

"ENGLISH WRITING STRATEGIES IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL"

A Case Study of third Secondary Class

By:

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ABSTRACT:

More and more studies have been done on the writing skills. However no clear study has been conducted on the best strategies used to improve to the ability of writing a fulfilled paragraph by the secondary stage students. Due to its importance, the present study is designated to present the main

reasons for the students' weakness in writing a paragraph and the best strategies that can help them to overcome these obstacles. The researcher started his study with a background about the problem and its results. Then, he suggests some strategies for planning, revising and editing a paragraph. The methodology used in this research is the "Experimental Method". The experimental design used in this research is the Classical pretest-post test in which the total population of participants is randomly divided into two samples; the control sample, and the experimental sample. The subjects in this study are two groups students studying at Al-Diya secondary school plus ten of Arab English Language teachers who are going to fill a questionnaire about the strategies the researcher selected and used. The results of the two tests showed that the experimental group has got a higher score than the control group and this proves that the strategies used by the researcher were effective enough in improving the students' ability in writing a paragraph. The results of the questionnaire proved how much those teachers were aware of the importance of using such strategies to improve the students' writing ability. Finally, the results of the interview with the students showed the main reasons for their weakness in writing.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Learning to write is uniquely challenging. Writing requires the mastery of vocabulary and spelling to the ability to organize and convey ideas. Indeed, the intricacies of writing make it one of the highest forms of human expression.

Educators agree that teaching the process of writing, from planning to final draft, is central to good writing instruction. However, many students with learning

problems are frustrated in their attempts to engage in the writing process because of difficulty with the mechanical aspects of writing.

Problems with writing may draw attention away from the writer's focus on ideas. A teacher, therefore, needs effective ways of assisting students in overcoming the obstacles to writing. In this study, the researcher will examine the strategies that teachers can use to help students deal with the writing obstacles. Moreover, students may have learned bad habits in high school that they need to un-learn. For example, some students were taught in high school to avoid the first person and thus may use awkward grammatical constructions to avoid it rather than learn the contexts when its use is appropriate. Recognition of students' prior experience with writing and the complex nature of writing can help us to more effectively design assignments and provide support as students continue to hone their skills. That's why, the researcher designed an interview with the students to know more about their previous experiences with writing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem presented in this study is that students of 3rd secondary school are weak in writing a paragraph. As a crucial topic, the research is going to discover the techniques and strategies that suits those kind of students as a way to help them in improving their writing skills.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

While many experts and scholars have much to say about the obstacles that face students in writing a paragraph, little is known about the students' personal experiences. The

main objective of the present study is to find out the why the students of 3rd secondary school are weak in writing a fulfilled paragraph technically, taking into consideration both the teacher's and the students' perceptions about the obstacles face them in writing a paragraph. Thus, this study is designed to treat the writing strategies and techniques used to overcome the students' writing obstacles.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

In the present study, the researcher attempts to answer the following question:

- 1) Why are the secondary stage students weak in writing a paragraph?
- 2) What are the obstacles face the secondary stage students in writing a paragraph?
- 3) Which teaching strategies does the researcher find most effective and why?

HYPOTHESES

In this study, the researcher's hypothese are:

1. The secondary stage students are weak for many reasons.
2. There are many obstacles that led to the waekness of the secondary stage students in writing a paragraph.
3. The researcher used certain effective strategies and techniques to overcome such obstacles.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

More and more researches have been conducted to discover the best strategies or techniques to be used in teaching writing to secondary stage students. However, no consensus has been reached on the best way to teach them. In this sense, the present study is extremely important as it

tries to present the best solution for the secondary stage students to overcome their weakness in writing a paragraph. Besides, it helps teachers as it focuses on what is working well in teaching writing skills to this kind of students and what is not.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

To avoid misunderstanding and to make the discussion run appropriately, there are several terms that need to clarify:

- **Writing:** Writing is a method of representing language in visual form.
- **Strategies:** A careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal.
- **Secondary School:** A school that is intermediate between elementary school and college. Its students are between the ages of 11 and 16 or 18.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The subjects in this research are two groups students of Al-Diya Secondary School. The samples would be the 3rd year students. Group A (Experimental Group) is going to be taught writing by the new strategies selected by the researcher. Group B (Control Group) is going to be taught writing conventionally. It is very crucial as a starting point to ensure that both groups have an equal level in writing a paragraph. The second subjects are ten of Arab English language teachers who are going to fill out a questionnaire about the new strategies used to teach writing to those students.

METHODS AND THEORITICAL VIEWS:

The methodology used in this research is the "Experimental Method". The experimental design used in this research is the Classical pretest-post test in which the total population of participants is randomly divided into two samples; the control sample, and the experimental sample. Only the experimental sample is exposed to the manipulated variable. The researcher compares the pretest results with the post test results for both samples. Any divergence between the two samples is assumed to be a result of the experiment.

VALIDITY:

The tools used in this research to collect data are:

- **A paragraph writing activity;** to determine if there is difference in progress between the two groups.
- **A questionnaire** about participants' perceptions of writing strategies used by the researcher to teach those students to improve their ability in writing a paragraph.
- **An Interview** with the students is the last tool used in this research. The aim of this interview is to discover the problems facing the students in writing a paragraph.

RELIABILITY:

The research data will be given to a statistical expert to get the correlation coefficient.. The statistical analysis software program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) will be used to analyze the questionnaire.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In the school setting, writing plays two different but complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the

use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001) Teachers should have effective methods for helping students with learning problems overcome the obstacles to writing. The purpose of this research is to provide the readers with strategies that allow them to choose methods most suitable for their students in the secondary stages.

During their secondary school, most of our students were not writing with the frequency we might expect, nor were they doing the types of writing that we will require of them in their college years. In a study at George Washington University (2007), first-year undergraduates reported that the most frequently assigned high school writing tasks required them to offer and support opinions, with a secondary emphasis on summarizing and synthesizing information. Students were rarely required to criticize an argument, define a problem and propose a solution, shape their writing to meet their readers' needs, or revise based on feedback.

Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by The Chronicle of Higher Education (2006), 61% of high school teachers said their students have never written a paper that was more than five pages. As a result, students have not had enough practice to develop a set of sophisticated writing skills.



When students lack skills in these areas, their writing may be unsatisfactory in multiple ways – from poor grammar and syntax to unclear organization to weak reasoning and arguments.

DESIGN OF THE WHOLE WORK:

The whole study is expected to be composed of five chapters. The first chapter will be an introduction to the study. The second chapter will handle the literature review. The third chapter is going to be about the research methodology. The fourth chapter will treat the data analysis and interpretations. The last chapter will talk about the findings and recommendations presented by the researcher.

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