Chapter – VI

Discussion
6.0 DISCUSSION

The outcome of the current study proved improvement in the writing abilities of the participants belonging to both control and experimental groups. However, the experimental group’s score was relatively higher than the control group’s score. This could be due to the flipped classroom method, which was the mode of instruction for the experimental group.

6.1 PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

The major research tools designed to test the hypothesis were the pre-test and post-test on essay writing task conducted to both the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention. The data collected through the pre-test and post-test was evaluated using the essay rating scale from the ESL Composition Profile and analysed using SPSS software. The results of the analysis were computed, particularly the results of different tests which were appropriate for the nature of the data. There were six objectives formulated in the study and the major findings of the pre-test and post-test analysis for each research objective were discussed below.

6.1.1 IMPACT OF BIG WRITING INSTRUCTION THROUGH REGULAR ENGLISH CLASSES ON CONTROL GROUP

The first objective of the study was to examine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group participants who received Big Writing instruction, which focused on teaching of components of
writing namely, vocabulary, connectives, concord and mechanics of writing through regular classroom that did not involve using technology.

The study analysed the impact of Big Writing instruction on the participants in the control group and the statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test essay writing scores of the participants found out that the participants had scored better in the post-test in all the four components of writing than that of the pre-test and there was statistically significant difference between the two tests. Therefore, the study had proved that the participants of the control group had shown improvement in their writing abilities as a result of the Big Writing instruction.

The first component of the Big Writing instruction was vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction for tertiary level learners were studied by many researchers and the studies had found out that lack of vocabulary was one of the critical reasons for difficulty in speaking and writing tasks (Astika, 1993). The result of the current study indicated that one of the reasons for the improvement in the post-test essay writing scores of the control group participants was due to the improvement in the participants’ vocabulary knowledge. The study had found out that the difference in the vocabulary mean scores between the pre-test and post-test was 1.28. Moreover, from the analysis of the t-test on the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test on the vocabulary, it was found out that the t-test value was 4.861 with the p-value 0.001, which showed a statistically significant difference. Hence, the study had reported that the participants’ scores in essay writing task were directly linked with the vocabulary knowledge.
The finding of the present study was empirically supported by the findings of Lemmouh (2008) who studied the relationship between the grades and lexical richness of students’ essays. The participants of the study were 37 advanced learners of English and the essays written by the participants were examined using a lexical richness evaluation tool that determined the amount of advanced vocabulary. The study of Lemmouh had proved that there was a relationship between the use of advanced vocabulary in the participants’ essays and the overall course grade.

The second writing component focused in the present study was connectives. The result of the study revealed that the participants of the control group had shown improvement in the usage of connectives after the Big Writing instruction through regular English classes and hence, there was a significant improvement in the post-test essay writing scores. The difference in the mean scores of connectives between the pre-test and post-test was found to be 1.08. Furthermore, there was difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test on the connectives with the t-test value, 6.378 and p-value, 0.004, which was lesser than 0.05 and hence, it was statistically significant. Therefore, the study had proved that there was relationship between the essay writing scores of the students and the use of connectives in essays.

Studies conducted on the relationship between the quality of essays and the cohesive devices had shown positive relations. The findings of the present study were similar to the findings of Jafarpur (1991), who found out that the quality of essays written in English was correlated with the number of cohesive
ties and cohesive types used in the essays. However, the findings of the current study contrasted with the findings of the study that examined the writing quality of impromptu essays by Crossley and McNamara (2012) who studied on the development and use of cohesive devices in L₂ writing and their relations to judgments of essay quality. The samples of the study were 57 tertiary level L₂ students enrolled for upper level EAP courses at Michigan State University. A 30-minute descriptive essay writing task was administered on the participants to analyse the relationship between the use of connectives and the quality of essays. The study had found out that the local and text cohesive devices between sentences were negatively correlated with the expert ratings of essay quality.

The third writing component of the intervention programme was concord, that is, subject-verb agreement. The finding of the study was related to the study conducted by Dorn (2000), who found out that subject-verb agreement was one of the grammar areas that second language learners needed to master to write effectively. It was also supported by Tan (2005) who reported that it was essential to learn the basic concepts of subject-verb agreement for second language learners to improve their language proficiency.

In 2016, Ponmani and Mekhala conducted an investigation on the concord errors in the ESL learners’ writing. The analytical study was conducted to 58 rural ESL arts and science college students and it was reported that learners had limited knowledge in using concord within the target language and committed concord errors as they were not successful in learning the rules and usage of
concord. The findings of the study were related to the findings of the current research study, particularly in emphasising the importance of concord knowledge in students to write accurate sentence structure. In addition, it had also proved that concord was one of the common language difficulties identified in the ESL tertiary level learners of arts and science colleges in Tamil Nadu.

One of the reasons for second language learners to make mistakes in the mechanics of writing was social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, which had led to an increase in poor writing, usage of incorrect spellings, poor punctuations and bad grammar (Anurag et al., 2015). Hence, mechanics of writing was the fourth component included in the intervention programme, Big Writing instruction. The findings of the current study had found out that the difference in the mechanics mean scores between the pre-test and post-test was 0.2. In addition, the t-test result proved that there was statistically significant differences in mechanics (t=3.399, p=0.001). Therefore, the study had established that the Big Writing instruction through regular classroom method had developed the participants’ knowledge of mechanics of writing and hence, enabled them to score better in the post essay writing test.

The findings of the present study reported that explicit instruction of mechanics of writing, that is, spellings and punctuations lead to the improvement in the standard of writing. The finding was similar to the findings of Asayeh and Prem Kumar (2016), who studied the use of colours to teach punctuation marks. However, the improvement in the mechanics of writing observed in the
current study was meager with the difference in the pre and post-test mean scores, 0.2. The reason for the condition could be students’ neglect of spellings and punctuations at tertiary level and furthermore, mechanics of writing get least importance in the assessment of discipline-specific subjects.

Over all, the study had found out that the participants of the control group had shown improvement in the writing abilities after the Big Writing instruction through regular English classes. The findings of the current study were similar to the findings of the studies conducted on the efficiency of Big Writing by Pleasants (2007), Harland et al. (2014) and Florence and Sherine (2014).

6.1.2 IMPACT OF BIG WRITING INSTRUCTION THROUGH FLIPPED ENGLISH CLASSES ON EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

The objective of the second research question was to examine the impact of Big Writing instruction through flipped English classes that involved using computers and internet on the experimental group participants.

The statistical analysis of the results of the pre-test and post-test essay writing scores of the experimental group that received Big Writing instruction through flipped English classes found out that the participants had scored considerably better in the post-test than that of the pre-test and there was statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The difference in the VCCM mean scores between the pre-test and post-test was computed to be 3.72 in vocabulary, 4.1 in connectives, 4.51 in concord and 0.72 in mechanics of writing. Moreover, the difference in the test statistics between the
pre-test and post-test scores in vocabulary (t=11.086, p=0.001), connectives (t=12.646, p=0.003), concord (t=10.294, p=0.001) and mechanics (t=8.893, p=0.002) was found to be statistically significant. Hence, it was proved that the participants of the experimental group scored better in the post-test than in the pre-test.

The results of the analysis favoured the flipped English classroom method that involved teaching and learning using computers and internet. The findings of the current study was concurrent to the findings of earlier studies conducted in other cultural and educational contexts of Kang (2015) and Han (2015), whose studies had found out that the flipped classroom developed students’ grammar knowledge when compared to other teaching methods.

Furthermore, the findings were also akin to the findings of Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) who conducted a study on the impact of flipped grammar class on EFL Saudi secondary school students’ performances and attitudes. The study involved 20 participants in the experimental group and 23 participants in the control group. The experimental group participants learnt grammar through flipped classes that used videos whereas the control group participants were taught grammar in the traditional way. It was found out that the flipped classroom strategy enhanced the students’ grammar competency effectively.
6.1.3 COMPARISON OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES OF CONTROL GROUP AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

The objective of the third research question was to examine whether there was any statistically significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental group, which received Big Writing instruction through flipped English classes that involved using computers and internet, whereas the control group received Big Writing instruction through regular English classes that did not involve using technology.

The results of the statistical analysis of the current study proved that the participants of the experimental group had scored relatively higher than the participants of the control group in the overall mean scores. The study investigated the efficacy of teaching Big Writing approach designed for the tertiary level learners to develop the writing skills through regular English classes without using technology and flipped English classes that involved using computers and internet. The study could prove and establish that the experimental group participants of the flipped English classes had performed relatively better than the control group participants of the regular English classes in the assessment variables under study, vocabulary, concord and mechanics of writing except connectives. The difference between the post-test mean scores of both groups was 1.91 in vocabulary, 0.76 in connectives, 5.02 in concord and 0.36 in mechanics of writing. However, the t-test result found out that there was statistically significant differences in vocabulary (t= 3.598, p=0.001), concord (t=8.116, p=0.003) and mechanics (t=3.619, p=0.001).
Even though, for connectives the mean scores secured by the participants in the experimental group are higher than the participants in the control group, there was no statistically significant difference. It established the fact that Big Writing session through flipped English classes had made relatively better impact on vocabulary, concord and mechanics, than the Big Writing session through regular English classes. However, both groups secured almost same scores in connectives.

The findings of the current study was akin to the study on the impact of the web-based collocations instructions on ESL students’ essay writing and speaking ability conducted by Negin Shahryari (2015) to compare the effects of traditional classroom method and web-based instruction. The study was designed to evaluate and explain the effect of web-based collocation instruction on two crucial tasks; essay writing and speaking ability. Statistical analysis of the study revealed that experimental group that received web-based collocation instruction had performed significantly better than control group that acquired vocabulary through traditional techniques.

The findings of the current study are also similar to the findings of Preet Haridar (2012) who had investigated on the effectiveness of using technology in developing the writing skills of the ESL learners at tertiary level. The results of the study could establish that the incorporation of technology could provide innovative and creative ways of nurturing student learning potential and enhancement of language skills. The results of the present study also supported the findings of Mireille (2014) and Ali Saïd Ahmed (2016) who examined the
effect of a flipped classroom on writing skill in English as a foreign language and students’ attitude towards flipping. The outcome of these studies showed that the experimental group who were taught through flipped classes outperformed the control group participants in the post-test.

Similarly, the findings of the present study were in line with the findings of the study conducted by Sarah S. Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016), who did a study on the impact of the flipped grammar classroom on EFL Saudi secondary school students’ performances and attitudes. The study involved two groups: experimental and control. The experimental group, which was taught grammar lessons through flipped classroom method, had 20 participants and the control group that underwent grammar lessons through traditional classroom method had 23 participants. The statistical analysis of the post-test results proved that adopting the flipped classroom method had seemed to play a role in enriching the students’ grammar abilities, as the mean score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group even though the difference was not statistically significant.

6.1.4 IMPACT OF BIG WRITING INSTRUCTION THROUGH FLIPPED CLASSES ON FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPANTS

The objective of the fourth research question was to determine whether there was any statistically significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the female and male participants of the experimental group, which received Big
Writing instruction through flipped English classes that involved using computers and internet.

Studies had shown that gender differences affected students’ academic interests and achievements. Macleod et al. (2002) had found out that gender differences played a pivotal role in certain academic subjects such as language, computer, science, and math to manipulate the learners’ interests and outcomes in learning. As far as language learning was concerned, Second Language theorists believed that females performed better in second language learning than males (Ehrlich, 2001).

From the statistical analysis of the mean scores, it was found out that the female participants of the experimental group scored higher than the male participants. However, when the mean scores for each assessment variable was analysed for differences using the independent samples test, it was reported from the findings of the present study that female participants scored higher in vocabulary, connectives and concord than the male participants. In mechanics of writing, both the female and male participants scored almost equal. The t-test result proved that there was statistically significant differences in vocabulary \((t= 3.505, p=0.001)\), connectives \((t=2.989, p=0.004)\), concord \((t=2.006, p=0.049)\) but not in mechanics \((t=1.262, p=0.211)\). The computed ‘p’ value of the post-test vocabulary score was .00, in connectives 0.004, and in concord 0.049, which were less than 0.05 and thus, significant at 5 per cent level. On the other hand, the computed ‘p’ value of the post-test mechanics score was 0.211, which was greater than 0.05 and hence, the study had reported
that there was no significant difference in the average score of mechanics after the intervention in relation to gender. As a result, the findings of the study had proved that the female participants in the experimental group, which underwent flipped English classes, scored higher in vocabulary, connectives and subject-verb agreement than the male participants.

The findings of the current study directly linked to the findings of the previous study, which was carried out by Narayanan et al. (2007). It was reported that male students had less motivation to learn English language than female students. It was also found out that the female students demonstrated positive attitude towards learning English language and the male students had high anxiety than female students.

However, the findings of the current study was contrary to the findings of the study conducted by Lai and Kuo (2007), who found out that the male students demonstrated more positive learning attitude than the female students and moreover, the findings of the study had established that the male students expressed less learning anxiety toward the use of CALL programs for their English learning than the female students.

6.1.5 IMPACT OF BIG WRITING INSTRUCTION ON VERNACULAR MEDIUM PARTICIPANTS

The main rationale of the fifth research question was to examine whether the Big Writing instruction through regular and flipped English classes had made any improvement in the writing abilities of the participants who had done the
higher secondary level in vernacular medium schools. Hence, the study analysed to find out whether there was any statistically significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the vernacular medium participants of both the experimental and control groups.

It was found out from the results of the statistical analysis that both the group vernacular medium students had shown improvement in the post-test essay writing task. However, when the post-test scores of the experimental group vernacular medium participants were compared with the post-test scores of the control group vernacular medium participants, it was proved that there was statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups. The study thus had found out that the experimental group vernacular medium participants had scored relatively higher than the control group vernacular medium participants. The improvement could be due to the fact that the experimental students were taught Big Writing instruction through the flipped English classes.

There were no studies seemed to have conducted to investigate the efficacy of teaching English language skills on vernacular medium students through flipped English classes. However, there were studies that focused on the problems and difficulties faced by the tertiary level students who had undergone the higher secondary level at vernacular medium schools, which formed the basis for the fifth research objective. Manivannan (2005) had investigated on CALL for vernacular medium students of engineering colleges. It was reported from the investigation that the students from vernacular
medium schools faced academic challenges such as comprehending the syllabus for all the subjects in English in the freshman year and furthermore, the students’ ability to interact with teachers and fellow students was crucially undermined. The findings of the study proved that CALL could facilitate learning English language in a feasible manner. Similarly, an investigation was conducted by Jayraj (2014), on the students of rural vernacular medium government schools and English medium private schools in developing the paragraph writing skills in English. It was reported that writing skill was the mode through which learners were trained and evaluated in Indian schools, colleges and universities. It was emphasised that writing skills should be acquired in schools and failing to which the learners will lack writing skill competency at the higher level of education.

6.1.6 IMPACT OF BIG WRITING INSTRUCTION ON FIRST GENERATION LEARNERS

The sixth research question aimed at examining the efficacy of Big Writing instruction through regular English classes and flipped English classes on the writing abilities of the participants who were the first generation learners. Hence, the study analysed whether there was any statistically significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the first generation learners and continuous generation learners of both the experimental and control group. It was found out that after the intervention the first generation learners in both the groups had shown improvement in the writing abilities. However, when the post-test scores of the first generation learners in both the groups were
compared, the analysis had reported that there was a statistically significant difference in the post-test mean scores of all the Big Writing elements: vocabulary, connectives, concord and mechanics in favour of the experimental group. When the mean scores of each component was analysed using independent T tests, it was found out that the t-value and p-value for vocabulary were 2.413 and 0.019 respectively and the p value is lesser than 0.05. Similarly, the t-test and p-value of the elements, connectives (2.046, 0.045), concord (7.379, 0.001) and mechanics (2.137, 0.037) established the fact that there was statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The difference in the post-test scores of vocabulary, connectives, concord and mechanics between the experimental and control groups might be due to the flipped classroom model used for teaching the experimental group.

Earlier studies did not seem to have investigated the impact of flipped English classes or Big Writing Instruction or any other similar method on the first generation learners. On the other hand, there were studies conducted on the problems and difficulties faced by the first generation learners in schools and colleges. Stebleton and Soria (2012) investigated on the barriers to academic success faced by the first generation learners in universities and had found out that one of the major challenges faced by the first generation learners was weak English language skills. It was reported that the first generation learners more frequently encounter hindrances that impede academic success. The study had
compared the data collected from the first generation and the continuous
generation learners and had proved that there was statistically significant
differences between the two groups on various factors including weak English
skills (d= -0.19), which was a larger difference and which established the fact
that the first generation students encounter greater challenges in academic
growth and success than the continuous generation learners. Furthermore,
Thayer (2000) had reported that the first generation learners would possibly
enroll in a college with less academic grounding, and would have inadequate
access to information about college experience either first-hand or from
relatives. It was further emphasised that the first generation learners would get
less support from families for attending college.

It was found out that the first-generation learners at tertiary level did not have
English language support at home and they solely depended on the teaching
instruction offered in colleges. The main rationale for the sixth research
question was to determine how far the VCCM instruction through the regular
classroom without using technology and the flipped classroom that involved
using computers and internet, facilitated the development of the writing skills
of the first-generation learners. The statistical analysis proved that the first-
generation learners in both the experimental and control groups had scored
better in the post-test than that of the pre-test. Nevertheless, when the post-test
scores of the both the groups first-generation learners were compared, it was
found out that the first-generation learners in the experimental group had
performed considerably better than the first-generation learners in the control
group. This could be due to the flipped classroom method adopted for the experimental group that involved using computer and internet, which in turn had offered participants a wider exposure to English language and hence, it had yielded better result when compared to the regular classroom method.