



## Scrutinizing The Utility of Flipped and Online Instructions for Ameliorating EFL Learners' Writing Ability

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

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Flipped instruction constitutes an approach to language teaching that prompts the teachers to give priority to the learners' active engagement in second language interaction by assigning them to examine their instructional lectures outside the context of the classroom. The present study made an endeavor to determine the degree to which online and flipped approaches to writing instruction affected the EFL learners' writing ability. To this end, first, the researchers selected 75 intermediate-level female EFL learners in three intact classrooms of a private language institute in Urmia (Iran) as the participants. Second, the researchers administered the writing pretest of the study to all of the groups. Third, they used the Adobe Connect learning management system to provide the online and flipped groups with the pertinent writing instruction treatment in ten sessions. Nonetheless, they provided the control group with in-person writing instruction. Fourth, they administered the immediate and delayed writing posttests of the study to all of the groups immediately after the termination of the treatment sessions and one month subsequent to the end of treatment respectively. Finally, they used SPSS 24 to perform the data analysis. Based on the obtained results, although both the online and flipped approaches had immediate and delayed positive impacts on the participants' writing ability, the flipped approach was more beneficial than the online. The results may provide EFL teacher educators, course developers, syllabus designers, and teachers with guiding principles regarding the uses of online and flipped courses in foreign language contexts.  
**Keywords:** flipped instruction; online instruction; writing ability

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## 1. Introduction

It can be said that flipped instruction and learning is one of the most exhilarating advancements in modern times. Flipped instruction is a rather recent strategy and somehow a type of blended learning. Its goal is to enhance learners' engagement by having them complete their assignments at home. By so doing, the learners can have ample time in the classroom to work on tasks during the class period. Generally, flipped instruction is a methodology in which the instructor prioritizes effective learning throughout class time. In traditional instruction, the teacher is the focus of attention, the leader, and the dissemination of knowledge and information. However, in flipped instruction, the teacher answers learners' questions, guides them, and provides them with feedback. The flipped instruction purposefully shifts the focus of attention to learners who are usually introduced to different topics outside of school. Therefore, it frees up classroom time for the study of topics more thoroughly and initiates elaborate learning opportunities. In a flipped classroom, content may be delivered in a variety of forms, e.g., video lessons, power points, etc. Meanwhile, digital research, text readings, and online collaborative discussions may alternatively be used.

Another recent innovation is online education which is an instructional model where learners and teachers communicate with one another and deal with educational issues. There is no in-person communication because tasks, readings, and lectures are provided on the Internet.

**Mainly**, the online classroom is usually a more active learning milieu. Learners have to work to gain information. It is in fact through participation and interaction that the learners take an active and important role in course delivery and material. One of the main drawbacks of online courses is the teachers' challenge of establishing communication with the students in real-time exchanges.

**Nonetheless, one of the advantages of** online courses **is that** the learners set their own pace for the work that needs to be accomplished. The learners usually have a bit of flexibility in deciding where and at what time they are able to participate, though there are generally deadlines and due dates that imperatively must be met.

Online learning has emerged as a flexible and popular alternative to face-to-face learning and teaching. It brings about educational opportunities to learners with time, geographic, or other constraints that make in-person education impossible or difficult to pursue. It also provides an alternative option to those who favor online learning's instructional delivery method and flexibility.

Therefore, this study makes an endeavor to determine the role of the flipped and online approaches in the betterment of Iranian EFL students' writing skills. To this end, it strived to answer the ensuing questions:

- 1) Do online and flipped writing instruction approaches have a significant immediate impact on intermediate-level EFL learners' writing ability?
- 2) Do online and flipped writing instruction approaches have a significant delayed impact on intermediate-level EFL learners' writing ability?

## 2. Literature Review

A close perusal of the pertinent literature (e.g., Buitrago & Díaz, 2018; Chuang et al., 2018; Sergis et al., 2018) indicates that researchers have focused on the concept of *learner engagement* in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the past decades. Hsieh et al. (2017) maintain that language learner engagement characterizes the degree to which a learner makes an endeavor to take part in the learning tasks and strives to ameliorate the quality of his/her interaction and collaboration with his/her peers in diverse academic contexts.

The description of learner engagement indicates that it is affected by numerous learner factors and contextual factors in language classrooms (He et al., 2016). Among the various factors which influence the engagement, *classroom time* and language teachers' *classroom management skills* have attracted considerable attention in the field of SLA (Ferreri & O'Connor, 2013). The interest in these factors stems from the fact that the language teachers' ability to control them has an extremely beneficial and advantageous impact on learner engagement in different language learning tasks (Lee & Wallace, 2018). This issue has prompted a number of researchers (e.g., Alghasab, 2020; Su Ping et al., 2019) to adopt more state-of-the-art approaches to language instruction including the *online* and *flipped* language teaching approaches which are likely to effectively ameliorate the language learners' engagement in the process of language acquisition compared to the traditional in-person classes.

Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018) argue that online language instruction constitutes a language teaching approach that encompasses multitudinous modes of technology-mediated language instruction. As they explain, online language courses provide learners with language instruction by means of different Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and empower them to interact with their language teacher and peers using diverse features of these systems including camera, microphone, screen-sharing, and file-sharing features among others. Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018) point out that the interest in online courses stems from the fact that they facilitate the language teachers' management of classroom activities and tasks and enable them to allot adequate classroom time to each of their language learners in their virtual classrooms.

Notwithstanding, as Hung (2018) remarks, online language courses suffer from certain disadvantages in specific language teaching contexts. Afrilyasanti et al. (2016) note that the major difficulty with this approach in diverse

language learning contexts (especially foreign language learning contexts) is the lack of necessary infrastructure. More specifically, the unsatisfactory state of the Internet connection and the multitudinous server-based issues may impede the use of online instruction in different settings. As Sergis et al. (2018) point out, the above-mentioned problems have promoted the SLA researchers (e.g., Leis et al., 2015) to take advantage of flipped approach in various language learning settings.

Tse et al. (2019) describe the flipped approach as the approach to language learning which facilitates and expedites the students' learning of the various skills of the second language by providing them with lecture-based online instructional materials and focusing on their active engagement and participation in the context of the in-person classes. They explain that the flipped approach may have a beneficial impact on the learners' acquisition of the target language due mainly to the fact that it enhances the learners' enjoyment during the process of language learning, ameliorates their independence in the process of task performance, and promotes their discovery learning.

Likewise, Fauzan and Ngabut (2018) averred that flipped instruction constitutes a more beneficial approach compared to traditional language teaching methods due to certain reasons. As they explained, first, this approach provides the students with various acquisition styles (e.g., visual) with the opportunity to engage in second language interaction. Second, it empowers the learners to learn the various aspects of the target language at their own pace and encourages them to evaluate their progression toward the development of second language competence. Lastly, as they noted, this approach takes advantage of hands-on tasks and ameliorates the learners' discovery learning in the context of the classroom.

In addition, as Hung (2015) pointed out, the flipped approach to language instruction is preferable to the traditional methods owing to the fact that it suits the needs of learners who are not able to attend in-person classes on a regular basis. Moreover, Hung (2015) explained that this approach empowers the students to use both peer feedback and teacher feedback in an effective way and expedites their interlanguage development. Lastly, as he noted, the flipped approach improves the learners' self-efficacy by making them cognizant of their capability to perform diverse language learning tasks in an independent way outside the context of the classroom.

Similarly, Pavanelli (2018) highlighted the learner-centered nature of flipped language teaching and noted that this approach gives priority to the satisfaction of the learners' educational needs and takes account of the cognitive and affective student variables that influence language acquisition. Furthermore, he argued that this approach prompts the learners to formulate and implement effective language learning strategies in the process of task

performance. As he concluded, there is a need for more empirical studies of this approach in different language learning contexts.

A careful scrutiny of the pertinent literature indicates that SLA researchers have focused on specific issues regarding the online and flipped approaches to the exclusion of others. First, most of the studies have focused on either the online approach (e.g., Mahmoudi-Dehaki et al., 2021; Rahimi et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2013; Xu & Qi, 2017) or the flipped approach (e.g., Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Sergis, Sampson, & Pelliccione, 2018; Tse, Choi, & Tang, 2019). That is, they have barely compared the utility of these approaches in various academic settings. Second, a large number of studies (e.g., Khalifeh et al., 2022; Leis et al., 2015; Shekhipour et al., 2021; Shooli et al., 2021; Su Ping et al., 2019; Yousofi & Bashiri, 2023) have examined the immediate effects of the online or flipped courses on the students' acquisition of the various features of the target language and have disregarded the long-term effectiveness of these approaches in the process of language acquisition. Finally, a group of studies (e.g., Khosravani et al., 2020) have investigated the impacts of the online and flipped approaches on the learners' individual factors (e.g., motivation) and have not examined their efficacy for teaching language skills including writing skills among others. This study made an effort to resolve the above-mentioned issues in the EFL context of Iran.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

Considering the above-mentioned aims, the researchers took advantage of convenience sampling to select 75 intermediate-level female EFL learners as the participants (in three intact classrooms) from among 421 students of a language institute in Urmia (Iran). These Turkish learners were in the age range of 14 to 20. Furthermore, they had taken general English courses at the selected institute for nearly three years. The researchers obtained informed written consent from all of the participants prior to the onset of the study.

#### 3.2. Instrumentation

##### 3.2.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

In this study, the researchers took advantage of Allan's (2004) OPT to select the EFL learners as the participants of the study. OPT involves three main sections including *grammar*, *vocabulary*, and *cloze test*. Furthermore, each of the pertinent sections of this test involves 20 multiple-choice items. Allan (2004) notes that the statistical analyses have shown that the test is a reliable (.84) and valid (.89) test. Nevertheless, the researchers took advantage of Cronbach's alpha measure to determine the reliability of this test prior to the onset of the study. Based on the obtained results, this test was a reliable (.81) test. Therefore, it was utilized in this study.

### **3.2.2. Writing Instruction Textbook**

Considering the underlying intention of this study, the researchers used the textbook entitled *Becoming an Academic Writer* (Goodson, 2012) in order to provide the groups with writing instruction during the treatment sessions. This textbook facilitates language learners' development of their writing skills by adopting a step-by-step approach to writing instruction. Moreover, it enables the students to review the diverse stages of the writing process by providing them with multitudinous exercises which have to be completed on a weekly basis.

### **3.2.3. Writing Assessment Framework**

In this study, the researchers used the Writing Assessment Framework (Brown & Bailey, 1984) in order to assess EFL learners' writing ability on the writing pretest and the immediate and delayed writing posttests of the present study. This framework involved three main sections including *style*, *structure*, and *writing mechanics*. It empowered the researchers to objectively assess each of the above-mentioned aspects of the writing tasks on a 20-point scale. The researchers examined the inter-rater reliability index using Cohen's kappa measure. Based on the obtained results, the inter-rater reliability index ( $k = .82$ ) was satisfactory.

### **3.2.4. Writing Pretest**

Based on the overriding aim of the research, the authors developed a writing pretest based on the writing topics of the textbook entitled *Becoming an Academic Writer* (Goodson, 2012) in order to examine the EFL learners' writing skills before the onset of the study. This test prompted the participants to write a 250-word paragraph based on the relevant instructions in about 40 minutes. The researchers used the Writing Assessment Framework (Brown & Bailey, 1984) to assess the participants' performances on this test.

### **3.2.5. Immediate and Delayed Writing Posttests**

To examine the effectiveness of the treatment of this study, the researchers took advantage of an immediate writing posttest and a delayed writing posttest which were administered to the participants immediately after the termination of the treatment sessions and one month after the end of the treatment sessions respectively. These tests were parallel to the writing pretest of the study. More specifically, both of them were developed based on the writing topics of *Becoming an Academic Writer* (Goodson, 2012). Moreover, they prompted the learners to write a 250-word paragraph based on the test instructions in 40 minutes. The Writing Assessment Framework (Brown &

Bailey, 1984) was utilized for rating the EFL learners' performances on these tests.

### **3.2.6. LMS**

In this study, the researchers used the Adobe Connect LMS in order to provide the online group and the flipped group with their relevant treatments. This system enables its users to take advantage of various features including *public chat, private chat, screen-sharing, file-sharing camera, and microphone* features in a user-friendly interface in online and flipped classes. It constituted the regular system of the selected language institute. Consequently, all of the language learners were familiar with its features. Nonetheless, the researchers provided the selected participants with a ten-minute instructional video to ensure that all of them were able to use the various features of this learning management system in an appropriate way.

### **3.3. Design**

The researchers used the quasi-experimental design to carry out the study. As Mackey and Gass (2016) point out, the researchers use this design to scrutinize the impact of independent variables on dependent variables when they are not able to take advantage of random assignment. Accordingly, in this study, the researchers made an endeavor to examine the impacts of online and flipped writing instruction approaches (i.e. independent variables) on the EFL learners' second language writing ability (i.e. dependent variable). Notwithstanding, they were not able to randomly assign the participants to the experimental groups and the control group and used the intact classes.

### **3.4. Procedures**

In this study, first, the researchers selected the relevant language institute in Urmia (Iran) due mainly to the fact that it offered online, flipped, and in-person classes to language learners and constituted an optimal research site based on the primary objectives of the study. Second, they contacted the management department of the relevant language institute, informed the manager of the objectives of the present study, and obtained his consent to the study. Third, they used OPT in order to select 75 EFL learners in three intact classes (i.e. 25 learners in each class) as the participants. These classes were randomly selected from among the online, flipped, and in-person classes of the relevant institute. They were named the online, the flipped, and the control group based on their course types. The researchers obtained written informed consent from all of the participants in these groups. Fourth, they administered the writing pretest to the groups prior to the onset of the treatment sessions. More specifically, they used the Adobe Connect LMS to administer this test to the online and flipped groups. On the other hand, they used the pen and paper

version of this test in the control group. The learners took this test in 40 minutes.

Fifth, during the treatment sessions, the researchers provided the online group and the flipped group (i.e. the experimental groups) with online and flipped writing instruction respectively in ten sessions in a 5-week period of time (i.e. 2 sessions per week). More specifically, in the online group, the researchers provided the learners with writing instruction using the Adobe Connect LMS and prompted them to perform the relevant paragraph writing tasks of each session in 40 minutes during their class time. On the other hand, in the flipped group, the researchers used the Adobe Connect LMS to provide the learners with writing instruction using PDF, audio, and video files which had to be studied and scrutinized prior to the in-person sessions. Moreover, they answered the learners' questions regarding the content of the PDF, audio, and video files in the in-person sessions and supervised the learners' paragraph writing tasks which had to be completed in 40 minutes during their class time. Notwithstanding, the control group was not provided with the online or flipped writing instruction treatments. More specifically, the researchers provided the learners with writing instruction in in-person classes and asked them to perform the pertinent writing tasks in 40 minutes during the same period of time.

Sixth, the researchers used the Adobe Connect LMS to administer the immediate and delayed writing posttests of the study to the online group and the flipped groups immediately after the termination of the treatment sessions and one month subsequent to the end of these sessions respectively. Notwithstanding, they used the pen and paper version of these tests in the control group. All of the groups took these tests in 40 minutes. Finally, SPSS 24 was employed for analyzing the obtained data.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The researchers had to select the appropriate tests to analyze the obtained data. To this end, they examined the characteristics of the collected data. The independence of the collected data along with their interval nature and normality showed that the researchers could use parametric tests. Considering these results, the researchers used the paired-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA test for analyzing the data. Moreover, they had to make sure that the groups were homogeneous. To this end, they compared their pretest performances. Table 1 shows these results:

**Table 1**

*Performances of the Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on the Writing Pretest*

	M	SD	SE	95% CIM		Minimum	Maximum
				LB	UB		
Online Group	34.60	5.050	1.010	32.52	36.68	26	44



Flipped Group	33.88	5.696	1.139	31.53	36.23	26	43
Control Group	33.76	4.746	.949	31.80	35.72	26	44
Total	34.08	5.122	.591	32.90	35.26	26	44

Moreover, Levene's test showed that the variances were homogeneous (Sig. = .263) and the researchers scrutinized the ANOVA test's results. Table 2 presents the relevant results:

**Table 2**

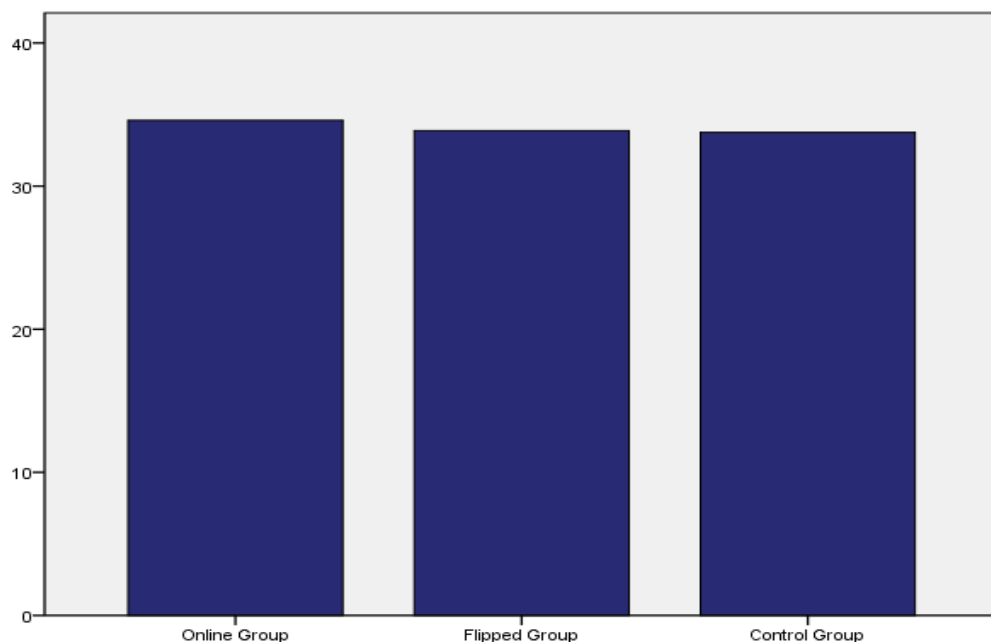
*ANOVA Test of the Performances of the Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on the Writing Pretest*

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
BG	10.320	2	5.160	.192	.825
WG	1931.200	72	26.822		
Total	1941.520	74			

According to Table 2, these groups were homogenous ( $p < 0.05$ ). Figure 1 delineates these results:

**Figure 1**

*Pretest Performances of the Online, Flipped, and Control Groups*



Therefore, the researchers analyzed the obtained data. The first question made an effort to specify the degree to which the online and flipped approaches

influenced the learners' writing ability immediately after the termination of the treatment. Based on this objective, the paired-sample test was utilized to determine the utility of the above-mentioned writing instruction approaches. A comparison of the online group's performance on the pretest and immediate posttest of writing can be seen in Table 3:

**Table 3**  
*The Online Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Immediate Writing Posttest*

	M	N	SD	SEM
Pretest	34.60	25	5.050	1.010
Immediate Posttest	43.24	25	2.260	.452

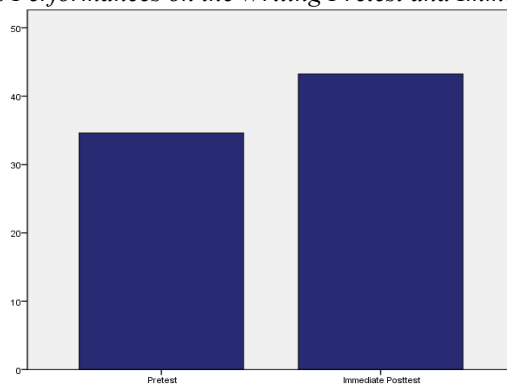
The researchers used a paired-sample t-test to examine the significance of the difference between the performances of this group. Table 4 shows the results of this test:

**Table 4**  
*The Online Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Immediate Writing Posttest*

	PD					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD	SEM	95% confidence				
				L	U			
Pretest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Immediate Posttest	8.640	4.803	.961	-10.623	6.657	-8.993	24	.000

As shown in Table 4, the online writing instruction significantly improved the EFL learners' writing ability immediately after the termination of the treatment sessions ( $p < .05$ ). Figure 2 shows these results:

**Figure 2**  
*The Online Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and Immediate Writing Posttest*



Similarly, the performances of the flipped group were compared on the pretest and immediate posttest. The results are provided in Table 5:

**Table 5**  
*The Flipped Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Immediate Writing Posttest*

	M	N	SD	SEM
Pretest	33.88	25	5.696	1.139
Immediate Posttest	47.80	25	3.279	.656

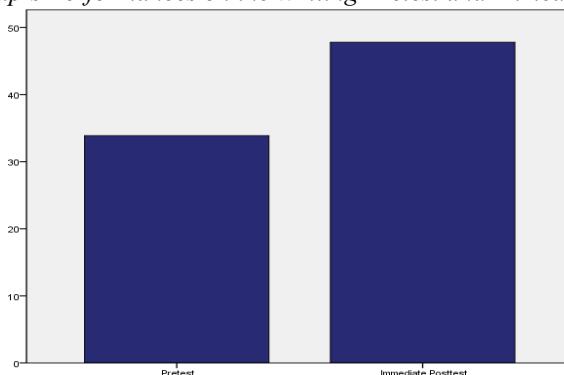
A paired-sample t-test was used to check the significance of the discrepancy between the performances of this group on the above-mentioned tests. Table 6 shows the relevant results:

**Table 6**  
*The t-test of the Flipped Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Immediate Writing Posttest*

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD	SEM	95% CID				
				L	U			
Pretest - Immediate Posttest	-13.920	6.370	1.274	-16.549	-11.291	10.926	24	.000

According to Table 6, flipped writing instruction had a significant immediate positive effect on the learners' writing ability ( $p < .05$ ). Figure 3 shows these results:

**Figure 3**  
*The Flipped Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and Immediate Writing Posttest*



The number two question made an attempt to examine the delayed effects of the online and flipped writing instruction approaches on learners' writing skills. Considering this aim, the results of the online group on the pretest and immediate posttest were compared. These results are provided in Table 7:

**Table 7**  
*The Online Group's Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Delayed Writing Posttest*

	M	N	SD	SEM
Pretest	34.60	25	5.050	1.010
Delayed Posttest	39.88	25	1.616	.323

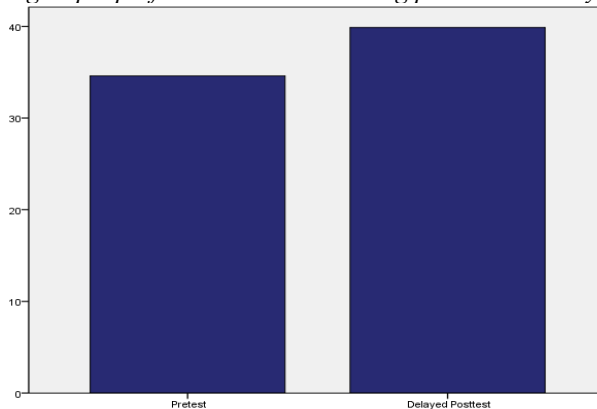
Using the paired-sample t-test, the researchers assessed the significance of the differences between these groups. These results are presented in Table 8:

**Table 8**  
*The t-test of the Performances of the Online Group on the Writing Pretest and the Delayed Writing Posttest*

	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	sd	SEM	95% CID			
			L	U			
Pretest - Delayed Posttest	-5.280	5.397	1.079	-7.508 -3.052	-4.892	24	.000

As shown in Table 8, online instruction had a significant delayed positive impact on learners' writing ability ( $p < .05$ ). The results are elucidated in Figure 4:

**Figure 4**  
*The online group's performance on the writing pretest and delayed writing posttest*



Similarly, the flipped group’s performance on the pretest and delayed posttest were compared. Table 9 shows the relevant results:

**Table 9**  
*The Flipped Group’s Performances on the Writing Pretest and the Delayed Writing Posttest*

	M	N	SD	SEM
Pretest	33.88	25	5.696	1.139
Delayed Posttest	43.44	25	3.441	.688

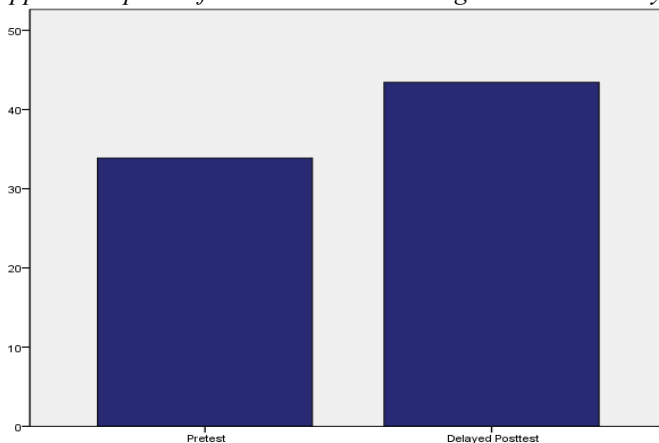
The researchers utilized a paired-sample t-test for determining the degree to which the differences between the performances of this group on these tests were significant. Table 10 shows these results:

**Table 10**  
*The Flipped Group’s Performance on the Writing Pretest and the Delayed Writing Posttest*

	PD				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD	SEM	95% CID L U			
Pretest - Delayed Posttest	-9.560	7.066	1.413	12.477 6.643	-6.765	24	.000

As shown in Table 10, flipped writing instruction had a significant delayed positive impact on the EFL students’ writing ability ( $p < .05$ ). Figure 5 shows these results:

**Figure 5**  
*The Flipped Group’s Performances on the Writing Pretest and Delayed Writing Posttest*



Finally, the third question attempted to determine the significant discrepancies between the immediate and delayed impacts of the online and flipped writing instruction approaches on learners’ writing ability. Accordingly, the groups’ performances on the immediate posttest were compared. These results are provided in Table 11:

**Table 11***The Online, Flipped, and Control Groups' Performances on the Immediate Writing Posttest*

	N	M	SD	SE	95% CIM		Minimum	Maximum
					LB	UB		
Online Group	25	43.24	2.260	.452	42.31	44.17	39	48
Flipped Group	25	47.80	3.279	.656	46.45	49.15	39	52
Control Group	25	35.72	4.248	.850	33.97	37.47	29	43
Total	75	42.25	6.011	.694	40.87	43.64	29	52

Moreover, the variances were homogeneous due to the fact that the results of Levene's test ( $p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, the ANOVA test could be examined. These results are shown in Table 12:

**Table 12***ANOVA Test of Performances of Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on Immediate Writing Posttest*

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
BG	1860.587	2	930.293	82.327	.000
WG	813.600	72	11.300		
Total	2674.187	74			

As shown in Table 12, the differences between the performances of the online, flipped, and control groups were significant ( $p < .05$ ). Notwithstanding, the post hoc Tukey test had to be checked whose results are presented in Table 13:

**Table 13***Post Hoc Tukey Test of Performances of Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on the Immediate Writing Posttest*

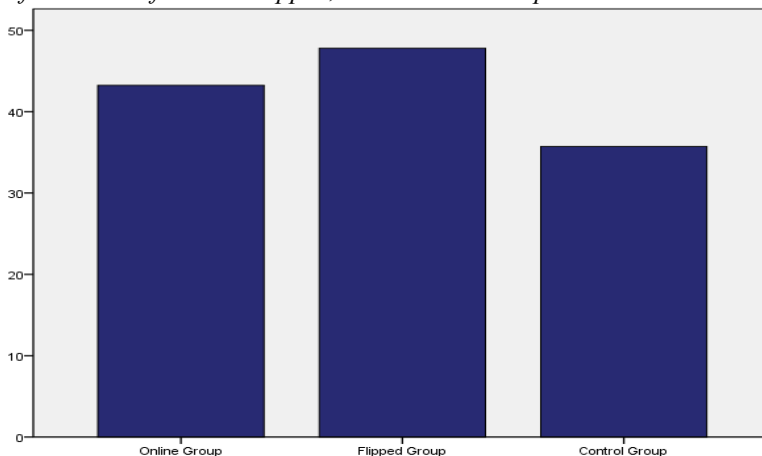
(I) Groups Immediate	(J) Groups Immediate	MD (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% CI	
					LB	UB
Online Group	Flipped Group	-4.560*	.951	.000	-6.84	-2.28
	Control Group	7.520*	.951	.000	5.24	9.80
Flipped Group	Online Group	4.560*	.951	.000	2.28	6.84
	Control Group	12.080*	.951	.000	9.80	14.36
Control Group	Online Group	-7.520*	.951	.000	-9.80	-5.24
	Flipped Group	-12.080*	.951	.000	-14.36	-9.80

According to Table 13, the differences between the groups were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). More specifically, the flipped group significantly outperformed both the online group and the control group. Furthermore, the performance of the online group on this test was more satisfactory than the control group. These results are supported by the asterisk marks on the *Mean*

Differences in a column of this table. Figure 6 shows the above-mentioned results:

**Figure 6**

*Performances of Online Flipped, and Control Groups on Immediate Writing Posttest*



Moreover, a comparison was carried out on the performances on the part of all the groups on the delayed writing posttest. Table 14 shows these results:

**Table 14**

*Performances of Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on Delayed Writing Posttest*

	N	M	SD	SE	95% CIM		Minimum	Maximum
					LB	UB		
Online Group	25	39.88	1.616	.323	39.21	40.55	38	43
Flipped Group	25	43.44	3.441	.688	42.02	44.86	39	50
Control Group	25	34.12	3.844	.769	32.53	35.71	28	40
Total	75	39.15	4.942	.571	38.01	40.28	28	50

Furthermore, the variances were homogeneous due to Levene’s test ( $p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, the ANOVA test was examined. Table 15 shows these results:

**Table 15**

*ANOVA test of Performances of Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on Delayed Writing Posttest*

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
BG	1105.947	2	552.973	56.760	.000
WG	701.440	72	9.742		
Total	1807.387	74			

According to Table 15, the differences between the performances of online flipped, and control groups were significant ( $p < .05$ ). Notwithstanding, the post hoc Tukey test had to be checked. Table 16 shows the results of this test:

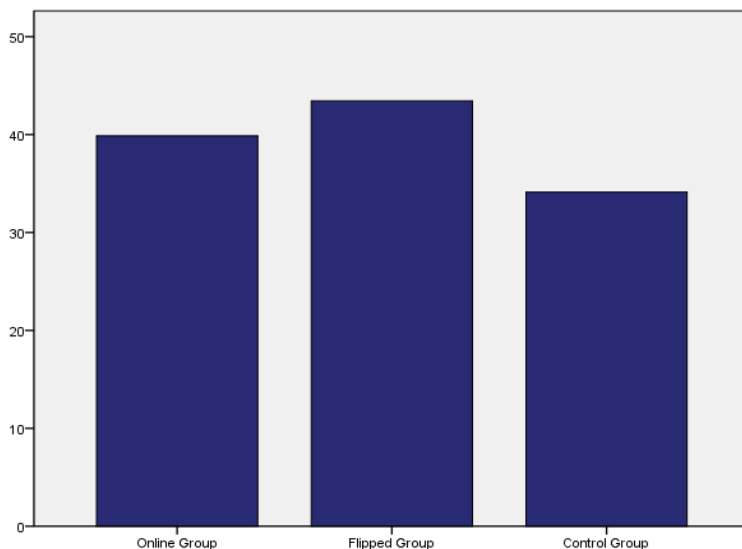
**Table 16**

*Post Hoc Tukey Test of Performances of Online, Flipped, and Control Groups on the Delayed Writing Posttest*

(I) Groups Delayed	(J) Groups Delayed	MD (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% CI	
					LB	UB
Online Group	Flipped Group	-3.560*	.883	.000	-5.67	-1.45
	Control Group	5.760*	.883	.000	3.65	7.87
Flipped Group	Online Group	3.560*	.883	.000	1.45	5.67
	Control Group	9.320*	.883	.000	7.21	11.43
Control Group	Online Group	-5.760*	.883	.000	-7.87	-3.65
	Flipped Group	-9.320*	.883	.000	-11.43	-7.21

According to Table 16, the differences between these groups were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). That is, the flipped group significantly outperformed the online and control groups. Furthermore, the performance of the online group was more satisfactory than the control group. The asterisk scripts concerning the *Mean Differences* column of the mentioned table support these results. The above-mentioned results are shown in Figure 7:



**Figure 7***Performances of Online Flipped, and Control Groups on Delayed Writing Posttest*

## 4.2. Discussion

Question number one focused on the immediate impact of online and flipped approaches on EFL learners' writing ability. Based on the obtained results, both of these approaches significantly ameliorated the learners' writing skills immediately after the end of treatment sessions. In general, these results corroborate the findings of a number of studies including Wang et al. (2013), Li et al. (2014), Li et al. (2015), Zheng et al. (2013), Yilmaz (2017), Zarrinabadi and Ebrahimi (2018), Su Ping et al. (2019), Khodabandeh, and Tharirian (2020), Mahmoudi-Dehaki et al. (2021), Rahimi et al. (2021), and Ahmadi Safa and Zareian (2022). These studies highlighted the fact that both the online and flipped approaches had beneficial impacts on students' learning of the diverse aspects of a second language including the writing skill.

He et al. (2016) argue that both the online and flipped approaches to the teaching of a second language are likely to ameliorate the language learners' language acquisition due mainly to their engagement potentiality. They explained that the in-person classes deprive a certain number of the students of the opportunity to engage in the process of language learning due to the classroom logistical problems. Nonetheless, as they note, the online and flipped classes empower all the learners to engage in the above-mentioned process by interacting with their peers and teacher and by performing their tasks under their instructor's supervision. Likewise, LaFee (2013) points out that the online and flipped approaches to language instruction enable language teachers to take advantage of learner-centered language learning techniques which improve the language learners' cooperation in the context of the classroom. He notes that in

these approaches the language learners are provided with the opportunity to effectively take advantage of their peers' feedback compared to the in-person classes and can perform their language learning tasks in an acceptable way.

Considering the above-mentioned discussions, it can be maintained that in the present study online and flipped approaches had an advantageous immediate effect on learners' writing skills since they promoted their interaction, engaged them in the process of language acquisition, and prompted them to use their peers' feedback to perform the writing tasks and to develop their second language writing skill.

The second research question was concerned with the delayed impacts of online and flipped approaches on the learners' writing skills. On the basis of the results, both of these approaches significantly improved the language learners' writing ability one month after the termination of the treatment sessions. Generally, these results are in line with Roehl et al. (2013), Leis et al. (2015), Zhang et al. (2016), Zuo (2016), Karimi and Hamzavi (2017), Xu and Qi (2017), Yang (2017), Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018), Sergis et al. (2018), Xiao et al. (2018), Ye et al. (2018), Zou, and Xie (2019), Khosravani et al. (2020), and Heidari Tabrizi et al. (2023). These studies have argued that online and flipped courses are likely to have a long-lasting positive effect on language learners' acquisition of various features of the target language.

Tse et al. (2019) point out that both the online and flipped instructional approaches may enhance language learners' enjoyment in different academic settings. They note that, unlike the traditional in-person classes, these approaches to language teaching are not confined to the context of the classroom and empower the learners to continue language learning outside their academic contexts. According to them, this characteristic of the online and flipped courses results in their long-lasting effects on students' learning of the different aspects and skills of a pertinent second language. Similarly, Fisher et al. (2017) note that online and flipped instructions prompt language learners to develop critical thinking skills. According to them, the learners' development of these skills empowers them to relate new knowledge of the target language to their background knowledge in a meaningful and effective way and ameliorates their long-term language learning.

Considering the above-mentioned discussions, it can be stated that in this study the delayed positive impact of online and flipped instructional approaches on EFL learners' writing ability can be ascribed to their focus on continuous learning and critical thinking. That is, they improved the language learners' long-term learning of the writing skill by prompting them to take advantage of the language learning opportunities outside the context of the classroom and to develop critical thinking skills.

Lastly, the present study made an effort to determine the differences between the immediate and delayed impacts of the online and flipped instructional approaches to the teaching of writing on students' writing ability.

The results underlined the fact that flipped approach had more beneficial immediate and delayed impacts on learners' writing ability compared to the online approach. Generally, the above-mentioned results support the findings of the studies by Engin (2014), and Burke and Fedorek (2017). These studies showed that flipped courses were more effective in ameliorating the learners' reading skills compared to online courses.

Fisher et al. (2017) believe that flipped courses may be more efficacious for improving students' learning of the diverse features of a second language compared to online courses owing to their structure and flexibility. As they explain, the structure of these courses enables the learners to specify their weaknesses and helps them to deal with the challenging aspects of second language acquisition in an effective way. Moreover, Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018) point out that flipped courses adopt a discovery learning approach and prompt learners to become more independent in regard to the acquisition of the various features of the target language in comparison with the in-person and online courses. As they point out, this approach to learning empowers the learners to develop a proper understanding of the second language use in various academic settings. Finally, Sergis et al. (2018) note that the supremacy of the flipped courses over the online courses can be attributed to the fact that the structure of these courses is more congruent with the learning styles of language learners compared to the online courses. More specifically, they are more effective for users who prefer to engage in in-person interaction with their peers and instructor to analyze the materials which are provided to them using the LMS.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

This study strived to specify the immediate and delayed impacts of the online and flipped approaches to the teaching of writing on EFL learners' writing ability. Based on the findings, both of these approaches had significant immediate and delayed positive effects on the learners' development of their writing skills. Moreover, based on the results, the flipped approach was more beneficial for developing the learners' writing ability compared to the online approach.

Several conclusions can be deduced based on these results. First, current teacher education courses should be properly redressed to include online instruction and flipped instruction modules. A close perusal of these courses shows that, in general, they lean towards traditional in-person instruction and do not apprise teachers of technology-mediated modes of instruction including online and flipped instructions. Second, there is a need to provide teacher educators with tailor-made education regarding online and flipped courses. A large number of teacher educators are experienced teachers who have taught only in-person classes and do not have sufficient information on the various aspects of online and flipped courses. The in-service and re-education courses

have to empower the teacher educators to translate their knowledge of the practical considerations in the in-person classes to the online and flipped classes. The teacher educators' knowledge regarding the above-mentioned courses can enable them to ameliorate the pre-service and in-service language teachers' digital literacy in diverse academic settings. Finally, the EFL course developers and syllabus designers should revise the current courses and teacher manuals respectively. More specifically, the EFL course developers have to provide the language learners with the opportunity to attend flipped courses along with the traditional in-person and online courses due mainly to the fact that the flipped courses enjoy the advantages of both the in-person courses and online courses. Moreover, the syllabus designers need to redress the teacher manuals by including certain sections in the relevant manuals that provide the teachers with adequate information on online and flipped courses. The teachers' knowledge about these courses may have a beneficial impact on their ability to teach the different features of a second language such as the writing skill using the LMS.

This study had certain limitations because it did not select male learners as its participants. Moreover, it did not control the impact of the learners' age on the obtained results. In addition, the researchers delimited the study by focusing on intermediate-level learners in language institute settings. That is, caution must be exercised regarding the generalization of obtained results to other proficiency levels and academic settings. Future studies should take the above-mentioned issues into consideration. Moreover, these studies have to take advantage of qualitative data collection techniques including structured and semi-structured interviews to provide a sufficient understanding of the utility of the online and flipped courses. Finally, future studies need to be conducted in different contexts to determine the degree to which the online and flipped courses are compatible with the needs and wants of language learners in different situational contexts.

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