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The Effect of The O-Rama Strategy on developing EFL Iraqi Pupils' Writing skill

Hamsa Abd Alhader Turki*

Tikrit University/ College of Education for Women

hamsa.turki23@gmail.com

&

Prof. Madeha Saif Aldeen Saleh (Ph.D.)

Tikrit University/ College of Education for Women

dr.al-sumaidai@tu.edu.iq

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Abstract

The research aims to identify the effect of the O-Rama strategy on the writing skills of Iraqi EFL pupils. The hypothesis posits that there is a statistically significant improvement between the mean scores of the experimental group, which is taught through the O-Rama strategy, and the mean scores of the control group, which is instructed using conventional methods. To achieve the study's objectives and validate the hypothesis, a non-randomized experimental group pretest-posttest design has been selected. The students will receive instruction during the academic year 2024-2025. A sample consists of 50 pupils in the fifth stage at AL Rayan Preparatory School for Girls, distributed into two groups. Group A represents the experimental group that includes (25) pupils who are taught according to the O-Rama strategy. Group(B) represents the control

* **Corresponding Author:** Hamsa Abd Alhader Turki , Email: hamsa.turki23@gmail.com

Affiliation: Tikrit University - Iraq

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group, which also includes (25) pupils who are taught according to the traditional method. Both groups have been equalized in such variables from educational level of parent. According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group, who is taught the O-Rama strategy, and the control group, who is taught by using the conventional method in the posttest. This suggests that the O-Rama strategy is more effective than the conventional strategy. The study concludes with some findings.

Keywords: EFL, English Language, the O-Rama, writing

أثر استراتيجية أو-راما في تنمية مهارة الكتابة لدى تلاميذ اللغة الانجليزية العراقيين

همسه عبد الحاضر تركي فارس

كلية التربية للبنات / جامعة تكريت

و

ا.د. مديحه سيف الدين صالح

كلية التربية للبنات / جامعة تكريت

المستخلص

يهدف البحث إلى التعرف على تأثير استراتيجية "أو-راما" على مهارات الكتابة لدى تلاميذ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق. وتفترض الدراسة وجود فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات المجموعة التجريبية التي تدرس استراتيجية "أو-راما" ومتوسط درجات المجموعة الضابطة التي تدرس بالطريقة التقليدية. ولتحقيق الأهداف والتحقق من الفرضيات أعلاه تم اختيار تصميم الاختبار القبلي والاختبار البعدي للمجموعة التجريبية غير العشوائية. وقد تم تدريس الطلاب خلال العام الدراسي 2024-2025. وتكونت عينة البحث من (50) تلميذة من تلميذات المرحلة الخامسة في مدرسة الريان الإعدادية للبنات، موزعات على مجموعتين. تمثل المجموعة (أ) المجموعة التجريبية التي تضم (25) تلميذة يتم تدريسهم وفقاً لاستراتيجية "أو-راما". بينما تمثل المجموعة (ب) المجموعة الضابطة، التي تضم أيضاً (25) تلميذة يتم تدريسهم وفق الطريقة التقليدية. وقد تعادلت المجموعتان في متغيرات المستوى التعليمي لولي الأمر. وفي ضوء النتائج أوضحت وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات المجموعة التجريبية التي تدرس

على وفق استراتيجية "أو-راما" والمجموعة الضابطة التي تدرس باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية في الاختبار البعدي. وهذا يشير إلى أن استراتيجية "أو-راما" أكثر فعالية من الاستراتيجية التقليدية. وبعدها انتهت هذه الدراسة إلى بعض الاستنتاجات .

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، اللغة الإنجليزية، أو-راما، الكتابة

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most common educational problems that pupils' face is learning to write ,The O-Rama strategy is an effective way that can contribute to improving the writing skills of Iraqi pupils. By strengthening vocabulary and understanding sentence structure, this strategy helps pupils deal with complex texts more effectively (Blackburn,2013). The O-Rama strategy serves as an effective guide for various teaching purposes. It encourages pupils to consider their audience, purpose, topic, and choice of text type when planning their writing (Hartanti, 2011). The research aims to find out the effect of the O-Rama Strategy on developing EFL pupils' writing skills. To achieve the hypothesis, a study is conducted to verify the aim of the research: whether there is a statistically significant improvement between the experimental group and the control group scores in the overall quality of writing skills among EFL Iraqi pupils. The research is limited to the five-year preparatory school pupils at Al-Rayan School in the city of Samarra, who are studying the "English for Iraq" textbook, the activity book, and the student book, specifically units one, two, and three, during the academic year 2024-2025. The pupils of the two experimental groups had to sit for a pre-test and a post-test composed of two written tests before and after the strategy training. The results of the pre-tests and post-tests of these groups are compared to the control group's results to assess the effect of the training on the O-Rama strategy in writing for our pupils.

This study aims to find out the effect of the O-Rama Strategy on developing EFL pupils' writing skills.

This study hypothesis there is a statistically significant improvement between the experimental group and the control group scores in the overall quality of writing skills among EFL Iraqi pupils.

2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. O-Rama strategy

Cunningham and Shablak (1975) define the O-Rama strategy to help pupils selectively write and analyze text. O-Rama strategy acts as a roadmap, guiding pupils through a text in a thoughtful manner. It ensures that pupils navigate the text using

illustrations, explanations, and graphic organizers that help them identify concepts and connections within the text. The O-Rama strategy focuses on guiding pupils through the process of writing, organizing, and ordering vocabulary to communicate a clear idea within the text, which is often difficult for pupils to master.

Blackburn (2013) is an educator and author, introduced the notion of "O-Rama" as an innovative educational strategy to help pupils improve their writing skills. Blackburn refers to the O-Rama as a dynamic instructional strategy aimed at developing writing skills among pupils. The O-Rama strategy focuses on the importance of organization, relevance, mastery, and assessment in the writing process. By breaking down the complexities of writing into manageable components, this strategy directs educators to scaffold writing instruction effectively, allowing pupils to see the interconnectedness of various writing elements. Furthermore, the O-Rama strategy encourages and enhances pupils' confidence in their writing abilities and motivates them to engage.

O-Rama strategy is fundamentally based on metacognitive theory and scaffolding approaches to learning. The metacognitive theory has a direct influence on the awareness and control of cognitive processes involved in writing. It refers to the importance of metacognition—thinking about thinking—essentially in the context of planning, monitoring, and evaluating the writing process. Metacognitive strategies help pupils' improve their writing by making informed choices, reflecting on their thoughts, and assessing the impact of their communication, (Readence & Moore's ,1980) O-Rama, linked with metacognition, it is used to intentionally improve pupils' thinking or comprehension. It serves as a guide to provide teachers with an opportunity to help pupils clarify and organize information when writing text. The O-Rama strategy in writing is a conceptual framework designed to promote the creativity and effectiveness of the writing process by encouraging a comprehensive exploration of ideas. This strategy emphasizes the importance of using "O" as a focal point to represent both objectives and outcomes, thereby guiding writers to consider their purpose and audience when drafting their narratives.

2.1.2 The Benefits of use the O- Rama Strategy

The Guide-O-Rama strategy is an instructional tool designed to enhance pupils' writing skills by providing guided assistance as they write texts. It combines a structured roadmap with written think-aloud prompts, enabling teachers to model expert reading behaviors and support students in processing key concepts and information (Blackburn, 2013).

This strategy typically consists of many key components :

1. The O-Rama strategy like roadmap serves as a visual guide that outlines the writing process. It helps pupils understand the stages of writing, from brainstorming ideas to organizing their work.
2. In this strategy, think-aloud prompts encourage teachers to verbalize their thought processes while writing. By sharing their reasoning and decision-making, teachers provide students with insights into how to approach writing tasks effectively.
3. Teachers demonstrate expert reading and writing behaviors, showing students how to analyze texts, identify main ideas, and organize their thoughts coherently. This modeling helps students internalize effective strategies.
4. The strategy emphasizes the importance of understanding key concepts and information. Teachers guide students in identifying essential elements of their writing, ensuring that they can articulate their ideas clearly and effectively.
5. The Guide-O-Rama strategy promotes interaction between teachers and students. They receive immediate feedback and support, fostering a collaborative learning environment (Blackburn, 2013).

2.1.3 Concept of Writing

Writing has advanced greatly throughout human history, serving as a fundamental instrument for communication, cultural preservation, and intellectual progress. Writing can generally be defined as a technique of conveying language in a visual or tactile form, primarily via the use of symbols or letters (Crystal, 2003) . It is more than just a transcription of spoken language; it is a separate system with its own norms and regulations that is frequently utilized for reasons other than oral communication, such as record-keeping, storytelling, and abstract thinking (Ong, 1982). Writing plays an important role in literacy development and educational contexts. According to Vygotsky (1978), writing is a means of internalizing language and ideas, and it plays a significant part in the growth of higher psychological processes. Writing becomes a tool for self-expression and introspection in this situation, as well as a cognitive scaffold. For example, academic writing is a discipline-specific activity that introduces students to certain methods of thinking, reasoning, and presenting information in addition to being a means of disseminating knowledge (Lea & Street, 1998).

2.1.4 The Importance of Writing

Writing is a necessary ability for communicating, exchanging information, and developing critical thinking abilities. In both personal and professional settings, it is a tool that allows individuals to successfully convey thoughts, sentiments, and facts. Writing is a very versatile technique for attaining a variety of goals (Graham, 2006). It actively supports pupils' information processing as they write. A method of maintaining close relationships with loved ones, acquaintances, and coworkers when we can't meet them in person. Writing is how we communicate, create tales, create fictional worlds, find our identities, deal with loneliness, and record our experiences. Because it has both psychological and physical advantages, writing about our ideas and experiences may even improve our mood (Smyth, 1998).

2.1.5 The Type of Writing :

1. Descriptive Writing :

This type of writing uses words to create a picture, appealing to the reader's senses to arouse feelings and visions (Langan, 2013).

2. Creative Writing :

This includes a variety of writing styles with an emphasis on creative expression, including fiction, poetry, and screenplays (Elbow, 1981).

3. Expository Writing :

Williams and Bizup (2014) highlight essential kind of writing seeks to describe, educate, or clarify something for the reader. It is frequently utilized in educational contexts.

4. Narrative Writing :

Adams (1990) explores the narrative writing, which conveys a tale with a clear sequence of events, is commonly seen in fiction and memoirs.

5. Academic Writing :

According to Day (1998), this formal writing style is often seen in scholarly publications, theses, and research papers.

This section contains the previous studies that are relevant to the study. The list is listed chronologically, from oldest to most recent.

3. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Experimental design is a methodical framework used by researchers to alter independent variables and examine their effects on dependent variables. This process

allows for the formulation of statistical conclusions about the relationship between these variables (Best & Khan, 2006).

The experimental study involves the utilization of pretest and posttest to acquire data from both the control and experimental groups. The results are compared to determine the effect of the therapy on the dependent variable (Riazi, 2010).

The design of this study is a pretest-posttest format, where the experimental group is taught using the O-Rama Strategy, while the control group receives instruction through conventional methods. Consequently, the two groups of the five preparatory pupils are the sample of the research. The experimental design of the research is illustrated in (Table - 1) :

(Table - 1) The Experimental Design of the Study

Groups	Pretest	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Posttest
Experimental	Pretest	Teaching English according to the O-Rama strategy	Writing skills	Posttest
Control	Pretest	Teaching English according to the traditional strategy		Posttest

3.1 Population and sampling of the Study

According to Triola (2017), a population is the entire set of all the components (people , measures, or items) that are going to be examined . The population of this study consists of (50) EFL Iraqi preparatory pupils of the five-year pupils in Al-Rayan School in the city of Samarra , Salah Al-Din Governorate.

(Table - 2) Population of the Study

No.	Preparatory School	Pupils' Number
1	Al – Gaza Preparatory School for Girls	20
2	Al – Amoria Preparatory School for Girls	15
3	Al– Iasma Preparatory School for Girls	30
4	Al – Jannat Al Iraq Preparatory School for Girls	15
Total		80

The sample is a small number of learners chosen for examination and observation (Best,1981). To fulfill the aim of the study, the researcher randomly selected Al-Rayan Preparatory School for Girls as the study sample for the academic year 2024-2025. The pupils are divided into two sections (A and B). Section A is randomly chosen to serve as the experimental group, comprising 25 pupils. Similarly, Section B is randomly selected to act as the control group, also consisting of 25 pupils. Therefore, the total sample size is 50 pupils . The textbook in use is a standard resource used in all Iraqi schools for teaching English to pupils in the five preparatory classes, who have been studying the language for a minimum of six years. The sample below as shown in (Table - 3).

(Table - 3) The sample

Group	Sections	Number	Total
Experimental	A	25	50
Control	B	25	

3.2 Equivalence of the Two Groups

To achieve equality between the two groups, characteristics such as age, parents' educational achievement, and previous year English language degrees must be controlled (Good et al., 1976).

3.2.1 Parents' Academic Attainment

3.2.1.1 Fathers' Academic Attainment

The study divides each group into two levels and uses the chi-square calculation to ascertain whether the academic attainment of pupils' fathers in the five groups differs statistically. After analysis, it is discovered that the calculated value is (3.019), which is found to be less than the critical value of (11.07) at a degree of freedom of (5) and a level of significance of (0.05). (Table 4 - 5) shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of the fathers between the two groups.

(Table -4) The Chi-Square Value of Fathers' Academic Attainment

Level of Education	Group	Total	Chi-Square Value	DF	Level of Significance
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				Calculated	Critical		
	EG.	CG.					
Higher stud	1	0	1	3.019	11.07	5	0.05
Bachelor	4	3	7				
Diploma	6	5	11				
Secondary	3	6	9				
Intermediate	8	6	14				
Primary	3	5	8				
Total	25	25	50				

3.2.1.2 Mothers' Academic Attainment

Using the chi-square calculation, it is determined that the mothers' academic attainment is equivalent for both groups. The calculated value is (1.444), which is less than the critical value, which is (1.434), at the degree of freedom of (5) and the level of significance of (0.05). Table (5) indicates that there is no significant difference between the two groups with respect to this variable.

(Table -5) The Chi-Square Value of the Mothers' Academic Attainment

Level of Education	Group		Total	Chi-Square Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
	EG.	CG.		1.434	11.07		
Higher stud	1	1	2	1.434	11.07	5	0.05
Bachelor	4	6	10				
Diploma	4	3	7				
Secondary	4	6	10				
Intermediate	6	5	11				
Primary	6	4	10				
Total	25	25	50				

3.2.2 Age of the Pupils

To determine whether there is a difference in the pupils' ages, the months of the pupils for the two groups are counted until the first of August 2024 to find out whether

there is any difference between their ages. By applying the t-test formula for two independent groups, it is found that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their age since the mean score value of the experimental group is (201.36) and the standard deviation is (9.65) and that of the control group is (202.88) and the standard deviation is (8.18.) The calculated t-value is (0.600), which is found to be lower than the critical value, which is (2.011) at the degree of freedom of (48) and the level of significance of (0.05). This means that the pupils of the two groups are equal in age, as shown in (Table -6) .

(Table -6) The Mean, Standard Deviation, T-Value of Pupils' Age

Groups	No. of pupils	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	25	201.36	9.65	Calculated	Critical	48	0.05
CG.	25	202.88	8.18	0.600	2.011		

3.2.3 Pupils' Scores in the Writing of the Previous Year

The achievement of pupils on the previous school year's English final test (2024-2025) has been examined and contrasted, as indicated in the appendix (2). The mean score value of the experimental group is 73.40, while that of the control group is 72.36, with standard deviations of 13.52 and 16.29, respectively. The calculated t-value is found to be 0.246, which is less than the critical value of 2.011 at the degree of freedom of 48 and the 0.05 level of significance. This result signifies that there is no statistical difference between the two groups regarding their prior accomplishments, the data shown in (Table -7) .

(Table -7) Mean scores, standard deviations, and t-value for the Pupils Previous Year Degrees in English

Groups	No. of pupils	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	25	73.40	13.52	Calculated	Critical	48	0.05
CG.	25	72.36	16.29	0.246	2.011		

3.2.4 Pupils' Scores in the Pretest

The purpose of the pre-test is equalization. Both the experimental and control groups submitted to the same pre-test. The experimental group had a mean pretest score of 55.92, while the control group had a mean pretest score of 54.76 with standard deviations of 11.88 and 11.42, respectively. The calculated t-value is determined to be 0.352, which is lower than the critical value of 2.011 at the degree of freedom of 48 and the level of significance of 0.05. According to the data shown in (Table - 8), indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups' pre writing test.

(Table-8) The T-Test Value of the Two Groups in the Pre-test

Groups	No. of pupils	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	25	55.92	11.88	Calculated	Critical	48	0.05
CG.	25	54.76	11.42	0.352	2.011		

3.3 Construction of the Post writing test

The post-test is utilized to assess the development of the course at the conclusion of an instructional period. To achieve this, the researcher develops a test focused on the topic (units or textbooks) selected at the start of the study. This test aims to measure whether there are statistically significant differences in English language proficiency between the control and experimental groups of students.

To achieve the aim of the test, the researcher has constructed written test of four questions, and each question scores (25)marks ,the total is (100) marks. Question one is a subjective test that includes asking the pupils to read a passage and write about the advantages and disadvantages of the internet, the score(25). Question two: is a subjective test where the pupils are asked to look at ten pictures and write a composition in the form of a short story, the score(25) and also Question three and four have score(25) .

3.4 Validity of the Posttest

According to Messick (1989), validity is a comprehensive evaluation of how effectively experimental evidence and theoretical reasoning support the sufficiency and appropriateness of test-score-derived conclusions and actions. Gronlund (1998) defines validity as the extent to which conclusions formed from evaluation results are suitable, relevant, and meaningful for the assessment's intended purpose. Furthermore, Taherdoost (2016) states that validity determines if what is meant to be measured is indeed measured.

3.5 Face Validity

Face validity refers to the idea that a test appears relevant and appropriate for its intended purpose on first glance, based on subjective assessments of its format, substance, and questions. Essentially, it is a subjective assessment that the test accurately measures what it is intended to evaluate (Bobko, 2001). Bayens and Roberson (2010) assert that evaluating face validity is based more on the researcher's subjective assessment than on actual data. The test's ability to strike a balance between different points of view and a common conceptual framework must be taken into account. This test was shown to a panel of English language specialists to see if it truly reflects students' competence growth. There was a 100% consensus among the panel members regarding the questions in the final form.

3.6 Content Validity

Hughes (1989) indicates that content validity is the degree to which test items match the actual event that the test is meant to imitate. This is important because it portrays the situation accurately. Experiments are used to determine the links between independent and dependent variables. While internal validity pertains to removing challenging aspects from studies, external validity occurs when our findings can be applied to a wider population.

3.7 Reliability of the Posttest

Reliability is the capacity to sustain repeatability and consistency across time. According to Maree and Fraser (2004), a test's reliability is also determined by how error-free its measurements are; the more likely a test is to have measurement mistakes, the less trustworthy it is. An essential quality of a good test is reliability. If an exam's level of accuracy is constant and steady throughout tests administered to the same sample of pupils under the same circumstances, it is considered trustworthy (Verma and Beard, 1981).

3.8 Pilot Study

According to Neuman (2013), a pilot study is a primary investigation that attempts to enhance research topics, data gathering strategies, and analytical approaches for a more

extensive study. However, a pilot test (Richards & Schmitt, 2010) is a test designed for a small, representative sample of examinees to evaluate the test's effectiveness and applicability .

3.9 Difficulty Level and Discrimination Power of the test item

According to Devellis (2003), item difficulty is the measurement tool used to determine if students are failing or succeeding a particular task . It is found that the difficulty level of the current test items ranges from (0.32) to (0.71).

Discriminating power is the extent to which an item separates qualified testers from inept testers. An item has strong discriminating ability if it collects the right answers from good students and the wrong ones from poor students. It is noteworthy that a high power of discrimination will be close to 1.0, while no power of discrimination will be null (Brown, 2010). The test item discriminating power range is found to be between (0.31) and (0.57).

3. 10 Final Administration of Posttest

The exam is administered to two groups of students on January 15, 2025, following the verification of its validity and reliability during the pilot administration. The post-test for the experimental and control groups was held on the same day, but at different times and places. The exam has a time constraint of 45 minutes to complete the written portion. The study relied on two English professors to observe the courses and answer students' inquiries. All test papers were collected and graded based on the defined schema.

4. THE RESULTS

To fulfill the aim, which is to examine how the O-Rama strategy affects EFL Iraqi pupils' writing skills. The application of the t-test formula for two independent samples has revealed the results shown in (Table - 9) that the mean score of the experimental group is (13.71) and that of the control group is (8.50). The computed t-value (6.356) is higher than the critical t-value (2.000) at 0.05 level of significance and (48) degree of freedom. This result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their post-writing tests, favoring the experimental group.

(Table -9) Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values of the Two Groups in the post writing skill Test .

Groups	No. of pupils	Mean	SD.	T-Value	DF	Level of Significance
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EG.	25	13.71	2.685	Calculated	Critical	48	0.05
CG.	25	8.50	2.346	6.356	2.000		

4.1 Discussion of Result

This study aims to ascertain whether the O-Rama strategy has an impact on the writing abilities of EFL Iraqi pupils . The results indicate that the English language developments of the experimental group, which is taught using the O-Rama strategy, are higher and better than those of the control group, which is taught using traditional methods in the posttest. By using the O-Rama strategy and applying its activities such as charts, videos, pictures, explanations, etc., pupils' curiosity and motivation to learn English writing are increased. The O-Rama strategy encourages pupils to organize their thoughts and learn how the structure of a sentence is done. Pupils are able to learn new ideas, foster engagement, critical thinking, personalized learning, analyze, and understand the contents of the unit of the text. This will develop the pupils' skills and abilities to access correct writing with clear ideas and links among vocabulary, allowing them to interact easily. A review of previous research shows that the O-Rama strategy remains successful when various other methodologies are used .

5. CONCLUSIONS

The current study findings indicate that O-Rama strategy has a positive effect on pupils' writing development. The purpose is to investigate how the O-Rama strategy affects the writing of Iraqi preparatory pupils. Following data collection and analysis, the results indicate that pupils who are taught using O-Rama strategy outperformed those who are taught using both the conventional method and O-Rama strategy. Based on the current study's findings, the following deductions have been made:

1. O-Rama strategy has been found to develop writing skills in fifth-grade. Structured brainstorming sessions and visual organizers can help pupils better arrange their ideas before writing. This preparation results in more structured and rationally arranged paragraphs.
- 2 . It promotes the development of various writing abilities, such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing, through controlled activities.
3. O-Rama strategy emphasizes the value of creativity in writing. Allowing pupils to experiment with numerous genres and styles helps them build their own voices and improve their overall writing skills. This creative freedom can result in more unique and intriguing writing pieces.

4. O-Rama strategy encourages collaboration among pupils. Working in groups or pairs fosters a sense of community and allows pupils to share feedback and ideas. This collaborative atmosphere can help them improve their writing skills while also teaching them to think critically.
5. Pupils who use O-Rama strategy acquire confidence in their writing talents, which can lead to improved performance in assessments.
6. It enhances various tools in O-Rama strategy, such as videos, graphic organizers, and pictures, to elucidate the meaning of the text. This approach enhances students' curiosity and eagerness to broaden their knowledge, increasing their interest and attention.

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Q1) Write about the advantages and disadvantages of using the internet ? (25M)

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.....

**Q2) look at the pictures and describe what you see by using present simple tense in the form of a short story ?
(25M)**



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.....

**Q3) Complete this paragraph about describing a friend . Use at least five adjectives with prepositions, you can use these options for your writing (good at , honest with , angry about , collaborate with , proud of , interested in)
(25 M)**

My friend Ameena isn't very good at sport, but she likes to travel ,write stories and she is brilliant at art . I like her because.....

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.....
.....

Q4) Write an e-mail to your friend telling him about the “Traditions in Ramadan” in your country. Write 100 – 120 words. (25 M)

Dear Noor



You asked me about the traditions of Ramadan in Iraq. Well, during Ramadan, Muslims do not.....
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