

## THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH TEACHING FORUMS ON IMPROVING ELEVENTH GRADERS' WRITING SKILLS IN HABLA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed at investigating the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls. It also aimed at examining the role of the stream of study (Literary Stream versus Science Stream). To achieve these objectives the researchers used the pre-test post-test approach on a sample of 14 female students chosen randomly from 73 eleventh graders in Habla Secondary School for girls. The collected data from the pre-test and the post-test was analyzed using means, standard deviations, paired sample t-test, independent t-Test and Cronbach Alpha Formula. The results revealed that using forums for teaching English had a positive influence on improving students' writing skills. In the light of these results, the researchers recommended teachers to give value to the new technological tools as forums for improving students' writing. The researchers also recommended decision makers to organize training sessions and workshops for discussing the effectiveness of using forums on improving the students' writing skills and also to give training to the teachers how to teach writing effectively through forums.*

**KEYWORDS:** *English teaching forums .Writing skills. Eleventh Graders.*

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### INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Being one of the four skills of the English language as other languages, writing is a vital instrument that enables people to communicate their feelings, experiences and thoughts, beliefs and other things related to their daily life. Mourtaga (2004) postulates that writing is a critical way of communication and for judging a person by the quality of writing he possesses. Al-Abed Al-Haq & Al-Sobh (2010) have a similar point of view when they point out that writing is an important communicative language skill that requires a mental effort to "think out" the sentences and the ways of joining them to be meaningful and communicative. Thus, the skill of writing is an indispensable skill for learners of English as a foreign or a second language. According to Klein (1985), writing is the ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols to have meaning and content that could be communicated to other people by the writer. Writing skills, therefore are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message.

Regardless of its aforementioned importance, writing, unlike other language skills has created a lot of problems among learners of English as a Second Language (Othman and Mohamad, 2007). Writing statements and paragraphs in a foreign language can be very challenging for the

students. Such insight was supported many years ago by Allen & Corder (1974) who postulate that writing is a complex task and the most difficult of the language abilities and skills to acquire. Such difficulty might be due to the fact that writing conventions require longer cohesive sentences and more refined vocabulary than are normally used in speaking (Rubin, 1994).

Another source of difficulty was given by Whiteman (1981) who maintains that students are weak in writing because teachers concentrate on teaching grammar, spelling drills, and punctuation rather than involving students in the writing process. Ybarra & Green (2003), furthermore, maintain that the writing process can be very difficult for learners of English language as they must do tasks like generating ideas, organization, and perfect use of grammar and vocabulary. Such difficulties and others necessitate EFL learners to learn about the mechanics and conventions of good and effective writing on one hand, and to have the opportunity to examine good samples and models of writing to practice the writing skill in more effective environment on the other hand, where they can receive feedback and encouragement when necessary. Al-Sharawneh, (2012) states that the assessment of the writing ability among language teachers and students has always been important because the results of such an evaluation are used for a variety of administrative, instructional and research purpose. Classroom teachers, in particular, can benefit from these results to help improve, influence, refine and shape their students' attained writing ability.

This means that EFL teachers should employ a variety of enjoyable and interesting methods and techniques to foster students' writing skills. Fostering students' writing skills can be achieved through using different types of technological advancement which can enhance the quality of learning and teaching. The use of computers and graphics-based programs can make the writing task much easier and enjoyable, and can make them express their thoughts more clearly. With the rapid development of computer-mediated communication, online forums have become more involved in classroom settings to promote student critical thinking, knowledge construction and language learning autonomy (Lim & Chai 2004; Marra, Moore & Klimczak 2004). According to Tan (2012), the use of new multimedia technologies and the Internet in learning is seen as a means to improve accessibility, efficiency and quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration. One of the possible ways for improving the writing skill for ELL students, thanks to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), is using forums. Kaur (2011) defines online forums as an important learning strategy for students to improve their language skills since it enables users of a website to interact with each other by exchanging tips and discussing topics related to a certain theme whereas Cyprus (2010) declares that an online forum is known as a message board, online discussion group, bulletin board or web forum on a website whereby members can post discussions, read and respond to posts by other members who can revolve around any subject in an online community forum.

### **Nature and benefits of forums**

An online forum is a discussion area on a website whereby members can post discussions, read and respond to posts by other forum members. So (2009), in this regard, adds that asynchronous online discussion forums, are some of the simplest computer-mediated communication tools that teachers can easily integrate into their teaching to extend discussions beyond classroom contexts.

Further definition was given by Santosa et. al (2005) who maintain that online forums are a kind of computer mediated communication which allows individual to communicate with others by posting written messages to exchange ideas. It uses asynchronous type of communication. Smith (2001) points out that well- structured and appropriately facilitated online discussion can provide a learning environment that allows the immediate application of new information to learners' personal and professional lives. Besides, online forums are more flexible compared to face to face communication as they provide time to reflect and think and allow both introverted and extroverted students to be involved in online discussions. Chinedu (2008) maintains that by participating in online forums, access to knowledge is free. Moreover, Chinedu (2008) posits that forum members could willingly share their wealth of knowledge and experience with other members. In return, every member of the forum can benefit from this infusion of free knowledge. Online discussion forums, in particular provide an authenticity in writing and therefore serve as a meaningful supplement to the writing curriculum (Pauley 2001).

Aileen Ng (2008) discovered that the implementation of the online forum appears to provide reinforcement tasks to enable students to practice their writing. Besides that, the online forum also facilitates collaborative learning. Students could share their ideas and opinions in order to produce better quality writing as compared to if the tasks were to be completed independently.

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Peterson and Caverly (2006) discovered that through online forums, teachers are able to document the growth of their students' ability to support a point in their messages. Students improved their ability to respond to a classmate and to make a point supported with evidence. Callan (2006) states that online forums create a discussion environment. Everything that gets posted gets read over and over again. Online forums rarely turn into heated arguments as people are given time to research and consider their comments before replying. This in turn, makes high-quality discussion.

Pavlina (2005) discussed some potential benefits of regular online forum participation such as: intellectual exchange, learning new ideas and refining old ones, enjoying community membership, influencing the forum's evolution, contributing to others, making new friends and contacts, new business leads, keeping up with current events, learning about new opportunities.

Qing Li (2004) mentioned nine characteristics of a good online forum: Establish a friendly, open environment, use authentic tasks and topics, emphasize learner-centered instruction, encourage students to give constructive feedback and suggestion, let students experience, reflect and share the benefit of using threaded discussion, be sure that instructors facilitate collaboration and knowledge building, encourage dialogue and referencing of other student postings, use humor for motivation and finally use emoticons to help convey ideas and feelings.

Twining (2004) pointed out that teachers have a wide range of reasons for including ILT within their teaching, and a similar spread of beliefs in the value of it, and the reasons why it is expected

of them. It is therefore necessary to assess these understandings and beliefs, and their intentions for their students, in interpreting their choice of e-learning approaches in the classroom.

Smith (2001) claimed that well-structured and appropriately facilitated online discussion can provide a learning environment that allows the immediate application of new information to learners' personal and professional lives. Besides, online forums are more flexible compared to face to face communication as they provide time to reflect and think and allow both introverted and extroverted students to be involved in online discussions. As a result of the aforementioned benefits and potentials, the use of computer based online discussion through online forums is evident in the curriculum of many courses throughout the world in universities in Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Scott & Ryan 2009).

However, to date and up to the researchers' knowledge, it seems that no study has investigated the influence of English teaching forums on eleventh graders' writing skills in the Palestinian context. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls hoping that the results can offer the Palestinian students and teachers the opportunity to use forums and get benefit from it when aiming at improving their writing skill.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Throughout the researchers' field work at university as practicum supervisors of TEFL students at An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University in Nablus area, they noticed that most students even at university level have weak writing skills and they usually face the difficulty of writing one or two short paragraphs especially at school. Such difficulties might be due to the writing conventions which require longer cohesive sentences and more refined vocabulary than are normally used in speaking (Rubin, 1994); teachers concentrate on teaching grammar, spelling drills, and punctuation rather than involving students in the writing process (Whiteman, 1981); students are required to produce good ideas arranged logically, using an active group of vocabulary items and structures including discourse markers (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Al-Sobh, 2010) and because learners of English must do tasks like generating ideas, organization, and perfect use of grammar and vocabulary (Ybarra & Green, 2003). The researchers believe that Eleventh Graders need to be helped in this area so as to be able to write appropriately either when they sit for Tawjihi exams or when they join university for higher education. Under these conditions, it seems that the traditional techniques of teaching English in general and the writing skill in particular have been proven to be ineffective and that EFL teachers need to adopt new techniques and methods for teaching the writing skill. One of these techniques is English teaching forums which, although have become common in many countries, the Palestinian schools are still unaware of their potentials and their positive impact on the skill of writing. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1- Investigating the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls.

2-Examining the role of the stream (literary versus scientific)in the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills.

### **Questions of the study**

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1-What is the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls ?

2-Are there any statistical significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls due to the test (pretest vs. posttest) ?

3-Are there any statistical significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls on the pretest due to the stream variable ?

4-Are there any statistical significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls on the posttest due to the stream variable ?

### **Significance of the study**

To the best of the researchers' knowledge and regardless of the various benefits of English teaching forums mentioned by many researchers (Kaur , 2011; Aileen Ng ,2008; Chinedu , 2008; Peterson and Caverly , 2006; Callan, 2006; Pavlina , 2005; Gerbric , 2005; Qing Li , 2004) ,there has been no study conducted in the Palestinian context to investigate the influence of using English language forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills. Thus, the significance of this study springs from the fact that it has the potential to provide both teachers and students with new horizons for practice and exposure to the English language especially in the era of ICT in general and the Internet in particular.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study has the following limitations:

1-It is restricted to a sample of 14 female students chosen randomly from the two streams of the eleventh grade at Habla Secondary School for girls.

2-It is restricted to the influence of forums on improving one particular skill which is the writing skill.

3-It is limited to a specific period in the second semester of the scholastic year 2015/ 16.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A great deal of studies have been conducted in the western world to investigate the effect of using different types of technology in education. Some researchers aimed at examining the influence of blogs and YouTube, others went to investigate the effect of Facebook and other social media networks. This section aims to present some studies in the field of using forums and blogs for pedagogical purposes.

To start with, blogs seem to have some common features with forums since, according to Al-Mudallal (2013), a blog is as a web page that is easily designed and provided by specific providers to enable the user to write and post topics as well as let users to add texts, images and

audio and video scripts, provide relevant links and interact with editors and readers by making comments or entries. On the other hand, forums are defined as message boards online discussion group, bulletin board or web forums. An online forum, furthermore is a discussion area on a website whereby members can post discussions, read and respond to posts by other forum members.

To investigate the effect of using the weblog as a teaching and learning supportive tool on enhancing Palestinian eleventh graders' English writing performance, Al-Mudallal (2013) carried out a study on a purposive sample of 40 EFL female students studying at Dallah Al Mughrabi Secondary school was chosen to be the participants of this study. They were divided into a control group of 20 students, and an experimental one of 20 students. The findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores attained by the experimental group and those by the control group in the post writing achievement test in favor of the experimental group. This showed a remarkable improvement in English writing performance of the experimental group students in general and in their writing product skills in particular as compared with the control group students. Moreover, the findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores attained by the experimental group and those by the control group in the process writing questionnaire in favor of the experimental group. Likewise, the findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the writing attitudes scale before and after the experiment in favor of the after administration of the experiment. Additionally, implementing the effect size equation, the study revealed that the weblog project had a large effect size in favor of the experimental group.

Cequena (2013) aimed to examine the effect of blogging (weblogs) on the forty-one freshman college students' writing performance. The researcher followed a descriptive qualitative method to collect the needed data. Three classes or a total of 66 freshman college students from a top university in the Philippines, majoring in Communication Arts and Accountancy participated in the study that ran for more than three months in the first semester of 2012-2013. The classes were taught academic writing in English using weblogs (blogging) in which each student was required to write two major essays, extended definition and argumentative essays, along with other minor essays. Each session ran for one and a half hours with two sessions per week covering 13 weeks or more than three months. Data was gathered from students' weblogs and response logs, students' reflection, writing rubric and interview, and students' final essay. The findings revealed that students' writing skills improved. In addition, the findings showed that blogging helped students improve their writing skills because of their peers' constructive feedback.

Isa (2012) aimed at investigating the effect of using wikis on improving Palestinian ninth graders' English writing skills and their attitudes towards writing. The researcher adopted the experimental method to achieve the purpose of this study. To achieve this aim, the researcher employed a representative sample of 39 students studying at Bureij Prep. Girls School 'A' in the Gaza Strip. The experimental group consisted of 20 students whereas the control one consisted of 19 students. An observation card, a questionnaire and a writing test were used as the tools of the study. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences in

participants' performance before and after implementing wiki project in the favor of the post-performance. The findings also pointed out the presence of significant differences between the attitudes of the experimental group before and after the experiment of utilizing wikis to develop students' writing skills in favor of after experiment. Moreover, the study findings revealed that there were significant differences between the mean scores attained by the experimental group and those by the control group in favor of the experimental group. This was due to the wiki technology.

Al-Sobh & Al-Abed Al-Haq (2012) investigated online linguistic messages of the Jordanian secondary students and their opinions toward a web-based writing Instructional EFL Program (WbWIP). The participants of the study were 61 eleventh scientific grade students in four secondary comprehensive schools, two male schools and two female ones that belong to Irbid Second Directorate of Education. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers designed a Web-based Writing Instructional Program. An observation sheet was used to record the linguistic messages of the students. A 24-item questionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the experiment which lasted for one month (16 normal classes). The results of the study revealed that students used the (WbWIP) had positive opinions towards using the Internet in learning the skill of writing. Moreover, there was interaction among students themselves and between students and teachers which was clear through the messages they sent concerning their linguistic behavior. Moreover, students were motivated and their performance was influenced positively.

Based on the supposition that student's learning and teacher's teaching could be enhanced by technology if used appropriately, Kaur (2011) aimed to look at the benefits of online forums in language learning particularly in improving students' writing and communication skills. The researcher found that well-structured online discussion forum can provide students with extensive practice in writing. In order to offer a successful discussion forum, teachers need to be fully skilled in practical use of the sites and committed to engaging with them, believing in their relevance and benefit for students and willing to spend dedicated time every week on the discussion forum with students. Teine (2000) pointed out that students have been found to be in favor of the self-paced, self-regulated feature of asynchronous discussions compared to face-to-face discussions.

Schuetze (2010) conducted a research in the University of Victoria Canada and the University of Kiel in Germany. The study showed that most students of both universities felt comfortable writing online and they wrote more than ever before. They used the forum more actively than in a face-to-face classroom or chat. In turn, some students also mentioned that they liked to read what other students posted in online forums.

Al-Abed Al-Haq & Al-Sobh (2010) aimed to examine the effectiveness of a web-based writing instructional EFL program (WbWIP) on Jordanian secondary students' performance. The participants were 122 seventeen-year old students in the eleventh scientific grade studying in four secondary comprehensive schools, two male schools and two female ones. To achieve the objectives of the study the researchers used a pre-post achievement test. The experiment lasted for two months (16 normal classes). The results of the study revealed statistically significant

differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the students' mean scores of the overall English writing achievement post-test in favor of the experimental group. The results also revealed that there were statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) due to gender in favor of the female students compared with males. The results further revealed that there was a significant difference at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) among the mean scores of the students' achievement post-test for the discursual component "content" in favor of the experimental group.

Scheetz, (2010) conducted a research in the University of Victoria Canada and the University of Kiel in Germany. The study showed that most students of both universities felt comfortable writing online and they wrote more than ever before. They used the forum more actively than in a face-to-face classroom or chat. In turn, some students also mentioned that they liked to read what other students posted in online forums.

Wooley (2007) examined the effects of web-based peer review on students' writing within an online, asynchronous peer review system. Participants included 114 students selected from 10 sections of a sophomore-level educational psychology course at Midwestern State University. Males composed 46% of the sample ( $n = 53$ ), and females composed 45% of the sample ( $n = 61$ ). The study sought to illuminate distinctions between different types of reviewing and reviewer preparation, namely the effects of feedback elaboration and the effects of providing examples of helpful and unhelpful feedback. Results indicated that students who provided elaborate forms of feedback with free form comments performed significantly better on writing than students who provided numerical ratings only. The results also indicated that review-first groups did not perform better than write-first groups. Using video and text chat discourse gave higher speaking skill results, followed by listening, reading and finally writing skills

Chuo (2007) investigated the effects of the Web Quest Writing Instruction (WQWI) program on Taiwanese EFL learners' writing performance, apprehension and perception of web resource integrated language learning. The participants were college students. One class received traditional learning and the other received the WQWI program. The findings showed that the students in the WQWI class improved their writing performance significantly more than the traditional class. Also the WQWI class showed significant reduction in writing apprehension. Moreover, students had a favorable perception of the WQWI reorganization and more language learning progress through web resources.

Fellner and Apple (2006) utilized student blogs in a CALL program of low-proficiency and low-motivation Japanese university language students during a seven-day English language course in September 2004. The program included computer-based tasks and tasks in the traditional classroom. The researchers described the students' writing gains by the number of words and their frequency level in the students' blogs at the beginning and at the end of the program. The researchers found a 350% increase in the number of the words used in the students' blog entries by the end of the CALL program. Gerbric (2005) in a study among twenty-five Chinese and Kiwi learners encountered that online forums provide opportunities specifically for particular groups of students. Chinese students found the virtual and text-based nature of the medium allowed them to enter discussions more easily and they felt more comfortable with their written responses compared to face-to-face discussions. On the other hand, Martyn (2005) discerned



seven elements of a good online forum: require students to participate ,grade student efforts , involve learning teams , structure discussion, require a hand in assignment , learners use their own experience in posing questions and scenarios and finally, relate the discussion to course objectives.

Al-Jarf (2004) investigated the effect of online learning on struggling ESL college writers. The participants were 113 ESL female freshmen students in two classes at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University enrolled in a writing course. They were divided into two classes: control and experimental. The control group was taught with traditional writing instruction, whereas the experimental was exposed to a combination of traditional and online (web-based) writing. Both groups were pre-tested. Test results showed significant differences between the two groups. The experimental group used an online course from home where they posted their paragraphs, stories, and poems in addition to locating information in sites like “Yahoo Movies”. At the end of the course, both groups were post-tested. ANCOVA results showed significant differences between both groups in favor of the experimental group who were more proficient, made less errors and they could communicate

Taking this literature review into consideration, the following may be inferred:

1-There were some studies that aimed to investigate the effect of using certain forms of technologies such educational blogs, wikis, online learning , web-based Instructional Programs on improving the writing skills and showed strong effect and clear correlation between using these new technologies and developing writing skills such as Mudallal (2013); Cequena (2013); Isa (2012); Al-Sobh & Al-Abed Al-Haq (2012); Wooley (2007); Chuo (2007); Fellner and Apple (2006); Al-Jarf (2004) ; .

2-There were other studies which particularly aimed at discussing the advantages of using forums for pedagogical purposes in general and for English language teaching in particular such as Al-Sharawneh,(2012);Singhal,(1997) ; schuetze,(2010); Callan, (2006); Gerbic (2005); Chinedu,(2008) ; Peterson and Caverly (2006) ; Pavlina (2005) ; Qing Li (2004); Smith (2001).

3-There were studies that aimed at investigating the effect and benefits of using educational blogs on the improvement of writing skills such as Kaur (2011; Schuetze (2010); Aileen Ng (2008); Gerbric (2005).

4-In short, there seems to be a prevailing consensus on the positive impact of using forums in teaching the skills of English language in general and the writing skills in particular.

5-Nevertheless, none of the aforementioned studies was carried out in the Arab World or in Palestine to investigate the effect of forums on English language teaching.

Consequently, the present study comes to fill the gap and to add something to the body of literature in this specific field of technological advancement through investigating the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders’ writing skills in a Palestinian Secondary School.

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This section presents the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. It includes participants of the study, variables, research instruments, procedures, statistical analysis, data collection and data analysis.

### Study design

To meet the nature and the objective of this study which aimed at investigating the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills, the researchers used the quasi - experimental design through a case study method based on a qualitative statistical approach. To achieve these objectives , the researchers used one group chosen from a secondary school .The elements of this design are clarified by the following symbols ( G1 O1 X O2 ) where G1 and O1 stand for a pre - test, X stands for the treatment by using forums for teaching English and O2 stands for the post - test .

### Participants

The population of this study consisted of all eleventh grade female students at Habla Secondary School for girls from literary and science streams. The students whose native language is Arabic has been learning English at school from the first grade when they were six years old. Their English proficiency level, however, was between low and intermediate despite the fact that they have spent 10 years in learning English as a foreign language using the new Palestinian curriculum English for Palestine.

### Sample of the study

The sample of the study consisted of (14) female students who were chosen randomly from the two streams of the eleventh grade at Habla Secondary School for girls in the second semester of the scholastic year 2015/2016 .The students were 16-17 year-old. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the sample of the study.

**Table (1): Distribution of the Study Sample**

Stream	Number	Frequency
Science	8	57.2 %
Literary	6	42.8 %

### Variables of the study

The present study comprised the following variables:

- 1-The independent variables: a- Teaching through English forums; b- the stream (literary versus science stream).
- 2-The dependent variable: The improvement of eleventh graders' writing skills.

### Instrument of the study

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers prepared a pretest –posttest design to measure the students' writing skill before and after participating in the study. The tests was

developed by the two researchers with the help of three teachers who teach the eleventh graders in accordance with the general guidelines and curriculum outcomes of the eleventh grade.

### **Validity of the achievement test**

To ensure the validity of the achievement test, it was given to a jury of specialists in TEFL including two instructors at An-Najah University and three English teachers at Qalqilia Directorate of Education to evaluate the appropriateness of the pretest and posttest passages and to give their own comments and suggestions. Consequently, their suggestions and recommendations were taken into account when designing the final version of the tests.

### **Reliability of the achievement test**

To achieve the test reliability, Cronbach Alpha Formula was used for measuring the internal consistency which was (0.91). This percentage showed that the test was reliable to be used to achieve the objectives of the study.

### **Procedures**

To carry out the present study, the following steps were followed:

- 1-Permission was taken from Qalqilia Directorate of Education to start the study.
- 2- The sample of the study was determined.
- 3- The researchers gave the teacher and the 14 students a training session on how to use the forums in English writing classes.
- 4-The pretest and the posttest were constructed by the teacher and the researchers.
- 5-Validity and reliability were ensured before administering the tests on the sample.
- 6-The participants were firstly given the pretest to measure their achievement in the writing skill.
- 7-The students were taught for two weeks by using the forum which was initiated by the teacher of English at Hablah School with the complete support and coordination with the researchers who trained both the teacher and the students on how to use the forum for posting discussions, reading, responding to posts by other forum members, commenting, adding to the forum and interacting with each other.
- 8- The teacher's key role was to encourage the participating students to actively participate in the forum through adding and exchanging ideas and topics. Meanwhile, the researchers visited the teacher twice to offer help and support.
- 9- The teacher also used to pay great attention to the students' writings and comments in terms of the presentations of grammatical errors, structure, and ideas.
- 10- At the end of the implementation stage, the researchers implemented the post writing achievement test to explore the progress in students' writing performance in general and the improvement in their writing skills in particular after intervention.
- 11-SPSS was used to analyze the collected data from the posttest.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The data for this study were collected from the students' scores on the pretest and posttest after using the forum for two weeks. The collected quantitative data were then analyzed using the SPSS. More specifically, the total average of the posttest and the pretest, Paired sample t-test, Independent T-test were used to obtain the required data and to answer the questions of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls. To achieve this objective, three major questions were raised. This section presents the statistical data that have been analyzed using the SPSS program.

### Results related to the questions of the study

#### Question (1): What is the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls?

To answer this question, students' overall achievement scores on the pretest and posttest were calculated and the results are shown in table (2) below.

**Table (2): Total Average of the Pretest and the Posttest**

Serial	Pretest	Posttest	Average	Differences between the two means
1	5	6	5.5	1
2	4	6	5	2
3	6	8	7	2
4	7	7	7	0
5	8	9	8.5	1
6	7	9	8	2
7	6	7	6.5	1
8	6	8	7	2
9	6	8	7	2
10	7	8	7.5	1
11	7	9	8	2
12	6	7	6.5	1
13	8	9	8.5	1
14	8	9	8.5	1
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.85</b>	<b>7.17</b>	<b>1.36</b>

Table (2) above shows that the total average of students' achievement score on the posttest is higher than the total average of the pretest. This shows that the forums have a positive influence on improving students' writing skills. The total average of the pretest was (6.5) while the total average of the posttest was (7.85) which indicated that the students achieved better results in the posttest. The difference in the two means was 1.36. The results might be due to the fact that online forums have the potential to create a discussion environment where everything that gets posted gets read over and over again, which in turn, makes high-quality discussion (Callan , 2006), and that a good online forum has the potential to establish a friendly open environment, use authentic tasks and topics, emphasize learner-centered instruction , encourage students to give constructive feedback, let students experience, reflect and share the benefit of using threaded discussion (Qing Li , 2004)

These results were in consistent with Alieen Ng (2008); Gerbric (2005) ; Smith (2001) and Callan (2006) who indicated that using online forums facilitate significantly students' academic performance, also it provides students with reinforcement tasks to enable them to practice their writing. Additionally, forums can facilitate collaborative learning.

**Question (2) :Are there any statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of English teaching forums on improving eleventh graders' writing skills in Habla Secondary School for girls due to the test(pretest vs. posttest )?**

To answer this question, the researchers used Paired T-test to investigate the significance of differences according to the two streams on both of the pretest and posttest. The results are shown in table (3) below.

**Table (3): Paired T-Test of the Students' grades due to the type of test**

Test	Mean	S D	df	T	Sig
Pre-Test	6.50	1.16	13	-8.018	0.000
Post-test	7.85	1.09			

Table (3) shows that there were statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of forums for teaching English on improving students' writing skills as a result of the mean differences between the pretest and the posttest was (6.50) for the pretest and (7.85) for the posttest. Such difference indicates that the students achieved progress in writing. Testing this question showed that using forums for improving students' writing skills had a positive influence on the students' achievement in favor of the posttest grades. This result indicates that there was a great influence of using forums for teaching English on improving students' writing skills.

**Question (3) : Are there any statistical significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the influence of forums for teaching English in improving the eleventh graders' writing skills at Habla Secondary Girls School on the pretest due to the stream ?**

To answer this question, the researchers used Independent T-test to examine the significance of mean differences of the pretest with regard to the stream (literary and science). The results are shown in Table (4) below.

**Table (4) Independent T-Test for the Pretest Scores Due to the Stream.**

Stream	Mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	(t)	Sig
Scientific	6.6250	.91613	12	.451	.660
Literary	6.3333	1.50555			

Table (4) shows that there were no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the influence of forums on improving the eleventh graders' writing skills at Habla Secondary School on the pretest due to the stream. These results might be attributed to the fact that the two streams have the same curriculum, same tasks, same activities and also the same teacher who used to help them to develop their English language skills. This result indicates that all students regardless of their stream can benefit from using the forums to develop their writing skills.

**Question (4): Are there any statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the influence of forums for teaching English on improving the eleventh graders' writing skills at Habla Secondary School on the posttest due to the stream variable ?**

In order to answer this question, the Independent T-test was used to examine the significance of mean differences of the posttest with regard to the stream (literary and scientific). Table (5) below shows the results of this test.

**Table (5) Independent T-Test for the Posttest Scores Due to Stream.**

Stream	Mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	(t)	Sig
Scientific	8.1250	.83452	12	1.057	.311
Literary	7.5000	1.37840			

Table (5) shows that there were no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the influence of English language forums on improving the eleventh graders' writing skills at Habla Secondary School on the posttest due to the stream. The researchers attributed these results to the equivalence between the two streams in the pretest, also they had the same treatment by using the forums which might be a reason for having no statistical differences between the two streams on the posttest.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study provided strong evidence that the use of English teaching forums as a teaching and learning tool support the process of writing and result in achieving better results in students' writing performance than the traditional method does. The results also showed that there were no statistical significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the use of forums for teaching English on improving students' writing skills due to stream variable. The researchers believe that the improvement of the students' writing skills may be attributed to the utilization of English teaching forums which provided the participating students with the opportunity to have extensive practice in writing where they could write, post topics, add texts, images and audio and video scripts, provide relevant links, interact with the teacher and readers by making comments or entries, and respond to posts by other forum members. Such benefits were obvious enough to agree with Chinedu (2008) who points out that by participating in online forums, access to knowledge is free and the forum members could willingly share their wealth of knowledge and experience with other members.

### Pedagogical implications

Based on the results of the study, the following pedagogical implications can be drawn:

- 1- The forums could be a useful tool for teaching the writing skill.
- 2- EFL teachers should be trained on how to use the forums for supplementary activities and tasks that can be carried out outside the classroom.
- 3- The Palestinian Ministry of Education should have policies to train both teachers and students to use the forums for teaching English and other possible subjects.

4-EFL teachers should be given incentives to encourage them to consider integrating online forums into their language teaching to develop students' writing and communication skills.

5-Teachers should bear the responsibility and the inner motivation to be willing to spend dedicated time every week on the discussion forum with students.

6-Decision makers should organize training sessions and workshops for discussing the effectiveness of using forums on improving the students' writing skills.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the results of the study, the researchers suggest the following recommendations:

1-Further research studies are recommended to investigate the effectiveness of using English teaching forums on the other English language skills (listening, speaking and reading).

2. A similar study should be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using English teaching forums on other graders and streams in other parts of Palestine.

3. A similar study should be conducted at the university level especially with the courses Writing 1 and Writing 2.

4-Further research studies are recommended to investigate difficulties facing teachers and students when using English teaching forums.

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