THE EFFECT OF OUT-OF-CLASS READING TASKS ON DEVELOPING EFL WRITING SKILLS[i]

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Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the relationship between out-of-class reading activities and writing in English as a foreign language. A quasi-experimental pre-test- post-test research design without a control group was used to assess the effect of reading a novel and reading news as out-of-class reading activities on writing achievement. The research results were triangulated with open-ended questions asking participant views about their out-of-class reading tasks. 40 students of an ELT Department at a Turkish university participated in the study. The students were divided randomly into two groups and group A was asked to read a novel while group B was asked to read news as out-of-class reading tasks, for a month. The participants' writing achievements were tested through two writing tasks, as a pre-test and post-test, in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, mechanics and total scores. The pre-test and post-test scores did not display statistically significant differences between the A and B groups either in total scores or in scores of specific dimensions of the assessment. The participants in group A displayed statistically significant improvement in terms of organization, vocabulary, and language use while the participants in group B demonstrated improvement in content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. The qualitative data verified the quantitative findings, and provided views about different features of the tasks. Some suggestions for further research on the role of various factors that affect the development of writing skills, and the relationship among different language skills are provided.

Keywords: reading skills, writing skills, writing performance, out-of-class reading

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1. Introduction

Language teaching methodology has attributed different emphasis on different language skills. As a matter of specialization, most research on language teaching indicates primarily a perspective of studying language skills in an isolated fashion. It's quite natural to conduct research on variables that affect writing, reading, speaking, or vocabulary development etc., but the research literature also suggests that it is not always likely to differentiate among language skills and to view them as distinct from each other. Reading and writing are two of the neighbouring skills assumed to be very close to each other.

Above all, literacy has been defined as reading and writing until recently, though some other components have been added to the identification of literacy in time. Nearly everyone is aware of the significance of reading, reading is on the top of list of hobbies for many, and civilization is associated with writing. On the other hand, language is simply an interaction of input and output. Most of the time input is provided through listening and reading while the output is through speaking or writing. However, although the relationship between reading and writing is a commonly agreed on phenomenon in language teaching, the interrelatedness and interaction between the neighbouring skills reading and writing have not been discovered in detail.

Hence, we attempted, in our study, to focus on the interrelatedness of the two crucial language skills reading and writing. Although the applied linguistics research literature suggests a mutual influence between reading and writing, it is also likely to observe controversial findings and conclusions mainly based upon L1 research on reading. That's why this paper will scrutinize the relationship between EFL writing and reading, focusing on the effect of out-of-class reading tasks on developing writing skills, in view of the significance of authentic language, and a historical overview of research on reading-writing relationship.

2. Review of literature

2.1 EFL writing and writing instruction
As a major component of language instruction, various dimensions of writing regarding the conventions, types, functions, layout of writing and writer variables have been under focus for many language researchers and teachers. A number of approaches, methods, and techniques on developing writing skills can be observed in the literature on writing. Although different views and perspectives of writing have been proposed, discussed, and studied, development of writing skills in English was primarily based on experiences and findings about writing as a mother tongue. Hence, the teaching of writing in English as a foreign language has roots in and benefitted a great amount from knowledge of writing as a mother tongue and experiences of native language writers (Ferris, 2003).

However, it is not likely to explain second/foreign language writing depending merely on L1 writing abilities. Instead, a number of factors that suggest some positive as well as negative relationships can be identified between L1 writing ability and L2 writing

ability in writing instruction (Friedlander, 1994; Hyland, 2003; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008).

Research on L2 writing can be observed to enhance with the 1980s, and the writing research before 1980s included perspectives which are believed to be mostly dominated with error analysis studies as a result of the emergence of applied linguistics in 1950s to 1970s, which at the same time signals views of writing as a product (Hinkel, 2005). Naturally, improvement of a learner's writing ability when learning a language was viewed to a great extend as an indicator of his/her overall language proficiency. Although such an understanding was a dominant understanding of writing until 1970s, in time, recognition of writing as it cannot be limited to graphic representations of the language led to focusing on rhetorical and linguistic forms, the writer and cognitive processes, the content, and the reader in writing instruction research (Raimes, 1991). L2 writers' bilingual and bicultural experiences, their conceptions of knowledge, self and texts, instructional practices of teachers, learners' learning styles, teachers' teaching styles, including some cognitive, cultural and social dimensions (Hyland, 2003; Weigle, 2002) are also among the variables assumed to be effective on writing.

Newer perspectives brought to writing instruction, included different approaches to writing as process, product or genre as well. In Gordon's (2008) terms the scene in writing can be portrayed as a theoretical continuum including "writing as an extension of grammar" on the one end, "communication of meaning" on the other end, and approaches such as "process, genre, or functional orientations" between the two ends of the continuum. On the other hand, L2 writing contexts, writing instruction, assessment of writing, composing processes, and textual variables are among the subjects of study in research on writing (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008). Still, some more recent research suggests findings that writing can facilitate knowledge creation as well, based on an evaluation of the role of writing in second language development (Williams, 2012).

Hence, behind the finished text lie some specific stages, factors and processes each writer goes through. Processes such as prewriting, drafting, writing, editing, or reediting (Emig, 1967; Matsuda, 2003; White, 1988), are among the interests of many writing researchers. Toward the end of the 20th century, awareness on the fact that each EFL writer may approach writing in a different way, the significance of writer's identity and writer related variables have attracted more attention in EFL/ESL writing (Hedgcock, 2005). However, there is still a lot to discover about the exact process of writing that the writers go through while composing, and variables that are likely to correlate with writing in English.

Writing is researched in view of different variables which are thought to be directly related to developing writing skills. Although every language skill can be found to correlate with others, most of the time writing skill is closely associated with primarily reading skills. A major connection between these two skills can be reminded as reading and writing together have been used basically for a long time to define literacy, though literacy is today regarded a much more complex issue. Among the four main language skills, the research literature associated reading and writing with each other more than

other language skills and the relationship between these two skills have been subjects of study from different perspectives.

2.2 Reading as a factor relevant to writing

In language learning, most practices suggested the development of reading skill prior to the development of writing, and the relationship between reading and writing did not attract much attention until 1980s. However, with the 1980s the research literature reflects considerably more awareness on the reading-writing relationship, and an increase in the number of studies relevant to possible relationships between reading and writing (Graber Wilson, 1989; Pimsarn, 1986; Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Still, it is not surprising for many to observe contemporary research on reading mainly in the form of studies focusing on variables relevant to reading comprehension, reading strategies, or reading types such as extensive-intensive reading (Alyousef, 2005; Ghasemi & Hajizadeh, 2011; Solak & Altay, 2014; Sakurai, 2017) although the connection between reading and writing is among the recognized phenomena as well.

Research on the relationship between reading and writing in English provides valuable data as L1 research as well as EFL. It is likely to encounter results of research in the literature that suggest influence of reading on the development of writing, writing on the development of reading, and a two-way influence on each other, with some models developed to understand the nature of reading, writing and relationships between the two skills (Schoonen, 2018; Shanahan & Lomax, 1988).

Shanahan (1982) sets forth some valuable findings and propositions on the relationships between reading and writing that, first of all, reading and writing are viewed to be necessary but not sufficient for the teaching of the other. The relationship between reading and writing is found to be changing and strengthening as the proficiency in the language increases. Depending on the change in such a relationship, instruction in either of them is also expected to change.

Shanahan (1984) reports from previous research on the relationship between reading and writing that reading and writing are assumed to depend on identical knowledge, and instruction in one must lead to improvement in the other. However, he concluded, depending on findings from his own research that reading and writing overlap, but they are not identical suggesting that more research needs to be conducted on the relationship between reading and writing. From this point of view, reading and writing are separate entities that require instruction. Yoshimura (2009) supports this view as *"while reading and writing share constructs and may support each other, there are differences between the two abilities and reading ability does not always transfer to writing ability"*. In the same vein, Shanahan & Lomax (1988) draw attention to the need that reading-writing relationship should be researched in different instructional contexts and take different instructional approaches into consideration.

Specifically, about the contributions of reading to writing, reading is assumed to influence writing in a number of ways (Tierney & Leys, 1984). The writers' choice of topic, genre, writing style, vocabulary, their values about writing, their understanding of the author's craft are among the components of writing that the type and amount of reading

materials are to be effective on. Then, the writers can revise, rethink, or evaluate their own thoughts and arguments when attaining their written product. Just at this point, complementary to the topic, the significance of authentic language and authenticity manifests itself when identifying the relationship and correlations between reading and writing. Authentic language is an indispensable component of reading and writing as it provides us with the real language. Brochures, Cartoons, Comics, Currency, Directories, Greeting Cards, Images, Internet, Invitation Cards, Advertisements, Journals, Magazines, Maps, Menus, Movies, Newspapers, Notices, Post-Cards, Pictures, Product Labels, Puppets, Recipes, Songs, Stamps, TV Programmes, Tickets, Wall Papers, Weather Reports are among the commonly known sources of authentic language most of which are easily available both in digital and print forms. Besides being a valuable source of linguistic structures and functions, the cultural content of authentic materials is thought to reflect a motivational potential as well (Peacock, 1997).

El-koumy (1997) reminding that there was no research on reading-writing relationship in EFL learners, conducted a study on reading-writing relationship in 150 NES students and 150 EFL students. The study revealed difference in results about reading-writing relationships, and mainly three reasons were claimed to be acting on the stage. Firstly, the NES teachers were observed to be emphasizing both reading and writing skills equally, whereas the EFL teachers tended to focus on reading and writing separately; thus, the EFL learners lacked the benefitting transfers across the two skills. Students' proficiency levels were found to be the second reason for the source of limitation in transfer across the two skills. Opportunities in using language outside the classroom were reported to be the third reason about the degrees of transfer across the reading and writing skills.

Agustin Llach (2010) reminds that also the reading-writing relationship in second language acquisition changes and correlates similarly. In the same study, it is reported that as learners' proficiency in L1 reading increases, sophisticated vocabulary and story structure can contribute to writing achievement. That is why, examining the same factors in L2 reading and writing, and the relationship between L2 reading proficiency and L2 writing ability with different samples of learners who have higher proficiency levels is important.

Hence, the relationship between reading and writing is mentioned in different studies, and some positive as well as negative correlations are highlighted in the literature, but it hasn't been identified how, when, or what types of reading can influence writing in what ways exactly. That's why we have attempted in this study to explore the influence of reading two specific types of reading (news and novels) on writing persuasive essays to have an understanding of the place of reading among the variables that affect writing.

3. Methodology

This study is a mixed model research. A quasi-experimental pre-test- post-test research design without a control group was used to assess the effect of reading a novel and

reading news as out-of-class reading activities on writing achievement. The research results were triangulated with open-ended questions asking participant views about their out-of-class reading tasks. The study was conducted during the spring term of the 2016-2017 educational year.

3.1 Sample

Convenience sampling is used in this study. 40 students (7 male and 33 female) of a Turkish University ELT department 1st year students participated in the study.

3.2 Procedure

The study was conducted as part of the Advanced Reading and Writing course that the ELT department students take in their first year. Totally 50 students enrolled in the course were randomly divided into two and each group consisted of 25 students. Each group was given a different reading assignment to be done as an out-of-class reading for a month.

Group A was assigned the task of reading George Orwell's novella 'Animal Farm' as an out of class reading activity. They were asked to read the novel and write a summary of the book in about 5 pages in a one-month period.

Group B was asked to follow internationally recognized newspapers, from countries where English is the native tongue (e.g. BBC, CNN, The Independent, VOA). They were required to read a piece of news daily, and the task consisted of reading a piece of news daily, writing down the title and the source of the news, and a very short summary of the news in a few sentences.

One-month instruction in class, between the pre-test and post-test focused on introducing the organization of a five-paragraph persuasive essay with explanations and examples in English. Both groups received the same instruction.

In addition to assessing the participants' writing achievement levels, participants' views of the out-of-class reading task that they were responsible for were obtained through open ended questions. The participants were asked to express their positive and negative views of the task in the form of 'gains' and 'losses'. The pre-test, post-test data and the data about the participants' views about the task were gathered in distinct sessions.

Throughout the research, some of the participants failed to attend either of the sessions for the pre-test, post-test, or failed in performing the task and submitting their reports, thus, they were excluded from the research data. 40 participants (17 in group A, and 23 in group B) successfully attended all of the necessary sessions and steps of the research. Group A consisted of 4 males and 13 females while group B consisted of 3 males and 20 females.

3.3 Instrumentation

A pre-test and a post-test were administered to both groups to assess their progress in writing.

The students were given two writing assignments tests, one as a pre-test and one as a post-test. Prior to the pre-test, the students had already been taught about writing a paragraph, different paragraph development methods, rhetorical features of writing, and a five-paragraph persuasive essay model was introduced to form the basis for assessment. After the pre-test the participants were informed about their reading tasks, and 30 days later the participants were given their post-test writing assignment. The pre-test and post-test writing assignments were graded by another ELT researcher according to Jacobs et al.'s analytic scoring profile (cited in Weigle, 2002, p. 116) in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics to guarantee objectivity. The writing task topics were chosen among the topics on the participants' local agenda which do not require extra specialization.

The students were also asked to express their views of the reading task they were given with an open-ended question in an attempt to triangulate the research data and have an insight into the participants' perceptions of the reading tasks, as well as checking consistency among the results obtained. The open-ended question administered to obtain the participants' views of their out-of-class reading tasks was in the form of: "What do you think about your 'out of class reading activity'?" and they wrote their views as positive/gains vs. negative/losses.

Positive (Gains etc.)	Negative (Losses etc.)
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

3.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were recorded on the computer and non-parametric Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon signed rank test were used to analyse the data obtained throughout the research.

The participant views regarding their perception of their out-of-class reading assignments were analysed and sorted according to the themes highlighted in their views into positive categories as 'vocabulary', 'grammar/ language use', 'fluency', 'content', 'summarize/paraphrase', 'comprehension', 'develop a desire to read', and 'other'. Negative views of the task were observed mainly to be under three headings as 'time', 'summarizing' and 'other'.

4. Results

4.1 Achievement results

Descriptive data regarding the pre-test achievement results of total participants are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-Content	40	18.9500	2.51100	15.00	25.00
Pre-Organization	40	12.8750	2.20939	10.00	18.00
Pre-Vocabulary	40	13.9750	1.45862	10.00	17.00
Pre-Language use	40	14.4000	2.25093	10.00	20.00
Pre-Mechanics	40	2.4750	.64001	2.00	4.00
Pre-Total	40	62.6750	6.82525	50.00	84.00
Group	40	1.5750	.50064	1.00	2.00

4.1.1 Pre-test writing achievement results

Table 2 below presents comparative findings regarding the pre-test writing achievement of the participants.

Table 2: Pre-test writing achievement comparison of group A and group B

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	*P*
Pre-Content	A	17	19.71	335.00		.696
	B	23	21.09	485.00	-.391	
	Total	40				
Pre-Organization	A	17	22.56	383.50		
	B	23	18.98	436.50	-.991	.322
	Total	40				
Pre-Vocabulary	A	17	18.32	311.50		
	B	23	22.11	508.50	-1.088	.277
	Total	40				
Pre-Language use	A	17	20.65	351.00	-.072	
	B	23	20.39	469.00		.942
	Total	40				
Pre-Mechanics	A	17	22.15	376.50	-.885	
	B	23	19.28	443.50		.376
	Total	40				
Pre-Total	A	17	20.79	353.50	-.137	
	B	23	20.28	466.50		.891
	Total	40				

*P<.05

Pre-test achievement data regarding the students' writing performance was analysed through Mann-Whitney U test and a statistically significant difference between group A and group B could not be found.

4.1.2 Post-test writing achievement results

Post-test writing achievement comparison of the two groups is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Post-test writing achievement comparison of group A and group B

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	*P*
Post-Content	A	17	16.91	287.50		
	B	23	23.15	532.50	-1.727	.084
	Total	40				
Post-Organization	A	17	18.32	311.50		
	B	23	22.11	508.50	-1.038	.299
	Total	40				
Post-Vocabulary	A	17	20.32	345.50		
	B	23	20.63	474.50	-.085	.932
	Total	40				
Post-Language use	A	17	22.29	379.00		
	B	23	19.17	441.00	-.880	.379
	Total	40				
Post-Mechanics	A	17	21.56	366.50		
	B	23	19.72	453.50	-.547	.584
	Total	40				
Post-Total	A	17	19.41	330.00	-.508	.612
	B	23	21.30	490.00		
	Total	40				

*P<.05

Post-test writing achievement of the participants was analysed through Mann-Whitney U test and a statistically significant difference between group A and group B could not be found.

4.1.3 Group A Pre-test post-test writing achievement results
Pre-test post-test comparison of group A writing achievement is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Pre-test post-test comparison of group A writing achievement

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	*P*
Post-Content – Pre-Content	Negative Ranks	6[a]	4.50	27.00		
	Positive Ranks	5[b]	7.80	39.00	-.549[a]	.583
	Ties	6[c]				
	Total	17				
Post-Organization – Pre-Organization	Negative Ranks	1[d]	1.50	1.50		
	Positive Ranks	8[e]	5.44	43.50	-2.514[a]	
	Ties	8[f]				.012*
	Total	17				
Post-Vocabulary – Pre-Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	2[g]	2.00	4.00		
	Positive Ranks	8[h]	6.38	51.00	-2.405[a]	.016*
	Ties	7[i]				
	Total	17				
Post-Language use – Pre-Language use	Negative Ranks	0[j]	.00	.00		
	Positive Ranks	11[k]	6.00	66.00	-2.992[a]	**.003***
	Ties	6[l]				
	Total	17				

Post-Mechanics – Pre-Mechanics	Negative Ranks	2[m]	6.00	12.00		
	Positive Ranks	6[n]	4.00	24.00	-.905[a]	.366
	Ties	9[o]				
	Total	17				
Post-Total – Pre-Total	Negative Ranks	1[p]	1.50	1.50		
	Positive Ranks	13[q]	7.96	103.50	-3.208[a]	**.001***
	Ties	3[r]				
	Total	17				

*P<.05

Analysis of the data regarding the writing achievement of group A suggests that the group who read the novella is found to show progress in organization, vocabulary, language use and total writing achievement. A statistically significant improvement could not be found in content and mechanics of group A essays between the pre-test and post-test results.

4.1.4 Group B Pre-test post-test writing achievement results
Table 5 below presents pre-test post-test writing achievement comparison of group B.

Table 5: Pre-test post-test comparison of group B writing achievement

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	P
Post-Content – Pre-Content	Negative Ranks	3[a]	5.17	15.50		
	Positive Ranks	10[b]	7.55	75.50	-2.109[a]	**.035***
	Ties	10[c]				
	Total	23				
Post-Organization – Pre-Organization	Negative Ranks	0[d]	.00	.00		
	Positive Ranks	20[e]	10.50	210.00	-3.944[a]	**.000***
	Ties	3[f]				
	Total	23				
Post-Vocabulary– Pre-Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	2[g]	5.50	11.00		
	Positive Ranks	14[h]	8.93	125.00	-3.064[a]	**.002***
	Ties	7[i]				
	Total	23				
Post-Language use– Pre-Language use	Negative Ranks	5[j]	7.00	35.00		
	Positive Ranks	13[k]	10.46	136.00	-2.237[a]	**.025***
	Ties	5[l]				
	Total	23				
Post-Mechanics – Pre-Mechanics	Negative Ranks	3[m]	5.50	16.50		
	Positive Ranks	8[n]	6.19	49.50	-1.604[a]	.109
	Ties	12[o]				
	Total	23				
Post-Total – Pre-Total	Negative Ranks	0[p]	.00	.00	-4.019[a]	**.000***
	Positive Ranks	21[q]	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	2[r]				
	Total	23				

*P<.05

Results regarding the pre-test post-test comparison of group B writing achievement suggest statistically significant improvements in content, organization, vocabulary, language use and in total scores. However, the group did not display a significant improvement in the mechanics of writing.

4.2 Participant views of the reading tasks

Positive and negative obtained from the participants were analysed sorted into groups depending on the themes expressed by them and the positive views emphasized 7 main themes as 'vocabulary', 'grammar/ language use', 'fluency', 'content', 'summarize/paraphrase', 'comprehension', 'develop a desire to read', and the views that we could not identify or that express vague judgments (both in positive and negative views) were included in a separate category as 'other'. Negative views in both groups clustered around 'time', 'summarizing' and 'other'.

Table 6: Group A views of the out-of-class reading task

Themes		f	Total	n	Total
Positive	Vocabulary	13	45	15	20
	Grammar/ Language Use	2			
	Fluency	3			
	Content	3			
	Summarize/Paraphrase	4			
	Comprehension	2			
	Develop a desire to read	14			
	Other	4			
Negative	Time	3	11	9	
	Summarizing	5			
	Other	3			

Participants in group A expressed their positive views of the reading task that it contributed to their 'vocabulary', 'grammar/ language use', 'fluency', 'content', 'summarize/paraphrase', 'comprehension', 'develop a desire to read', and 'other'. Totally 20 students in the A group delivered views on the reading task, 15 of them had positive views where 9 declared negative views. Totally 45 positive views with 11 negative views of the reading task ensued. As positive views, 13 students expressed reading George Orwell's novella contributed to their vocabulary, 2 students grammar/language use, 3 students fluency, 3 students content, 4 students summarizing/paraphrasing ability, 2 students comprehension, 14 students their desire to read, and 4 students expressed 'other' contributions. 'Stronger memory', 'new experience', 'I learnt describing', 'I learned a lot of things' are the positive views expressed by the participants that we decided to include in the 'other' category.

Negative views of the reading task expressed by the students in group A were observed to be about 'time', summarizing', and 'other'. Negative views labelled as 'other' in the A group are 'I read the book on PDF so it was hard', 'It is a little long, so sometimes I got bored', 'It needs concentration and really good focusing'.

Table 7: Group B views of the out-of-class reading task

Themes		f	Total	n	Total
Positive	Vocabulary	9	59	22	22
	Grammar/ Language Use	9			
	Fluency	1			
	Content	18			
	Summarize/Paraphrase	5			
	Comprehension	2			
	Develop a desire to read	12			
	Other	3			
Negative	Time	12	23	19	
	Summarizing	7			
	Other	4			

Positive views of the reading task obtained from group B were grouped as the contribution of reading task to 'vocabulary', 'grammar/ language use', 'fluency', 'content', 'summarize/paraphrase', 'comprehension', 'develop a desire to read', and 'other'. Totally 22 of the 23 participants in group B expressed their views of the reading task, and they created 59 positive views. Their views regarding the themes identified are as, 9 about vocabulary development, 9 grammar/ language use, 1 fluency, 18 content, 5 summarizing, 2 comprehension, 12 desire to read, and 3 categorized as 'other'. The three positive views labelled as 'other' are 'noticing different accent styles', 'improving listening', 'exercising mind and fingers'.

17 of the 25 participants in Group A, shared their views of the reading task, and attended both the pre-test and post-test. 8 participants failed to attend either the pre-test or the post-test and 3 of the 8 participated in expressing their views of the out-of-class reading tasks. 15 participants declared some gains from the task, and 9 of them mentioned negative views as well.

23 of the 25 participants in Group B attended both the pre-test and post-test and 22 participants shared their views regarding the reading task. 22 participants declared gains from the task, and 19 of them expressed negative views about the task as well.

In group A, 9 students declared negative views, while 19 students declared negative views in group B.

5. Discussion

Analysis of our data suggests some results consistent with the previous findings in the literature as well as indicating some controversies to be verified by further research. To start with, pre-test and post-test writing achievement tests did not display a significant difference between the groups. It is not surprising that the one-month instruction between the two tests mostly concerned with the organization of writing. It seems quite natural that both groups improved in terms of the organization of writing and did not display a significant difference between the two groups.

Augustin Llach (2010) proposes that correlation between reading and writing is closer as the proficiency in a foreign language increases, and the proposition 'good L2

readers are good L2 writers' is regarded acceptable for proficient learners. In our study, we didn't differentiate among the proficiency levels, but the student admission policies of the institution assume that the students pass the same exams and fulfil the same requirements to be enrolled in the department. The students are thought to at a similar level of language proficiency. As the pre-test and post-test writing achievement tests did not display a significant difference between the two groups, it is likely to claim that this study was conducted on equivalent groups.

On the other hand, Augustin Llach (2010) also draws attention to vocabulary and reports that vocabulary was the component that best explained reading-writing relationships. In terms of vocabulary, participants in our study seem to display improvement but they did not display a significant difference between the groups as both groups read. It can be concluded that both groups benefited from reading and the type of texts did not create a statistically significant difference. However, reading-writing relationship in terms of vocabulary can be tested in different contexts and deeper analysis can be attained.

Linguistic complexity and syntactic structures constitute another significant identifier of writing proficiency, to which 'language use' dimension in our writing achievement tests correspond to. In terms of language use, both groups seem to display improvement after their out-of-class reading tasks, but the results did not display a significant difference between the groups. In fact, it is not a clear-cut finding about the benefit of reading because the instructional practices in class could also be effective on any of the dimensions as well.

Another interesting, maybe not surprising, finding from our study is that none of the two groups displayed a statistically significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test, or difference between the groups in terms of the mechanics of writing. It seems possible to conclude that the effect of reading on the 'mechanics' of writing is limited and some further research can focus on the problem to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The place of explicit instruction and practice in developing the mechanics of writing can be researched to identify more exact connections to reading-writing relationship.

A prominent finding from this study seems to be the one regarding the content of writing. Pre-test post-test comparison of the results suggests that group B displayed a statistically significant improvement in 'content', while group A did not display a significant improvement in 'content'. Assuming that both groups received the same instruction, at the same time, and only the different variable was their out-of-class reading, reading news for a month seems to contribute more than reading a novel to the content of the persuasive essays. Participants' perceptions of their tasks also support this finding that group B members were willing to share more views of the reading task, and they thought reading contributed to them in terms of 'content' because 'content' as a positive view of their reading task received the highest frequency (18).

About EFL writers' views of the out-of-class reading tasks, it seems that both groups perceive reading as a positive activity because both groups expressed more positive views than negative views. Group A provided 45 positive views, and group B 59

positive views while group A highlighted 11 negative views and group B 23 negative views. What is surprising here is that most of the negative views centred on 'time', and 'summarizing/paraphrasing', where group B complained about the time spent on performing the tasks more than group A.

However, the participants' displeasure with the time was indicated in close relation to 'summarizing/paraphrasing'. Actually, the participants were asked to summarize and record what they had read to make sure the learners had performed the task and was not the chief purpose of the study. That is why, spending time to read and summarizing what they read turned into a variable that creates negative views of the reading task. Specifically, the news readers emphasized that they had lost time when finding a news story, deciding on the story of the day to read and summarize which signals some more burden on the B group as compared to the A group:

"Sometimes finding news was difficult." (Participant 6B)

"It was hard to sum up news, I got confused lots of time." (Participant 31B)

"It was very beneficial for our reading and writing skills. It was also very enjoyable searching for news each day." (Participant 12B)

"I think this homework was successful. I tried to choose meaningful news." (Participant 23B)

On the other hand, a significant finding to be underlined here is again about participants in group B (news readers) that all of the participants who expressed views had positive attitudes toward the task. However, in group A,15 of the 20 students who expressed views had positive views of the task. Taking into account the fact that both groups had negative views with the common themes, and relatively the more burden put on the B group, it is likely to claim that reading news is likely to create more joy of reading for students.

What leads us to such an interpretation of the results is that the participants in group B emphasized their pleasure, on the contributions of reading news to the content of writing, about increasing their knowledge of the world through reading. Following the real-life stories, comments, discussions, arguments and counter arguments daily was an opportunity for them to experience different views of the world, as good as an enlightenment.

Our results seem to be in accordance with Graber-Wilson's (1989) assertions that incompetence in writing can not only be associated with syntactic and rhetorical problems but can also be related to, critical thinking skills and motivation. Learner behaviours need to be observed and researched in terms of motivational factors about reading and writing. What we could observe in our study is that when teachers ask students to read out of the class, the students may not always be motivated enough to read. When teachers give reading tasks to be done out of class, they may have some

strategies to make sure the reading task is accomplished. For example, teachers sometimes ask the students to read and include questions in their exams regarding the reading tasks, or they can ask, as we did in our study, the students to keep record of what they read in written form as well as requiring an oral summary and so on.

However, especially the developments in digital materials bring some new factors to be taken into consideration. For example, (Participant 37A) declared that he/she read the book in PDF form and that was tiring and boring for him/her as 'I read the book on PDF so it was hard. It is a little long, so sometimes I got bored'. Advantages and disadvantages of new forms of reading and reading habits need to receive attention in reading research with an analysis of the same factors in terms of writing as well. The digital world today provides us with many opportunities in reading and writing, but new opportunities may not always mean advantages, but also create some disadvantages too.

To be precise, analyses, summary, or translation of many of the novels or stories are available on the internet today and when teachers ask learners to read a novel or a story, students might be firstly interested in reading the available analyses, summaries, or even the translations in their mother tongue. Therefore, the teachers' goals may not match with the learner outcomes as desired. In our study, (participant 26A) alleged without hesitation that 'If it was a less political book, it would be more enjoyable to read it, but it was different and informative than our other writings', which is quite surprising, to see her focusing on politics, regarding that it was the first time they were asked to read a novel. The negative meaning expressed through the word 'political' in her views is another point that deserves discussion, but, as it is out of our concern in this study, we suggest for further research to focus on analysing various meanings attributed to reading or writing tasks.

On the other hand, online sources represent great advantages in terms finding various texts inauthentic language either as books or newspapers. Reading news online is exactly a revolution as compared to the availability of limited printed forms of newspapers for language learners. Putting the possible disadvantages aside, reading news is likely to create potentially more excitement than reading a novel. In a sense, reading daily news is like watching a live show, while reading a novel can be resembled to watching a pre-recorded (also analysed, summarised, and translated to other languages) program. When a student knows that analysis reports, summaries and translations of a pre-recorded show (a book) are available to be informed about the content, it may mean that the risks of deviating from the teacher's route (reading) to achieve the goals expected from the reading activity.

Last but not least, although our main goal in the study was to focus on the effect of out-of-class reading on writing achievement, receiving participant views that the reading task contributed to listening skills has been an unexpected finding for us (e. g. positive view 'improving listening' by the participant 40B). In fact, it is quite natural when the opportunities on news websites of offering written texts and videos/audios of the news stories.

6. Conclusion

To begin with, the findings from this study are limited to the sample of this study and more research needs to be conducted in different contexts, and with different samples to be generalizable to larger contexts. Still, results of this study suggest some positive correlations between EFL reading and writing, consistent with the literature on the influence of reading on writing.

The pre and post-tests didn't display statistically significant differences between the A and B groups either in total scores or in scores of specific dimensions of the assessment (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics). Although the correlation does not suggest statistically significant differences between the two types of out-of-class reading (reading a novel and reading news), reading news seems to be more effective on the content of writing persuasive essays when compared to reading a novel. Reading a novel is found to contribute to the *organization, language use, vocabulary* and *total achievement* while reading news seems to contribute to the *content* of writing in addition to *organization, language use, vocabulary*, and *total achievement*. Hence the B Group differed from the A Group in terms of content development in writing. Apart from the writing achievement tests, qualitative data obtained on student views of the reading task indicate that B group (news readers) declared 'content' with the highest frequency as a benefit from reading. More research on the contribution of specific types of reading on specific types of writing is likely to provide us with more explanatory findings about reading-writing connection.

On the other hand, *mechanics* of writing is not found to be affected by reading. Neither of the groups suggested a statistically significant improvement in mechanics of writing. It is also verified by the qualitative data that students in either of the groups did not declare any views regarding the contribution of reading to their abilities in the mechanics of writing, which can be regarded as consistent with the results of the writing achievement test. Therefore, more research on the instruction and practice of *mechanics* of writing are suggested.

The qualitative data obtained in this study suggest some hints about positive and negative views of learners about reading, and writing. As a positive finding, reading news seems to be more interesting (at least less boring) than reading a novel for the students, regarding the research results and the researcher's observations. A major identification of negative view of learners can be that they concentrated mostly on 'the time spent' and 'paraphrasing/summarizing'. In a sense, their negative views seem to centre primarily on writing rather than reading.

1980s have been a turning point in the development of language skills, especially about writing instruction and reading-writing relationships. Taking the technological, scientific, and social developments of our time into consideration, it is likely to conclude that in a couple of decades we will find ourselves in a very different environment from what we have experienced so far. We will need to adapt our minds and our practices to the forthcoming conditions. Reading and writing habits of the human are transforming into new forms and it will not be surprising to see people reading and writing in digital

forms. Developing forms of new virtual reading and writing are prone to create new variables to affect language teaching, as well as to create new research questions for the researchers.

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