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The Effectiveness of Using PLEASE Strategy for Teaching Writing Skills to EFL Preparatory School Students

ABSTRACT

This research describes about the effectiveness of using PLEASE strategy for teaching writing skills to EFL preparatory school students. Writing is one of the important skills that express ideas, expressions and feelings. In language teaching, writing plays a vital role due to proficiency in generating, documenting and transferring varieties of messages to readers, so the writer can have a good interaction with the society. Writing skills enhances students' abilities to produce an expressive text using their own words or devising new others via practicing different topics.

The present study aims at: Finding out the effectiveness of using PLEASE strategy on EFL preparatory school students' writing skills.

To verify the hypothesis of the study, an experiment was designed where two groups each of which had 35 students chosen randomly from the fifth grade at Sarea Preparatory School for Boys in Mosul city. One of these two groups was assigned as an EG which was taught writing skills by using PLEASE strategy, and the other as a CG which was taught writing skills by using traditional approaches. Both groups were matched in terms of their age, parents' level of education, the level of subjects' achievement in English for the previous academic year 2021-2022, and their scores in the pre-test.

The statistical analysis of the results reveals that the achievement of the students in writing skills in the EG is significantly higher in average than that of the students in the CG on total scores of the post-tests. The results of the study affirm the contribution of PLEASE strategy to the development of the EFL preparatory school students in writing skills. This indicates that PLEASE strategy is more favourable to learning than the traditional approaches.

In view of the findings obtained, the research ended up with a number of recommendations. Furthermore, some suggestions for further studies are provided as well.

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تأثير استخدام استراتيجية "PLEASE" لتعليم مهارات الكتابة لطلاب المرحلة الإعدادية من اللغة
الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

باسم محمد بكر الحديدي / جامعة تكريت

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الخلاصة:

يصف هذا البحث فاعلية استخدام استراتيجية "PLEASE" لتعليم مهارات الكتابة لطلاب المرحلة الإعدادية من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الكتابة من المهارات المهمة التي تعبر عن الأفكار والتعبيرات والمشاعر و تعزز مهارات الكتابة من قدرات الطلاب على إنتاج نص تعبيرى باستخدام كلماتهم الخاصة أو ابتكار اشكال أخرى جديدة من خلال ممارسة موضوعات مختلفة. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى:

١. اكتشاف اثرا استخدام استراتيجية "PLEASE" على تعليم مهارات الكتابة لطلاب المرحلة الإعدادية من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

٢. اكتشاف اثرا استخدام استراتيجية "PLEASE" على المكونات الخمسة لمهارات الكتابة لطلاب المرحلة الإعدادية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
أ) استخدام اللغة

ب) التعامل مع المحتوى

ج) المهارات الميكانيكية

د) المهارات الأسلوبية

هـ) مهارات التقييم

٣. اكتشاف اي من المهارات الخمسة تأثرت اكثر باستراتيجية "PLEASE".

وللتحقق من صحة الفرضيات الموضوعية، صمم الباحث تجربة استخدم فيها مجموعتين (كل مجموعة مكونة من ٣٥ طالبا) تم اختيارهم بشكل عشوائي من بين طلبة الصف الخامس في اعدادية سارية للبنين في مدينة الموصل. كما تم اختيار إحدى المجموعتين لتكون المجموعة التجريبية إذ تم تدريسها باستخدام استراتيجية "PLEASE" أما المجموعة الأخرى فقد اختيرت لتكون المجموعة الضابطة إذ تم تدريسها باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية. وقد تم تكافؤ كلتا المجموعتين عند المتغيرات التالية: العمر، التحصيل الدراسي للوالدين، درجات الطلاب في مادة اللغة الانكليزية للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢ ودرجاتهم في الاختبار القبلي.

بدأت التجربة في ٢٠٢٣/١١/١٥ وانتهت في ٢٠٢٣/٤/١٢٠. كما دُرست المجموعتان التجريبية والضابطة من قبل الباحث نفسه. تم الحصول على صلاحية الاختبارات ومدى ملاءمة الموضوعات ومخطط الدرجات وخطط الدروس من خلال عرضها على مجموعة من الخبراء في مجال تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية واللغويات في ضوء النتائج المتحصلة ،اختتم البحث بعدد من التوصيات، فضلا عن ذلك طرحت بعض المقترحات المتعلقة بالبحوث المستقبلية.

كلمات مفتاحية : مهارات الكتابة ، PLEASE ، المرحلة الإعدادية

Section One

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Writing is one of the language skills and one activity done by the students. Writing will not be produced without mastering the important components such as grammar, vocabulary and mechanics is suitable for the rule of language available the language itself. Writing should to follow the rule because writing also has rules. By mastering the components of writing itself, someone can writes everything about what she or he to write , such as diary, papers, report, homework, project papers and exercises. This statement is also stated by Harmer “writing has rules too in which we need to recognize and follow them” (Harmer , 2003 , p.247). As one skill of the language, writing has important role as the Hughes’s statement : writing is also a means of reinforcing other language skills”. It means that before starting to write, someone should know the components of writing itself. (Hughey, 2003,p.6)

The students got difficulties in writing, especially about writing a paragraph. In the class, the teacher used conventional method or none . He only gave students a ready-made paragraph in an example on the students’ book, and then asks them to memorize it, but when he asked them to write a paragraph, they were not able to do it. They were not able to express and develop their ideas. Their sentences were also incorrect based on the structure. They use capital letters on the wrong place, and lack of choices of the words. (Fareed et al. 2016)

PLEASE strategy or Pick-List- Evaluate-Activate-Supply-End. PLEASE strategy as one of the strategies to use because this strategy is easy to application and help the students to write and can increase the students in learning English. The strategy provides a structure to help students generate and organize ideas and write sentence and paragraphs. It is useful because it provides cues to help students with inability of remembering and applying

activities involved in the process of planning and writing. (Welch, M. 1992, p.15)

1.2. Aim of the Study

The present study aims at finding out the effectiveness of using PLEASE strategy on EFL

1.3. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research can be formulated as follow :

-There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental group's achievement in the writing skills at post-test.

1.4. Value of the Research

Notably, preparatory students' ability in writing paragraph is an important area of research which findings are hoped to be valuable, thus this study should be value for both theoretical side and the practical one.

A-Theoretically, this study is useful for the researchers to pave the way for further research on this topic, since there is a need to pursue a research in this field.

B-Practically this study is expected to be valuable to the English teachers ,educators, specialists and text book writers and those who are responsible for the policy of language teaching.

1.5. Limits of the Research

The present study is limited by the following:

- ❖ The 5th preparatory students.
- ❖ Sarea preparatory school.

- ❖ The academic year 2022-2023.
- ❖ It is concerned with teaching writing a paragraph by using PLEASE strategy
- ❖ As far as teaching material is concerned, the textbooks “English for Iraq”

1.6. Definition of Basic Terms

1.6.1 PLEASE strategy:

Akincilir (2010: 23) tells that PLEASE strategy is effective for improving the students' ability in writing paragraph. This strategy consists of six words, they are:

1. Pick: Pick the topic, choose the best one topic that will be discussed about.
2. List: List the ideas about the topic, think the related idea with the topic.
3. Evaluate: Evaluate the topic that you have, determine the topic is complete and relevant with the topic.
4. Activate: Activate each the paragraph with the ideas that will become a topic sentences.
5. Supply: Supply the supporting sentences with use the ideas that related one.
6. End: End the paragraph with the concluding sentence to summarize the paragraph and hold the ideas(p.53)

The operational definition: PLEASE strategy is a strategy that consists of six steps (pick, list, evaluate, activate, supply and end). It leads the students to arrange their idea in writing paragraph or text.

1.6.2 Writing

Harmer(2007) states that writing is one of the four skills in English. Writing is considered as the productive skill since it allows the language user to produce texts. Writing (as one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing) has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English(p.31)

Section Two

2.0 Theoretical background

2.1. Definition of PLEASE Strategy

This strategy learns to write a paragraph using the planning, composing and revising of the process approach. Each steps means to elicit a specific action with writing. The steps are: Pick the topic, List the idea about the topic, Evaluate the idea, Activate the paragraph with the ideas, Supply the supporting sentence, End with concluding sentence and Evaluate the paragraph (Siregar,2020,p.25).

PLEASE strategy is a kind of road map to develop a writing product using an acronym that can be remembered and applied easily(Aminatun, D., Ngadiso, N., & Marmanto, S. 2019, P.34-40) . PLEASE strategy can be used as a tool to make the students able to express their ideas in written form coherently from beginning to concluding sentences or paragraphs.

Dewi, Artini, & Piscayanti (2017: ١٥) say that PLEASE strategy had positive effect in increasing in both quality and quantity of students' written product. Positive effect here is the quality of the writing is good because of the content are appropriate with all the elements in writing such as grammar, vocabulary, kinds of the text, etc.

In addition, Akincilir (2010) tells that PLEASE strategy is an effective strategy to improve students' ability to write paragraphs(p.53). By using this strategy,

students can write paragraphs because this strategy helps students to improve and organize ideas and according to Graham(2005) PLEASE strategy is a plan and write a paragraph containing a topic sentence, supporting sentences/details and a concluding sentence/statement(p.4).

On the other hand, Welch(1992) states that PLEASE strategy is a metacognitive learning strategy for improving the paragraph writing of students with mild learning disabilities(p.2). It means that PLEASE strategy is metacognitive for written expression, to assist students planning and writing composition by modifying a highly structured step by step procedure. In addition, PLEASE strategy effective to improving the students' ability in writing a text and an essay. Because the teacher will teach the students how to use the PLEASE strategy so that they can implemented when they are writing text or paragraph.

This strategy consists of six steps to help students in writing recount and text. The steps are:

a. Pick

1. Pick a topic .
2. Pick your audience .
3. Pick the appropriate textual format given the topic, purpose and audience

b. List

1. List ideas about the topic .
2. This is to be used for sentence generation .

c. Evaluate

1. Evaluate your list of ideas .
2. Determine if it is complete .

3. Plan the best way of organizing or sequencing the ideas that will be used to generate supporting sentence.

d. Activate

1. Activate with a topic sentence to introduce the paragraph
2. Students are introduced how to write short and simple declarative topic sentence that will “ activate “ the written idea for the reader

e. Supply

1. Supply supporting sentences .
2. Use the list generated for supporting sentences ideas .
3. Gradually enhance by generating clarifying or “ expansion” sentences.

f. End

1. End with a concluding sentence to summarize the paragraph and hold the ideas together.

2.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of PLEASE Strategy

PLEASE strategy is included in prewriting activity. This strategy is very useful for describing the sequence of event of writing skills. Meanwhile, using PLEASE strategy has advantages and disadvantages in writing process.

The Advantages

Nasution, (2018) mentions that the advantages of using PLEASE strategy are:

- a) PLEASE strategy can help student how to start their writing, how to plan what they want to write and how generate the good ideas from their topic for their writing.
- b) It can improve students writing ability especially in writing descriptive paragraph.

c) It can make the students independently in writing, because in PLEASE strategy students find their own topic with their self also the idea, supporting sentence and concluding from their topic for their writing.

d) It can help the students to generate, organize, and make students easy to write sentence and also paragraph.

e) PLEASE strategy can help the students to remember and apply

Activities in the process of planning that their do since find the

Topic until make the concluding for their writing.

The Disadvantages

- PLEASE strategy make students spend most their time for doing the steps.
- This strategy needs extra time and effort.
- It is time consuming for both teachers and students.
- This strategy is not applicable for large classes because implementing this strategy requires teachers to guide and monitor students writing inside the class room (Kurniati, 2019). .

2.3. Role of the Teacher in Teaching Writing by Using PLEASE Strategy

Teaching writing is very important because writing helps students to deliver some messages and integrate with other skills like reading. Welch (1992) indicates that the role of the teacher is as the following:

1. Pick: The teacher asks the students to pick the topic about their writing. The topic should be familiar and interesting such as to describe their life in college.

2. List: The teacher asks the students to list all their ideas in a paper about their life in school such as (the school life is interesting , the school is very big , the school life is full of beautiful memories , the school life and friendship ..Etc.).

3. Evaluate: After the students collect all of the information about their ideas, they can evaluate all the ideas and decide which idea can be used to support their topic in describing their college life.
4. Activate: The teacher asks the students to write their first sentence about their topic. The students can write the first sentence for example “My college life is full of beautiful memories “.
5. Supply: The teacher asks the students to supply the supporting sentences in their paragraph with the ideas that they have collected, explaining that the supporting sentences are important such as "my college has big classes and high buildings...etc.
6. End: The teacher reminds the students to end with concluding sentence and evaluate their writing.
7. The teacher asks the students to write a paragraph independently to check if the students understand the steps of the strategy and able to write another paragraph by using PLEASE strategy.
8. The teacher asks the students to check and edit their writing (p. 18).

2.4. Role of The students by Using PLEASE Strategy

1. Students should follow each step on PLEASE strategy.
2. Students should write a text independently because PLEASE strategy guides the students to find their own topic and ideas to write about it.
3. Students should follow the steps of the strategy accurately i.e. starting with finding a topic until the end of their writing process (Ibid)

2.5. Procedurere of PLEASE Strategy

In applying a strategy, of course there are procedures that must be followed. The procedures are very useful in order to make the process of doing the strategy run

well. PLEASE is an organizing concept which directs the learner to identify the Pick-List-Evaluate-Activate-Supply-End the topic in writing descriptive paragraph. In addition, Brokop and Persall (2009) say in implementing of this strategy, the teacher should do some steps (p.12). There are six steps of this strategy to help students write a paragraph. Each step follows a letter in the word PLEASE:

- a. Pick: Teacher provides students with instruction about how to pick their topic, their audience, and appropriate format.
- b. List: Teacher shows students techniques to list information about the topic.
- c. Evaluate: Teacher instructs students in ways to evaluate if their list is complete. Then they plan the best way to organize the ideas.
- d. Activate: Teacher shows students how to activate the paragraph with a topic sentence. Teacher provides instruction to students about writing a topic sentence.
- e. Supply: Teacher instructs students to extrapolate information from their list of generated ideas to supply supporting sentences. Then, teachers provide instruction about how to generate clarifying o expansion sentences.
- f. End: teacher reminds students to end the paragraph with a concluding sentence. students learn how to rephrase their topic sentence by using synonyms to generate a concluding sentence. (Nasution, 2018)

Section Three

Procedures

3.1 The Experimental Design

The experimental design is a blueprint of the procedures that enable the researcher to test his hypotheses by arriving at valid conclusions concerning the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Best & khan, 2006,

p.177). The present study presents the selection of two groups randomly. Both groups (EG and CG) are submitted to pre- and post-tests. The independent variable PLEASE strategy is administered to the EG only. Their scores on the dependent variables (Writing skills), measured by the post-test, are compared to see whether there is any significant difference between both groups or not.

Table (1)

The Experimental Design

Group	independent variable	Post-test
EG	PLEASE strategy	Post-test
CG	Traditional methods	Post-test

3.2 The Population

The population of the present study includes all the fifth preparatory students in Sarea preparatory school for boys in Mosul city, during the academic year 2022-2023. The total number is 127 students, divided into three sections namely: A, B, C.

3.3 The Sample

The sample of this research was selected randomly from the population above. Two groups were selected randomly. One group was selected as the EG, (namely group A), and the other as the CG (namely group C).

The number of the students in group A is 42, and in group C is 43. After excluding 7 students in group A and 8 students in group C and they employed for pilot study, the total number of the sample subjects is 85 students, 35 students in each group.

Table (2)

The Population and The Sample study

Class	Groups	No. of Population	No. of Pilot Students	The Sample
A	EG	42	7	35
C	CG	43	8	35
	Total	85	15	70

3.4 Course Materials and Teacher-Led Lessons

The lessons that both sets of fifth-grade prep students in Iraq have been learning in English. The text includes a student book and an activity book that cover the same eight chapters. Every fourth lesson is a review of the previous three. Both the Student Book and the Activity Book include the same information. The study of English for Iraq is limited to only two modules. The research experiment for this study was conducted during the second semester. The first day of the study for both groups was January 15, and it lasted until April 20. The traditional manner of instruction is used with the control group, while the experimental group keeps a PLEASE strategy of their lessons.

3.5 Face validity

Face validity refers to the degree to which a test looks right, and appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of the examinees who take it, the administrative personnel who decide on its use and other psychometrically unsophisticated observers (Cumming, 1996, p.3).

3.6 Construct Validity

Construct validity is a significant issue when it comes to validating large-scale standardized tests of proficiency. Because such tests must adhere to the principle of practicability for economic reasons, and because they must sample a limited number of domains of language, they may not be able to contain all of the content of a particular field or skill (Brown, 2004, p. 26).

To check whether the test items are suitable and practical or not, the test has been exposed to a jury of experts for evaluation. The jurors are asked to modify, add, or change anything they do not find appropriate in the test. The jurors have agreed that the test items are appropriate to measure the purpose they are designed for, except for some minor recommendations and modifications, which have been taken into consideration.

3.7 Reliability of the Post-test

The reliability of a test is a critical characteristic of a good test. It is said that a test is trustworthy if the degree of accuracy of the exam is stable and consistent each time it is administered under the same conditions to the same sample of pupils (Veram and Beard, 1981, p.860). One of the necessary characteristics of a good test is reliability. Alderson (1995) states that "reliability is the extent to which test scores are consistent. (p.294).

3.12 Item Analyses

The purpose of item analysis is to assess the complexity and discriminatory power of test items. According to Cervantes (1989), "item analysis is a tool that helps the test writer locate test content and determine the difficulty or ease of an item (p.11-12)." This means it can recognise and separate poor students from the others.

3.12.1 Difficulty Level

Item difficulty refers to the extent to which an item appears to be complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. It just reflects the percentage of learners who respond correctly to the object. The most suitable test item will have item difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown, 2010, p. 70-1). It was found that the current test items' DL ranges from (0.33) to (0.67), as shown in table (12).

3.12.2 Discrimination Power

Discrimination power means " calculating the degree to which a particular item's results correspond with the results of the entire test' (Alderson, 1995, p.80). This means that an object is deemed to have weak power of discrimination if it is correctly scored by high-skilled students as well as low-skilled students.

Item discrimination refers to the degree to which an object makes a difference between good and poor testers. An object has good power of discrimination if it collects the right answers from the good students and the wrong answers from the bad students. It is worth noting that the high power of discrimination will be close to 1.0, and no power of discrimination will be nil at all (Brown, 2010,p. 71). The results obtained indicate that the test item DP ranges from (0.31) - (0.71).

Section Four

4.0 Data Analysis and Result Discussion

4.1 Hypothesis of the Study

To find out if there is any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post-test, all mean scores are obtained and compared. Statistics show that the mean scores of the

experimental groups are (69.80) and that of the control group is (57.20). By using the t-test formula for two independent, the calculated t-value is found to be (4.394), while the tabulated t-value is found to be (1.994) at the degree of freedom (68) and level of significance (0.05), This means indicate that there is a significant difference between the achievement of the two groups and in favour of the experimental group.

Thus, the hypothesis of the study which states that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post-test is rejected.

Table (3)

**Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values of the Two Groups
in Post-test**

Groups	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
EG.	35	69.80	11.97	Calculated	Tabulated	68	0.05
CG.	35	57.20	12.01	4.394	1.994		

4.4 Discussion of the Results

The statistical analysis of the results indicates that the achievement of the students in writing skill in the EC is significantly higher in average than that of the students in the CG on total scores of the post-tests. The results of the study affirm the contribution of to the fifth-preparatory students' writing skills. This indicates that PLEASE strategy is more favourable to learning than the traditional approaches.

4.5 Conclusions

In the light of the findings of the current research, it can be concluded that:

1. Teaching writing skills through PLEASE strategy proves to be more useful for the EFL students than through traditional methods.
2. The subjects of the EG seem to be engaged with the lesson more than the students taught by the traditional methods. Therefore, they have more positive attitudes about learning writing skills.
3. Students' planning improved in terms of awareness, actual engagement in pre-writing planning and time spent on planning.
4. Students reported that the strategy eased the writing process.
5. Students can learn to distinguish between significant and less significant ideas which can be included before writing process.

4.6 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher gives some recommendations as follows:

1. English teachers are recommended to use PLEASE strategy in their teaching learning process in order to improve the students' writing ability.
2. Since writing is a tool for communication, EFL students should be taught how to formulate and organize their thoughts systematically and effectively in order to enable them to achieve effective written text.
3. Evaluation of writing should be focused on different skills like the language use, mechanical skills, treatment of content, stylistic skills and judgment skills.
4. The syllabus designers need to revise their syllabi and English language course materials according to the principles of PLEASE strategy

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