

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



The Effect of Intensive Teaching of Conditional Sentences Type One on Iranian Grade Three High School Students' Writing Ability

[PP: 99-105]

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of intensive teaching of conditional sentences type one on Iranian grade three high school students' writing ability. To this end, to get the objective, 30 female grade three level high school students with the age range of 16 at Shahid Beheshti School in Goorabzarmikh, SomeSara, Iran were selected from 80 students based on their performance on Quick Placement Test. They were randomly divided into two groups, an experimental and a control. Those in the experimental group received eight-session treatment that was the use of intensive teaching of the conditional sentence type one and, on the other hand, those in the control group received eight-session through normal regular teaching method. In normal regular teaching method, teacher used textbooks and traditional method in teaching the grammatical points. A posttest was then administered to both groups. The results revealed that the experimental group that utilized intensive teaching of first conditional sentences made a noticeably higher progress in terms of their writing ability than the control one.

Keywords: *Conditional sentences, Intensive teaching, Writing skill*

ARTICLE INFO	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
	05/05/2018	10/06/2018	28/08/2018

Suggested citation:

Farhangi, B. & Pourmohammadi, M. (2018). The Effect of Intensive Teaching of Conditional Sentences Type One on Iranian Grade Three High School Students' Writing Ability. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 6(3), 99-105.

1. Introduction

Writing is the one of four skills that every language user needs to know how to use it and to know the importance of writing different texts, articles, books, and magazines and so on. According to So and Lee (2013, pp. 1-2), "as second language writing is considered very short complex for L2 learners, and a need for systematic and comprehensive writing instruction is heightened".

Troia (2007) believed that for teachers to be able to adeptly use a process approach, 90-minutes per week is bare minimum, but most teachers who espouse such an approach appears to be devoting less than that to their instruction. Similarly Graham, Harris, Fink, and MacArthur (2003) found that only slightly more than half of primary grade teachers across the nation reported making more than one or two instructional adaptations for struggling writers, and sometimes the adaptations were

counterproductive to promoting the development of skilled writing and motivation to write, including limiting the degree to which students paced their own writing efforts, selected their own topics, and worked peers.

To a school student the word grammar means analytical and terminological study of sentences. Knowledge of grammar helps students in the correction of mistakes and improvement of written work. Grammar is a sure ground of reference when linguistic habits fail us. So grammar is indispensable (Debata, 2013). The characteristic of writing, which create this impression vary from language to language. In English, one of the key factors in fluent writing, specially writing of conditional sentences is the order of information within the sentence, and in particular at the beginning of the sentence (Elloway, 2013).

1.1 Statement of the Problem



Many teachers use different tools to enhance their students' learning specially in writing skill. L2 writing is confronting a large number of linguistic problems with vocabulary items and sentence structures. L2 is a complicated skill and L2 learners need to know sufficient information of vocabulary and accurate sentence construction, but they write and revise the drafts several times and they are not satisfied with the writing process because of limited number of class sessions and insufficient time in class. For L2 learners who do not have sufficient knowledge of four writing components, content, organization, structure and mechanics L2 writing is very complicated.

Some students may have limited understanding of English structures, especially in understanding types of conditional sentences and this is because of that they may have limited grammatical knowledge and information. For the learners up to now there are many grammatical problems which are related to making different sentences on the basis of grammatical principles such as making different types of conditional sentences or making passive voice sentences and etc. Most students do not use grammatical structure accurately in school for example when they are asked to write an essay or a text which should use conditional sentences, they may make a mistake.

Novice and struggling writers do not know enough information about writing process and writing grammatically to make big picture changes (Shreman & Delapaz, 2015). They are reasons why poor writers are not adapting at making more substantive discourse-level revisions. One set of reasons pertains to cognitive and motivational issues, while another pertains to instructional issues (Troia, 2007).

For the learners, up to now little and marginal research have been carried out on the effect of intensive teaching conditional sentences type one on EFL learners' writing improvement. This research investigates the effect of intensive teaching conditional sentence type one on grade three high school students' writing ability. Although in writing simple text, L2 learners may use their own grammatical language (native language) and may intermix the learning of target language rules with their own language. Teachers should consider the ways to solve these problems, and use different techniques to prevent it and help them to write grammatical sentences accurately. Foreign

language learners find it painstaking to write the target language, producing less fluent sentences and encountering difficulties in the revision of their written work (Hyland, 2003), however, these difficulties are not only attributed to their linguistic abilities but they mostly lay in the nature of writing process itself (Chih, 2008).

1.2 Significance of the Study

Given a paucity of research about intensive teaching of conditional sentences type one on writing ability, the present study sought to provide ground for more accurate judgments to be made about the efficacy of intensive teaching of writing accurate grammatical texts and writing ability. This study is supposed to be helpful to increase the students' writing ability in the field of grammatical points especially in writing accurate conditional sentences type one.

In addition, the study helps the teachers to use creative ways to teach the students and evaluate them. This study will be efficient for students who want to learn language and for teachers in classrooms especially in senior high schools. The study will be useful for teachers in high schools to evaluate their students and apply suitable strategies in order to increase students' knowledge of language and their writing skill.

1.3 Research Question

This research seeks to find a practically justified answer to the following question:

Does the intensive teaching of first conditional sentences produce a statistically significant effect on Iranian grade three high school students' writing ability?

2. Literature Review

One crucial step in elevating the status of writing instruction and its associated research is to identify what we know and where we need to know to invest further effort for the field to flourish and draw attention it deserves from various stakeholders. To that end there are summarized research findings in four areas: characteristics of struggling writers' products and processes, essential instruction content and process, assessment, and teachers' practices and professional development (Troia, 2007).

Wilder and Mongillo (2007) maintained that teacher educators have the dual responsibility to ensure that pre-service teachers can compose well-written expository text and that they are prepared to teach the skills to their students. Both state

and national standards articulate the importance of teaching and learning about expository text structures.

Nation and Macalister (2010) believed that focus on the product of communication, particularly in reading and writing can have a positive effect on language use. Feedback about the process of communication can be brought about valuable improvement in formal speaking, and in writing. The giving and receiving of feedback is an integral part of the process approach to writing. A key point for teachers to remember, however, is that the learners are required to do something with the feedback they receive (Chandler, 2003).

Hudson (2004) also believed that one of the most important pillars of the literacy strategy is that grammar should be closely integrated with writing activities. Grammar has been considered in both these roles: as a tool or resource that a writer uses, and also as a part of the outcome of the writing process.

In the terminology of theoretical linguistics, grammar shall be considered both as “competence” (knowledge) and “performance” (behavior or the product of the behavior in text)

2.1 Defining Intensive Teaching

Davies (2006) described intensive teaching models known as “accelerated”, “time-shortened”, “block format”, “compressed” course or “intensive modes of delivery (IMD) have been defined in various ways. Block teaching has been defined as: “a daily schedule that is organized into larger blocks of time (more than sixty minutes) to allow flexibility for diversity of instructional activities”. Block teaching is a practice more suited to the high school sector. It consists of longer than usual classes held during a conventional timetabled schedule.

The whole curriculum design process can be applied to something as small as an activity in a lesson. Alternatively, attention can be focused on just one part of the curriculum design process. It should be clear from this that curriculum design is not the exclusive possession of full-time curriculum designers. Teachers need to make decision relating to curriculum design in every lesson (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Mukundan, Mahvelati, Amin Din and Nimehchisalem (2013) have pointed out that in some learning teaching context where learners face time constraints in learning the language skills, intensive programs have emerged. The aim of these courses is to facilitate students’ learning of ESL writing skills in a shorter period. For example,

intensive teaching format was inevitable due to the fact that the subject were the low scoring students who needed more practice to catch up with their peer.

Advocates of intensive course assert that accelerated teaching programs have a significant effect on learners’ English knowledge development (Moghadam & Malekzadeh, 2011). The superiority of the outcome of intensive English program over regular courses has been corroborated in the in the related literature (Burton & Nesbit, 2002; Hong-nom & Leavel, 2006).

2.2 Conditional Sentence Type One

Our concern is every day conditionals, including all sentences of the form *if A then C* or *C if A*, where *A* and *C* are declarative clauses. Naive individuals can grasp the meaning of such assertions, and they can use it to reason.

The term naive refers to merely to people who have not studied logic in any depth. The conditional type one and two have separate core meanings that refer to sets of possibilities. Knowledge, pragmatics, and semantics can modulate these meanings (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 2002).

Johnson-laird and Byrne (2002) also believed that conditionals consistent with only a single possibility usually depend on common knowledge the speaker and hearer. These facts of the matter can be expressed either literally or ironically. Kufman (2005) distinguished between predictive and non-predictive readings of conditionals. The predictive differ from the non-predictive in that the antecedent 1) carries the certain condition when used in isolation, but not in the conditional, and 2) refers to a state of affairs that is not yet “manifest” or “verifiable” at speech time. He took (1) and (2) to be reflections of the same semantic properly.

Hasselgard (2016) explained that the conditionals are analyzed for syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, i.e. syntactic position of the conditional clause, verb forms used in hypothetical or pragmatic. Delereck and Reed (2001) believed that conditional constructions are two-clause structures in which one of the clauses is introduced by *if* or by a word or phrase that have a meaning similar to *if*. The construction relates two situations to each other in such a way that one clause contains a condition for some aspect of a situation offered by the other clause. Conditional constructions can be paratactic, but are typically hypotactic. In hypotactic constructions the conditional can be headed



by a conjunction or it can be marked by subject-operator inversion.

Barraouillet (2011, p. 152) stated that “conditional reasoning is the reasoning permitted by propositions containing the connector *If*. Though *If* can be used in several different syntactic structures like “*Ifthen*”, “*.....only if*”, “*If and only ifthen.....*”, “*.....if.....*” ”. Barraouillet (2011) concentrated on the form “*If.....then*” as in “If an animal is a dog, then it has legs”, which has been the most studied. A variety of tasks has been used to assess how individuals understand and reason from this type of sentence.

The logical form typically assigned to conditionals in the philosophical literature is $A > C$.

In this formal expression *A* is normally taken to represent the antecedent, *C* the consequent, and given the need to locate the binary connective $>$, the natural candidate seems to be *if*. But linking the form $A > C$ in this way to real conditionals sentences is for a couple of linguistic reasons not conceiving (Schulz, 2013). Schulz (2013) stated that the syntax of conditionals clearly differs from the syntax of complex sentences formed using coordinators like *and* and *or*. Conditionals are no coordinated clause, but subordinated-main clause construction.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were selected based on their scores obtained from QPT (Quick Placement Test). The study was carried out with a sample of 80 females grade three level high school students with the age of 16, at Shahid Beheshti School in Goorabzarmikh, Somesara, Iran. The participants whose score were in the range of 20-28, were selected as the main sample of this study. They were randomly divided into two different groups. Both groups contained with 15 participants. The experimental group received the intensive teaching of conditional sentences type one as the treatment. On the other hand, the control group received normal regular teaching method.

3.2 Pilot Study

Before performing the pretest and posttest for the target participants, they were administered to five pre-intermediate level students with the same characteristics as the target sample. The pretest and posttest were piloted to inform the researcher about the possible problems of the instrument and to

avoid wasting time with the participants selected inappropriately.

3.3 Pretest

A pretest was administered before the treatment to consider the probable initial differences existing between the groups with regard to their writing ability. The test that was administered to the students as the pretest included 40 items selected from English Book 3 and Iran Language Institute Book in pre-intermediate level (Appendix A).

3.4 Posttest

The posttest was identical to the pretest but with a slight rearrangement of the items was administered to the participants. The aim of this rearrangement was controlling the possible testing effect (Appendix B).

3.5 Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Before giving the pretest to the main participants, a pilot study was done. The pretest was given to 5 pre-intermediate level students with the same characteristics of the target sample in order for to predict the potential problems of instruments and to make sure that the time was not being wasted with inappropriate participants. The estimated values of Cornbach’s Alpha for both the pretest and the posttest of writing ability were exceeded 70 (α pretest = 0.78, and α posttest = 0.75). Then a writing pretest was administered in order to find out the potential initial difference of participants’ writing ability between the experimental and control groups.

In this study the pretest was the sections of the test ILI pre-intermediate book and test English book 3 (ILI & EB3 test) and contained 40 items. The allowed time for the pretest was 50 minutes. Paired-samples use this pattern in all t-test was run to find out any possible initial differences between the performance of participants in the experimental and control group in the pretest. After making sure of the homogeneity of the group with respect to their writing ability, the experimental group followed intensive teaching of conditional sentence type one. Inversely, the control group used normal regular teaching.

The treatment was given to the experimental group which included intensive teaching of conditional type one. It was designed to teach conditional sentences type 1 within eight-session in 40 minutes. In addition, in the treatment, other minor grammatical points and new words were

taught to the experimental group. On the other hand, for the control group, where other grammatical points such as word orders, present and past tenses, were taught within one hour in eight-session.

After carrying out the treatment, the posttest piloted before with reliability of 0.75 was given to participants in order to inspect the result and to measure the progress from the pretest to the posttest and effectiveness of the treatment in the experimental group.

Considerably, the posttest was the same as the pretest except for the rearrangement of the item was controlling the potential testing effect. The score for the pretest and the posttest were between 0-40. The paired-samples t-test was run to compare the mean of two groups from the pretest to the posttest.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Data Analysis and Findings

First, the reliability of the writing tests was estimated through running Cronbach's Alpha to the results of the writing tests in a pilot study with five participants. The estimated values of Cronbach's Alpha for the pretest of writing came to ($\alpha = 0.78$), that for the posttest amounted to ($\alpha = 0.75$) which were both considered "acceptable" values according to the reliability standards suggested by Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott (1994) as indicated in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for the Writing Test (Adopted from Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott, 1994)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	N of sample
Writing Test (pretest) .78	40	5
Writing Test (posttest) .75	40	5

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for the Writing Test (Adopted from Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott, 1994)

Interpretation	Reliability indices
Good	.80
Acceptable	.70
Marginal	.60
Poor	.50

4.2 Inferential Analyses of the Data

For the pretest scores, the findings showed that there was no significant difference in the scores for the control group ($M = 20.06$, $SD = 1.53$) and the experimental group ($M = 20.80$, $SD = 2.67$; $t(28) = .92$, $p = .365$, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.47, 95% CI: -.89 to 2.36) was small (Eta squared = .0293). In other words, the two groups were

approximately at the same level of proficiency in terms of their foreign language writing ability in the administered test at the beginning of the study.

For the posttest scores, since the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column was less than .05, there was a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable (posttest scores) for each of the two groups. In this study, the Sig. (2-tailed) value was (.004). As this value was lower than the required cut-off of (.05), it could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean of the posttest of writing for the control group ($M = 20.40$, $SD = 1.24$) and the experimental group ($M = 23.13$, $SD = 3.15$) at the end of the study ($t(28) = 3.11$, $p = .004$, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 4.07, 95% CI: .93 to 4.52) was small (Eta squared = .2567).

The guidelines (proposed by Cohen 1988, pp. 284-7) for interpreting this value are .1 = small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect. Expressed as a percentage, 25.67 percent of the variance in the posttest scores of writing could be explained by types of treatment. The experimental group who received intensive instruction on conditional type one outperformed the control group who worked on grammar traditionally. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that intensive teaching of first conditional sentences had statistically significant effect on Iranian grade three high school students' writing ability test as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics for the Pretest and the Posttest of Writing for the Two Groups

Groups		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Experimental	Pair 1	Pretest scores	20.8000	15	2.67795	.69144
		Posttest scores	23.1333	15	3.15926	.81572
Control	Pair 2	Pretest scores	20.0667	15	1.53375	.39601
		Posttest scores	20.4000	15	1.24212	.32071

Table 4: Paired Samples Test for the Pretest and the Posttest of Writing for the Two Groups

Groups		Paired Differences	Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	SD	Lower	Upper			
Experimental	Pair 1	Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-2.33	1.29	-3.04	-1.61	-7.00	14	.000
			Control	Pair 2	Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-.33	.81	-.78	.11

The outstanding point of this study clarified was to analyze the effectiveness of intensive teaching of conditional sentences



type one on Iranian grade three high school students' writing ability in Shahid Beheshti high school in Goorabzarmikh, SomeSara, Iran. The results of this study are in line with the results of other studies such as Walter (2014), Ruth and Guinee (2011) and Harris and Dubibhr (2011) which concerning the use of intensive teaching in improving the writing skill and language learning. In the other words, the results of the present study ascertain previous findings in the field which have revealed the effect of the intensive teaching on students' writing ability. The results of this study are in line with the results of the study done by Walter (2014) who indicated that 15 minutes a day of intensive teaching of interactive writing, improve students' interactive writing ability and their writing skill, and they are able to transfer what was learned in the intervention across other areas. The reason for intensive teaching is that the students will be in a setting which they learn how to use self-regulation procedures and how to plan and revise different texts, and how to use their memory to keep track, and also the intensive teaching strengths their motivation in the field of learning language and in writing the texts and enhances their communicative activities.

The findings are also in agreement with the study carried out by Roth and Guinee (2011) who indicated that ten minutes a day of the intensive instruction for students in the interactive condition; makes them obtain greater progress on a measure of independent writing. The reason of effectiveness of the intensive teaching is that it enhances the independence and autonomy in writing correct sentence and motivates the students to use self-correction in writing different texts in terms of grammar accuracy and better communication. It is as the present study which showed that the students outperformed in writing text in terms of grammatical accuracy.

5. Conclusion

This research tried to examine the effectiveness of teaching of first conditional sentence in improving writing ability of grade three high school students. The findings of the study ascertain that intensive teaching has positive effects on the students' writing ability. Based on the results of this study, the experimental group who received the intensive teaching of first conditional sentences made more progress in the posttest of writing ability, and led to more

proficiency in writing ability among Iranian grade three high school students.

Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected. Generally, this study opens a new way for Iranian students use their ability and skills in writing accurate grammatical text, and in order to interact with each other effectively. This study recommends applying the intensive teaching of first conditional sentences for grade three high school students that helps them to learn better and obtain more proficiency in writing different accurate grammatical texts.

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