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# PLEASE Strategy in Writing: An Experimental Study in EFL Senior High School in South Sumatra

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*Abstract*

*Writing remains one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, particularly in organizing ideas coherently and expressing them clearly. In Indonesian senior high schools, students often struggle with paragraph development due to limited strategic guidance and reliance on standard teaching techniques. To address this issue, this study investigated the effectiveness of the PLEASE (Pick–List–Evaluate–Activate–Supply–End) Strategy in improving the writing achievement of eleventh-grade students of MAN 2 Palembang. A quasi-experimental method with a quantitative approach was applied, involving two groups: one experimental group receiving PLEASE strategy instruction and one control group with teacher's strategy. The writing test was administered before and after the treatment and evaluated through descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including independent and paired-sample t-tests. The results revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group and a notable difference between the experimental and control groups. These findings indicate that the structured and metacognitive nature of the PLEASE strategy effectively enhances students' ability to plan, organize, compose, and refine paragraphs. Future research may explore its application across different writing genres or integrate it with digital media to optimize writing instruction in diverse EFL contexts.*

**Keywords: EFL; Experimental Study; PLEASE Strategy; Teaching Writing**

## INTRODUCTION

One of the essential competencies in English education at the senior high school level is writing. Writing acts as a critical means of gaining and demonstrating knowledge in various content areas, as well as a crucial tool for communication and self-expression (Hinkel, 2017). In the academic realm, writing is valued not only as an important outcome, but also as a means of learning and understanding course material (Wang & Zhang, 2017). In the process of learning English, writing skills act as productive skill that allow students to convey their thoughts and ideas effectively but also enable them to communicate more clearly and

persuasively in written form (Zulmen et al., 2023). Furthermore, Vacalares et al. (2023) said that effective writing skills enable students to articulate their original viewpoints, ideas, and analyses through written forms, which is crucial for academic success.

Despite its importance, writing is considered to be one of the hardest skills for non-native English speakers to learn. One of the primary challenges lies in the complexity of the writing process itself. Writing is a multifaceted skill that requires a deep understanding of four categories in writing aspects, such as imitative, intensive, responsive and extensive (Brown, 2020). Moreover, according to Fareed et al. (2016), students have difficulties with writing because they have to focus on a number of aspects in writing such as vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling while also accurately developing their thoughts and arguing their points. It makes it difficult for the students to organize and present their ideas in a clear, coherent, and engaging way. Furthermore, when it comes to the English writing skill, students' difficulties also come from translating those ideas into readable writing. As supported by Xin and Yunus (2019) the differences in language components between the two languages result in most students tend to transfer their thoughts from L1 to L2, which causes them to make grammatical mistakes while writing. The other reason is that in writing the students need the ability to conduct research to find relevant sources and critically Evaluate them is another essential aspect of successful writing (Fadda, 2012). From those factors of writing skill, no wonder why many students experience difficulties toward mastering writing skill

Taking into account to the previously mentioned factors of students' difficulty in writing skill, teaching strategy is a crucial factor to help students in learning how to master writing skill in English education. Brown (2020) stated that teaching strategies are crucial for both teachers and students to learn English language successfully, and that they are one of the determining factors that significantly impact how learners approach language learning. In addition, Oxford (2016) argued that choosing the right teaching strategy to improve learning process by making it simpler, quicker, more enjoyable, independent, efficient, and adaptable to new circumstances may have an impact on students' proficiency in English language skills, especially to enhance students' writing skill.

One of the teaching strategies that the teacher may apply to foster students' writing skill is Pick-List-Evaluate-Activate-End (henceforth, PLEASE Strategy). Gulo et al. (2023) proposed that the PLEASE strategy can empower high school students to become more effective and independent writers. In addition, Friend and Bursuck (2018) found that the PLEASE strategy can help high school students produce cohesive and well-organized paragraphs, because the strategy guides students through a systematic process of planning, organizing, and evaluating their writing, leading to more coherent and logical compositions. A study by Graham and Harris (2017) which focused on its application in university settings, found that students can compose paragraphs using this strategy since it improves concept organization and paragraph development. Therefore, the PLEASE strategy is a teaching strategy that can be effectively used to enhance writing skills in students of all ages, including secondary school, high school students and varsities.

Preliminary study was conducted at MAN 2 Palembang by interviewing with one of the teachers of English. Several issues in students' writing achievement, including difficulties in paragraph construction, lack of idea organization, and low motivation. The teacher at the school is used to using the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach without any clearly stated for

teaching paragraph writing (N.E., personal communication, October 19, 2024). While PBL encourages collaborative learning and critical thinking, it often lacks structured support in the drafting stage, especially concerning paragraph composition (Shin et al., 2021). This limitation makes it difficult for students to build cohesive and well-developed texts. In contrast, the PLEASE strategy offers a comprehensive framework that supports students through each phase of writing, ensuring a clearer understanding of paragraph structure and content development (Graham et al., 2017).PLEASE offers a step-by-step approach that directly addresses the issues identified: the 'Pick' and 'List' steps help students generate and organize ideas, 'Evaluate' and 'Activate' guide them through planning and drafting, while 'Supply' and 'End' support revision and reflection. Therefore, the strategy aligns well with the students' needs by offering both cognitive and motivational support throughout the writing process.

There were some previous studies which have shown the effectiveness of the PLEASE strategy across various educational levels, junior high school (e.g., Marzulina, 2018; Sartika & Nery, 2018), senior high school (Aminatun et al., 2019; Gulo et al., 2023) and university level (e.g., Al-Zu'bi & Kayed, 2019). Similarly, Sinambela and Sinulingga (2013) found that writing strategy instruction significantly enhanced students' ability to generate, organize, and revise content. Most of these studies revealed that PLEASE strategy is effective to improve students' writing achievement on tenth or twelfth-grade students. While these findings highlight the general effectiveness of the PLEASE strategy, most of the existing research has focused on students in the tenth or twelfth grades. There is still limited research on its implementation in the eleventh grade, particularly in Islamic senior high schools. Moreover, few studies have examined the application of the PLEASE strategy within the framework of Kurikulum Merdeka (Emancipated Curriculum), which emphasizes student autonomy, higher-order thinking skills, and differentiated instruction.

Given the unique demands of Kurikulum Merdeka and the growing emphasis on independent, strategy-based learning in Indonesian education, further investigation is needed to evaluate how well the PLEASE strategy supports students' writing development in this specific context. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of the PLEASE strategy in improving the writing achievement of eleventh-grade students at an Islamic senior high school implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether the implementation of the PLEASE (Pick-List-Evaluate-Activate-Supply-End) strategy can significantly improve the writing achievement of eleventh-grade students at (unrevealed). It is expected that this research will not only contribute to the growing body of knowledge in writing instruction but also provide practical insights for teachers seeking innovative and structured strategies to enhance student writing outcomes. By addressing a specific instructional gap, this study seeks to offer new value in the field of English language education through the integration of metacognitive strategies in the writing classroom.

**METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of the PLEASE (Pick–List–Evaluate–Activate–Supply–End) strategy in improving students' writing achievement. The research was conducted at MAN 2 Palembang, a public Islamic senior high school accredited A and implementing the Emancipated Curriculum. The participants were drawn from the eleventh-grade students

enrolled in the academic year 2024/2025. The total population consisted of 261 students distributed across eight classes. From this population, two classes were selected using convenience sampling in collaboration with the English teacher, considering factors such as average English scores and class availability. One class was assigned as the experimental group, and the other as the control group, each consisting of 31 students.

The data collection process was conducted over twelve sessions for each group. The first session served as the pre-test, during which students in both the experimental and control groups were asked to write a composition based on a selected argumentative or hortatory exposition topic. This task aimed to measure their initial writing ability. The pre-test was administered under exam conditions within a 60-minute time limit. The next ten sessions were used for treatment. The experimental group received writing instruction using the PLEASE (Pick–List–Evaluate–Activate–Supply–End) strategy, while the control group received instruction through the method typically used by the classroom teacher, which was the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. In the twelfth session, a post-test was administered using the same format as the pre-test, featuring a new but comparable topic to assess students' writing improvement. Both the pre- and post-test compositions were assessed by two independent raters using an analytic scoring rubric covering content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Inter-rater reliability was calculated to ensure scoring consistency. The scores from both tests were then analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the PLEASE strategy.

The primary instrument for data collection was a writing test administered before and after the treatment. The writing test was constructed based on a detailed test specification table aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on the ability to compose argumentative and hortatory exposition texts. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by two expert validators who reviewed the test specification, test items, scoring rubric, and lesson plan. All components were deemed valid in terms of content, clarity, relevance, and alignment with curriculum standards. To ensure reliability, the result of students' writing scored by two raters using writing rubric adopted from Turnitin's CCSS. In order to make sure whether both raters are consistent in interpreting the rubric description to determine the score, inter-rater reliability analysis was implemented. The scores gained from the two raters were analyzed using Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau correlation coefficients. The results of inter-rater reliability showed strong agreement between raters, with values above 0.85, indicating excellent scoring consistency.

The data analysis involved descriptive statistics to describe students' writing performance (mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation). Then, the data were subjected to prerequisite analyses, which include normality and homogeneity tests using the Shapiro-Wilk and Levene's Test respectively. These tests confirmed that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous. After that, to analyze the improvement within the experimental group, a paired sample t-test was conducted. Finally, to examine the significant difference between the experimental and control groups, an independent sample t-test was used. The threshold of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for both tests.

Throughout the data collection process, all procedures were carried out ethically. Permissions were obtained from the school authorities, and students were informed about the purpose and voluntary nature of their participation. The implementation of the PLEASE

strategy was designed to ensure that students could engage actively in a structured and supportive learning environment, aiming to enhance their writing ability through metacognitive and systematic instruction

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
### The Effect of the PLEASE Strategy on Students' Writing Achievement

To find out students' writing improvement before and after taught using PLEASE strategy in experimental group, firstly the data obtained from pre-test and post test score was analyzed through descriptive statistic and then analyzed using prerequisite analysis (normality and homogeneity test) before finally analyzing using inferential statistic which is paired sample t-test.

**Table 1. Descriptive Analysis**

| Test Type | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 31 | 32 | 73 | 52.82 |
| Post-test | 31 | 56 | 90 | 72.56 |

The data in Table 1 indicates a substantial increase in the students' writing scores after the implementation of the PLEASE strategy. The average score improved from 52.82 in the pre-test to 72.56 in the post-test. This improvement suggests that the strategy significantly enhanced students' writing performance. To confirm the statistical significance of the improvement, a paired sample t-test was conducted, but before that the prerequisite analysis was conducted to make sure all the data were distributed normal and homogenous. The results are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2. Prerequisite Analysis: Normality test**

| Test Type | Statistic | df | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 0.976 | 31 | 0.701 |
| Post-test | 0.967 | 31 | 0.451 |

Based on the data in Table 2, the normality test using Shapiro-Wilk shows the significance (Sig.) values for both pre-test (0.701) and post-test (0.451) which are higher than the significance level of 0.05, it means that the data of pre-test and post-test in experimental group was normally distributed. After checking for the normality, the data were analyzed to make sure they were homogeneous using Lavene's test. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Prerequisite Analysis: Homogeneity test**

| Test Type | Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Based on mean | 0.013 | 1 | 60 | 0.911 |
| Based on median | 0.007 | 1 | 60 | 0.934 |
| Based on median and adjusted df | 0.007 | 1 | 58.469 | 0.934 |
| Based on trimmed mean | 0.012 | 1 | 60 | 0.914 |

The data listed in Table 3 shows that the significance (Sig.) values for all calculation methods; based on mean (0.911), median (0.934), and trimmed mean (0.914), are greater than the threshold value of 0.05. It can be concluded that the data in the experimental class are homogeneous. Because the data is considered normal and homogeneous, and then paired sample t-test were conducted, the result of analysis listed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Hypothesis Testing: Paired Sample T-Test**

| Pair | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre vs Post-test Experimental | -8.324 | 30 | <.001 |

The output data shown in table 4 indicates a significant value (Sig. 2-tailed) less than 0.001 (<0.001), which is far below the standard alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between the two related means. The large negative t-value (-8.324) supports the interpretation that the post-test scores were significantly higher than the t-table for N: 60 which is 1.670. Therefore, the result confirmed that there was a significant improvement in the students' writing performance after the implementation of the PLEASE strategy.

**The Significant Difference of Students' Writing Achievement**

To find out significant differences of students' writing achievements between the students who were taught using PLEASE strategy and those who were not, firstly the data obtained from post test scores in control and experimental group was analyzed through descriptive statistics and then analyzed using prerequisite analysis (normality and homogeneity test) before finally analyzing using inferential statistics which is independent sample t-test. The data is shown from Table 5 to Table 8.

**Table 5. Descriptive Analysis**

| Test Type | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test 11.2 | 31 | 45 | 78 | 59.15 | 10.688 |
| Post-test 11.3 | 31 | 56 | 90 | 72.56 | 8.808 |

Based on the data on Table 5, the control group had scores ranging from 50 to 78, a mean score of 59.15, and a standard deviation of 10.688. Meanwhile, the experimental group showed higher performance with scores ranging from 56 to 90, a mean score of 72.56, and standard deviation of 8.808. These results indicate that the experimental group not only achieved a higher average score, but also had more consistent scores compared to the control group. After that, the prerequisite analysis was conducted before analyzing before finally analyzing using inferential statistic which is independent sample t-test. The results are shown in Table 6 and Table 7.

**Table 6. Prerequisite Analysis: Normality test**

| Test Type | Statistic | df | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test 11.2 | 0.960 | 31 | 0.290 |
| Post-test 11.3 | 0.967 | 31 | 0.451 |

The Table 6 above presents the results of the normality test for the post-test scores of the control group and experimental group, analyzed using Shapiro-Wilk test. According to the data results, the significance value (Sig.) for the control group is 0.290 and for the experimental group is 0.451. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it indicates that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of the post-test scores for both groups meet the assumption of normality. After checking for the normality, the data were analyzed to make sure they were homogeneous using Lavene's test. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7. Prerequisite Analysis: Homogeneity test**

| Test Type | Lavene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Based on mean | 1.086 | 1 | 60 | 0.302 |
| Based on median | .792 | 1 | 60 | 0.377 |
| Based on median and adjusted df | .792 | 1 | 59.473 | 0.337 |
| Based on trimmed mean | 1.048 | 1 | 60 | 0.310 |

As shown on table 7 the result of homogeneity test where significance values (Sig.) for all four methods; based on mean (.302), median (.377), median with adjusted degrees of freedom (.377), and trimmed mean (.310), are all greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the post-test scores from both groups were homogeneous, after that, independent sample t-test were conducted, the result of this inferential analysis is listed in table 8

**Table 8. Hypothesis Testing: Independent Sample T-Test**

| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test control & experimental | -5.395 | 60 | <.001 |

Based on the data in Table 8, the Sig. (2-tailed) value under "Equal variances assumed" is reported as < .001, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in writing achievement between the two groups after treatment. Therefore, the result concluded that the use of the PLEASE strategy had a significant impact on students' post-test writing scores compared to the teaching strategy used in the control group.

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the PLEASE strategy significantly improves students' writing achievement. The structured steps of the PLEASE strategy, beginning from selecting a topic (Pick), organizing ideas (List and Evaluate), constructing the paragraph (Activate and Supply), and ending with final evaluation (End), helped students to write more coherently and confidently. Thus, this reflects the strength of explicit strategy instruction in promoting organized and self-monitored writing.

These findings are consistent with previous research by Gulo et al. (2023), which showed that the PLEASE strategy improved students' descriptive writing performance. Similar results were also reported by Aminatun et al. (2019) who emphasized that the strategy facilitated writing development among high school students by enhancing their metacognitive skills. In line with Graham and Harris (2018), the findings of this study confirm that explicit and structured instruction in writing significantly contributes to better outcomes. The statistical significance found in both control and experimental group analyses also aligns with Marzulina (2018), who discovered that the PLEASE strategy not only improved the organization of ideas but also increased student motivation and confidence in writing. Students benefited from the scaffolding aspect of the strategy, which is grounded in self-regulated learning principles (Mohammed, 2021)

The effectiveness of the PLEASE strategy as revealed in this study is deeply rooted in its theoretical foundation, particularly in the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model developed by Welch in 1997, which combines cognitive strategy instruction with self-regulation techniques such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-instruction. Each stage in PLEASE prompts students to engage in conscious planning and reflection, which aligns with metacognitive theory that emphasizes the importance of learners being aware of and controlling their own learning process. This is further supported by Al-Zu'bi and Al-Kayed (2018), whose

study demonstrated that SRSD-based models like PLEASE strategy improved paragraph cohesion and organization.

A distinguishing feature of this study lies in its focus on senior high school EFL learners within the Indonesian educational context, a population that remains underrepresented in empirical research on writing strategies such as PLEASE. Additionally, the use of a quasi-experimental design with controlled implementation enhances the internal validity of the findings and offers a more precise evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness in authentic classroom settings. While much of the existing literature has concentrated on the application of PLEASE in descriptive writing tasks, the present study extends its scope by investigating its use in argumentative and hortatory exposition writing, which demand higher-order cognitive skills and more complex language organization.

The implications of these results are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, they strengthen the claim that metacognitive strategies such as PLEASE strategy is effective in improving complex language skills like writing. Practically, this strategy offers teachers an innovative instructional model that enhances student engagement, supports weaker learners, and enables clearer, more structured writing production. Moreover, the guided nature of PLEASE is echoed in the work of Wahyuningtyas and Zuhriyah (2024), who emphasize the effectiveness of structured strategy teaching in supporting weaker writers. The future implementations should consider instructional time management to fully realize the benefit of PLEASE strategy, as it is a time-consuming strategy. In conclusion, the study confirms that the PLEASE strategy, grounded in SRSD and metacognitive theory, is effective in enhancing EFL students' writing achievement, particularly in developing coherence, organization, and writing confidence. Its structured and reflective nature makes it a valuable addition to writing instruction in secondary education, especially in contexts similar to Indonesia.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of this study demonstrated that the PLEASE (Pick–List–Evaluate–Activate–Supply–End) strategy had a significant positive effect on the writing achievement of eleventh-grade students at (unrevealed). Students who were taught using this structured and step-by-step strategy were able to write more coherently, organize their ideas more clearly, and improve the overall quality of their paragraphs compared to those who were taught using the conventional Project-Based Learning method. The improvement was evident both in statistical analysis and in practical classroom outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous research and are strongly supported by the theoretical foundation of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), which emphasizes explicit instruction and strategic thinking during the writing process. The structured steps of PLEASE strategy provided meaningful scaffolding that helped students move through each stage of writing with greater clarity and confidence.

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