Employing TBL and 3PS Learning Approaches to Improve Writing Skill Among Saudi EFL Students in Jouf University

Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim Mugableh[1]* & Dr. Mohammad Nayef Khreisat[2]
[1]*English Department, Jouf University, Tubarjal, Saudi Arabia*
[2]*English Department, Jouf University, Tubarjal, Saudi Arabia*
Correspondence Author: Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim Mugableh, E-mail: ahmugableh@ju.edu.sa

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Learning the writing skill is a challenging task for second or foreign language learners. This difficulty stems from the fact that students required multiple skills and knowledge while writing. They need, for example, enough vocabulary inventory, grammar knowledge, and other discourse strategies to organize the text. Students are also in need for background knowledge about the subject matter of the writing task, so they generate their ideas accordingly. To achieve all these targets and to meet the challenges, a need for an approach that meets the requirement of the written task and enhances the students' abilities and linguistic background is a must. The aim of this research is to investigate two of the available approaches; namely, the TBL approach and the conventional 3Ps model, to improve Saudi EFL students' writing skill in Jouf university. The focus is on finding out the effect of the two approaches, the differences between them, and what are the aspects of improvement that TBL approach can achieve. The data were collected experimentally through writing pretest and posttest after students received training using the two approaches for 6 weeks. The findings revealed that using TBL approach is significantly effective in learning writing skill. It was also found that TBL approach is more effective than the conventional model. Furthermore, findings demonstrated that employing TBL approach on teaching Saudi EFL students' writing skills improved five writing sub-skills including organization, content, mechanism, grammar, and vocabulary with the organization and content the most improved areas.

1- INTRODUCTION

Writing, as one of the four major skills, has been seen as the most important skill because of its role in the communication between the writers and readers. It is also well-known that the information received through listening and reading channels is reproduced through writing. In this sense, writing is a productive skill like speaking, but the representation is made through letters instead of sounds. Although it was found that writing is the least portion of people's communication in comparison to other skills (Gilakjani & Ahmadi 2011), using writing is essential and critical in business communication, legal documents, and books of various kinds. Nevertheless, learning the writing skill is a challenging task for second or foreign language learners (Al Fadda 2012; Mourtaga 2004). This difficulty stems from the multiple skills and knowledge that students required to employ while writing. They need for example sufficient vocabulary repertoire, grammar knowledge,

and other discourse strategies to organize the text (Ridha, 2012). Students are also in need for background knowledge about the subject matter of the writing task, so they generate their ideas accordingly.

In Saudi educational context, communicating in English language requires students, who study English as a foreign language (EFL), to master the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Mastering these skills can help these students exchange information about the latest developments occurring around the world (Keshta & Harb 2013). Mastering the writing skill, as one of the productive skills, is considered the most difficult and challenging task for Saudi EFL students (Al Fadda 2012; Mourtaga 2004). This difficulty stems from the high level of cognition processes that are needed to build the relationships in the writing discourse at the word, sentence, and whole text levels. This includes producing a piece of writing

that is coherent, cohesive, and meaningful. To achieve these elements of writing, Saudi EFL students must write in an organized format that follows a clear pattern, keeps smooth transition among the sentences and paragraphs, selects appropriate lexical devices, and maintains an overall well-formed structure of the sentences in relation to the word order and word forms. Once these writing elements are achieved, it can be said that the Saudi EFL students are able to deliver their ideas and thoughts more smoothly and effectively to the reader.

Most EFL classrooms in Saudi context of education employ the so called 3Ps approach of teaching which stands for (present, practice, and produce) (Hamoudeh, 2016). 3Ps approach is "an approach for teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, practice of the item and then production (i.e. use) of the item" (Tomlinson, 2011a: xv). The teacher role in this approach is principal as he or she is responsible for providing information and guidance about the topic and content of writing. The student's role in this approach is limited to apply the information and guidance received from the teacher to produce the writing. Accordingly, this approach tends to be more into teacher-centered. Moreover, this approach does not require students to interact or discuss with other students in the same class. This makes this approach more suitable to learn the aspects of writing that do not require much communication, such as grammar and vocabulary. However, it is less effective in learning other aspects of writing such as planning the content.

Although 3Ps approach is one of the well-established methodologies in the academic arena, it has its critics and a couple of relatively new methodologies start gaining popularity such as TBL (Task-Based Learning) approach. TBL approach is a new approach to learn the language through structured activities and tasks that aim to give students a space to communicate while they are learning and to be more responsible for their learning. Accordingly, the focus of TBL approach is on the actual tasks that stimulate the interest of students since learning would be built around that particular task (Nunan 2005). According to Willis (1996), who provided a framework of this type of approach, the teacher's role is limited to guiding students during the activity by selecting and sequencing the tasks, preparing learners for the tasks, and raising students' awareness. In this process, the role of teacher is to adopt real-life tasks and problems as teaching materials to stimulate students to use cognitive ways of thinking (Hung 2014). The students' role is to discuss, perform, and evaluate the task and then produce what is required from the task. It is an integrated system with multidisciplinary teaching and learning approach and offers the students rich learning opportunities in different disciplines (Harden 2001). In the teaching process of TBL, students are often placed in complex situations where they should analyze problem by themselves and learn necessary knowledge to solve problem (Qing, Ni, & Hong 2010). Moreover, the students need to work in pairs or groups to solve the problems in the tasks.

Based on the above-mentioned arguments, this research is an attempt to employ TBL approach in Aljouf university particularly in EFL classroom to find out the effect of using task-based learning (TBL) approach and a conventional approach (3Ps) on the Saudi EFL students' writing skill, the difference in the Saudi EFL students' writing scores as a result of using the two learning approaches, conventional (3Ps) and task-based learning (TBL) and the aspects of improvement in the Saudi EFL students' writing performance that are achieved by using the TBL approach.

2- STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

To meet the Saudi EFL students' needs in developing their English writing skills, there is a crucial need to adopt prominent teaching approach that meets the requirement of the written task and that enhance the students' abilities and their linguistic background. Accordingly, two main learning approaches are proposed and researched namely Task-based learning approach (TBL) and conventional approach (3Ps).

Several researchers had employed TBL and 3PS approaches to find out the possibilities of using one of these approaches in developing students' learning skills. TBL and 3Ps were investigated in various areas of language learning, such as in speaking (Hasan 2014; Shafaei, Salimi, & Talebi 2013), vocabulary acquisition (Fallahrafie, Rahmany, & Sadeghi 2015; Javanbakht & Yasuj 2011; Thanh & Huan 2012) and listening (Urmia 2012). One of these attempts was made by Assalahi (2013), who administered an interview with lecturers to find out the reasons behind adopting the conventional approach in a grammar classroom on the account of the more communicative one, the TBL. lecturers reported number of reasons that justified their use and preference of 3Ps approach in learning. Lecturers showed consistent beliefs that they prefer the 3Ps to TBL as they think that the use of a communicative approach like TBL will make them lose their central role in the class, lose the control over the class, and eliminate the students' needs for them as sources of knowledge. Other contextual factors were

also reported by lecturers. They noted that TBL is time consuming and the classrooms are not equipped with the aids and materials that are needed for explanation.

Although the study conducted by Assalahi contributed to our standing of the possible barriers of using the TBL approach, it was not without gaps. First, the focus of comparison was on teaching grammar with little attention given to writing. Second, the findings were based on the lecturers' point of views and perspectives. The students' performance as a result of using either of the approaches was not measured. These two gaps are filled in the present research by comparing the outcomes of the two approaches in learning writing skills. Moreover, this is very significant to direct English lecturers toward the importance of using TBL approach in the Saudi context of education. By comparing the effect of the two approaches (TBL and 3Ps) on the Saudi EFL students, this will raise the lecturers as well as the students' awareness of the numerous advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches and their impact on students' writing development.

3- RESEARCH QUESTIONS
3.1 What is the effect of using task-based learning (TBL) approach and a conventional approach (3Ps) on the Saudi EFL students' writing skill?
3.2 What is the difference in the Saudi EFL students' writing scores as a result of using the two learning approaches, conventional (3Ps) and task-based learning (TBL)?
3.3 What are the aspects of improvement in the Saudi EFL students' writing performance that are achieved by using the TBL approach?

4- LITERATURE REVIEW
4.1 Task-Based Learning Framework
The notion of task-based learning is derived from the concept of vocational education, which relies on practice and gaining experience over practice. The theoretical background for this approach is 'cooperative learning', which assumes that learning can be achieved through doing learning activities in groups. In each activity, a learner can exchange their ideas and information to motivate other groups' members. In this sense, the cooperation among the group members makes the source of learning and improves the learning outcomes (Olsen & Kagan 1992).

Since it was established in the mid-1970s, TBL approach has received attention from several researchers, such as (Ellis 2003; Hung 2014; Nunan 2006; Willis 1996) and others. The main idea in this approach involves giving students an academic task in the form of "classroom work" that aims to involves

students in a dynamic and communicative process, so they become able to comprehend, manipulate, produce or interact in the target language (Nunan 2006: 5). In this sense, TBL is a contextual process that requires students to achieve the given task based on a 'workplan" Ellis (2003). It is a kind of a communicative activity in which the target language is used to achieve communicative purposes that are crowned by authentic production (Willis 1996). As proposed by Clark, Scarino, and Brownell (1994), performing any learning task successfully requires the following:
  o A real-life purpose that justify performing the task.
  o A real or imagined context of the event in which the task takes place.
  o Doing and thinking processes to perform the task.
  o Producing the results thought of and practiced using the skills and knowledge obtained from practicing.

Compared with the other conventional approaches such as the 3Ps, TBL approach assumes that the four language skills are integrated in learning process. In this sense, TBL focuses on both, the meaning achieved through interaction and form expressed by grammar accuracy (Nunan 2004). Consequently, it is expected to control the potential threats of the conventional writing learning approaches. However, this approach is not without limitations. The execution of TBL takes longer duration to be implemented and it does not focus much on grammatical accuracy. These limitations make TBL to be used in English writing classrooms in a narrow range.

The present research adopts Willis's (1996) framework of task-based learning as the theoretical learning framework. Willis developed this framework first in 1996 as consisting of three stages or classroom activities (1) pre-task, (2) task cycle, and (3) language focus. While the first and second stages are communicative and focus on meaning, the third stage is productive and focuses on the form. The pre-task involves students to prepare prior to performing a certain task. This preparation is usually made by the teacher, who provides students in this stage with the useful information, such as the meaning of certain words and phrases that facilitate students' mission. He or she also introduce and explain the task through certain demonstrations, such as pictures, audio or video recordings. The purpose of doing this is to add to the students' background knowledge of the topic in hand.
Task cycling involves students to work in groups, or pairs if their number is very small, to discuss the task. The teacher's role in this stage is to monitor students while they are communicating and negotiating the

topic without interference. This is important, as monitoring students from distance would achieve student-centered based learning. In this stage, the students plan the task, finish it in specific time allotted for this purpose, write their notes, elicit agreement from other group members, exchange their ideas, and come up with the first draft of their task.

In the language focus stage, the students in each group produce a report of their production and share it with the class. The teacher's role in this stage is to sum up the language points in the task prior to assigning homework that should be done individually.

4.2 Task-Based Learning Approach in Learning Writing

There are various designs that have been proposed for a task-based lesson (e.g. Lee, 2001; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). However, they all have four principle phases in common as following:

- o Pre-task phase: the teacher introduces the topic to be learned by learners where he/she utilizes tasks that help learners learn useful words and phrases. In this phase the teacher should check the learners' understanding of the task instruction.
- o During-task phase: in this phase, the students perform the task either in pairs or in small cooperative structures. This phase depends on the type of task to be tackled. The teacher role in this phase was as a monitor and a motivator for students to be involved in the task.
- o Post-task phase: in this phase, students present their reports depend on the nature of the task either in speaking or writing.
- o Feedback and evaluation: the teacher may wish to conduct a feedback session to discuss the success of the task and consider suggestions for improving it. He may give brief feedback on content and form. And he may play a record of others doing the same task. Evaluation of the task would provide useful information for facilitator when planning further tasks.

This research adopts the task-based learning (TBL) approach by Willis (1996). The selection of this approach was made on the basis that the use of this approach in learning the four skills in English language revolutionized the learning process. Instead of being dependent on the conventional learning that is dependent on mastering the forms of the language, which requires more memorizing abilities, through TBL, learning becomes more dynamic, communicative, enjoyable, and fruitful.

According to this framework, learning is built upon giving learners a variety of learning tasks. Each of these tasks consist of communicative activities about real life situations in the target language, which require learners to interactively involve in critical thinking and problem-solving procedures to construct their knowledge and achieve the required task.

Although Willis (1996) did not focus on writing as a skill in the scope of her approach, adopting this framework in the current research hopes to give an opportunity to the students in the experimental group to practice writing in fluent and spontaneous ways of using the language, and to guarantee producing more accurate form of the language.

4.3 Conventional Learning Approach (3PS)

As opposed to TBL, conventional learning approach focuses on the form rather than the meaning. The process unusually passes into three stages; namely, presentation, practice, and production known as 3Ps model. The teacher, who is dominant in the classroom, usually begins the lesson by providing the new forms and meanings to be learned. According to Skehan (1998: 9), 3Ps is conducted into three stages. In the first stage, the structure of a grammatical point is presented to facilitate understanding of the underlying rule. This would develop the "declarative knowledge" of the learner. Skehan added that the second stage involves moving from gathering knowledge into practice. In this stage, the focus is on the accuracy, which is "subject to the teacher's careful supervision or control". In the third stage, Skehan noted that the declarative knowledge obtained from the first stage is converted into "procedural knowledge" to produce the language. This production is not guaranteed as students' control on their learning is "gradually loosened" when they move from stage to another (p. 93).

As it is shown by Skehan, the procedures and focus in 3Ps model are quite different from the steps, procedures, and focus in TBL in many aspects. While the focus is on the teacher-centered method in 3Ps, the student is the centered of leaning in TBL. In the latter, the teacher's role is limited to guiding students during the activity by selecting and sequencing the tasks, preparing learners for the tasks, and raise students' awareness. Meanwhile, students' role in TBL is to discuss, perform, and evaluate the task and produce what is required from the task on their own pace.

Another difference between the two methods is that 3Ps focuses on the form and accuracy, whereas, the TBL focuses on the form and meaning at the same time. In comparison to conventional learning

approaches, TBL is more communicative, which entitles students with more engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills (Qing et al. 2010; Zhaochun 2015). In 3Ps model of learning, students are only following the teacher's instructions without much interference in the learning decision and in a way that is not communicative. Little space is left to them to discuss, plan, and share their ideas and planning with others.

This research applies the two approaches on two groups of students. The first group practices learning using the 3Ps and the other practices the TBL. The purpose is to verify the effect of the two learning approaches and the difference between them in improving the learners' writing skill.

4.4 Research on TBL Approach
Several studies attempted to find out the effect of using TBL approach on students' writing performance. In a study conducted by Bantis (2008), the researcher investigated the use of TBL in teaching writing. The focus of Bantis' research was to find out the problems connected with using TBL pedagogically as a base of teaching English communicatively and the influence of such instructions on student with mixed ability. Moreover, the focus also was on finding the effect of using TBL approach on L2 acquisition of writing. The researcher used a mixed method design that employed qualitative data collection and quantitative data analysis. The data were collected in the forms of 35 students' written transcriptions of writing conferences, writing samples, and interviews. One teacher and 10 school students were also interviewed. The descriptive analysis showed that the TBL approach can be used a means of instruction to provide with differentiated teaching. It was also found that this approach can be used pedagogically as a means of instruction following the constructivism theory in which the teacher is the model and the students who construct their knowledge. Finally, the results showed that TBL proved to be a useful vehicle of second language acquisition to address the diverse needs of second language learners.

Another study was conducted by Alavi and Tabar (2012), who examined the effect of the task type and pre-task planning, as one aspect of TBL, on the level of writing accuracy among Iranian EFL students. The first focus of the study was on determining whether there was any significant difference in the level of accuracy in the students' writing production across two types of tasks: personal and decision-making. The second focus was on finding whether the accuracy is significantly important based on the various planning types are performed: no planning, individual, pair, or group planning before performing the task. To achieve the aims of the study and answer the research questions, the researchers recruited 120 Iranian EFL students whose level of English was intermediate. The subjects were selected in a random sampling technique and then assigned to three 3 experimental groups and one control group. The data collected from students in the form of written productions were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using the 2-way ANOVA test in SPSS. The use of this test was to determine the single and tandem effect of two variables addresses in the study (task type and planning condition). The findings showed that the task type affects learners' writing accuracy in a way that the greater accuracy is realized in the cognitively more complex decision-making tasks. Moreover, the pre-task planning conditions had great effect on the students' accuracy; the experimental groups enjoyed a higher accuracy in the tasks than the control group which confirmed the effect of pre-task.

Moussaoui (2012) conducted a qualitative and quasi-experimental study on second year undergraduate students from Setif University English department in Algeria. The study sought to investigate the effect of working in pairs, as one form of cooperative writing, in fostering undergraduate students writing autonomy and attitude. The result of pre and post training in writing tasks showed that most of subjects' essays in both control group and study group were lacking cohesion and logical organization. On other hand the finding also showed that there is a significant influence of peer work on improving students writing, thinking skills, hence, develop their writing autonomy.

In another study by Cao (2012), the researcher aimed at finding out whether the use of TBL approach in Chinese university students' context is feasible to train students on writing. Building on the students' old practices and difficulties in writing, the researchers asked about the possibility of adopting TBL as an approach to improve the students' writing competence. The researcher used two questionnaire and two tests (pre and post). The pre-treatment questionnaire showed that the students face difficulties in the content and organization. The students also showed less difficulty in using vocabulary, structuring the sentences, and fluency. The analysis of the students' scores in the posttests showed that the use of TBL was effective in promoting students' competencies in writing, as the students' scores in the posttest were significantly different from their scores in the pretest. The students in the experimental group also performed significantly better than the students in the control group. The students' scores in the control group remain constant without any noticeable change.

In another study, Han (2014) investigated the effect of

using TBL approach on the writing performance of university students in China. Two treatment groups were created, control and experimental with 48 and 46 students respectively. After receiving 2 hour-training a week for the whole semester, an open-ended 3 item questionnaire was administered to students. The three items attempted to elicit answers from students regarding the TBL effect, students' beliefs, and TBL strengths and weaknesses. The qualitative analysis showed that the students who received training on using TBL were more active than those students received conventional training. The students also believed that using TBL approach was an interesting and new experience that motivated them to use English more. They maintained that using such an approach helped them improve other skills, such as vocabulary and speaking. This study was important as it revealed the extent to which the TBL approach can be useful in learning writing. However, the students were not tested practically to confirm what they have achieved. The present research while assuming the effect of this approach was keen to test students to see whether the use of TBL can practically improve students' writing performance.

Hai-yan (2014) investigated the extent to which the use of TBL approach is useful in teaching big number classes in a university setting in China. The data collected for the study through a questionnaire that administered to 196 first year university students. After receiving training for one year using TBL approach, the analysis showed that the TBL approach can be used in classes with big number of students. The findings also revealed that the students become more aware of the importance of using their method on their writing process improvement. However, they were less aware of the teachers' roles. The students positively affirmed that using such an approach was effective and useful to their learning of English writing. Although the analysis approved the effect of TBL approach, the findings were based only on the students' responses in the questionnaire. No writing tests were conducted to investigate the effect empirically. This calls for further investigation that exposes students to real tests that measure the impact. This study closes this methodological gap by testing the effect of TBL approach by conducting a pretest and posttest after giving instructions using this approach. It also compared the use of this approach with another conventional approach to have clearer picture of TBL approach effect on students writing.

As explained earlier, TBL approach is one of the applications of cooperative learning. This approach is conducted into three stages, pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. In the first task, the students are required to plan before doing a written task, which is essential for this approach to succeed. Pre-task planning might affect the students' production in writing once it is guided by carefully selection of words or sequences. To investigate the effect of planning, Mohammadnia and Ayaz (2015) placed the students into two pressure planning situations, a guided group, who were provided with key words and expressions, and unguided one without being given any guiding words and expressions. The subjects were 30 male and female Turkish EFL students studying English language in an institute in Iran. The students were in the upper-intermediate level of language proficiency. They were asked to describe a process in a picture in writing depending on a sample process picture given to them. However, the guided group was provided with markers written or underlined in the sample picture while the unguided group was only given the sample picture without any markers. The statistical analysis showed that the planning guided pressured group outperformed the unguided pressured planning group indicating that planning given to students can positively affect EFL learners' writing production. Although the study provided important insights on the effect of planning the task before writing on writing production, the findings were built on the planning designed already by the teacher. In other words, it is still unknown whether the students are able to plan for themselves without relying on their teachers marking on the papers, which is in the core of task-based learning. Students in the task-based learning are supposed to plan their writing and come up with their own ideas following the training they have received from their teachers. They should be responsible for their writing and able to construct their knowledge by themselves. In the current study the students received training on planning and executing the writing task. They were then asked to use what they have learnt to construct their knowledge by producing writing.

Zhaochun (2015) applied Willis' (2003) approach of TBL to find out whether the use of this approach can improve the English writing of Chinese students and whether it is more effective than conventional teaching approaches. Fifty university Chinese students were recruited as a sample in the study. The students' mean scores in the language proficiency level were assumed by the researcher as the same after administering a language placement test to the students. The subjects were then assigned to two intact class groups, experimental and control. Three instruments were used in the study: pre-test, posttest, and an interview. The two groups were asked to answer two writing tests: pre-experiment test and post-experiment test. The statistical analysis showed that the use of TBL

approach which lasted for 16 weeks was effective as the students in the experimental group, who received training using this approach, were improved significantly in comparison to the students who received conventional teaching using the 3P's approach. The aspects of improvement included a general development in the students' role from being passive recipient to more active participants. This result was confirmed by the students' answers in the interview. The study was well done although the individual differences of the students were not considered in relation to their individual achievements. The reliance in the study was on the mean scores of the students. Moreover, the study had another limitation, as it did not consider the students gender, which might have affected the students' scores.

Although all of the above-mentioned researches had investigated different academic contexts in different educational contexts, none of these studies found in literature as far as the researcher is aware addressed the case of Saudi EFL students in any academic context. Therefore, this research was conducted in order to fill the gap by investigating the effect of using TBL approach on writing production of Saudi EFL students in Jouf university.

5- METHODOLOGY
5.1 Research Design
Since the main purpose of this research was to find out the effect of using two learning approaches namely; TBL and 3PS approaches on developing the Saudi EFL students' writing skills of argumentative essay, a quasi-experimental design was employed. According to Creswell (2002), this design enables the researchers to find the differences between groups (difference between the control and experimental) and within subjects' differences (differences in performance among the students of the same group: the control or experimental). In this research, this design helped the researcher to find out the effect of each approach on the students' writing performance in the control group (those who used 3Ps approach) as well as the students' writing performance in the experimental group (those who used TBL approach). This was achieved by finding the differences in the students' scores of each group in the pretest with their scores in the posttest. Moreover, this design helped the researcher to compare the effect of the two approaches on the two groups of students after receive training. This was made by comparing the students' writing mean scores in the experimental with the mean scores of the control group students.

The students in this research were categorized into two treatment groups; control and experimental. All subjects in the two groups were asked to write an essay before receiving any training as a pretest. This pretest was important as a point of reference of the current writing performance of the students in the two groups before receiving any training. The subjects in the two groups then received two types of training. The subjects in the control group received training using the conventional approach (3Ps) in which the students learnt how to present, practice, and produce their writing. The students in the experimental group, on the other hand, received writing training using Willis's (1996) TBL approach, which consists of a pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. At the end of the training period, which lasted for 6 weeks, the subjects in each group were asked to write a posttest.

The data collected from the pretests and posttests were calculated to answer the research questions. Therefore, in order to answer the first research question which targets the effect of each approach on the students' writing performance, the students' scores in the pretest and posttest of each group were compared. To answer the second research question which targets the differences in impact between the two approaches, the means of the scores obtained from each group were also compared. To answer the third question, which targets the aspect of improvement as a result of using TBL approach was analyzed qualitatively by providing instances from the students' writing in the pretest and posttest.

5.2 Sampling Method
Students were selected in a convenience sampling (i.e. selection based on the availability of students). Since the sampling method is convenience, the findings in this study are only generalizable to the subjects in the present study (Creswell 2011). The subjects of this research were divided into two groups where 25 students were in the control group, and 25 students were in the experimental group.

5.3 Data Collection Instrument
The data in the present study were collected quantitatively using three instruments: (1) a writing pretest before receiving training, (2) training for six weeks, and (3) writing posttest after receiving training. The following is a detailed account of these instruments.

5.3.1 Writing pretest
Prior to the training that was given to the students using the two approaches (TBL and 3Ps), the subjects in the two groups (control and experimental) were asked to write a 200-word argumentative essay on 'the advantages and disadvantages of eating fast food and home-made food . The selection of the topic was made

since it was argumentative and derived from the course book (Writing from within by Curtis Kelly and Arlen Gargagliano). The purpose of this instrument was to determine the students' writing performance before receiving any training on writing. The scored obtained from pretest were kept to be compared with the students' scores in the posttest after receiving training.

5.3.2 Training
After exposing students to the pretests, the subjects in the two groups, control and experimental had received training using the TBL approach and 3Ps for 6 weeks where they attended 8 writing lessons. The training sessions consisted of the following:

- o 1 session was specified to conduct the writing pretest.
- o 8 sessions were specified for giving students instruction on writing argumentative essays using the two approaches.
- o 1 session was specified to conduct the writing posttest.

5.3.3 Writing posttest
After receiving training using the two approaches (TBL and 3Ps) for 6 weeks, the students were asked to write a posttest on the same topic that was used in the pretest. The selection of the same topic was to ensure the validity of the experiment as the difficulty of the tasks remained the same (Creswell 2011), so comparable findings are reached. The purpose of the posttest test was to find out whether the adoption of Jane Willis' TBL framework in writing classes can improve the Saudi EFL students' writing competence or not. This was achieved by comparing the students' scores in the control group with their counterparts' scores in the experimental group prior and after training. The mean scores obtained from the posttest of each group of students were employed to answer the research questions.

5.4 Data Analysis
To analyses the data in this study, the following instruments were employed:

5.4.1 Marking analytical scale
The students' writing production in the pretest and posttest were analyzed by marking their writing production against a marking analytical scale (see appendix A). This instrument was adopted from Alderson, Clapham, and Wall (1995), who developed a marking scale of writing based on five writing features: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanism (punctuation and spelling). Each writing feature was given a score of 5 scores with a total score of 25 across the five features. Under the

content feature, the students were rated based on the relevance and adequacy of addressing the content. For the organization, the students were rated based on the evidence of using organization skills, such as using an adequate number of paragraphs and the clarity of the internal structure of ideas in the paragraphs. The vocabulary feature was assessed based on the relevance, appropriateness, and adequacy of the used vocabulary to the topic. The grammar feature was assessed based on the accuracy. For the mechanism, the students' use of punctuations and spelling mistakes were marked for accuracy.

5.4.2 Statistical Tests
After marking the students' writing production using the aforementioned criteria and to analyze the data obtained by means of the two writing tests (pretest and posttest), the students' scores in the control and experimental groups were keyed into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS V.22) to prepare for analysis. Two statistical tests were used, (1) SPSS Paired Sample T-Test and (2) SPSS Independent T-Test.

6- FINDINGS
6.1 Effect of Using TBL Approach on Students' Writing Performance (RQ1a)
The students' scores obtained from the pretest and posttest were compared using the paired T-Test. This test was used to find the differences in the performance of students of each group before and after receiving treatment. The focus of comparison was to find out whether students in the experimental group and control group had improved after training them using TBL. As shown in the descriptive statistics in Table 1, the mean score of the 25 students in the experimental group in the pretest (*M=15.6, SD = 1.435*) were much below their scores in the posttest (*M=23.16, SD =1.7*).

| Experimental Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretest Scores	15.68	25	1.435
Posttest Scores	23.16	25	1.700

Table 1. Effect of Using TBL Approach on Students' Writing Scores in Experimental Group

These findings are visually illustrated in Figure 1. As it can be seen, the students' scores have improved from 15.68 in the pretest to reach 23.16 in the posttest. The

difference in the mean scores between the two types of writing tests give initial impression that the training that students received influenced their writing performance.
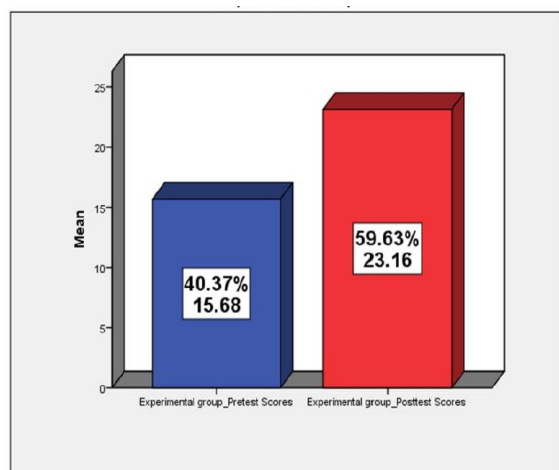
Figure 1. Differences in Writing Scores as a Result of Using TBL between the Pretest and Posttest in the Experimental Group

To determine whether the improvement in the student's scores as a result of using TBL approach during training in the experimental group was significant, a Paired Samples T-test was conducted using SPSS. As shown in the inferential statistics (see Table 2), t (24) = 19.963, p = .000, since the significant value was smaller than alpha, it can be affirmed that the training had a significant effect on the students' achievement in writing.

Experimental group	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest Scores - Posttest Scores	-7.480	-19.963	24	.000

Table 2. Significance of Effect of Using TBL Approach on Students' Writing Scores in Experimental Group

It can be noticed that the students who received training using TBL in the experimental group had improved significantly due to the treatment. This indicates that the use of TBL was effective in improving the Saudi EFL students' writing performance.

6.2 Effect of Using 3Ps Approach on Students' Writing Performance (RQ1b)

For the students' scores in the control group, the descriptive statistics (see Table 3) shows that the mean score of the 25 students in the control group in the pretest (*M = 18.33, SD = 3.088*) were a little bit higher than their scores in the posttest (*M = 18.37, SD = 2,151*). These findings are visually illustrated in Figure 2.

Control Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretest Scores	18.33	25	3.088
Posttest Scores	18.37	25	2.151

Table 3. Effect of Using 3Ps Approach on Students' Writing Scores in Control Group

As it can be seen, the students' scores have improved from 18.33 (49.95%) in the pretest to reach 18.37 (50.05%) in the posttest. The difference in the mean scores between the two types of writing tests give initial impression that the training the students received using conventional learning model (3Ps) had a very small effect on improving their writing performance. This difference is clearly not significant. However, and to make sure that the difference is not important, a further test was needed to find out whether the improvement was significant and could be counted for.
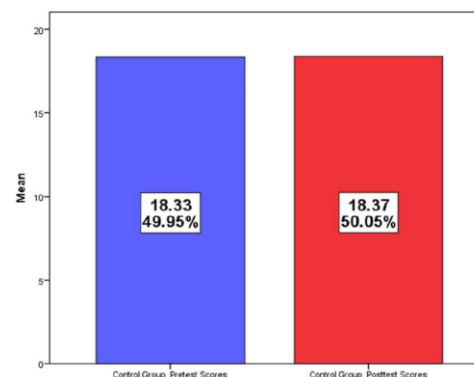
Figure 2. Differences in Writing Scores as a Result of Using 3Ps between the Pretest and Posttest in Control Group

To determine whether the improvement in the student's scores as a result of using 3Ps approach during training in the control group was significant, a Paired Samples T-test was conducted using SPSS. As shown in the inferential statistics (see Table 4), t (27) = -.093, p = .926, since the significant value was larger

than alpha, the null hypothesis is accepted. It can be confirmed that the treatment using 3Ps had no significant effect on the control group students' writing achievement.

Control group	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest Scores - Posttest Scores	-.037	-.093	26	.926

Table 4 Statistical significance of Effect of Using TBL Approach on Students' Writing Scores in Control Group

Although the students, who received training using the conventional model of learning, known as 3Ps in the control group, had improved a little bit, the difference in their scores between the pretest and posttest was not significantly important. This indicates that the effect of the 3Ps approach is very limited in comparison to the effect of using the TBL approach.

6.3 Difference between Using TBL Approach and 3ps Model in Improving Students' Writing Performance

The posttest scores obtained from the two groups of students were keyed into SPSS to be Compared in order to find the group differences as a result of training. Since the comparison is between two diverse groups of students, the Independent T-Test in SPSS was used to compare the students' posttest scores in the control and experimental. The test aimed at finding out which group had obtained more benefit of the approaches used in training whether being TBL in the experimental group or 3Ps in the control group.

As shown in the descriptive statistics in Table 5, the mean score of the 25 students in the control group in the posttest (*M=18.37, SD = 2.15*) were much lower than the scores obtained by the experimental group in the same test (*M=23.16, SD = 1.7*). This difference in the mean scores indicates that there is a difference in the improvement effect on behalf of the use of TBL as a learning approach.

Protest Scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Control Group	25	18.3704	2.15100
Experimental Group	25	23.1600	1.70000

Table 5. Difference between Using TBL Approach and 3Ps Model on Students' Writing Posttest Scores in Control and Experimental Groups

These findings are visually illustrated in Figure 3. As it can be seen, the students' scores in the control group 18.37 (44.23%) in the posttest are very much lower than the scores obtained by the students in the experimental group 23.16 (55.77%) in the same posttest. The difference in the mean scores between the two groups indicates that the training using the TBL approach was more effective in improving the students writing scores than the training using conventional learning model (3Ps).
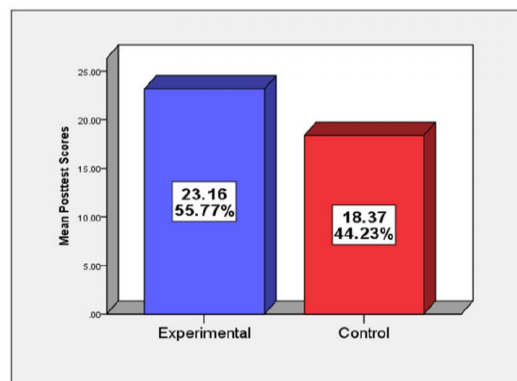
Figure 3. Differences between Using TBL Approach and 3Ps Model on Students' Writing Posttest Scores in Control and Experimental Groups

To determine whether the difference in effect between the two approaches was significant, an Independent samples test was conducted using SPSS. As shown in the inferential statistics (see Table 6), *t* (24) = -.-8.154, *p* = .000, since the significant value was larger than alpha, the null hypothesis was accepted. It can be confirmed that the training using TBL is significantly more effective than the training using 3Ps model in improving students' writing achievement.

Protest Scores	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control group- Experimental group	-4.720	-8.154	24	.000

Table 6. Statistical significance between Using TBL Approach and 3Ps Model on Students' Writing Posttest Scores in Control and Experimental Groups
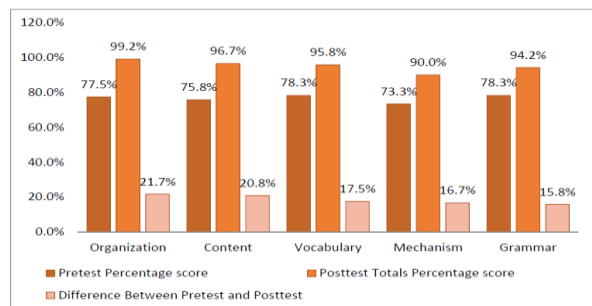
6.4 Aspects of Improvement Achieved by Using TBL Approach

A close inspection of the students writing based on the five-element criteria; organization, content, vocabulary, mechanism, and grammar was made. The distribution of each student's scores was weighted out of 5 points with a total of 25 points for the five elements (see Table 7). The total number of students in the experimental group was 25, so the total scores for all students in each criteria element were 125. The analysis of the students' scores showed that the

students in the experimental group scored 93/125 points under the element organization which was raised up to 119/120 after receiving training. Under the mechanism criteria, the scores increased from 88/120 to reach 108/120. In the vocabulary, the increase was from 94/120 to 115/120. The students' use of grammar rose from 95/120 to 113/120. In the last criteria, the content scores were 91/120 and rose to 116/120.

Weight	Organization 5	Mechanism 5	Vocabulary 5	Grammar 5	Content 5
Pretest totals/120	93	88	94	94	91
Protest totals/120	119	108	115	113	116

Table 7. Scores Distribution, Weight, and Increase in Students Writing Scores across 5-point criteria

Based on the discrete rating of the students answers in the pretest and posttest as obtained by the experimental group students (see Figure .4), it was found that the students generally improved across the five criteria; organization, content, vocabulary, mechanism, and grammar. However, the improvement was more in certain writing skills, such as organization, vocabulary, and content. The other aspects of grammar, the mechanism and grammar were not developed noticeably. The following are the aspects of improvement.

students' writing classrooms can yield significant improvement to their writing competence, which involves improvement on several writing sub-skills, especially the organization and content.

Figure 4. Aspects of Improvement in the Experimental Group

7- CONCLUSION

The subjects' writing performance in the experimental class was improved noticeably after 6 weeks of using the TBL approach. This method of learning has affected them greatly as they improved in the five aspects of English writing; organization, content, mechanism, vocabulary, and grammar with the organization and content the most improved areas. This improvement did not occur in the control class who used the conventional 3Ps model over the same period of training. This indicates that the use of TBL in writing was successful in elevating Saudi EFL students' competence of writing. It can be concluded that the application of TBL Approach to Saudi EFL

REFERENCES

Al Fadda, H. 2012. Difficulties in academic writing: From the perspective of King Saud University postgraduate students. *English Language Teaching, 5*(3): 123.

Alavi, S. M. & Tabar, N. A. 2012. The effect of task type and pre-task planning condition on the accuracy of intermediate EFL learners' writing performance. *The Journal of Applied Linguistics, 5 (1), 36, 60*.

Alderson, J. C., Clapham, C. & Wall, D. 1995. *Language test construction and evaluation.* Ernst Klett Sprachen. Assalahi, H. M. 2013. Why Is the Grammar-translation Method Still Alive in the Arab World? Teachers. Beliefs and Its implications for EFL Teacher Education. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(4): 589.

Bantis, A. M. 2008. *Using Task Based writing instruction to provide differentiated instruction to english language learners.* ProQuest. Birjandi, P. & Tabatabaei, O.

2010. Examining the Impact of Gender on Task-Based Conversational Interactions Among EFL Learners: The Case of Recasts. *JSR, 1*(26): 35-64.

Cao, L. 2012. A feasibility study of task-based teaching of college English writing in Chinese EFL context. *English Language Teaching, 5*(10): 80.

Clark, J., Scarino, A. & Brownell, J. 1994. Improving the quality of learning. *A Framework for TOC Renewal in Hong Kong*.

Creswell, J. W. 2011. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.* (4 ed.). Boston, USA: Pearson Education.

Ellis, R. 2003. *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford University Press Oxford. Fallahrafie, Z., Rahmany, R. & Sadeghi, B. 2015. The Effect of Task-based Teaching on Incidental Vocabulary Learning in English for Specific Purposes. *Cumhuriyet Science Journal, 36*(3): 836-846.

Gilakjani, A. P. & Ahmadi, M. R. 2011. A study of factors affecting EFL learners' English listening comprehension and the strategies for improvement. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 2*(5): 977-988.

Hai-yan, M. 2014. The task-based teaching of writing to big classes in Chinese EFL setting. *English Language Teaching, 7*(3): 63.

Hamouda, A. (2016). The impact of Task-Based Instruction on developing Saudi university EFL students' English-speaking skills. Retrieved from http://search.shamaa.org/PDF/Articles/E GJfeau/JfeauVol32No2Y2016/jfeau_201 6-v32-n2_002-080_eng.pdf

Han, M. 2014. The Effects of Task-Based Teaching Approach on College Writing Classes. *Studies in Literature and Language, 9*(3): 182.

Harden, R. 2001. AMEE Guide No. 21: Curriculum mapping: a tool for transparent and authentic teaching and learning. *Medical teacher, 23*(2): 123-137.

Hasan, A. A. A. 2014. The effect of using task-based learning in Teaching English on the oral performance of the secondary school students. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education, 3*(2): 250-264.

Hung, N. V. 2014. Review of Notion and Framework of Task-Based Language Teaching. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistic Research, 2*(1): 39-48.

Javanbakht, Z. O. & Yasuj, I. 2011. The impact of tasks on male Iranian elementary EFL learners' incidental vocabulary learning. *Language Education in Asia, 2*(1): 28-42.

Keshta, A. S. & Harb, I. I. 2013. The effectiveness of a blended learning program on developing Palestinian tenth graders' English writing skills. *Education Journal, 2*(6): 208-221.

Long, M. H. & Crookes, G. 1992. Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *Tesol Quarterly, 26*(1): 27-56.

Mohammadnia, Z. & Ayaz, P. 2015. The Effects of Guided vs. Unguided Pressured Planning on EFL Learners' Writing Fluency. *English Language Teaching, 8*(3): 169.

Mourtaga, K. 2004. *Investigating Writing Problems Among Palestinian Students.* Author House.

Moussaoui, S. 2012. An Investigation of the Effects of Peer Evaluation in Enhancing Algerian Student's Writing Autonomy and Positive Affect. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 69*(0): 1775-1784.

Nunan, D. 2005. An introduction to Task-Based Language Teaching (Nunan, 2004). *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly June 2005 Volume 7, Issue 1., 7*(1): 25-28.

Nunan, D. 2006. Task-based language teaching in the Asia context: Defining'task'. *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3).

Olsen, R. & Kagan, S. 1992. About cooperative learning. *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book*: 1-30.

Pearson PTR. Yeganeh, M. T. & Ghoreyshi, S. M. 2015. Exploring Gender Differences in the use of Discourse Markers in Iranian Academic Research Articles. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 192*: 684-689.

Qing, Z., Ni, S. & Hong, T. 2010. Developing critical thinking disposition by task-based learning in chemistry experiment teaching. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2): 4561-4570.

Ridha, N. 2012. The effect of EFL learners' mother tongue on their writings in English: An error analysis study. *Journal of the College of Arts, University of Basrah, 60*: 22-45.

Shafaei, A., Salimi, A. & Talebi, Z. 2013. The impact of gender and strategic pre-task planning time on EFL learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 4*(4): 746-753.

Skehan, P. 1998. *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford University Press. Swales, J.

Thanh, L. & Huan, N. 2012. Task-based language learning and student motivation in vocabulary acquisition. *Language Education in Asia, 3*(1): 106-120.

Tomlinson, B. 2011. *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Urmia, I. 2012. The Impact of Computer Assisted Language Learning on Iranian EFL Learners' Task-Based Listening Skill and Motivation. *Journal of academic and applied studies, 2*(1): 39-61.

Willis, J. 1996. *A framework for task-based learning.*

Zhaochun, S. 2015. A Tentative Study on the Task-Based Teaching of Writing to English Majors in Chinese Settings. *English Language Teaching, 8*(3): 71.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: writing analytical scale
Adopted from (Alderson et al. (1995: 109-110))

Score	Criteria
	Relevance and Adequacy of Content
0	The answer bears almost no relation to the task set / Totally inadequate answer
1	Answer of limited relevance to the task set / Possibly major gaps in treatment of topic and/or pointless repetition
3	For the most part answers the task set, though there may be some gaps or redundant information.
5	Relevant and adequate answer to the task set.
	Organization
0	No apparent organization of content
1	Very little organization of content / Underlying structures not sufficiently apparent
3	Some-organizational skills in evidence but not adequately controlled
5	Overall shape and internal pattern clear / Organizational skills adequately controlled
	Vocabulary
0	Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication
1	Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task / Perhaps frequent lexical in appropriacies and/or repetitions
3	Some inadequacies in vocabulary for the task / Perhaps some lexical in appropriacies. and/or circumlocution.
5	Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for the task / Only rare in appropriacies .and/or circumlocution
	Grammar
0	Almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate
1	Frequent grammatical inaccuracies
3	Some grammatical inaccuracies
5	Almost no grammatical inaccuracies
	Mechanism (Punctuation/spelling)
0	Ignorance of conventions of punctuation / Almost all spelling inaccurate
1	Low standard of accuracy of punctuation / Low standard of accuracy in spelling
3	Some inaccuracies of punctuation / Some inaccuracies in spelling
5	Almost no inaccuracies of punctuation /Almost no inaccuracies in spelling
/25	Total