

MEASURING FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AMONG ESL LEARNERS: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study is initiated with the desire to explore the factors affecting the use of technology among ESL learners and to develop and refine the scale for measuring these variables.

Design/Methodology / Approach: The research is based on primary sources for data collection. Total, 18 students participated as second language learners, the literature in the area have been reviewed. The study contributes by developing a scale to measure the factors affecting the use of technology among ESL learners

Originality / Value: This study contributes in the area of scale development and refinement. Under the present scenario, due to Covid 19 protocols, lockdowns and shutting of schools came into effect throughout the country. The students were forced to learn through technological devices. This has implications for ESL learners, posing the need to measure factors affecting use of technology among the ESL learners. Therefore, there is a greater need to develop a scale measure the research variables in ESL learner's context.

Findings: The findings of this research have indicated that technology has a large effect on second/ foreign language writing ($d = 1.7217$). These findings have also revealed that the scale developed and refined can be used for further research.

KEYWORDS: Multimedia, Lisrel 8.80, SPSS 20. E-Learning, Communication Technologies, Technology-Based Writing, Learning Writing, Second Language Writing

INTRODUCTION

One of the important skills in human beings is writing. Writing is a higher function as compared to any other function of learning among students According to Graham et al. (2013), it has its own significance for students in all walks of life, the writing skills are essential in learning for students' success in schools. Students write to transmit information and with the advent of technology, digital writings are used to "gather, preserve and transmit information widely." technological devices have a crucial role for English as a Second language (ESL) learners, especially in the phase of COVID 19. After the inception of pandemic in early 2020 all the schools and academic institutions were forced to shift their teaching and all other teacher student communications on technological infrastructure due to indefinite lock downs. The students were being trained in digital writing and disseminating information. Under this scenario the area of technology among ESL learners became significant.

There are numerous latest researches advocated the role of technology in improving writing among ESL learners and the area is widely investigated (Alharbi, 2019; Barrot, 2020; Iwasaki et al., 2019; Karami et al., 2019; Kessler, 2020; Pearson et al., 2005; Tam, 2012; Wihastyanang et al., 2020). Numerous studies were previously published to investigate the use of computers and other related technologies in ESL learners writing (Abdul Fattah, 2015; Ahmed, 2015; Ahmed, 2013; Bikowski and Vithanage, 2016; Janfaza et al., 2014; Kashani et al., 2013; Khalil, 2017; Khoshsima and Sayadi, 2016; Lam et al., 2018).

The findings were summarized in many reputed reviews (Goldberg et al., 2003; Little et al., 2018; Williams and Beam, 2019). The findings stated in these reputed reviews concluded that educational technology had an impactful effect of on writing outcomes. It is reviewed by many researchers that there is an effect of technology on writing but it was not done empirically Williams and Beam (2019). The design of their study was in the form of a literature review. Some comparative studies were also reviewed and in this area Wollscheid et al. (2016), compared studies using digital writing tools with traditional way of writing such as computers and tablets with those using traditional writing tools such as pen(cil) and paper.

Therefore there is a need for investigating the factors affecting the use of technology among ESL learners writing and developing the scale through which the research constructs can be measured.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Writing and Language Learning

Writing has a major role to play in language learning and its importance cannot be undermined. It is believed that writing is one of the “central pillars of language learning.” (Ariana, 2010, p. 134).

Factors Affecting the Use of Technology in Writing

The factors affecting technology inclusion in writing among ESL learners are given as under:

Stage of Writing

As suggested by many researchers, the process of writing has many stages. The classification of these stages differs from one person to another: it has been reported that the process of writing has five stages, namely, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Morgan et al., 2007). In another classification four distinct steps, namely, thinking, planning, writing and revising were identified (Haluska, 2006). This classification is developed in the context of secondary school students.

Context

The role of technological devices is important and forms a context of learning among ESL learners and is depicted in many researches. In the second language context, many researchers investigated the effect of web-based collaborative writing tasks on the writing scores of second language writers (Bikowski and Vithanage, 2016). In ESL context studies differed from each other on the basis of technological platforms and devices utilized. Many studies used the mobile phones and their applications to enhance learners’ motivations and develop their abilities to write (Estarki and Bazyar, 2016; Gharehblagh and Nasri, 2020; Kanala et al., 2013; Khaksefidi, 2016; Malekzadeh and Najmi, 2015);

Others have used computers and immobile technological devices (Ahmed, 2013; Alghasab, 2020; Baker and Lastrapes, 2019; Awada et al., 2019; Ciftci and Kocoglu, 2012; El- Ghonaimy, 2015; Ellison and Drew, 2020; Ghafoori et al., 2016; Hsu and Lo, 2018; Jafarian et al., 2012; Janfaza et al., 2014; Kashani et al., 2013; Khoshsima and Sayadi, 2016). Overall, these studies highlight the positive effect of technology on foreign language learners' writing skills. Therefore we can conclude that these technological devices are very effective in improving the writing skills of the second language learners.

Language Proficiency Level

Proficiency level has a role to play and we find that there are many studies investigating the effect of technology on the learners' writing performance and were conducted at different learners' language levels. Some of these studies were conducted for advanced learners (Abdul Fattah, 2015; Bikowski and Vithanage, 2016; Jafarian et al., 2012; Kashani et al., 2013; Khalil, 2017); other studies were directed to intermediate learners (Estarki and Bazayar, 2016; Ghafoori et al., 2016; Janfaza et al., 2014; Khoshsima and Sayadi, 2016; Malekzadeh and Najmi, 2015); others addressed the beginners (Hsu and Lo, 2018; Kimmons et al., 2017). Therefore Language proficiency plays a crucial role among ESL learners and included in our scale.

Educational Level

The level of education is also regarded as an important factor and is considered in many researches (Abdul Fattah, 2015; Ahmed, 2015; Bikowski and Vithanage, 2016; Ciftci and Kocoglu, 2012; El-Ghonaimy, 2015; Ghafoori et al., 2016; Hsu and Lo, 2018; Khaksefidi, 2016; Khalil, 2017; Khoshsima and Sayadi, 2016); some researches were based on secondary school learners (Ahmed, 2013; Jafarian et al., 2012; Kimmons et al., 2017; Lam et al., 2018); and some others with language institute learners (Estarki and Bazayar, 2016; Janfaza et al., 2014; Malekzadeh and Najmi, 2015). Therefore it seems as a sound evidence to indicate that technology has a positive effect on the learners' writing skills in all the educational levels.

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