Enhancing Primary Narrative Skills: A Systematic Review of Process Writing Integrating Plot Diagrams

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Abstract
This review systematically analyses past studies on the efficacy of the Process Writing Approach (PWA) and plot diagrams in enhancing narrative writing skills among ESL learners. ESL learners often struggle with structuring their narratives, organising story elements coherently, and maintaining consistency, leading to difficulties in producing well-organised and engaging essays. By employing the PRISMA framework, 1700 records were found and evaluated through a multi-phase process: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. As a result, 10 research studies were identified based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, which were later put under a comprehensive analysis. The results underscore a significant positive impact of using PWA on improving writing abilities, particularly in terms of organisation, coherence, and language utilisation, facilitated by its systematic stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Additionally, plot diagrams assist learners in visualising and organising their narratives, hence enhancing their abilities to effectively map story components. Although both approaches exhibit particular advantages, further research is required to investigate the integration of digital technology with PWA and its relevance across diverse writing genres. This review highlights the potential of PWA and plot diagrams to revolutionise ESL narrative writing instruction and advocates for their implementation by educators to improve overall writing outcomes. Furthermore, this study suggests that a combination of these methods can foster creativity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy in ESL classrooms. Subsequent research should examine the long-term effects and adaptations across different educational contexts and explore ways to tailor these approaches to meet individual learner needs.
Keywords: Process Writing Approach, Plot Diagrams, Narrative Writing, ESL Learners, Education

Introduction
The 21st-century presents unforeseen challenges that demand new forms of overcoming them that the World Economic Forum (2020) named skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, and collaboration, as crucial to manage 21st-century

learning. Acquiring these skills can easily be translated into learners' writing that its proficiency becomes essential since it improves communication clarity, concept expression, and critical thinking, all vital for success in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (Mawas & Muntean, 2018). The Education 4.0 framework, in accordance with the requirements of 4IR, promotes learner-centric approaches, including project-based learning (PBL), which enhance collaboration, critical thinking, and written communication abilities (Yang & Cheng, 2023). Evaluating language proficiency involves writing skill, which is considered the most advanced skill among the four language skills. Writing has a vital role in achieving academic success, enhancing intellectual growth, and facilitating efficient communication. As a result, it is highly esteemed in examinations, employment opportunities, career progression, and social services (Gautam, 2019).

English Language Teaching (ELT) is crucial in Malaysia due to its significant role in enabling global communication and promoting professional development. The language is a compulsory subject from primary education to university. The Malaysian government observes the opportunities that English provides economic and professional advancement, especially with ASEAN integration and worldwide participation. As such, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 underscores the necessity of improving English language proficiency, particularly in writing, since proficient writing is crucial for academic and professional achievement. In light of these aims, comprehending how methodologies, such as the PWA and plot diagrams can improve writing outcomes, is pertinent in the Malaysian setting, where writing competency continues to be a significant emphasis (MoE, 2017). ESL learners in Malaysia encounter difficulties in writing, such as generating, structuring, and differentiating across writing genres, impeding their progress in academics and professional pursuits (Baharudin et al., 2023) Learners' lexical inadequacy, their inability to arrange syntax correctly while writing grammatically correct sentences can be clearly seen in their writing (Saravanan et al., 2021; Hartshorn et al., 2023). Difficulties in writing, restricted vocabulary, and problems with sentence structure lead to unclear messages, making effective communication difficult (Fareed et al., 2016; Roever & Al-Gahtani, 2015). Additionally, a lack of comprehension of English writing standards further complicates the task of arranging thoughts in a logical manner (Ghulamuddin et al., 2022; Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021; Qasem, 2020). Furthermore, distinguishing between narrative and generic writing styles presents challenges, resulting in incorrect writing styles (Fareed et al., 2016; Awang et al., 2021). The understanding of English writing subtleties is additionally impeded by cultural and linguistic hurdles (Yoon & Polio, 2017; Falihah et al., 2020), which in turn affect lucidity and learners' confidence (Baharudin et al., 2023; Matiso, 2023).

This study addresses the ongoing challenges encountered by ESL learners in producing coherent and well-structured narratives, as noted in Malaysian classrooms and globally. Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing learners' academic and professional outcomes. This review systematically analyzes the dual impact of PWA and plot diagrams, providing teachers with a comprehensive understanding of their efficacy and potential integration into writing instruction.

Prior studies indicate that primary ESL learners in Malaysia face numerous difficulties in narrative writing, especially stemming from restricted exposure to language structures and interference from their first language (Jaafar Siddek & Ismail, 2021). These challenges can

impede the capacity to create cohesive and organised narratives. In light of these challenges, it has been proposed that instructional strategies like guided writing and visual aids can effectively assist these learners (Joseph, Ismail, & Yunus, 2021). Guided writing offers a framework that helps individuals cultivate their thoughts step by step, while visual tools, like images, enhance the process of generating ideas and organising narratives effectively. This is essential in the Malaysian context, where individuals frequently face challenges in producing cohesive and well-structured narratives.

Current research emphasises the changing approaches used to teach English writing in Malaysia. Ahmed and Bidin (2016), for instance, showed the efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing writing proficiency. Similarly, Hassan, Rahman, and Azmi (2021) revealed that the integration of digital platforms in blended learning resulted in improved writing skills among ESL learners. Li et al. (2018) reiterated this, emphasising the significance of digital technology in teaching ESL writing for effective communication in the global digital context. There are other directions taken at improving writing, such as using project-based and PWA for English for Academic Purposes (EAP), that was noted to have enhanced critical writing abilities (Abdullah et al., 2022). Another direction taken to enhance writing skills is by using plot diagrams (Rahmawati etal., 2018). In fact, some studies have considered combining both plot diagrams and PWA to effectively tackle writing problems. It was observed that the combined approaches were able to help learners improve their writing skills, organise thoughts and reduce writing anxiety (Bayat, 2014). Visual representations of story structures, such as plot diagrams, helps comprehension and builds towards constructing cohesive narratives, hence improving narrative understanding (David & Aziz, 2020; Che Awang et al., 2021). PWA comprises five crucial stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. During the prewriting phase, learners generate ideas, collect information, and organise the structure of their writing, facilitating the transition from a blank page to a clear outline of their work. The writing phase entails converting these ideas into written format, allowing learners to concentrate on conveying their thoughts without excessive concern for precision. Revising enables learners to refine their content through the reorganisation of ideas, improving coherence, and enhancing clarity. In the editing phase, learners concentrate on correcting grammatical inaccuracies, assuring linguistic accuracy, and enhancing mechanical aspects such as spelling and punctuation. The proofreading phase entails examining the final drafts for any residual flaws before submission (Gezmiş, 2020). These stages work together to enhance writing skills, foster originality, and encourage critical thinking (Tjalla, 2016; Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

This literature review systematically analyses research on the use of PWA and plot diagrams to improve the narrative writing skills of ESL learners. This technique, which has not been thoroughly examined in ESL environments, provides new perspectives on effective strategies for teaching ESL. The review focuses on two primary questions: (1) What are the effects of the PWA on learners' proficiency in composing narratives?, and (2) How do plot diagrams assist learners in effectively organising their ideas in a logical manner?

Methodology
The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guideline (2020) is a well-established and systematic guideline aimed at enhancing clarity and rigour in the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. This approach offers a set of

designated guidelines and a checklist that assist researchers in ensuring uniformity, transparency, and thoroughness throughout all stages of the review (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). Adhering to the PRISMA guideline enables researchers to guarantee that their methodologies and findings are comprehensible and can be assessed for validity and reliability. The framework encompasses several essential stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, Inclusion, and Reporting, each facilitating a systematic and transparent review process.

Identification

In order to locate prospective publications for review, we utilised the Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) databases. Boolean operators were combined with a comprehensive set of keywords to refine the search results. This extensive search approach was designed to encompass all pertinent research by utilising a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to guarantee a comprehensive and inclusive search. A detailed list of the keywords used is provided in Table 1.

Screening

We conducted a screening on the identified papers by evaluating the titles and abstracts to ascertain their relevance to the research questions. The inclusion criteria is made up of 3 aspects: (a) **The Samples:** Past studies that specifically addressed ESL learners, (b) **Year of Publication:** These studies must be published within the timeframe of 2017 to 2024 to guarantee the inclusion of the most recent research findings and trends in narrative writing instruction, and (c) **Language:** These studies were restricted to those published in English to maintain linguistic consistency and to enable precise interpretation and comparison of the findings. Excluded studies were determined based on 3 aspects: (a) **The Samples:** Any research study that targeted learners who were not studying English as an ESL, (b) **Year of Publication**: Papers that were published prior to 2017, or (c) **Language of Publication**: Those that were not written in English. A detailed overview of the search strategy and the inclusion/exclusion criteria is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Search Strategy and Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Section	Details

Search strategy	1) Database search: Google Scholar, ERIC
	2) Keywords used (combined using Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT):
	   a) PWA
	   b) plot diagram
	   c) narrative writing
	   d) ESL learners

Inclusion Criteria	1. Focus on ESL learners 2. Published between 2017 - 2024 3. English papers
Exclusion Criteria	1. Focus on non-ESL learners 2. Published before 2017 3. Non English papers
Study Selection Process	1. Screened based on titles and abstracts 2. Assessed for eligibility

Data Extraction	1. Data extracted:
	   a. study design
	   b. sample size
	   c. intervention details
	   d. outcomes
	   e. key findings

Data Synthesis	1. Narrative synthesis 2. Thematic analysis
Limitations	1. Restricted to English language publications 2. Varied quality of the included studies

Eligibility
We thoroughly examined the full texts of studies that met the initial screening criteria to verify their suitability according to the predetermined criteria for inclusion and exclusion. The eligibility assessment entailed a meticulous examination of each study to verify that it satisfied the criteria for inclusion.

Inclusion
The selected research data were gathered using a standardised form. The collected data included details about the study's design, sample size, specifics of the intervention, outcomes, and key findings. The quality of the methodology and potential bias in the studies included were assessed through established quality evaluation techniques. The variation in study designs and outcomes made it impossible to conduct a meta-analysis. We opted for a narrative synthesis and thematic analysis to effectively summarise the findings and emphasise the recurring themes. The progression of information across the various stages of the review is presented in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

Reporting
To guarantee a comprehensive and meticulous account of the systematic review process and findings, we followed the PRISMA guidelines, utilising the PRISMA flow diagram illustrated in Figure 1 and adhering to the PRISMA checklist as a guide for systematic reporting. The PRISMA flow diagram provides a clear visual representation of the progression of studies through essential phases, such as identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The application of these tools guaranteed thorough inclusion of all critical components, such as the title, abstract, methodology, results, and discussion, thus improving transparency and clarity throughout the review process.

Data Extraction and Synthesis
Given the differences in study designs and outcomes, we performed a narrative synthesis to sum up the research findings. Thematic analysis was conducted in accordance with the six-step approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). An inductive thematic analysis was used, where themes were derived directly from the data without imposing pre-existing codes or theoretical frameworks. The process involved an in-depth understanding of the data, the generation of initial codes, the identification of themes, the evaluation of those themes, precisely defining and naming of themes and the compilation of the final report. A semantic approach was utilised, concentrating on the explicit content of the studies to identify recurring themes pertinent to narrative writing and ESL instruction. This organised thematic analysis enabled a thorough comprehension of key concepts and common elements identified in the research.

Limitations
This review had several limitations, such as the restriction to English-language publications, which might have excluded pertinent studies published in other languages. Moreover, the diverse quality of the included studies could potentially affect the dependability of the obtained findings. Although there are certain limitations, this review attempted to provide a comprehensive and thorough examination of the literature on using plot diagrams and the PWA to enhance the narrative writing skills of ESL learners.

Literature Review Findings and Discussion
The research consistently highlights the effectiveness of two essential methodologies: PWA and plot diagrams in improving narrative writing skills among ESL learners. PWA offers a well-organised framework that guides learners through various stages, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, greatly enhancing their writing skills by fostering coherence and organisation. Simultaneously, plot diagrams act as visual aids that assist individuals in outlining the framework of their narratives, allowing for a logical organisation of ideas and the creation of clearer, more cohesive stories. The combination of these methodologies enhances the writing process, as PWA provides a structured method for crafting narratives, while plot diagrams facilitate the visualisation and organisation of story components, leading to better writing results.
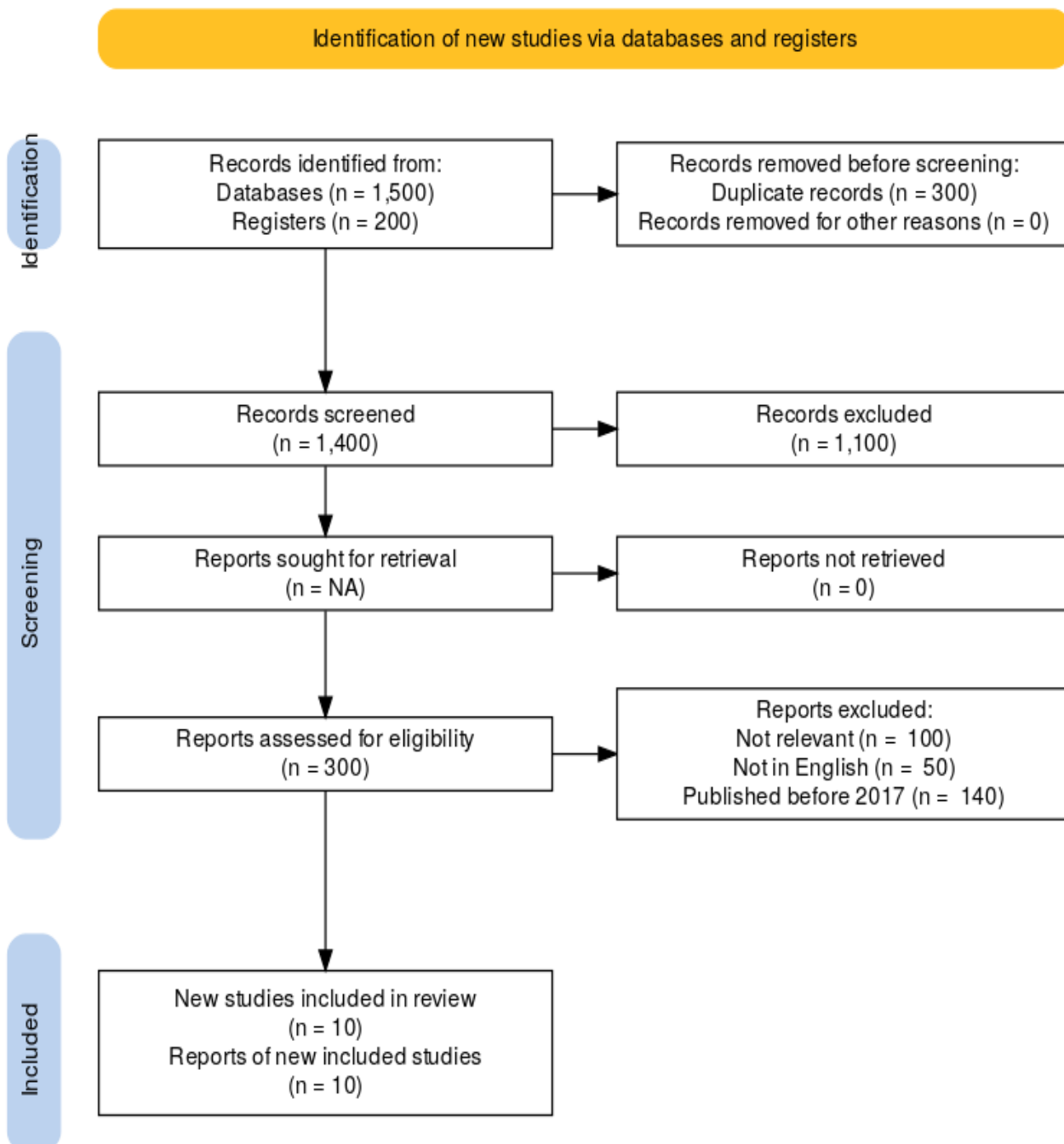
Figure 1 : PRISMA Flow Diagram

The Effects of PWA on Learners' Proficiency in Composing Narrative Essays

The literature consistently demonstrates that the PWA is beneficial in improving narrative writing skills among ESL learners at different stages of education. These techniques have demonstrated significant enhancements in learners' writing abilities, as supported by numerous research. Nevertheless, it is crucial to critically assess these studies in order to comprehend their contributions to the existing knowledge and identify any gaps in research.

Regarding theoretical contributions and gaps, the PWA has been evaluated in several educational situations, highlighting its strong effectiveness in enhancing writing skill. Maolida

and Azhar (2019) emphasised the significance of grasping narrative text structures, whereas Sarmiento and Cruz (2021) concentrated on organisational skills and coherence. These studies enhance the theoretical basis of PWA by showcasing its practicality in several settings. Nevertheless, there is a requirement for additional research investigating the theoretical foundations of PWA in other cultural contexts and its long-term impact on writing proficiency.

Regarding methodological strengths and limitations, the studies utilise different methodologies. Qualitative approaches (Lara, 2018; Maolida & Azhar, 2019) provide detailed insights into the implementation and challenges of the PWA. On the other hand, quantitative approaches (Sarmiento & Cruz, 2021; Andriani et al., 2022) offer measurable outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the PWA. Although these various methodologies offer a thorough understanding, future studies could gain advantages by employing mixed-methods approaches to encompass both qualitative insights and quantitative data, thus providing a more comprehensive perspective on the impact of using PWA.

In terms of sampling and selection, the majority of the research examined had a very small sample size or focused on certain educational levels, such as senior high school learners (Sarmiento & Cruz, 2021) or fourth-grade learners (Lara, 2018). Subsequent investigations should strive to use more extensive and varied samples in order to augment the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal studies to monitor the advancement of learners over an extended period of time could offer useful insights regarding the lasting impacts of using PWA.

In terms of the instruments employed, the studies employed a range of tools to assess writing proficiency, including observational and interview methods (Maolida & Azhar, 2019) as well as pre- and post-tests (Sarmiento & Cruz, 2021). Implementing a standardised set of instruments in all investigations could enhance the ability to compare and combine results effectively. Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies and analytics could provide more accurate and unbiased assessments of enhancements in writing.

Although the usefulness of PWA has been shown, there are still significant study gaps and areas for future exploration. There is a scarcity of study on the incorporation of PWA with other educational methods and technology. Examining the potential synergy between digital tools and PWA, as proposed by Caro and Parra (2018), could present novel opportunities for improving writing education. Furthermore, exploring the influence of PWA on various writing genres beyond narrative could offer a deeper understanding of its suitability.

Future research should concentrate on modifying PWA for various learning environments and examining its effects on distinct writing styles and proficiency levels. Longitudinal studies may offer valuable insights into the lasting nature of these enhancements over time, whereas cross-cultural studies could broaden its relevance across various educational contexts.

The Role of Plot Diagrams in Assisting Learners to Organise Ideas Logically
The implementation of plot diagrams and other structural tools in narrative writing has demonstrated considerable potential in improving the coherence and organisation of ideas among learners. This debate consolidates the results of five investigations, offering valuable

insights into the effectiveness of different plot diagram methodologies and their adaptations in research. Plot diagrams have proven to be useful tools for assisting learners in visualising and organising their narratives. This has contributed to the theoretical knowledge of how visual aids might enhance writing instruction. Blended learning environments, combining online and offline instruction, have been found to offer ESL learners flexibility and the opportunity to employ various learning strategies, including cognitive and metacognitive approaches (Wei, Sulaiman, & Ismail, 2024). Such environments can be advantageous in developing learners' narrative writing skills, as they support autonomous learning and provide opportunities for real-time feedback. Varotsis (2018) and Kim et al. (2018) showcased the utility of algorithms and visualisations in facilitating narrative construction. However, there is a requirement for further theoretical investigation into the ways in which diverse forms of visual aids can enhance distinct phases of the writing process and how these aids influence learners' cognitive processes.

In terms of methodological strengths and limitations, the studies analysed utilised a wide range of methodological techniques, including qualitative action research (Lara, 2018) and experimental designs (Putri & Fitrawati, 2020). Although these approaches offer useful insights, conducting longitudinal and cross-sectional studies in future research would be advantageous in order to comprehend the long-term and comparative impacts of utilising plot diagrams. Furthermore, conducting experimental research that includes control groups could provide more reliable evidence regarding the efficacy of these methods.

Studies on plot diagrams, similar to PWA studies, frequently focused on particular educational levels or utilised limited sample sizes, taking into account sampling and selection. By incorporating diverse and larger samples from various educational environments, the research can improve the generalizability of its findings. Conducting research that includes various age groups and competency levels would also be advantageous.

The investigations included a range of instruments, including narrative mapping methodologies (Nuraini et al., 2022) and visualisation tools (Kim et al., 2018). Future research should focus on creating and establishing evaluation instruments that effectively gauge the influence of plot diagrams on the coherence and organisation of writing. Additionally, digital analytics techniques can be utilised to offer more intricate feedback on the writing processes of learners. Further studies are required to explore the integration of plot diagrams with other educational methodologies and technology. An investigation into the synergistic impact of plot diagrams and digital storytelling tools could yield profound insights for improving narrative composition. Furthermore, it is imperative for study to explore the potential adaptations of these tools for other literary genres and contexts.

Future research should explore the integration of plot diagrams with various visual aids and technological tools, including digital storytelling platforms, to enhance narrative writing even further. Furthermore, research should investigate how plot diagrams influence various writing styles beyond just narrative, including descriptive and persuasive essays, to evaluate their wider relevance. It is essential to explore the application of plot diagrams among learners with different skill levels and in various educational settings to assess their flexibility and impact. Additionally, longitudinal studies may offer valuable insights into the

enduring advantages of incorporating plot diagrams in writing instruction, especially regarding lasting enhancements in coherence, organisation, and overall writing skills.

Conclusion

This literature review systematically analysed previous studies on the efficacy of the PWA and the use of plot diagrams in improving narrative writing abilities among ESL learners. The review sought to comprehend the effects of the PWA on learners' narrative writing skills and the role of plot diagrams in enhancing the expansion and organisation of ideas in a cohesive manner.

The results consistently show that the PWA greatly improves several parts of learners' narrative writing skills. Research has shown significant enhancements in the writing skills of learners, namely in terms of their ability to organise their thoughts, maintain logical connections, and use language appropriately. The PWA's methodical and repetitive procedures of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing cultivate a more profound comprehension of narrative structures and enhance the overall calibre of writing. Moreover, the significant importance of cognitive elements, such as proficiency in spelling and the capacity to focus on specific tasks, further strengthens the overall advantages of the PWA.

Furthermore, the incorporation of plot diagrams has been discovered to greatly assist in the expansion and organisation of thoughts in a meaningful manner. Plot-algorithms and Story Curves are tools that aid in the representation and organisation of intricate narratives, allowing learners to distinguish between story parts and their interconnections. The utilisation of visual tools such as the Story Pyramid Strategy and the Plot Skeleton tool enhances the organisation of story materials, hence resulting in enhanced writing skills. The implementation of the Story Mapping Technique improves learners ability to arrange and articulate their thoughts, leading to enhanced narrative coherence and structure.

This review has demonstrated that the integration of PWA and plot diagrams offers a comprehensive method for instructing narrative writing by addressing the research issues. The PWA improves learners' writing skills by implementing a systematic approach that encourages ongoing progress and the development of cognitive capacities. Simultaneously, plot diagrams provide visual aids that assist learners in arranging their thoughts and organising their narratives with greater efficiency. Collectively, these techniques enhance both the proficiency in crafting narratives and the level of involvement, self-assurance, and motivation of learners.

This review's findings contribute notably to ESL education by illustrating the effectiveness of integrating PWA and plot diagrams in narrative writing instruction. This study provides practical strategies to enhance creativity, critical thinking and autonomy in writing, specifically targeting the unique challenges encountered by ESL learners. These insights can assist educators and policymakers in formulating targeted interventions and curricula aimed at enhancing writing outcomes and boosting learners' confidence.

Educators are advised to embrace these integrated methods to promote improved writing results in ESL students, guaranteeing that both the imaginative and organisational components of writing are attended to. The implementation of this comprehensive approach

has the capacity to revolutionise the teaching of narrative writing in ESL, resulting in substantial enhancements in learners' writing abilities, confidence, and academic achievements.

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