

## **The Effect of Using Ginger Software on Jordanian Ninth Grade Female Students' Performance in Spelling**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the use of Ginger software on Jordanian ninth grade female students` performance in spelling. The participants were 54 ninth grade female students in Al-Ramtha Directorate of Education..The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group of 26 female students who were taught via Ginger software, and a control group of 28 female students who were taught via the regular teaching method. The researchers developed a spelling achievement pre/post test. The findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the students` performance on the spelling achievement test in favor of the students in the experimental group. Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommended the use of Ginger software in teaching spelling.

**Key words:** Ginger Software; Spelling Ability; Academic Performance; Ninth Grade; EFL.

أثر استخدام برمجية جنجر (Ginger) في تحسين الأداء الإملائي لدى طالبات الصف التاسع الأساسي في الأردن

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ملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى استقصاء أثر استخدام برمجية جنجر في تحسين الأداء الإملائي لدى طالبات الصف التاسع الأساسي في الأردن. واختيرت عينة الدراسة بالطريقة المتيسرة، حيث تألفت من ٥٤ طالبة من طالبات الصف التاسع الأساسي في مديرية التربية والتعليم للواء الرمثا. تم تقسيم العينة إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة تجريبية تكونت من ٢٦ طالبة درست الإملاء من خلال برمجية جنجر، ومجموعة ضابطة تكونت من ٢٨ طالبة درست بالطريقة الاعتيادية. من أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة، قام الباحثون بتصميم اختبار تحصيلي في الإملاء تم التأكد من صدقه وثباته. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى الدلالة ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) بين نتائج الطالبات في الأداء الإملائي في الاختبار البعدي لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. وبناء على نتائج الدراسة، أوصى الباحثون باستخدام برمجية جنجر في تدريس الإملاء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: برمجية جنجر (Ginger) ، الإملاء، التحصيل الأكاديمي، الصف التاسع.

## 1: Introduction

Writing is a significant means of communication between individuals. As a productive skill, writing has got a major focal starting from bits and pieces of the sub skills (e.g., spelling, punctuation) till mastering the higher level skills (e.g., planning, organization). Writing accurately, spelling, is one key sub skills in foreign language context.

Spelling is simply defined as writing the word properly by using the correct order of the letters as a dictionary writes, it refers to the process of decoding units of sound to written symbols (Lipson & Wixson, 1997).

Research showed that spelling is a complex, challenging skill, especially, for Arabic-speaking students (Al-Olimat & AbuSeileek, 2015). The irregularity of the English system is problematic for all students (Al Jayousi, 2011), even for native speakers (Alenazi, 2018). There are 44 English phonemes which are represented by 26 letters. So, the correspondence between a grapheme with several phonemes (e.g., `th` which corresponds with the phonemes /ð/ in the word `these`, /θ/ in the word `through`, and /t/ in the word `Thai`) could cause such difficulties for students (Cook, 2008). Alhaisoni; Al-Zuoud and; and Gaudel (2015: 185) stated that "spelling errors are mainly the outcome of anomalies existing in the target language of the students as well as L1 interference from their internalized Arabic language system."

In this context, several studies (e.g. Albalawi, 2016; Alhaisoni et al, 2015; Al-Oudat, 2017; Al-Zuoud & Kabilan, 2013; Dada, 2015; Said, 2018) pointed out that the most common kinds of spelling errors that students commit while writing, with varying degrees of occurrence, are the following: omission errors (deleting letter(s)), substitution errors (using wrong vowel(s) or consonant(s) for another one), insertion errors (doubling letter(s) or insert additional letter(s)) , ambiguous errors (articulation or interference errors), in addition to disordering errors (inversion or transposition).

Several studies highlighted the importance of correct spelling based on various reasons. For example, Al-Sobhi, Rashid, Abdullah and Darmi (2017) indicated that precise spelling provides a reader with an explicit clear message to understand. They pointed out the necessity for a writer to be competent, for the sake of sending

his/her written messages in a clear way far from any barriers that may affect and destruct the meaning.

On the other hand, poor spelling may affect both writing as a final product and the writer/ speller. Many studies were carried out in this respect. For example, Nahari and Alfadda (2016) came with the idea that individuals who lack their spelling proficiency as well as the development of its skill may be assessed negatively by peers, instructors, and themselves alike. In addition, they may try to use simpler words as a matter of treating their weakness and lacking which may restrict and affect the communication and meaning.

The reasons behind poor spelling were discussed by several studies. For instance, Said (2018) argued that errors that students make are a result of poor teaching methods, the lack in spelling practices in and outside the classroom as well as the shortage to find additional strategies which could limit the underestimation of learners` errors in their learning.

Dada (2015) also suggested many factors that stand beyond errors that students commit in spelling as follows: students usually are careless to go through their works after writing, the lack of books that aid and explain spelling errors in school libraries, teachers do not teach spelling, especially, at the secondary schools. Furthermore, some of teachers commit spelling errors while writing.

Hence, the need to provide students with suitable corrective feedback which may help to overcome these difficulties and barriers became a must. Fu and Nassagi (2016) asserted that research paid more attention to the role of corrective feedback in teaching English either as a second language (ESL) or as EFL in the past few decades. Although it is still a controversial issue as it develops or hinders teaching and learning process.

Horbacauskiene and Kasperaviciene (2015) pointed out the priority of direct correction for both language instructors and students, in terms of saving time and offering clarity. However, they claimed that students who lack their own spelling skills may not prefer to receive corrective feedback from the teacher, which may view their weakness, and as a result minimize their motivation. In this regard, Ghandi and Maghsoudi (2014) stated that students still commit those spelling errors

that had been corrected previously by the teachers, which indicates that they didn't care for this type of correction.

Al-Olimat and AbuSeileek (2015) asserted that the marked observable weakness and difficulties in students' English language skills in general, and spelling in specific may be attributed to the traditional teaching practices and techniques in providing corrective feedback, which depend solely on the teacher. They claimed that computer may aid in presenting suitable corrective feedback which is beneficial rather than the teacher's. Besides, they confirmed the necessity to stop using red pens in scoring students' homework and tests, since it may affect students' responses more negatively than other techniques used by a teacher, although some studies accepted it as a way of decreasing students' errors (e.g., Lin, Liu & Pass, 2017).

Moreover, providing suitable feedback, in a less threatening and more efficient atmosphere, is considered as one of the biggest challenges for teachers (Tomczyk, 2013). It needs much time and effort from both the teacher and the student, in which teachers may spend the whole class in an attempt to correct students' papers. Abedi, LatifiandMoinzadeh (2010: 168) argued that "Since providing feedback to students' errors is one of the most difficult tasks to be obtained in terms of effort and time-consuming, it is worth investigating the most effective way to react to errors."

Again, teachers should be aware towards the way of corrective feedback that students need, where there is a sense of keeping pace with evolving and modernity. Many studies (e.g., Abd-Almajeed & Al-auwfi, 2015; Alharbi, 2014; Al-Roqi, 2018) recommended the need to apply such modern teaching methods and strategies in teaching spelling.

The use of Computer Assessed Language Learning (CALL) has increased markedly in the last few years. It's used as a supported system which allows superior achievements to be obtained in contrast with the traditional methods, whereas the teacher is the only source of knowledge (Bataineh & Bani Hani, 2011).

In this respect, numerous studies were conducted on using CALL for improving students' spelling performance. For instance, Abu Serhan (2007) investigated the effect of using the word processor on correcting the spelling errors among ninth grade students and their attitudes toward using it. The sample of the study consisted

of two groups: The first group consisted of 250 ninth grade students chosen to diagnose the wide-spread dictation errors. And the second one included 80 male and female students chosen to measure the effect of using word processor compared to the regular method of teaching dictation. It was distributed into two groups: the control group of 40 students who were taught following the regular method and the experimental group consisted of 40 students who were taught using the computer. A diagnostic test and a questionnaire were used. The results revealed only six common dictation errors committed by more than 50% of the students. The study also revealed that there were significant differences attributed to the method of teaching, in favor of the experimental group.

Baniabdelrahman (2017) examined the effect of using computer-based writing (Paper- Rater) software on Jordanian tenth grade students in grammar. The sample of this study consisted of 70 tenth grade female students who were divided into two groups: the experimental group consisted of 34 students who were taught using Paper- Rater while the control group consisted of 36 who were taught using the regular method of teaching. An achievement test was applied. The findings of the study revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in several aspects of writing such as punctuation, spelling, capitalization and tenses.

Ambrose and Palpanathan (2017) studied the effectiveness of computer-based writing using Google Documents (Docs) in improving students` writing performance. The sample consisted of 114 senior students at a Chinese Independent High School who were engaged in the in-class writing tasks (pen and paper) and one writing task in the computer lab. A pre/post-writing questionnaire was given in addition to students interviews. The findings showed a significant improvement of students` writing performance via Google Docs.

Zhu, Mark, Brian, and Liu (2016) conducted a study to compare students` writing performance using word-processor or pencil-and-paper. The participants were 32 students studying elementary Chinese as a foreign language. The participants used two forms of writing media to present two essays: The first one used a word-processed essay and the second one used a conventional hand-written essay. Questionnaires and interviews were used. The results showed that the students performed

significantly better when using a word processor. Although a small number of students preferred writing by hand, they appreciated the appropriateness of writing in words spelled and written by the computer.

Ghahri, Hashamdar and Mohamadi (2015) investigated the effect of technology, namely English correcting websites in the accuracy of the writing performance. The sample of the study was 60 EFL intermediate students who were randomly divided into two groups: The experimental group that was engaged in the English correcting websites, while the control group received the traditional teacher given feedback. A Preliminary English Test (PET) was applied. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in students` performance in favor of the experimental group.

As mentioned before, there are a number of computer software programs that can be applied in English language learning (e.g., Paper- Rater, word processor). The free online software, Ginger, is one of many available tools that help users to enhance their writing qualifications in terms of grammar checking, spelling correction, sentence rephrasing, plagiarism checking, proofreading, translating, accessing reference tools as dictionaries, applying text reader in addition to offering a personal trainer (tutor).

The spell checker that Ginger included provides students with visual feedback. It highlights errors of the original sentence, and then suggests a single correction for each one based on the context of the complete sentence rather than correcting each word separately. It`s just one click away. Furthermore, it provides with auditory feedback via Ginger`s Text to Speech (TTS), and allows students to hear the pronunciation of their errors and their corrections alike (Simon & Fitzpatrick, 2010).

## **2: Purpose of the Study**

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of using Ginger software on the EFL ninth grade female students' performance in spelling.

### **Questions of the Study**

The study attempted to answer the following question:

Are there statistically significant differences in Jordanian EFL ninth grade female students' performance at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in spelling test scores due to the use of Ginger software as compared to the regular method?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study hopes to draw attention of the officials and decision makers to the real need to include such CALL programs, which may facilitate and improve the educational process in the curriculum. Also, the results might be beneficial for both teachers and students in terms of saving time and effort, and achieving autonomy while learning. Furthermore, this study may contribute to overcome most of spelling difficulties and barriers that students face, based on the Ginger software aids that computers offer, as a matter of adaptation with the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the age of technological and cognitive explosion.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

**Ginger Software:** it is a free online software used for providing with writing analysis for the sake of helping students to improve grammar and to attain better accuracy in writing. It helps in checking spelling, grammar and plagiarism, style and word choice analysis, and vocabulary building. In this study, Ginger software was used in order to develop students' spelling performance in English language.

**spelling ability:** it refers to writing words properly by using the correct order of letters as dictionary writes (Lipson & Wixson, 1997). Operationally, it is the ability of students to spell correctly measured by the spelling test developed by the researchers.

**Regular Method:** it is teaching *Action Pack 9* writing activities through the strategies presented in ninth- grade *Action Pack* teachers' book.

**Academic Performance:** it is the ninth grade female students' performance in spelling which is measured by the post test which was prepared by the researchers.

### **3: Sampling, Instrumentation, and Data collection and Data Analysis**

The participants of the study were Jordanian EFL ninth grade female students in Al-Ramtha Directorate of Education. They were chosen from Nahawand and Primary Mixed School and Al- Khansa Primary School during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. They were selected purposefully and assigned randomly into two groups: The experimental group from Nahawand school which was taught via Ginger software, and the control group from Khansa which was taught using the regular method of teaching as suggested in the teacher's book.

The researchers prepared a spelling achievement test. It consisted of two questions which included two tasks:

**Task 1:** The students were asked to edit the passage which includes purposefully spelling errors.

**Task 2:** The students were asked to write a passage to compare between country life and city life, using the included tips.

A pre-test, which was prepared by the researchers, was applied the first time towards the end of March/2018 (before the experiment started to check the equivalence of the two groups) and it was re-applied by the end of May/2018 to check the students' achievement after the treatment). The test covered some of misspelling aspects such as: wrong vowel letter or consonant letter (substitution), reversed order of double vowels (inversion), extra erroneous repeated consonants or insert additional letter(s) (insertion), deleted letter(s) (omission), and producing different sound/s of speech (pronunciation). The researchers took into consideration students' abilities and proficiencies to write in the second question forming two complete paragraphs.

The researchers and the two English language teachers of the two groups (the control group and the experimental one) graded students' answers, then the results were analyzed and discussed in order to compare the two strategies that were applied. Students' scores were analyzed using means, standard deviations, and t-test of independent samples in order to answer the research question by finding out the significant differences in performance between the two groups.

#### **4: Study Procedures**

After obtaining an approval from Al-Ramtha Directorate of Education to conduct the study, the participants were divided into two groups (an experimental group and a control group). Then the pre-test was applied on the two groups of the study. The two groups used the same textbook, the same teaching material, and the same procedures except the way of corrective feedback. The experimental group received corrective feedback via Ginger software while the control group followed the regular method of teaching.

Ginger software was used twice a week for a period of two months. Next, the developed test was administered again directly after the experiment had finished. Then, the test was graded by the researchers and the teachers of English language of the two groups. By the end, statistical analyses were used to analyze the results.

## 5: Findings of the Study

Results Related to the Study Question: *Are there statistically significant differences in Jordanian EFL ninth grade female students` performance at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in spelling test scores due to the use of Ginger software as compared to the regular method?*

In order to answer the question of the study, means and standard deviations were calculated. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post Test**

Source	N	Mean	SD
Control group	26	24.32	7.18
Experimental group	28	28.40	5.64

Table 1 shows that the mean score of the control group was less than the mean score of the experimental group (24.32 and 28.40 respectively). The results show that the experimental group which was taught through Ginger Software performed better than the control group. In order to check if the observed differences were

significant, t-test of independent samples was run (Table 2 below presents the results).

**Table 2: Results of T-test of Independent Samples**

Source	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-value	Sig ≤
<b>Control group</b>	28	24.32	7.18			
<b>Experimental group</b>	26	28.40	5.64	24	2.59	0.013*

\*\* Significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 above shows that there is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the mean score of the control group in favor of the experimental one. The mean score of the experimental group (28.40) is greater than the mean score of the control group (24.32). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups due to the use of Ginger software as compared to the regular method.

In order to check if there were statistically significant differences in the achievement of the experimental group in the five categories of spelling errors (omission, substitution, insertion, inversion, and pronunciation) of the first question of the post test, ANOVA test was run. The results are presented in Table 3 below

**Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of the Experimental Group in the Five Categories of Spelling Errors in the First Question of the Post Test**

Category	N	Mean	SD
<b>Omission</b>	26	2.65	0.90
<b>Substitution</b>	26	1.19	0.75
<b>Insertion</b>	26	2.89	0.87
<b>Inversion</b>	26	3.64	0.86
<b>Pronunciation</b>	26	3.03	0.99

\*\*The means are out of 4

The results in Table 3 show that there are observed differences in the experimental group' achievement in the five categories of errors. Students scored

better in the omission, insertion, inversion and pronunciation categories in comparison with their mean scores in the substitution category. In order to check if these differences are statistically significant, ANOVA test was run. Table 4 below presents the results.

**Table 4: Results of ANOVA Test of the Experimental Group' Mean Scores in the Five Categories of Spelling Errors of Question One of the Post Test**

Source	DF	Type III	Mean Square	F-value	Sig
Categories	4	85.119	21.279	12.83	0.0001
Error	125	207.311	1.658		
Corrected Total	129	292.431			

\*\*significant at (a= 0.05)

The results in Table 4 show that there are statistically significant differences at (a= 0.05) in the experimental group' mean scores in the five categories of errors` F=12.83. To check in which categories the students performed significantly better, Tukey test of multiple comparisons was run. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Results of Tukey Test of Multiple Comparisons of the Experimental Group' Mean Scores in the Five Categories of Question One**

Group	comparison	Difference between means	50% confidence
1	2	1.46	0.47 2.45**
1	3	0.2350	-1.2145 0.7444
1	4	-0.9862	-1.9847 - 0.0124
1	5	-0.3846	-1.3733 0.6041
2	3	-1.6966	-2.6761 -0.7171 ***
2	4	-2.4477	-3.4462 -1.4492 ***
2	5	-1.8462	-2.8348 -0.8575 ***

2	4	-0.7511	-1.7405	0.2383
3	5	0.149	1.129	0.829
4	5	0.6015	-0.3970	1.6000

\*\* Significant at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

The results in Table 5 show that there are statistically significant differences between the first, third, fourth and fifth categories in one hand (omission, insertion, inversion, pronunciation) and the second category (substitution) in favor of the first, third, fourth and fifth categories. Furthermore, the results show no statistically significant differences among the first, third, fourth and fifth categories of errors.

**Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations of the Experimental Group in the Five Categories of Spelling Errors in Question Two of the Post Test**

Category	N	Mean	SD
Omission	26	1.23	0.75
Substitution	26	1.00	0.55
Insertion	26	3.12	1.07
Inversion	26	3.69	1.08
Related to writing instructions	26	3.62	0.80

\*\* Means are out of 4

The results in Table 6 show that there are observed differences in the experimental group' achievement in the five categories of errors. Students scored better in the insertion, inversion, and related to writing instructions categories in comparison with their mean scores of the omission and substitution categories. In order to check if these differences are statistically significant, ANOVA test was computed. Table 7 below presents the results.

**Table 7: Results of ANOVA Test of the Experimental Group' Mean Scores in the Five Categories of Spelling Errors of Question Two of the Post Test**

Source	DF	Type III	Mean Square	F-value	Sig
Categories	4	179.42	44.854	26.58	0.0001
Error	125	210.962	1.688		
Corrected Total	129	390.377			

\*\* Significant at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

The results in Table 7 show that there are statistically significant differences in the experimental group' mean scores in the five categories of errors. To check in which categories the students performed significantly better, Tukey test of multiple comparisons was run. The results are presented in Table 8 below.

**Table 8: Results of Tukey Test of Multiple Comparisons of the Experimental Group' Mean Scores in the Five Categories of Question Two**

Categories	Means	Omission	Substitution	Insertion	Inversion	Related to writing instruction
		1.23	1.00	3.12	3.69	3.62
Omission	1.23	-	-	X**	X**	X**
Substitution	1.00	-	-	X**	X**	X**
Insertion	3.12	X**	X**	-	-	-
Inversion	3.69	X**	X**	-	-	-
Related to writing instructions	3.62	X**	X**	-	-	-

\*\*X = significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$

The results in Table 8 reveal that there are statistically significant differences between the third, fourth and fifth categories on the one hand (insertion, inversion, related to writing instructions) and the first and second categories (omission and substitution) on the other hand in favor of the third, fourth and fifth categories.

Furthermore, the results show no statistically significant differences among the third, fourth and fifth categories of errors.

## **6: Discussion of the Results of the Study Question**

The question of this study is: *Are there statistically significant differences in Jordanian EFL ninth grade female students` performance at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in spelling test scores due to the use of Ginger software as compared to the regular method?*

The results of the study revealed that there were significant differences in the EFL ninth grade students` performance in spelling due to the use of Ginger software as opposed to the regular method of presenting feedback. This might be due to the way that students receive the corrective feedback via Ginger software in terms of editing students` errors directly and providing with immediate corrective feedback.

It is possible to account that students in the experimental group were more motivated than those in the control one. This might be referred to the fact that Ginger software offers a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere for learning. Students in the experimental group achieved an independent learning and became more autonomous because they weren`t hesitant, since they wrote without taking into consideration the reaction of the teacher or their peers towards their committed errors, which as a result gave them a sense of freedom and self confidence to communicate and write as they want, and allowed them to experience many of words that they have not sure of their correctness before. This result accords with the findings from the study of Al-Olimat and AbuSieleek (2015) that corrective feedback via word processor is highly motivated for learning in terms of reducing anxiety, assessing the written work independently, presenting useful corrective feedback which is beneficial rather than the teacher one.

Moreover, the results revealed that Ginger software was an affective flexible device in facilitating the correction process, in terms of obtaining more speed and accurate corrective feedback in a less effort from both the students and the teacher, regardless of any factors that may affect the correction process. Since providing suitable corrective feedback needs much time and effort from both the learner and the teacher, in which teachers may spend the whole class in an attempt to correct students' papers. This might be due to the fact that students who were exposed to

Ginger software can receive the suitable corrective feedback step by step and word by word starting from responding to the teacher instructions till finishing and handling the final draft, in which some teachers may correct students` written work expeditiously in inaccurate manner based on many factors as follows: the shortage of time, the large number of students inside the classroom, the feeling of tiring, stress and pressure, difficulties in classroom management. Furthermore, some teachers think that their role or responsibility is just to guide students while writing and not to teach spelling.

This result is in harmony with what was reported by other studies. For instance, Baniabdelrahman (2017) claimed that word processor works as a flexible private teacher, corrector, monitor, recorder, trainer and supporter in following learners` behavior while writing. She asserted that it follows the learner`s reactions step by step any time/ place that he/ she prefers, starting from their responses to its instructions till receiving the feedback out of any type of stress or fear, which means that using handouts or worksheets may not lead to obtain the same results in facilitating teaching and learning process. Also, Baleghizadeh and Dadushi (2011) argued that teacher should be coach, facilitator, monitor and guide instead of being examiner or copy editor.

Furthermore, the use of Ginger software offered an interesting ground for learning. It opened new outlooks for the students. This might be due to the presentation content and the good qualities of the software. Since students can receive visual and auditory corrective feedback in a simple neat way within an attractive, well designed, and organized page. The screen features in terms of clarity, colors, line size and type, and the ease of the use promoted the students to practice more and more without getting bored, in addition to the use of theTTS which enabled the students to distinguish between the errors that they commit and their correction, and how they differ phonetically. In contrast, students used to receive the handwritten feedback which is presented in an old repeated way, starting from the first grade till finishing a higher level of education. The reason which may stand beyond making students careless about this type of correction, in which there are a lot of crowded lines of correction presented in an arbitrary and untidy manner here and there.

This result is consistent with the findings of Atiker and Turan (2017) that the presentation contents of the software and its features, in terms of screen advantages and well planning, capture and attract students` attention and interests. This result is also consistent with the findings of Ghandi and Maghsoudi (2014) who claimed that students still commit those spelling errors that had been corrected previously by the teacher, which indicates that they did not pay attention to this type of correction. Also, Simon and Fitzpartrick (2010) indicated that Ginger`s text to speech is very beneficial in terms of enabling students to hear their errors and their correction alike.

### **Recommendations**

1. Ministry of Education is invited to include such CALL programs in English language curriculum, including using different modern strategies and techniques. In addition, it should provide with adequate training for both teachers and students on how to deal and benefit from these programs.
2. More research is needed in the area of teaching spelling via Ginger software, and about different scholastic stages, samples and other English language skills.
3. Attention should be paid to the time of exposure to computer-mediated corrective feedback via Ginger software as a matter of adaptation with technical and technological age.

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