

*Teaching Beyond the Borders: Using the ELT Classroom to Raise Students Social Awareness*

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"Human existence depends upon compassion, but curiosity and knowledge without compassion is inhuman and compassion without curiosity and knowledge is ineffectual"

Victor Weisskopf, A nuclear physicist.

## **Introduction**

In our time where war prevails and women and children suffer different faces of abuse and when the environmental conservation needs the awareness of citizens, the need is urgent to modernize our approaches while teaching to solve these dilemmas. The English language teachers are in a unique position to promote the idea of global citizenship through their work (Wilkins, 2000; Alakkawi, 2012). The present study suggests a way to teach writing interactively to enhance the students' awareness of their responsibility as citizens. It relies on the civic values as a meaningful, realistic content since research (Wilkins, 2000; Dorfman, L.R., & Cappelli, R. 2007) indicate the need for informing and raising students' awareness of the global civic issues in an attempt to create a new global citizen who is aware of his social responsibility.

Consequently, the present study is an attempt to raise the students' awareness of their social responsibilities while teaching writing. Thus, students can value the quality of good work and environmental conservation. Moreover, they become aware of the human rights including women's rights and children's rights. Finally, they practice - in their writing class - important life skills such as negotiation and tolerance. It is a needed attempt to regain the role of the teacher as an educator who does not only teach according to latest techniques but also as an active educator who reshapes the minds and souls of his students on his struggle to reform the society.

## **Review of literature:**

The present study focuses on two integral dimensions as a background of this study; the first is in the field of social responsibility. The second is in the field of writing since it is the means by which the goals of the present study are achieved. The present study clarifies the value of enhancing the awareness of social responsibility while teaching writing and how it can be promoted by positive interactions with peers and teachers and how it provides students with additional incentives to achieve.

Teaching Social Responsibility means intentionally teaching young people to understand themselves, each other, and the world to help teachers create classrooms where students can air and solve conflicts, discuss controversial topics, have a say in what and how they learn, ask questions and engage in dialogue. They are sometimes moved to action as a result of their study( Shapiro,2011; Swami, 2009).

Kathryn Wentzel(2012) clarifies that social competence at school can be a relation between social responsibility and academic achievement. She also illustrates that students' social responsibility is not only a valued outcome in and of itself but it can be instrumental in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of cognitive abilities.

Even if social responsibility can't be taught directly as knowledge, it can be "caught" in a variety of ways--through observations of the behavior of students, friends and others; through reading and discussions; through a sense of injustice that demands

personal action. It can also be caught through schools that encourage community service in some form or through immersion in a class project that, whatever its success, can transform a person's life (Weissbour, 2009; Shapiro,2011).

As for the second dimension it is recommended that writing should be taught interactively. Writing is a vitally important skill to teach and learn since writing is a foremost means of communicating ideas. It is an essential classroom activity since students are tested in written form in the final exams (Clark, 2012, p. 4).

Effective teaching of writing should include negotiation of the rules and mechanics of writing while maintaining a focus on factors such as organization, form and features, purposes and goals, and evaluation of the communication between the author and the reader (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008, p. 3).

In the United States, modern writing instruction illustrates that students need to write clearly and for a wide variety of real-life purposes (Graham &Perin, 2007, p. 22). Thus, writing instruction should focus not only on the correctness of forms and conventions but also on helping learners to practice a wide variety of forms and genres, with the ability to adapt to different purposes (Graham &Perin, 2007, p.25).

Writing involves a range of skills that need to be developed using various strategies: focusing on the topic, organization, elaboration, style, and conventions. Writing skills, provide students with more opportunities to succeed by finding areas of strength and weakness. Writing skills also make expectations visible to students, helping them become critical readers of their own writing as well as those of others (Alakkawi, 2012; Bowen & Cali, 2007).

Berninger (2004) explained that the main goals of writing instruction should be broader than merely teaching sentence syntax and should have “genre-specific discourse writing skills and strategies for writing for multiple purposes” (p. 738). Berninger stated that writing instruction should include completing long-term writing assignments, feedback, and report writing, especially for content subjects that reflect social issues. Creative writing is essential in enabling students to express original ideas and give them opportunities to experiment with various genres, such as poetry and plays.

Clark (2012), on the other hand, stated that “an important goal for a writing course is to help students develop an effective writing process” (p. 1).

Thus, in the writing class a variety of strategies can develop those cognitive processes: (a) thinking aloud; (b) providing multiple-step algorithms for students to apply in their independent writing; (c) props such as “think-plan” sheets to help students plan before writing and “think-revise” sheets to help students revise after writing a draft; and (d) scaffolding (i.e., guided assistance and feedback) (Berninger, 2004, p. 734).

Graham and Perin (2007) stressed that writing skills are an important indicator for academic success and a basic requirement for participation in different areas of life. (P. 11).

Bowen and Cali (2007)clarified that the style is not a matter of right and wrong; instead, it is a matter of what is appropriate for a particular setting and audience. Furthermore, word choice, sentence fluency, and the writer’s voice all contribute to

the style of a written text; writers should choose the exact word to convey meaning (Bowen & Cali, 2007, p. 19).

Peha (2002) provided a full description of the writing strategies involved in the writing process: prewriting, drafting, sharing, revising, editing, and assessing. During prewriting, students are engaged in activities that help them decide their ideas. Drafting strategy helps students establish their writing by organizing these ideas. Moreover, the sharing strategy is considered the most valuable and enjoyable stage in the writing process; there are different ways to organize sharing, such as whole-class sharing, small-group sharing, and partner sharing. The revising strategy is the point in the writing process where writers benefit most from sharing the ideas. Editing is considered a demanding task because the writer should edit the written text by following the rules in terms of grammar, style, and mechanics(p.4).

Prior (2006) stated that writing is a mode of social action and not only a means of communication; it participates in making particular kinds of people, institutions, and cultures (p. 58).

Harmer (2001) commented that “writing is a cooperative activity” to refer to an activity in which students share the stages of writing as partners or in groups. One of the advantages of cooperative writing is that the lecturer can give more detailed, constructive feedback since s/ he deals with a small number of groups rather than individual students (Boughey, 1997, as cited in Harmer, 2001, p. 260). Harmer clarified that cooperative writing is useful when teaching students the process of writing since reviewing and evaluation are enhanced by having more than one person working on the same text (p. 260). In addition, cooperative writing helps students generate more ideas that can be valued. Thus, writing in groups can be greatly beneficial for students not only in developing their writing skills but also in reforming their ideas, discussion, and peer evaluations (Harmer, 2001, p. 260).

MacArthur, Graham, and Fitzgerald (2006) clarified that writing is a powerful tool since the power of writing is captured in the famous quote: “The pen is mightier than the sword” (p. 1). They claimed that writing makes it possible to gather, preserve, and transmit information. Further, writing provides an important means of personal self-expression.

Jalaluddin et al. (2011) clarified that the main aspects which teachers can use to help students improve their writing proficiency are teacher’s questioning, commenting, and giving clues; in addition to students’ involvement in the process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing ( p. 185). They described writing as “a social and a cultural activity that must be seen in its social and cultural context” (p. 184).

To sum up, it can be concluded from the two previous dimensions of the theoretical review that the interactive writing approach is helpful in breaking poor writing habits. In addition, it is considered an easy, successful method for involving students in a process of inquiry which modifies their ideas and enhances their awareness of their social responsibility.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social responsibility of citizens is needed to improve our societies. Students need to learn differently to achieve this goal by acquiring skills that help them to think critically, to inquire, to engage in dialogues and to listen attentively. They can learn skills in conflict resolution.

On the other hand, most EFL learners have difficulty mastering language skills, especially the writing ones, which are considered a problem that the English language learners face in their attempt to achieve language proficiency (Clark, 2012).

Thus, the present study suggests a method for teaching writing where students listen to each other, read each other's ideas which are written by a member from each group on the board. They also discuss the different ideas with democratic practices and practice important life skills such as negotiation and tolerance before they finally write their final drafts.

### **Research Questions**

The present study answers the following questions and sub-questions:

**Research Question 1.** To what extent is teaching writing interactively effective for developing writing skills among Saudi female students at the secondary school level?

The following sub-questions generated from this main question:

Research Sub-Question 1.1. Does teaching writing interactively influence the organization of Saudi female secondary school students' writing?

Research Sub-Question 1.2. Does teaching writing interactively influence the content of Saudi female secondary school students' writing?

Research Sub-Question 1.3. Does teaching writing interactively influence the style of Saudi female secondary school students' writing?

Research Sub-Question 1.4. Does teaching writing interactively influence the mechanics of Saudi female secondary school students' writing?

**Research Question 2.** To what extent does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' writing strategies?

The following sub-questions generated from this main question:

Research Sub-Question 2.1. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' brainstorming strategy?

Research Sub-Question 2.2. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' planning strategy?

Research Sub-Question 2.3. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' drafting strategy?

Research Sub-Question 2.4. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' revising strategy?

Research Sub-Question 2.5. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' editing strategy?

Research Sub-Question 2.6. Does teaching writing interactively influence Saudi female secondary school students' evaluating strategy?

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Interactive writing.** As defined by Williams (2009), interactive writing is a theoretically grounded instructional approach. Throughout the lesson, the teacher treats the students as apprentice writers: The teacher first explains what writers do and then scaffolds the students' ability to engage in those behaviors, both through thinking and physical writing (p. 15).

According to Williams (2009), it includes several stages of development; prewriting or brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating (p. 9).

**Brainstorming:** Defined by Nagin (2012) as a prewriting activity that helps the writer invent content and generate ideas, images, or viewpoints.

**Planning:** Defined by Nagin (2012) as a step which involves reflection on the material produced during prewriting to develop an overall design to achieve the aim of the paper. Planning also involves finding support for a topic and blocking out a rough organizational structure.

**Drafting:** It occurs when the writer begins to develop content through the sustained production of connected sentences. The goal is to begin realizing and shaping the content of the piece in a form that allows the writer to explore and understand the subject's territory (Nagin, 2012).

**Revising:** it is the activity of checking context, making connections, and assessing impact. It involves making changes to match the plan of the text (Harmer, 2001).

**Editing:** Nagin (2012) defined editing as focusing on sentence-level concerns, such as punctuation, sentence length, spelling, agreement between subject and verb, and style.

**Evaluating:** It is the activity of assessing the draft or subsequent drafts (Harmer, 2001).

### **Teaching Social Responsibility:**

It means intentionally teaching young people to understand themselves, each other, and the world; to help teachers create classrooms where students can air and solve conflicts, discuss controversial topics, have a say in what and how they learn, ask questions and engage in dialogue, and are sometimes moved to action as a result of their study (Weissboured, 2009)

Social responsibility is an ethical framework which suggests that an individual has an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large.

### **Participants in the Study:**

The subjects of the present study were randomly selected from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade secondary school students. Sixty female students were divided into two groups; thirty for the control group and thirty students for the experimental one. The age of the students ranged from 16 to 18 years old. They had similar backgrounds.

### **Design of the Study:**

A quasi-experimental design was applied to determine the effectiveness of teaching writing interactively on developing students' writing skills. The duration of the experiment was eight weeks. The two groups-control and experimental-were tested before and after the experiment.

The independent variable of this study was using the interactive approach (by applying the strategies of brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating).

The dependent variables were the writing skills and students attitudes towards the ideas of social responsibility.

Both groups had identical pre- and post-tests. The experimental group had a pre- and post-questionnaires and an attitudinal questionnaire.

## **Instruments of the Study:**

Several instruments were used in this study:

- 1- Pre- and post-tests: Prepared by the researcher (See appendices 1 & 2)
- 2- Pre- and post- questionnaire of the suggested strategies for teaching writing. (See appendix 3).
- 3- Attitudinal questionnaire. (See the results part).
- 4- A scoring rubric: The scoring rubric was developed by Algarni and Alakkawi (2013). It was used to score the students' essays in the pre- and post-tests of both groups. (See appendix 4).

## **Teaching Method and Procedures**

The time allotted for the experiment was eight weeks, during which the students were led through six strategies for teaching writing interactively by brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating. Thus, students learn to communicate with others and think aloud. Moreover, practice peace resolution skills while thinking critically. The steps of the suggested method are:

=> Brain storming activity.

=> Writing ideas in note forms in a first draft.

=> Discussing the ideas that are written in note forms on the blackboard to be seen by all students.

=> Choosing new ideas from the ones written on the board.

=> Writing the second draft in complete sentences. This includes the ideas that students are convinced with from the ones on the blackboard.

=> Editing & Proof reading.

Consequently,

=> Reducing the teacher's marking load.

=> Finding the teacher as an educator.

=> Ability to integrate the four language skills; Listening, speaking, reading before students write their final draft under the teacher's guidance. Moreover, students become aware of the ideas focusing on their social responsibility.

The teacher can open a dialogue by speaking about his or her experiences in taking action on public issues. S/he can then propose for discussions and journal writing as described above.

As a post writing stage, students can reflect upon different ideas mentioned in the class. Then, the teacher has them interview people with different perspectives. This stage encourages students to reflect more on the different ideas discussed. It also leads to personal development regarding; anger management, attention management, critical thinking, emotional intelligence as clarified by Wentzel (2012).

## Data Analysis

The data was analyzed according to the present research questions and sub-questions and reported in the form of tables with a narrative explanation.

Two research questions and 10 research sub-questions were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) at the  $p = .01$  level of significance.

Results of the pre Test: Table 1

Group	N	Mean (M)	Std. deviation SD	<i>t</i>	Df (Degree of freedom)	Sig.
Exp.	30	1.46	0.68	0.72	58	0.01
Control	30	1.43	0.81			No significance

Results of the post Test: Table 2

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.16	1.14	4.24	58	0.01
Control	30	1.8	1.24			significant

Data was collected to determine whether there was a significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental group and those of the control group.

Data in Table 1 revealed that there was no significant difference between the experimental group and their peers of the control group in the pre writing test.

Data in Table 2 revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between students' writing skills of the control group ( $M = 1.8$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) and in the experimental group ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) based on their posttest score data. The statistically significance difference was not only at 0.05 but it showed significance difference at 0.01. This result of the posttest indicated significant development in the experimental group students' writing skills as a whole, with an overall mean of 3.16 compared with 1.8 for the control group.

The following tables prove that the experimental group results showed significant difference at the level 0.01 compared to their peers of the control group in the different categories of the post test. The results are as follows:

Independent Samples t-Test – Posttest (Organization)

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
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Exp.	30	3.9	0.37	6.8	58	0.01
Control	30	2.1	1.1			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Posttest (Content)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.7	0.91	4.87	58	0.01
Control	30	2.5	0.93			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Posttest (Style)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.5	1.3	4.23	58	0.01
Control	30	2.2	1.1			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Posttest (Mechanics)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.93	0.37	4.13	58	0.01 Significant
Control	30	2.8	1.3			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Pre-Questionnaire (Writing Strategies)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	20.33	3.27	0.99	58	0.01 No significance
Control	30	19.46	3.49			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Brainstorming Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	5.1	1.2	2.1	58	0.01
Control	30	2.2	1.4			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Planning Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	4	0.76	11.41	58	0.01
Control	30	1.7	0.77			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Drafting Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
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Exp.	30	3.5	1.3	2.8	58	0.01
Control	30	2.6	0.95			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Revising Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.8	0.64	10.6	58	0.01
Control	30	1.8	0.77			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Editing Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	T	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	3.8	0.87	8.8	58	0.01
Control	30	1.9	0.85			

*Independent Samples t-Test – Post-Questionnaire (Evaluating Strategy)*

Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	Sig.
Exp.	30	4.1	0.69	6.9	58	0.01
Control	30	2.3	1.2			

**Results of Attitudinal Questionnaire (Evaluation of the Program)**

*Post-Questionnaire – Evaluation of the Program for the Experimental Group*

c. Evaluation of the program					
<b>1. The Writing Program</b>	Very	Much	Somewhat	Not	Not at all

	much			much	
1.1. How much do you like the interactive approach to be used in the writing classes?	40%	50%		10%	
1.2. How useful is the interactive approach in modifying your ideas?	60%	35%	5%		
1.3. How easy is the interactive approach in modifying your ideas?	80%	15%		5%	
<b>2. Strategies</b>	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat	Not useful	Not useful at all
2.1. How useful are the following strategies <b>in improving your ideas?</b>					
2.1.1. Brainstorming	70%	15%	5%	10%	
2.1.2 Planning	80%	5%	10%	5%	
2.1.3 Drafting	50%	30%	10%	10%	
2.1.4 Revising	40%	30%	5%	20%	5%
2.1.5 Editing	60%	30%		10%	
2.1.6 Evaluation	70%	25%	5%		

The previous table includes the percentages of agreement and disagreement for all questionnaire items. This questionnaire was given only to the experimental group to evaluate the experiment. Regarding the students' attitudes towards the suggested method in relation to modifying their ideas; Most students liked it (Very much: 40%; Much: 50%), and some of them (10%) did not like it much. Most of them found it useful (Very Much: 60%; Much: 35%), and 5% found it somewhat useful. Eighty percent of the participants found it very easy to use when learning writing, while 15% found it easy, and 5% found it not easy. Regarding the students' opinions on the strategies used to develop writing skills, most of them found all the strategies very useful (brainstorming: 70%; planning: 80%; drafting: 50%; revising: 40%; editing: 60%; evaluation: 70%). Some of them found all the strategies useful (brainstorming: 15%; planning: 5%; drafting: 30%; revising: 30%; editing: 30%; evaluation: 25%). Some found the strategies somewhat useful (brainstorming: 5%; planning: 10%; drafting: 10%; revising: 5%; evaluation: 5%). Although the majority of the participants found the strategies useful, some found them not useful (brainstorming:

10%; planning: 5%; drafting: 10%; revising: 20%; editing: 10%). Finally, 5% of the participants found the revising strategy is not useful at all.

Thus, the results of the study proved that teaching writing interactively was successful. Further, it improved the experimental group students' writing skills and changed their way of thinking to be critical and deeper regarding the ideas of their social responsibility. They also could value the quality of good work and practiced important life skills such as negotiation and tolerance.

### **Conclusion and Implications:**

The present study is an attempt to solve the problems in the field of teaching writing and enhancing the students' awareness of their social responsibility to reform the minds of the new generation. Thus, students can value the quality of good work and environmental conservation. Moreover, they become aware of the women's rights, children's rights and practice in the writing class important life skills such as negotiation and tolerance.

Even if social responsibility can not be taught directly as knowledge, it can be "caught" in a variety of ways through discussions; through a sense of injustice that demands personal action and through teachers and schools that encourage community service.

Social responsibility takes intention and attention and time to happen. Thus, students should be given opportunities to take part in the processes of group decision making.

The present study helps teachers to create classrooms where students can air and solve conflicts, discuss controversial topics, have a say in what and how they learn, ask questions and engage in dialogues and are sometimes moved to action as a result of that context of learning.

The present study is an attempt to find the English language teacher as an educator who is capable of teaching writing in a way that improves students' writing skills and at the same time enhances students' awareness of their social responsibility.

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**A. Writing Strategies.** Please read the following statements very carefully. Then put a  $\checkmark$  in the appropriate column that indicates the extent to which you agree with the statement.

<b>A. Students' Writing Strategies in English:</b>	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree <sup>s</sup>
	5	4	3	2	1
1. It is easy to brainstorm for ideas when writing in English.					
2. I know how to plan before writing in English.					
3. I know how to draft when writing in English with my group.					
4. I know how to revise a draft when writing in English.					
5. I know how to edit a draft when writing in English.					
6. I know how to evaluate my essay when writing in English.					

## Appendix 5 (Scoring Rubric)

Skills	Advanced 4 points		Proficient 3 points		Partially proficient 2 points		Unsatisfactory 1 point	
	Organization		All ideas are organized around a central topic.		Most ideas are organized around a central topic.		Ideas are loosely organized around a central topic.	
		Ideas are connected and presented in a clear, logical order.		Ideas are connected and follow a readable order.		Some ideas are connected but order disrupts the reader.		Ideas are not connected and writing does not have a logical order.
Content		Has a clearly defined central idea.		Has an identifiable central idea.		Has a vague central idea.		Does not have a central idea.
		Provides only relevant and clear information.		Provides mostly relevant information.		Provides some relevant information.		Provides little information or mostly irrelevant information.
		Elaborates with specific and interesting details.		Details are largely general, brief or obvious.		Limited use of details.		Repetitious/no details.
Style/Fluency		Uses a variety of words to begin sentences.		Uses some variety of words to begin sentences.		Uses a limited variety of words to begin sentences.		Uses the same word to begin almost every sentence.
		Effective use of simple and complex sentences.		Uses a complex sentence.		Only uses simple sentences.		Incomplete/rambling sentences.
		Writing creates a situation that is engaging and compelling.		Writing is clear and personable.		Words are very general/formulaic and do not suggest a		Too few words to gauge a voice.

				voice.	
	Uses active verbs, precise nouns, and colorful adjectives.		Heavy use of simple verbs, everyday nouns, and adjectives.	Repeats many of the same words throughout writing.	Uses words that are inaccurate, lifeless, or mechanical.
Mechanics of Writing	<b>Error free</b>		<b>Nearly error free</b>	<b>Numerous errors</b>	<b>Pervasive errors</b>
	<b>Punctuation:</b> simple and complex sentences.		<b>Punctuation:</b> simple and complex sentences.	<b>Punctuation:</b> simple and complex sentences.	<b>Punctuation:</b> simple and complex sentences.
	<b>Capitalization:</b> proper nouns and sentence.		<b>Capitalization:</b> proper nouns and sentence.	<b>Capitalization:</b> proper nouns and sentence.	<b>Capitalization:</b> proper nouns and sentence.
	<b>Spelling:</b> No excuse words and phonetically correct.		<b>Spelling:</b> No excuse words and phonetically correct.	<b>Spelling:</b> No excuse words and phonetically correct.	<b>Spelling:</b> No excuse words and phonetically correct.
	<b>Grammar:</b> subject-verb agreement		<b>Grammar:</b> subject-verb agreement	<b>Grammar:</b> subject-verb agreement	<b>Grammar:</b> subject-verb agreement