

## The Impact of Online Teaching Tools on Improving Writing Skills Among EFL Adult Learners: An Intrinsic Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper investigated the possible impacts of online learning tools on a 57-year-old Iranian EFL learner's writing ability to get the desired General IELTS writing score. The researcher is a qualified teacher who held 90 consecutive online sessions to help the learner get his desired writing score in the IELTS writing exam. The teacher used Internet-based learning tools to improve his General IELTS writing skills to get a five on the writing test. The findings show the possible impacts of applying online learning tools to improve the General IELTS writing exam.*

**Keywords:** Writing Skills, IELTS Exam, EFL Learners, Online Teaching

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There are four main language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Reading and listening are passive, but writing and speaking are active or reproductive skills. It means that the learners have to produce sentences on their own. Also, they need a lot of practice and learn many things related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and usage [1]. Online learning is a solution to continue teaching and learning activities even though it is not done face-to-face. The effectiveness of online learning will be achieved if the prerequisites have been met, namely the availability of online media, time management, and internet connection [1]. Writing is a central element of language. Reading and language arts programs must consider the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, assessment procedures, and language development [2]. Many studies have found that writing skills have contributed to poor language proficiency because most ESL learners find skills very challenging to learn. Their poor writing skills can be evident in the results of their examinations [3].

#### 1.1 The General IELTS Writing Test

According to the British Council, the General Training Writing test includes two tasks that are based on topics of general interest. For task 1, the examinee is presented with a situation and asked to write a letter requesting information or explaining the situation. For task 2, he/she is asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay can be slightly more personal in style compared to an Academic Writing task. They will support their point of view with relevant examples from their own knowledge and experiences. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style. All tasks are assessed based on a 0 to 9 scoring system [4].

### 2. METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Design and Participants

The current research is an Intrinsic Case Study. The researcher investigates the possible impacts of applying online learning tools on a 57-year-old Iranian EFL learner's writing ability to get his desired writing score.

#### 2.2. Instruments

The IELTS Writing Test was used to assess the writing ability of the participant. The learner took the tests at the official center of IELTS Irsafam in Tehran. Among writing tests, 3 were mock and the final was an official test. So the tests were valid and reliable and the instructor did not intervene in the assessment of writing ability.

#### 2.3. Materials for Teaching IELTS Writing

The researcher is the instructor who used online materials such as a simplified grammar website, an online dictionary, a video sharing website, an image search engine, and digital audio storybooks to teach writing in English, he also used the Android Skype, version 2024 to communicate with the learner.

#### 2.4. Procedures

According to Krashen Learners acquire language when exposed to "Comprehensible Input," i.e., language that is a step beyond their current level of language proficiency ( $i+1$ ) [5], which means there is no output without enough input. The researcher asked the learner to choose an audiobook as a story to listen to every day, and he made the learner listen to stories as a compulsory task, the time of listening was set as 3 hours a day. He applied deductive and inductive methods to improve the learner's general understanding of sentence structure.

First, the teacher taught him the overall concept of sentence structure and the differences between two languages based on the Ziahosseiny models [6] of contrastive analysis. (Tables 1 and 2, show the derived models for the second-person subjective pronoun in English and its counterpart in Persian and the word "cousin" in English and its Persian equivalent), The researcher made these models based on Ziahosseiny's book. Then all grammar materials as simplified models [7] were taught. Because of the learner's age, the teacher used simplified English for training. And finally, some writing model tests were practiced as mocks and role-plays. The teacher used a combination of L1 and L2, he also used positive reinforcement to encourage the learner to write naturally. 90 online sessions were held consecutively; each session was 90 minutes, and the total teaching time was 135 hours. Initially, the teacher taught the learner how to use the Online Longman Dictionary effectively. The teacher used the online Longman Dictionary and online diagrams, images, and videos to teach task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy which are the four main criteria of the writing test in the IELTS exam. Moreover, subjects including collections, word families, regular and irregular kinds of verbs, spelling, and basic punctuation rules were taught by using online learning tools. Table 3 shows the number of sessions using online educational tools.

The teacher constantly corrected the learner's mistakes and at the same time, he did his best to increase his self-confidence. He always encouraged the language learner to write sentences in English naturally using prefabricated models derived from authentic native context [7], [8]. Because of the importance of time in the IELTS writing test, the teacher tried to find the easiest words and structures for the learner by interacting with him. Whenever the learner had a question, he would ask the teacher through online applications as an instant communication tool during the day and the teacher would answer it, in other words, online support was always available.

**Table 1.** Contrastive Analysis of Second Person Subjective Pronoun in English Vs.Persian, Based on Ziahosseiny Models[5]

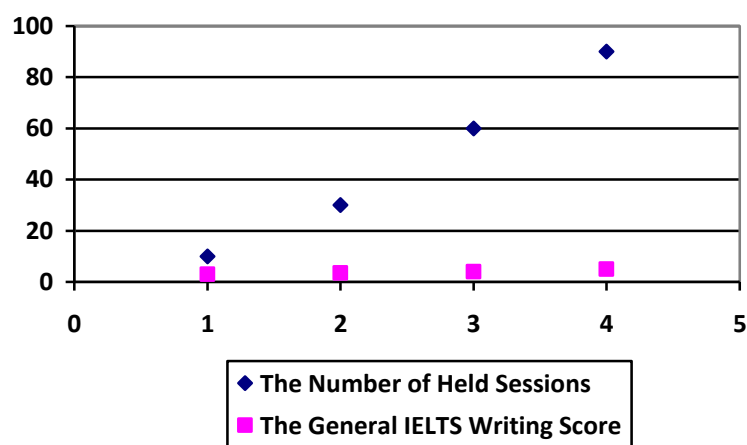
Second -Person Subjective Pronoun in English	Second-Person Subjective Pronoun in Persian
You(Both Singular and Plural)	تو (Singular ) شما (Plural)

**Table 2.** Contrastive Analysis of "Cousin" In English vs Persian Based on Ziahosseiny Models [5]

English Word	Persian Equivalent Word
Cousin	پسر عمو، پسر دایی، پسر خاله، دختر عمو، دختر دایی، دختر دایی

**Table 3, The Online Educational Tools and The Duration of Using Each Per Session.**

No.	Type of Online Educational Tool	The number of Sessions	Purpose	Details
1	Digital Audio Story Books	Every day Outside of Online Classes(At least 3 hours a day )	Improving Sentence Structure, Lexical Resources, Grammar	WWW.Irlanguage.Com
2	Website, Online Education Images	70 (From the 20th session to the 90th session)	Improving the Learner's Cognition of Grammar, Vocabulary, and Unfamiliar Materials	Images.Google.Com
3	Website, Video Sharing	70(From the 20th session to the 90th session)	Practicing IELTS Writing Samples by Watching and Practicing	WWW.YouTube.Com
4	Website, Online Dictionary	90	Conjugating Verbs, Spelling, Collection, Sample Sentences, Correcting Errors, Transitive Vs. Intransitive, Preposition, Word Families, etc.	WWW.ldoceonline.Com
5	Website	90	Grammar – Sentence Samples	WWW.Englishpage.Com
6	Skype	90	Communication	Android Skype 2024



*Figure 1. The number of Online Writing Session and IELTS Scores*

### 3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has its limitations like all case studies. First, the study was conducted only on a male language learner. Secondly, it was done on a middle-aged person, 57 years old. And the effect of using Internet educational tools on improving writing skills among other ages needs more studies. Thirdly, this study was conducted by a 44 male instructor with about 10 years of experience teaching adults. Therefore, the way of teaching and interaction of a 44-year-old teacher with a 57-year-old language learner differs from a younger and less experienced teacher. Moreover, this study only focused on writing skills for the General IELTS test and academic IELTS writing test, and other skills were ignored. To clarify various aspects of the impact of online writing training on language learners, more studies should be done

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The research found that teaching IELTS writing skills with the help of Internet technology positively affected the learning of writing skills, even though the learner was not young. This finding confirms the findings of other researchers who believed that technology improves writing performance. [9] This research can have many implications for teaching English online, especially teaching General IELTS writing tasks for adult learners.

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