# Effects of Online Think-Pair-Share Strategy in Developing Preparatory School Students' Writing Skills in EFL Classrooms

إعداد

**Waseem Farrag Mohammed Basha**

**EFL Teacher**

## Abstract

This research focuses on addressing the challenges in writing skills faced by preparatory school students, particularly in the context of grammar, mechanics, and overall writing abilities. The study is driven by the observed weaknesses in students' writing performance, identified through a pilot study that revealed issues such as punctuation, spelling, sentence formation, word expressions and grammar. The traditional teaching methods and the predominant use of the Arabic language in English classes were identified as contributing factors to these challenges. The researcher proposes the use of the online Think-Pair-Share (TPS) cooperative learning strategy as an innovative approach to enhance students' writing skills. While previous studies have recognized the positive impact of cooperative learning strategies, this research specifically focuses on the online implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy. The literature review asserts the benefits of cooperative learning, emphasizing active participation, positive attitudes toward writing, increased importance of feedback, stress reduction, and the promotion of higher-order thinking and communication skills. Additionally, the research aligns with the contemporary trend of utilizing online learning, highlighting advantages such as flexibility, immediate feedback, better retention, access to up-to-date content, and suitability for 21st-century learning environments. The research aims to investigate the effects of online Think-Pair-Share strategy in improving the writing skills in EFL preparatory school students. The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the improvement of writing skills among preparatory school students, fostering cooperative learning, and integrating online strategies that align with contemporary educational needs.

**Key Words:** Cooperative learning, Think-Pair-Share (TPS), Online learning, Writing skill, EFL**.**

## Introduction

The cultivation of strong communication skills, especially in writing, is crucial in the ever-changing field of education. Writing has unprecedented significance as a mean of expressing ideas and thoughts in writing. Its power is in its capacity to go beyond the confines of in-person or spoken communication, making it possible to send messages to a larger audience in an easy-to-use manner. Nevertheless, writing is much more than just copying what someone else says. Even native speakers struggle with it since it requires a complex orchestration of ideas, a methodical presentation, and linguistic accuracy.

This research is the result of a deep recognition of the critical role that writing abilities play in communication in general. It focuses specifically on the preparatory school level, acknowledging the particular difficulties that students encounter in acquiring this vital ability. Writing, which is sometimes considered to be the most difficult language skill, reveals its complexity as students work through the specifics of mechanics, grammar, and the complex skill of composition. Based on his own teaching experience in the preparatory stage, the researcher identified a common weakness in students' writing performance. This weakness showed up in a variety of forms, from mechanical obstacles like misspellings and punctuation errors to grammatical aspects like subject-verb disagreements.

This investigation began with a careful pilot study that the researcher carried out. Students at preparatory schools were given a comprehensive writing test as part of this preliminary study, and their works were then thoroughly examined. The results revealed a landscape

full with obstacles—inconsistent punctuation, misspelt words, confusing sentence structures, grammatical mistakes, and a marked lack of ideas. In order to identify the underlying causes of this issue, the researcher conducted insightful interviews with educators and students.

The discovery that traditional teaching strategies and the ongoing usage of Arabic in English classrooms were both significant reasons to students' writing difficulties was a turning point in this investigation. This discovery made it clear that new pedagogical approaches are required, ones that address writing skills shortcomings while also fitting in with modern educational paradigms.

Within the larger field of educational research, several studies highlight the benefits of cooperative learning approaches. One of the most notable of these is the "Think-Pair-Share" strategy, which is praised for its ability to develop cooperative learning environments, improve writing skills, and encourage active student participation. Even while other studies have emphasized the benefits of cooperative learning, an obvious gap still exists. Previous research frequently assesses and applies a range of cooperative learning strategies without exploring the specifics of a particular strategy. In addition, the investigator noted a lack of investigation into the field of online cooperative learning—a field where the combination of technology and pedagogy opens up new possibilities.

Thus, this research places itself at the crossroads of these educational imperatives. It looks into how well the online "Think-Pair-Share" method might help pupils in preparatory schools improve their writing abilities. In order to offer a comprehensive knowledge of the

strategy's effects, the study questions focus on certain aspects of writing, such as the use of punctuation, spelling ability, vocabulary deployment, expressive articulation, and grammatical understanding.

This finding has far-reaching implications on several levels. It aims to close the gap between conventional teaching approaches and the changing requirements of students in the twenty-first century. Through the use of online cooperative learning, this research seeks to develop a greater understanding of cooperative knowledge production in addition to improving writing skills.

The need for technology integration in education grows as more people adopt the digital age. Because of its built-in adaptability, immediate feedback systems, and availability of current information, online learning is becoming a powerful instrument in the educational toolbox. In accordance with this direction, the researcher hopes to open up new avenues for educational study by investigating the connections between cooperative writing strategies and online learning.

The study hypotheses provide insight on the possible effectiveness of the online "Think-Pair-Share" technique by supposing substantial variations in the mean scores of students in the group before and after the treatment. The extensive collection of sub-hypotheses breaks down these variations along certain writing skill characteristics, giving the main research hypothesis more specificity.

The one-group pre/post-test paradigm that underpins the study methodology highlights the investigation's narrow focus. The sample used for this study is a purposefully selected group of 30 proficient EFL preparatory school students who are familiar with online environment.

A mixed-methods approach is used in the analysis of the data, integrating quantitative measures with qualitative insights obtained from open-ended questions.

Essentially, the goal of this research is to make a contribution to both the field of pedagogy in practice and the body of knowledge on successful language teaching strategies. Through shedding light on the possibilities of the online "Think-Pair-Share" strategy, it aims to provide teachers with a revolutionary instrument for developing skilled writers and motivated students. The trip takes place in the context of a quickly changing educational environment, where the combination of conventional knowledge and cutting-edge technology serves as a catalyst for developing the future generation of speakers and thinkers.

**Study Questions**

1- To what extent can utilizing Online (Think – Pair – share) strategy affect the EFL preparatory school students' writing skill?

**From this main question the following sub-questions arise:**

2- What is the effect of using Online (Think-Pair-Share) strategy in developing the EFL preparatory school students' usage of punctuation?

3- What is the effect of using Online (Think-Pair-Share) strategy in developing the EFL preparatory school students' spelling?

4- What is the effect of using Online (Think-Pair-Share) strategy in developing the EFL preparatory school students' using of vocabulary?

5- What is the effect of using Online (Think-Pair-Share) strategy in developing the EFL preparatory school students' using of expressions?

6- What is the effect of using Online (Think-Pair-Share) strategy in developing the EFL preparatory school students' using grammar?

**Hypothesis of the study:**

1- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on the writing test between the pre and posttests in favour of the posttest.

**From this main hypothesis the following sub-hypotheses can be stated:**

2- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on punctuation usage between the pre and post-tests in favour of the posttest.

3- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on developing spelling between the pre and post-tests in favour of the posttest.

4- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on developing vocabulary between the pre and post-tests in favour of the posttest.

5- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on developing expressions between the pre and post-tests in favour of the posttest.

6- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group students at the level of 0.05 on developing grammar between the pre and post-tests in favour of the posttest.

## Study Delimitations

## This study is delimited to:

1- The study focuses specifically on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) 3rd preparatory school students within a localized context, namely El-Geel El-Muslim preparatory school.

2- One academic term.

3- The research assumes a basic level of proficiency among participants in utilizing online platforms for learning.

## Literature Review

Relevant literature to the study variables is presented in the following section. To be specific, the major concepts and underpinnings of both Think-Pair-Share strategy and writing skill will be presented.

## Think-Pair-Share (TPS):

Think-Pair-Share (TPS) is a collaborative learning strategy that engages students in a three-step process designed to foster active thinking, discussion, and knowledge sharing. This method encourages individual reflection, pairs students for collaborative discussion, and culminates in a group sharing session. Initially proposed by Frank Lyman in 1981, TPS has since gained popularity as an effective tool for promoting critical thinking, communication skills, and deeper understanding of subject matter.

## Cooperative learning and TPS:

The target strategy in this research is one of the most popular strategies of cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, students are divided into small groups of mixed ability levels. Each group is given a task or project to complete, and the group's success is measured by the overall performance of the group, rather than the individual contributions of each member. This teaching style encourages students to work together to help each other learn and achieve common goals.

Cooperative learning has been shown to be an effective way to improve student learning and achievement. It can also help students develop important social skills such as communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution. Cooperative learning is teaching in which students work as a team to achieve a common goal. According to Anita Woolfolk (Educational Psychology, 2004), cooperative learning structures have been popular in American education since her early twentieth century, when they were introduced by American educational reformer John Dewey. Cooperative learning is commonly referred to as "group work," however groups of students working together may or may not be cooperating. (Firestone, 2014)

Cooperative learning is the best way to acquire basic knowledge. The trainer's role in cooperative learning: The trainer is the center of authority in the class, and group assignments tend to be more closed and often contain specific answers. Cooperative learning students work in small groups on regulated tasks. They are individually accountable for their own task, and the group's overall performance is evaluated. Cooperative groups gather in person to learn how to work together as a

team. Students can discuss their strengths and build skills in their limitations in small groups. They improve their interpersonal abilities. Learn how to handle disagreement. Students participate in a range of activities that improve their grasp of the material being addressed when cooperative groups are directed by defined goals.

## Cooperative learning environment

Three things are necessary to create an environment for cooperative learning. First, students need to feel safe and challenged at the same time. Second, the group should be small enough for everyone to contribute. Third, we need to clearly define which tasks students will work on together.

## Elements of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning researchers David and Roger Johnson (Woolfolk, 2004) discovered five components that explain cooperative learning:

## 1- Face-to-Face Interaction

Face-to-face activities in which students debate and clarify assignment themes to one another help students promote the learning of others.

## 2- Positive Interdependence

The students feel that they are "working on this problem together" and that each member's individual efforts are helping not only themselves, but the group as a whole. Each student's grade is determined by the grades of other group members.

## 3- Individual Accountability

Each student is accountable for his or her own contribution to the group. Clearly formulated goals ensure that each student understands his or her responsibilities and those of the group.

## 4- Group Processing

Students are given the opportunity to analyze their groups in terms of how well they have learned and whether they are demonstrating cooperative skills.

## Cooperative Skills

Students not only learn the subject matter, but also interpersonal skills and teamwork. From the beginning of cooperative learning, students gain communication, leadership, and conflict resolution abilities. (Long Crowell, 2014)

## Constructivism Theory

According to David, (2015) constructivism, as a paradigm or worldview, holds that learning is an active constructive contextualised process of producing knowledge rather than absorbing it. The learner is an information creator. New information is added and matched to his past knowledge. Each person has a unique interpretation and building of the knowledge process.

Arends (1998) elaborates constructivist principles by stating that constructivism believes in the learner's personal production of meaning via experience, and that meaning is determined by the interplay of past knowledge and new occurrences.

**The principles of constructivism**

The following are the fundamental principles of constructivism theory:

**1- Knowledge is built rather than innate or passively absorbed:**

The core principle of constructivism is that human learning is built, that learners create new knowledge on the foundation of prior learning. This prior information influences the new or modified knowledge that a person creates as a result of new learning experiences.  (Phillips, 1995).

**2- Learning is an active process:**

Learning is an active rather than passive activity. The passive approach to education sees the learner as an "empty vessel" to be filled with information, whereas constructivism asserts that learners construct meaning only via active engagement with the environment. Understanding cannot be passively received since it requires generating meaningful connections between existing information and new knowledge as well as the processes involved in learning.

**3- Knowledge is socially constructed:**

Learning is seen as a social activity, something we do together, rather than as an abstract idea (Dewey, 1938). Vygotsky (1978), thought that community is important in the process of "making meaning." According to Vygotsky, the environment in which children grow up influences how and what they think about. For example, Vygotsky (1978) states Social interactions from directed learning within the zone of proximal development result in cognitive development as children and their partners' co-construct knowledge. As a result, all teaching and learning is about sharing and negotiating socially constructed information.

### 4- Knowledge is personal:

Each learner has a particular point of view based on prior information and values. This indicates that the same lesson, instruction, or activity may result in different learning for each child due to differences in subjective judgments. This theory appears to be at odds with the notion that knowledge is socially created.

### 5- Learning exists in the mind:

Knowledge, according to the constructivist position, can exist just within the human mind and is not necessary to correspond to any real-world reality (Driscoll, 2000). Learners will always strive to develop their own personal mental model of the real world based on their views of it. Learners will constantly update their mental models to reflect new knowledge as they perceive each new event, as well as develop their own interpretation of reality.

**The main types of constructivism:**

Constructivism is classified into three major categories, which are as follows:

### 1- Cognitive constructivism based on the work (*Jean Piaget)*:

According to cognitive constructivism, knowledge is actively produced by learners based on their existing cognitive structures. As a result, learning is linked to their cognitive growth stage. Cognitivist teaching approaches attempt to help students integrate new material into their current knowledge and to enable them to make the necessary changes to their existing intellectual framework to accept that information.

### 2- Social constructivism based on the work (*Lev Vygotsky)*:

According to social constructivism, learning is a cooperative process by which people acquire knowledge through their interaction with culture and society. Lev Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) postulates that in a child's cultural development each function occurs her twice. Once at the societal level and once at the individual level. First among people, then among learners.

### 3- The notion of radical constructivism (*Ernst von Glasersfeld)*:

Ernst von Glasersfeld (1974) introduced the concept of radical constructivism, which claims that all knowledge is built rather than observed through senses. Learners construct new information based on prior knowledge. According to radical constructivism, the knowledge that individuals build informs us nothing about reality and simply helps us operate in your surroundings. Thus, knowledge is created rather than found. Humanly built reality is always being adjusted and interacting to match ontological reality, but it can never provide a 'true image' of it.

**Writing skill:**

Writing skill is a complex and multifaceted cognitive process that involves the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information coherently and effectively through the written medium. It is a fundamental aspect of communication that goes beyond the mere transcription of spoken language. Writing skill encompasses the mastery of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and punctuation, as well as the capacity to organize and structure content in a clear and purposeful manner. Proficient writing involves conveying a message with precision, engaging the audience, and adhering to the conventions of language.

## Nature of Writing Skill:

Writing can be printed in hard copy or electronically, and it is a visual method of communication. Both the author and the reader should be able to grasp it. Writing is a useful skill since it requires the writer to both create new language and understand already-existing data. Writing requires expertise and knowledge in a wide range of subjects, and learning the best words to express one's emotions and ideas is a lifelong effort.

Writing is more than just putting words together to make a phrase or lining together sentences to make a paragraph. The challenge with writing in the English language (EFL Writing) is turning ideas into texts that are cohesive, accurate, instructive, and accessible (Richards and Renandya, 2002). The distinction between speaking and writing is summed up by Langan (2007). Any notion put out in paper must be backed up by precise information or justifications.

Written words aren't usually the same spoken ones you see on papers. Speaking and writing differ in a number of ways, according to Brookes and Grundy (1998):

1- Writing, such as letters and emails, is a text-type distinct from those used in speaking.

2- One can employ techniques in writing that are not appropriate for speech. These are visual tools distinct from spoken stress and intonation patterns.

3- Spoken sounds and spelling can occasionally diverge.

4- Speaking and writing have various applications in daily life.

5- The reader doesn't respond to the writer right away. Students often have more time to consider when writing than they do during conversational activities.

Everyone thinks that speaking is faster than writing, however writing allows us to take our time and choose the words that best convey our thoughts. In his investigation, the researcher discovered this issue: pupils had trouble transferring their ideas into written work.

**Participants:**

The participants in this study comprised of thirty third-year preparatory school students, who were randomly selected from El-Geel El-Muslim School at East Directorate in Tanta Governorate during the school year 2022-2023. The experimental group, who included thirty students, studied the proposed strategy content taught by the researcher during the second semester of the aforementioned school year. Considering the serious considerations of educational level and proper age, the researcher ascertained that the students in the experimental group have been learning English as a foreign language for approximately thirteen years and their age bracket ranged from fourteen to fifteen years old. The participants' ages range from 14 to 15 years old. They've been studying English for the past eight years. Their writing abilities in English was around average (with some severe issues in writing mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expressions).

**Design of the Study:**

The present study is a quasi-experimental one group. A pre-test and a post-test were administered before and after the experiment.

**Instruments:**

**The Pre- and Post- Reading Tests:**

The researcher employed two tool to accomplish the study's goal: a pre-post writing exam to determine the influence of the online Think-Pair-Share strategy on developing paragraph writing abilities (mechanics: word spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary) and expressions. The second tool is utilized to score the writing test.

**Treatment:**

The treatment lasted for 3 months. It consisted of 7 lessons, 14 sessions, sixty minutes each. Moreover, the students interacted to complete the required tasks and home assignments online with each other for about an additional hour in order to follow the procedures of online think-pair-share away from the sessions. Students were asked to write a new topic every lesson. Then, formative assessment techniques were used to evaluate students' gained knowledge after finishing each writing task and throughout the treatment. The researcher as an English teacher provided direct instruction, modeling, guidance, and online assistance to maintain students' positive participation and interactions in the writing process.

The researcher reviewed the literature review intensively especially those dealt with think-pair-share strategy (for example: Farizi et al. 2019; Atika et al. 2018; Waluyo. 2018; Sahardin et al. 2017; and Lukman. 2016). The researcher benefited from those previous experiences in the field of education and adapted them to achieve the current study's goal.

**Implementation:**

The following is the implementation procedures of the suggested online program.

1- Following the establishing of the online program, it was ready for implementation and investigation of its effectiveness in developing the target subskills, and therefore the treatment was to be carried out.

2- An online orientation session was given to educate the participants of the program's goals, prerequisites, processes, responsibilities of the participants and the researcher (as a teacher), benefits, and time and length.

3- Online pre-testing the participants.

4- Creating the online requirements for the online program's implementation; i.e. zoom application.

5- Carrying out the experiment with the first scheduled online session, then proceed according to the implementation plan until the online program is completed.

6- Providing the online post-test.

7- Compiling the data and analyzing them quantitatively.

**Results:**

After applying the treatment program to the students, the researcher collected the data and analyzed them to compare the mean scores of the pre and post tests of the experimental group using paired samples t-test. Table (1) shows the collected data.

## Table (1)
## Paired Samples t-test of students' speaking pretest and posttest scores

| Skill | test | N | M | SD | df | t | P |
|-------|------|---|---|----|----|----|---|
| writing | Pre | 30 | 6.30 | 1.878 | 29 | 18.987 | 0.01 |
| | post | 30 | 20.07 | 2.803 | 29 | | |
| punctuation | Pre | 30 | 1.20 | .407 | 29 | 19.607 | 0.01 |
| | post | 30 | 4.03 | .556 | 29 | | |
| spelling | Pre | 30 | 1.27 | .450 | 29 | 17.676 | 0.01 |
| | post | 30 | 3.97 | .615 | 29 | | |
| vocabulary | Pre | 30 | 1.37 | .490 | 29 | 16.864 | 0.01 |
| | Post | 30 | 4.07 | .583 | 29 | | |
| expressions | pre | 30 | 1.17 | .379 | 29 | 19.411 | 0.01 |
| | post | 30 | 4.10 | .607 | 29 | | |
| grammar | Pre | 30 | 1.30 | .466 | 29 | 15.277 | 0.01 |
| | post | 30 | 3.90 | .662 | 29 | | |

**Discussion:**

As presented in the previous table (Table 1), the results of the paired samples t-test showed that there were statistically significant differences between the pre and post tests mean scores on all speaking subskills (i.e., overall writing, punctuation, spelling vocabulary, expressions and grammar skills) in favor of the posttest. This shows that the suggested program of online cooperative activities positively affected students' writing skills.

**References:**

- Arends, R. I. (1998). Resource handbook. Learning to teach. *Boston: MA: McGrow-Hill*.

- Atika, W., Sukarno, S., & Wahyuningsih, S. (2018). THE IMPROVEMENT OF OBSERVATION REPORT WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF THINK PAIR SHARE LEARNING MODEL. In *Social, Humanities, and Educational Studies (SHES): Conference Series* (Vol. 1, No. 1). https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/SHES/article/view/23476

- Brookes, A., & Grundy, P. (1998). *Beginning to write: Writing activities for elementary and intermediate learners*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.com/books?hl=ar&lr=&id=pXU_3uH4ARIC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Brookes+and+Grundy+(1998,+p.+112)&ots=SmM6RbdJnc&sig=Nyiu_I-DLemUnWyljXnlcp_dETI

- Crowell, A., & Kuhn, D. (2014). Developing dialogic argumentation skills: A 3-year intervention study. *Journal of cognition and development*, *15*(2), 363-381. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15248372.2012.725187

- David L, "Constructivism, in Learning Theories", https://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html

- Driscoll, Marcy. (2000). Psychology of Learning for Instruction. Boston: Allyn& Bacon.

- Farizi, I., Fauzyah, F., & Apsari, Y. (2019). THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE TECHNIQUE IN IMPROVING STUDENTS'ABILITY IN

WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education), 2*(5), 752-756. https://www.journal.ikipsiliwangi.ac.id/index.php/project/article/view/2655

- Firestone, Mary,(2017) study. http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-cooperative-learning-definition-lesson-methods.html

- Lukman, I. F. (2016). The Effectiveness of Think Pair Share Technique Toward Students Ability in Writing Descriptive Text at the Eighth Grade Students of SMP Negeri 3 Sinjai. *English Education Department Tarbiyah and Teaching Science Faculty Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar*. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/198225737.pdf

- Phillips, D. C. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational researcher*, *24*(7), 5-12. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0013189X024007005

- Richards, J. C., and Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in Language Teaching: Anthology of Current Practice. Cambridge University Press

- Sahardin, R., Hanum, C. S., & Gani, S. A. (2017). Using Think-Pair-Share for writing descriptive texts. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *4*(1), 54-65. https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/SiELE/article/view/7004

- Von Glasersfeld, E. (1974). The Yerkish language for non-human primates. *American Journal of Computational Linguistics*. https://aclanthology.org/J74-3007.pdf

- Vygotsky, L., & Cole, M. (2018). Lev Vygotsky: Learning and social constructivism. *Learning theories for early years practice*, *66*, 58. https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5018183&publisher=FZ7200#page=69

- Waluyo, A. J. B. (2015). Improving students' writing skill in descriptive text using video through think pair share method (A Classroom Action Research at the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 5 Cepu in the Academic Year of 2014/2015). https://digilib.uns.ac.id/dokumen/detail/49248