
**The Effect of Visible Thinking Approach on Developing
Preparatory Stage Pupils' Organization
of English Persuasive Writing**

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using the visible thinking approach on developing persuasive writing organization skills. Participants of the study were 30 pupils chosen randomly from first grade prep at Sawada Preparatory School during the first term of the 2023-2024 academic year. They represented the study experimental group which was instructed through using the visible thinking-based activities. The researcher's instruments included a checklist, a rubric and a pre/post persuasive writing organization test. Participants were taught through using some relevant visible thinking activities designed by the researcher that included "generate-sort-connect-elaborate; concept maps and headlines". Participants' scores on the pre and posttest were statistically analyzed using T- test and effect size. Results of the study revealed the positive effect of using visible thinking activities on enhancing first year preparatory pupils' persuasive writing organization skills. That's why the visible thinking approach is recommended to be applied to various instructional situations.

Keywords: visible thinking, organization, persuasive writing

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Introduction :

Academic writing in general and persuasive writing differ slightly from one another. While persuasive writing requires proving and supporting the writer's position on a subject, general writing communicates facts or descriptions as the writer gives data, facts, and explanations. Additionally, it provides arguments and proof to back up the writer's claims (Schmitz, 2012). For EFL learners to grasp writing persuasive English paragraphs, cohesion and coherence, two essential elements of persuasive writing organization, are also crucial (Dontcheva, Navratilova & Povolná, 2020).

The following five elements should be taken into account when structuring a persuasive writing piece: an introduction and thesis, opposing and qualifying ideas, substantial evidence to support the claim, language style and tone, and a compelling conclusion (Schemitz, 2012). Regretfully, students in Egypt's initial level sometimes struggle to maintain clarity and cohesiveness when writing persuasive essays. This is made clear by the way they formulate and present their thoughts, provide evidence, and use proper punctuation and spelling.

As for teaching persuasive writing, traditional styles of teaching in preparatory stage do not guarantee the exact aid for students as it only focuses on individual tasks to identical writing models. As a change from the traditional classes to creation-based activities, the visible thinking activities are recommended. The researcher has chosen some visible thinking activities relevant to creating and organizing ideas. This type of thinking includes some thinking routines like: generate-sort-connect-elaborate: concept maps; I used to think..., now I think... and headlines.

The "generate-sort-connect-elaborate" thinking routine depends on revealing and organizing prior knowledge to recognize its connection with the current topic studied. This thinking routine highlights the thinking steps of making a concept map that both organizes and reveals one's thinking and in consequence, his writing. Also, the "headlines" thinking activity depends on acquiring the students the skills of summarizing and capturing the heart through giving quick summaries of many details given (Ritchhart, Church & Morrison, 2011).

Therefore, the researcher suggests using visible thinking activities to help the students to keep good organization throughout their persuasive writing performance including mastering proper coherence and cohesion in the text. To be precise, the researcher proposes visible thinking to help the students to write a proper persuasive paragraph.

The Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study can be stated as the lack of EFL persuasive writing organization skills among preparatory stage pupils. Therefore, the researcher attempted to investigate how the visible thinking activities affected English persuasive writing organization skills among preparatory stage pupils.

Context of the problem

The researcher has noticed the low performance of first year preparatory stage pupils in the organization of a written persuasive paragraph. Most of first year preparatory stage pupils' skills are not up to their stage requirements. This happens despite the great efforts exerted by all EFL teachers to improve such vital writing skills.

The study questions

- 1- What are the persuasive writing organization skills required for preparatory stage pupils?
- 2- What is the effect of using activities based on visible thinking for developing preparatory stage pupils' persuasive writing organization skills?

The study hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the persuasive writing organization skills between the experimental group pupils on the pre-posttest at (0.05) level in favor of the post-test.

Definitions of terms

The visible thinking approach

Tishman and Palmer (2005, p. 2) define visible thinking as "an approach to learning that asks students to make visible representations of their thinking, helps students to go deeper, ask questions, develop conceptual understandings that go

beyond knowledge of the facts, and make connections to prior knowledge".

For Ritchhart, Church and Morrison (2011, p. 10), the visible thinking approach can be described as "types of thinking that are particularly useful when we are trying to understand new concepts, ideas, or events. It includes thinking moves that serve understanding well".

The visible thinking in this study is described as the activities and processes provided for EFL Prep stage pupils to improve their persuasive writing organization skills.

Organization

Ruegg, R. (2013) defined organization of persuasive writing as "the physical aspects of writing, such as paragraphing and the existence of organization markers, or deeper textual aspects, such as the coherent flow of ideas and the cohesive devices".

Hyland (2005) described organization in writing as "following the coherence in writing information in a text in order to guide readers".

The organization process in this study is described as EFL Prep stage pupils' abilities to apply both coherence and cohesion concerned with the logical connection between ideas, development and support while writing a persuasive paragraph after their exposure to the visible thinking approach activities.

EFL Persuasive Writing

Schmitz (2012, p. 523) defines persuasive writing as "writing to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued".

O'Keefe (2016, p. 19) describes persuasive writing skills as "writing that focuses on persuasion, which involves people's efforts to convince others of the merits of their own positions by influencing their mental states".

The persuasive writing in this study is described as EFL Prep stage pupils' abilities to write a convincing paragraph, an email, a short story or a review relevant to the studied topics through using visible thinking activities.

Review of Related Literature

Organization of persuasive writing

Our daily lives now depend heavily on our capacity for persuasion. Students used to write for a real audience and share their thoughts on relevant themes because of how quickly the world was changing and how social media was becoming more widely used. On the other hand, these chances are sometimes blocked in school settings (Atkins, 2011). One of the essentials of writing communication is that students should be better at expressing their thoughts and mastering persuasion.

Students who write persuasively should have an amazing opportunity to demonstrate their intelligence by selecting a topic and persuading the reader with evidence. The ability to persuade someone to act or adopt a different viewpoint places the author in a powerful position (Mackenzie, 2007). However, it's also possible that the low persuasive writing performance is the result of insufficient writing instruction (Brindle, Graham, Harris & Hebert, 2016) or inadequate teacher preparation (Graham, Harris, Chorzempa & MacArthur, 2003). Therefore, there is a need for applying instructional activities that provide EFL learners with opportunities to practice better organization throughout writing a persuasive paragraph.

As for conducting the organization of persuasive writing, the student should give a captivating opening to his essay, establish trust with his readers and begin by acknowledging and explaining viewpoints that could be at odds with his own. Naturally, his idea should come up at some point in his introduction. He also outlines the boundaries of his position. This makes him appear more sincere and reasonable to people who might otherwise be inclined to disagree with him. He establishes a calm and responsible tone for the essay by politely acknowledging the limitations of opposing viewpoints and accepting them (Schemitz, 2012).

In addition, there is a direct correlation between cultivating the ability to write persuasively and mental habits like adaptability, questioning and problem-solving, applying past knowledge to novel situations, and creativity and imagination. This was asserted by the research done by Alkthey & Al-Qiawi (2020). So, the visible thinking activities are expected to make a positive effect on enhancing persuasive writing organization skills.

The Visible Thinking Approach

Because of the complicated skills required to master organization of persuasive writing, a kind of instruction based on the idea of providing circumstances of learning through real world settings is needed. This kind of instruction can be achieved through the use of the visible thinking approach. Church & Ritchhart (2020) detailed that thinking is an internal process, something that happens inside the individual's mind. So, it seems mysterious and unreachable to the instructors. This resulted in the need to make thinking visible. They used the term "visible" not just to represent what can be seen with the eye but also what we can distinguish, notice, and

identify. When we make thinking visible, it becomes obvious to all, teachers as well as students. It then becomes something that can be analyzed, investigated, challenged and encouraged. They specified four practices used to make thinking visible: questioning, listening, documentation and thinking routines.

Because the visible thinking approach has to do with individual thought and cognition, it is grounded in the cognitive theory of instruction. To enable students to think critically in challenging learning scenarios, visible thinking requires the application of tools and strategies. The ideal approach to teach each kid is influenced by their unique characteristics. One tool that might be useful in learning scenarios is mapping. To help them think, some kids, however, prefer to use illustrations, while others would rather talk about it. Furthermore, some students like dealing with actual data, while others prefer working with ideas and possibilities (Bryson, et al, 2004). For that reason, the researcher used the visible thinking activities in order to enhance the students' organization of persuasive writing as he felt that it would be beneficial for preparatory stage pupils.

Some related studies were conducted to investigate the effect of using the visible thinking approach in the field of EFL teaching and learning such as Panzavolta, Mosa & Laici (2020) who investigated the effect of using visible thinking approach techniques on learning and teaching English. In addition, Marquez (2020) investigated the effect of using the thinking routines on promoting ESL speaking skills whereas Dajani & Youssif (2016) used thinking routines to promote Palestinian students' engagement and foster their understanding in addition to their inquiry skills.

Methods and procedures

This study adopted the quasi-experimental design using (one group for EFL pupils' pre-post treatment). The group was taught through using some activities based on visible thinking approach for developing persuasive writing organization skills among EFL pupils in the preparatory Stage. The pre-post persuasive writing test was administrated to the same group before and after the treatment.

Variables of the study

The variables of this study are:

- 1- Persuasive writing organization skills as the dependent variable.
- 2-The visible thinking approach as the independent variable.

Participants of the study

The participants of this study were selected at random from Sawada Preparatory School, Minia, in the academic year 2023- 2024. The mean age of the sample ranged between 12 and 13 years old. One experimental group was assigned at random (N=30). Moreover, the pupils in the experimental group were informed that the study was being carried out with the aim of developing their persuasive writing organization skills; they were pleased to take part in the experiment.

Design of the study

The study utilized the experimental design employing one experimental group. The group received the visible thinking activities through the academic year 2023-2024. A pre- post test was administered to the study group before and after the treatment.

Instruments of the study

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the researcher designed the persuasive writing organization checklist, test and rubric.

1- The checklist of persuasive writing organization

The checklist was designed in light of reviewing the literature and previous related studies concerned with fostering the development of persuasive writing organization sub-skills in EFL context. The reason for which the researcher used

the checklist was the identification of the most significant persuasive writing organization skills so as to suit first year preparatory and construct the persuasive writing organization test to be used as a pre-posttest.

The initial form of the checklist was comprised of six sub-skills classified as keeping adequate coherence between sentences and ideas, keeping adequate cohesion between parts of each sentence, using correct persuasive writing paragraph and email formats (introduction, body and conclusion), mentioning relevant ideas to the topic, using relevant topic sentences and a conclusion and using the last sentence as a summary sentence or a conclusion sentence.

Validity of the Checklist

The checklist was submitted to a panel of jury specialized in the domain of curriculum and instruction (TEFL) so as to determine the degree of salience of each sub-skill and its appropriateness for first year prep pupils. The jury members contended that the skills included into the checklist were largely adequate and appropriate to its purpose.

2) The persuasive writing organization test

Aim of the test

The persuasive writing organization test was used as a pre-test to ensure that pupils at the study group were lower in persuasive writing organization before conducting the experiment; and hence the progress achieved by the study group would be attributed to the visible thinking approach activities that the study group pupils were exposed to. As a post-test, it was used to investigate the effectiveness of the visible thinking approach techniques on enhancing the study group's persuasive writing organization skills.

Context of the test

The Pre-posttest aimed to measure students' overall persuasive writing organization skills and sub skills. These sub skills are: keeping adequate coherence between sentences and ideas, keeping adequate cohesion between parts of each sentence, using correct persuasive writing paragraph and email formats (introduction, body and conclusion). The test consisted of two sections. The first section was objective used to assess the participants' performance of recognizing the persuasive writing organization items in a provided text. The second section was subjective and was used to assess the participants' knowledge in using the

persuasive writing organization elements in writing. Pupils were asked to use their knowledge of the persuasive writing organization taught by the researcher and they were given the criteria which they will be scored on.

Validity of the test

To establish the validity of the persuasive writing organization skills test, it was submitted to a number of specialized jury members in the domain of curriculum and EFL instruction to voice their opinions regarding the clarity of test instructions, the suitability of the topics to the level of the first year prep, and the clarity of the questions. The jury members confirmed that the test proved to be valid.

Reliability of the test

Reliability of the test was statistically carried out by using test re-test method. Thus, the reliability co-efficient of the test were based on administrating of the test to students. The reliability of the test is measured by correlation coefficients between two tests and the table below illustrates the reliability coefficients.

Table (1)

Reliability coefficients of the persuasive writing organization test

Questions	Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Quest.1	0.731	0.01
Quest.2	0.718	0.01
Quest.3	0.701	0.01
Quest.4	0.865	0.01
Quest.5	0.762	0.01
Quest.6	0.887	0.01

As shown in the above table, the reliability coefficients for all the test questions are high. Therefore, the test was considered reliable for the purpose of the study.

3-The scoring rubric for persuasive writing organization test

The researcher used an analytical scoring rubric based on the features of the persuasive writing organization sub skills that are adequate for the first grade prep stage pupils taking into consideration that this checklist track improving persuasive writing organization.

The persuasive writing organization test has three main aspects which are

keeping adequate coherence between sentences and ideas, keeping adequate cohesion between parts of each sentence, using correct persuasive writing paragraph and email formats (introduction, body and conclusion). Each aspect was scored on a basis of scoring scale from (A) to (F) where “A” represents the highest performance level, while “F” represents the failing performance level. As for the validity of the rubric, it was submitted to a jury for validation, and it has been approved.

Results of the study

This study tried to investigate the effectiveness of the visible thinking approach in developing EFL persuasive writing organization skills. The t-test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of the study group on the pre-and post-application of the test.

Results of the study hypothesis

The study hypothesis stated that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group pupils' mean scores on the pre-test and the post-test of persuasive writing organization skills in favor of the post-test. To determine the amount of development for the experimental group after the implementation of the visible thinking approach, t-test and eta squared values were used to compare the results of the experimental group before and after the treatment as shown in tables (3&4).

Table (3)

T-test results comparing the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test in persuasive writing organization skills test

Skills	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	"t" value	df
Organization	Post Test	8.13	0.776	2.767	11.857*	29
	Pre-Test	5.37	1.066			

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**Table (4)
Eta Squared (η^2) Values between Pre-Post Performance of the Experimental Group on
the Persuasive writing organization Test**

Skill	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	Eta	Eta Squared (η^2)
Organization	Post Test	8.13	0.776	2.767	0.834	0.695
	Pre-Test	5.37	1.066			

Tables (3 & 4) point out that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' mean scores on the pre-test and post-test of persuasive writing organization skills in favor of the post-test since the total estimated t-value of the two types of persuasive writing questions is (11.857) which is statistically significant as 0.01 level. This means that the pupils' persuasive writing organization skills, in general, have been developed due to the treatment provided at level 0.01. Moreover, the effect size of the visible thinking approach on the pupils' persuasive writing organization skills was further measured according to the Eta squared factor and the total calculated effect size value of the two types of persuasive writing questions is (0.695) that is more than the large value effect and close to one.

Consequently, the results proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. Thus, the study hypothesis was supported. Furthermore, the growth of the experimental group pupils in the persuasive writing skills before and after the implementation of the visible thinking approach is compared in figure (1).

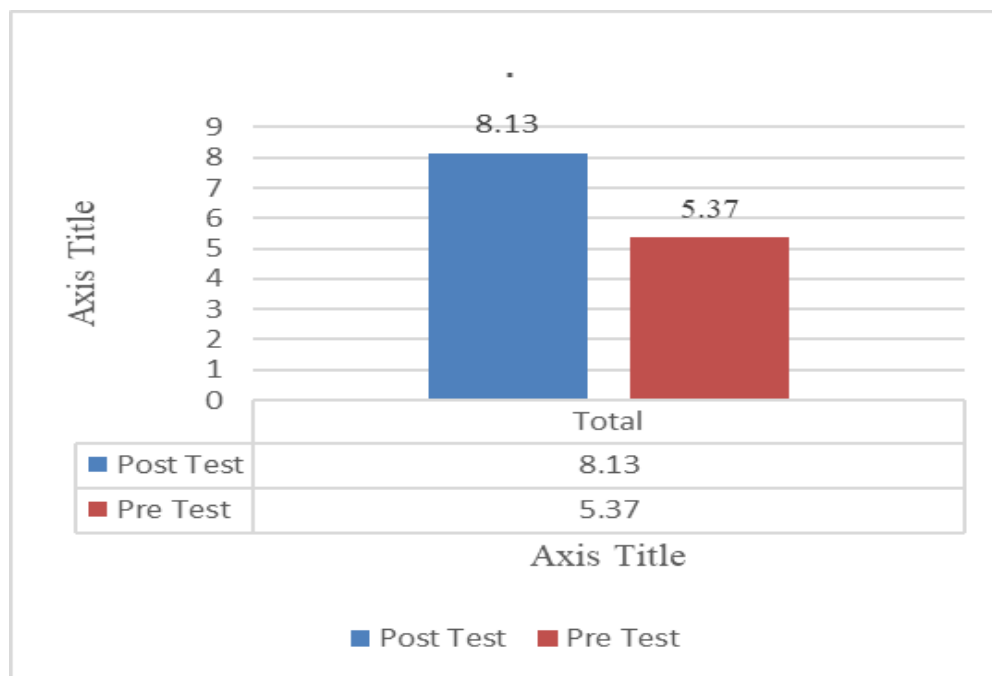


Figure (1) Comparison of the Experimental Group Students' Mean Scores on the Pre-test and Post-test of Persuasive Writing Organization Skill

Discussion

The overall purpose of the current study was to develop EFL persuasive writing organization skills through some activities based on visible thinking approach. The study examined the prep stage pupils' knowledge of how to form a persuasive writing paragraph. The results of the study revealed that the study group had significantly high scores in the post test.

The findings corroborate the research of Marquez (2020) who reported that the pupils taught by visible thinking techniques got high marks in the English language tests. However, this researcher focused on using VT for developing English language in general, but the present study focuses on developing persuasive writing organization skills using different visible thinking activities such as "generate-sort-connect-elaborate; concept maps and headline. The participants' posttest performance was better than that on the pre-test thanks to practicing visible thinking

activities and they outperformed themselves on the post-administration of the persuasive writing organization test.

The data analysis demonstrated that the VT activities proved to be statistically and educationally significant in developing first year prep pupils' persuasive writing organization skills. Effect size values were obtained through comparing the experimental group persuasive writing organization pre-posttest. Thus, the experimental pupils' considerable improvement in persuasive writing organization skills and sub-skills can be substantially attributed to the suggested VT activities. These results revealed the significant effect of VT activities to enhance persuasive writing organization skills and this is consistent with the results of Marquez (2020), Bilbao-Quintana, et al. (2021), Encinas, González and García-Martín (2021), and Panzavolta, Mosa & Laici (2020).

Conclusions

This study investigated the effectiveness of using VT activities for developing persuasive writing organization skills. This study gives scientific evidence of the effectiveness of the suggested activities based on visible thinking approach to refine the persuasive writing organization skills for first year prep pupils. The effectiveness of the suggested activities may be largely attributable to the numerous tasks, guides, and steps the researcher presented to the pupils to aid them produce fruitful results in this mode of writing. It can also be concluded that the mentioned VT approach can satisfy the majority of the learners in the language course. At last the significant point that was revealed by conduction of this study was that, using VT activities helped the pupils to be active learners rather than passive learners. Hence, it can be concluded that this VT approach is accepted by learners in addition to teachers, and providing that by considering learners' perceptions is necessary in language education particularly persuasive writing courses to improve learners' written accuracy originally.

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