The Effectiveness of STOP and DARE in Planning and Drafting Argumentative Writing: A case of Saudi College Level Students

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Abstract
Changing social dynamics have influenced writing a lot and learning and teaching process has also evolved greatly in terms of its theoretical as well as practical aspects. EFL learners in Saudi context behave very much differently to the writing tasks as English is introduced at a later stage in school education. Consequently, learners face a lot of challenges in responding positively to the methods and strategies implemented at the college level. The courses are intensive but failed to achieve the desired outcomes at the end of the program. A sample of work from 20 second year bachelor level students is taken to check the validity STOP and DARE strategy in improving students' writing skills and also to see how the learners respond to this method. Teaching of argumentative writing is a part of their mother tongue teaching of which they are conceptually aware of but how do they respond in EFL learning is of interest to this present study.

Key words: Arab EFL learners, argumentative, SRSD, writing

1. Introduction

The recent studies and their findings suggest that, even if we aren't getting any worse, we aren't doing as much as we could to provide students with the best writing instructions. Writing skill is difficult to master as it combines thought, feeling, and social interactions to be able to completely express oneself using linguistic cues (Perin, 2013) and demands "cognitive analysis and linguistics synthesis"(Seitova, 2016). However, the skill of writing in English, particularly the argumentative type, presents as an obstruction for Arab L2 learners in general (Ahmed, 2010; Doushaq, 1986), and Saudi students in particular (Ali Al-Khairy, 2013; Alrabai, 2014, 2016; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Grami, 2010; Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). One reason to such weakness is due to the different cultures background between L1 and L2. Ferris (1994) examined 60 argumentative papers for undergraduate student half of them are native speakers and the other half are non-native speakers. The results of the study revealed clear differences between the two groups regarding the length of writing, and the use of counterarguments (Ferris, 1994). Ferris (1994) indicated that her ESL students in writing is the result of poor composing ability rather than inadequate proficiency in language in general (Ferris, 1994). Another explaining is related the difference between native and non-native argumentative writing to the contrast between rhetorical traditions such Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist and English language which is based on "Aristotelian notions of directness, justification, and proof" (Hinkel, 1997).

In the same regard, Chinese writers demonstrate epistemological and dialogical emphases and highlights the need to use analogies comparing to American writers (Liu, 2005). Though that the Western influence considered powerful and in the past century and explain the similarities between the Chinese and English rhetorical conventions, the Marxist philosophy is still the dominant philosophy in China and explain its contrast from English culture (Liu, 2005). The influence of cultures on writing has a strong impact on the Persian argumentative writing where the Iranian writers use various indirectness modes of expression since they prefer to avoid refutation and direct arguments (Biria & Yakhabi, 2013).

The argumentative writing between Arabic and English does not go far from this dissimilarity where the former tends to use the Thorough-Argumentation and the latter prefer the Counter-Argumentation style (Hatim, 1997). In the Thorough-Argumentation style the writer usually imply to the opponent's claim and avoid the direct addressing to his argument. Hatim (1997) addresses the Arabic argumentative writing as: thesis-substantiation-conclusion while the English prefers to address the opponents directly: thesis- opponents-substantiation- conclusion. In Arabic the use of the through-argumentation to solidarity, politeness, and face-saving as factors of preference of this style (Hatim, 1990).

This may explain the difficulty for L2 learners when they write in the target language because when write in a L2 context, L2 learners evokes the L1 as a framework for their writing (Connor, 1987; Kaplan, 1966). Adding to this most of writing instructions seen in ESL classroom based on drills and exercises (Parker Lara-alecio & Gomez, 1996). In addition, instructions in teaching writing in Arabic focus mainly on grammar and the feedback is merely correcting sentences with fixed phrases such as "good" and "excellent"(Alshammari, 2011; Liebman, 1992). This can be related to adapt the product-approach in teaching writing in the classroom which focus on the grammatical accuracy of student's writing (Badger & White, 2000) and emphasizes the rhetorical drills (Silva, 1990). However, the product approach is widely common in teaching

Arabic in Saudi Arabia (Bakry & Alsamadani, 2015) as well as English(Al-hazmi & Scholfield, 2007; Ezza, 2010; Grami, 2010).

The challenge faces the L2 learners in English argumentative writing lies on the contrast between English and Arabic argumentative style rather the linguistic competence students need.

1.1 Argumentative writing
Argumentative writing is a genre of writing in which a learner investigates a topic. A leaner collects, generates, and evaluates evidences to establish his position on the topic in a very concise manner. It is different from expository essay in terms of amount of pre-writing or the invention and research involved. The argumentative writing is ordinarily allotted as a capstone or final project in first year writing or advanced composition courses and includes extensive research. Expository writing includes less research and is shorter in length. These are often used for in-class writing exercises or tests, for example, the GED or GRE. Argumentative writing is considered to be a vital for composition courses at school as well as college levels. However, it is quite evident that students do not work enough on analytic or interpretative essays to be prepared for the much complex task of argumentative essays (Applebee & Langer, 2006).

The researches available on reading suggest that this writing task is the most challenging one for the students. Newell (2011) offered a number of reasons why the students face difficulty in comprehending their field specific texts as they are failed to apply argumentative text structures and eventually face difficulty in generate evidences to support their reasons and counter arguments. Sometimes even the teachers avoid dealing with the arguments due to various reasons which is the reasons why students lack this perspective of textual structures wherein their own reasons are the bases of developing a perspective (Newell et al, 2011: 277). He also proposes that reading and writing should go in hand in hand in order to achieve the necessary requirements for argumentation. It is crucial as it forms the basis for generating content for the argument and its corresponding vocabulary and grammatical structures. Lack of these elements would result in poorly conceptualized arguments.

Creativity and logic have a significant role to play in writing as the task of generating ideas to the final organization and crafting of ideas in a well comprehensible structure is all about argumentative essay writings (Janks, 2012; Mendelowitz, 2013).

1.2 SRSD and its influence on writing
SRSD is an instructional approach that combines explicit instruction in self-regulation procedures and strategy instruction. It has been used in various academic areas such as reading and math; but focus has been given to writing (Graham & Harris, 2003). The Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is a framework consists of six instructional stages used to teach argumentative writing (Harris & Graham, 1996) and was the median for many different type of writing strategies to teach K-12 learners (Harris et al., 2008). The SRSD instructional model proves to be beneficial to students' argumentative writing (Berry & Mason, 2012; De La Paz & Graham, 2002; Graham & Perin, 2007; Mason et al., 2013).

Though the SRSD was mainly designed to improve students' writing who have some disability, its features are found to be effective in L2 learning. First, it emphasizes on the explicit role in

acquiring language in the declarative memory in which adult learners rely explicitly on nature (Spada & Tomita, 2010; Ullman, 2004). This goes in the line of Anderson's ACT theory (1983, 1992) of three stages for second language learners, of which the first stage is the cognitive stage in which the learners can describe verbally the declarative knowledge that he/she has acquired. The second stage of SRSD instructional framework is explicit instruction "discuss it" and the third stage is "model it".

Second, the process approach is more productive and more beneficial for L2 learners (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007; Zamel, 1982) and particularly Saudi learners (Alhosani, 2008) is now considered the dominant approach of writing in middle and high school in the United States (Applebee & Langer, 2011). However, the SRSD instructional framework follow the process approach proved its beneficial value on native English speakers who are at different educational levels such as college (Graham & Harris, 2003; Song & Ferretti, 2013;), high school (Mason et al., 2013), intermediate school (De La Paz & Graham, 2002), and elementary school (Graham et al., 2005), as well as L2 English learners at the elementary school level (Glaser & Brunstein, 2007). Also, a recent study that used (SRSD) framework revealed a significant improvement on undergraduate Saudi students' writing majoring in English at Saudi university (Alshammari, 2016).

Moreover, the importance in practice in the classroom is crucial for learning… Finally, the SRSD encourage the collaborative learning which is beneficial for L2 learners writings (Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005), where it allow participants to share writing in the fifth phase of its six phases. All these features of the SRSD which meet the requirement of L2 acquisition make it convenient model for L2 writing even for natural learners.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the influence of SRSD model L2 learners who are majoring in English in a foreign language context and see if the model improves their argumentative writing in total and what parts of the essay have the most influence and what parts has the least. Moreover the study will measure the participants' responses and compare it their level of writing and see who are beneficiate most from the model the good writers and the weak ones.

Research question
1. To what extent, does the SRSD instructional model with the STOP and DARE strategy improve Saudi students' argumentative writing?
2. Who benefit from the SRSD instructional model most, the good writers or the weak ones?

2. Methods
2.1 Participants and Procedure
The study took place in Northern Border University in Saudi Arabia. 20 male students in experimental group and 19 males in the control group participated in the study. The participants are students in the English department and translation in the NBU. They ranged from 18-20 years old. All the participants are in the second year in their program and never been studied English outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In other words, their exposure to English language is limited to classroom because English in Saudi is in a foreign language context. The participants took two

courses in writing (Writing1 and Writing 2) and at the time of the study they were taking the final course of writing (Writing 3).

The participants in both groups took a pretest which was an argumentative writing essay. The topic was decided by a team of expert English teacher who teach English as second language for long time. The topic in the pretest as well as in the post-test was considered that does not need a special knowledge in writing about it. After the pretest, the experimental group took a course for six weeks in argumentative writing. The course was based on Self-regulated Strategy Development instructional framework (Harris & Graham, 1996) using the STOP and DARE strategy (De La Paz & Graham, 1997). The study last for six weeks and participants took a post-test in the seventh week. For six weeks, they took two hours per week. Since the English language in Saudi Arabia is considered a foreign language and students have limited opportunity to practice it outside the classroom, the participants in the experimental group were given more time to practice writing in phase 5 where they write first in groups, in pairs , and finally independently in phase 6. The control group took the regular lessons designed for Writing 2 course.

The pretest and post-test essays for both groups was analyzed using SPSS model. First, the improvement for both groups separately. The study followed (Berry & Mason, 2012) rubric of evaluating essay parts: (a) thesis statement that includes opinion and a support (one point), (b) three reasons that support the thesis statement (three points), (c) three explanations for the reasons (three points), and (d) conclusion (one point). Another variable analyzed is the length of essays and investigate if the SRSD model motivates students to write more words.

3. Data collection and analysis
Control Group:
We can summarize the data pre and post training as under:

Table 1. *The data pre and post training*

S.No.	Particular	Pre Training	Post Training
1	Total no of students	19.00	19.00
2	Total no of passages	51.00	59.50
3	Total no of word count	1,169.00	1,019.00
4	Average no of word count	61.53	53.63
5	Average no of passages	2.68	3.13
6	No of students covering 'thesis'	17.00	19.00
7	No of students covering 'reason'	16.00	19.00
8	No of students covering 'explanation'	11.00	4.00

9	No of students covering 'ending'	6.00	3.00
10	No of students all the four headings	2.00	1.00
11	No of students having more than 50 word counts	12.00	9.00
12	No of students covering more than two heading	12.00	6.00

From the table1 we can see that:

1. Total number of passages written by the group has increased by 16.67% and average number of passages written by the students has increased from 2.68 to 3.13 after getting the general training.
2. The total number of word count has also decreased by 9.26% after the general training. The number of students with more than 50 word count has decreased from 12 to 9 after the training.
3. The number of students covering more than two areas/headings has decreased from 12 to 6.
4. The number of students covering 'Thesis' in their writing has increased from 17 to 19 after training.
5. The number of students covering 'Reason' in their writing has increased from 16 to 19 after training.
6. The number of students covering 'Explanation' in their writing has increased from 11 to 4 after training.
7. The number of students covering 'Ending' in their writing has increased from 6 to 3 after training.

We conducted ANOVA single factor test to check whether the training has significant impact on the total number of passages written by the students.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean number of passages, word count, thesis, reason, explanation, ending covered by the students' pre and post training.

The data collected by means of the pre and post-test design.

Table 2. *Pre & Post test scores on all four elements*

	Max score	Pre-test		Post-test			
	8	M	SD	M	SD	F	P-value
Total score		2.684211		3.131579		1.848614	0.1824
Thesis score	1	0.921053		0.947368		0.066176	0.798452

Reason score	3	1.157895	1.947368	7.758621	0.008472
Explanation score	3	0.5	0.131579	7.84	0.008166
Ending score	1	0.210526	0.131579	0.522581	0.474414
Word count	-	61.52632	53.63158	0.952144	0.335686

The control group show insignificant improvement in the total score of the essays, $F(1, 36) = 1.85$, $p = .182$. The parts of the essay show insignificant improvement in the thesis and ending sections while the reason and the explanation show a significant improvement. Unaspiringly the students' ability to write more vocabulary did not improve between the pretest (M= 61.53) and the post-test (M= 53.63).

Correlation Analysis:

Table 3. *Pre & Post-test correlational analysis between headings, word count & No. of passages*

Correlational Analysis (Headings, Word count & No. of passages)	**Pre Training**	**Post Training**
Correlation between word count and total no. of passages	0.36	0.54
Covariance between word count and total no. of passages	7.64	14.47
Correlation between no. of headings and word count	0.39	0.31
Covariance between no. of headings and word count	7.09	4.66

The correlation coefficient between word count and total number of passages written has increased from 0.36 to 0.54 post training.
The correlation coefficient between number of headings/areas covered and word count has decreased from 0.39 to 0.31 post training.

Table 4. *Experimental Group*

S. No.	**Particular**	**Pre Training**	**Post Training**
1	Total No of Students	21	21
2	Total No of Passages	79.83333333	112.8333333
3	Total No of Words	1257	2642
4	Average No of Word Count	59.86	125.81
5	Average No of Passages	3.80	5.37

6	No of Students Covering 'Thesis'	21	21
7	No of Students Covering 'Reason'	21	20
8	No of Students Covering 'Explanation'	18	19
9	No of Students Covering 'Ending'	8	17
10	No of Students All The Four Headings	8	16
11	No of Students Having More Than 50 Word Counts	11	20
12	No of Students Covering More Than Two Heading	18	20

From the table 4 we can see that:

1. Total number of passages written by the group has increased by 41.34% and average number of passages written by the students has increased from 3.8 to 5.37 after getting the special training.
2. The total number of word count of the group has significantly increased from 1257 to 2642 after the general training. The number of students with more than 50 word count has increased from 11 to 20 after the training.
3. The number of students covering more than two areas/headings has decreased from 18 to 20.
4. There was no change in the number of students covering 'THESIS' in their writing after training.
5. The number of students covering 'REASON' in their writing has decreased from 21 to 20 after training.
6. The number of students covering 'EXPLANATION' in their writing has increased from 18 to 19 after training.
7. The number of students covering 'ENDING' in their writing has increased from 8 to 17 after training.

We conducted ANOVA single factor test to check whether the training has significant impact on the total number of passages written by the students.

Analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean number of passages, word count, reason, explanation, thesis, ending covered by the students' post training. There is no significant change in the number of student covering more than two area/heading post training. The experimental group results shows that the strategy STOP and DARE has a significant influence on students writing. ANOVA single factor test were conducted to check whether the treatment has a significant impact on the total score of essay written by the students as shown in table (2).

Table 5. *Pre & Post training differences among the students*

Groups	**Count**	**Sum**	**Average**	**Variance**		

Pre-training	21	79.83333	3.801587	2.048942		
Post-training	21	112.8333	5.373016	3.608069		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	25.92857	1	25.92857	9.166881	0.004299	4.084746
Within Groups	113.1402	40	2.828505			
Total	139.0688	41				

The p-value show a significant improvement of the SRSD framework using the STOP and dare strategy on student's writing F(1, 40)= 9.17, *p*= .004. Moreover, the using this strategy helps students to produce more vocabulary in the post-test, F (1, 40) = 17.32, *p*= 0001.

Summary						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
Pre-training	21	1257	59.85714	991.5286		
Post-training	21	2642	125.8095	4282.862		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	45672.02	1	45672.02	17.31841	0.000163	4.084746
Within Groups	105487.8	40	2637.195			
Total	151159.8	41				

To see the exact influence of the treatment on the vocabulary, a regression analysis has been conducted and marked that 61.85% of the variation in the total scores of passages written by students in the experimental group is explained by the total number of word count.

Table 5. *Variation in the total scores of passages*

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.785602947
R Square	0.61717199
Adjusted R Square	0.597023147
Standard Error	1.205806039

Observations	21

To see which parts in the essays that written in by the experimental group and has a significant improvement, a single factor ANOVA test was conducted on the four essay's parts as seen on table (6)

Table 6. Pre and Post test scores on all four elements

	Max score	**Pretest**		**Post-test**			
	8	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*P-value*
Thesis score	1	0.936508		0.960317		0.412844	0.524195
Reason score	3	1.642857		2.166667		5.821973	0.020502
Explanation score	3	1.031746		1.619048		6.039484	0.01842
Ending score	1	0.261905		0.626984		8.504823	0.005782

It is clearly that the treatment has insignificant influence on the Thesis part in the experimental group. However, the Reason, explanation, and ending improved significantly in the post-test.

Another test where conducted to see is there a significant difference between the number of essay parts written by the students in the experimental and the control group in the post-test. The results show that participants in the experimental group write more essay parts than the control group in the post-test, $F(1, 38) = 13.38$, $p = 0008$.

Summary						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Control	19	45	2.368421	0.356725		
Experimental	21	66	3.142857	0.528571		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	5.982519	1	5.982519	13.37861	0.000768	4.098172
Within Groups	16.99248	38	0.447171			
Total	22.975	39				

Comparing the scores of the total scores between the control and experimental group shows the experimental group scores are significantly higher than the control group in the post-test, F (1, 38)= 20.57, p< 5.6E-05. However, the scores between the two groups on the pre-test doesn't have a significant difference that means they are in the same level of writing before the beginning of the experiment. Moreover, an ANOVA single factor was conducted to compare the word count in the post-test between the control and experimental group. The results show that participants on the experimental group write significantly more words in the post-test than in the control group, F (1, 38) = 20.07, p = 6.64E - 05. Finally, the results show that participants on the experimental group cover significantly more parts of the essay than participants on the control group, F (1, 38) = 37.39, p = 3.96E-07.

4. *Discussion*

The significant improvement of participants in the experimental group with the relative short time of the experiment support the conclusion that the ESL students are weak in the composing ability rather than language proficiency (Ferris, 1994). The study supports other studies (Berry & Mason, 2012; De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & Graham, 2002; Glaser & Brunstein, 2007) in proving the benefit of SRSD instructional model in teaching. More specifically, this study along with (Alshammari, 2016; Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Song & Ferretti, 2013) prove the benefits of SRSD with natural learners. Moreover, the study comes up with similar results with a previous study used SRSD with different strategy, TREE strategy (Alshammari, 2016). Both study show significant improvement on students writing in the experimental group in the total scores and reasons, explanation, and ending section, not however, thesis section.

What is interesting that the current study along with the (Alshammari, 2016) improve the ability of writing more vocabulary and consequently increased the length of essay and the average length increased from (M = 59.86) in the pretest to (M = 125.81) in the post-test. However, both studies did not include teaching vocabulary but it seems that the SRSD framework instructional motivate learners to recall vocabulary they did not use usually. It is also noted that in both studies that most of the participants in the control group fail to write the conclusion part though it is only a summarization of the thesis while participants in the experimental group have a significant improvement in ending section. This might because students who study the SRSD have a clear idea of the essay parts and became aware of the characteristics of each part. Moreover, the six steps of the SRSD that learners have gone through were able to wash up the L1 style and implement the L2 (Kaplan, 1966). On the other hand, participants on the control group seems still confused of their L1, Arabic, language style which basically locate the thesis statement at the end of the essay which function also as a conclusion (Bacha, 2010).

Conclusion

Though the overall of the study prove the improvement for the SRSD using the STOP and DARE strategy, the relative short time of the experiment limit its benefits for the students and future studies should consider allowing more time for participants to see and compare the effect of the SRSD instructional model. This study along with other studies prove that teaching L2 learners English writing style is not impossible and good results can be achieved in relatively short time. It is important to use this study and other studies, e.g. (Alshammari, 2016) as an evidence for benefits of using the process approach represented by the SRSD instructional model in Saudi

Arabia to improve the weakness of Saudi learners who are majoring in English (Ali Al-Khairy, 2013; Grami, 2010; Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016).

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Dr. Sahal Al Shammari holds Ph.D. in the area of TESOL from University of Kansas, USA. Besides research papers to his credit, he has also authored a couple of fictions in Arabic language, of which *Yasir* has been declared best-seller with more than 30,000 copies sold so far. He has written scripts for educational films as well as documentary films for various media channels. Being an ELT expert, he aims to explore the area of writing skills of the Arab EFL learners in greater depth.

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