



Article

The Relationship Between Argumentative Speaking and Writing Among EFL Students

Fouad Akki¹, Mohammed Larouz², Brahim Ait Hammou³, Handoko Handoko⁴

¹⁻³Faculty of Humanities, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco

⁴Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

SUBMISSION TRACK

Received: July 22, 2023

Final Revision: September 3, 2023

Accepted: September 7, 2023

Available Online: October 5, 2023

KEYWORDS

argumentative genre, speaking, writing, relationship, output

CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: fouad.akk@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study looks at the connection between argumentative writing and speaking among sixth-semester EFL students at Moulay Ismail University in Morocco's English Studies department. In order to achieve this objective, a total of 80 undergraduate students who were learning English as a foreign language (EFL) were selected as participants. Participants were then given both speaking and writing examinations to assess their argumentation skills in these two areas. Regression and correlation analyses were performed in SPSS on the study's data. The findings show a substantial difference between speaking and writing in contentious discourse, in addition to a high positive association. Argumentative speaking was statistically proven to predict a great proportion of argumentative writing. The findings suggest integrating argumentative speaking and writing in teaching and assessment practices in a balanced way. The two skills can be taught along with each other to facilitate correspondences between the two modalities in argumentative genre. As the study concludes, it offers valuable insights into the implications of these findings, highlights the research limitations encountered during the research process, and provides recommendations for future endeavors in the realm of language pedagogy and assessment. This study not only contributes to our understanding of the interplay between argumentative writing and speaking but also paves the way for more comprehensive and integrated language instruction practices in EFL contexts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over several decades of the development of teaching the English language, there has been a noticeable transition from focusing input to prioritizing output. One of the most well-known and well-liked proponents of the "input Hypothesis," Krashen (1994), said that all that is required for language acquisition in the target language is understandable input. However, Lee & VanPatten (1995) noted that "input hypothesis" might not be enough on its own to support a native-like acquisition in L2. Advocates of this perspective (Swain, 1985; Pica, 1994; Long, 1996) assert that the significance of both "input" and "output" in language acquisition is equal. Since productive language abilities are seen to be

essential to language development, the importance of output or language production in this situation cannot be overstated (Swain, 1995; Izumi, 2002; Mackey, 2002).

Despite the aforementioned importance of productive skills, speaking and writing have been viewed in a separate way (Hartely, 2007). While researchers have extensively examined their positive impact on both L1 and L2 acquisition, research has not sufficiently paid enough attention to the interconnection between the two skills (Hubert, 2008, Akki & Larouz, 2021). Accordingly, speaking and writing connections, as a research area, has emerged to examine the relationships between these two modalities. Weissberg (2005)

refers to this kind of research as “cross modality research”, which is “any research aimed to investigate where the oral and written modes intersect or interconnect” (p. 94).

Speaking has been defined differently by many scholars. Bygate (1987) thought that speaking is manifested in the ability to produce single and discrete sounds of a particular language; and this view was referred to as a “bottom-up approach” to define speaking. According to Bygate, this approach emphasized articulating and combining sounds in a systematic way to form meaningful utterances. In line with this view, teaching of speaking stressed the importance of starting with the smallest units-sounds- and move on to the mastery of words, sentences, and later to discourse aspects (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001). However, speaking abilities are not merely restricted to the production and mastery of discrete and small elements. Consequently, the “bottom-up approach” was criticized on the ground that it overlooked the interactional and social and discourse aspects of speaking.

In line with these critics to the bottom up approach, Bygate (1998) advocated a new reliable definition of speaking based on interactional aspects; and this was referred to as a “top down approach”. For instance, Howarth (2001) defined speaking as a “two-way process involving a true communication of ideas, information or feelings between a speaker and a listener in shared time and physical context” (p. 23). Along the same vein, Nunan (1989) supported the importance of exposing the learners to the spoken discourse at the early stages of learning, and the smallest single units will be acquired later.

Adhering to the same approach, Burns and Joyce (1997) considered speaking as an interactive process of making meaning. In this case, it involves receiving, processing, and producing information. Subsequently, Nunan (2003) defined speaking as a “productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning” (p. 48).

Writing ability has been defined by many scholars (e.g., Hornby, 2005; Rivers, 1981; Brown, 2001; Nunan, 2003; Zamel, 1982; Hyland, 2003). According to Hornby (2005), writing means to make letters or numbers on a surface, especially using a pen or a pencil. In addition, Rivers (1981)

stated that writing is “conveying information or expression of original ideas in a consecutive way in the new language” (p. 294). Additionally, Brown (2001) considered writing as a thinking process that can be planned and revised many times before its release (p. 336).

According to Nunan (2003), writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs (p. 88). Writing, therefore, is both a physical and a mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to paper. On the other hand, writing is a mental act because it involves a lot of thinking to generate ideas.

Furthermore, writing can be defined as a “complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time” (Nunan, 1999, p. 273). Thus, writing is a “process through which meaning is created” (Zamel, 1982, p. 195). In the same vein, Kern (2000) describes writing as “a dynamic process of designing meaning through texts within a community” (p. 186). This implies that writing is both an individual and a social process. Likewise, Hyland (2003) defines writing as “a socio-cognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences” (p. 23).

Regarding the influence of oral communication on written expression, it has been suggested that engaging in speaking activities can enhance writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) educational settings. According to Florez and Hadaway (1987), oral language development has the potential to impact an individual’s writing behavior. Cumming (1992) conducted a case study examining the instructional strategies employed by three English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. The study posited that engaging in speaking activities may yield beneficial outcomes for the enhancement of writing skills. In a similar vein, Manglesdorf (1989) and Weissberg (1994) have posited that classroom discourse, as previously indicated, emulates the cognitive activities inherent in the act of composing, hence enhancing learners’ comprehension of the cognitive mechanisms implicated in the writing process.

Similarly, the study conducted by Yun et al. (2012) investigated the influence of enrolling in a public speaking course on the writing proficiency of students at an American institution. The research findings indicate that public speaking has a good impact on the development of learners' writing skills, specifically in terms of their ability to effectively structure their work and demonstrate control over grammar.

Furthermore, Rausch (2015) conducted a study that investigated the influence of speaking training on the writing proficiency of English language learners in the United States, as well as the instructional implications that may be derived from these findings. The primary objective of this study was to examine the extent to which instructional strategies designed to enhance arguing speaking abilities also contribute to the development of argumentative writing skills. The findings indicate that instructing students in the art of oral argumentation has a beneficial effect on their capacity to engage in written argumentation.

In a study done by Al-Roomy (2016), the objective was to explore the impact of oral interactions on the development of composition skills among university students in Saudi Arabia. The study specifically focused on the function of speaking in developing the writing abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research employed a case study design and involved the examination of group work scenarios. The findings indicated that the incorporation of both written and oral interactions facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the writing process among the students.

The current research indicates the relationship between speaking and writing skills (Geva, 2006, p. 14). Hubert (2008) conducted a study examining the correlation between written and oral communication in the Spanish language classrooms at universities in the United States. The findings indicate that there exists a developmental pattern in the correlation between writing and speaking abilities within the context of foreign language acquisition. Consequently, "their writing proficiency matches their speaking proficiency more closely the more advanced these subjects become" (Hubert, 2008, p. 98).

In a subsequent study, Hubert (2013)

investigated the correlation between the rate of progress in speaking and writing skills among a group of 17 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who were studying Spanish at different proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) at a university in the United States. The findings of the study indicate a significant and positive relationship ($r = .863$) between the levels of proficiency in speaking and writing among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who are studying Spanish.

Furthermore, Zhu (2008) conducted a study to determine the validity of utilizing syntactic maturity as a dependable metric for exploring the correlation between English oral proficiency and written expression. The findings demonstrate a robust positive association between oral and written communication in relation to indicators of syntactic development.

In addition, the scholarly works of Cheung and Chang (2009) and Cheung and Leung (2011) have investigated the correlation between English writing and speaking proficiencies within the context of Hong Kong students learning English as a foreign language. The results indicate that there are modest and strong positive associations between speaking and writing, respectively.

Furthermore, a study was undertaken by Cahyono and Mutiaraningrum (2016) to investigate the correlations between the writing proficiency and public speaking skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, taking into consideration their learning methods based on personality. The findings of the study indicate a significant correlation between public speaking skills and writing skills among both introverted ($r = .718$) and extroverted ($r = .646$) student populations.

Despite the importance of the above experimental and correlational research, as exemplified by the above studies, it is noticed that most of previous research on speaking and writing connection generally examined the relationship between holistic speaking and writing without any reference to the kind of communicative purposes for which language is used. Accordingly, EFL learners can use spoken and written language for narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative purposes. The current study will specifically focus on argumentative mode of discourse to examine

the relationship between speaking and writing in this genre.

II. METHOD

Research design

A quantitative correlational research design was relied on to compare and correlate the students' speaking and writing scores in argumentation. Because one of the major objectives of the study is to investigate the degree of association between the two measures, regression analysis was conducted to account for the variance that can be predicted across argumentative speaking and writing. Statistical tools like paired-samples t-tests as well as Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression were computed to answer the study's research questions.

Sample

The sample comprises 80 undergraduate students in their sixth semester who are studying English as a foreign language. 759 EFL undergraduate university students in their sixth semester were the demographic from whom the sample was randomly selected. For the purpose of example, a total of 19 subjects—1681 students in group one, 18 subjects—165 students in group two, 19 subjects—214 students in group three, and 24 subjects—219 students in group four—were chosen at random. The sample consists of 42 female participants and 38 male participants.

Instruments and Procedure

The students' argumentative speaking and writing were assessed through speaking and writing proficiency exams. To measure the participants' argumentative speaking abilities students were asked to express two opinions and support them with pertinent arguments; these cases

are controversial situations in which the subjects were engaged in arguing to defend and support their points of view. Speaking argumentation skill was evaluated holistically on a 0–10 point scale.

To measure the participants' argumentative abilities in writing, the participants were asked to answer two different questions and support their point of view with pertinent arguments. Corresponding to this, a 0–10 point rating system was used to assess writing argument skill.

With regards to scoring, two raters coded the written paragraphs to account for inter-coder reliability. The results showed a good degree of reliability between the two raters; the average measure ICC was .82 with a 95% confidence interval from .71 to .88 of agreement between the two raters, $F(79) = 5.49, p < .001$.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparing the Means

The descriptive statistics analysis yielded findings indicating that the average score for arguing speaking abilities is 6.47, while the average score for argumentative writing is 5.74. These results are displayed in Table 1.

A paired samples t-test was relied on to compare the means and to determine whether there is a significant difference between the speaking and writing scores. The results showed that there is a significant difference between argumentative speaking ($M = 6.47, SD = 1.18$) and argumentative writing ($M = 5.74, SD = 1.43$) scores; $t(79) = 4.78, p < .001$. These results are displayed in Table 2.

The results of the correlation between argumentative speaking skills (ASA) and argumentative writing abilities (AWA) will be presented in the next section after the descriptive

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Argumentative Speaking and Argumentative Writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Argumentative Speaking Ability	80	3.25	8.75	6.47	1.18
Argumentative Writing Ability	80	1.00	8.50	5.74	1.43
Valid N (listwise)	80				

Table 2. Paired Samples Test (ASA and AWA)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Argumentative Speaking Ability-Argumentative Writing Ability	.73	1.36	4.78	79	.000

statistics results and a comparison of the means of the two sets of data have been shown.

Results of Correlation

The findings of the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant moderate positive connection ($p < .01$) between ASA and AWA. The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed, resulting in a value of $r = .46$, which was found to be statistically significant at $p < .001$. These results are displayed in Table 3.

A basic linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the extent to which argumentative speaking ability could serve as a predictor of argumentative writing ability. These findings led to the conclusion that argumentative speaking ($R = .46$, $R^2 = .21$) can predict 21% of argumentative writing produced by EFL learners. The value of the corrected R^2 was 0.20. These results are displayed in Table 4.

Overall, the findings showed that the argumentative speaking mean and argumentative writing mean varied statistically significantly, $t(79) = 4.78$, $p < .001$. The marks obtained in speaking tend to surpass those achieved in writing when it comes to argumentative debate. Furthermore, a moderate positive association that was statistically significant was seen between argumentative speaking abilities (ASA) and argumentative writing abilities (AWA), with a correlation coefficient of $r = .46$, $p < .001$. Along with these outcomes, the regression analysis demonstrated a statistically significant degree of

ASA's ability to predict AWA. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for this equation was .21, indicating that 21% of the variation in the capacity to write persuasively could be predicted from the level of persuasive speaking. The predictive value holds significance; nonetheless, it fails to encompass a substantial degree of diversity.

The above results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between argumentative speaking and argumentative writing as well as a moderate positive correlation between the two modalities. In the first place, the significant difference between speaking and writing in argumentative discourse indicates that students' speaking abilities are greater than their writing ones, which suggests that semester six students face more difficulties in writing compared to speaking. Accordingly, this might suggest that writing is more cognitively demanding for the participants.

In addition to these findings, the study demonstrated that there is a statistically significant correlation between argumentative voice and writing. These results align with earlier research that looked at the relationship between speaking and writing modalities and showed how these skills are related to one another; for example, Zhu (2008), Cheung & Chang (2009), Cheung & Leung (2011), Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum (2016), Akki & Larouz, (2020, 2021) found that the development of one modality is related to the development of the other. As a result, argumentative writing scores rise along with argumentative speaking scores.

Table 3. Correlation of Argumentative Speaking and Argumentative Writing

		Argumentative Speaking Ability	Argumentative Writing Ability
Argumentative Speaking Ability	Pearson Correlation	1	.46**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80
Argumentative Writing Ability	Pearson Correlation	.46**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80

Table 4 Model Summary^b (ASA and AWA)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.46 ^a	.21	.20	1.27	1.42

Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), Argumentative Speaking Ability.

b. Dependent Variable: Argumentative Writing Ability.

Nevertheless, the current study's findings show only a moderate positive correlation between them. That is, semester six students' argumentative speaking abilities are fairly related to their argumentative writing abilities, and argumentative speaking does not account for a huge variation in argumentative writing. Therefore, demonstrating a good command of argumentative speaking might not predict a great deal of argumentative writing.

While the findings are interesting here, the current study suffers from some limitations. First, asking respondents to respond to two controversial situations might not be enough to measure argumentative speaking and writing. Hence, the instruments used might not provide a clear account of the students' level in speaking and writing. With alternative data collection techniques, such as essays, the results would have been more reliable. Likewise, relying on holistic scoring instead of analytic measures cannot provide the researcher with a detailed account of writing performance in areas such as grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, syntax, and content. Accordingly, future researchers are invited to use analytic scoring rubrics in measuring speaking and writing skills. Finally, the relationship between speaking and writing in other modes of discourse such as expository and narrative could be investigated.

IV. CONCLUSION

The current study demonstrated that argumentative speaking scores are greater than argumentative writing scores. Despite this significant difference between the means of speaking and writing, there is a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. Given this brief account of findings, one of the most important implications of the present study is to the requirement of giving much attention to argumentative writing which was found to be below argumentative speaking. In this situation, teachers can engage students in speaking exercises before writing assignments to help them stay focused and to help them recall the subjects they will be writing about. Students' written work, for example, is probably going to be improved by discussions. Hence, pupils proficient in oral communication can leverage their speaking skills to enhance their writing proficiency. Furthermore, since persuasive writing and speaking are correlated, it is possible to teach the two abilities simultaneously to promote connections between them. Nevertheless, because argumentative speaking cannot predict a great proportion of argumentative writing, more attention is also to be paid to writing instruction inside the classroom by assigning appropriate writing tasks that can enhance the students' written outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Akki, F., & Larouz, M. (2020). Comparative studies of spoken and written language with implications for EFL classrooms. In M. Yeou, R. Erguig & B. Benzehaf (Eds.), *New Perspectives in the Study of Language, Culture and Translation: Proceedings of the Second Doctoral Symposium* (Eljadida) (pp. 247-264). Rabat: Edition & Impression Bouregreg.
- Akki, F., & Larouz, M. (2021). The Relationship between Speaking and Writing in Descriptive Discourse in a Moroccan University EFL Context. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 2(1), 124-134. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlts.v2i1.102>
- Al-Roomy, M. (2016). Developing students' EFL writing skills by enhancing their oral interactions. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 5(5), 24-32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v5n.5p.24>
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Burns, A., & Joyce, H. (1997). *Focus on speaking*. Sydney: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research.
- Bygate, M. (1987). *Speaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bygate, M. (1998). Theoretical perspectives on speaking. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 20-42.
- Cahyono, B. Y., & Mutiaraningrum, I. (2016). Indonesian EFL students' proficiency in writing and ability

- in speaking across personality learning styles. *Studies in English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 168-186.
- Cheung, K. M., & Chang, R. (2009). *The relationship between the sub-components of English writing and speaking skills among Hong Kong primary students*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Primary Education.
- Cheung, K. M., & Leung, F. F. Y. (2011). Using assessment data to investigate the relationships between speaking and writing. *Assessment and Learning (1)*, 140-156.
- Cornbleet, S., & Carter, R. (2001). *The Language of speech and writing*. London: Routledge.
- Cumming, A. (1992). Instructional routines in ESL composition teaching: A case study of three teachers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 1, 17-35.
- Florez, V., & Hadaway, N.L. (1987). *Relationship of oral language proficiency and writing behaviors of secondary second language learners*. Paper presented at the Southwest Regional Conference of the International Reading Association. (15th, Phoenix, AZ, January 24, 1987).
- Geva, E. (2006). Second-language oral proficiency and second-language literacy. In D. August, & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hartley, J. (2007). Reading, writing, speaking and listening: *Perspectives in applied linguistics*. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2), 316-320.
- Hornby, A. S. (2005). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. China.
- Howarth, P. (2001). Process speaking: Preparing to repeat yourself. *MET*, 10(1), 39-44.
- Hubert, M. D. (2008). *The relationship between writing and speaking in the U.S university Spanish language classroom*. Unpublished Thesis. Purdue University Library.
- Hubert, M. D. (2013). The development of speaking and writing proficiencies in the Spanish language classroom: A case study. *Foreign Language Annals*, (46)(1), 88-95.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Izumi, S. (2002). Output, input enhancement, and the noticing hypothesis: An experimental study of ESL relativization. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24, 541-577.
- Kern, R.G. (2000). *Literacy and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krashen, S. (1994). The input hypothesis and its rivals. In Ellis, N. (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 45-77). London: Academic Press.
- Lee, J., & VanPatten, B. (1995). *Making communicative language teaching happen*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In Ritchie, W. C., & Bahtia, T. K. (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413- 68). New York: Academic Press.
- Mackey, A. (2002). Beyond production: Learners' perceptions about interactional processes. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 379-394.
- Manglesdorf, K. (1989). Parallels between speaking and writing in second language acquisition. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing: Empowering ESL students* (pp. 134-145). London: Longman.
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge University Press United Kingdom.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English language teaching*. Singapore: Mc Graw Hill Company.
- Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second-language learning conditions, processes and outcomes? *Language Learning*, 44(3), 493-527.

- Rausch, P. (2015). The relationship between English speaking and writing proficiency and its implications for instruction. *Culminating Projects in English*, 34. https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/34
- Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching foreign language skills* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–256). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlerhofer (Eds.), *Principles and practice in the study of language* (pp. 125–144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weissberg, R. (1994). Speaking of writing: Some functions of talk in the ESL composition class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 121-139.
- Weissberg, R. (2005). Talking about writing: Cross-modality research and second language speaking/writing connections, in P. Matsuda & T. Silva (Eds.), *Second language writing: Perspectives on the process of knowledge construction*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Yun, K. A, Costantini, C., & Billingsley, S. (2012). The effect of taking a public speaking class on one's writing abilities. *Communication Research Reports*, 29(4), 285-291.
- Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The process of discovering meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(2), 195-209.
- Zhang, Y. (2009). An experimental study of the effects of listening on speaking for college students. *English Language Teaching*, 2(3), 194-204. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n3p194>
- Zhu, X. (2008). Is syntactic maturity a reliable measurement to investigate the relationship between English speaking and writing? *The Asian EFL Journal*, 10(1), 133-153.