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THE IMPACT OF PLEASE STRATEGY ON DEVELOPING PARAGRAPH WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract
This study aimed at investigating the effect of PLEASE (Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply, and End) strategy on developing paragraph writing skills of first-year students at Al-Balqa Applied University. It attempted to investigate the effect of PLEASE on paragraph writing achievement, compared to conventional method. Eighty-one EFL learners participated in the study at Ajloun College and were distributed on experimental and control groups. To fulfil the purpose of the study, the researchers applied pre- and post-test on both groups. After analysing the obtained data, the results indicated that PLEASE strategy affected paragraph writing positively. The study suggested several implications and recommendations for the future research.

Keywords: EFL, please strategy, writing skills

Introduction
Writing is one of the most important skills that should be acquired or learned in life (Makmur at el, 2016; Pasand & Haghi, 2013) and it is essential for communication by making signs on a page. It is used to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, and to share knowledge. It is used to translate our thoughts into useful accessible documents, so we can convey our messages effectively and meaningfully. In addition, writing also is a way to teach us how to think and how to be an educated human being (Pack, 2003). Moreover, writing has a positive impact on language learning since it invokes the learners to concentrate more on the accurate use of language (Harmer, 2004). It is also essential in several fields and professions, such as medicine, journalism, and education.

Writing is considered one of the most complex skill in learning a language that EFL students should master (Richardson & Morgan, 2003; Negari, 2011). Nunan (1989) argues that "Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of variables simultaneously" (p. 34). Richardson and Renandya (2002) claimed that writing is a complex process because it involves cognitive and meta-cognitive elements and he assumed that "writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners" (p. 303). At the sentence level, a good writer should use correctly spelling, structure, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary. At the paragraph level, he/she should present his/her ideas in a cohesive and coherent paragraph or text. As a result of its complexity, many language

learners face difficulty in writing. It is worth noting that writing is not an easy task for native speakers which makes it a challenge for foreign language learners.

Furthermore, the researchers noticed that most students at Al-Balqa Applied University have some difficulties when writing paragraphs. They have many ideas, but they cannot translate these ideas into meaningful and readable text. They committed many mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and word choice. To solve the previous problems, it is essential to adopt suitable strategies especially at the paragraph level. Several studies have been conducted on the effect of using different strategies on paragraph writing. For example, (Alzu' bi, 2007) and Sabra (2014) found out a positive influence of certain strategies on paragraph writing and solving writing problems. Thus, instructors should select a good strategy to solve the students' difficulties when they write paragraphs.

As a result, the researchers selected PLEASE strategy as it is very suitable to encounter the problems that faced the students when writing paragraph. When the researchers reviewed the related literature such as Stave at el. (2005) and Liza and Refnaldi (2013), they found that PLEASE has positive effects on improving writing at the paragraph level because it can help the students generate and organize their ideas. Because of the characteristics of PLEASE strategy, the researchers conducted the present study to investigate its impact on developing paragraph writing and solving the major problems that faced the students at universities.

Many English language learners face several problems in paragraph writing. They have many ideas, but they do not know how to translate them to readable text due to their poor vocabulary and grammar, and their inability of organizing ideas. In addition, difficulties and problems with spelling, punctuation, revising, editing and capitalization are present. To solve such problems, the researchers encourage instructors to use PLEASE strategy because most studies argued that it is among the most suitable strategies to solve all of the previous problems. The study tries to explore whether PLEASE strategy can develop paragraph writing.

Operational Definitions

1. PLEASE strategy is an instructional mnemonic meta-cognitive strategy that reminds students with the steps of the writing process at the level of paragraph
2. Writing achievement is the score of the post test that every student in the two groups gains after completing the treatment immediately (Al-zu'bi, 2015).

"PLEASE" strategy is used by teachers and instructors to determine the difficulties that face students in prewriting, planning, and paragraph revision (Welch, 1992). Also, it is a map that reminds learners to apply specific steps of paragraph writing (Graham and Harris, 2007).

Steps of PLEASE

1. Pick the topic, audience, and paragraph type.
2. List information about the topic
3. Evaluate whether the list is complete and determine how to order the items in the list.
4. Activate your writing by starting with a topic sentence.
5. Supply supporting details in sentences, using items from the list.
6. End with a strong concluding sentence and evaluate the paragraph by revising and editing. (Vaughn, et al., 2003).

According to many researchers who conducted studies to found out the effect of PLEASE strategy on developing writing, there exists positive impact, especially at primary stages and with students with learning disabilities. Sinambela and Sinulingga (2013) found that the use of PLEASE strategy significantly improved student's achievement in writing. Similarly, Yulastri (2014) conducted a study on the effect of PLEASE strategy on the writing achievement of 12th grade of senior high school students. The study found out that PLEASE strategy helped students to organize their ideas and produce readable paragraphs. It also motivates students to write more.

A study by Wardani (2016) aimed at investigating whether there was a significant difference on writing competency between the students who learned writing with the use of "PLEASE" and those who learned writing with the use of the conventional writing strategy. The sample of the study was 44 Nigerian students at the tenth grade who were selected through a random sampling technique. After collecting and analysing the data, the results showed that there was a significant difference on writing competency between the students who learned writing by using "PLEASE" strategy and those who learned writing with the use of the conventional writing strategy. The students who were taught by using "PLEASE" strategy achieved better in writing competency, as compared to those who were taught by the conventional writing strategy.

In another study by Aminaturn, Ngadiso and Marmanto (2018), the impact of PLEASE strategy on the writing skills of eleventh grade of SMA Negeri 1 Ngemplak. The results of the study indicated that students taught using PLEASE strategy performs better in learning writing than those who taught by Guided Writing strategy.

The PLEASE strategy helps students with learning disabilities in the process writing. Welch (1992) claimed that PLEASE strategy was significantly more effective in developing the meta-cognitive abilities of sixth-grade students with learning disabilities, for prewriting planning, composition, and revision. Findings also suggest that students' attitude towards writing and writing instructions improved significantly following the experimental treatment.

Akincilar (2010) explored the impact of the "PLEASE" on writing skills. The sample of the study was selected from the fifth-grade learners who studied English in a private primary school in Istanbul. The results indicated that PLEASE strategy helped students in pre-writing and planning stage, and it increased their self-confidence.

Several researchers conducted studies that aimed at finding out the effect of PLEASE strategy on the descriptive writing. All of these studies showed that PLEASE strategy improved students' descriptive writing (Marzulina, 2018; Dewi, 2018; Spartt, 2005; Liza & Renaldi, 2013 & Nasution, 2018)

All previous studies found that PLEASE strategy affected writing achievement positively. They selected samples from primary stages and students with learning disabilities. Unlike these studies, the current study investigates the influence of PLEASE strategy on different types of writing of undergraduate university students.

Method

The researchers selected a purposeful sample of 81 first-year students from Ajloun University College. They were divided into experimental (by using PLEASE strategy) and control group (by using the conventional way) to investigate whether or not PLEASE strategy has a positive effect.

The researchers designed a writing test which includes 3 topics, based on the students' levels to write a perfect paragraph about one of them (See Appendix 2).The specific objectives of the test include:

1. Writing the topic sentence.
2. Writing supporting sentences.
3. Writing the concluding sentence.
4. Writing using correct grammar.
5. Not making spelling errors.
6. Using suitable punctuations marks.
7. Establishing coherence by using linking words.
8. Organizing and ordering the paragraph.
9. Using suitable vocabularies.
10. Following the paragraph format.

The researchers asked a number of experts to judge the test so as to produce the final draft. Finally, the researchers used a rubric to correct students' paragraph writing mistakes based on the objectives of the test (See Appendix 3).

The researchers designed six lesson plans which covered 18 lectures (each lesson took a week) according to the PLEASE steps (See Appendixes 1). To ensure the validity of the program, a panel of experts revised the program, and the researchers followed their comments and suggestions to produce the final draft.

The researchers used the quasi-experimental design. The experimental group consisted of 41 students, whereas the control group included40 participants. The researchers used the pre-test technique to make sure that both groups are equivalent and post-test to find out whether there is a difference between them.

Findings and Discussion

To test the equivalence between the mean scores of the groups on writing in the pre-test, the T test was computed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of t-test for the pre-writing test

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
PRE	Experimental	41	17.27	6.573	-.312	79	.756
	Control	40	17.73	6.594			

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test were slightly similar to the control group's mean score: (17.27; 17.73). This indicates that the T value of writing test was not statistically significant at ($\alpha \leq 0$, 05), so 0.312 is higher than 0.05, implying that the two groups are equivalent.

The t-test was performed to answer the main question of the study as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of T-test of the post writing test between the two groups.

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
POST	Experimental	41	23.15	5.360	2.188	79	.032
	Control	40	20.18	6.793			

As shown in Table 2, there is a difference between the two tests in favour of the experimental group because T value which is (2.188) is statistically significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

The result is expected because of the benefits and features of PLEASE strategy. First of all, the strategy provides a structure to help students plan what they write from pre-writing activities and to generate their ideas while writing. This strategy also helps students to revise their writing in the post-writing stage. Secondly, it motivates the students to explore their ideas. Thirdly, the steps of PLEASE strategy are easy to remember and apply. Finally, it helps students write independently because it leads students to find their topics and ideas about what they will write. This helps them to improve their ability of paragraph writing.

The main result of study is consistent with the previous theoretical and practical studies which indicated that the use of PLEASE strategy develops students' paragraph writing.

Conclusion

The results of the study agree with the previous studies as most of them demonstrated that the PLEASE strategy plays a positive role in improving students' paragraph writing. According to the findings of the study, the researchers offer the following recommendations. Firstly, other researchers may conduct similar studies on other levels of writing like essay writing and composition. Secondly, training instructors on how to apply PLEASE strategy.

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