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The Effect of Computer Chatting on Developing Tenth Graders' Reading and Writing Skills

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effect of the chatting technique in the development of tenth grade students' reading and writing skills in English language. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researchers employed chatting software (Vypress Chat) to examine the effect of using the chatting as a new mode to develop the reading and writing skills. The sample consisted of (40) male students. It was divided equally into two groups (experimental and control). The researchers developed an achievement test to assess the general language proficiency of the students in terms of their reading and writing skills. The treatment lasted for (20) sessions that aimed at teaching the experimental group through the chatting technique in the language laboratory. On the other hand, the control group learned the same material via the traditional method in the classroom.

The findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the achievement of the experimental and the control group in the reading skill in favor of the experimental group which taught via the chatting technique. There were statistically significant differences between the achievement of the experimental and the control group in the writing skill in favor of the experimental group which taught via the chatting technique. There were statistically significant differences at in overall tenth graders' achievement between the two teaching methods (the chatting technique and the traditional method). In the light of the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that the chatting technique should be introduced as a major tool for teaching reading and writing skills.

Keywords: computer chatting, reading and writing skills, tenth graders, English language.

اثر استخدام دردشة الحاسوب على تطوير مهارات القراءة والكتابة لدى تلاميذ الصف العاشر

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الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أثر طريقة الدردشة في تنمية مهارتي القراءة والكتابة لطلبة الصف العاشر في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف استخدم الباحثان برنامج الدردشة (Vypress Chat) لبيان اثر استخدام مثل تلك الطريقة الجديدة في تنمية هذه المهارات. قام الباحثان باختيار عينة قصدية تكونت من (٤٠) طالبا تم توزيعهم عشوائيا إلى مجموعتين (المجموعة الضابطة ٢٠ طالبا والمجموعة التجريبية ٢٠ طالبا). واستمر التدريب إلى (٢٠) جلسة خلال أربعة أسابيع هدفت إلى تدريس المجموعة التجريبية باستخدام طريقة الدردشة في مختبر الحاسوب، بينما تم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة المادة نفسها باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية في الغرفة الصفية. هذا وقد أشارت نتائج الدراسة:

١. هناك أثر ذو دلالة إحصائية في تحصيل طلبة المجموعة التجريبية الذين يدرسون مهارة القراءة باستخدام طريقة الدردشة مقارنة بتحصيل طلبة المجموعة الضابطة الذين يدرسون بالطريقة التقليدية.
 ٢. هناك أثر ذو دلالة إحصائية في تحصيل طلبة المجموعة التجريبية الذين يدرسون مهارة الكتابة باستخدام طريقة الدردشة مقارنة بتحصيل طلبة المجموعة الضابطة الذين يدرسون بالطريقة التقليدية.
 ٣. توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في التحصيل الكلي (القراءة والكتابة) لطلبة المجموعة التجريبية الذين يدرسون بطريقة الدردشة مقارنة بالتحصيل الكلي (القراءة والكتابة) لطلبة المجموعة الضابطة الذين يدرسون بالطريقة التقليدية.
- وفي ضوء تلك النتائج أوصى الباحثان بالتوصيات بضرورة استخدام طريقة الدردشة كأداة رئيسة في تعليم مهارتي القراءة والكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: دردشة الحاسوب، مهارات القراءة والكتابة، تلاميذ الصف العاشر، اللغة الإنجليزية.

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Introduction

The central focus of this study is to look at legitimacy of using computer «chatting» for textual study in the subject of English and to understand the value that a non- traditional form of teaching the reading and writing skills can have in enhancing student learning and enjoyment. The present study argues that when students are engaged in chatting study, that is pleasurable, learning outcomes can be enhanced.

The current research represents an inquiry which was a global one related to how learner-centered classes offer the promise of a more effective method to integrating information technology «chatting» in teaching and learning than still often dominant teacher-centered classes (Hamzeh, 2000). The present study tends to be experimental with the aim of maximizing the instructional potential of using the internet chatting in teaching reading and writing. In this examination of computer-supported classroom, the «chatting» method was administered for tenth grade students in Dhiban School on the first semester of the scholastic year 2005/2006 by their current English teacher. The students (experimental group) undertook eight curriculum units which used the teacher's guide frame work of instruction. The lessons (for the experimental group) took place in the computer laboratory which had already been connected by LAN (Local Area Network) software named Vypress. The same teaching material was taught to other tenth graders (the control group) where lessons took place in the classroom setting.

Developing the skills of reading and writing is the subject of the present research. One way to teach these significance skills of reading and writing as being integrated may be through introducing such skills in advanced

techniques of chatting. When students use a certain chat programme, they practice the reading and writing skills. They receive a message which needs to be read then a response which needs to be written. This enables students to practice reading and writing skills with enjoyment, which in turn will motivate the teaching /learning process of the two skills.

However it will be worthwhile to determine exactly what is meant by reading as well as writing. Reading is defined by Staiger (1973:p. 15) as:

“Reading is a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author becomes meaning in the mind of the reader”.

However, writing is defined by Ministry of Education (MoE) (1984) as the production of graphic symbols as speech is the production of sounds. But these symbols must be arranged in a way to form sentences and these sentences must be arranged in a particular order and linked in a certain ways to form a sequence of sentences that have a coherent whole. It requires mental effort in the building of the sentences and the ways of combining and arranging them in order to be meaningful and communicative. According to the MoE in Jordan, writing should be taught with the ultimate purpose of providing students with the ability to use the writing skill in their further education, career, and daily life.

According to the researchers’ knowledge many studies on internet have been conducted; yet there is not any previous research as incorporating chatting in teaching both of reading and writing skills in the same nature and components of the presents study. However, the components of the present study were compared to somewhat similar ones.

Jepson (2006) explored the patterns of repair moves in synchronous non-native speaker text chat rooms in comparison with voice chat rooms on the internet. The number of participants in his study was set by the number of non-native speakers who actively participated in the random chat sessions sampled-averaging six in the text chats and three in the voice chats. Significant differences were found between the higher number of total repair moves made in voice chats and the smaller number in text chats. Qualitative data analysis showed that repair work in voice chats was often pronunciation-related.

Odeh (2004) investigated the effect of a training program based on

modern technology (the internet) on the learning styles of Jordanian secondary school students. The study sample consisted of (40) female students. It was divided equally into two groups, an experimental group and a control one. The researchers carried out a pre-test (see appendix) on both groups in order to compare their initial learning styles. On a completion of the program, a post-test (see appendix) was applied to both groups. Results of the training program showed a superiority of the members of the experimental group.

Kung (2004) carried out synchronous electronic discussions in an EFL (English as a Foreign language) reading class. The study sought to contribute to a better understanding of how EFL students chat on line through qualitative analysis of the output that they produce. The sample of the study was 47 students (7 male, 40 female) majoring in English at a college of languages in Taiwan. The results of the study showed a large number of misspelled words, usage mistakes, and grammatical errors. The majority of the students' writing consisted of sentence fragments. Another prominent feature of the students' output was an almost exclusive use of the target language. Also, after the data analyzed students do perform a variety of interactional speech acts. They greeted each other, asked questions, requested clarifications, expanded on topics, agreed and disagreed with their interlocutors, negotiated duties, and took leave. Students were also found to take on many of the roles usually played by the teacher in face-to-face interactions.

Ojaili (2002) questioned the impact of using the internet (as apposed to using the traditional method) on teaching idioms to EFL students at Yarmouk University. The sample consisted of 30 students divided into two groups. The control group consisted of 16 students taught in a traditional classroom, while the experimental group consisted of 14 subjects taught at an internet laboratory. The question of the study was "Is there a significant difference between the retention of the students studying idioms in a traditional way and that of those studying the same materials through the internet?" The results of the experiment showed that there was a significant difference between the retention of the experimental group and that of the control group in spite of the fact that they were both chosen randomly and taught by the same instructor using two different methods. The difference

was in favor of the experimental group and was attributed to the use of the internet in teaching the idioms in question.

Kung and Chuo (2002) investigated the potential role of EFL websites as a means to supplement in-class instruction. It evaluated a programme in which forty-nine students enrolled in a high-beginner EFL class were introduced to five websites and instructed to use them for a homework assignment and for self-study. Data collected revealed that despite some difficulties encountered, students had overall positive attitudes towards using the teacher-selected websites in their learning of English. The students found that learning English through ESL/EFL websites was interesting and that the teaching strategies used by the teachers were effective and necessary. The results of their study affirmed that students consider the Internet a useful tool to supplement in-class instruction. The students deemed it appropriate to learn English through teacher-recommended ESL websites.

Kasper (2002) reported that through internet chatting, students have extensively opportunity to read materials in numerous contexts where meaningful written communication and analysis issued. Internet chatting creates, to Kasper (2002), a highly motivating learning environment that encourages ESL students to interact with language in new and varied ways, where, their academic literacy, necessary for a successful school experience is refined and developed.

Sierra (1999) pointed out that the internet chatting offers new opportunities for real interaction, students can work with speakers in any corner of the world, mainly with speakers from developed countries. Sierra, moreover, demonstrated that instructional media tends to be motivating type of task for students which enable them to establish real interpersonal relations, although somewhat virtual, and thereby increasing their interest.

Moreover, Belisle (1996) believed that when students communicate with each other using internet e-mail, their audience tends to focus almost entirely on the message itself and much less on the form, grammar, spelling, mechanics, etc. Belisle maintained that by using computers, students become better problem solvers and better communicators. Over a network, using e-mail and chatrooms, students have the chance to collaborate and work together with other classmates, peers, and teachers. Belisle (1996),

also, reported that networking frees them from the limitations of traditional writing tools that often inhibit and restrict writing processes. Learning is then transformed from a traditional passive exercise to an experience of discovery, exploration, and excitement. To Belisle, Students tend to realize their full potential when they are empowered to contribute and collaborate as a team to accomplish their writing tasks more effectively.

The present study is similar to the previously reviewed studies in detecting whether internet has an effect on language learning. All the studies concluded that internet have positive effect on language learning, which is on line with the assumptions of this research. Most of the studies about the use of internet for educational purposes in the Arab world as well as in Jordan are very limited. The current study, however, highlights the effect, if any, of using internet chatting in teaching second language reading and writing skills.

The Problem

The goal of the present study was to present, as well as, to evaluate the significance of language learning through interacting the skills of reading and writing online. Consequently, the researchers orchestrated instructional conversations where the subjects of the study (tenth graders) could meet to discuss questions, share drafts for peer review, communicate via e-mail and participate in discussions in a chat room.

As internet revolutionizing education, such development is exciting for teachers of English as a foreign language in that it offers greatly expanded opportunities for authentic communications beyond the walls of the traditional classroom. And authentic communication is crucial in language acquisition. In the present study, the researchers makes use of chatting to capture, motivate and anchor learner attention to, and render comprehension. Finally, the study comes as a response towards recent tendencies by the Ministry of Education for highlighting the crucial role of information technology and communication in the classroom.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study is to investigate the means and the extent to which the use of chatting contributes to the development of learner-

centered environment where learners may improve their reading as well as writing skills.

However, the study was chosen on the basis of the orientation established by the Ministry of Education for educational reform in Jordan. The Ministry provided schools with enviable access to computers, Internet, financial support and training to develop the technological infrastructure which will place Jordan to the fore in the region. The study, as to the researchers' knowledge, appears to be the first study to investigate internet chatting in teaching reading and writing skills in Jordan.

Since technological advances have brought about the ever-increasing utilization of computer-assisted language learning, it is hoped that, the results of the study may give insights to educators in the Ministry of Education, syllabus designers, and teachers of English as foreign language (EFL) where they may improve and fit Internet into teaching English skills. The study may motivate other researchers to investigate the same field with different variables to unravel some obstacles which hinder learning English language.

Question of the Study

This study, accordingly, tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the achievement of the experimental group (chatting technique) and the control group (traditional method) in the reading skill?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the achievement of the experimental group (chatting technique) and the control group (traditional method) in the writing skill?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) in overall tenth graders' achievement between the two teaching methods; (the chatting technique and the traditional method)?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are employed in the current study with the following implications.

Chatting Approach: the approach that is used in the internet laboratory by

the researchers where a chatting program is used for teaching both reading and writing skills.

Vypress Chat: a chatting software cited (<http://vypress.com/buy/>) from the internet. By which students interact in the computer lab.

Local Area Network (LAN): is a group of computers and associated devices that share a common communications line or wireless link and typically share the resources of a single processor or server within a small geographic area.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC): A technology for setting up a personal chat-room with contacts in schools. That is possible to set up a certain chat-room using (IRC) with that school. In this way, the teacher can be sure with whom students are chatting with.

Control group: the group taught in the classroom according to the procedures of the teachers' guide book, where tools such as, chalkboard, cassette, pictures, student's book are used.

Experimental group: The group taught at the internet laboratory according to chatting software (Vypress Chat), where students interact with each other under the supervision of the teacher.

Virtual learning: the use of the internet chatting as a tool for teaching and learning and to assist classroom teachers in locating internet resources for instruction. It provides resources that classroom teachers can use to support instruction-based internet.

The traditional approach: the approach that is used in the classroom where the teacher follows the suggested procedures of the teacher' guide book in the teaching/learning process.

Methodology and Procedures

The present study aims at finding out what effect, if any, a chatting method, consisting of tenth graders' selected reading passages on developing student's reading comprehension together with their writing skill. Thus, an exploration of the design and methodology in terms of the study's population, sample, instrument, instructional material, the chatting method, and statistical design is needed.

The Population and Sample

The population of study consisted of (303) tenth grade students in all-male public schools in Dhiban Directorate of Education in Jordan during the first semester of the scholastic year 2005/2006. The student's English language proficiency level may be referred to as low, according to results obtained by the pre-test (see appendix).

The sample of the study consisted of 40 tenth grade students. The procedure used in the selection of the sample was as follows:

- 1- One section was divided into two groups and was purposefully selected for participation in the study, with twenty students in each one. One section was chosen as the experimental (randomly) and the other as the control.
- 2- Forty students in the two selected sections were administered a pr-test (see appendix) to assess their general language proficiency in the light of their reading and writing abilities.
- 3- The experimental group was to learn the selected reading passages through the chatting method in the computer laboratory. On the other hand, the control group was to learn the same reading passages through the traditional method in the classroom.

The Instruments

To successfully conduct the study, the following instruments were adopted:

- 1- Eight reading comprehension passages were taken from the English textbook *Jordan Opportunities* (by Harris, Mower and Sikorzynska, 2005 a) assigned for the tenth grade.
- 2- A reading and writing comprehension test (see appendix) was developed by the researchers in order to assess the subjects' reading and writing skills prior and after the experiment. The test (see appendix) consisted of a set of questions which reflected the level of Knowledge; while there was another set of questions that reflected the level of comprehension; and a final set of questions which reflected the level of application.
- 3- "Vypress chat", which is a chatting software whose features are easy-to-be used format for text-based conferences and discussions was installed into the LAN (Local Area Network) Vypress Chat does not require an internet connection or a dedicated server to support discussions. This

software allows all users to have equal access to the application's tools and functions. Accordingly, all students in the experimental group were able to communicate, interact and discuss the reading passages.

The Validity and Reliability

The instrument (i.e. the test) was subjected to judgment and piloting. The test was validated by a jury of English language specialists. The jury of judges was formed as follows:

- 1- Five experienced university professors in TEFL.
- 2- Three English language supervisors.
- 3- Five English language teachers.
- 4- Two evaluation and assessment university professors.

The team was asked to validate the content of the test concerning its instructions and suitability, to the objectives of the research. The team comments and suggestions were studied carefully, and the necessary modifications were made accordingly.

The test reliability was obtained through the split-half method on a pilot group of 40 students, who were randomly chosen from the population of the study. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.80 which was considered to be appropriate to conduct the current study.

The context for the research was an experimental for intermediate-level (tenth graders) in Dhiban Secondary School. To answer the research questions, a preliminary t-test was conducted to test the equality of the two groups (namely, the control and the experimental groups). Then descriptive statistics were used to describe the properties of the variables (i.e. dependant and independent variables) in terms of means and standard deviations. Depending on the results of the t-test, the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the significance of the difference between the post-test means for both groups (i.e. the control and the experimental groups).

Study Procedures

The experiment took four weeks in the first semester of the scholastic year 2005/2006. A pre- test was given to the students in order to see the level of the students before the treatment.

Throughout the four weeks, the same teacher taught the experimental group the reading passages obtained from Jordan Opportunity (by Harris et al, 2005 a) through using the chatting method in the computer laboratory. The control group, however, was taught the same reading passages by one of the researchers (currently an English teacher) who followed the procedures in the teacher's guide (Harris, Mower and Sikorzynska, 2005 b). By the end of the four weeks, all students were tested again at the end of the experiment by means of a post-test which was originally used as a pre-test.

The control group was taught in the classroom by the teacher in the light of the traditional method suggested by the Teacher's guide (Harris, Mower and Sikorzynska, 2005 b). It entails the following:

- 1- Before reading the text with the class, the teacher tries to get students to tell what they know about the subject of the text.
- 2- The teacher asks students to look at the title of the text and asks them to guess what the text is about.
- 3- The teacher may use the pictures, if there are, that illustrate the text.
- 4- The teacher asks students different types of questions at different intervals of students' reading of the text. Questions before students start reading of the text (pre- reading questions), questions while students read the text (while- reading questions), and questions after students finish reading the text (post- reading questions). Pre-reading questions invite students to predict what are they going to read about? Or to scan the text for a single piece of information, while-reading questions make students think of what they read. Post-reading questions give students the chance to look at main points in detail throughout the text in a way that may relate it to their own daily lives.
- 5- Through the lesson, students are always asked to read the text silently and on their own.
- 6- The teacher gives the meaning of vocabularies that are essential for understanding only, before the process of reading is initiated. Other vocabularies, however, are inferred by the students while they read.

Regarding teaching writing, the teacher's guide (Harris, Mower and Sikorzynska, 2005 b) illustrated different types of controlled writing which are suitable for most students for tenth graders. Types of controlled

writing include: filling- in sentences, answering comprehension questions, completing charts or tables, completing a certain dialogue, writing parallel sentences or parallel paragraphs.

The experimental group was taught by the same teacher in the computer laboratory in the light of the suggested method by the research (i.e. the chatting method) for teaching reading as well as writing skills. Vypress Chat (software) was downloaded into the LAN (Local Area Network) where students were able to chat about the selected reading passage.

Being tenth graders, the students know how to use the computer as a system of processing information. Yet, they had no idea how to use the chatting software. So, the first week of the experiment was dedicated to make sure that all students can use the chatting software (Vypress Chat) fully. The chatting software adopted in the present study was cited from (<http://vypress.com/buy/>). However, the chatting method entailed the following stages:

1. The students were asked to prepare the text in advance.
2. Each student had access to one computer and was unlikely to be within earshot of any of his partners.
3. They were given discussion questions based on texts.
4. The chatting method replaced the oral discussions that the students were used to doing.
5. Students were asked to participate in an electronic discussions during each reading and writing lesson.
6. The students were told to discuss the discussion questions electronically for one 45-minute lesson period, the transcripts were saved by the software to the teacher.

When students started chatting, they saw a screen displaying the on-going conversation with each contribution starting on a new line. At the bottom of the screen, there was a text box where the students could type a new message and send it after clicking on a “send” button. The students could choose pen colours, pictures, and each student chose different one in order to differentiate his own contributions. Unlike many situations on the internet, where users use nicknames and other participant might not know the real name or gender of their interlocutors, every participant in the present study knew who they were addressing.

Study Results

The current study examined the provision of the chatting method that allows learners to interact in virtual rooms without engaging in face-to-face contact in order to develop the skills of tenth graders' reading and writing. This section presents the findings of statistical analyses of the data gathered to answer the questions of the study and the discussions.

To increase the precision of the experiment, students responded to a pre-test which measured their command of reading as well as writing skills. To start with, Table (1) shows the means and standard deviation for the pre-test for both groups (namely; the control group and the experimental group) in terms of the subjects' achievement of reading and writing skills at the significance level where $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 1
Results of the Pre-Test

Group	Skill	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number
Experimental	Reading	11.65	6.037	20
	Writing	10.25	4.351	20
	Total	21.90	9.380	20
Control	Reading	9.55	2.856	20
	Writing	9.25	3.810	20
	Total	18.80	5.146	20

It is apparent from Table (1), above, that there are slight differences between the two means of both of the control and the experimental groups (means: 18.80; and 21.90 respectively), in order to sort out this difference in terms of statistical significance, t-test was employed. The test results, however, are shown below in Table (2).

Table 2
T-test for Equality of Means

	T	DF	Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences
Total	1.296	38	3.10	2.392
Pre-Test			3.10	2.392

* Significance at $\alpha = 0.203$

Table (2) displays that the difference between the achievement of both groups on the pre-test is not statistically significant at the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Accordingly, T-value (1.269) which is greater than 0.05 (the significance level) is indicative of the equality of the two groups.

Results Related to Question One

To review, the present study sought to answer a set of questions, one of which is:

Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the achievement of the experimental group (chatting technique) and the control group (traditional method) in the reading skill?

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test the significance of differences between the experimental group who studied eight selected reading passages via the chatting method in the computer lab and that of the control group which studied the same material in the classroom via the traditional method. Yet firstly, it is highly important to see the means and standard deviations of the two groups in order to be able to describe the variables fully. The following table, table (3), below represents the means and standards deviations of the experimental and control groups' achievement in the reading comprehension test.

Table 3
Post- Test Results of the Reading Comprehension Skill

Group	Mean	St. Deviation	number
Experimental	28.75	5.33	20
Control	21.40	4.13	20
Total	25.08	6.00	40

From table 3, it was clear that the experimental group who studied the reading skill via the chatting method in the laboratory achieved higher scores in the post test than that of the control group who were taught according to the traditional method in the classroom. Mean and standard deviation scores were (28.75; 5.33) for the experimental group who used the chatting method as suggested by the present research in studying the selected reading passages. While mean and standard deviation scores were

(21.40; 4.13) for the control group who studied the same reading material according to the traditional method as suggested by the teacher's guide by Harris et al. (2005 b).

After describing the variables, it was essential to find out whether or not these differences were significant. Thus, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out. The results of the analysis are shown in Table (4).

Table 4
Results of ANCOVA Test of the Reading Skill

Source of Variance	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	P	Sig.
PRE	16.388	1	16.388	0.715	.403
Group	473.512	1	473.512	20.656	*0.000
Error	848.162	37	22.923		
Total	1404.775	39			

Significance $\alpha = 0.05$

As indicated by (Table 4), there are statistically significant differences of the groups where ($F=20.656$) of the group variable in terms of reading skill achievement. The Table, also, illustrates that the significance of ($P= 0.000$) which is less than the level of the significance ($\alpha =0.05$) and indicative as well. The difference was in favor of the group who studied reading via the chatting method in the computer laboratory.

Results Related to Question Number Two

However, the second question of the present study was: Are there any statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the achievement of the experimental group (chatting technique) and the control group (traditional method) in the writing skill?

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to assess the significance of differences between the experimental group who studied writing via the chatting method and that of the control group who studied writing through the traditional method. Table (5) below, describes means as well as the standards deviations of the two groups' (experimental and control) achievement.

Table 5
Post- Test Results of the Writing Skill

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number
Experimental	23.90	7.91	20
Control	17.80	8.85	20
Total	20.85	8.84	40

Obviously, the above Table illustrate the fact that the experimental group, who studied writing via the chatting method, achieved higher scores in the post-test more than that of the control group, who were taught according the traditional method. Mean and standard deviation scores were (23.90; 7.91) for the experimental group who used chatting in teaching writing in the computer laboratory. While mean and standard deviation scores were (17.80; 8.85) for the control group, who was taught according to the traditional method in the classroom. This supports the argument carried out by the researchers at the outset of the research where the chatting method was perceived as effective.

In order to find out whether these differences were significant or not, the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out further. The results of the analysis however, are shown in Table (6).

Table 6
Results of ANCOVA Test of the Writing Skill

Source of Variance	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	P	Sig.
PRE	830.531	1	830.531	16.624	.000
Group	241.893	1	241.893	4.842	*.034
Error	1848.469	37	49.959		
Total	3051.100	39			

* Significance $\alpha = 0.05$

From Table (6), there are statistically significant differences between the two groups where ($F = 4.842$). That is, there is a difference in the achievement of both groups in terms of the writing skill. The table, also, illustrates that the significance of ($P = 0.034$), which is less than the level of the significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). The difference, however, was in favor of the group who studied writing via the chatting method.

Results Related to Question Number Three

To end with, the last question of the present study was: Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) in overall tenth graders' achievement between the two teaching methods (namely the chatting method and that of the traditional one)?

Table (7) displays the mean scores and standards deviations for the experimental and control groups' total achievement in terms of the skills of reading as well as writing.

Table 7
Post- Test Results of Reading and Writing Skills

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number
Experimental	52.65	10.6	20
Control	39.20	10.78	20
Total	45.92	12.56	40

In the table above, it is evident that the experimental group who studied reading and writing via chatting method achieved higher mean scores in the post-test than that of the control group who were taught according to the traditional method. Mean and standard deviation scores were (52.65; 10.6) for the experimental group, while scores were (39.20; 10.78 respectively) for the control group. This indicates the effectiveness of the chatting method.

In order to sort out the significance of these differences, the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out further. The results, however, of the analysis are shown in Table (8).

Table 8
Results of ANCOVA Test of the Reading and Writing Skills

Source of Variance	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	P	Sig.
PRE	1230.723	1	1230.723	14.6	.000
Group	1183.813	1	1183.813	14.043	*0.001
Error	3119.027	37	84.298		
Total	6158.77	39			

* Significance $\alpha = 0.05$

As shown in Table (8), there are statistically significant differences

between the two groups where $F (14.043)$. That is, there is a difference in the achievement of both groups in terms of the total achievement in reading and writing skills. The table also illustrates that the significance of ($P=0.001$) which is less than the level of the significance ($\alpha =0.05$). The difference was in favor of the overall achievement of the experimental group who studied reading and writing skills via the chatting method.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of teaching tenth graders the skills of reading and writing through the chatting method in computer laboratory as apposed to that of the traditional method as suggested by the Teacher's Guide (2005) in the classroom in the first semester of the scholastic year 2005/2006. However, the chatting method was built-up against a background of research on EFL literature viewed as effective for enhancing comprehension of written discourse (Heift, & Catherine, 2000).

The study showed positive performance of the experimental group on a test of reading comprehension as integrated with writing (there were no prior differences between the two groups at the start of the experiment before the treatment). The present study, however, indicated that such positive performance was correlated significantly with the chatting method. The training was carried out in twenty sessions of 45 minutes each, over a four week period.

To begin with, assuming that the test reflects validity and reliability well, it may be stated that the chatting method utilizing the computer laboratory did result in improving reading comprehension as well as writing skill of students learning by chatting as compared to students who learn without chatting. Generally speaking, integrating computers in the process of teaching and learning tend to cue the deficits in comprehension (Martín, 2003)

A t-test was used to check the equivalency between the two groups with regard to their achievement in reading and writing skills. Results revealed no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$). This may be interpreted in the light of the fact that the two groups were taught last year by the same teacher who is teaching them this year in the same school. This may be the reason

for the equivalence between them.

Another possible explanation of the results obtained by the first question of the study is due to students' attitude. The students, as Arekat (2003) stated, had positive attitudes toward using internet chatting for reading, especially when it is the first time ever they have used chatting as an instructional tool. The new reading tool (chatting) tended to motivate the participating students of the study to be more involved in such an experience, which consequently affected their performance positively. The same result is in line with the research findings of Arekat (2003) where she revealed that students have positive attitudes towards using the Internet in education.

High scores of the chatting group could be interpreted on the basis of the fact that the reading and writing skills were presented with multimedia (pictures, animation, sounds and colours). This might have motivated them. In contrast, the control group, texts were presented through the typical textbook pictures. Singhal (1997) supported the earlier interpretation. In this respect, Singhal believed that the use of multimedia elements, such as sound, video, and interactive hypermedia have a lot of advantages in the process of teaching/learning which are supported by the internet.

The current study illustrates evidence for the effectiveness of the chatting method in teaching the writing skill as apposed to that of the traditional method. This may be interpreted on several grounds.

One possible explanation is that teaching writing according to the traditional view emphasizes correct sentence, structures, and the mechanics of writing such as spelling and punctuation. Internet chatting, as a writing tool in the present study, tends to help students to write better texts without being worried about spelling or punctuation marks. Because, as to Belisle (1996), most of computer- word processing programs contain spelling and grammar checkers, such features encourage students to write more where their anxiety toward writing is reduced to the minimal.

A second possible explanation is that the experimental group was provided with multimedia (pictures, pen colours and sounds) through using the programme that might motivate the participating students to learn writing via the chatting method. Since students in the control group usually generate more content electronically than with traditional pen-and-pencil methods. Singhal (1997) supported the above viewpoint. He proposed

that the interactive and multimedia capabilities of the computer made it an attractive teaching/learning tool. Computers can provide immediate feedback to students and students can work at an individualized pace. Software can be designed to include sound, graphics, video, and animation. Moreover, when information is presented in a non-linear sequence enabling learners to select the exercises or concepts they wish to review.

A third possible explanation of the effectiveness of chatting in enhancing the tenth graders' writing skill is the fact that it is good for different groups of people, especially the weak and the shy. This view is consistent with Belisle's (1996) findings. Also, Lee (1998) pointed out that collaboration among students makes learning easier for the shy student to ask his group mates about difficult issues.

A fourth possible explanation for the effectiveness of using the chatting method as an instructional tool is the attractive environment internet chatting tend to provide. When discussions were held in the classroom, a small number of active students participate during the lesson. In the present study, however, all students participated equally at the same level. Tudini (2003) maintained that extensive analysis of transcripts from chat sessions supported the viewpoint above. He indicated that higher levels of student-to-student exchange occurred in the computer session than in the teacher-centered face-to-face session. He also found more equal and increased student participation in electronic discussions when compared with face-to-face discussion

The overall findings of the current study reported the effectiveness of the chatting method in enhancing the reading and writing skills. Since there are no studies investigating reading and writing instruction through internet chatting of the same nature and components of the present study, the results of the study were compared to somewhat similar experiments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1- Adopting and practicing the teaching of chatting method in Jordanian reading and writing classes.
- 2- Conducting further studies on the effect of using internet chatting on

the teaching of L2 reading comprehension on the reading performance of Jordanian students.

3- Carrying out studies on the effect of using internet chatting on students' reading and writing skills using World Wide Web (WWW).

4- Investigating the effect of using chatting on other language skills.

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