



# Utilizing Authentic Materials Based on Journal Writing to Develop EFL First Year Experimental Language Secondary School Students' Writing Performance Skills

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بحث مشتق من الرسالة الخاصة بالباحثة

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of utilizing authentic materials based on journal writing program on developing writing performance skills of EFL secondary school students. The design used in the present study was quasi-experimental. Two classes were randomly drawn from one of Zagazig secondary schools, namely Zagazig Experimental Language Secondary School for Girls in the school year 2015/2016. The sample of the study consisted of 46 first grade students randomly distributed to two groups, the experimental group and the control one of 23 students each. The experimental group received researcher-facilitated activities through Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program for teaching writing performance skills. To achieve the objectives of the study, a checklist of writing performance skills was prepared, a proposed program was developed. Based on the writing performance skills judged valid, a test was developed and administered to the two groups and a rubric for correction was developed. The experiment lasted for three months. Upon the completion of the experiment, all students were post-tested. Differences between the pretests and posttests were calculated using t-test. Results indicated that (1) there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students in their performance in the pre and post application of the writing performance test, (2) there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in their performance in the post application of the writing tests in favor of the experimental group. It was concluded that the present study provided evidence for the effectiveness of utilizing Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program in developing the experimental group students' writing performance skills.

**Key Words:** writing performance skills, Authentic Materials, Journal Writing technique, secondary school.

## **1. Introduction**

Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether writing in one's native language or in a foreign language. Yet as adult English as foreign language (EFL) learners put their thoughts on paper, see their ideas in print, and share them with others, they find they develop a powerful voice in their new culture ( Al Badi, 2015; Al-Zu'be, 2006; El-daly, 2011; Peyton, 1993; Tran,1997).

Bello (1997) indicated that writing, as a productive language skill, plays an essential role in promoting language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and large chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they learn in class. He added that “one of the major failing in the traditional curriculum could be attributed to lack of attention given to writing, which is an important avenue for thinking”.

EFL learners need to develop some writing skills such as: the ability to write complete and meaningful sentences, coherent, clear and well- organized ideas, use communicative language, choose suitable words and idioms and use writing mechanics appropriately (AlSayed, 2013; Abdel-Haq, 2014; Bahgat, 2014; El-Serafy, 2008; Ibnian, 2011; Voit, 2009).

Student interest in writing begins once students see a real reason for writing. Furthermore, research shows that writing instruction is most effective when it resembles real writing done for real purposes (Duke, Hall, Purcell-Gates & Tower 2007). Authentic foreign language materials which are unaltered materials generated by native speakers for native speakers (Bacon, 1992; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Lombardi, 2007; Scarcella and Oxford, 1992; Tomlinson, 2012) and not designed for pedagogical purposes, have been proven to be effective and interesting in enhancing students' learning. In writing, authentic materials would help

teachers introduce various types of texts, language styles, and new vocabularies to their students. In addition, they make learning writing more meaningful (Bliss, 2010; Jacobson, Degener, and Purcell-Gates, 2003; Maroko, 2010; Masood, 2013; Mohamed, 2012).

One of the techniques that have been used to help students write for communication is journal writing. This technique can make writing a social process that is based on authentic communication between two or more individuals. Furthermore, journal writing provides students with chances to use the foreign language in authentic context. It gives EFL students the chance to express themselves freely without being afraid of making mistakes ( Salem, 2007).

According to Moon (2006), journal writing is a special type of written interaction between two students or a student and a teacher usually around an agreed topic using writing prompts. Journal writing supports the writing process by providing an authentic two-way written interaction between writing partners, which are usually the teacher and the student. Teachers would not evaluate/rate performance or correct errors but write and respond as a “partner” in a conversation, (Peyton & Reed, 1990).

In journal writing, students write about topics of their own choosing topics related to the course content. Teachers then write back, responding to the students’ questions and comments, introducing new topics, or asking questions, ( Abdel Maksoud, 2007; Elliott, 2003; Husna, 2011).

Research confirmed the effectiveness of using journal writing technique in teaching writing performance. In many studies, participants in the journal writing group scored significantly higher than the control group on tests of writing (e.g. Abu Naba'h, 2013; Foroutan, Noordin, & Hamzah, 2013; Mansor, Shafie, Maesin, Nayan, & Osman, 2011; Salem, 2007; Stapa & Al-Bakri, 2001; Thorson, 2011; Voit , 2009; and Yoshihara, 2008 ).

## **2. Theoretical Background and Review of Studies**

### **2.1. Definition of Authentic Materials**

Guariento and Morley, (2001) define authentic material as “an authentic text...created to fulfill some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced” (p.347). Jacobson, Degener and Purcell-Gates (2003, p. 1) sees authentic materials as printed materials, which are used in classrooms in the same way they would be used in real life. For Tomlinson (2012), “an authentic text is one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach. . . . The text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original which has been simplified to facilitate communication” (162). Authentic learning is defined as a learning that “...focuses on real-world, complex problems and their solutions, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice. The learning environments are inherently multidisciplinary” (Lombardi, 2007, p.2).

### **2.2. Benefits of Authentic Materials**

Tomlinson (2012) reports that several researchers “argue that authentic materials can provide meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used, motivate learners and help them develop a range of communicative competencies and enhance positive attitudes towards the learning of a language” (161). Gilmore (2007) states that “authentic materials, particularly audio-visual ones, offer a much richer source of input for learners and have the potential to be exploited in different ways and on different levels to develop learners’ communicative competence” (103). Spelleri (2002) notes that “authentic materials offer real language that is contextually rich and culturally pertinent” (16). Peacock (1997) empirically investigated the use of authentic materials in the classroom and concluded that motivation and on-task behavior increased significantly when learners used authentic materials.

To summarize, we can say that authentic materials are beneficial because they:

- expose learners to language that serves a useful purpose;
- provide a refreshing change from the textbook;
- focus more closely on learners' interests and needs;
- provide information about a variety of topics;
- increase learners' motivation; and
- connect the classroom with the outside world.

Another perceived benefit of authentic materials for teachers is how readily available they are. Case (2012) maintained that the reason some teachers use authentic materials is because of their convenience. It is easy to find them, and there are a lot of different materials available for the teachers to choose from.

### **2.3. Types and Sources of Authentic Materials**

Authentic materials can be classified as follows (Agustina, 2009; Lingzhu and Yuanyuan, 2010):

- 1- Authentic Listening/ Viewing Materials such as music, news and other audio materials available on the internet, TV programming including movies, commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, professionally audio-taped short stories, novels, songs, documentaries, or sales pitches, announcements in airports and stores.
- 2- Authentic Visual Materials such as slides, photographs, paintings, wordless street signs, pictures from magazines, postcard pictures, or wordless picture books, images and graphs available on the internet, drawing, stamps, X-rays,.
- 3- Authentic Printed Materials such as newspaper articles, movie advertisements, astrology columns, sports reports, advice columns, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, street signs, cereal boxes, tourist

information brochures, university catalogues, telephone books, TV guides, comic books, pins with messages, or bus schedules.

- 4- Realia (Real world objects) Used in EFL/ ESL Classrooms – such as coins and currency, folded paper, wall clocks, phones, Halloween masks, dolls, and puppets, to name a few. (Realia are often used to illustrate points very visually or for role-play situations.)
- 5- Authentic Multimedia Materials consist of: TV, video programs of various kinds, pod casting in the internet, and web based programs involving multimedia use.

#### **2.4. Selecting Authentic Materials**

(Alamri, 2009) asserts that for authentic materials to be efficient and fulfill their task a careful selection of materials, activities and procedures is required. So, the selection of such materials should be based on some specific criteria such as linguistic complexity, amount of information, length, speed of delivery, varieties of English accents and the objectives to be achieved. Brown and Eskenzai (2004) say that the primary criteria for selecting appropriate authentic text should be the reader's current vocabulary knowledge and the desired vocabulary knowledge throughout the curriculum, in addition to grammar difficulty and text cohesiveness.

Day (2004) confirmed that authentic materials should be appropriate to the following aspects or dimensions:

##### **A) Language Ability**

Teachers should use materials that are appropriate for the linguistic abilities of their students. Further, those who develop materials should ensure that the level of the language is appropriate for the abilities of the audience for whom they write. And publishers should advertise their materials appropriately.

## **B) Variety of English**

We need to extend our consideration of appropriateness to include the issue of *what English? What dialect or variety of English should materials developers use and teachers teach?* For example, should we use American English? What about British English? Does the English in materials have to be based on a native speaker model?

### **a. Activities, Tasks and Exercises**

The notion of *appropriateness* is not restricted to language. The concept should also be applied to the activities, tasks, exercises, and so on, that teachers ask students do. Those who design and develop materials should incorporate activities, tasks, and exercises that fit into the lives and needs of the target audience.

## **2.5. The Impact of Authentic Materials on EFL Writing**

There is growing body of research on the role authentic materials on FL teaching. Researchers and teachers increasingly acknowledged the need for and usefulness of authentic materials in the field of teaching writing. Empirical studies have substantiated the positive results taken by learners who have opportunities to interact with and deal with authentic texts. For example, Wiguna (2015) aimed to find out whether using authentic Materials in teaching Recount Text is effective or not and to know how far is the effectiveness of using authentic Materials in teaching Recount Text to improve students' writing ability. The study was conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah PLUS Salatiga in the academic year 2014/2015. The result showed that using authentic Materials was effective in improving students' writing ability. Therefore, the authentic materials were appropriate to be applied in teaching recount text.

Masood (2013) intended to scrutinize the efficacy of authentic materials for enhancing writing skills of the second language assimilators at secondary level in Pakistan. The findings of the study indicated that the use of authentic materials had a significantly greater

positive effect on the secondary level EFL students' writing skills achievement scores.

Xerri (2012) described how a group of bilingual postgraduate students were assisted in improving their writing skills in English by means of a pedagogical approach that utilized a wide variety of authentic texts published online. Despite its limitations, to a large extent this small-scale study confirmed the idea that the use of authentic texts in ELT can prove beneficial, especially if students are empowered to choose the texts they would like to base their learning on. Findings also indicated that the use of authentic materials helped to boost the students' confidence and motivation.

Maroko (2010) explored the authentic materials approach and demonstrated how it may be used in the teaching of functional writing in the classroom. The study defined and classified authentic materials, and explained how they apply to classroom functional writing. Second, it described classroom authentic material analysis and evaluation activities that can be useful learning and teaching tools where the learners, as a result of reading and discussing, can go on to be effective functional text writers. Finally, the study proposed an authentic text-based teaching and learning methodology that can be used in the acquisition of functional writing skills in the classroom.

## **2.6. Definition of Journal Writing**

Dyment and O'Connell (2010) defined writing journals as the medium or platform for writing perspectives, ideas or conceptions that express the individual's learning.

Abdel Maksoud (2007) defined journal writing as a functional, interactive, self-generated approach in which a teacher and students write entries together on any topic chosen by students focusing on meaning not mechanics or form and the teacher responds to these entries; asking questions or modeling grammatical and spelling errors indirectly.

### **2.7. The Importance of Journal Writing**

One of the best things about daily journal writing is that it can take so many forms. Teachers can use journal writing to meet specific goals, or the purpose can be wide open. Some teachers check journal writing and work on polishing skills; others use journals as the one "uncorrected" form of writing that students produce. Some teachers provide prompts to help students begin their writing. Others leave decisions about the direction and flow of student journals up to the students (Hopkins, 2010). Ritchie(2003) reported that after completing 7 weeks of weekly journal entries, students were provided with many opportunities for both the student and teacher to give feedback, ask questions, and offer ideas for further reflection. In addition, bonds of trust were formed, not only between the student and teacher, but among the students themselves as they learned to begin to trust themselves and the decisions they made. Last, students valued being able to ask the teacher questions and receive validation without exposing their own perceived weaknesses to their peers.

Educators typically use writing journals to facilitate or support the process of learning. Students support the learned materials by demonstrating their understanding of it, its application and usage in daily life situations through their written expressions in their journals (Dyment & O'Connell, 2010). Journal writing is often used by the instructors as a means of evaluating students in academic courses. Some studies have indicated that instructors also have a positive impression of students' journal writing assignments, since in this method the responsibility of learning is shared by the student and instructor (Hashemi and Mirzaei, 2015).

### **2.8. Types of Journal Writing**

Tompkins (2004) classifies journals into seven categories: personal journals, dialogue journals, reading logs, learning logs,

double-entry journals, simulated journals, and reflective journals. These types of journals can be described briefly as follows (Tompkins, 2004, pp. 193 - 210):

- 1- **Personal journals (Diaries):** Students write about events that take place in their personal lives and about the topics that represent a personal interest to them in order to record their reactions to those topics. Students' journals in this case are mostly private though they may choose to share them with people close to them.
- 2- **Dialogue journals:** Students write about personal things as well as topics that interest them in order to share their writings with someone else. This indicates that this type of journal is meant to be communicated to others. Students can communicate with their classmates or their teachers through this type of journal.
- 3- **Reading logs:** Students write in order to respond to a short story, poem, and/or informational books that they are reading in their syllabus. They relate what they read to their own experiences. Students write in the writing logs as a part of theme cycles in their subject matter.
- 4- **Learning logs:** Students write as a part of their subject matter assignments. They take notes, write vocabulary words, create timelines, and draw diagrams and maps. Learning logs are diaries students keep to register their reflections about what they are learning and how they are learning it. Learning logs are founded in reflective writing, in which a learner can reflect about the process of learning and how to make it more personally and useful.
- 5- **Double -entry journals:** Students divide each page in their journals into two columns and write different types of information in each column. For example, they can write quotes from a story in the left column and relate each quote to their life experiences in the right column.

- 6- **Simulated journals:** Students play the role of a book character or a historical personality and write journal entries from that person's viewpoint.
- 7- **Reflective journals** are defined as '... written documents that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning' (Thorpe, 2004, p. 328). Reflective journaling provided an opportunity to rethink about how the class was organized and conducted and what students learned. In this matter, students paid more attention to the classroom learning through journaling about classroom learning ( Lee, 2013).

### **2.9. Effective Steps for Implementing Journal Writing**

For the effective implementation of journal writing, the teacher should take the following suggested steps into consideration (Cooper & Kiger, 2003; Montgomery, 2001; Peyton, 1993):

- 1- The teacher should explain the idea of journal writing to students.
- 2- He or she writes a journal entry in the classroom in order to show students how this process is done.
- 3- With students, the teacher sets how frequently they should write in their journals and how often they should turn in their journals so that he or she can read and comment on them.
- 4- Students should be free to write on any topic that interests them.
- 5- During the initial stages of journal writing, teachers should set some group processing sessions in order to evaluate how the process is going and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of journal writing. Teachers should also help students solve problems that they face during the writing process.

## **2.10. The Role of the Teacher and Student in Journal Writing (JW)**

### **Teacher's Role in Journal Writing**

JW provides teachers with a valuable opportunity to see their teaching practices through the eyes of the learners (Peyton, 2000; Marefat 2001). The following are the main opportunities provided by JW for EFL teachers.

- 1- JW provides a space in which teachers can observe the actual performance of learners in gaining knowledge of language (Tonthong, 2000). EFL teachers can take the opportunity to help learners with the linguistic and communicative aspects of their language learning. In their comments on student writings, teachers can give indirect hints or even provide direct instruction and correction on the grammatical structure of sentences or the use of vocabulary.
- 2- Through JW, teachers can assess what EFL learners need to learn. JW can shape an ongoing process of needs analysis, which teachers may find helpful in the design and modification of the EFL syllabus, teaching materials, and teaching activities and strategies (Mirhosseini, 2009).
- 3- Providing information about learners' knowledge of language and their writing abilities, JW can be a non-threatening means of assessment and formative evaluation of learning progress (Peyton and Seyoum ,1993). JW gives teachers valuable information about learner achievements, as well as about their learning problems. After negotiations with learners, specific journal entries can also be included in a portfolio to demonstrate progress and to illustrate the EFL learning process (Peyton, 2000).
- 4- JW extends the time that teachers can spend with individual learners. It helps teachers know and understand the backgrounds and life experiences of their students (Peyton, 2000). This may

help teachers take steps towards aspects of individualized teaching that can address the needs of individual learners.

- 5- JW can help teachers become involved in teacher research (Tonthong 2000), as it provides qualitative data that is difficult to gain through formal research instruments. An ongoing informal action research is the outcome of a research view of JW.
- 6- JW provides EFL teachers with a valuable opportunity to receive feedback from learners. Teachers can even take the opportunity to directly ask for student comments on teaching activities (Dyment & O'Connell, 2010). Learner reflections on teacher performance provided through JW is genuine feedback that can be a valuable asset in a reflective teaching process (Jay and Johnson 2002; Tonthong 2000).
- 7- The process of engagement in JW provides EFL teachers with a very flexible and constantly emerging practice that allows for changes in teaching strategies as the situation demands (Wilson and I'Anson 2006). It is a meaningful context for practicing teacher autonomy, since it is the teacher who decides what aspect of student writing to focus on, what kind of feedback to provide and how to situate the whole practice in the overall context of EFL teaching.

### ***Student's Role in Journal Writing (JW)***

EFL learners can genuinely and meaningfully communicate and express concepts of interest and expect their writings to be read and commented on by a real and interested audience. They enjoy the company of the teacher as a participating conversation partner in an ongoing process of authentic communication (Peyton, 2000). The following are the major opportunities offered to students by JW in EFL writing pedagogy.

- 1- Expressing thoughts through writing and employing linguistic tools for this purpose helps learners improve their lexical and grammatical knowledge of language. Studies show that as learners continue JW, their grammatical errors decrease (Crumley, 1998). Moreover, EFL learners can use this approach to directly ask for grammatical correction or to communicate with the teacher about formal aspects of language.
- 2- With continuous practice and using description, narration and argumentation, as the purpose dictates, learners gain greater fluency in discursive and communicative aspects of writing. Over time, learner writing becomes more fluent and this provides a basis for other EFL writing activities (Peyton and Reed, 1990; Peyton 2000). Learners can also use teacher responses as models of language use.
- 3- Exchanging written messages is inspiring and creates or increases willingness to write. The authentic activity of JW intrinsically inspires learners and develops positive attitudes towards EFL learning (Tonthong, 2000). Since learners do not have to worry about marks, the anxiety associated with writing decreases and learners gain confidence in their own abilities.
- 4- When learners talk to their teachers through JW, they find the opportunity to maintain a discussion with the teachers and to express their views about other activities in the classroom context. They can actively participate in teaching–learning practices through their comments and reflections (Crumley, 1998).
- 5- When engaged in the process of JW, learners move towards self-initiation and independence and take responsibility for their own learning. They can discover their weak points, evaluate and analyze their learning process, and learn by themselves (Tonthong, 2000). Providing a space for learners to rely on their own self-reflective and expressive ability in writing, JW promotes

autonomous language learning and encourages EFL learners to generate their own ideas (Marefat, 2001).

- 6- Through JW, EFL learners can gain a voice and have an opportunity to freely express themselves. Because JW is a private correspondence, it helps learners reflect their internal beliefs and this leads them to reflect on their own ideas. Legitimizing personal narratives, JW creates interactions that extend beyond classroom topics and help learners express thoughts, an opportunity which is usually lost in traditional education (Mirhosseini, 2009).
- 7- JW helps learners to critically think about and read their world and the words they encounter. EFL learners develop an ability to reflect on their experiences in the past, their situations in the present and their hopes for the future. It can shape a critical literacy environment in which EFL learners and teachers can explore and discuss social issues of immediate concern (Mirhosseini, 2009; Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini ,2005).

### **2.11. The Impact of Journal Writing on EFL Writing**

A considerable number of studies have investigated the effect of journal writing on students' writing performance. This section will be devoted to a review of studies in EFL and ESL writing.

Awada (2014) reported the results of an experimental study that examined the relative effectiveness of Windows Movie Maker (WMM) as a computer-assisted language learning tool versus journal writing in improving the English as a foreign language (EFL) writing Proficiency and decreasing the levels of writing apprehension of grade eleven students in Lebanon. The results of the study indicated that the WMM journaling proved to be more effective than the traditional pen and paper journaling in enhancing Proficiency and decreasing writing apprehension.

Lee (2013) explored reflective learning journals written by Japanese college students who are enrolled in an English language program in the United States. The goal of the study was to examine what types of reflective journal entries students write and how reflective journal writing contribute to their language learning development. Lastly, the findings revealed that writing reflective journal is a useful task to develop students' language learning in following aspects: remembering, self-encouraging, self-realizing through completing the task.

Alsaleem (2013) attempted to determine whether WhatsApp electronic journaling as a new application in smart phones has a significant effect on writing vocabulary word choice and voice of undergraduate Saudi students. In this quantitative, quasi-experimental study, data are gathered using a pretest-posttest design using a sample of 30 EFL undergraduate female students in Languages and Translation College. Results indicate a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that journaled.

Husna (2011) conducted a study related to dialogue journal. Ten sessions were conducted. At the three first sessions of her study, students wrote from something simple like personal identities and daily activities. Started from the seventh session, the students tended to write more creative topics like hobbies, and friendship. The students can conduct various writing based on what they felt and happened at that time.

### **3. Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the importance of EFL writing performance skills, there is a lack in EFL writing performance skills among first year experimental language secondary school students. This lack revealed itself through analyzing some first year experimental language secondary school students' writing skills in the pilot study (N=25) conducted by the researcher, that indicated the low level in students' EFL writing performance skills.

Thus, there is a need for an effective teaching program for developing writing performance skills among first year experimental language secondary school students. So, the following study aims at examining the effectiveness of utilizing Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program in developing students' writing performance skills.

#### **4. Questions of the Study**

The present study attempted to answer the following main question:

**To what extent can authentic materials based on journal writing develop EFL experimental language secondary school students' writing performance skills ?**

This broadly stated question can be subdivided into the following ones:

- A) What are the writing performance skills required for first year experimental language secondary school students in learning English as a foreign language?
- B) How far do first year experimental language secondary school students master these skills?
- C) What is the actual level of writing performance for first year experimental language secondary school students?
- D) How far can authentic materials based on journal writing develop writing performance for first year experimental language secondary school students?
- E) How can authentic materials based on journal writing be used to develop writing performance for first year experimental language secondary school students?

#### **5. Hypotheses of the Study**

Based on the related studies and research questions the following hypotheses were formulated:

- 1- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in

the post administration of the overall writing performance skills test in favor of the experimental group scores

- 2- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the overall writing performance sub-skills test in favor of the experimental group scores.

## **6. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to:

- 1- Develop experimental secondary school students' writing performance by using authentic materials based on journal writing.
- 2- Help secondary stage students write communicatively.
- 3- Overcome obstacles to the implementation of authentic materials and journal writing in the study context.

## **7. Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to the following:

- 1- Utilizing authentic materials based on journal writing with the following five types of journal writing: (personal journal, dialogue journal, double entry journal, reading log, and learning log).
- 2- Two first year experimental language secondary classes in Sharkeya (two classes from Zagazig Experimental Language Secondary School for Girls), which were randomly drawn and divided into two groups the experimental group and the control one.
- 3- A limited duration for teaching the Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program (3 months).
- 4- Developing only the writing performance skills, that were approved by the jury members as the most important skills for the first year experimental language secondary school students.

## **8. Procedures of the Study** □

To answer the previously mentioned questions, the following procedures were conducted:

- 1- Reviewing literature and relevant studies related to: writing performance, using authentic materials instruction, and journal writing technique in teaching and learning English as a foreign language .
- 2- Preparing a list of writing performance skills suitable for first year experimental language secondary school students through a checklist for teachers, supervisors, and EFL methodology specialists.
- 3- Developing a pre-post writing performance skills test to measure the students' writing performance skills and submitting it to a jury of specialists to determine its validity .
- 4- Drawing a random sample of first year experimental language secondary school students and randomly dividing them into two groups (the experimental group and the control one).
- 5- Administering the writing performance pre-test to the two groups the experimental group and the control one.
- 6- Teaching the authentic materials based on journal writing program by the researcher to the experimental group. The control group received the regular instruction by the researcher.
- 7- Administering the writing performance post-test to the two groups; the experimental and the control one to investigate the effectiveness of authentic materials based on journal writing program in developing the students writing performance skills for the experimental group as compared to the control one.
- 8- Treating data statistically.
- 9- Discussing the results of the study.

10- Drawing conclusions, providing recommendations and suggestions for further research

## **9. Definition of Terms**

Along the current study, the researcher would adopt the following definitions:

### **9.1. Authentic Materials**

Backman and Klinghammer (2006, p.84) defined authentic materials as the materials used in the target culture for actual communicative needs. They should enable the learner to hear, read and produce language as it is used in the target culture. Bailey (2006, p.300) added that authentic materials are oral and written texts that occur naturally in the target language environment and that have not been created for language learners.

### **9.2. Journal Writing**

A communicative technique that students will use to write short paragraphs about topics that interest them. Students will be required to write a journal entry at least once a week. This type of writing will not be too private since students will share their journal entries with their teacher. The teacher will provide feedback directed to the content and meaning. He will not comment on mechanics or grammar errors (Salem, 2007).

### **9.3. Writing Performance**

(Abu Naba'h, 2013, p.38) defined this term as expressing oneself on a certain topic through the written word with good quality and enough quantity.

## 10. Methodology

### 10.1. Study Design

The quasi-experimental design was adopted in the present study. A pre- post test was given to the two conditions: experimental condition and control condition before and after the treatment.

### 10.2. Study Sample

The sample of the study was drawn from first year experimental language secondary stage students at Sharkeya, namely Zagazig Experimental Language Secondary School for Girls in Zagazig city. The sample was 46 students: the control group= 23 and the experimental group= 23. The experimental group was exposed to the authentic materials based on journal writing program. The control group received the regular instruction. To make sure that both groups were equivalent in the writing performance skills, the EFL writing performance skills test was administered to the control group and the experimental group before implementing the program. Mean, standard deviation and "t" value of the two groups were computed.

**Table 1.** t-values for the Differences between the Experimental Group and the Control Group on Writing Performance Pretest

Group	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	t-value	df	Significance
Control	23	28.96	14.858	3.617	44	.350
Exper.	23	44.48	14.241			

-p > 0.05 (not significant)

Table 1 indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the overall writing performance skills pre-test, where "t" value is (3.617), which is not significant at (0.05) level of significance. This means that the two groups are equivalent in their writing performance skills.

### **10.3. Instruments of the Study**

The instruments of the present study included a writing performance skills checklist and test designed by the researcher. The test was used to measure students' writing performance skills before and after implementing the suggested program. The pre/post test consists of four questions. Each question requires students to use guiding words to compose a paragraph. The time of the writing skills test lasted 50 minutes. It was counted through getting the mean between the fastest student and the lowest one in answering the test questions. The test was corrected by the researcher through using a rubric prepared by her. The rubric consists of eight parts; each part has four items ranging from "4" marks to "1" mark. The students were given "4" marks when their performance is high and "1" mark when their performance is low. The instruments were submitted to a jury member, they were asked to determine the validity of the instruments in terms of clear instructions, items and its suitability for the students' level. They indicated that the test instructions were clear and suitable for students' levels and background knowledge. Therefore, the instruments were a valid measure of writing performance skills (Face Validity). To ensure the content validity of the instruments, they were developed in the light of a systematic and accurate review of literature and previous studies. This accurate and systematic review determined the general form of the instruments, their form of questions and how they should be corrected. Therefore, the content of the instruments was representative of the skills that were intended to be measured. Thus, the instruments were valid and having a content validity.

#### **10.3.a. Writing Performance Test Reliability**

In order to establish the reliability of the writing performance test, it was administered to a randomly drawn group of 20 first year students of Zagazig Experimental Language Secondary School for Girls. Those students were excluded from the whole experiment, i.e., they were neither included in the control group nor in the experimental group. Then, the test was re-administered after two weeks to the same students

under relatively the same conditions in terms of the time and place. Cronbach's Alpha statistical formula was calculated. The correlation between the results in the two administrations was 0.91. This means that the correlation coefficient of the retest was relatively high. Therefore, the test was considered a reliable one.

#### **10.4. The Authentic Materials Based on Journal Writing Program**

##### **10.4.a. Aim of the Program**

The overall aim of the authentic materials based on journal writing program was hopefully to develop the writing performance skills of secondary stage experimental language school students.

##### **10.4.b. Sources of the Program**

The researcher prepared the suggested program based on the previous studies such as; Abdel Maksoud (2007); Alsaleem (2013); Awada (2014); Husna (2011); Lee (2013); Maroke (2010); Mohamed (2012); Salem (2007); Wiguna (2015) and Xerri (2012).

##### **10.4.c. Description and Time Duration of the Program**

The experimental group was met twice a week in 90 minute classes, each two sessions took from 3 to 4 classroom periods a week (45 minutes each). Therefore, the program took 30 classroom periods over a period of 11 weeks. The experiment consisted of twenty instructional sessions and two introductory sessions. Each session was devoted to the following: learning objectives, materials, procedures, the role of the researcher and student and finally the performance. During the instructional procedures, different sessions had different learning goals and different methods were applied. The experiment started at the beginning of February 2016 and finished at the end of April. Moreover, each student received some handouts during the administration to be used through the teaching of the suggested program.

#### 10.4.d. The Instructional Aids

The researcher used board, paper, pens, authentic materials, journal, response entries, internet access and printed handouts on the specified topics of the program.

#### 10.4.e. Evaluation of the Program

Four evaluation sessions were prepared to enable the researcher to evaluate students' writing performance in paragraph and letter writing performance during the implementation of the program followed by four lessons on common errors in students' writings (formative evaluation). Moreover, at the end of the program the researcher applied the writing test to measure the students' writing performance skills (summative evaluation).

### 11. Results of the Study

#### 11.1. First Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that "There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the overall writing performance skills test in favor of the experimental group scores". t-test for independent samples was used to find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (the experimental group and the control one) in the post application of overall writing performance skills test.

**Table 2.** t-values for the Differences between the Experimental Group and the Control Group on Overall Writing Performance Posttest

Group	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	t-value	df	Significance
Control	23	39.91	15.582	9.990	44	0.000*
Exper.	۲۳	94.26	20.927			

\*Significant at 0.05

**Table 2** illustrates that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level of significance in writing performance test between the mean scores of experimental group and the control group in the post application of overall writing performance test in favor of the experimental group. From the table, it can be noticed that t-value for overall writing performance is (9.990). This value is significant at 0.05 level in favor of post application of the experimental group. Therefore, this provides enough evidence to support hypothesis one.

The mean of the experimental group was much higher than that of the control group in the post-writing performance test scores (94.26). Whereas in the control group, it was (39.91). These significant differences between the experimental group post results and the control post ones can be ascribed to the training the experimental participants had through implementing the authentic materials based on journal writing program.

### **11.2. Second Hypothesis**

It was hypothesized that "There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the overall writing performance sub-skills test in favor of the experimental group scores".

As writing performance consists of a number of sub-skills, the previous hypothesis has the following sub-hypotheses:

- A) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in quantity (length) in favor of the experimental group scores.
- B) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in purpose in favor of the experimental group scores.

- C) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in genre in favor of the experimental group scores.
- D) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in content in favor of the experimental group scores.
- E) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in organization in favor of the experimental group scores.
- F) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in grammar in favor of the experimental group scores.
- G) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in vocabulary choice in favor of the experimental group scores.
- H) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the writing performance test in mechanics in favor of the experimental group scores.

t-test for independent samples was used to find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (the experimental group and the control one) in the post application of each

sub-skill of writing performance test. The mean and the standard deviation as a measure of variability were calculated.

**Table 3.** t-values for the Differences between the Experimental Group and the Control Group on Writing Performance Sub-skills Posttest

Writing Performance Sub-skills	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	Significance
Quantity (Length)	Control	23	5.609	2.3498	7.026	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	11.826	3.5343			
Purpose	Control	23	5.217	2.9381	8.792	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	12.391	2.5847			
Genre	Control	23	4.000	2.0449	10.801	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	11.696	2.7375			
Content	Control	23	4.391	1.8275	10.427	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	12.435	3.2168			
Organization	Control	23	5.478	2.3716	7.758	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	11.652	2.9903			
Grammar	Control	23	5.130	1.9841	6.217	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	10.261	3.4241			
Vocabulary	Control	23	4.435	2.7107	9.512	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	12.174	2.8067			
Mechanics	Control	23	5.652	2.9172	6.546	44	0.000*
	Exper.	23	11.435	3.0723			

\*Significant at 0.05

Table 3 illustrates that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level of significance in writing performance test

between the mean scores of experimental group and the control group in the post application of each sub-skill of the writing performance test in favor of the experimental group. From the table, it can be noticed that t-value is (7.026) for quantity, (8.792) for purpose, (10.801) for genre skills, (10.427) for content skills, (7.758) for organization skills, (6.217) for grammar skills, (9.512) for vocabulary skills and (6.546) for mechanics skills. Thus, it can be safely said that the t-test results proved to be statistically consistent with the second hypothesis. Therefore, this provides enough evidence to support hypothesis two.

The means of the experimental group was much higher than that of the control group in the sub-skills of the post-writing test scores. Whereas in the control group, it was lower. These significant differences between the experimental group post results and the control post ones can be ascribed to the training the experimental participants had through implementing the authentic materials based on journal writing program.

## **12. Discussion and Interpretation of Results**

The results of the current study showed that the experimental group outperformed the control one on the post test of the writing performance skills. Hence, the significant differences which were found to be on the post-test favoring the experimental group might be due to exposing this group to the authentic materials based on journal writing program which proved to be effective.

The justification of the results above could be that authentic materials focus on content rather than form; expose students to a variety of vocabulary; structure and language style; relate more closely to student's needs in the real world; help teachers in developing writing tasks; and developing students' writing performance skills (Masood, 2013 and Xerri, 2012). Indeed, this result is not surprising as the students moved from their limited learning environment (using only textbooks) to another environment connecting them with the language as it is used in the real world by native speakers. Authentic materials (a) increased their

knowledge of vocabulary items needed in real situations, (b) introduced them to how language is used in the real world, (c) improved their cultural understanding and language proficiency as well as writing performance, (d) were interesting, (e) fulfilled their needs, and (f) enabled them to enhance their writing styles.

Results of the present study lend support to those of Bliss, (2010); Maroko, (2010); Masood (2013); Mohamed, (2012) and Wiguna, (2015) as these studies assured that there is a positive relationship between using authentic materials in teaching and developing the writing performance skills among the students.

The findings of the present study are also consistent with Abdel-Hack, (2004); Abdel Maksoud, (2007); Alsaleem (2013); Awada, (2014); Husna, (2011); Lee, (2013) and Salem, (2007). These studies assured that there is a positive relationship between using journal writing technique in teaching writing performance skills among the students. However, findings of this study contradict Haynes, (2001), whose results indicated non-effectiveness of journal writing technique in enhancing students writing skills. The majority of the studies suggest that journal writing enhanced writing performance skills. This is consistent with this study which proved that the experimental group outperformed the control one.

Finally, it was shown that the two hypotheses of the study were accepted. Accordingly, it was found that the authentic materials based on journal writing program was effective in developing experimental language secondary school students' writing performance skills.

### **13. Conclusions**

The results of this study revealed that authentic materials based on journal writing program can develop students' writing performance skills. Students in the control group who were taught in the regular method could not achieve any improvement. On the other hand, the

students in the experimental group who were taught through using the suggested Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program achieved higher levels of performance because those students were provided with the opportunity to learn the content of the program using different steps and activities included in this program.

The results of this study support the use of authentic materials in teaching English as a foreign language in general and writing performance in particular. The results revealed that the use of authentic materials in teaching English to EFL students is more effective than the use of non-authentic materials. The results also support the use of the different types of journal writing in developing writing performance skills.

The present study may contribute to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of the combination of Authentic Materials and Journal Writing technique. It can also be concluded that using such technique could develop students' writing performance skills and sub-skills. Moreover, Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing program was effective in encouraging the students to study the English writing

#### **14. Recommendations** □

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations could be suggested:

- English language teacher should emphasize the development of the students' writing performance skills in the early educational stages to develop them in the following stages.
- Teachers and instructors need to be provided with training to explore the usefulness of Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing and to master its integration in their classrooms.
- Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing activities should be integrated within the learning curriculum, relating them to the goals and objectives of the course.

- Curriculum designers should make use of Authentic Materials based on Journal Writing activities when designing English language courses.

### **15. Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings of this study indicate the need to investigate the following areas:

- 1- Investigating the effectiveness of authentic materials based on journal writing program in enhancing other writing skills; i.e. critical and creative writing at various educational stages.
- 2- Investigating the effect of authentic materials based on journal writing program on other language skills, e.g., reading, speaking, listening and secondary stage students' attitudes towards them.
- 3- Investigating the effectiveness of authentic materials based on journal writing program in decreasing students' speaking and writing anxiety.
- 4- Designing similar programs based on authentic materials and journal writing technique for students at different stages (preparatory and university).
- 5- Investigating the effectiveness of other instructional strategies in developing students' writing performance skills.

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## الملخص باللغة العربية

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى بحث أثر استخدام المواد الاصلية القائمة على كتابة اليوميات على تنمية مهارات الاداء الكتابي لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية و لقد تم إستخدام التصميم شبه التجريبي فى الدراسة الحالية حيث تم سحب عينة الدراسة عشوائياً من طلاب الصف الأول الثانوى من مدرسة بمحافظة الشرقية (المدرسة التجريبية للغات) فى العام الدراسى ٢٠١٥/٢٠١٦ و تكونت عينة الدراسة من (٤٦ طالباً) من الصف الاول الثانوى و التى تتكون من مجموعة ضابطة (٢٣ طالباً) ومجموعة تجريبية (٢٣ طالباً). و بينما تلقى طلاب المجموعة التجريبية التدريس على مهارات الاداء الكتابي اللازمة لهم من خلال استخدام المواد الأصلية القائمة على كتابة اليوميات و السجلات، تلقى طلاب المجموعة الضابطة التدريس بالطريقة المعتادة. و لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم اعداد قائمة لتحديد مهارات الاداء الكتابي و تم اعداد برنامج ،و بناء على صدق قائمة مهارات الكتابة تم اعداد اختبار فى الاداء الكتابي و الذى تم تطبيقه على المجموعتين التجريبية و الضابطة، و تم اعداد دليل لتصحيح الاختبار. و قد استغرقت التجربة ثلاثة شهور و بعد انتهاء التجربة تم اختبار الطلاب بعدياً. و تم حساب الفروق بين نتائج الاختبار القبلى و البعدى باستخدام اختبار "ت" و أشارت النتائج الى وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين متوسطى درجات طلاب المجموعة التجريبية فى اختبار الاداء الكتابي الكلى القبلى و البعدى لصالح درجاتهم فى التطبيق البعدى و وجود فرق ذو دلالة احصائية بين متوسطى درجات طلاب المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة فى اختبار الاداء الكتابي لصالح المجموعة التجريبية و خلصت الدراسة الحالية لفاعلية استخدام برنامج المواد الاصلية القائم على كتابة اليوميات فى تنمية مهارات الاداء الكتابي لدى طلاب المجموعة التجريبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مهارات الاداء الكتابي، المواد الاصلية، أسلوب كتابة اليوميات ،المرحلة الثانوية.