherever you like, or on a topic of interest. Basically, podcast files have the same common audio and video files, only podcast technology has changed the way they are published on the site, and instead of the user visiting the site every day to receive new files, he can subscribe to Podcasts, without going to the site, whenever the site is updated and a new file is placed in it, users will be automatically notified and receive them.

Among the factors that have caused the rapid growth of podcasts include: the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, the growth of bandwidth, the creation of multimedia personal computers, the unlimited download capability, and the rapid adaptability of MP3 devices (Gary Baines 2007). This technology, which has the inherent potential to improve experimental quality and educational methods and increase the efficiency of learning, has expanded rapidly and created new opportunities in education. So, podcasting can archive professors' teaching sessions and broadcast and distribute them for re-reading. With this method, supplementary educational materials can be prepared and made available to students, or students can be required to produce and present their special educational podcasts as homework (Lee *et al.* 2008).

The types of podcasts based on how they are used in education include basic podcasts (commonly used in classrooms), supplementary podcasts (used to prepare class summaries and more lesson content), and creative podcasts (prepared by learners) (McGreer 2009).

One of the benefits of using podcasts is the development of learning environments that increase the interaction between students and the content and also increase student motivation (Najafipour 2019). Also, the podcast can be combined with other electronic learning activities and used in language learning, especially the second language, for comprehensive learning in terms of conversation, comprehension, and correct pronunciation of words (Adrsinga and Salmon 2007).

Literature review

(Nonny basalama, Trynti abdurrahman, 2018) ^[2] studied the students' listening comprehension through the use of podcasts in EFL classrooms. 60 high school students were taken as a sample in this study. Findings revealed that there is a significant difference in post-test scores between the two groups, favoring the experimental group. Mohammadreza Farhangi, and Hassan Nejhad Ghanbar studied the effects of podcasting on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' speaking skills. A total of 60 Iranian EFL upper-intermediate learners participated in this study, the participants in the experimental group were asked to produce podcasts on their pair and group discussion and upload them to the podcasting service. The results showed that the inclusion of podcasting in the language classroom had a positive effect on EFL learners' speaking skills in the experimental group. Mohammad Bamanger, and Ryadh Al-Hassan, 2015, studied whether giving English as a foreign language learners podcast lectures in addition to the traditional lectures help the to enhance their English language writing and to explore the useful information regarding the adoption of podcasting as a learner or trainer to improve learning and teaching methods. 55 level two students participated in this study and they were divided into two groups; experimental and control groups. The participants in the experimental group received podcast lectures as well as in-class traditional lessons, while the control group was given just traditional classroom lessons. The results revealed that students in the experimental group got higher scores than the control group. Huseyin Kafes, and Mustafa Caner, 2019, studied EFL freshmen's perception of the impact of creating pronunciation podcasts on their pronunciation skills. 80 freshmen enrolled in a teaching English as a foreign language teacher education program at a Turkish state university. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, investigations or notes records of

dashboard activities, analytic and performance tracking records of the LMS, and podcasts created by the participants as well as recordings of the peer feedback on the discussion board. Data analysis revealed that participants have a positive view of creating pronunciation podcasts and that podcasting freed them to a great extent from the Spatiotemporal limitations of the classroom, allowing them to study and practice pronunciation at their convenience.

Research questions

1. Is argumentative podcast instruction effective in improving the argumentative writing skills of EFL learners?
2. Is there a statistical difference in writing achievement between the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental and control groups?
3. Is there a statistical difference in writing achievement between the post-test results of the experimental and control group?
4. What are the attitudes of the students toward the use of argumentative podcast instruction to improve argumentative writing ability?

Methodology

Participants

The study was conducted with 55 tertiary students, studying EFL at Tabriz Azad University. The participants were randomly assigned into two groups, one as the control group and the other as the experimental group. There were 26 students in the experimental group and 29 students in the control one. They were between 20 and 22 years old. They could be described as having roughly equal language proficiency.

Materials

Technology Development Podcasting

Pre-test and post-test

To explore the effect of the podcasts on the students' writing performance, the researcher used a pre-test to measure the learners' performance in writing before the treatment. Then a post-test was administered to both groups. In both tests, participants were asked to write an argumentative essay on the topic of Technology Development.

Questionnaire

The researcher conducted a five-Lickert questionnaire with 12 questions and administered it among the experimental group to state their views of, and experiences in using argumentative podcasts to enhance argumentative writing skills and to explore their attitudes toward the use of argumentative podcasting.

Procedure

The study involved a quantitative method with an experimental pre-test and post-test design. It took 4 weeks for the researcher to complete the study. In the first week of the study, the participants of both groups were asked to write an argumentative essay about Technology Development to measure the learners' argumentative writing proficiency level before the treatment. The following week, the researcher made a WhatsApp group, and all the participants in the experimental group were asked to join the group. The researcher shared argumentative podcast links in the group, and the participants downloaded and saved them. They were

also asked to listen to the podcasts before the class. In each session, two links were shared. When the learners came to the class, they discussed the argumentative podcasts, new words, new expressions, and critical thinking. After brainstorming they were asked to write argumentative essays about a topic that was related to the shared podcasts.

On another side, the learners in the control group didn't receive any special kind of treatment. At the end of the 4th week, both groups were asked to write an argumentative essay about a specified topic. The scores of both groups were calculated by an analytic scoring rubric. The papers of all the participants were corrected by two experienced English teachers.

To make sure that participating subjects in this study were at the same writing proficiency level, before the instruction, a T-test was run using the pre-test scores.

Table 1: Independent sample T-test results for the group equivalency.

Group	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	T value
Experimental	26	1.17362	34.89	0.909	0.112
Control	29	1.31520	37.71		

As it is shown in Table 1, the mean score of the experimental group (1.17362) and control group (1.31520). So, they are almost similar to each other and there was no statistically significant difference between the results of each group in the pre-test.

Results

The study aimed to explore the impact of using argumentative podcasts on EFL learners' argumentative writing performance. Descriptive analysis and paired sample T-test were conducted to examine the effect of the argumentative podcast on both groups' writing instruction and also to find out if the two groups had an enhancement in their writing instruction after the treatment.

Table 2: Paired Samples T-test results for Pre-test and Post-test for the control group

Group	Test	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	T value
Control Group	Pre	29	2.3122	1.31198	0.792	0.254
	Post	29	2.4097	2.08105		

According to the results, however, the control group received a traditional method of teaching, and they had better performance in the post-test.

The Control group produced more enhanced writing performance in the post-test scores (M=2.4097) than in their pre-tests (M=2.3122).

Table 3: Shows paired samples T-test results for pre-test and post-test for the experimental group.

Group	Test	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	T Value
Experimental group	Pre	26	2.3508	1.16389	0.001	3.841
	Post	26	3.6178	0.37682		

Table 3 indicates that the participants from the experimental group performed better in the post-test (M=3.6178) than in the pre-test (M=2.3508) and also there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group, $P < 0.5$ level [$T = (3.841)$, $P = (0.001)$] proposing that the argumentative writing

performance of the experimental group was enhanced because of the shared argumentative podcasts. The enhancement between the mean scores in the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group.

Table 4: Independent samples T-test results for the post-tests of the groups

Group	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	T value
Experimental	26	3.64	1.934	0.036	2.224
Control	29	2.39	2.081		

Table 4 reveals that the learners in the experimental group got higher marks in contrast to the control group. The mean score of the post-test for the experimental group was 3.64 and the mean score of the post-test for the control group was 2.39, which reveals the fact that the experimental group outperformed their writing performance.

To explore the attitudes of the EFL learners towards implementing argumentative podcast lectures in the writing classes descriptive statistics of the means and standard deviations of the experimental group participants' responses were computed.

Questionnaire

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Podcasts are useful for learning new vocabulary.	4.1878	0.84871
2	Using podcasts is possible everywhere and at every time.	3.4258	1.17568
3	I found my writing improved at the end of the course.	3.2291	0.99170
4	I would recommend my friends use podcasts.	3.4245	0.69895
5	Podcasts help improve my use of English Grammar.	3.8115	0.94120
6	It was a good experience to use podcasts.	3.1209	0.95234
7	Access to podcasts' transcripts could enhance my comprehension.	3.1209	0.63420
8	I find no difficulty in playing podcasts.	3.9578	0.99864
9	Podcasts could be an effective tool for exams.	3.3124	1.08747
10	I will continue to use podcasts after this writing class.	3.1209	1.02142
11	Using podcasts is waste of time.	2.1887	1.16712
12	I listen to podcasts before the course.	1.7731	0.95062

According to the data, question 1 with the highest mean score (M=4.1878) indicates that students find podcasts useful for learning new English vocabulary, and question 12 with the lowest mean score of (M=1.7731) indicates that students disagree that using podcasts is waste of time and also they do not agree with question 12 and they didn't listen to any types of podcasts before the course.

Conclusion

Podcasting can be considered as an expression language teaching technology, language teachers by using this technology can provide lectures or their students without time limitation and also place limitation

The study aimed to discover the impact of argumentative podcasting on students' argumentative writing skills. The results revealed that the students who received the argumentative podcast lectures performed better in argumentative writing than the students who didn't receive this podcast. Podcasting also showed a positive attitude toward podcasting as brainstorming for, writing classes. They stated that they used podcasting only out of the educational environment and as fun, not as educational technology.

Based on the findings teachers can provide podcasts for different topics and play them as a brainstorming before the writing task or they can share the link with learners and in this case, they listen to it before class and be ready for a writing task. Teachers can also hold on workshops to teach students about podcasting technology and its impact not only on writing skills but also on all skills of language learning

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