EFFECTS OF USING EXPLICIT WRITING INSTRUCTION (EWI) ON LOW PROFICIENCY UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

To my late father, *Ibrahim Gani bin Abdul Kassim*, who taught me about life.
May you find peace and happiness in Paradise.

To my beloved mother, *Bashira Bee binti Yacoob*, for her endless prayers,
support, love and encouragement.

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

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

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of using Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) on low proficiency upper elementary students' writing skill and writing motivation. This research fills the gap by exploring the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary learners in Malaysian context, studying those effects on cognitive and motivational aspects while providing in-depth insights into the effects of EWI. The research samples were thirty-two low proficiency upper 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 students' writing skill before and after the implementation of EWI which reflected the effectiveness of using EWI in developing low proficiency upper elementary students' writing skill. It was comprehensively reported that EWI enhanced writing motivation of low proficiency upper elementary students by changing their negative perceptions about writing as well as promoting autonomous and controlled motivation. 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 Pengajaran Penulisan Secara Explisit (PPSE) ke atas kemahiran menulis dan motivasi terhadap penulisan pelajar tahap 2 yang berkemahiran rendah. Kajian ini memenuhi keperluan mengkaji kesan PPSE terhadap pelajar tahap 2 berkemahiran rendah di Malaysia, mengkaji secara spesifik aspek kognitif dan motivasi seterusnya memberikan analisis menyeluruh mengenai kesan PPSE. Sampel kajian adalah tiga puluh dua pelajar tahap 2 berkemahiran 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 PPSE dan secara langsung membuktikan pelaksanaan kaedah PPSE efektif dalam meningkatkan kemahiran menulis pelajar tahap 2 yang berkemahiran rendah. Di samping itu, PPSE telah meningkatkan motivasi terhadap penulisan pelajar tahap 2 yang berkemahiran rendah dengan mengubah persepsi negatif mereka terhadap penulisan serta meningkatkan motivasi autonomi dan terkawal. 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

EWI	-	Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI)
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

While the education system has been changing its paragon towards becoming so text-oriented, writing has been regarded as one of the most essential skills to students (Rietdijk et al., 2018). In fact, writing well has become the necessity for young learners and has been viewed as the prerequisite for participation in civic life and global economy (Graham & Perin, 2007; Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018; Teng, 2019). Nevertheless, in many educational settings, writing instructions are not given much attention (Soiferman, 2017; Stanford, 2019) especially in terms of the significance of those strategies in developing learners' writing skills. Among those instructions, the most distinguished to teach low proficiency learners techniques for planning, revising, and composing texts is Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI henceforth) or known as strategy instruction (Graham & Harris, 1993). EWI has been well-documented in terms of its effectiveness in enhancing writing skills and writing performance (Graham & Perin, 2007; Soiferman, 2017; Stanford, 2019) of (a) adult learners (Abbuhl, 2012; Manan & Raslee, 2018; Dayyani, 2019; Gomez-Laich et al., 2019), (b) young adults (Clark, 2013; Soiferman, 2017; Stanford, 2019; Mastan et al., 2017), (c) upper primary students (López et al., 2017; Teng, 2019; De Smedt 2019), (d) low proficiency writers (Harris et al., 2006), as well as helping learners with learning disabilities (Sexton et al., 1998; Butler, 1999). Following such trends in the research on writing, the current study aims to explore the effects of Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) on low proficiency upper elementary students in the selected setting.

This chapter explains the background of the study in section 1.2 and followed by the statement of problem in section 1.3. The research objectives are specified in section 1.4 while research questions are listed in section 1.5. In section 1.6, the research hypotheses are further explained. Section 1.7 discusses the scope of the study followed

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by section 1.8, the significance of the study. The theoretical framework is explained in section 1.9 and the conceptual framework is exemplified in section 1.10. The definition of key terms are discussed in section 1.11. The whole chapter is summarised in section 1.12.

1.2   Background of Study

Year 2021 marks the beginning of the third wave as outlined in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. As documented in it, the efforts of continuously enhancing English language proficiency have been always of paramount importance towards achieving excellence with elevated operational flexibility (Ministry Of Education, 2012). Besides, the compulsory schooling has been extended from six to 11 years. Paradoxically, notwithstanding the efforts and the longer years spent on learning English, Malaysian students are reported as having low English command. (Yunus & Mat, 2014; Hazita, 2016; Husaini et al., 2016; Yaacob et al. 2020). Yunus and Mat (2014) through their findings designate Malaysian students as having poor language skills, lack of motivation and limited vocabulary in English which is supported by Husaini et al. (2016). Furthermore, they claim writing as the most critical skill that despite acknowledging its importance, students find it very challenging.

While further accentuating this concern, Yunus and Mat (2014) through their study, bring our attention to the rural areas where the issue is more prevalent. A huge number of upper elementary students are reported as having difficulty to write as writing requires them to be proficient in various components of language skills (Teng, 2019).

The poor command and low proficiency in English are due to the cognitive demands of writing as pointed out by many researchers in this area of study. Most of them specified writing skill as challenging and laborious to be acquired and learned compared to other language skills (De Smedt et al., 2018; Teng 2019; Zheng, 1999). In addition, the complex writing process also contributes towards the problems mentioned above. This challenging nature of writing has been the major factor which

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develops a negative attitude towards learning (Clark, 2013; Butler, 1999). According to Loan and Yen (2017), negative attitudes exhibited by learners affect their overall achievement. This problem underlines the motivational aspect of learning.

In fact, motivational issues are common especially in rural areas (Mat & Yunus, 2014) and as summarised by Yaacob et al. (2020), low motivation leads to low proficiency level which is supported by Thang et al., (2011) that attitudes and motivation of learners determine their proficiency and examination grades. Indeed, motivation drives learners to develop and enhance their writing skill. Adding to that, we should consider teaching methods and types of instructions provided by the educators as those factors do affect writing specifically in the second language (De Smedt and Van Keer, 2017; Wang et al., 2015).

The discussion above set the background of the study by accentuating on the concern of providing effective writing instructions to improve writing performance and motivation in order to improve students' proficiency level. Although Yaacob et al. (2020) stated the fundamental importance of educators' role in using effective teaching methods and instruction, developing ESL learners' writing skill as underlined by Yunus and Mat (2014) is never an easy task.

The significance of providing effective writing instruction in improving learners' writing skill has been comprehensively reported in many studies. In fact, Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) highlights their concern about the importance of writing instruction which is further contextualised in elementary school settings by Clark (2013) and De Smedt et al. (2016). One of those evidence-based writing instructions which has been proven effective to elementary school learners is explicit writing instruction (Clark 2013; De Smedt and Van Keer, 2014; De Smedt 2019). With the identical concept of providing direct and clear writing instruction, 'explicit writing instruction' has been termed differently in different studies. For instance, Finlayson and Mccrudden (2019) referred to it as For example, Graham and Harris (1993), Graham et al. (2000) as well as Teng (2019) in their study referred it as the Self-regulated strategy development while Finlayson and Mccrudden (2019) extended the term as teacher-implemented self-regulated strategy development. Besides, López, et

al. (2017) used the term 'direct instruction and strategy modelling' to represent explicit writing instruction. Another term used is writing strategy instruction in Mastan et al. (2017) and last but not least, Soiferman (2017) termed it as the direct explicit instruction.

In spite of the escalating experiential authentication on EWI, educators barely embrace this strategy to teach writing as stated by Stanford (2019) they do not realise the impacts of using EWI on learners' writing skills. Besides, EWI is occasionally viewed as opposing the constructivist thinking (Graham & Harris, 1997) and its effects on learners' self-efficacy (Graham &Harris, 1993) or writing motivation remain unclear. This calls for additional studies to explore the effects of using EWI on learners as well as how it affects the development of writing skill and motivation.

Although extensive studies have been implemented within this area, there are still a few crucial facets which appear ambiguous in this research literature. First, the scope of the study particularly the participants and contexts. Majority of studies focused on adults and young adults learners within the continuum of average to good writers. Less made an attempt to investigate the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary learners. Besides, based on the literature, only a few studies involved Malaysian students. Second, despite being a powerful approach which might bring positive impacts on students' learning, as pointed out by Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007), EWI's impacts on other areas of motivation remain inexplicit. Third, the majority of studies conducted lie within the range of quantitative design with numerical data being presented in order to prove the effectiveness of EWI with very few aimed at exploring the issue in depth. Thus, there is a dire need to explore the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary students in Malaysian context.

1.3   Problem Statement

This research is based on the significance of teaching writing skill to learners (Graham & Perin, 2007; Clark, 2013; Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018; Teng, 2019) as having the skills will improve performance in all areas of life (Stanford,

2019). Since writing involves intricate cognitive processes, it is undeniably challenging to write (Mastan et al., 2017; Padmawati & Artini, 2019) especially for L2 learners as pointed out by Cole and Feng (2015), they do not come to school with the same background knowledge as native English speakers.

Thus, this section briefly states the writing issues and problems reported in previous research while connecting it to the need of effective writing instruction to develop students' writing skill and writing motivation. Thus, the three gaps identified are the need for more research: i. exploring the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary learners in Malaysian context, ii. studying the effects of EWI on both cognitive and motivational aspects and iii. combining quantitative data with rich qualitative data to provide in-depth insights into the effects of EWI.

Most of the studies conducted in Malaysian contexts specifically in English as a second language revealed the lack of language competence particularly in terms of writing among students (Mastan et al., 2017). Those studies further accentuate a few problems faced by L2 learners such as limited vocabulary (Stapa & Abdul, 2006), inability to generate ideas (Hyland, 1996), inability to construct sentences while considering the grammar part of the language (Marlyna et al., 2007; Ghabool et al., 2012), lack of motivation and interest (Ganapathy & Ying, 2016) as well as lack of ineffective writing instructions (Mohd & Abdullah, 2009; Azizaturrohmi, 2019). These problems eventually produce a bunch of low proficiency learners. In essence, the problems listed above can be grouped into two major challenges which are cognitive and motivational challenges.

Indeed, the challenges specified above are consistent with the selected sample which is the low proficiency of upper elementary students within the research setting. The students specifically the participants of this study find it difficult to come up with words to form sentences as they are lacking in vocabulary. Even worse, they find it difficult to spell words, adding to this are the punctuation and paragraphing problems. The most serious problem is that they do not have the idea to write. Specifically, most of them find it challenging to produce written texts due to cognitive constraints and complexity of the writing process (Clark, 2013; De Smedt 2019). The complex nature

of the writing process is explained by Teng (2019) as involving three consecutive stages. The first stage is the planning stage which involves producing and organising thoughts. The second stage involves generating texts which actually refers to the process of translating the ideas into words and sentences. The final stage is the revision stage where the process of rewriting texts occurs with the aim of improving the text quality.

This eventually led to having a negative attitude towards writing. As explained by Teng (2019), when learners struggle to communicate their ideas in writing, they eventually end up in frustration, lack of motivation, and writing-related anxiety. As claimed by Clark (2013) and Butler (1999), negative attitude affects students' motivation to write. Since most of them think that writing class is difficult and boring, they show less interest and motivation to involve in it. Despite being taught writing using traditional methods of model essay and drilling, they show poor writing skills which were clearly depicted in their final year achievement test.

There are many contributing factors namely setting, familiarity and exposure to English Language, family background, writing instruction as well as motivation. The school is located in a suburban area surrounded by a community who use their mother tongue (Malay Language). Thus, English language can be seen as a foreign rather than a second language which further highlights the notion that they do not have the exposure, motivation and necessity to learn and acquire the language.

Numerous studies have proven that with the implementation of on-going suitable writing strategies, students can learn to independently produce written texts while overcoming their problems in writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). Unfortunately, the educators' failure to recognise and implement effective writing instructions as well as the exam-oriented education system which prioritise results rather than learners' overall cognitive development (Koo, 2008 as cited in Mastan et al., 2017) affect the process of developing students' writing skill.

This put a great demand on educators as noted by Soiferman (2017), educators can no longer abandon writing instruction to chance. In fact, she suggests that writing

instruction should be taught explicitly to develop learners' writing skills. This view is further supported by Hochman and Wexler (2017). It is saddening to state that in many educational settings, writing instruction has not received the required attention as highlighted by Stanford (2019), many educators do not realise the vitality of teaching writing explicitly. Indeed, these problems serve as challenges for English Language learners in Malaysia (Mastan et al., 2017).

Providing high-quality writing instruction is pertinent to develop beginning writers' writing skills due to the complex and resource demanding nature of writing tasks (De Smedt and Van Keer, 2017). There is a list of research focusing on the language teaching pedagogy specifically writing skills suggest the need for explicit writing instruction in developing writing skills among learners regardless of their age (Clark, 2013; Soiferman, 2017; Lopez, 2017; Mastan et al., 2017).

Effective writing instruction is vital to deal with the complexity of writing and students' poor writing skills. In this respect, it is appropriate to support low proficiency learners and beginning writers in developing effective writing knowledge, skills, and strategies (De Smedt and Van Keer, 2017). As claimed by Harris et al., (2006) Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) is an effective strategy to help this group of students to acquire writing knowledge and strategies. Many researchers have been investigating the use of EWI to enhance students' writing skills. However, most of the researchers focused on young adults and adults learners (Azizaturrohmi, 2019) with less attempt made to explore this issue among low proficiency upper elementary students in Malaysian context. Besides, there is a lack of studies conducted for low proficiency upper elementary students in Malaysian contexts. Therefore, there is a dire need for teachers to implement an effective writing instruction to develop, improve and enhance writing skills to produce a competent young generation in accordance with the aspirations outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

Taking into account the lack of studies in Malaysian context focusing on this area, this research serves a significant role in addressing the issue as well as providing a reference for educators and language practitioners. Thus, this research explores on how the Explicit Writing Instruction affects low proficiency upper elementary

students' writing skills and motivation by taking into consideration the lack of studies in Malaysian context. The participants of the study are guided in a step-by-step writing lesson (Explicit Writing Instruction).

The comprehensive discussion above underlines the critical need to explore the effects of EWI within the selected sample and setting. This research fills the gap by i. exploring the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary learners in Malaysian context, ii. studying the effects of EWI on both cognitive and motivational aspects and iii. supporting quantitative data with rich qualitative data to provide in-depth insights into the effects of EWI. Hence, the explanation above underlines two research objectives which are described in the next section below.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aims:

1. To explore the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary students' writing skill.

2. To explore the effects of EWI on low proficiency upper elementary students' writing motivation.

1.5 Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the use of EWI affect low proficiency upper elementary students' writing skill?

2. How does the use of EWI affect low proficiency upper elementary students' writing motivation?

1.6   Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are defined for the first research question in order to measure the effectiveness of the EWI on low proficiency students' writing skill based on the pre-test and post-test conducted. There is no hypothesis for the second research question as the analysis would be based on the frequency and themes.

The hypotheses are as follows:

a. Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in students' writing skill before and after the implementation of Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI).

b. Alternative hypothesis: There is a significant difference in students' writing skill before and after the implementation of Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI).

1.7   Scope of the Study

This study is carried out in one of the elementary schools in Pasir Gudang, Johor. The overall population of the school during the implementation of the study is 88 students. There are altogether 48 upper elementary students but this study involves only 32 of them who are selected based on homogenous purposive sampling technique to fulfill the aim of the study (refer to section 3.3) with a number of 5 students willing to be involved in the focus-group interview session. The unequal distribution of the students based on gender (22 boys and 10 girls) is not taken into consideration as it is not within the objectives of the study. Table 1.1 depicts the overview of the scope of this study.

Table 1.1 Scope of the Study

Research Questions	Methodology	Key Concepts	Respondents
i) How does the use of EWI affect low proficiency upper elementary students' writing skill?	Mixed-method -Quasi- experimental design	In-depth discussion of the effects of EWI on students' writing skill	32 upper elementary students of one of the schools in Pasir Gudang, Johor
ii) How does the use of EWI affect low proficiency upper elementary students' writing motivation?		In-depth discussion of the effects of EWI on students' writing motivation	

By referring to the table above, it can be concluded that this study addresses only two research questions which aimed at exploring the effects of EWI towards students' writing skill and writing motivation respectively. With close reference to the aim and selected sample, the findings do not represent the whole population of either the upper elementary students in the selected school or nationwide.

1.8   Significance of the Study

This study is significant for both educators and researchers.

1.8.1   Significance for Educators

While analysing and scrutinising the primary school syllabus, we might realise that the focus is on developing learners' writing ability which actually begins with the construction of words and phrases eventually lead to the formation of sentences and paragraphs (Rahim et al., 2017). It is our concern that many teachers are sceptical in terms of their expectations, especially when they want their students to produce composition without having enough guidance or steps on how to make good ones. Instead of focusing on the writing process which is crucial to produce successful

writers, teachers tend to just look at the final product. As a result, Teng (2019) in his research pointed out that a large number of upper primary students are underprepared for English writing. Similarly, the exam-oriented environment puts a constraint on the strategies specifically the writing instruction employed by teachers. As more time is needed to assist the struggling learners, teachers usually do not opt to implement EWI since it is time-consuming. (Mastan et al., 2017). This study sheds light on the advantages of using EWI to facilitate the writing processes.

1.8.2 Significance for Researchers

This study is significant to the researchers who are interested in analysing issues in writing as this study fills the gap of exploring the motivational factors in writing. Besides, the focus is on the upper elementary learners. According to De Smedt et al. (2016), the period between elementary and secondary schooling, specifically the upper elementary grades is marked as the most relevant time to motivate students. This is due to the fact that during that time, students are expected to develop the ability to deal with more complex academic tasks (De Smedt et al., 2016). In addition, De Smedt and Van Keer (2018) reported on the lack of studies on explicit instruction and its effects on writing motivation.

Obviously, there is a lack of research focusing on writing among young bilingual learners as most of the researchers are interested in exploring and investigating this area among monolingual speakers (Hammer et al., 2014 as cited in Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to understand young bilingual learners' writing development and identify instructional pedagogies that support their growth as writers.

Indeed, less research has made an attempt to look at the effectiveness of using EWI on elementary students as most of those research focus on older students. Besides, it is quite difficult to find studies focusing on the same area in Malaysian context. Taking into consideration these factors and significance of writing skills to produce competent generation, this study is interested in investigating the writing instruction

for struggling upper-elementary students in Malaysian context. Clearly, as discussed by Harris et al., (2006), teachers should identify those struggling young learners and provide them with extra assistance or special writing instruction to address literacy problems in the future. Therefore, this study serves as reference and guide for teachers, researchers and those interested in understanding the relevance of EWI in meeting the needs of young struggling learners within Malaysian context by scrutinising the effects of using EWI and how it develops writing skills of the selected sample.

1.9   Theoretical Framework

Figure 1.1   Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory

The Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) which is implemented in this research is based on the idea of providing scaffolding to develop writing skills among the students which is grounded by Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory (as depicted in Figure 1.1). One of the main goals of it is to make explicit the writing processes and all the interrelated elements as a way of scaffolding the students in internalising and developing writing skills and as stated by Gomez-Laich et al., (2019), direct or explicit writing instruction is a kind of scaffolding process as it helps the learners to realise on the steps and progress across the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). Similarly, this process accentuates clear improvements in a few distinguished aspects such as students' writing performance, attitude and interests. (Padmadewi & Artini, 2019) which further implies the effectiveness of EWI towards developing writing skills.

Based on Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory, the extensive practice and guidance provided throughout the EWI help children to internalise and self-regulate those writing purposes and tasks while actively moving across the ZPD. This constructivism theory accentuates the interactive roles of educators; purposeful writing tasks combined with the use of language skills as well as the importance of practising those writing tasks and goals in order to optimise writing skills.

As proposed by Arnold (2017), Vygotsky's theory allows English Language (EL) students to learn language by interacting, observing and experiencing. He describes these three ways as a representation of a real-life setting as well as part of the first language acquisition process (Arnold, 2017). In essence, EWI with the above elements embedded within the steps attempts to As cited by Krashen (2003) in Arnold (2017) utilise natural language acquisition methods to instruction and practice eventually establishing less stressful and less anxiety-inducing environments further supporting language acquisition.

Figure 1.2   The 5E Instructional Model

Besides, the EWI which is administered in this study is based on the 5E Instructional Model (as described in Figure 1.2). The 5E Instructional Model was developed based on cognitive psychology and constructivist learning theory. This model consists of five stages which are to engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate. These stages guide the overall flow of EWI. In steps 1 until 3, participants are engaged in writing instruction and they are guided in exploring the writing process through modeling. The writing instruction is followed by the next E which is Explain

in step 4 where the teacher or facilitator explains the process in depth through guided practice. The next step is Elaborate, where the previous strategies and steps are elaborated in terms of the application in context (via independent practice). The assessment or closure which is the final step is intended to evaluate the overall technique.

The effects of EWI on students' motivation is based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000b). Motivation is distinguished into two subtypes which are the autonomous writing motivation and controlled writing motivation. Autonomous motivation refers to engaging in a writing activity for its inherent satisfaction or personal value. On the contrary, controlled motivation involves engaging in a writing activity due to internal or external pressure (De Smedt et al., 2018). Both motivation will be measured using the SRQ-Writing motivation to explore the effects of EWI on students' writing motivation.
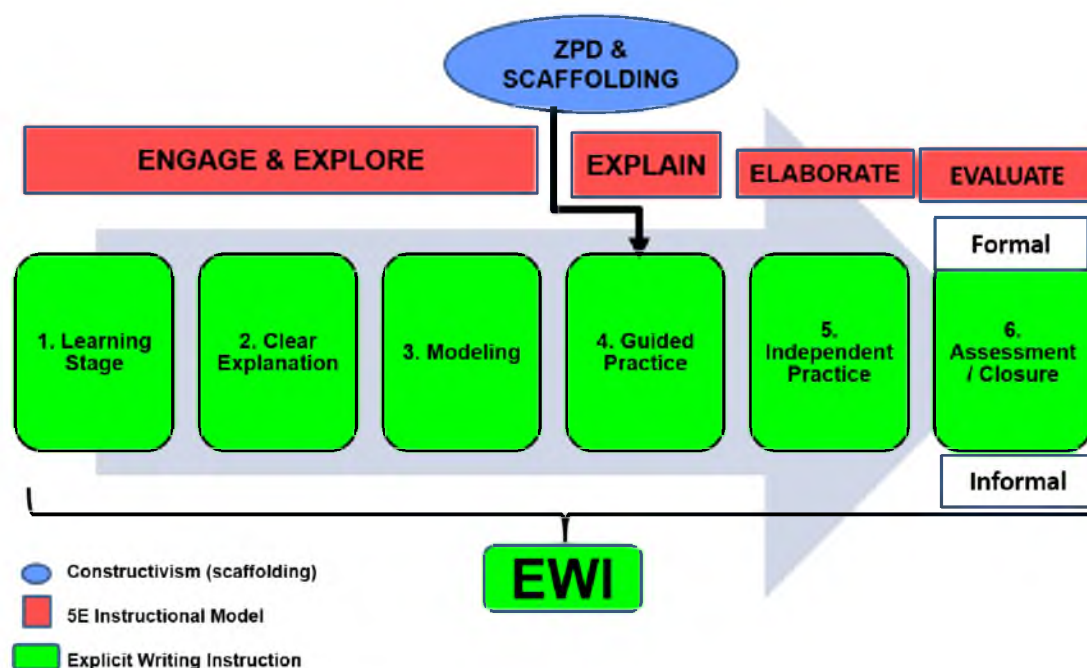

Figure 1.3   Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI)

Figure 1.3 shows the concept of Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) which is a guided step-by-step writing instruction aimed at developing low proficiency upper elementary learners' writing skills. This teaching strategy is grounded by the idea of the ineffectiveness of the traditional sample essays and drilling techniques of teaching

writing. The sample will undergo three weeks of EWI. The procedures are explained in detail in the methodology section. EWI consists of 6 steps namely learning stage, clear explanation, modelling, guided practice, independent practice and assessment or closure. The stages are developed based on the Constructivism theory and 5E Instructional Model.

The concept of EWI combines two components of explicit teaching which are the writing knowledge and strategies (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2017). Empirically, EWI has been found to be successful in teaching young learners writing knowledge (Fitzgerald & Teasley, 1986; Koster et al., 2015). The explicit teaching of writing knowledge revolves around the process of teaching genre knowledge and structural knowledge (Graham et al., 2013). While genre knowledge refers to the ability to understand the goal and content of a specific genre which is vital to produce relevant pieces of work, text structures knowledge refers to knowing the various components or elements constituting a genre. Albeit the provision of sample essays is efficacious in developing students' writing knowledge (Abbuhl, 2011), this traditional method does not improve students' writing.

The second component of explicitly teaching the writing strategies includes ensuring that the students should first learn strategies on how to plan texts, when, and why. They learn to write texts by creating and transcribing concepts, based on their preparation. And finally, they must get used to revising the content, structure and surface aspects, like spelling, in order to achieve improved text quality (Berninger et al., 1996).

The implementation of EWI in this study is based on the following assumptions; first, modelling the writing process is effective in helping struggling young learners (Fidalgo et al., 2015). Second, educators should explicitly describe the writing strategies by using different techniques such as mnemonics to assist the learners in memorising the steps (Graham et al., 2000). Third, educators should provide adequate and varied opportunities for students to practise combined with time-based feedback and guidance (Graham et al., 2000). Finally, providing personalised support and input through scaffolding is crucial and since the aim of EWI is towards

producing the autonomous learners especially in using the strategies, educators'
support or guidance should be slowly decreased which is evident in the independent
practice stage.

1.10   Conceptual Framework
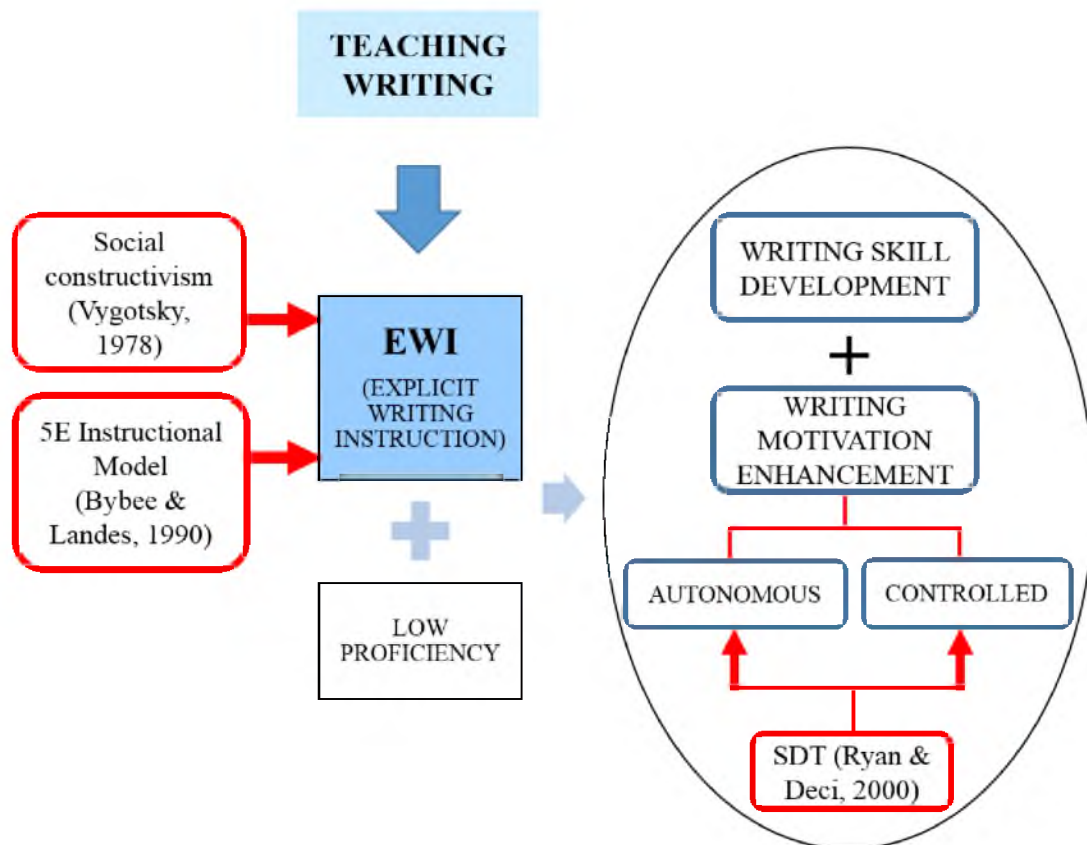
Figure 1.4   Conceptual framework

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of EWI on low proficiency
upper elementary learners. Figure 1.4 depicts the conceptual framework of this study.
Briefly, the main focus of this study is; (i) teaching writing, and in this, there are two
key concepts i.e. (i) EWI and (ii) low proficiency students, that will contribute to the
study's outcome which are the development of students' writing skill and their
writing motivation. The writing motivation will be analysed based on the subtypes
(autonomous and controlled) as proposed in the Self-Determination Theory.

Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) can be interpreted as giving learners direct and specific information or rule formulation about a target form and it has been found to play a significant role in second language (L2) learning (Clark, 2013; Lopez et al., 2017; Hochman and Wexler, 2017; Dayyani, 2019). The implementation of EWI is based on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding concept. Besides, it is guided by 5E Instructional Model by Bybee and Landes (1990). The stages are systematically structured according to the learning model mentioned.

This study revolves around the implementation of EWI to address the writing problems identified among the low proficiency upper elementary students. Those problems are classified as the cognitive challenges and motivational challenges. The cognitive challenges deal with the complexity of writing tasks and processes while the motivational challenges refer to students' negative perception and attitude towards writing.

Thus, the EWI is implemented as an intervention to develop students' writing skill eventually dealing with the cognitive challenges due to, as claimed by Teng (2019) the complexity of the writing process. Besides, the motivational challenges can be dealt with by providing explicit instruction (Hall, 2016). As exemplified by Clark (2013) it is always the underlying concern of EWI to meet the needs of learners by changing their attitude towards writing. In summation, EWI should be regarded as an effective approach to tailor the unique requirement of providing motivation and boosting learners' interests which is essential to improve the learning process.

Hence, the effects of providing low proficiency students' with explicit writing instruction are observed and analysed in terms of writing skill development and enhancement of writing motivation. The effects of EWI on students' motivation is explored based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000b). The writing motivation is measured using an appropriate scale which distinguishes the autonomous writing motivation and controlled writing motivation. The autonomous motivation refers to engaging in a writing activity for its inherent satisfaction or personal value. On the contrary, controlled motivation involves

engaging in a writing activity due to internal or external pressure (De Smedt et al., 2018).

Above all, the discussion brings our attention to the conceptual framework of the study while highlighting the significance of using EWI to develop students' writing skill and to enhance their writing motivation. Therefore, the following section describes the important key terms in this study.

1.11 Definition of Terms

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

1.11.1 Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI)

Explicit Writing Instruction (EWI) is a direct instruction in teaching writing. Clark (2013) and Lopez et al. (2017) interpreted it as an approach where learners are provided with direct and specific information or rule formulation about a target form in language learning. In this particular study, it refers to the implementation of systematic, direct, engaging, and success-oriented writing instruction aimed at developing writing skills of the struggling upper elementary students of the selected population which consists of the following general steps, I do, you do, we do, and they do.

1.11.2 Proficiency

Canale (1983) describes language proficiency as a big term which comprises of a language learner's or user's communicative abilities, knowledge systems, and

skills. In this study, the scope of proficiency includes the facets of being able to do something with the language and having knowledge about it (Harsch, 2016).

1.11.3 Upper Elementary

In this study, the term upper elementary describes the education from year 4 to year 6 in primary schools in Malaysia where the age specified for the students is between 10 to 12 years old (Ministry of Education, 2012).

1.11.4 Writing Skill

Writing skill refers to the ability to produce written texts. Specifically, it refers to the ability to deal with multiple components of writing such as choice of writing strategies, subject, organisation, mechanics of writing, vocabulary, grammar, syntax and the targeted audience (Raimes, 1984). In this study, writing skill refers to the ability of students to produce written texts by paying attention to the components of writing.

1.11.5 Writing Motivation

The word 'motivation' which originated from the Latin word "movere", refers to the act of moving. Motivation is a process which instigates, directs and sustains goal-oriented behaviours and activities (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). The writing motivation in this particular research is based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), by Ryan and Deci (2000b) which distinguishes between autonomous and controlled writing motivation. Autonomous writing motivation depicts the presence of inherent satisfaction or the element of personal values while doing certain activity (De Naeghel et al., 2012). Comparatively, controlled writing motivation covers both the internal and external pressure.

1.12 Summary

Above all, this particular chapter has essentially covered the needs for this research by comprehensively explaining about the inadequacy of studies available within the selected area. The lack of studies conducted focusing low proficiency upper elementary learners in Malaysian context highlights the significance of this study. Hence, the current study aims at generating crucial findings for educators, learners and researchers. Thus, the next chapter put forth the literature review based on information gathered from related studies and research.

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