

استخدام معالج الكلمات لتعليم الكتابة لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة الملك سعود

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ملخص البحث. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق هدف رئيسي هو اختبار فاعلية برنامج معالج الكلمات لمساعدة الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تعلم مهارة الكتابة ومعرفة موقف أفراد عينة الدراسة من استخدام الحاسب الآلي في تعلم الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية. تم إجراء الدراسة في معمل التعليم الإلكتروني التابع لقسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها بكلية الآداب في جامعة الملك سعود خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني للعام الجامعي ١٤٢٥/١٤٢٦ هـ. وتم تقسيم عينة الدراسة إلى مجموعتين حسب معدلاتهم: مجموعة تجريبية درست مهارة الكتابة بالطريقة المحوسبة، ومجموعة ضابطة درست المهارة نفسها بالطريقة التقليدية. قام أفراد المجموعة التجريبية بالعديد من التطبيقات العملية في الكتابة باستخدام الحاسوب مثل البحث عن الأخطاء وتصحيحها. تم عمل اختبار لمعرفة أثر البرنامج المستخدم، وتم أيضا إجراء استفتاء لمعرفة آراء المجموعة التجريبية في تعليم الكتابة باستخدام الحاسوب. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المجموعة التجريبية التي درست مهارة الكتابة بالطريقة المحوسبة حققت نتائج أفضل في امتحان الكتابة من المجموعة الضابطة التي درست المهارة نفسها بالطريقة التقليدية، كما تبين أن أفراد المجموعة التجريبية يرون أن استخدام الحاسب الآلي هو أسلوب فعال لتعليم مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية. أخيرا خلصت الدراسة إلى استنتاج مفاده أن استخدام برنامج معالج الكلمات له أثر إيجابي على تعليم مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.

Appendix

Survey: Computer-aided Writing (Results)

Dear Student,

Please circle the number about how you feel.

1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree

No	Statement	1	2	3	4
1	The computer provides me with more feedback about my errors and mistakes.	50%	30%	15%	5%
2	Using the computer in the writing class encourages me to spend more time working on my papers than when I write with a pen.	10%	70%	15%	5%
3	When I use word processing on the computer, I am more careful about grammar.	20%	60%	15%	5%
4	I can think of more ideas for my writing when I use the computer.	30%	60%	10%	0%
5	I like using word processing better than other ways to write in English.	30%	55%	15%	0%
6	When I use word processing on the computer, I pay more attention to what I am writing.	25%	65%	10%	0%
7	I feel I have learned more about writing in English from this class than I have from other English classes I have taken in which the computer was not used.	20%	70%	10%	0%
8	When I write using the computer, I pay more attention to punctuation.	30%	60%	10%	0%
9	When I use word processing on the computer, I am more careful about style.	85%	10%	5%	0%
10	I am not worried that it will take me longer to learn to use the computer than other students.	85%	5%	10%	0%
11	I think using the computer in writing class is interesting.	55%	40%	5%	0%
12	The computer-aided writing helps me in developing self-reliance skills, problem-solving strategies, and critical thinking abilities.	60%	35%	5%	0%
13	I pay more attention to choosing the right word when I use the computer.	25%	70%	5%	0%
14	I would recommend that other students learn to use word processing for writing their papers in English.	20%	70%	10%	0%
15	I would like to take another writing course if I could use the computer.	25%	65%	10%	0%
16	I get better scores on papers I have written using the computer.	20%	65%	15%	0%
17	It was easy to learn how to use the computer.	35%	50%	10%	5%
18	I can change my papers more easily and more often when I use word processing than when I write with other ways.	10%	60%	30%	0%
19	I plan to continue using the computer to write my papers after this class is finished.	20%	60%	15%	5%
20	The computer-aided writing helps students interact and work together, which helped them in improving writing.	70%	25%	5%	0%
21	I pay more attention to spelling when I use the computer.	50%	40%	10%	0%
22	The feeling in the class is friendly and the students in this class help one another.	45%	50%	5%	0%
23	Using word processing makes me less worried about writing because I know I can edit my writing easily.	5%	65%	30%	0%
24	I use word processing more than any other way to write papers for my class	20%	60%	20%	0%
25	I think I write longer papers using the computer.	25%	65%	5%	5%
26	I do not get nervous in the computer-writing class.	5%	90%	5%	0%
27	I can easily use the non-linear method when I use the computer.	20%	70%	10%	0%
28	I feel I get more individual attention from the teacher in the computer-writing class than I do in other, non-computer-writing classes.	15%	70%	15%	0%
29	I pay more attention to organization when I use the computer.	25%	65%	10%	0%
30	I am happier with my papers when I write using the computer.	25%	70%	5%	0%
	Frequency	960	1670	340	30
	%	32.0	55.67	11.33	1.0

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This study proved that most of the members of the experimental group found it easy to use the computer in learning the skill of writing. This is in contrast with what was reported by other studies. For instance, Bloom [31] found that one of the disadvantages of computer-based instruction was the difficulty that students faced in using the computer programs. Bloom's study, however, was written more than 20 years ago, a period during which CALL has improved greatly.

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that the word processor has an effect on the process of teaching and learning the skill of writing. EFL learners have a facility that provides a chance for self-learning, which helps them to be more independent on teachers. They are also able to discover and correct their errors because the word processor enhances language learning, makes writing more organized, and aids in the mechanics of language. Not only can students use the word processor in the classroom under the control of the teacher, but they are also able to utilize it anywhere or anytime outside the classroom.

It has also become possible for EFL learners to use a wide range of word processor-based activities and applications such as checking grammar, style, and spelling errors, editing texts, and using punctuation marks. By using these practical language-learning activities, it has become possible to practice the sub-skills of writing in convenient contexts. The use of instructional software in a friendly non-threatening atmosphere encourages the use of the language skills as writing.

Finally, it can be concluded that EFL learners' performance in writing improves a lot through using word processors compared with the traditional procedures, techniques, activities, and methods used by EFL teachers. Some points for further research may include the following: using techniques like individual and cooperative learning in computer-aided writing, using TELL facilities such as email and chat in writing, and finding the effect of using different types of word processors on students' achievement.

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- 2) Most of the subjects in the experimental group (85%) believed that the word processor helped them to improve the skill of writing (20.0% of them (frequency = 4/20 students) strongly agreed and 60% (frequency = 12/20 students) agreed). The other 15% (frequency = 3/20 students) did not agree that the computer-writing class was helpful.

Members of the experimental group benefited a lot from computer-mediated learning. This is attributed to the instrument program used in the study which is accessed with a huge amount of linguistic information. It enabled the students to learn different sub-skills of writing, like grammar, spelling, style, and punctuation. Furthermore, the linguistic information in the program is arranged in an easy-to-use manner which allows the user to process it in a straightforward way.

This is in harmony with what was reported by other studies. For instance, Gayle, Davidson-Shivers, Nowlin and Lanouette [28] found that the computer-writing lesson was easy to follow, the subjects enjoyed it, and the computer helped them with their writing. Similarly, George, Bourret and Nelson [29] said that students were amazed at the amount of linguistic information made available to them by the computer, and were happy and excited about the ease of finding and incorporating information, using computer-aided writing facilities.

- 3) Nearly all the subjects in the experimental group (95%) thought that the computer-aided writing course assisted them to interact and work together, which was helpful for them in improving the skill of writing (70% of them (frequency = 14/20 students) strongly agreed and 25% (frequency = 5/20 students) agreed). The rest of the students (5%) (frequency = 1/20 students) believed that the computer-writing class did not enhance interaction and improve the skill of writing.

The use of computer-assisted writing in this study created an interesting and non-threatening atmosphere which motivated the student to depend on himself and work with other students to do many computer-based activities like editing his classmates' writing. This also created an atmosphere of cooperation among the subjects who could work together via chatting to write about a certain topic. They could also exchange viewpoints and receive new ideas about the subjects they discussed. Gu [30] reported that computer-assisted writing projects enabled students to interact in authentic situations with a variety of audiences, increase their levels of linguistic input and output, and enhance motivation for working and willingness to learn collaboratively.

- 4) The majority of the subjects in the experimental group (85%) thought that it was easy for them to use the computer in learning the skill of writing (35% of them (frequency = 7/20 students) strongly agreed and 50% (frequency = 10/20 students) agreed). The other 15% found it difficult to use the computer for learning the skill of writing (10% (frequency 2/20 students) of them disagreed and 5% (frequency 1/20 students) strongly disagreed).

Table 1.

Method	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Computerized	20	7.36	2.89147
Traditional	16	5.44	3.22364

As can be seen from the table above, the results of the study indicated that the members of the experimental group achieved better results in the writing test (mean scores = 7.36) than their counterparts in the control group did (mean scores = 5.44). This is in harmony with the previous studies about computer-assisted writing which reported that the computer was an effective tool for teaching language skills like writing (see, for instance, Hegelheimer, Mills, Salzmann and Shetzer [24]; Ong [25]). This is also in line with what was reported by other studies (Cohen and Riel [26]; Cononelos and Oliva [27]) which found that the computer improved the skill of writing.

It is possible to account for this finding in the following way:

- 1) The subjects in the experimental group studied in a relaxed atmosphere, which was motivating for critical thinking and supportive for using problem-solving strategies.
- 2) They had an access to extra facilities like grammar and spelling checkers which were found to be helpful for them.
- 3) Members of the experimental group became more dependent on themselves when they used electronic interaction.
- 4) The use of word processor in the classroom opened new prospects for the subjects, which motivated them for doing extra activities outside the classroom.

As to the attitude of the experimental group towards using computer-assisted writing, the results of the study revealed that members of the experimental group generally had a positive attitude towards computer-aided writing. The following is a summary of the results of the most important items in the questionnaire:

- 1) The majority of the members of the experimental group (87.67% (frequency = 26.3/30 items)) had a positive attitude towards computer-aided writing (32.0% of them (frequency = 9.60/30 items) strongly agreed and 55.67% (frequency = 16.70/30 items) agreed). However, the other 12.33% (frequency = 3.7/30 items) had a negative attitude towards computer-aided writing (11.33% (frequency = 3.4/30 items) disagreed and 1.0% (frequency = 0.3/30 items) strongly disagreed).

This is in line with other studies (Neu and Scarcella [8, p. 169]; Phinney [9, p. 208]; Daiute [15, p. 37]) which stressed that the majority of students had a positive attitude towards computer-aided writing because it was useful, enjoyable, and comfortable.

The word processor-based facilities were also used as effective tools for evaluating and diagnosing students' writing. One of these facilities, "Comment", was utilized by the instructor to mark the subjects' works. This facility was functional in helping the instructor in diagnosing errors and providing feedback about them. Members of the experimental group also used the word processor in finding as well as correcting grammar, style, and spelling errors. By clicking "F7" button, then "Resume," a new screen appears. It contains pieces of information about the rule that has been violated, illustrative examples, and suggestions for the user about the correct form. Members of the experimental group also used the non-linear approach in writing. Finally, the subjects in the experimental group utilized the chat facility to discuss different topics and exchange viewpoints about them. The word processor helped them to create an atmosphere of interaction and collaboration, and become more self-reliant, depending on the electronic instruments.

Data analysis

Data in the survey questions about the level of difficulty of language skills were calculated and analyzed. Means of scores of the survey questions were then found using the percentage method. Similarly, means of scores of the study subjects in the English language courses in the first semester were found using *Excel*. The subjects were then distributed into two groups according to their means, which was 2.8/5 for each group. Means of scores for the questionnaire items would be found and the resulting data would be analyzed using the percentage method via *Excel*. Moreover, the answer papers would be corrected by two independent examiners after conducting the test in order to insure the reliability of the scorer. If there was a big difference in evaluation (more than 10%), the paper would be given to a third evaluator and the mean score would be taken as the mark of the student.

The study had one independent variable: method of teaching, computerized or traditional. There was also one dependent variable, achievement of the study subjects. The description of the properties of the variables included in the study, means and standard deviations, and an independent-samples t test would be made to find if there were any differences between the results of the experimental and control groups using *SPSS*.

Results and Discussion

An independent-samples t test was run to find if there were any significant differences between the results of the experimental and control groups in the writing test. A t value of 7.960 was obtained which was found to be significant at $P < 0.05$ level. The table below shows the description of the properties of the variables included in the study and means and standard of deviations.

Procedure

The survey questions were given to the subjects of the study in different classes. They were asked to answer the two questions about the most difficult language skill to learn. Likewise, 10 professors of linguistics were requested to answer two questions about the most difficult EFL skill to teach. The researcher stated the aim of the survey for the subjects. After answering the survey questions, the papers were collected and the answers were analyzed.

At the beginning of the course, the instructor gave an introductory lesson about CALL in general and the use of word processor for teaching the skill of writing to the experimental group. Members of the experimental group were trained on using the word processor for learning the skill of writing. They were divided into small heterogeneous groups or pairs to enable the weak students to benefit from their classmates. Members of the experimental group used the word processor for many applications in writing like exercises, checking and correcting errors and getting feedback about them, editing texts, and making electronic linguistic interaction. At the end of the semester, a test was made to find the effect of the CALL method for teaching the skill of writing, and members of the experimental group were asked to fill out the questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire was stated. Students were given enough time to fill the forms (an average of 20 minutes). The instructor answered students' enquiries about the questionnaire items.

On the other hand, members of the control group were divided into small heterogeneous groups so that the weak student might benefit from their classmates. They studied the components of the paragraph, and received training on how to write different kinds of paragraphs like the descriptive paragraph. They were also provided with a checklist to edit peers' writing. They were asked to analyze paragraphs into their components, and find and correct errors. Moreover, they were trained on how to use punctuation marks correctly. Members of the control group also used different strategies in writing such as brainstorming. At the end of the semester, a test was administered to find the effect of using the traditional method for teaching the skill of writing to the control group.

Computer-based methods and activities

The word processor was used in presenting several language learning techniques on the low-tech level such as finding the missing word, filling spaces with suitable words, and searching words. Members of the experimental group used the word processor for finding out lexical relations like synonyms. In addition, *Word 2003* was used for writing and designing exercises and quizzes followed by feedback. Ready formats and templates for preparing tests were employed in this study. For instance, from the site <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Cunningham-CALLWriting>, the file *m-template.txt* was downloaded and uploaded into the word processor. The header of information was edited to show the name and the test title, and write the questions. The questions that were dealt with through this program were "true or false," "fill in the blank," and "multiple choice."

reading, or writing?" and "Why?" The other part also consisted of two questions for the professors. They were "What is the most difficult EFL skill to teach, listening, speaking, reading, or writing?" and "Why?"

Both the experimental and control groups used *Great Paragraphs* by Folse, Muchmore-Vokoun, and Solomon, 1999, a textbook used for teaching paragraph writing course. The course aims at introducing the basic concepts of paragraph writing, unity, and coherence, and giving practice about the types of paragraphs like the descriptive and narrative paragraphs. Members of the experimental group also used the word processor for editing texts, checking errors, finding related words, chatting, and doing exercises and quizzes. *Word 2003* software that is integrated into *Microsoft Office 2003* was used by the experimental group. Members of the control group also had an access to the linguistic material available in the word processor like the dictionary and the grammar and style rules, but in a traditional way.

To answer the first question of the study, a test was conducted for the experimental and control groups. It was given to two professors of linguistics in the field to check its suitability to the aims of the course, content, and clarity of instructions. They suggested introducing different types of questions like editing a text, analyzing a paragraph into its components, and rewriting sentences. Their comments and suggestions were taken into consideration. The test was several times field-tested. The internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha reliability for the test instrument was determined to be 0.80 which is statistically accepted. The students' papers were corrected according to the following five criteria: coherent and clear ideas, grammatical rules, correct spelling, mechanics and organization, and effective use of vocabulary. Between 15-25% of the total mark was allocated for each of these items.

To answer the second question of the study, the questionnaire made by Cunningham [22] was adopted. The questionnaire originally consisted of 38 items, but it was modified to suit the study. The questionnaire was given to the same two professors. They were requested to check the suitability of content and clarity of instructions. They suggested introducing items such as using the non-linear method via computer and checking style, spelling, and punctuation errors. They also suggested deleting eight items, as they were not necessary. Their suggestions and comments were considered by the researcher. The items of the questionnaire were reduced to 30 statements with which the student had to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The rubrics at the beginning of the questionnaire were clear and asked the student to circle the choice about how he felt about the statement (see the survey in Appendix). A pilot study was conducted to check that the statements of the questionnaire were suitable. To insure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha reliability was determined to be 0.86 which is high from the statistical point of view.

Cunningham [10] conducted a study about the usefulness of word processor for learners. Analysis of the data showed that students found the computer-based writing class to be challenging and comfortable. The students believed that word processing helped them to improve their performance in writing. They also reported that using the word processor benefited them in concentrating their attention on certain aspects of their writing such as grammar, word choice and organization. The results that were reported by Cunningham indicated that the word processor was positive and contributed to improve writing abilities by increasing willingness to write and revise, and sharing ideas with others.

Having reviewed related literature about the use of word processor for teaching and learning the skill of writing, the researcher notes that there is a dearth of CALL investigation studies (Hulstijn [23]) and lack of research oriented CALL articles (Adair-Hauck, Willingham-McLain, and Youngs [6]). Few studies are also based on applied work; others are theoretically oriented and glorify the use of technology for teaching EFL skills such as writing. This study, however, is based on an experimental work to test the effect of using word processor on the development of students' performance in writing. Furthermore, it investigates the students' opinions of computer-aided writing. The present research is also, to my best knowledge, the first study about the use of word processor in Saudi Arabia for teaching the skill of writing to EFL learners.

Methodology

Setting and context

This study was conducted in the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University during the second semester of the academic year 2004/2005. The experimental group studied in the E-learning Language Laboratory which has 40 PCs connected with local and global networks. The PCs in the laboratory are provided with the most up-to-date CALL software packages, such as *Word 2003*.

Subjects

The population of the study consisted of 85 freshmen in the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University for the academic year 2004/2005. The sample of the study involved students of the paragraph writing course. They were distributed into two groups, according to their GPA and the pre-test in English language courses in the first semester. The experimental group consisted of 20 subjects, and the control group of 16 ones. Moreover, 85 freshmen and 10 professors of linguistics in the department participated in answering the survey questions about the level of difficulty of learning/teaching EFL skill, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Instruments

A survey was designed by the researcher to find the most difficult EFL skill to learn/teach. It contained two parts. The first one consisted of two questions for the students. They were "What is the most difficult EFL skill to learn, listening, speaking,

countable and uncountable nouns. Similarly, this article is based on using a software instrument which is equipped with facilities for providing users with feedback about various linguistic errors.

Gousseva [20] conducted a study about a computer-aided writing class. Students were divided into small groups who interacted via computer. The aim of the study was to investigate the students' attitude towards using computer-mediated language learning. Gosusseva found that students' attitude towards CALL was usually positive because they could see different viewpoints and improve the skill of writing. She also said that students felt more comfortable in the CALL environment. She concluded that students of the 101 writing section focused on the role of computer-based facilities that were used in the writing class as means to increase interaction and share ideas with each other, while the 107 students stressed the importance of computer-based facilities that were used in the writing class as additional tools to practice English.

Adair-Hauck, Willingham-McLain, and Youngs [6] studied the effect of using technology enhanced language learning (TELL) on the performance of college-level students in writing. The sample of the study consisted of two groups, the experimental group and the control group. Both were taught by the same instructor, textbook, and ancillary materials, but the experimental group also participated in TELL activities. The results that the authors reported indicated that the experimental group performed better than the other group did in the skill of writing. The findings of the study also showed that it was feasible and in fact desirable to integrate computer-based instruction into learning and teaching language.

Stevens [21] recommended using the computer for learning/teaching the skill of writing. He believed that the word processor had a positive effect on the development of students' achievement in writing. He designed several word processor-based exercises and activities, and suggested the following to be used in the computer-writing class:

- Finding the missing word and writing it.
- The use of search and replace letters in a certain text.
- Double clicking a word, cutting it, and asking a student to paste it in the correct place.
- Editing: the teacher presents a text with errors, and students work individually or cooperatively (in groups or pairs) to revise it.
- Sentence completion: the teacher gives students a number of open-ended sentences or cloze exercise to complete.

- 1) What is the effect of the method of teaching on the achievement of the subjects in the writing tasks of the experimental group which studied via computer and the control group which studied in the traditional method?
- 2) What is the attitude of the subjects in the experimental group towards using computer-aided writing?

Definition of Terms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

Writing: writing a text of one paragraph (10-15 sentences) using the macro and micro skills of writing.

Word processor: a computer program used for editing texts, checking and correcting grammar, style, and spelling errors.

Limitations of the Study

Word 2003 was used in this study for editing texts and checking errors by members of the experimental group. Therefore, the results of the study are restricted to using *Word 2003*, and some of the findings may be applicable to the earlier versions of this facility or other word processors. The results cannot be generalized beyond this tool or similar populations.

Related Literature

Many studies reported that CALL is useful for EFL learners, and learners generally have a positive attitude towards using technology for learning language skills like writing because technology has a positive impact on the learning/teaching process (Warden [7]; Neu and Scarcella [8, p. 169]; Phinney [9, p. 201]; Brady [10]; Nash, Hsieh and Chen [11]; Johnson [12, p. 107]; Phinney and Mathis [13]; Herrmann [14, p. 75]; Daiute [15, p. 37]). In addition, many researchers stressed that CALL improves the skill of writing (Warschauer [16, pp. 16-18]) and facilitates communication and interaction between learners (Cooper and Selfe [17]). Several studies also suggested that students have a positive attitude towards computer-aided writing. Greenfield [18], for instance, reported that students enjoyed the CALL class and made significant progress in writing.

Cobine [19] found that the computer has a good effect on the improvement of the skill of writing. Learners could conceivably experiment with phrase and sentence structure, and practice rhetorical grammar through using computer linguistic functions. Computer tutorials offered them grammatical choices and then provided immediate feedback on structures, like sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, and the use of

know the most difficult EFL skill to learn/ teach. He asked 85 freshmen in the Department of English and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University about the most difficult EFL skill to learn. More than 67% of them said that it was writing, and most of them (70%) attributed this to using unsuitable methods and techniques for teaching the skill of writing. Similarly, the researcher asked 10 professors of linguistics in the department about the most difficult EFL skill to teach, and most of them (60%) said that it was writing and stressed the need for developing approaches, methods, and techniques for teaching EFL skills like writing in a more feasible way.

The present study introduces CALL approach for teaching EFL learners. It is based on a computer-assisted writing course, paragraph writing, which is based on the use of the word processor. Involving EFL learners in electronic functional communicative experiences motivates them to learn and use English in their daily lives. Moreover, Adair-Hauck, Willingham-McLain, and Youngs [6] pointed out that students who use the computer in learning the skill of writing are usually able to improve editing and writing skills more significantly than other learners do because they have an access to feedback about their errors in grammar, style and spelling. This study also introduces different word processor-based applications and activities for teaching the skill of writing.

Importance of the Study

To the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study in Saudi Arabia about using the word processor for teaching the skill of writing to EFL learners. The results might be useful for different groups of people for different reasons. Firstly, the study would be useful for instructors because it might provide them with the different applications of the word processors. Secondly, the study might be helpful for EFL learners, as it would shed light on the different uses of the word processor and its benefits for them. Finally, this study can be of great support for curricula designers, as it might list a number of the functions of word processors, and their applications for EFL learners.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at achieving the following goals:

- 1) Exploring the effect of using word processor on the development of EFL learners' performance in writing.
- 2) Investigating the students' attitude towards computer-aided writing.

Questions of the Study

This study was conducted on two groups: an experimental group that would be taught by the computerized method, and a control group that would be taught by the traditional method. It was concerned with answering the following questions:

practice, tutorial, simulations and games, problem solving, word processing, and databases and spreadsheets (for workplace literacy exposure). Moreover, digital video and audio software, animated graphics, and Internet-based programs are in use. This is in addition to other newer technologies used in instructional software, including interactive videodiscs, hypermedia, and other forms of multimedia that are constantly being explored and expanded (see Heinich, Michael, Russell and Smaldino [2, pp. 17-34] for more information).

The word processor is a computer program used for editing texts, and checking and correcting writing errors. It is the most useful type of all computer programs. Brierley and Kemble [3, p. 17] described it as the most enabling and beneficial of all the computer software. This study is about testing the effectiveness of using the word processor with EFL learners through using different types of computer-based activities. It should be stressed that a number of pre-conditions and prerequisites have to be present in the educational situation when the word processor is used for teaching writing:

- The availability of suitable software and compatible hardware.
- The qualified instructional staff that are able to use instructional software properly.
- Students with willingness and at least minimal skills in using computers.
- A suitable computer-assisted writing syllabus.

Brierley and Kemble [3, p. 33] indicated seven major applications for the word processor in writing: formatting, cutting and pasting, insertion and deletion, search, editing up, editing down, and editing across. These functions can be performed through the following facilities that *Word 2003*, the word processor which is used in this study, has: "Edit", "View", "F7", and "Format." Each of these facilities has other sub-functions which enable the user to do different tasks of editing texts.

In an article titled *Marking Student Work on the Computer*, Holmes [4] presented his software for marking students' writing. He developed tools to mark and annotate written assignments quickly and clearly using word processors. He developed macros and templates for *Word* and *WordPerfect 6.1* for *Windows*. They can be downloaded from links in the article (See [Download MS Word 7 Zipfile](#), and [Download WordPerfect 6.1 Zipfile](#)). This was useful to the subjects of the present study as they could get electronic marked documents with the types of errors they made, suggested correct forms, and feedback about their errors.

Problem of the Study

EFL learners face many difficulties in learning language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (AbuSeileek [5, p. 7]). At the beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2004/2005, a survey was conducted by the researcher to

The Use of Word Processor for Teaching Writing to EFL Learners in King Saud University

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Abstract. This study aimed at exploring the effect of using word processor on the development of EFL learners' performance in writing and investigating their attitude towards computer-aided writing. It was conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University during the second semester of the academic year 2004/2005. The sample of the study was divided into two groups: the experimental group which studied writing via word processor in the E-learning Language Laboratory, and the control group which studied the same skill in the traditional method. Several computer-based techniques, methods and activities like checking errors were used to achieve the goal of the study. A test was made to find the effect of the experiment. Moreover, a survey was conducted to investigate the students' attitude towards computer-mediated writing. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group achieved better results in the writing test than the control group did. The study also revealed that members of the experimental group had a positive attitude towards using computer-based writing. Finally, the study concluded that the use of word processor was a functional method for teaching the skill of writing.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the microcomputer has become an important tool of learning. The use of computers by non-native speakers has become vital in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Researchers and practitioners now realize the important role that computers play in learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language and look for effective ways to integrate them into various types of English language courses. Several computer-aided approaches, methods and techniques have been presented. Many computer-based programs like word processor have also been used for teaching different language skills including writing.

Many types of software are now used in computer-assisted English language learning (CAELL). Huss [1] classified them into the following e-products: drill and