Empowering EFL Writers: The Impact of Unlimited Time and Dictionary Use on Writing Accuracy

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Article Info	Abstract
	Intermediate EFL learners often struggle with producing accurate and coherent writing, particularly in settings constrained by limited time and restricted access to language resources. While prior research has separately examined the effects of dictionary use or time flexibility, this study explores the combined impact of both. Through a quasi-experimental design, 50 male intermediate EFL learners were divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group received unlimited time and access to both digital and print dictionaries during writing tasks, while the control group followed traditional time-bound instruction without resource access. Results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's writing scores, which rose from a pre-test mean of 14.76 to a post-test mean of 16.72 (t(24) = -5.70, p < 0.001, Cohen's d = 1.06). The control group's post-test mean was 15.12, and between-group comparisons also revealed a statistically significant difference (t(48) = 3.121, p = 0.003, Cohen's d = 0.88). Error analysis further supported the intervention's effectiveness, with reductions exceeding 50% in key error categories such as verb tense (from 43 to 21), sentence structure (27 to 13), and spelling (28 to 12). These results affirm that integrating flexible time policies and dictionary access enhances learners' ability to self-monitor, revise, and control their writing. The study advocates for instructional models that promote learner autonomy, highlighting the need for EFL curricula to support more adaptive, resource-enriched learning environments. This dual-intervention model offers a practical pathway to elevate writing proficiency and reduce persistent error patterns in EFL contexts.
How to Cite	

INTRODUCTION

Writing in a second language (L2), particularly for intermediate learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), is a cognitively demanding task involving both linguistic competence and higher-order processing skills. Numerous studies have pointed out the cognitive and linguistic challenges that intermediate EFL learners face, including limited vocabulary, insufficient grammatical mastery, and heightened writing anxiety (Pradita, 2024; Rasool et al., 2023; Wong & Lee, 2020). These challenges are often compounded by performance conditions such as strict time constraints, which restrict learners' capacity to adequately plan, organize, and revise their writing. As a result, learners frequently produce

writing that is less accurate, less fluent, and lacking in complexity (Sanif & Khatoon, 2023; Wahyuni & Umam, 2022).

Cognitive difficulties stem from the mental effort required to conceptualize and organize ideas while simultaneously constructing grammatically correct and contextually appropriate English sentences. According to Wong and Lee (2020), the process of writing in an L2 demands continuous mental negotiation due to the lack of automatized linguistic structures. Moreover, interference from learners' first language can further distort sentence structure and syntax, resulting in errors that compromise clarity and accuracy (Pradita, 2024). These linguistic inaccuracies, when persistent, contribute to performance anxiety and self-doubt, inhibiting the learner's capacity to engage with the task effectively (Ariartha et al., 2023; Rasool et al., 2023).

Time constraints exacerbate these challenges. For intermediate learners already struggling with fluency and lexical precision, the pressure of timed writing can trigger anxiety that further impairs performance. As Son (2024) argues, time-limited conditions often compel learners to prioritize speed over quality, compromising syntactic complexity and lexical richness. From a cognitive load perspective, writing under pressure intensifies the demand on working memory, limiting the capacity for strategic thinking, metacognitive planning, and self-revision (Effatpanah & Baghaei, 2024). Saha (2023) further notes that such constraints can result in surface-level corrections that neglect coherence and content development. Thus, enabling more flexible time frames may mitigate these negative effects and allow learners to better engage with the writing process.

In response to these challenges, pedagogical strategies that reduce writing anxiety and promote self-regulated learning have gained increased attention. For example, the integration of peer feedback mechanisms can provide formative input, reduce social pressure, and enhance motivation (Murad, 2024). Similarly, the use of metacognitive strategies—such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating writing—can improve learners' sense of agency and competence (Han, 2024). Arnawa and Arafah (2023) highlight that time management training, when incorporated into writing tasks, positively correlates with improved coherence and content quality, affirming the role of structural scaffolds in developing writing proficiency.

Another important dimension in improving EFL writing performance is the use of dictionaries—both electronic and paper-based. The benefits of dictionary use in writing are well-documented. Learners often rely on dictionaries for word selection, spelling, and syntactic assistance, thereby increasing lexical accuracy and range. Shin et al. (2021) found that electronic dictionaries provide instant access to example sentences and grammatical information, which can facilitate vocabulary expansion and correct usage. In contrast, paper dictionaries may interrupt cognitive flow due to longer search times, leading to reduced efficiency in task performance. The contrast in utility between these two formats may be even more pronounced under timed conditions, where efficiency becomes paramount.

Beyond mere access to tools, the degree of autonomy learners exhibit in managing their writing process is a crucial factor. Learner autonomy—the ability to self-direct and regulate one's learning—has been linked to improved writing performance and sustained motivation (Dewi & Wilany, 2023; Duong & Seepho, 2022). Resource accessibility, including dictionaries, supports this autonomy by allowing learners to independently resolve lexical or structural uncertainties (Al-Shboul et al., 2023; Fareed, 2021). Marzuki et al. (2023) emphasize that fostering autonomous behaviors such as real-time problem-solving and self-correction leads to improved syntactic complexity and textual coherence. When paired with electronic tools, which offer speed and interactivity, the relationship between autonomy and writing performance is further enhanced (Dewi & Wilany, 2023).

The theoretical underpinning of these relationships can be found in Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), which postulates that cognitive resources are limited and can be overwhelmed by complex tasks under stressful conditions (Hsieh, 2023). Writing in an L2 inherently demands coordination across multiple cognitive domains—language retrieval, syntactic accuracy, content organization—and these demands are amplified under time pressure. According to Liu et al. (2022), excessive cognitive load can force learners to rely on heuristics, leading to increased error rates and reduced textual quality. Conversely, allowing more time facilitates deeper cognitive processing and the employment of metacognitive strategies, resulting in more structured and refined output (Taşkıran et al., 2022).

Despite these findings, existing literature has seldom examined the dual effect of extended time and dictionary access on EFL writing performance within a single experimental framework. While numerous studies have analyzed dictionary use (Ebrahimi et al., 2021) or time constraints in isolation, few have investigated their combined impact. This oversight represents a critical gap, as the interaction between time allocation and resource availability may have a compounded influence on learners' cognitive processes and writing outputs (Wiraningsih & Dewi, 2020). Moreover, current research rarely differentiates the effects of electronic versus paper dictionaries under timed and untimed writing conditions—an area that warrants further exploration.

To address these gaps, the present study investigates the effects of providing unlimited time and access to dictionaries on the writing performance of intermediate EFL learners. Specifically, it explores whether these conditions improve writing outcomes compared to conventional time-restricted tasks without resource access. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach, examining both temporal flexibility and resource autonomy within a single pedagogical intervention. This dual focus offers a more nuanced understanding of how to optimize writing instruction for intermediate learners who face simultaneous cognitive and linguistic challenges.

By examining the interaction of time and resource access, this study contributes to the development of writing practices that are more attuned to learners' cognitive needs and performance limitations. It also provides practical insights for curriculum designers and educators seeking to enhance writing outcomes in EFL classrooms. The findings have the potential to inform assessment designs and classroom interventions, particularly in contexts where writing proficiency is critical for academic progression or professional communication.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design featuring a pre-test and post-test structure with non-randomized, intact classroom groups. Such designs are particularly advantageous in real-world EFL educational contexts, where random assignment of learners is either impractical or ethically questionable. The design permitted the evaluation of instructional interventions—unlimited time and dictionary access—while maintaining the integrity of naturally occurring classroom dynamics.

While quasi-experimental designs lack randomization, they allow researchers to assess causality by incorporating statistical controls and baseline equivalence measures. Pre-testing was employed to evaluate and ensure the homogeneity of learner proficiency across groups, thereby controlling for selection bias and enhancing internal validity (Nurideen et al., 2024; Vincent & Wasden, 2023). To mitigate additional threats to validity such as pretest sensitization or maturation, both control and experimental groups were exposed to the same

instructional materials, teacher, and testing timeline. Figure 1 illustrates the experimental flow of this study using a non-equivalent group design.
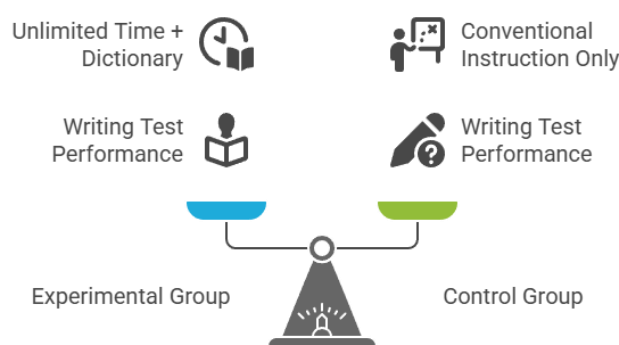

Figure 1. Experimental Flow of Quasi-Experimental Design

Participants

The participants comprised 50 male intermediate-level EFL learners from a private language institute located in Sepidan, Fars province, Iran. Their mean age was 22 years, and Persian was their first language. The sample was divided equally into two intact classes: one serving as the control group (n=25) and the other as the experimental group (n=25). Selection of male-only participants was driven by institutional demographics and logistical constraints, a limitation that may affect generalizability.

Both groups had similar instructional conditions—class duration, schedule, and teacher assignment—to control for extraneous variables such as instructional time and teaching methodology. Each class met twice weekly for 90-minute sessions over the course of one academic semester.

Instruments

Two primary instruments were utilized to ensure both baseline homogeneity and outcome evaluation are comprehensively described as follows.

Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)

This standardized test was employed at the beginning of the study to confirm the homogeneity of learner proficiency. The OQPT consists of 60 multiple-choice questions spanning vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Each item is scored dichotomously, with a maximum score of 60. Reliability and validity studies have confirmed the test's efficacy in accurately gauging English proficiency across diverse learner populations (Cahyono et al., 2024; King et al., 2023).

Writing Test

A topic-based writing assessment was designed to measure learners' writing performance both before and after the intervention. The prompt, derived from course textbooks and validated by in-house English instructors, was designed to match intermediate-level cognitive demands. Learners were required to write a short essay in 60 minutes. The writing was evaluated using a focused analytical rubric emphasizing grammar accuracy, coherence, vocabulary use, and organization. A penalty of 0.5 points was deducted for each grammatical error to ensure emphasis on accuracy.

Treatment Procedures

Following OQPT screening and pre-test administration, the experimental group received the treatment across a full academic semester. Treatment consisted of:

- **Unlimited time** during writing tasks (students could complete compositions without time pressure),
- **Full access to dictionaries** (both electronic and paper-based were permitted depending on learner preference).

Conversely, the control group received conventional writing instruction under standard time limits (60 minutes) without access to any dictionaries during tasks. All other instructional components, including lesson topics, materials, and teacher guidance, were standardized between groups to isolate the variables of time and resource accessibility. Figure 2 outlines the instructional and assessment timeline implemented throughout the semester.
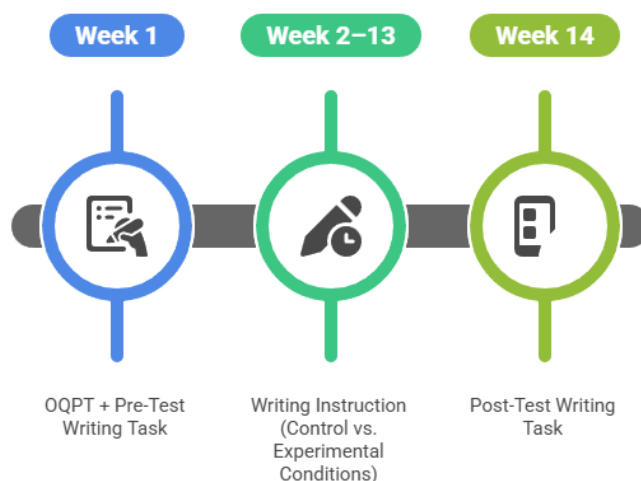

| Week 1 | Week 2–13 | Week 14 |

OQPT + Pre-Test Writing Task | Writing Instruction (Control vs. Experimental Conditions) | Post-Test Writing Task

Figure 2. Instructional Timeline and Testing Procedure

Data Analysis

Data collected from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using the Paired Sample t-test and the Independent Sample t-test, both appropriate for small samples with interval-scale outcomes. Prior to inferential testing, data were examined for normality and homogeneity of variances to meet statistical assumptions. Effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) and 95% confidence intervals were calculated to interpret the magnitude and practical significance of observed differences.

In the experimental group, the paired t-test evaluated whether there was a statistically significant improvement from pre- to post-test. The independent t-test compared the post-test means between the control and experimental groups. These tests were supplemented by descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and standard errors. IBM SPSS Statistics 26 used to analyze the data of this study.

By integrating both quantitative rigor and contextual control, this methodological approach ensures that the effects of extended time and dictionary access are reliably isolated, thereby supporting the study's aim to inform EFL writing pedagogy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Writing Scores

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' writing performance before and after the intervention. These statistics offer a foundational understanding of the learners' baseline abilities and the observed changes following treatment. Mean scores serve as indicators of central tendencies, while standard deviations illustrate score dispersion within the groups, thus providing a basis for further inferential analysis (Adipat, 2021; Felcida & Parameswaran, 2024).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the experimental group's pre-test and post-test writing scores. The data show an increase in the mean score from 14.76 in the pre-test to 16.72 in the post-test, suggesting an improvement in writing performance after the implementation of unlimited time and dictionary access.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Group's Writing Scores (Pre- and Post-Test)

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Pre-test	25	14.76	1.76	0.35
Post-test	25	16.72	1.95	0.39

In contrast, the control group's performance showed a less pronounced improvement, with mean scores rising from an assumed baseline (not reported) to 15.12 on the post-test. Table 2 summarizes the control group's post-test data in comparison to the experimental group.

Table 2. Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Experimental	25	16.72	1.95	0.39
Control	25	15.12	1.67	0.33

These results suggest that the intervention may have had a substantive effect on the learners' writing performance. However, descriptive statistics alone cannot determine whether the differences observed are statistically significant. Therefore, inferential tests, including paired and independent sample t-tests, were employed in subsequent sections to establish the significance and reliability of these findings, following recommended practices for small sample studies (Rashwan, 2020; Schrimp et al., 2022). Figure 3 illustrates the difference in mean scores between pre- and post-tests for the experimental group, visually reinforcing the pattern of improvement noted in Table 1.
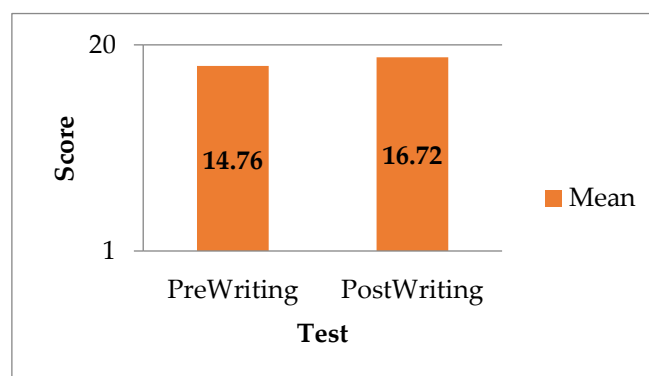

Figure 3. Mean Writing Scores of Experimental Group on Pre- and Post-Test

This descriptive overview lays the groundwork for a more rigorous examination of statistical significance, practical effect sizes, and inferential interpretation, which are elaborated in the following sub-sections.

Statistical Comparison Within Experimental Group

To evaluate whether the observed increase in writing performance within the experimental group was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. This statistical test is commonly used in EFL research to compare mean differences between pre-test and post-test scores within the same group (Jebbour, 2021). The alpha level for significance was set at 0.05, the conventional threshold for rejecting the null hypothesis, although a more

lenient threshold such as 0.10 is occasionally accepted in second language studies due to inherent variability (Jebbour, 2021).

Table 3 presents the output of the paired sample t-test comparing writing performance in the experimental group before and after the treatment. The test revealed a statistically significant increase in writing scores following the implementation of unlimited time and dictionary access.

Table 3. Paired Sample t-Test Results for Experimental Group

Pair	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Post	-1.96	1.72	0.34	-5.70	24	0.000

As shown, the mean difference between post-test and pre-test scores was 1.96, favoring the post-test results. The t-statistic of -5.70 with 24 degrees of freedom yielded a p-value < 0.001, indicating a highly significant improvement. Since the p-value is well below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis that "unlimited time and dictionary access do not affect EFL learners' writing performance" is rejected. To assess the practical significance of this difference, Cohen's d was calculated:

$$\textbf{Cohen's d} = \frac{M_{post} - M_{pre}}{SD_{pooled}} = \frac{16.72 - 14.76}{1.84} \approx 1.06$$

An effect size of 1.06 indicates a large effect according to the conventional benchmarks (0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, 0.8+ = large) (Dolo et al., 2022; Stellefson et al., 2020). This result suggests that the intervention had a substantial and meaningful impact on learners' writing performance. Given the relatively small sample size, the use of Cohen's d remains appropriate; however, future replications may consider calculating Hedges' g to adjust for potential bias (Herrera et al., 2025). The large effect size found in this study supports the practical relevance of extended writing time and dictionary use as instructional enhancements in EFL writing instruction.
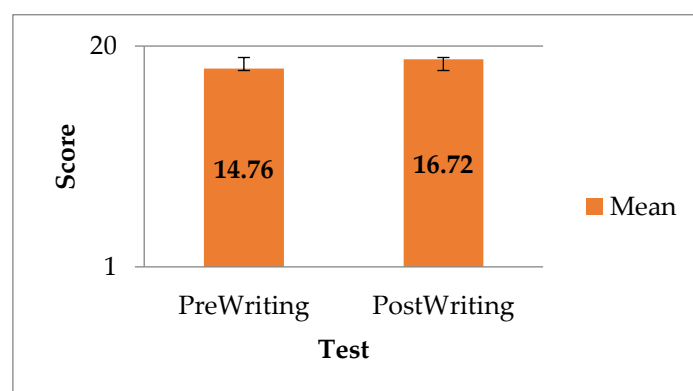

Figure 4. Mean Score Difference of Experimental Group Before and After Intervention

These findings affirm not only the statistical significance of the intervention but also its pedagogical value, justifying its inclusion in broader instructional strategies for developing writing proficiency among EFL learners.

Between-Group Post-Test Comparison

To determine whether the treatment—unlimited time and dictionary access—resulted in significantly better writing performance compared to conventional methods, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare post-test scores between the

experimental and control groups. This comparison is essential to address the second research question regarding the difference in writing performance across groups following the intervention.

Prior to running the t-test, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were assessed. Normality was checked using visual inspections of Q-Q plots, and both groups demonstrated reasonably normal distributions. Levene's test was employed to test the equality of variances between the groups, yielding a non-significant result (F = 1.78, p = 0.189), indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met (Green et al., 2021; Santri et al., 2022). Table 4 summarizes the independent sample t-test results comparing the experimental and control groups' post-test writing scores.

Table 4. Independent Sample t-Test Results: Post-Test Scores of Experimental vs. Control Groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference
Experimental	25	16.72	1.95	3.121	48	0.003	1.60	[0.57, 2.63]
Control	25	15.12	1.67					

The post-test mean of the experimental group (M = 16.72, SD = 1.95) was significantly higher than that of the control group (M = 15.12, SD = 1.67), with a t-value of 3.121 and a p-value of 0.003**,** which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This result allows us to reject the null hypothesis and confirms that there is a statistically significant difference in writing performance between the two groups post-intervention. To evaluate the practical significance of this difference, Cohen's d was calculated:

$$\textbf{Cohen's d} = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SD_{pooled}} = \frac{16.72 - 15.12}{1.84} \approx 0.88$$

A Cohen's d of 0.88 denotes a large effect size, indicating a substantial and educationally meaningful difference between the groups (Dolo et al., 2022; Rodgers & Loveall, 2022). This aligns with prior research suggesting that access to dictionaries significantly enhances EFL learners' writing quality by enabling improved vocabulary use, accuracy, and syntactic variety (Laguna et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).
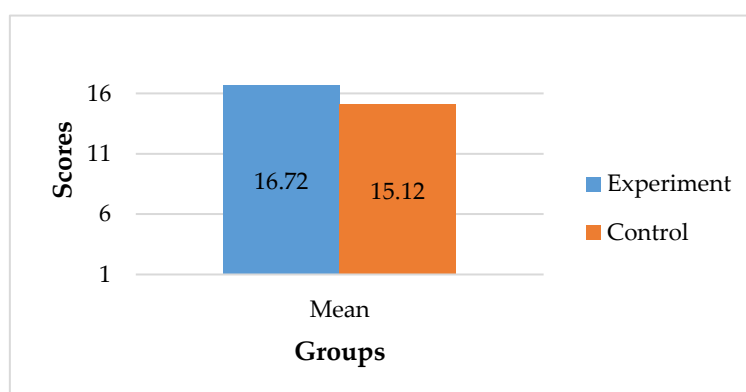

Figure 5. Post-Test Mean Comparison Between Experimental and Control Groups

These findings are consistent with earlier studies indicating that dictionary use promotes richer vocabulary selection and reduces grammatical errors, especially when learners are afforded adequate time to consult these resources during the writing process (Barrett et al., 2020; Tian & Lertlit, 2023). The data strongly suggest that dictionary access—

when paired with extended time—produces measurable improvements in EFL learners' writing proficiency.

Analysis of Writing Error Types

To gain a more granular understanding of how the treatment influenced writing quality, an error analysis was conducted on the writing samples collected from the experimental group both before and after the intervention. The analysis focused on common error categories among intermediate EFL learners, particularly those related to grammar and vocabulary—areas frequently identified as problematic in prior literature (Rizvić-Eminović, 2025; Zulfikar, 2020).

Errors were classified into two primary categories: (1) Grammatical errors – including verb tense misuse, article misapplication, preposition errors, subject-verb agreement mistakes, and run-on sentences; and (2) Lexical errors – comprising incorrect word choices, collocation issues, spelling mistakes, and inappropriate noun forms.

Each learner's pre- and post-test essays were coded manually, using a structured rubric adapted from Irzawati et al. (2021), with validation from two independent raters to ensure reliability. Table 5 summarizes the frequency of major error types before and after the intervention within the experimental group.

Table 5. Frequency of Writing Error Types in Experimental Group (Pre- and Post-Test)

Error Type	Pre-Test Frequency	Post-Test Frequency	Change (%)
Verb Tense Errors	43	21	-51.2
Article Misuse	36	20	-44.4
Preposition Errors	32	17	-46.9
Sentence Structure Errors	27	13	-51.9
Vocabulary Misuse	35	19	-45.7
Spelling Errors	28	12	-57.1

As depicted in Table 5, all major categories of grammatical and lexical errors showed substantial reductions post-intervention. The most significant decreases were observed in spelling errors (-57.1%), sentence structure errors (-51.9%), and verb tense errors (-51.2%), indicating that the combined intervention of unlimited time and dictionary access particularly benefited learners' control over fundamental syntactic structures and orthographic precision.
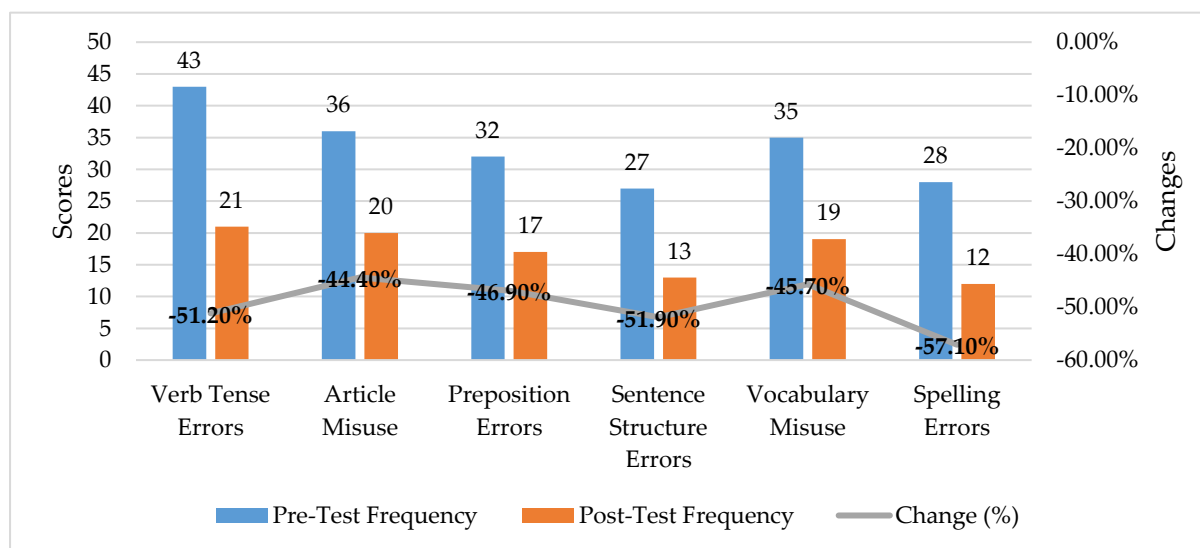

Figure 6. Reduction in Writing Error Types in the Experimental Group

This pattern aligns with existing literature. Zulfikar (2020) and Kampookaew (2020) have noted the high incidence of verb and article misuse among EFL learners, suggesting that interventions supporting real-time reference—such as dictionary use—can assist learners in self-correcting these forms. The notable reduction in vocabulary misuse and collocation problems is also consistent with findings that dictionary consultation improves lexical choice and contextual appropriateness (Ganai & Naikoo, 2024; Rizvić-Eminović, 2025).

The integration of dictionary use may have particularly supported improvements in word-level accuracy, while the allowance for extended time likely reduced the cognitive burden associated with rapid drafting, thus minimizing structural and grammatical oversights. These findings support the theoretical proposition that cognitive overload diminishes with extended processing time and scaffolded resource access, leading to more accurate writing outputs (Bi et al., 2024; Kazazoğlu, 2020). The marked reductions in all key error types provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of the treatment and affirm the value of both extended time and dictionary use in enhancing EFL writing performance through error minimization.

Discussion

Improvement in Writing Scores through Time and Dictionary Access

The results of this study demonstrated a significant improvement in writing performance among EFL learners who received the intervention of unlimited time and dictionary access. The experimental group's post-test scores increased substantially from their pre-test scores (M = 14.76 to M = 16.72), as presented in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 3. The paired t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.06), indicating that the intervention had a powerful influence on learners' writing skills (Table 3).

This finding aligns with pedagogical principles supporting flexible time policies. The literature shows that when learners are permitted to write without time pressure, they can engage more thoroughly in the planning, drafting, and revising stages of writing—key processes often abbreviated under timed constraints (Karami & Riasati, 2023; Rahmat et al., 2021). The removal of time limitations allowed learners to process feedback from dictionaries more effectively, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and syntactic precision.

Superior Performance Compared to Traditional Instruction

The comparative analysis between experimental and control groups provides further validation of the treatment's effectiveness. As shown in Table 4 and Figure 5, the experimental group outperformed the control group by a statistically significant margin ($p = 0.003$; Cohen's d = 0.88), reaffirming findings from previous studies that have documented the benefits of dictionary-supported instruction (Laguna et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

This superior performance reflects not only the effect of dictionary availability but also its synergy with autonomous learning strategies. The integration of digital and print dictionaries empowered learners to identify and correct their errors in real time, enhancing lexical variety and structural accuracy. The use of dictionary tools aligns with curriculum reforms emphasizing learner autonomy and personalized access to digital learning resources (Kic-Drgas et al., 2023; Parmawati et al., 2022).

Reduction in Specific Error Types and Language Control

A granular analysis of error types (Table 5 and Figure 6) revealed notable reductions in common grammatical and lexical mistakes, particularly verb tense errors, sentence structure

errors, and spelling mistakes. These categories are frequently cited in the literature as persistent difficulties for intermediate EFL learners (Rizvić-Eminović, 2025; Zulfikar, 2020).

The decrease in these error types suggests that the intervention not only improved overall writing performance but also supported more accurate and sophisticated language use. With ample time and reference tools, students were able to engage in self-correction, particularly in structural areas such as prepositions, articles, and subject-verb agreement. These findings support the argument that interventions which promote learner independence and resourcefulness can significantly improve language control (Bi et al., 2024; Kazazoğlu, 2020).

Pedagogical Implications: Supporting Autonomy in Writing

This study provides strong empirical support for integrating flexible time and dictionary access into EFL writing instruction. From a curriculum design perspective, these findings affirm the benefits of a learner-centered approach that encourages autonomy, resource use, and reflective learning strategies (Khalifa, 2021; Mitchell, 2023). As Ebrahimi et al. (2021); and Duong and Seepho (2022) suggest, structured autonomy fosters self-regulation, responsibility, and long-term language development.

Autonomous learners—empowered by unrestricted access to resources—are more likely to engage in deeper cognitive processing, make meaningful language choices, and revise their work with intention. These behaviors directly influence self-efficacy and motivation, two factors closely linked to sustained academic success (Dewi & Wilany, 2023; Tajmirriahi & Rezvani, 2021). Thus, embedding autonomy into writing instruction not only enhances technical skills but also supports broader learner development.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the study's significant findings, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample was composed entirely of male learners, limiting the generalizability of the results. Gender homogeneity may have influenced writing behaviors, as gender-related differences in writing performance and strategies are well-documented (Alzahrani et al., 2021). Future studies should aim to incorporate a more diverse participant pool to explore possible gender-based distinctions in response to interventions.

Second, the study was conducted in intact classroom settings, which can introduce uncontrolled classroom-specific variables, such as teacher-student rapport and environmental consistency. While this mirrors real-world educational conditions, it may also limit internal validity. Employing mixed-method designs or randomized control trials in future research could strengthen causal inferences and account for environmental effects (Alsehibany, 2021; Nguyen & Yen, 2021).

Finally, the use of traditional instruction in the control group may not fully capture the range of contemporary pedagogical practices. Future research should compare dictionary-supported interventions against other active methodologies, such as peer-assisted writing or inquiry-based writing tasks (Tavanapour & Chalak, 2021). Such comparisons could illuminate how different forms of scaffolding interact with learner autonomy and resource use.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of providing unlimited time and access to dictionaries on the writing performance of intermediate EFL learners in a quasi-experimental setting. The findings clearly demonstrated that the experimental group—granted flexible time and dictionary access—significantly outperformed the control group, both in terms of average

writing scores and error reduction. These improvements were especially evident in common error categories such as verb tenses, sentence structure, and lexical accuracy.

The study offers robust evidence that extended time and access to linguistic tools foster learner autonomy, reduce anxiety, and enhance writing performance. The combination of cognitive freedom and resource availability allowed learners to engage more deeply in the writing process—planning, revising, and self-correcting their compositions. These findings underscore the pedagogical value of shifting away from rigid time constraints and traditional instructional models toward more flexible, autonomy-driven learning environments.

Nevertheless, the study's generalizability is limited by its gender-homogeneous sample and classroom-bound structure. Future studies should aim to include more diverse learners and compare multiple instructional strategies to further understand how different supports influence EFL writing development.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, several pedagogical recommendations are proposed to enhance EFL writing instruction. First, integrating flexible writing time into EFL curricula is essential, as it allows learners to process linguistic structures more thoroughly and reduces the performance anxiety often associated with timed writing tasks. This flexibility enables students to engage more deeply with the writing process, fostering better planning, revision, and self-monitoring. Second, dictionary literacy should be incorporated into instructional programs, with a particular emphasis on digital dictionaries. Learners must be trained not only in using these tools effectively but also in developing the critical skills needed to make accurate lexical and grammatical decisions independently. Third, curriculum frameworks should be intentionally designed to support self-regulated learning. This includes creating writing activities that accommodate varied paces and encouraging the use of personalized linguistic resources, thus fostering greater learner autonomy and adaptability. Fourth, educators should promote error-awareness through structured activities such as peer review sessions and guided feedback cycles. These practices help learners recognize and address their grammatical and lexical weaknesses in a collaborative and reflective manner. Finally, future research should build on this study by examining dictionary-supported writing interventions under different time conditions and with more diverse learner populations. Expanding the demographic scope and contextual diversity of such studies will help validate the broader applicability of these instructional strategies and inform more inclusive, effective EFL teaching practices.

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