BLENDED LEARNING (BL) APPROACH TO TEACH
YOUNG LEARNERS WRITING SENTENCES
IN ESL CLASSROOM

MANMIT KAUR A/P PARANJIT SINGH

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Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, *Paranjit Singh and Sukhwinder Kaur*, for their endless prayers, support, love and encouragement.

To my siblings, for encouraging me to go the extra mile.

To my husband, for constantly supporting me to achieve greater heights.

To all those involved,
and for those who find it
beneficial
This one is for you.

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First and above all, I am most grateful to the Almighty God for his blessings, this thesis is finally completed.

In preparing this thesis, I was in contact with many people, researchers, academicians, and practitioners. They have contributed towards my understanding and thoughts. I am forever indebted to my supervisor, for her countless hours of reflecting, reading, encouraging, and most of all patience throughout the entire process.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the school division, for allowing me to conduct my research and providing the assistance needed. Special thanks goes to the participants of this study. Their excitement and willingness to participate and provide responses made the completion of this research an enjoyable experience.

Special thanks to my first teachers, my forever motivators; my mom and dad, whose encouragement and prayers are always with me. Not least of all, I owe so much to my siblings, Harmit Singh, Ahsmit Singh and my husband Prithipal Singh for their undying support and their unwavering belief that I can achieve so much.

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Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of using Blended Learning (BL) Approach to teach young learners' writing sentences in ESL Classroom. This research fills the gap by exploring the effects of BL Approach on young learners in Malaysian context, studying those effects on cognitive aspects while providing in-depth insights into the effects of BL. The research samples were thirty elementary students studying in one of the schools in Johor. A mixed-method research design was employed. With the aim of collecting data, quasi-experimental research design was adapted by using one-group pre-test and post-test, a set of questionnaire survey and a focus group interview. The data from the pre-test and post-test were analysed using paired sample T-test, while the data from the questionnaire were analysed using frequency and percentage. Both data were accompanied with descriptive statistical analysis to provide better understanding. Besides, thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the interview data. The findings showed a significant difference on young learners' writing skill before and after the implementation of BL Approach which reflected the effectiveness of using BL in developing young learners' writing skill. It was comprehensively reported that BL enhanced writing motivation on young learners' by changing their negative perceptions about writing as well. The findings are followed by a few recommendations and implications for educators and researchers with close reference to the limitations of this study.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesan pelaksanaan Kaedah Pembelajaran Gabungan (PG) untuk mengajar kemahiran menulis ke atas pelajar sekolah rendah dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Kajian ini memenuhi keperluan mengkaji kesan PG terhadap pelajar sekolah rendah di Malaysia, mengkaji secara spesifik aspek kognitif seterusnya memberikan analisis menyeluruh mengenai kesan PG terhadap kemahiran bertulis. Sampel kajian adalah tiga puluh pelajar sekolah rendah yang sedang menuntut di salah sebuah sekolah rendah di Johor. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kaedah campuran telah dipilih. Untuk tujuan mengumpul data, reka bentuk penyelidikan kuasi eksperimental diadaptasi dengan menggunakan ujian pra dan ujian pasca untuk satu kumpulan, satu set tinjauan soal selidik dan wawancara kumpulan berfokus. Data ujian pra dan ujian pasca telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan uji T sampel berpasangan, sementara data soal selidik dianalisis menggunakan frekuensi dan peratusan. Kedua-dua data telah disertakan dengan analisis statistik deskriptif untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik. Selain itu, analisis tematik telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data wawancara. Hasil kajian menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan terhadap kemahiran menulis pelajar sebelum dan selepas pelaksanaan kaedah PG dan secara langsung membuktikan pelaksanaan kaedah PG efektif dalam meningkatkan kemahiran menulis pelajar sekolah rendah. Di samping itu, Pg telah meningkatkan motivasi terhadap penulisan pelajar sekolah rendah dengan mengubah persepsi negatif mereka terhadap penulisan. Dapatan kajian diikuti dengan beberapa cadangan dan implikasi untuk para pendidik dan pengkaji dengan mengambil kira limitasi kajian ini.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	-	Blended Learning (BL)
L2	-	Second Language
EFL	-	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	-	English as a Second Language

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

In the heyday of technology, Second Language Teaching and Learning employs technological innovations to enable language learners to expose themselves to a genuine and useful setting. The use of technology in language acquisition, is no longer a novel concept. Technology has significantly altered the educational paradigm, making it easier to teach without regard to time or space constraints (Alonso et al, 2005), resulting in learners displaying full concentration in learning. Language learners can also rely on technology such as the use of Blended Learning (BL) to provide them with a plethora of options for improving their writing skills (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Learners can look for information with the help of technology at just one click. As mentioned by Felix (2003), technology in education provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve teaching and learning. The usage of various approaches including technology makes teaching easier in an ESL classroom.

According to Stahl (2015), there are four skills to be mastered in English namely listening, reading, writing and speaking in order to obtain a complete communication in English. Being able to communicate fluently in English, read accurately and write continuously are closely related. Of all, no precise definition of writing exists because "writing is unexpectedly difficult to define" (Urquhart & Weir, 2013). In this context, writing well in English plays an extremely vital aspect to increase a young learner's competence. Since English is the second language in Malaysia therefore, various approaches, methods and strategies of implementing the teaching of writing in English is crucial.

Carroll (1990) defines writing as the most essential innovation in human history, according to this author, since it gives a somewhat permanent record of knowledge, opinions, beliefs, sentiments, arguments, explanations, and theories. Writing is one of the most essential language skills to develop, for students particularly. Learner's knowledge is improved through indirect communication abilities. When compared to other language talents, mastering the writing talent is difficult. In fact, Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) states that writing ability tests students' to organise their thoughts and phrases in writing; it necessitates a broad knowledge base, ample time, and a thorough thought process.

Although writing is merely an indirect form of communication, it is critical for learners to strengthen their language skills by the use of technology. However, in the education world, teaching writing encourages learners to be able to convey their thoughts by obeying suitable rules socially and culturally focussing in Malaysian ESL classroom settings. Therefore, with globalization advancing at a breakneck pace, the advancement of numerous approaches used in teaching writing to young learners focussing on Blended Learning in Malaysian classrooms would be further discussed in this study. The discussion will also provide insights into the adaptation of Blended Learning in a Malaysian ESL classroom. Nevertheless, in many educational settings, blended learning approach is not given much attention especially in terms of the significance of those strategies in developing learners' writing skills. BL Approach has been well-documented in terms of its effectiveness in enhancing writing skills and writing performance for (a) young adults (Stanford, 2019). Following such trends in the research on writing, the current study aims to explore the effects of Blended Learning(BL) Approach on young learners' in the selected setting.

Henceforward, this chapter explains the background of the study looking at Blended Learning approach used in teaching writing based on Malaysian classroom context in section 1.2 and followed by the statement of problem which highlights the research gap of the study in section 1.3. The purpose of the study is discussed in 1.4. The research objectives are specified in section 1.5 while research questions are listed

in section 1.6. In section 1.7, the significance of the study is further explained. Section 1.8 discusses the scope of the study followed by section 1.9, the theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks are exemplified in section 1.10 and the important terms used are defined in section 1.11. The whole chapter is summarised in section 1.12.

1.2   Background of the Study

In Malaysia, English Language is widely used as the second language in most schools. The Year 2021 marks the beginning of the third wave as drawn in the Malaysia Education Blueprint(MEB) 2015-2025. As described in it, constant efforts to improve English language skills have always been critical to achieving excellence and increasing operational flexibility (Ministry Of Education, 2012). Furthermore, obligatory education has been extended from six to eleven years. Despite their efforts and the lengthier years spent learning English, Malaysian students are believed to have a poor command of the language. (Yunus & Mat, 2014; Hazita, 2016; Husaini et al., 2016; Yaacob et al. 2020).

In Malaysian classrooms, the usage of 21st century education in accordance with the MEB, and with the efforts of incorporating technology have been carried out over the years (Mastan et al. 2017). In Malaysia, most young learners face problems with writing, especially if English is their second or third language. It's possible that this is due to the fact individuals preferentially process information in various ways (Shuib & Azizan, 2015). Therefore, blended learning was established as part of the education improvisation to match with the 21st century of teaching and learning.

While further accentuating this concern, Shuib & Azizan (2015) through their study of a primary school in Sabah, mentioned that learners were unable to write, students and teachers frequently relied on textbooks or simply paper for source of writing. Simultaneously, "Information and Communication Technologies" (ICT) plays a vital role in building a new and enhanced model of teaching and learning. Blended learning as part of the teacher's teaching and student's learning process in writing

activities thus has become a crucial teaching and learning approach (Yunus et al. 2013).

According to the National Writing Project (2010), based on a study by primary school teachers, it was found that digital technologies are influencing learners' writing in a variety of ways, and it has also become a useful instructional tool. Technology is allowing learners to reach a wider audience with their work, communicate more effectively with other students, and reignite the creative spark in the next generation of authors. It is helping them to improve their writing skills and word usage. According to the report, half of the teachers polled believe that based on today's digital technology, it is easier for them to shape and improve learners' writing. Technology can aid in the improvement of writing for young learners.

One of the most important aspects of Malaysian ESL education in schools is the development of writing abilities, which are critical for future experts' knowledge acquisition and international professional communication. Leveraging the use of technology such as Blended Learning, although some teachers prefer tangible aids to supplement their teaching activities, digital technologies or ICT incorporated across the curriculum can be very different from those that existing teachers encountered while they were at school (Leask & Pachler, 2014). Keeping in mind, the usage of these technologies ease the teacher's burden and motivate young learners. Blended learning is a natural progression of the learning agenda and one of the most significant developments of this century (Thorne, 2003). It is believed to be a substantial development in the improvement of learning.

The teaching of language, especially writing in English which is considered the second language or even third language for some, definitely has its own challenges. The exposure of using English Language (EL) in the classroom has to be forced at times. Young learners do not feel encouraged. According to Al-Khsawneh (2010), students described the teaching style and the environment as the primary cause of their

English shortcomings. Many experts in this field have pointed out that inadequate command and proficiency in English is linked to the cognitive demands of writing. When compared to other language abilities, the majority of them described writing as difficult to learn and acquire (De Smedt et al., 2018; Teng 2019; Zheng, 1999). Due to the isolated society, many learners use their mother tongue as they are less proficient in EL.

The preceding discussion has established the study's context by emphasising the importance of offering appropriate writing approaches using BL in order to improve students' writing performance. Although the educators' responsibility in adopting new teaching methods and instruction is critical, basically using technology, as mentioned by Yaacob et al. (2020), strengthening ESL learners' writing abilities is never an easy process, as Yunus and Mat (2014) pointed out.

The importance of providing effective approaches such as Blended Learning in improving learners' writing capabilities has been reported in many studies. Moreover, Tobin (2007) highlights his concern that the integration of online and face-to-face activities is critical, and that teaching and learning qualities have an impact on the blended learning environment. Hoffman (1994), maintains that the usage of Blended Learning Approach is efficient to use in classroom or teaching because learners are able to look up information on their own on the Internet. Beauvois (1994) believes that the usage of Blended Learning to teach writing allows learners to have more freedom of expressing their thoughts on a certain topic or area. Adding on, Erkan (2013) claims that the online discussions or self- learning can help shy learners become more active participants in the learning process, a claim backed up by Belisle (2002), that shy learners are able to gain confidence and improve their writing skills by using Blended Learning Approach rather than traditional in-class pen-and-pencil methods. Thus, following the views of the above mentioned studies, the current study investigates effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach to teach Young Learners Writing Sentences in ESL Classroom.

1.3   Problem Statement

This research focuses on the importance of teaching writing skills to young learners (Graham & Perin, 2007; Clark, 2013; Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018; Teng, 2019) because possessing the abilities will help them perform better in all aspects of life (Stanford, 2019). Writing is definitely difficult since it includes complex cognitive processes (Mastan et al., 2017; Padmawati & Artini, 2019), particularly for L2 learners, who, as Cole and Feng (2015) point out, do not have almost the same background information as native English speakers. Despite the fact that substantial research has been done in this field, there are still a few key aspects that remain unclear in the research literature. Firstly, the scope of the study specifically the individuals and situations. The majority of studies focused on adults and young adults who were on the average to good writing capability. Less research has been done on the effects of Blended Learning Approach to teach writing to young learners. Furthermore, according to the literature, just a few studies have included Malaysian students. Secondly, despite being a powerful approach that may have favourable effects on students' learning, as Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) pointed out, Blended Learning Approach effects on other aspects of motivation remain ambiguous of BL, with very few aimed at studying the subject in depth. Thirdly, the vast majority of research is quantitative in nature, with numerical data offered to demonstrate the effectiveness of BL, with only a few attempting to go further into the subject. As a result, there is a pressing need to investigate the effects of Blended Learning Approach on Young Learners' in Malaysia.

Thus, this section briefly mentions the writing problems and issues reported in previous studies and relates to the blended learning approach in teaching young learners writing sentences. It also discusses gaps in research that have led to the current study: i. investigating the effects of Blended Learning Approach on young learners in Malaysian Context. ii. learning the effects of Blended Learning Approach on motivational aspects for the young learners by focussing on their perceptions. ii. linking quantitative data with qualitative data to provide a more in-depth insight into the effects of BL Approach on writing abilities of Malaysian young learners.

Most research undertaken in the Malaysian contexts, have indicated a lack of linguistic competency among young learners, particularly in writing (e.g. Mastan et al., 2017; De Smedt 2019). The studies have further highlighted a few difficulties faced by L2 young learners such as limited vocabulary (Hyland, 1996), lack of motivation and interest (Ganapathy & Ying, 2016) and technology accessibilities (Stapa & Abdul, 2006). These glitches would produce young learners who are less proficient in language, and especially in focusing writing. This would further group the problems listed into two challenges which are cognitive and perceptions.

The aforementioned limitations are congruent with the chosen sample of the current study, which is composed of young learners with limited skill in the research setting. This is based on the experience of the researcher, who is the current English Language teacher for the learners. The learners find it difficult to construct proper sentences due to the lack of vocabulary. Adding on, they face problems with paragraphing, punctuation and are unable to spell certain words. A number of them are unsure of what or how the sentence is constructed. Due to cognitive limits and the complexity of the writing process, the majority of students find it difficult to compose written sentences without any guidance (Singh ,2007). As explained by Teng (2019), the writing process involves three stages. The very first stage is planning, which entails generating and presenting information. The second stage entails the creation of texts, which is the process of converting thoughts into words and phrases. The third stage is the revision stage, which involves revising texts in order to improve the text's quality. However, this did lead to negative perceptions of young learners towards writing. When young learners struggle to explain their thoughts in writing, they experience dissatisfaction, a lack of enthusiasm, and worry about writing. According to Clark (2013), it has an impact on learners' perceptions of writing. They show less desire and willingness to participate in writing class because they believe it is tough and dull. The traditional method used which did not incorporate technology has left a negative impact on learners. Likewise, the use of Blended Learning Approach with the integration of online and face-to-face activities is critical, and an investigation of learners' online interactions can aid in improving the instructional design of BL settings (Bransford et al., 2000).

This leads to various contributing factors namely exposure to English Language, the access to technology as well as the learners' perception and motivation. The location of the school which is in an urban area which has a surrounding community exposed to EL. The students of the school have access to the Internet. Despite this, EL is still a second or third language for quite a number of learners. Young learners identified the primary causes of their English deficits as the instructional style and the environment (Al-Khsawneh 2010).

Various studies have proven that by implementing a suitable writing approach, this can lead to learners producing their written text independently to overcome their problems in writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). Unfortunately, some exam based education systems failed to prioritize the outcome instead of focusing on the cognitive development of young learners. The lack of incorporating 21st century skill, primarily Blended Learning in the classroom with the usage of technology leads to teaching objectives not achieved. This will affect the development of learners' writing skills.

As Soiferman (2017) points out, this places a high demand on educators. They could no longer leave writing teaching to coincidence. In fact, students in a face-to-face and technology-based approach mainly Blended Learning, aided language learning (Felix, 2003). This is further supported by Shea (2007). As Stanford (2019) points out, Blended Learning Approach in teaching writing has not received the attention it deserves in many educational settings. Many educators are unaware of the need of using Blended Learning Approach to teach writing to young learners. These issues do, in fact, present difficulties for English language learners in Malaysia (Mastan et al., 2017).

Blended Learning Approach is vital to deal with learners' poor writing skills. In this respect, it is suitable to guide young learners to develop good writing knowledge. As claimed by Rabab'ah (2003), Blended Learning is an effective approach to help young learners acquire knowledge in writing. Various researchers have been investigating the usage of Blended Learning to enhance learners' writing

skills. However, the focus was on young adults (Azizaturrohmi, 2019) where less effort is made to explore this issue among young learners in Malaysian context. Consequently, there is an extreme need for teachers and educators to use the Blended Learning Approach to improve and enhance learners writing skills in producing proficient younger generation aligned with the aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

Taking into consideration the limited number of studies in Malaysian context which focuses on this area, this research plays a significant role in addressing the issue by providing reference for educators. Hence, this research explores the effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach on young learners' writing skills and their perceptions by taking into account the lack of studies in Malaysian context. The participants of this research are guided step-by-step to incorporating Blended Learning Approach. This discussion above underlines the urgent need to investigate the effects of Blended Learning Approach based on the selected setting and sample. This study sets apart exploring the effects of Blended Learning Approach on young learners in Malaysian Context, ii. studying the effects on BL approach on both cognitive and learner's perceptions and iii. Supporting rich quantitative data to provide a deeper insight into the effects of BL.

1.4   Purpose of Study

Incorporating the usage of Blended Learning in teaching and learning varies in benefits for an ESL classroom. Learners need to develop their writing skills due to their low proficiency in the classroom. Thus, this study will be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using Blended Learning Approach to teach young learners writing sentences as well as to understand learners' perceptions on developing writing skills. This mixed-method study also will be useful in determining the usage of BL approach by the teachers in conducting writing lessons among young learners. Therefore, this is an attempt to demonstrate the usage of technology in dealing with substantial writing problems by the use of Blended Learning as it plays an important part in development of learners' writings.

1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims:

1) To explore the effects of blended learning on writing sentences among young learners.
2) To investigate the perceptions of young learners' in using blended learning to write sentences.

1.6 Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following research question:

1) How does blended learning effect young learners' writing of sentences?

2) What are the perceptions of the young learners' in using blended learning for writing sentences?

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is carried out in one elementary school located in Pasir Gudang, Johor. The overall population of the school when this study was implemented was 1032 students. A total of 30 students were selected as samples with 5 number of students willing to be part of the focus-group interview session. The distribution of gender is unequal based on (18 girls and 12 boys) is not taken into account as it is not related to the objectives of the study. Table 1.1 shows the overview of the scope of the study.

Table 1.1 Scope of the Study

Research Questions	Methodology	Key Concepts	Respondents
1) How does blended learning effect young learners' writing of sentences?	Mixed-method -Quasi- experimental design	In-depth discussion of the effects of BL Approach on young learners writing skill	30 upper elementary students of one of the schools in Pasir Gudang, Johor.
2) What are the perceptions of the young learners in using blended learning for writing sentences ?		In-depth discussion of the effects of BL Approach on young learners writing perceptions	

Based on this table above, it can be concluded that this study addresses two research questions which are aimed to explore the effects of BL approach towards young learners' writing skills and perceptions respectively. With close reference of the aim and sample selected, the findings do not represent the whole population of either the young learners in the selected school or throughout Malaysia.

1.8   Significance of the Study

This study is significant for both educators and researchers in investigating the effectiveness of Blended Learning to teach young learners writing.

1.8.1 Significance for Educators

When we look at the primary school curriculum, we can see that there is emphasis on improving students' writing abilities, which starts with the building of words and phrases and gradually leads to the development of sentences and paragraphs (Rahim et al., 2017). We are concerned that many educators are hesitant to set high expectations for their students, particularly when they ask them to write compositions without any advice or guidelines about how to do it. Teachers begin to depend on the final result rather than the writing process, which is critical for achieving better writers.

On the contrary, Teng (2019) found that a significant amount of young learners is poorly prepared for English writing in his study. The emphasis of teaching using a 21st century approach helps make the teaching and learning process more interesting. Teachers typically do not apply the BL Approach because it is time-consuming and requires a lot of time to assist challenging students. (Mastan and colleagues, 2017). This research highlights the benefits of adopting BL Approach to speed up the writing process.

1.8.2 Significance for Researchers

This study is crucial for researchers interested in evaluating challenges in writing since it covers a gap in the literature by examining motivating elements in writing. According to De Smedt et al. (2016), the time between elementary and secondary schools, mainly elementary grades, is the most important for motivating and

changing their perceptions in learning English. This is because young learners are expected to develop the capacity to deal with more difficult academic activities throughout that period (De Smedt et al., 2016).

Most scholars are interested in researching and investigating this subject among monolinguals, therefore there is certainly a paucity of research emphasizing on writing among young ESL students (Hammer et al., 2014 as cited in Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018). As a result, it is critical to comprehend the writing potential of future ESL students and to identify teaching pedagogies that support them.

Nevertheless, because most studies focus on older kids, there has been less study on the usefulness of employing Blended Learning with elementary pupils. Furthermore, finding papers concentrating on the same topic in the Malaysian setting is difficult. Hence, this study acts as a guide for researchers and teachers who are keen on understanding the relation of BL Approach to fulfilling the needs of young learners within Malaysian context by analysing effects of using BL Approach and how to develop writing skills of the chosen sample.

1.9   Theoretical Framework

This study explores the effectiveness of using Blended Learning Approach in analysing the writing skill of young learners. To this end Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory is implemented as the framework with relation to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development(ZPD) and Scaffolding.
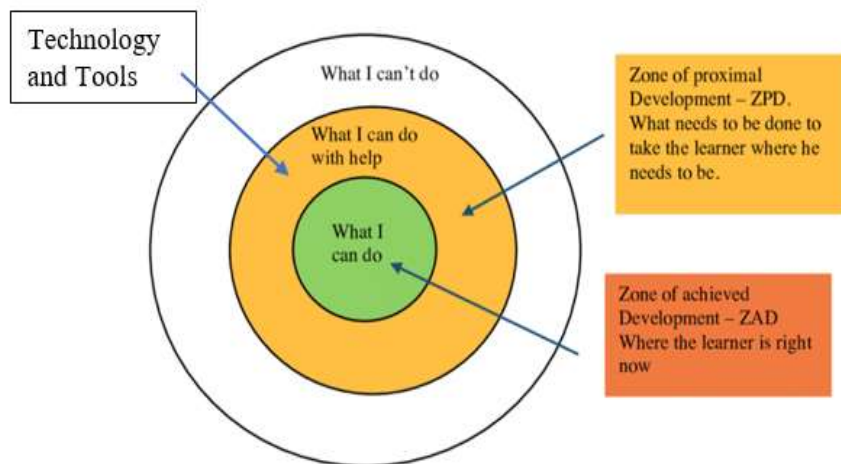
Figure 1.1 Vygotsky's ZPD and Scaffolding Theory

Based on the figure above, the implementation of Blended Learning(BL) Approach in this research is built on the idea of providing a scaffolding to develop writing skills among young learners. The important goal is to relate Blended Learning Approach as a way of scaffolding for young learners in developing writing skills focusing on sentences. Incorporating Blended Learning Approach to teach writing is a kind of scaffolding process to help young learners understand the steps across the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Likewise, this procedure highlights notable improvements in a few key areas, such as students' writing ability, attitude, and hobbies

(Padmadewi & Artini, 2019), implying that the BL Approach is effective in increasing young learners' writing skills.

The substantial practise and supervision provided during the implementation of BL assist young learners to internalise and self-regulate those writing purposes and tasks while actively progressing through the ZPD. This constructivism approach emphasises educators' collaborative roles; deliberate writing assignments linked with language skills; and the need of practising the given writing tasks and goals in order to improve writing skills. Students' social engagement and collaboration are also important in their learning process since they are more engaged in collaborative work (Ammar & Hassan, 2018).

Vygotsky's theory, according to Arnold (2017), permits English Language (EL) students to acquire language through interacting, seeing, and experiencing it. These three methods, he says, are a representation of a real-life situation and therefore a part of the first language acquisition process (Arnold, 2017). In other words, the teacher is scaffolding the writing lesson incorporating BL by expanding the learner's knowledge of their familiarisation towards the language. Through this scaffolding activity, learners are encouraged to have control over what they learn and eventually get used to involve in a more independent, constructive way such as the Blended Learning Approach.
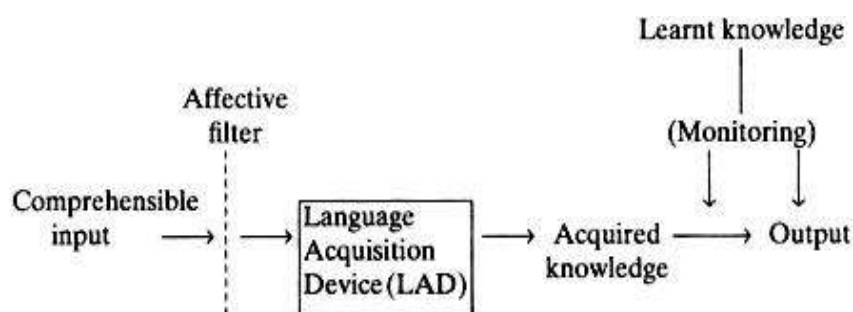
The Input Hypothesis Model of L2 learning and production (adapted from Krashen, 1982, pp. 16 and 32; and Gregg, 1984)

Figure 1.2 Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Adding on, the Input Hypothesis underpins the current study (as shown in Figure 1.2). This theory is based on Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory. It is based on the idea of providing input in developing writing skills among young learners. In this hypothesis is a step-by-step process in acquiring the language. In each stage, it differs. When comprehensible input (i) is given by the teacher and is then filtered by young learners, the teaching and learning process is successful. As noted by Gregg (1984), Krashen's use of the expression i + 1 wavers between meaning of the learner's competence at the stage after stage (i). For young learners in primary schools, the usage of this hypothesis is suitable as they need to be able to absorb the input given by the teacher directly. If the information conveyed by the teacher is successful and delivered well, input relevant for i + 1 is automatically provided.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis claims that language acquisition occurs through understanding messages or, in other words, through receiving "comprehensible input" (Abbuhl, 2011). Once the knowledge on writing skills have been acquired via Blended Learning, this directly allows the learners to produce the output. To be able to achieve the objective of the lesson, young learners should relate writing skills in their language learning.

The implementation of BL Approach in this research based on the frameworks of Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory and Karshen's Input Hypothesis displays the suitable characteristics that have been discussed. These frameworks are proper to be applied in an ESL classroom. Firstly, it enables learners to learn through modelling acquiring the writing process on their own. Next, educators should explicitly describe the writing strategies. Third, educators are able to provide various opportunities for self-learning as practice including feedback and guidance (Graham et al., 2000). Also, providing support and input through scaffolding is vital as the aim of BL Approach to produce young learners equipped with writing abilities.

1.10   Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.3 depicts the conceptual framework of this study which provides the structure of the content and concepts that will be incorporated in this research.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework

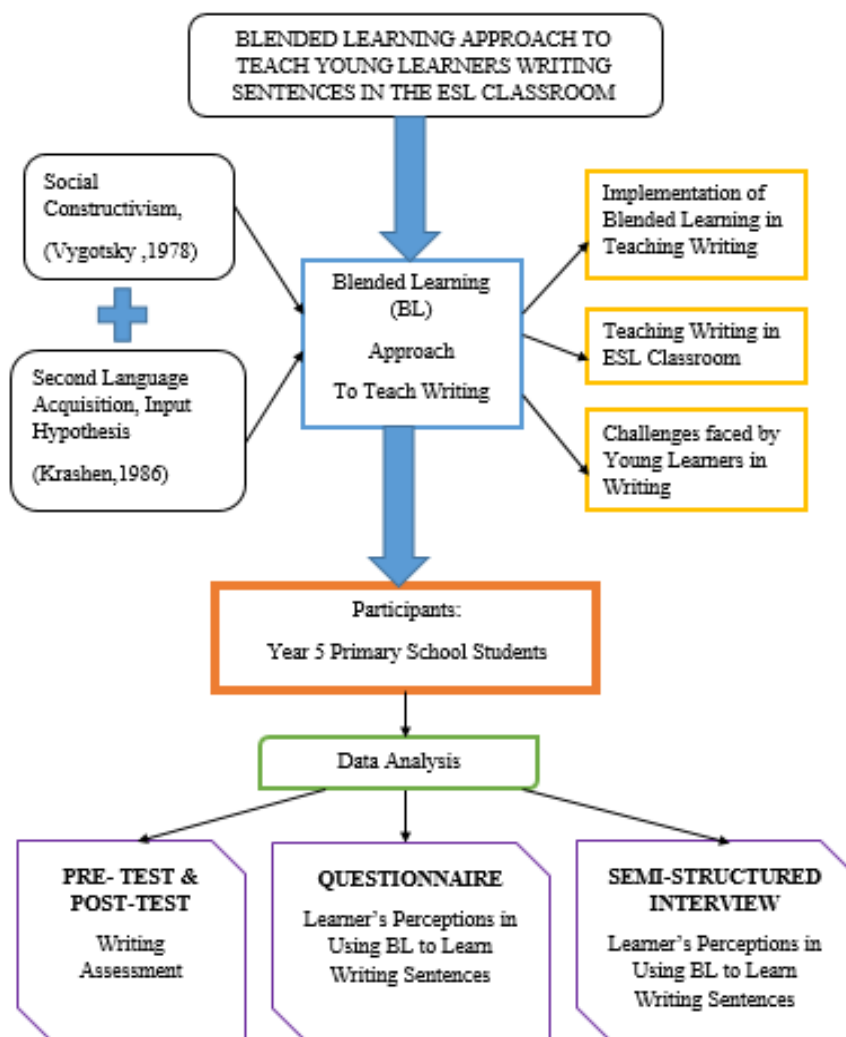The main focus of this research is Teaching Writing using BL to Young Learners. The concepts formulated are in connection with Krashen's ZPD, Scaffolding and Vygotsky's Input Hypothesis Theory. In this there are three main concepts to focus on. Firstly, the implementation of Blended Learning to teach writing for young learners. Secondly, teaching writing in an ESL classroom. Thirdly, challenges faced

by young learners in learning writing. The participants of this study are Year 5 Primary school students. A pre-test and post-test followed by a questionnaire and semi-structured interview will act as the data collection method.

1.11   Definitions of Terms

The sub sections below put forth the operation definitions of important terms for this study.

Blended Learning (BL)

Thorne (2003) defines blended learning as "combining online learning with more traditional ways of learning and development." Blended learning, according to Kupetz & Ziegenmeyer (2005), is "the planned arrangement of media, methodologies, and ways of structuring learning situations by integrating traditional media and methods with e-learning aspects and opportunities". When young learners are exposed to the use of technology mainly Blended Learning, they gain a sense of confidence. If the teacher is introducing writing, creative approaches should be used. Therefore, the approaches implemented in ESL classrooms to encourage young learners to be able to grasp and show interest in teaching and learning is vital Poorahmadi (2010). Blended Learning Approach is suitable for language learning usage in this study.

Young Learners

Children from the first year of formal schooling which starts off with pre-school from the age of five or six years old to eleven or twelve years old in elementary school are considered young learners (Clark ,2013). However, in education, it is the maturity of the students at school that matters, not their age. As a result, rather than focussing at the children's physical age, the sort of activity implemented in the classroom will be affected by knowledge about their surroundings, attitudes, and hobbies. So, it's critical to design activities that are within their capability, while also being enough interesting to make them feel at ease with their work. Furthermore, Clark

(2013) suggested that "the activities should focus on writing, or anything interactive" that are basic and repetitive.

Writing Skill

The capacity to produce written texts is referred to as writing skill. It refers to the capacity to cope with a variety of aspects of writing, including writing methods, subject matter, organisation, mechanics of writing, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and the intended audience (Raimes, 1984).

1.12   Summary

This chapter has presented the background, context, problem statement of the study on the effectiveness of Blended Learning to teach young learners writing sentences. It has been highlighted by the lack of studies concentrating on the use of Blended Learning Approach to teach young learners in the Malaysian environment. As a result, the current research seeks to produce important insights for educators, students, and researchers.

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