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**Investigation Pre-Writing Strategies
in Learning to Writing EFL**

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فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى
إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

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Dedication

To our dear parents for their patience ,understanding and support.

This success would not be achieved without, guidance, advice, help and encouragement from our supervisor Dr.Sami Abbas who supports us to finish this study .

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Writing is one of the most difficult, multifaceted and complex skills to learn in both native and foreign language. Therefore, to master it, learning different writing strategies can be helpful. As a result, this study attempted to investigate the effects of three pre-writing strategies instruction on the development of writing skill of English Foreign Language students.

Introduction

Numerous approaches to the teaching of academic writing are suggested in English as the first language (L1) contexts, many of which have influenced the development of the teaching of writing and been applied in ESL and EFL contexts. Process approach is one these approaches. A profound assumption underlying this approach is that teaching writing involves three stages: pre-writing, writing and post-writing. Pre-writing writing, the topic of this article, has a number of strategies that are believed to facilitate the development of students' writing competence. From this perspective, this article focuses on the pre-writing strategies to investigate how they are important to teach writing.

Section One

1.1 Writing Skill

According to Brown (1987:65), learning a second language involves

listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Reading and writing need to be taken into account as an advanced stage of language development. One of the highly complicated and difficult skill for the most of second language learners to acquire is certainly writing. This is due to the fact that the writing process requires L2 writers to apply not only higher-level skills like generating and planning ideas and thoughts, but also to translate them into a readable and well-connected text. They also should pay attention to lower level skills such as spelling, punctuations, word choice and so on, and if language proficiency of writers is weak, the difficulty becomes more evident.

However, though writing is a big challenge for L2 writers, it is very important in order for them to manifest and reflect on their knowledge in content areas (Richards, 2002:92). According to Mogahed (2013:21) for many people, especially young writers, starting to write is a big challenge. Tomkins (2001) believed that pre-writing strategies are the possible way to overcome it. From this perspective, Thorne (1993) argued that such strategies should receive the necessary emphasis and be practiced extensively in writing classroom activities. It is worthy to spend a lot of time and attention on them since they help solve a problem called “writer’s block”.

Similarly, Go (1994:24) debated that L2 writing teachers could employ pre-writing activities at the beginning stage of instruction. Such activities can promote students' writing competence. They engage and energize their participation in thinking to generate more ideas, talking and reflecting on their ideas, and group interaction to exchange and share their ideas.

The view of Shameem (1988) toward writing is that it is a nonlinear and restated process and consists of four stages: prewriting, composing/writing, revision and proofreading/ editing. The first stage of writing is prewriting. It is

described by Lally (2000) as consisting of three activities: discussion, free-writing, and brainstorming. The writer begins to think, find and make the ideas to be used in the next step. Mogahed (2013) believed that what occurs in the prewriting stage are handling and arranging. Prewriting is the first phase of writing, which is recognized as a source of composing (Huff and Kline, 1987).

At the second stage, the writer should write his/her first draft. At the third stage, he/she is required to monitor the coherence and cohesion, styles and syntax as well as grammar while s/he has done proofreading. In order to ensure that the essay is perfect in the final stage editing is done. Students should know these four stages in order to be informed about the process of writing.

1.2 Significance of Writing Skill in Academia

Academic essay writing is an important skill that will be used throughout any education you gain in your life. To earn good grades and high level degrees, you will need to learn to write quality academic essays. Beyond education, the skills you learn writing these essays will be carried with you into any future employment you may have. Being able to present your ideas clearly and logically in writing is a powerful tool in the business world. The following few points highlight why it is important to learn how to write a quality academic essay (Woodward-Kron, 2002:65).

Hartley(2002:207) admits that writing for academicpurposes has a number of advantages in order for learners to develop their skills in a number of areas:

A.It Teaches Students to Analyze

Academic writing usually requires students to look at somebody else's work or ideas and then form an informed opinion on it. Instead of merely describing the work of other people, students have to think about why it has been carried out and

which uses its findings may have for the future. This type of writing makes students engage in what they have read and decide how much importance it holds for their subject (Lea and Street, 1998:157).

B.It Allows Students to Convey their Understanding of their Disciplines

When students learn about a complex subject at university, it can be difficult for them to explain what they have understood if they struggle with academic writing. Essays give students the chance to reflect and demonstrate what they have learnt through writing (Ibid.).

C.It Has a Strong Focus on Technique and Style

Unlike some less formal types of writing, academic writing focuses on technique and how it should be used to best convey ideas. If students learn about style and how to write essays early on in their academic careers, they will find it much easier to write papers throughout university. Many lecturers have preferred styles or formatting requirements, so academic writing forces students to take these into consideration and create a paper that will impress. It is usually a good idea for students to ask for essay writing help if they are having issues with their technique, as this is something that can be solved with a little guidance (Swales, 1990:6).

D.It teaches Students to Think Critically and Objectively

Students should never write a one-sided paper that leaves no room for argument. Academic writing forces them to look at ideas and research from a different perspective, as this is what they will need to do in order to obtain good grades. Students have to learn to analyze theories from a number of different viewpoints and then make statements based on what they understand. This is an extremely useful skill for people to learn early on in life, as the ability to look at things objectively is something that will benefit them in real life (Swales, 1990:6).

E. It Teaches Students to Formulate Arguments.

When discussions take place verbally, they are often scattered and loosely organized. In an academic essay, the points of your argument need to be logically constructed such that they build on each other and accumulate a cohesive, overall argument. The process of writing an academic essay builds those logical thinking skills in your brain, and helps you to take a series of related thoughts and assemble them in a way that communicates well to others (Woodward-Kron,2002:65).

While you are formulating your essay, you will be automatically developing your logical thinking skills. Something that makes sense in your head does not always sound so good when put down on paper. You will have to challenge yourself to delve deeper into your thoughts and round them into shape so they convey your message successfully. Even if you never write another paper after college, the thinking skills you develop during the writing process will be with you forever (Swales, 1990:12).

F. It Teaches Students General Writing Skills.

Even if your future employment does not require academic essays per se, it will likely ask you to, at least, write intelligently to communicate with co-workers or customers. Your writing skills are strengthened through the process of putting together academic essays. Even if you are only writing emails on a regular basis, your enhanced writing skills will show you to be an intelligent and professional person (Swales, 1990:12).

G. It Teaches Students Referencing.

A big part of academic essays is referencing the material you used in the creation of the essay. In the internet age, plagiarism is a major problem and a serious offense. By citing the references you used in the process of developing your essay, you give due credit to those other sources and give your essay more

authority in the process (Swales, 1990:12).

Section Two

Pre Writing Strategies

As mentioned earlier, writing is often perceived as one of the most difficult skills in second and foreign language classrooms. To ease students' difficulty in writing, researchers have recommended a process approach, which emphasizes a step-by-step practice, rather than a product approach, which emphasizes only the final product (Stapa & Abdul Majid, 2009). Prewriting is the first phase of writing which is known as an origin of composing. All the activities that interfere between the first decision to write and the beginning of a maintained first outline are related to pre-writing phase so named as pre drafting. Many investigators begin to ensure that students use different ways in order to explore a topic before writing a draft, such as making use of mediation, journals, analogies, brainstorming, clustering, grouping and free writing (Ashwell, 2000:227).

A. Brainstorming

Brainstorming activities support students who do not usually like to write by creating a stress-free atmosphere. Thus in an EFL environment where students normally make effort to do their writing tasks, a nonthreatening atmosphere can help them develop their writing skill. Good writers are those who can think well; therefore, one way of expressing thought is writing (Harmer, 2001:86).

Brainstorming in the classroom motivate students to freely express their ideas and thoughts on a subject. As there are no wrong and right answers, the sessions provide students with a platform where they can voice their thoughts without fear of failure (Ibid.).

It seems useful to make situations in which students think about topic before starting composition. Brainstorming strategy can help students use their prior knowledge in their writing activity and recognize what skills and information they have and what they need to know (Rao, 2007:100).

Brainstorming promotes success for students with special needs as there is no one right answer. Let's say that the brainstorm topic is Weather, the students would state whatever comes to mind, which would most likely include words like rain, hot, cold, temperature, seasons, mild, cloudy, stormy etc. Brainstorming is also a terrific idea to do for bell work (when you have just 5-10 minutes to fill just prior to the bell (Rao, 2007:100).

Moreover, teaching students different brainstorming techniques in class is reasonable because it might facilitate them to cultivate their writing and create ideas that are necessary in second language acquisition. In spite of the ideas created in this stage may or may not be directly related to the topic, brainstorming is a valuable technique in developing students' ideas before they actually start their writing task (Harmer, 2001:89).

One of the most important features of brainstorming is that it does not need any preparation and it can be used at any level of education and under any situation (Buzan, 1993:32).

Brainstorming was popularized by Osborn (1953:89) in his book. He claimed that learners can enhance their creative output by the help of brainstorming. A number of rules should be considered during the brainstorming session:

1. No criticism of ideas
2. Building on what others have suggested
3. Strange and wild idea are accepted
4. Welcoming the large quantities of ideas.

Bobb-wolff (1996:56) debated that brainstorming can be a useful and improving instrument in the EFL contexts and as a means of showing students that they are collectively able to generate more ideas to enrich their learning process than they believed possible. This in turn, leads to enhance in their autonomy of learning and self-responsibility. However, most importantly, it develops the quality of students' activity and production in class.

According to Mogahed (2013:64), most of the problems cannot be resolved automatically by the first ideas that come to mind. It is important to take into account many possible solutions in order to get the best solution. Therefore, one of the best ways is brainstorming. Brainstorming is a helpful way to get start or generating new ideas. When students are familiar with the process they can apply this activity on their selves when they are attached, revising their work or moving on to a new phase.

B. Clustering or Mind Mapping

In clustering, ideas are organized visually. Start with person topic or prompt in a circle at the center of the page. Add a circle for every idea, clustering related topics like branches extending outward from a tree. Follow ideas to their end, ask who/what/where/when/why at dead ends, and draw lines to show new connections. Clustering utilizes a visual map to shape ideas and explore how those ideas relate to each other. (Huff and Kline, 1987:317)

Clustering is also known as 'branching' or 'mapping' is a structured technique based on the same associative principles as brainstorming and listing. Clustering is distinct, however, because it involves a slightly more developed

heuristic. The goal of clustering, or concept mapping, is to generate lots of ideas about a very broad topic, much like free writing (Manouchehry, et al., 2014, 160).

Clustering procedures vary considerably, although the fundamental objective is to equip students with tools for arranging words, phrases, concepts, memories, and propositions triggered by a single stimulus (i.e., a piece of information, a topic, a provocative question, a metaphor, a visual image). As with other techniques, clustering should first be modeled and practiced in class so students can eventually incorporate the tool into their own repertoire of invention and planning strategies (Ibid.).

C. Free Writing

Free writing is based on a presumption that, while everybody has something to say and the ability to say it, the mental wellspring may be blocked by apathy, self-criticism, resentment, anxiety about deadlines, fear of failure or censure, or other forms of resistance. The accepted rules of free-writing enable a writer to build up enough momentum to blast past blocks into uninhibited flow (Mogahed, 2013:61).

Free writing is a prewriting technique in which a person writes continuously for a set period of time without regard to spelling, grammar, or topic. It produces raw, often unusable material, but helps writers overcome blocks of apathy and self-criticism. It is used mainly by prose writers and writing teachers. Some writers use the technique to collect initial thoughts and ideas on a topic, often as a preliminary to formal writing. Free writing is not the same as automatic writing. Unlike brainstorming where ideas are simply listed, in free writing one writes sentences to form a paragraph about whatever comes to mind (Manouchehry, et al, 2014, 167).

Free writing, by itself, is writing freely to meet a set parameter, usually a time length (ex. 15 minutes) or a page length (ex. one page). Even if what is

written seems unrelated, disorganized, or incomplete, jot down any ideas that come to mind in what is called a stream of consciousness. Very importantly, you do not stop for any reason; just keep writing. This is most useful when you are writing creatively and are looking to get started (Ibid.).

Section Three

The Problems in Pre Writing Strategy in the Arab World Context

The Difficulties of Writing among Arabic Speakers generally speaking, writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and nonnative speakers alike because writers must balance multiple issues in their writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary and mechanics which means using the right punctuation, spelling and capitalization. Writing in a second language is even more demanding because it is “a complex, challenging, and difficult process” since writers are expected to produce written samples that are syntactically accurate, semantically acceptable and culturally appropriate. Arab students are not an exception. They face many difficulties writing well- developed paragraphs and essays in English. Since English and Arabic linguistic and orthographic systems differ, it is expected that Arab learners of English encounter difficulties learning English as a second/foreign language (Alsamadani, 2010:53).

Writers usually transfer the stylistic features of Arabic as their first language. For example, they tend to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions, repeat themselves and argue through presentation and elaboration. They often talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Ibid.)

Arab writers tend to use long sentences, repetition, presentation and elaboration. Repetition is presented by writing more synonyms in the same sentence. For

instance, the phrase "demolition and destruction" could be repeated twice in one sentence to convey emphasis. In addition, they use the coordinating conjunctions "and" and "as" excessively, which are parallel to "wa" and "fa" in Arabic.

Other research studies reveal problems in paragraphing and paragraph unity among Arab students writing in English. For instance, Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000:175) analyzed the writing of Jordanian students in Arabic, their first language, and English as their second one. They reported that 55% of the students wrote compositions in their first language that lacked organization of thoughts and with no appropriate linking of ideas.

Housen and Pierrard (2005:22) believe that most Arab students' errors are due to performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intra-language analogy. Therefore, contrastive analysis which has been defined as "an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements in a language"

Dulay et al. (1982:165) discuss four types of errors: developmental, inter-lingual, ambiguous and others errors. Developmental intra-lingual errors are "similar to those made by children learning a target language as their first language". The third type is ambiguous errors, that could be classified either as developmental or inter lingual since they reflect the learner's native language structure, and at the same time, they are of the type found in the speech of children acquiring their first language. The last type of errors is categorized as others. Dulay and Burt (1973:245) classified such errors as "unique". Errors of this type are items that do not fit into any other category. Furthermore, they are unique to second language learners.

CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to strengthen EFL learners' writing proficiency, specifically through writing strategies. By the help of writing strategies, it was supposed that learners could optimize their organizing, discussing, developing, and improving writing skill. The analysis of findings of the study showed how writing strategy instruction and accordingly, writing strategy employment promoted EFL learners' writing organization

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