



The Importance of Convergent and Divergent Teaching Methods on Teaching Writing

***Noor Jumaa Omran, **Dr Bushra Saadoon Mohammed Al-Noori**

*University of Baghdad, Iraq

** Alkadhum University College

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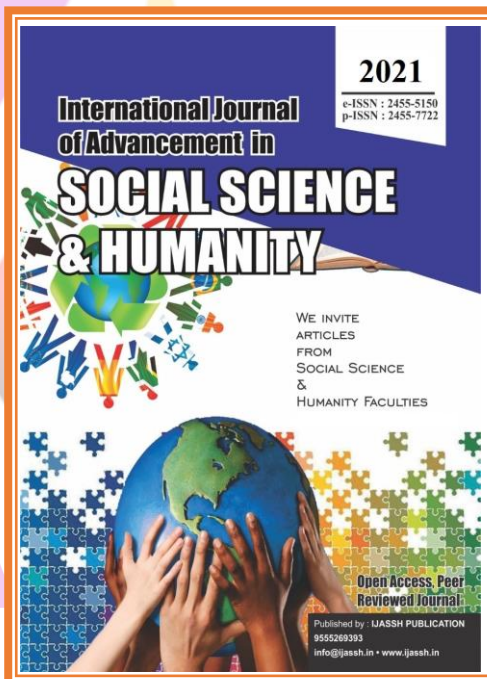
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ABSTRACT

Teaching as a difficult process is influenced by so different factors, of which one of the most important is the approach adopted to present and teach materials. Divergent and Convergent teaching methods are two examples of these approaches that were examined in this research. Writing Is a skill: by far the most significant reason for teaching writing, of course, it is a main language skill, just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write paragraph , letter, how to put written reports together, how to answer to advertisements - and increasingly, how to write using e- media They need to know some of the writing's special conventions (punctuation, paragraph construction etc.) just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately. Part of our job is to give them that skill.



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INTRODUCTION

One type of thinking based on Socrates' view point over more than 2500 years ago is critical thinking. According to Paul (2008), critical thinking is the reawakening of the intellect to the study of itself. It is the ability to how to think clearly and rationally.

Critical thinking isn't a matter of adding information. A good critical thinker should not necessarily have a good memory or knows many of facts. A critical thinker is able to conclude consequences from what she\ he knows, and she\ he knows how to benefit of information to solve problems, and how to search relevant sources of information to inform him (Chan & Lau, 2011). Alsagoff (2012) argued that critical thinking include of a mental process of analyzing or evaluating information to give evidence and reasoning, and to form judges about the facts.

The world is the era of technology and also of using information. We must try to adapt ourselves to make some changes as quickly as possible . We need to increase that our skills in flexible intelligences and also try to analyze information according to these new activity . These activities propose many sources of knowledge in the solving problems. Good critical thinking develops such thinking skills (Adam, 2002).

It is the point of view of Schafersman (1991) that all education should involve not only what and how to think, but also how to think well . Education philosophers mention that critical thinking is the important goal of learning and relevant to education (Ennis, 1996; Paul, 1997).

In a second language context, many ways in which critical thinking might be clarified and taught have become mostly debated concerns for L2 learning practitioners and scholars in recent years (Thompson, 2008). Divergent and Convergent teaching methods are from of these ways of education.

Convergent thinking is a term argued by Guilford in 1967 as the opposite of divergent thinking. Convergent thinking is the process of finding out a single best solution to a problem that we are trying many times to solve (Williams, 2003). Many tests and exams that are used in schools, for example multiple-choice tests , math quizzes, spelling tests, and standardized tests, are measures of the convergent thinking.

Divergent thinking is the process to create many unique solutions intending to solve a problem. This process of divergent thinking is free-flowing and spontaneous, unlike convergent thinking, which is that systematic and logically. When using convergent thinking, we can use logical steps in order to choose the one single the

best solution. By using divergent thinking, instead of that only choosing among appointed choices we research for new choices. Convergent thinking stands for firmly on logic and less on creativity, while divergent thinking is mainly based on creativity. We use divergent thinking mainly in open-ended problems that creativity is a important part (Williams, 2003).

We can use these divergent and convergent teaching methods in teaching grammar also. Grammar is one of the most fundamental concepts in human's communications. It is that how people ensure they are understood well, and it is also the best effective way to express any concepts, thoughts and that they want to share on. By promoting thinking, divergent and convergent teaching methods can also help students to come up with better ways of learning the grammar rules.

A. Statement of the Problem

Today, learning English as a second language begins early in our life. Across the early years of children achievement enhancing control over their thoughts and alertness. These developing abilities provide them to meet and conquer new growing challenges, from that coping with others to learning new academic skills. Despite of their growing abilities, it is sometimes difficult for children to regulate even their thoughts in ways that allow them to succeed

at new tasks. During these periods, teachers' new methods can also help children learn to regulate their own thoughts (Zeller, 2009).

Good writers are good readers. Writing gives more voice to our inner thoughts and allows us to share them also. Writing focuses students on phonics, mechanics, comprehension, developing their own voice or perspective, and communicating this perspective to others.

Teachers must learn how to make a classroom environment that is so conducive to writing and help to be effective writing instruction for all learners, such as struggling writers and English Language Learners. To do that effectively, teachers must first go through the writing process themselves, which can be also accomplished by taking.

Young children are natural language acquirers; they are self-motivated to take a language without conscious learning, unlike adults. They have the ability to imitate the rules and laws for themselves and the role of a good teacher is to get to increase this kind of acquisition (Dunn, 2014).

Articles in English are very significant, as we use them all the time. A good question from students and teachers of English as a second language is that "When do I use the articles a, an, and the?" The truth is that the

answer is very complex; it may give children a headache (Gunn, 2007).

Differences in marking definiteness among different languages have been considered as one of the most confusing areas for speakers of different languages (Mizuno, 1985). Afzali (2012), as a teacher who teaching of EFL to Persian speakers has frequently observed that the students may face problems when it comes in marking a definite or indefinite noun in English.

Definiteness in written Persian is mainly recognized by the absence of indefinite markers and indefiniteness in written Persian is marked in either by the numeral one (which is 'yek' before the noun phrase; i.e. pre-positioned) or also by using the suffix 'i' after that (i.e. post positioned).

Articles in English are presented by adding *a*, *the* or *an* at the beginning of the word or it may nothing before the words. But in Persian it is different situation as it was said and is not the same as English. So, for foreign language speakers, and for Iranians, it seems very difficult to learn articles due to the difference mentioned (Afzali, 2012).

Convergent teaching methods can be useful for teaching grammar especially articles by transferring lessons from the teachers to the students that emphasize a one single answer and the logical *one*.

Divergent teaching methods can also be benefit as it concentrates on many solutions for the problems and evokes the creativity of students themselves to learn grammar also .

B. Significance of the Study

The best teachers are those who prepare their students to think for themselves. Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010) argued that teachers' critical thinking is mainly intertwined with teachers' pedagogical success. As teachers' success is, in any ways, related to students' engagement, teachers' critical thinking which is also interconnected with educational achievement may affect students' engagement subsequently.

Teaching writing to foreign language learners especially for children needs specific methods, too. Teachers may transfer knowledge and ideas to students, and prepare them for more education. In this study, the researchers investigate on two methods in this field for both beginners to use grammar in writing and also compared these two methods with each other.

Since for many years ago, teaching grammar has been from memorization and rote learning. This method couldn't help learners to face new problems in grammar and solve them and also remember the rules completely. They are not interested in

learning grammar. But divergent and convergent methods have a main origin in mind and can help students to cope with new situations via critical thinking and creativity. It seems that we may be able to use divergent and convergent methods of teaching as types of writing and thinking frameworks.

Learners may need to know how to write articles, how to put written letters and reports all together, how to answer to advertisements - and increasingly, how to write using e-media. They may need to know some of the writing's special conventions (paragraph construction, punctuation, etc.) just as they need to know also how to pronounce spoken English very well. Part of our work is to give them that skill.

- It can also give the teacher a quietness down a noisy class, change the mood, break, and pace of a lesson, etc.

C. Research Questions

Q1. Does a convergent method have a positive or negative effect on writing articles?

Q2. Does a divergent teaching method have a positive or negative effect on learning articles by EFL beginner learners?

Q3. Does a convergent teaching method affect learning articles any differently than

divergent teaching method by EFL beginner learners?

D. Research Hypotheses

H1: Convergent teaching methods have a positive effect on writing articles by EFL beginner learners.

H2: Divergent teaching methods have a positive effect on learning articles by EFL beginner learners.

H3: A convergent teaching method is more effective than a divergent teaching method in learning articles by EFL beginner learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Human being learning and the mechanisms it may have attracted the attention of scholars for many years and different versions have been put forward to capture different aspects of these learning. Anyhow, the recent history of learning that started by behaviorists who believed in that learning is defined as the outward expression of new behaviors. They focused mainly on the observable behaviors. They believed in a biological basis for learning. However, this was criticized by failing to account for processes that taking place in the mind that can't be observed. This led to the cognitivism. "Mental processes such as

memory, knowing, thinking, and problem-solving need to be explored" (Tresa, 2004).

Cognitivism is a theoretical framework for the understanding of the mind proposed in the 1950s. Cognitivism is the psychology of learning that emphasizes human intelligence or cognition. The underlying concepts of cognitivism involve that how we think and get the knowledge. "Cognitivism involves memory, problem solving skills, examining learning, and intelligence. Cognitive theorists may want to understand how problem solving changes, how cultural differences may affect the way that we may view our own language development and academic achievements. They emphasized on active role of mind" (Geekz, 2014).

After proposing cognitivism, creativity and thinking spread based on it. So the concepts such as critical thinking and creativity thinking were represented as more than before. After several years, students may tend to use their creativity and intelligence in education rather than rote learning. Convergent and Divergent thinking skills are both very important aspects of critical and creativity thinking (Aristizabal, 2012).

Empirical Studies

[Strot](#) (1985) studied on the attractiveness of learners with divergent and convergent learning styles to teachers with divergent and convergent learning styles. He pointed

that convergers have been observed as favored over divergers by teachers. Although Guilford and Jackson (1961) found that both divergent and convergent students to be equal in the scholastic performance.

Jo Ann (2003) studied the relationship between creativity and divergent and convergent methods of teaching spelling. He found that

1. There is no significant difference in achievement between children taught by a convergent method and children taught by a divergent method; and
2. There is no significant difference in achievement between the high creative and low creative children; 3. There is no significant interaction between teaching methods and creativity.

Akbari Chermahini (2011) pointed that divergent-thinking of writing tasks require learners to generate as several target-related replies as possible, and the target constrains the choosing of possible answers rather weakly. In contrast way to convergent thinking, divergent thinking, requires focusing onto one single possible response for each item and thus calls for a strongly constrained search process.

Haji Pour Nezhad (2013) pointed that convergent method emphasizes recognizing the familiar results , accumulating information, and reapplying techniques. Divergent method, anyhow ,causes the learner to evaluate and generate so creative ideas and draw unexpected connections (Duff, 1986).

Duff (1986) brought the significant of goal orientation to the attention of L2 researchers that in her study of the effects of divergent and convergent tasks.

Koe (1967) also studied the effects of divergent and convergent teaching methods on students' performance on two mathematical problem-solving tasks. The aim was to find out the interaction between the divergent and convergent teaching methods and the thinking style (either convergent or divergent) of the student . Convergent thinkers scored mainly higher than did divergent thinkers on both dependent measures.

Katamadze (2012) studied using creativity to do articles with geographical names. She believed that article is the one of the most problematic issues in teaching English. Students find out it difficult to use the article in a correct way and they often make mistakes. She tried to assist students to learn articles creatively. She finally concluded that creative thinking is efficient in learning articles.

Flowers (2010) studied the impact of creativity on learning articles. He believed in that with any field, technology education and its close relatives have numerous weaknesses and strengths. One of these weaknesses is that has too long been dominated is learning articles. We may think of technology education as an empowering the students, divergently fostering their own creativity.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were 100 students of grade three in Elmiter Junior High School(equivalent to grade eight in American system) in Asmmaa Iraqi school , that were conveniently chosen . They had studied English at school for 3 years and some of them joined English classes in institutes along with their mates course at school. All of the students were females.

The learners were homogenized with(KET) exam and 55 students whose scores fell between one standard deviation below or above the mean were selected. They were randomly divided into two experimental groups and one control group. Each group consisted of 18 students.

Data Collection Instruments

To collect the data for the study, the following instruments were used:

KET (Key English Test): KET is a standardized test for English proficiency for elementary level students designed by Cambridge University ESOL. This test was used for homogenize the students. KET has three parts: The reliability of this test was calculated using a statistics called *Cornbrash's Alpha*. The reliability calculated for writing and reading skills was 0.90. Reliability is an essential features of a test. This reliability shows that the consistency of the test results, the fact is that students get the same marks if they took the test on two different types . One could count on the marks resulting from a particular administration to be an accurate index of learners' achievement.

Pre- and post-tests: This test included 28 multiple choice items questions designed based on available grammar books and was used for pre-test and post-test. Learners were supposed to choose an alternative from 4 choices. The reliability was calculated to be ($r=0.768$) by Cornbrash's Alpha. The alpha coefficient for the 28 items is .768, suggesting that the items have relatively highly internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection of this study started in May 2014, and lasted for three months. This research started after obtaining the required permissions from a young high school in Hameedan.

For the control group there were only a pre-test at the beginning and a post-test after one months, and there wasn't any treatment for them.

For the convergent group after a pre-test at the beginning, then there were 8 sessions of writing articles teaching. The convergent group was taught points for writing issues by putting articles in proper places and started for helping the students to refer to their background knowledge according to Lipoff (2013).

Some grammatical rules of using articles were divided into 4 groups and the researchers tried to gradually teach and practice these rules with the students over 8 sessions. The learners were so encouraged to memorize the rules and the researchers tried to show the rules every session and ask learners about what they had learnt so far. Then after 8 sessions they received a post-test.

The divergent group also received a pre-test, and then they started learning articles for 8 sessions.

According to Lipoff (2013) divergent learning occurs through play. This makes learners think so deeply and try to be creative; therefore, the researchers divided the group into other two sub-groups and tried to make a competition after teaching the points. For each question the learners

suggested many solutions and tried to solve the problem through doing collaboration by saying their opinion. Fill-in-the blanks activity in groups was from other activities that learners highly welcomed. Making parts of the sentences one by one and at the end having a complete phrase and using the write article for words were from other plays. Matching the halves of sentences attracted them too. Every session was accompanied with new games and new points of articles that students liked to do a lot. Then students received the post-test after 8 sessions.

Data Analysis

By Checking the effects of convergent and divergent teaching methods as independent variables on learning articles as dependent variable by using pre-test and post-test which was measured through ANCOVA statistical procedure and T-Test was used for comparing these effects. The data was analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (SPSS Inc. (2009). PASW Statistics 18 for Windows. Chicago: SPSS Inc) .

the maximum and minimum scores of the control group in the pre-test are respectively 8 and 19 and in the post-test are 8 and 19. The scores of the control group is 12.80 with a SD of 3.66 and the mean score of the post-test is 12.13 with a SD of 3.39.

The minimum and maximum scores of the convergent teaching method are 6 and 17 in the pre-test and 10 and 19 in the post-test, respectively. The mean score of students trained by the convergent teaching method is 10.66 with a SD of 2.69 in the pre-test and a mean score of 14.80 with a SD of 2.45 in the post-test.

The minimum and maximum scores of the divergent teaching method are 6 and 14 in the pre-test and 8 and 17 in the post-test, respectively. The range score of students trained by the divergent teaching method is 9.07 with a SD of 2.78 in the pre-test and a mean score of 12.86 with a SD of 2.72 in the post-test.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

This research showed that there is an important difference between the performance of learners taught by divergent and convergent teaching methods and writing articles and that the convergent teaching is more effective.

Guilford and Jackson (1961) argued that there is no difference between these two methods. Gagne (1965) sets that an eight-level hierarchy of learning types by putting more emphasis on convergent learning. Koe (1967) showed that problem-solving in his research might be the best done by divergent and convergent teaching and

convergent teaching was superior to divergent teaching on routine problems.

The results of the present study are not in line with Ann (2003) who studied the relation of convergent and creativity and divergent methods for teaching spelling.

He found that there is no important difference in achievement between the low creative and high creative children and there is no important interaction between creativity and teaching method.

The results of this study, however, are in line with [Strot](#) (1985) who pointed that pupils taught by convergent teaching method were more successful. One reason for this has been suggested by AkbariChermahini (2011) who pointed that divergent-thinking tasks require learners to generate as many target-related responses as possible, and the target makes the selection of possible responses rather weakly. In contrast to divergent thinking, convergent thinking that requires focusing onto one possible response each item and thus calls for a strongly constrained search process. By divergent method we arrive at the best, most logical answer in the least time possible.

Haji Pour Nezhad (2013) also pointed that convergent thinking emphasizes recognizing the familiar results, reapplying techniques, and accumulating information. Divergent

thinking, however, makes the learner to generate and evaluate many creative ideas and draw unexpected connections.

The findings of this study is also in line with Koe (1967) who analyses the effects of divergent and convergent teaching methods on students' performance on two mathematical problem-solving tasks. The reason was to find out the interaction between the divergent and convergent teaching methods and the thinking style in writing (either convergent or divergent) of the learner implying that convergent thinkers scored significantly higher than did divergent thinkers on both dependent measures. This result was proved by this study too.

This result is in line with Haji Pour Nezhad (2013) as according to Sandles (2003) that creativity is not relate to convergent thinking because of that we do not have to be creative to know the answer to this problem; all you have to do is to think with the stated, factual answer.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the statistical analysis of the data that showed in that convergent teaching method has a positive effect on the writing articles by EFL learners. According to the same analysis, divergent teaching method has also a positive effect on writing articles for EFL learners, too.

"Divergent" is written in first person from a very limited perspective. This limited point of view is vital in order to keep the reader in suspense. For example, Beatrice's mother seems the epitome of the Abnegation faction, selfless and giving.

But as for the third hypothesis mentioned before the divergent teaching method proved that more effective than convergent method in teaching articles .Anyhow, results showed that convergent teaching method based on the data gave and other result is

more effective than divergent teaching method especially in the present educational system. Since learners learn best by examples and referring to their first knowledge for deciding on a one single solution rather than brainstorming and try to investigate different solutions for a problem.



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