

Relationship between Reading and Writing Performance

Rosita Aminullah
 Caroline Joseph
 Sulaila Bakar
 Khalid Mat Pardi

ABSTRACT

This pilot study is aimed at investigating the relationship between reading and writing performance among university ESL students. The subjects of the study were students of English language from various faculties of UiTM Pahang. The data used was taken from the students' results in two reading comprehension tests and one writing test in their English for Academic Purposes (BEL311) final examination paper. The data collected was analyzed through SPSS 20 to provide indicators of their performance that can potentially reflect the reading and writing connection. The findings of the study showed that there some degree of correlation between the students' reading and writing performance. The research shows some connection between the constructs of reading and writing. The findings point to the need of nurturing greater success in the students' reading and writing abilities. The connections between the two language proficiency skills can be exploited for the benefits of university ESL students in general and UiTM Pahang ESL students specifically.

Keywords: *reading, writing, language proficiency skills, ESL students*

Introduction

Reading and writing have long been considered to be closely related. According to Holt and Vacca (1984), reading and writing are interdependent processes that are essential to each other and mutually beneficial. This is especially true in the tertiary education, in which students need to do a lot of reading and writing tasks to fulfill the desired curricula. Students often need to do extensive reading on a particular subject before they can write an academic paper. Students may also need to write different types of reports or write in response to a given text. For this reason, educators and researches feel that students need to be able to perform equally well in both reading and writing. Dionisio (1983) states that reading should be used for gaining insight for writing in different genres to develop students' style and form in writing. Based on these needs, therefore, this study investigates the relationship between reading and writing performance among university ESL students.

Literature Review

Since the National Conference on Research in English Charter in 1932, reading and writing have been treated by educators as part of the essential components of the English language (Petty, 1983). Since then a lot of studies have been conducted to investigate the connection between reading and writing. Most of these studies revealed that reading is connected to writing. Before that Stotsky (1983) published a review of correlational and experimental research studies that examined the influence of reading and writing relationships and it showed that better readers tended to be better writers and that better writers read more than poor writers, and better readers produce more syntactically mature writing than poor readers. In other words, reading and writing work in synergy (Tierney, 1992). At the same time, a study conducted by Eckhoff (1983) also found a correlation between the text read and the children's writing ability.

McGinley (1992) investigated the role of reading and writing while composing from sources and the results indicated that different reading and writing activities found functioned in unique yet partially overlapping ways during the process of composing from source. Taylor and Beach (1984) and Crowhurst (1991) conducted similar studies to examine students' reading-writing relationship and the results revealed the fact that students transferred knowledge gained in reading and instruction in persuasive writing led to significant improvements in writing compositions. This signifies that reading affects writing.

Tierney and Soter et al. (1989) conducted a study on the effects of reading and writing upon thinking critically. The study examined the amount and type of reading that learners engage in as they read, as they write, or as they both read and write. The results of the study revealed that the students who read and wrote were engaged in a great deal more evaluative thinking and perspective shifting than those who just wrote or those who just read.

Methodology

This study investigated the relationship between reading and writing in terms of the performance among university ESL students. The subjects of the study were 183 students (84 males, 99 females) of English language from the Faculty of Social Science (104 students) and Applied Science (79 students) of UiTM Pahang. The data was obtained from the students' reading and writing scores in their BEL311 Final Examination. The scores involved two reading tests and one writing test, which could provide indicators of their performance that potentially reflected the reading and writing relationship. The data was processed using *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 for Windows*. The data was analyzed using both the descriptive and inferential methods.

Findings

The results of the descriptive statistics showed that although the minimum and maximum scores for both reading and writing were almost the same, the mean for the writing scores was higher (11.607) than that of the reading scores (8.847). However, the standard deviation for the writing scores was lower (2.195) than that of the reading scores (3.269). Therefore, the students' overall performance was better in the writing test; higher mean and lower standard deviation (refer to Table 1).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading	183	3.0	17.5	8.847	3.2693
Writing	183	3.0	16.5	11.607	2.1950
Valid N (listwise)	183				

Based on table 2, the mean for the reading scores among the male students was 8.643 with a standard deviation of 3.490 while that of the female students was 9.020 with standard deviation of 3.077. The mean for the writing scores among the male students was 11.304 with a standard deviation of 1.901 while that of the female students was 11.864 with a standard deviation of 2.396. Therefore, in terms of gender, the mean for both female students' reading and writing scores were higher than those of male students'.

Table 2 Descriptives

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading	Male	8.643	3.490
	Female	9.020	3.077
Writing	Male	11.304	1.901
	Female	11.864	2.396

Based on Table 3, the mean for the reading scores among the social science students was 9.135 with a standard deviation of 3.312 while that of the Applied Science was 8.468 with a standard deviation of 3.193. The mean for the writing scores among Social Science students was 11.847 with a standard deviation of 2.489 while that of the Applied Science was 11.299 with a standard deviation of 1.698. Therefore, in terms of field, the mean of both the reading and writing scores of Social Science students were higher than that of the Applied Science students.

Table 3 Descriptives

	Field	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading	Social Science	9.135	3.312
	Applied Science	8.468	3.193
Writing	Social Science	11.847	2.489
	Applied Science	11.291	1.698

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between the reading and writing performance of the subjects. Based on Table 4, the findings of the study showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between the students' reading and writing performance ($r = 0.349$, $p = 0.000$). The correlation was significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 Correlations

		Reading	Writing
Reading	Pearson Correlation	1	.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	183	183
Writing	Pearson Correlation	.349**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	183	183

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the current study support the findings of the previous studies, that there is a correlation between the text read and the students' writing ability (Tierney, 1992; Eckhoff, 1983; Taylor & Beach, 1984; Crowhurst, 1991; Tierney & Soter et al., 1989). Therefore, this signifies that reading and writing work in synergy and that reading affects writing. Generally, the study reveals that the students had performed better in the writing test rather than the reading test. This is quite surprising as the majority of us tend to think that reading is easier than writing. There are several implications to this. First, students' attitude towards reading might not be very positive and they might be taking their reading lessons for granted. They might think that reading is not as difficult as writing and therefore do not need to pay too much focus or effort on it. Second, the lecturers are not very committed in teaching reading. They might give more focus on writing. Third, the curriculum is putting less focus on reading.

Gender has also some impacts on the reading and writing performance. It could be seen that the female students perform better in reading and writing in comparison to the male students. This might be due to several reasons. First, female students are generally more interested in reading and writing in comparison to the male students. They spend more time in reading novels and writing diaries when the male students are more interested in sports and video games. Second, there are differences in physiological aspects for both genders. Most females prefer to get involved in less active learning requirements such as reading and writing while the males are more interested in more active learning that require them to use tools and equipment. The study also reveals that Social Science students perform better in reading and writing. This could be due to the nature of the field. Generally, Social Science students need to read and write more to fulfill the curriculum. On the other hand, the Applied Science students are required to do more hand-on activities and less reading writing activities. This results in the Social Science students being more 'at ease' with reading and writing in comparison to the Applied Science students.

Most important, the results of the study have shown that there is a relationship between reading and writing. Even though the correlation is moderate ($r = 0.39$), it is a positive correlation. In other words, when the reading scores increase, the writing scores increase and not vice versa. Students performance in reading is related to their performance in writing. As writing improves through daily communicative use, reading is enhanced (Goodman & Goodman, 1983; Eckhoff, 1983; Taylor & Beach, 1984 and Crowhurst, 1991). In simpler words, a good reader makes good writer. Therefore, the curriculum needs to provide opportunities for students to practice reading and writing activities. Since research revealed important implications for the teaching of reading and writing together, then reading and writing should be integrated in the curriculum to maximize the possibility of using information acquired from both reading and writing. The challenge for educational programs is to provide students with opportunities to gain knowledge through the connection of reading and writing. More research in the reading/writing connection is needed especially across instructional disciplines and it must consider the implications of instructional methodology.

References

- Crowhurst, M. (1991). Interrelationship Between Reading and Writing Persuasive Discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 25 (3), 314-335.
- Dionisio, M. (1983). "Write? Isn't this Reading Class?" *The Reading Teacher*, 36 (8), 746-750.
- Eckhoff, B. (1983). How Reading Affects Children's Writing. *Language Arts*, 60 (5), 607-616.
- Goodman, K., and Goodman, Y. (1983). Reading and Writing Relationships: Pragmatic Functions. *Language Arts*, 60 (5), 590-599.
- Holt, S. L., and Vacca, J. L. (1984). Reading with a Sense of Writer: Writing with a Sense of Reader. In J. M. Jensen (Ed.). *Composing and Comprehending* (pp. 177-181). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- McGinley, W. (1992). The Role of Reading and Writing while Composing from Sources. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 27(3), 226-247.
- Petty, W., T. (1983). A History of the National Conference on Research in English. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Stosky, S. (1983). Research on Reading/Writing Relationships: A Synthesis and Suggested Directions. *Language Arts*, 60 (5), 627-643.
- Taylor, B. M., and Beach, R. W. (1984). The Effects of Text Structure Instruction on Middle-grade Students' Comprehension and Production of Expository Text. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 19 (2), 134-173.
- Tierney, R. J. (1992). Ongoing Research and New Directions. In J. Irwin & M. Doyle (Eds.). *Reading/Writing Connections: Learning From Research*. (pp.246-260). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Tierney, R. J., Soter, A., O'Flahavan, J. F., and McGinley, W. (1989) The Effects of Reading and Writing Upon Thinking Critically. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24 (2) 134-173.

ROSITA AMINULLAH, CAROLINE JOSEPH SULAILA BAKAR, KHALID MAT PARDI.
 Universiti Teknologi MARA (Pahang). rosita@pahang.uitm.edu.my, caroline@pahang.uitm.edu.my,
 sulaila@pahang.uitm.edu.my, khalid@pahang.uitm.edu.my.