Online Linguistic Messages of the Jordanian Secondary Students and their Opinions toward a   Web-based Writing Instructional EFL Program

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate 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 students' opinionnaire 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.

Key words: linguistic messages, opinions, web-based writing

Introduction

Writing is an important language skill which requires student's mental ability. The importance of writing is great as it integrates other language skills and helps teachers deal with language problems that may face students and hinder their communication. It is an activity that needs mental effort to think out, combine and arrange sentences to produce meaningful ideas. But it is not a skill to be learned in isolation from the other language skills: listening speaking and reading. It is taught with the goal of supplying students with the ability to use the writing skill in higher education or work. It is also a good means to express one's needs, thoughts and experience (English General Guidelines and Curricula for the Secondary stage; MOE, 1993: 6). Moreover, writing should not be thought of as only a productive skill. It is a three- stage process (pre- writing, writing, and rewriting). The teacher gives lessons about writing mechanics, provides writing models and various writing practices to keep his students interested. (English General Guideline and Curricula for the Basic and Secondary Stages, MOE, 2002: 70).

Writing is regarded as not only a means of communication and assessment, but a process of constructing knowledge (Wooley, 2007). Moreover, writing does not develop naturally, like the speaking skill. It is a thinking process, so students need a framework to start producing meaningful sentences (Toubat, 2003).

Rivers and Temperley(1978: 320) state:

> "To express oneself in written form, coherent, readable material does not necessarily flow from the pen. Nor such writing merely a matter of composing carefully constructed grammatical sentences. Lucid writing is only possible when writers have clarified their own thinking on the subject and know how they wish to present their view or develop their argument. The ideas may be obscure, even esoteric or hermetic, but the writers themselves know that this is what they want to say and their readers try to penetrate their thought. Muddled thinking, however, leaves readers confused and frustrated".

Therefore, students should be trained to write until they accomplish the objectives of the writing skill. Teachers should teach students the language and how it is used in context (De Beaugrande, 1993).

In Jordan , it is difficult to deny that learners of foreign language suffer from weakness in writing in spite the efforts exerted by the Jordanian educationalists to overcome this weakness (Toubat, 2003). Teachers do their best to help their students practice various relevant writing tasks so that their writing performance might be enhanced. Whiteman (1981) states that students are weak in writing because teachers concentrate on teaching grammar, spelling drills, punctuation more than involving students in the writing process. In spite of the fact that these are means that help students learn writing, students need to be taught the way to produce language communicatively. Teachers should use effective techniques to help their students write good compositions.

Research findings have supported the use of technology in teaching language. First, technology has positive influences on students' motivation (Tsou, Wang and Li, 2002; Bani Hani, 2009; Langone, Levine, Clees, Malone and Koorland, 1996). Students get benefit from the interaction with reading over email (Adler-Kassner and Reynolds, 1996). CALL is aneffective means for learning (Almadi, 2002; Yassin, 2002) and students get better scores in learning writing (Abu Seileek, 2004; Al-Mekhlafi, 2006; Hages, 2008; Al-Jarf, 2004; Yang, 2004; Chuo, 2007 and Wooley, 2007) Second, Technology programs have been encouraged as cost effective ways of enhancing direct human input (Ware and Warschause, cited in Tsou, 2008; Pigg, 1996). Moreover, technology has been a tool for teaching the writing skills since the time it was introduced to schools. The use of technology for writing includes computer-based projects and software programs that direct writing instruction and help students improve their writing performance (Burner, 2004).

The use of the Internet and the World Wide Web (www) has affects on the educational process and the techniques teachers use in teaching students (Chuo, 2007). The Internet also serves both as a communication tool and an information resource (Cunningham, 2000; Lee, 2009). In fact, the most important classroom use of the Internet is reaching information resources (Grabe and Grabe, 2001). Students who use the web to get information see that they reach a lot of resources all over the world. (Milone, 1996). Besides, exposing students to the use of the web-based writing instructional programs may change students' attitudes towards language and this may help them write better compositions. Therefore, using the web-based writing program is a technique that may help students write effectively. Using emails and sharing files may give students the opportunity of working with peers and teachers (Belisle, 1996).

In the Jordanian context, thousands of computers have been bought and given to public schools. Recently, 65.000 personal computers (PCS) have been given to 2250 public schools (Bataineh and Baniabderahman, 2006). Nowadays, these computers are linked to the Internet. However, many schools do not utilize classroom and school-based computer labs and related software to teach writing. Teachers do not also use emails and websites to improve students' writing level at both public and private schools according to the researchers' knowledge. Moreover, there seem to date that no study has investigated the linguistic messages of the Jordanian secondary students and their opinions toward using the Internet in teaching writing. Therefore, the researchers designed this web-based writing program which offers Jordanian students the opportunity to use the Internet and get benefit from it in writing composition and reveals students' linguistic messages and opinions toward it which may positively influence their writing. The results of this study might encourage educational leaders to reconsider this technique for schools.

Problem and Significance of the study

Throughout the researchers' field work at schools and university, they noticed that students are weak in the writing skill, and they need to enhance their writing performance. They face difficulty in composing as they are required to produce good ideas arranged logically, using active vocabulary items and structures including discourse markers. This difficulty lies on how to produce meaningful sentences which comprise coherent text (Abott, Gneenwood, Makeatiny and Wingard 1981). They are unable to produce language communicatively. Teachers concentrate on structure rather than the writing process and the current technique they use is not effective. (Toubat, 2003; Batayneh, 1986; AL-Quran, 2002; Krashen, 1984; Al-Sharah, 1988;; Kharma, 1985; Shakir, 1991; Al Omari, 2004; Leki, 1991; Kane, 1983).

The researchers believe that there are many reasons for students' weakness in the writing skill, the most important of which is the technique of teaching. Moreover, they think that there is a need to adopt new techniques for teaching writing that may help students be better writers. The teaching aids, such as the computer and the Internet are important and may positively affect students' writing.

Therefore, the researchers designed a web-based writing instructional program and conducted this study to investigate the linguistic messages of the Jordanian secondary students and their opinions toward it. Using the web-based writing technique may motivate students and encourage communication and interaction among them and their teachers, and finally improve their writing performance and achievement. Thus, it may be used as anew technique for teaching writing at schools. This technique may be included in the Jordanian curriculum as result a training program is expected to be developed for both teachers and students.

Purpose and Questions of the study

This study is designed to investigate the linguistic messages of the Jordanian secondary students and their opinions toward a web-based writing instructional technique. This study attempts to answer the following questions:
1. What linguistic messages do students send during the web-based writing lessons?
2. What are the students' opinions towards the web-based writing instructional EFL program?

Definition of terms

1 **Current technique**: It refers to the instructional technique without the use of computers and the Internet which is often used in classrooms and includes several steps. First, at the pre-writing stage students discuss the main ideas with the teacher. Second, the students write first drafts which are checked by the teacher. Third, students write final drafts and receive feedback from the teacher. Some subjects are then read and discussed.
2 **Secondary stage:** This stage includes two grades in Jordan : the eleventh grade and the twelfth grade. The eleventh grade students study levels one and two, whereas the twelfth grade students study levels three and four.
3 **Guided writing:** The kind of writing in which the teacher gives the students a writing task and helps them prepare the written subject by giving either written or oral assistance.
4 **Linguistic messages:** Students' messages sent to their teachers and peers Concerning discoursal component: language vocabulary, content and organization while writing.

Limitations of the study

This study has the following limitation:

This study is restricted to the available sample of four sections of the scientific stream eleventh grade students in Omar El-Lafi Secondary School for Boys, Eidoun Secondary School for Girls, Al-Mazar Secondary School for Boys and Al-Mazar Secondary School for Girls as these schools are equipped with very good computer labs linked to the Internet. Teachers and students are also very cooperative there. The researchers trained them in the Intel program.

Methods and Procedures

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

Participants of the study

Four public schools in Irbid Second Directorate of Education were chosen purposefully to form the participants of the study. The sample of the study consisted of four eleventh grade scientific classroom sections (just one section from each school) during the second semester of the academic year 2009-2010 as follows:

1. Two male scientific sections (n=26).
2. Two female scientific sections: (n=35). Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants.

Table 1: The Distribution of the participants of the Study

Number of Students	Gender	School
12	Male	Al-Mazar Comprehensive Secondary School for Boys
14	Male	Omar Al-Lafi Comprehensive Secondary School for Boys
17	Female	Al-Mazar Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls
18	Female	Eidoun Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls
61		Total

Table 1 shows that the total number of the participants of the study is 61, 26 males and 35 females.

Instrument of the study

The researcher used the following instruments:

1-Students' opinionnaire

An opinionnaire regarding the significance and utility of the web-based writing instructional program was distributed to students after the experiment was over. It is worth noting that the researchers constructed this opinionnaire. It is about the use of the web to find out the students' opinions concerning the web- based writing instructional program. It is essential to know how students feel towards this tool as a large number of psychologists, teaching experts and instructional technologists support the learner-centered approach in the teaching learning process. This affects the students' role in their own learning (Bani-Hani, 2009).

2.Observation sheet

An observation sheet was developed and used by the researchers and teachers to observe and record students' linguistic messages during the writing sessions.

3. The achievement test

The researcher developed an achievement test to measure the students' writing before and after participating in the study. The participants of the study were given a composition topic to write on in one period at the onset and outset of the study.

4. The Instructional Program (WbWIP)

This program was designed by the researchers to measure the effect of a web-based writing program on the performance of the Jordanian secondary students. This is the first section of the study (Al-Abed Al-Haq and Al-Sobh, 2010). The second section was to investigate students' online interaction through linguistic messages and their opinions toward this web-based writing program**.** This on-line program which was developed by the researchers allows students in grade eleven to write and teachers to track students' writing progress over time. The WbWIP was piloted. A group of 20 eleventh scientific grade students other than the participants of the study used this program. They wrote six subjects. No problems raised. Modifications concerning the title of the web pages, chat box were done. The time limit for each lesson was 50 minutes and the test grade was out of 100 points. They were finally evaluated. The components of the writing program and the evaluation criteria were the following: **Content, Organization, Vocabulary and Language use.**

Reliability and validity of the web-based writing instructional program

The WbWIP is a website that was created depending on the website www.forum5.info. The WbWIP was given to a group of university specialists in instructional technology to express their opinions. Modification concerning the number, title of the web pages and the place of the chat box was done according to their suggestions.

1. Objectives:

The specific objectives of the web-based writing instructional program are the   following:
 1- To write three paragraphs for some specific purposes benefiting from the electronic environment through access to the Internet for gathering information and ideas from the electronic resources.
 2- To write these paragraphs in correct spelling punctuation, grammar and usage.
 3- To write these paragraphs in an appropriate organization.

2. General grade outcomes

It is expected that students will:

1   gather information and ideas from electronic sources to organize and write in some advanced authentic contexts.
2   write three paragraphs for some specific advanced authentic purposes.
3   use appropriate organizational patterns to create advanced authentic written work.
4   apply knowledge of the conventions of language (e.g. spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage).
5   revise written work for accuracy, clarity, correctness and coherence with the assistance of peers and teachers.

Teachers' and students' training
The researchers trained the teachers of English who participated in teaching WbWIP for two days. They received training concerning the WbWIP components: registration, log in, objectives, outcomes, instructions, schools, lessons, editing and correction and receiving and sending messages through email and the chat box. Students were trained to write using the WbWIP.

Validity of the opinionnaire
The validity of the opinionnaire was obtained by giving the opinionnaire to a group of professors from university, specializing in educational technology, measurement and evaluation and curriculum and instruction to read the items and give their suggestions. Modification like adding some negative items was done according to their suggestions.

Validity and reliability of the achievement test
The validity of the achievement test was gained by giving the test to a group of university professors, supervisors and experienced teachers to express their views and give suggestions. Modifications concerning the given ideas were done according to their recommendations.To achieve the test reliability the researchers chose a sample consisting of 30 eleventh scientific grade students from Al-Husn Secondary School for Girls and administered the test on them. After two weeks, the test was administered on the same students again. The correlation between the two tests was calculated. The reliability of the test was found to be (0.81). This group of students was excluded from the participants of the study.

Validity of the observation sheet
For the purpose of validating the observation sheet, it was given to a group of specialists to judge whether the items were enough, appropriate and comprehensive. Modification was done according to their suggestions and recommendations.

Procedures of the study

To carry out this study, the researcher followed following steps:

1. Permission was taken from Irbid Second Directorate of Education to conduct the study.
2. The researchers met the teachers and students included in the experiment and trained them to use the program
3. The researchers visited teachers to offer help if needed.
4. Students were given six topics to write on .
5. A pre-post achievement test was given at the onset and the outset of the experiment,
6. A 24-item students' opinionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the experiment.
7. The observation sheet was used to record the linguistic messages of them.

Design of the study

The researchers used quasi experimental design to analyze the results of the study.. Students' linguistic messages and opinions were investigated to see their effect on the students' achievement.

The researchers designed this web site using www.forum5.info that contains registration and log in, objectives, outcomes, teacher's instructions, student's instructions, lessons, schools. Chat box and post (see appendix A: screens 1-10). This website has the following capabilities:
1. This web site supports the permission and authentication so each user has a username and password, thus he has his own data, lessons, and so on.
2. It supports different types of users (Student, teacher, and Administrator), so the process of teaching and learning is complete.
3. It has a calendar, so that the web site users can organize their works, and search depending on a certain data.

4. It has a help to explain all the web site topics, and how can the user change the settings of user preferences, posting issues, formatting and topics type, user level and groups, private messaging, and other issues.

5. It has the capability to search for topics, lessons, and posts, so this will enable the web site users to easily retrieve what they store.

6. The web site also browses all the members and groups, so the user can get information about them to make the contact process easy.

7. This web site has the ability to create groups, which is considered one of the most important methods to share information between users.

8. It has the ability to edit, assess, and correct the assignment and post reply the   correction and assessment to the user.

9. It has the ability of sending email, so all the users can exchange the massages and information among them.

Variables of the study

This study had of the following variables:

1. The independent variables were: 1) the method of teaching which is: web-based writing instructional program and gender.
2. The dependent variables were the students' linguistic messages and opinions.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from four secondary schools, two for boys and two for girls in Irbid Second Directorate of Education. Each school has a computer lab linked to the Internet. The experiment started on the first of February 2009. It lasted for one month. (12 normal classes for training and teaching).

Moreover, the researchers observed the whole experiment to guarantee the right implementation of the web-based writing instructional program.

Data Analysis

1. To answer the first question, percentages, means and standard deviation for the students' opinionnaire were calculated to determine the students' opinions towards the WbWIP.
2. To answer the second question, frequency, correction and percentages of students' linguistic messages during the WbWIP sessions were calculated to investigate the students' linguistic messages .
3. Data of the pre-test and post-test were calculated for statistical analysis (SPSS). Means and standard deviations for the students' overall achievement scores were calculated.

Results of the study

This section presents the results of the study concerning the students' achievement the students' linguistic messages and opinions toward using a web-based writing instructional program.

Results related to the first question

To answer the first question: "How do the participants of the experimental group behave linguistically during the web-based writing lesson?", an observation sheet was used to record students' linguistic messages during the writing sessions. Frequency of these messages and corrections are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency and Examples of Students' Linguistic Messages during the WbWIP Sessions

Examples of Correction	Percentage	Frequency	Discoursal Component
- many things have been stolen - the handicapped deserve all our help	22.7	170	Content
- Petra which was built by the Nabateans is very beautiful. - I was very sad because I lost my mobile phone.	20.0	150	Organization
- thief, hole, biochemist, border, encyclopedia, culture, fertilizer, beautiful, try, chemical	30.6	230	Vocabulary
- given, if, does, wrote, needs	26.7	200	Language Use
	100%	750	Total

Table 2 shows that students learning with the WbWIP sent many messages about all discoursal components. The biggest number of messages is about "vocabulary" which is 230, with the percentage of 30.6%, whereas the smallest number is about the "content" which is 170, with the percentage of 22.6%.

Male students who are 26 sent 280 messages with the percentage of 10.8% messages per student, whereas female students who are 35 sent 470 messages with the percentage of 13.4% messages per student.

Female students sent more messages than male students. The feedback of these messages may affect the students writing improvement. These messages are presented in Table 3**.**

Table 3: Frequency and Percentages of Students' Linguistic Messages According to Gender

Percentage	Frequency	Discoursal Component
62.7	470	Female students
37.3	280	Male students
100	750	Total
100	750	Total

Table 3 shows that female students sent 470 messages with the percentage of 62.7%, whereas male students sent 280 messages with the percentage of 37.3%.

Moreover, female students sent more messages concerning all the discoursal components. This is clear in Table 4.

Table 4 Frequency and Percentage of Female Students' Messages Concerning the Discoursal Components

Percentage	Frequency	Discoursal Component
14.3	67	Content
17.6	83	Organization and Mechanics
31.3	147	Vocabulary
36.8	173	Language use
100	470	Total

Table 4 shows that female students sent 173 messages as the highest number for language use with the percentage of 36.8%, whereas they sent 67 messages as the lowest number for "vocabulary" and "content" respectively, with the percentage of 14.2%.

Male students sent less messages than the females did. This is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of Male Students' Messages Concerning the Discoursal Components

Percentage	Frequency	Discoursal Component
16.5	45	Content
18.7	53	Organization and Mechanics
25.6	72	Vocabulary
39.2	110	Language use
100	280	Total

Table 5 shows that male students sent 110 messages, with the percentage of 39.2%; the highest number was for "vocabulary", whereas they sent 45 messages for "content" as with the percentage of 16.5%. Female and male messages were sent to both teachers and peers. This is clear in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency and Percentage of Female Messages Sent to Both Teachers and Peers

Percentage	Frequency	Messages Sent
31.2	112	to Teachers
68.8	358	to Peers
100	470	Total

Table 6 shows that female students sent 112 messages to teachers, with the percentage of 31.2%, whereas they sent more messages to peers, which is 358, with the percentage of 68.8%.
Male students also sent less messages to teachers. This is clear in Table 7.

Table 7: Frequency and Percentage of Male Messages Sent to Both Teachers and Peers

Percentage	Frequency	Messages Sent
28.6	80	to Teachers
71.4	200	to Peers
100	280	Total

Table 7 shows that male students sent 80 messages to their teachers, with the percentage of 28.6%, whereas they sent more messages to peers, which is 200, with the percentage of 71.4%.

Results related to the second question

To answer the second question: "What are the students' opinions concerning the efficacy of the web-based writing instructional program?" A 24- item opinionnaire was administered after the experiment to the students to find out their opinions about using the web in learning the English writing skill. Percentages, mean scores and standard deviations of respondents within each category of the four Likert scale opinionnaire, were also calculated. Table 8 presents the results.

Table 8: Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation for the Students' Opinionnaire

Item ID	Rank	Attitudes and its items	Percentage in Each Category				Mean	Std. Dev.
			S.D.	D.	A.	S.A.		
11	1	Writing with the WbWIP is more interesting than the current technique			34.4	65.6	3.656	0.48
20	2	-I feel that I am obliged to use the WbWIP	1.6		39.3	59.0	3.557	0.59
10	3	Referring to the related websites is better than referring to books in the current technique		3.3	41.7	55.0	3.517	0.57
24	4	-Writing via the Internet is difficult	1.6	1.6	45.9	50.8	3.459	0.62
17	5	I like to have another writing course via the Internet			56.7	43.3	3.433	0.50
14	6	I interact with my colleagues easily with the WbWIP		10.0	40.0	50.0	3.400	0.67
18	7	Learning by WbWIP helps me communicate		6.6	47.5	45.9	3.393	0.61
22	8	- I feel worried when the WbWIP lesson comes		13.1	37.7	49.2	3.361	0.71
19	9	- Writing with the WbWIP is a waste of time	3.3	8.2	41.0	47.5	3.328	0.77
1	10	The WbWIP helps me write my paper better than the current technique		3.3	62.3	34.4	3.311	0.53
6	11	WbWIP provides me with more helpful information about the topic			70.5	29.5	3.295	0.46
12	12	I advise my colleagues to learn writing via this technique (WbWIP)		8.2	54.1	37.7	3.295	0.61
23	13	Writing with the WbWIP helps improve my creativity		6.6	59.0	34.4	3.279	0.58
21	14	Assigning a writing lesson via the Internet is very useful		3.3	66.7	30.0	3.267	0.52
8	15	The WbWIP provides me with better content than the traditional book	3.3	4.9	57.4	34.4	3.230	0.69
16	16	The current technique of writing is better than the WbWIP	8.2	8.2	37.7	45.9	3.213	0.91
9	17	-Writing with the WbWIP helps me write well organized subjects		4.9	68.9	26.2	3.213	0.52
15	18	I liked the technique my teacher uses to help me with the WbWIP	1.6	6.6	62.3	29.5	3.197	0.63
7	19	When I use the WbWIP I think of more ideas than the current technique	6.6	6.6	49.2	37.7	3.180	0.83
13	20	I get better scores with the WbWIP		6.6	73.8	19.7	3.131	0.50
3	21	My English vocabulary items develop as a result of WbWIP		8.2	77.0	14.8	3.066	0.48
2	22	My English writing improves as a result of the WbWIP	1.6	6.6	77.0	14.8	3.049	0.53
4	23	My grammar, spelling and punctuation become better because of using the WbWIP		14.8	68.9	16.4	3.016	0.56
5	24	I spend more time writing my papers with the WbWIP	6.7	10.0	61.7	21.7	2.983	0.77
		Whole Scale	3.8	7.1	55.4	37.2	3.284	0.26

Table 8 shows that the overall responses came within the degree of agreement (Agree). The items of the opinionaire were classified under the two degrees of agreement as the following:

a. Within the degree of approval "Strongly Agree": items (1, to 3) were classified with the mean scores ranged between 3.7% to 3.6% ranked in a descending order.

Within the degree of approval "Agree": items (4 to 24) were classified with the mean scores that ranged between 3.5% to 2.9% in descending order.

Discussion, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This study was an attempt to investigate the students' opinions and linguistic messages toward using a web-based writing instructional program.

Discussion of the results related to the first question

This question investigated students' linguistic messages during the sessions of the web-based writing. The researchers recorded the students' linguistic messages sent to both teachers and peers concerning all discoursal components(content, organization and mechanics, vocabulary and language use).

Students were found to have sent many messages which affected their topics positively as they got direct feedback. Male and female students sent a lot of messages to both teachers and peers. Female students sent more messages than male students concerning all discoursal components (see Table 2). This might have affected the students' achievement in the post-test concerning the discoursal components: "content" and "vocabulary".

Moreover, both male and female students sent more messages to peers than to teachers. Female students sent more messages to peers than males. Sending more messages by females might have affected their achievement positively as they got better scores in almost all discoursal components. The researchers also thinks that sending more messages to peers by both male and female students stresses what methodologists and education experts always say about the role of the teacher as a facilitator, controller, helper and consultant. Students sent a lot of messages to peers because they might feel that they are away from the teachers' authority they experience in the current lesson. At the same time, students might consult the teacher when they could not find the right answer from their peers.

This result also stresses individualization as every student might love to have a work to do and cooperates with his/ her peers according to the necessary needs of work.

Discussion of the results related to the second question

This question investigated if students had positive opinions towards using the Internet in learning the writing skill. Students were found to have positive opinions towards using the Internet in the classroom writing.

This result is consistent with, Bani Hani (2009) who adopted computerized programs for teaching English and with Tsuo Wenli (2008) who adopted a web-based writing program and Yang (2004) who found that students had positive attitudes toward using the web-based writing.

As motivation is possibly the most important factor of success in second language learning (Jaradat, 2009), students who were taught writing via the Internet had positive opinions towards using it because they were motivated when they found that the Internet was an interesting technique and a powerful aid for learning writing, so they felt at ease, confident and happy, working with the WbWIP. Students' opinions were ranked as the following:

1. Items: (1, 2 and 3) came within the degree of "strongly agree". with the means of 3.51% to 3.65% in descending order, as they give the students' general impression about using the Internet in writing.
2. Items (4 to 24) came within the degree of "Agree" with the mean scores of 3.5% to 2.9%. These items represent the practical side of the WbWIP. They focus on activity and acquaintance.

The researchers believe that these opinions towards the web- based writing instructional program might be attributed to the following reasons:

(1) This web-based writing program was designed to be used easily and effectively. It does not require advanced computer skills.

(2) The role of the WbWIP teacher as a helper, facilitator and supervisor might have convinced the students to enjoy working with this program. The teacher found the time to interact with each student. Thus, the students had more chances to get individual assistance from the teacher. This is different from the current class where the teacher's role was much more authoritative.

(3) The cooperative way among students themselves and between them and their teachers, and the feedback given immediately might have affected the students' opinions positively.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the students' linguistic messages and opinions towards using the web in learning the writing skill. It was found that using the web in learning the writing skill motivated students which affect their achievement positively (Al-Abed Al-Haq and Al-Sobh, 2010). Moreover, the use of the web-based writing program encouraged the communication and interaction among students themselves and among students and teachers. Students felt excited, interested and happy during the time of work on the web-based writing program Furthermore, the direct feedback given to students after writing is of great importance to students who made necessary corrections which is better than doing the correction afterwards when the student forgets what he/she has written previously. In addition peer review seems to help teachers spend less time reading the students' topics.

Pedagogical implications

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

1. The Internet could be a useful tool in TEFL in teaching the writing skill.
2. The Internet could help shy students participate through sending messages to peers and teachers. The Internet could help shy students to participate through sending messages to peers and teachers.
3. The Internet might help learners by facilitating the process of learning through communication, interaction and direct feedback.
4. Teachers and instructors should be trained to teach writing via Internet at schools and universities.
5. Discoursal programs could be computerized and taught via Internet to help students develop an efficient composing process through writing.
6. Universities should provide a writing course via Internet.
7. Ministry of Education should train students to use the Internet in writing composition.
8. Ministry of Education should provide computerized material for teaching writing via Internet.

Recommendations for further research

Based on the results of the study, the researcher suggested the following recommendations:

1. Research should be conducted to investigate the students' linguistic messages and opinions toward the other English language skills (Listening, Speaking and Reading).
2. Conducting a similar study to investigate the students' linguistic messages and opinions of other classes and streams in other parts of Jordan.
3. Conducting a similar study at the university level.

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