



**Ain Shams University
Faculty of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Department**

The Effect of a Program based on Brainstorming Strategy in Developing Writing Paragraph for Preparatory Stage Students

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education for the Master's Degree in
Education**

(Curriculum and Instruction)

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Table of Contents

Contents	Page
Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter one: Research problem	1
1.1 :Introduction.	2
1.2 :Background of the Problem.	6
1.3:Context of the Problem.	7
1.4:The Study Problem.	9
1.5: The Study Questions.	9
1.6 :The Study Hypotheses.	10
1.7 :Significance of the Study.	11
1.8 :Aim of the study.	11
1.9 :Delimitation of the Study.	12
1.10 :Definition of Terms.	12
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature& Studies	15
Introduction:	16
2-1: Teaching writing	16
2-1-1 : Writing in L2	18
2-1-2: Writing goals	19
2-1-3:Writing Process	19
2-1-4: Writing Skills in EFL	20
2-1-5: Writing Sub-Skills	22
2-1-6 :Types of Writing Sub-Skills	23
2-1-7: Importance of Writing	24
2-1-8: Writing and learning	26
2-1-9 : Writing Strategies	27
2-1-10 : Difficulties of writing	29
2-1-11: Problems with Paragraphs Organization	33
2-2 : Prewriting Strategies	36
2-2-1: Brainstorming	38
2-2-2: The purpose of Brainstorming	41
2-2-3: Brainstorming in EFL	43
2-2-4: Studies related to writing EFL	44
2-2-5: Studies Related to Brainstorming	48
2-2-6: Brainstorming Techniques	52

2-2-6-1: Brainstorming for right brains	55
2-2-6-2: Brainstorming for left brains	56
2-2-7: Testing& Assessing Writing	56
Chapter three: Method and Procedures	59
3-1: Design of the Study.	60
3-2: Participants of the Study.	60
3-3 : The study instruments.	61
3.3.1: The student's questionnaire.	61
3.3.2: The teachers' questionnaire.	62
3.3.3: The checklist.	62
3-3.4: Pre-post Test.	64
3-4: The program.	68
3-5: Assessment.	76
Chapter four: Data analysis and Results	80
Introduction.	81
4-1 :The results of the Interview and Questionnaire	81
4.1.1 :The results of the student's questionnaire	81
4.1.2:The results of the teachers' questionnaire	83
4-2 : Statistical Analysis of the Data.	84
Conclusion	112
Chapter five:Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations	113
5- 1: Summary	114
5-2: Results (study findings)	116
5-3: Conclusion	117
5-4: Recommendations	119
5-5: Suggestions for further studies	121
References	123
Appendices:	139
Appendix A: Jury members	140
Appendix B: Teacher's Questionnaire	144
Appendix C: Students' Questionnaire	149
Appendix D: Pre-post Test	154
Appendix E: Checklist	163
Appendix F: Simulation Questionnaire	167
Appendix G: Teacher's Guide	171
Appendix H: Samples of student's writing	184
Appendix I: Contents of the program	195
Arabic summary	253

List of Tables

Table(1) : Objectives of the Units	70
Table(2) : Students' Questionnaire results	81
Table(3) : Teacher's Questionnaire results	83
Table(4): The mean of the pre-post test	85
Table(5):T- test results of pre and post test in every task.	86
Table(6) :ETA square for the three task	87
Table(7):The mean of writing task one and two.	89
Table(8) :T- test results of writing task one and two.	90
Table(9):The mean of the pre-post test using skills related to form	92
Table(10) :T- test of pre and post test using skills related to form	93
Table(11):ETA square for skills that related to form	93
Table(12):The mean and standard deviations of the pre-post test in skills related to meaning	95
Table(13):T- test of pre and post test using skills related to meaning	96
Table(14) :ETA square in skills related to meaning	97
Table(15):The mean of the pre-post test using brainstorming strategy	99
Table(16):T- test of pre and post test using brainstorming strategy	100
Table(17) :ETA square using Brainstorming Strategy	102
Table(18):The mean of the pre-post test of brainstorming techniques	103
Table(19) :T- test of pre - post test using brainstorming techniques	105
Table(20) :ETA square test using brainstorming techniques	106
Table(21):The mean of the pre-post test using writing subskills	108
Table(22) :T- test of pre and post test using writing subskills.	109
Table(23) :ETA square using writing skills.	110

List of Figures

Figure (1) :the four skills	16
Figure (2) :Rhetorical triangle.	19
Figure (3) :Six areas of the writing Process	20
Figure (4) :Elements of effective writing	26
Figure (5):Paragraph Patterns	33
Figure (6) :A linear and a recursive model of writing process	37
Figure (7) :The major writing process	39
Figure (8) :Venn diagrams	55
Figure (9):The difference between pre and post test in the three tasks.	88

Figure(10):The difference between pre and post test in tasks one &two	91
Figure (12):The differences between pre-post test using skills related to form	94
Figure (13):The difference between pre-post test in skills related to meaning	98
Figure (14):The difference between pre and post test using Brainstorming Strategy.	102
Figure (15):Pre and post test using brainstorming techniques	107
Figure (17):The difference between pre and post test using writing Skills	111

Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effects of brainstorming strategy on developing third preparatory grade students' paragraph writing skills in EFL. Classes of thirty eight students were given instruction in three specific brainstorming techniques prior to the completion of writing tasks in a normal class setting. The students were then given an attitudinal survey asking how useful and effective they found the program to be. This study will outline the three brainstorming techniques used in the classroom: clustering, bulleting and Venn diagram techniques. The students were then given post-test. The results showed : there is statistically significant evidence that the program based on brainstorming strategy improved the students' paragraph writing .The program has significant effect on third year prep school students' in developing paragraph writing skills including; topic sentence , supporting sentences , concluding sentence, paragraph organization and grammar .The data collected demonstrates that the students felt the techniques studied were useful and effective in preparing them for their writing tasks.

Key words: Brainstorming- Clustering - Bulleting - Venn diagram- Paragraph.

Chapter one

Research problem

Chapter One

Research Problem

This chapter deals with the research problem, its rationale and importance. It also presents the research questions, hypotheses and the definition of terms used in the present study.

1.1 Introduction

Writing is the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of signs or symbols known as a writing system . One of the more important aspects of recent educational reform efforts is increased attention to writing skills.

Brown, 2001:334, stated that not all the four skills are regarded as equal. While speaking and listening are the starting points in the acquisition of a language and are learned naturally, writing and reading are ‘culturally specific, learned behaviours’ which are acquired only if someone is taught, much like the ability to swim. Brown (2001) and writers like Fitzgerald (1987) make analogies of the difficulties of writing to those of swimming, for even though one may learn to swim and to write this does not imply that the skill will be mastered, even if one is proficient in a language. Writing is not a spontaneous skill or acquired easily, it is viewed as ‘probably the most difficult thing to do in language’ (Nunan, 1999:271). While speaking allows the user to exploit various devices such as body movement, gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, pitch, hesitation and stress to facilitate communication, this is not available to the writer. Nor can the writer clarify, revise or backtrack ideas when there is miscommunication or misunderstanding between reader and writer Hedge (2005). Writing to be effective is dependant on a number of features which are not shared by spoken language, not only in

terms of linguistic and pragmatic features but also the context in which it will be interpreted. Nunan (1999). Writing is a 'complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time' Nunan (1999:273) According to Hedge (2005), there is a need to organise the development of ideas or information ;ambiguity in meaning must be avoided through accuracy; the writer must choose from complex grammatical devices for emphasis or focus; and finally, they must pay attention to the choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence structures to create a feasible meaning and an appropriate style to the subject matter and reader.

Students need well developed writing skills to help them master new concepts and ideas and to document and demonstrate their learning. In addition, effective writing is valued and demanded by employers. Feedback from students, lecturers and employers shows that many students do not have well-developed writing skills and are, as a result, disadvantaged as learners and as future graduates seeking work in a competitive marketplace. Thus, students need help to develop their writing skills, Radloff & Harpe (2001).

Writing is a critical life skill and process which not only helps fulfills a need for self expression, but it also becomes a powerful tool which enables the writer to reach others and influence reality ,Holt (1970). Successful elementary and secondary school experiences, as well as many life experiences after formal education, are contingent on the ability to write well, and in an informational format ,Moran, Schumaker & Vetter (1981).

When the writers create paragraphs, they are dividing their ideas into chunks that the reader's brain can handle. These chunks can not be just random—they have to have **one clear idea** and **logical support for that**

idea. It also should be clear how that one idea connects to the rest of the writing.

The study by Mason and others (1979) indicates that the failure of writing skill is one of the factors responsible for school failure and dropout of learners in the early stages of education. The failure to learn and mastery of writing skill leads to difficulties in learning to read. Writing occupies the top position in the hierarchy of skills and language abilities in terms of acquisition preceded comprehension, speaking and reading skills.

Approaches to Improve Writing Paragraph:

- Process-Oriented Approach (Graham & Harris, 1988)
- Computer-Aided Approach (Naughton, Hughes & Ofiesh, 1997; Mac Arther, 1988)
- Dialogue Approach (Langer, 1984) (Lindsley, 1995)
- Skills Development Approach (Needels & Knapp, 1994)
- Brainstorming Strategy (Osborn, 1953).

The concept of **brainstorming** was introduced by Osborn (1953). Osborn offered a theory of the steps involved in the creative process, describing it as "a stop-and-go, catch-as-catch-can operation-one which can never be exact enough to rate as scientific".

Brainstorming is a problem solving technique.

It is not a part of strategic planning, but is a “tool” used throughout the planning process. It is an important group technique to learn. The researcher describes the possibility of using **Brainstorming Strategy**, in teaching writing paragraph in English to help students develop mental skills and to express their ideas logically and efficiency. It helps students to develop their skills to reach the highest level of filtering their ideas logically through writing, Namken and Rapp (1997).

Student interaction within the group has a key role in the development of mental skills to generate ideas and using Brainstorming is an effective way to achieve this, Richards (1990).

Bejarano (1997) sacrificed the important role played by the groups in the interaction of student and improve performance.

The student who uses **Brainstorming** has a high capacity to generate and organize ideas. There are many techniques in brainstorming strategy ;Word Map, List, Scratch ,Outline, Question and Answer, Free-writing, Bulleting, Cubing, Clustering and Venn diagram.

The researcher used three of the above techniques:

1. **Bulleting**. The student order sentences or words that belong to a particular topic.Brainstorming for Left Brains: a more orderly way to brainstorm, the bullet method.
2. **Clustering or webbing**. As the words arranged in the form of a map connected to each other.Brainstorming for Right Brains: Right brained thinkers are typically comfortable with a variety of shapes, and ideas. They may be most comfortable with clustering as a brainstorming technique.
3. **Venn diagram** for writing comparative paragraph. Students face the inability to organize ideas in writing because they need training on positive experiences in writing. There are students can not afford to classify ideas and arrange them logically.

1.2 Background of the Problem

Students with difficulties in written expression face a problem in expressing their ideas in writing and the inability to organize or arrange logically. Many students write one idea in many sentences. So these students should be trained to connect ideas with each other in writing by

introducing the relationship between ideas and sentences. Many of the students do not have the ability to organize thoughts to write a paragraph or an essay. Students use the trial and error method in writing. Where they find errors they begin writing from the beginning, changing the title or the topic sentence, Scardamalia & Beriter (1986).

Students take a little time in planning, organizing and selecting the main sentence in spite of their inability to become familiar with the subject. This may be due to the weakness of their ability to organize and provide cohesion between the sentences to write correct paragraph. On the other hand students ensure the mastery of spelling rules, without regard to the organization and the coherence between the sentences. Richards (1990).

The essential interest of pupils is the rules in writing a paragraph, this affects the flow of writing, Perl (1979). Teachers who teach a second language such as English need to understand the overlap between language and writing, Harklau (2002).

Correcting mistakes does not help to improve and adjust the writing paragraph, Truscott (2007). Teaching the rules while writing paragraph leads to writing sentences separately and isolated from the meaning. This reduces their experiences in the control or mastery of the curriculum, Hillock (1984).

Lower case proficiency students have difficulty making their writing coherent. They tend to be more concerned with language matters rather than making meaning. This may be because they do not have a mental representation of their writing, Lee (2004).

The most important problems facing the students in writing paragraph are as follows:

1. Students could not write a paragraph with main topic sentence.

2. Students could not choose the main sentence. So the teacher should help the students to choose the topic sentence.
3. Some students rush to write their ideas without pre-writing and coherence between them.
4. Pupils face also a problem in writing the topic sentence; they may deviate to another subject.
5. Of the most common problems in writing paragraph is the presence of more than one main idea in one paragraph.

Friend and Cook (2010) have devised a framework providing a "conceptual foundation for understanding collaborative interactions. They stated that the school environment will impact the effectiveness of collaboration between students.

1.3 Context of the Problem

The problem of the study was that prep students had poor writing skills. The absence of appropriate strategy for teaching and assessing writing, specially writing paragraph led to neglecting this skill.

The researcher realized that there is a problem from the following sources:

- 1.** The researcher found many errors in student' paragraph writing for example, choosing the topic, subordinate and concluding sentences and coherence between the beginning and end of the idea .
- 2.** Many studies focused on the analysis of verbal errors, misspellings, punctuation and grammar.
- 3.** The teachers focus on teaching students to write a paragraph without mistakes in spelling, punctuation, pronouns, grammar, etc..... without regard to the organization of the paragraph.