

**USE OF PROCESS WRITING TO ENHANCE
WRITING ABILITIES AMONG YEAR 5 PUPILS**

GURMINDER KAUR A/P HARI SINGH

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

USE OF PROCESS WRITING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' ABILITIES
AMONG YEAR 5 PUPILS

GURMINDER KAUR A/P HARI SINGH

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*I dedicate this piece of work to my parents, Mr Hari Singh and Madam Sarjit Kaur,
my loving and supporting husband, Mr Harminder Singh, my beloved children,
Akashdeep Singh, Hashreena Kaur and Hashveena Kaur, my
siblings and my friends for their love, motivation and support.*

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ABSTRACT

Writing is often seen as a very difficult skill to master and teachers too find it a difficult skill to teach. This study was to investigate the use of process writing to enhance students' writing abilities among Year 5 pupils. The study was carried out on one group, the experimental group. Thirty Year 5 pupils from the national primary school were the respondents of the study. The research instruments used were pre-test, post-test and teachers' interview questions. The study was administered for two weeks during their English lessons. Five stages of treatments in the process writing approach were administered including pre-writing, drafting, rewriting, editing and publishing. The intervention was administered to the experimental group. A pre-test was given before the intervention followed by a post-test after the intervention to the experimental group. An external examiner was involved in marking the scripts to retain the validity of the scores. The test scores were analysed using the SPSS and the essays were analysed to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. Four teachers were interviewed to find out some of the methods they use in teaching writing and their views in using process writing in the classroom to teach writing. The results indicated that the intervention was successfully carried out and the results obtained were favourable. This shows that students if given to learn the process or stages needed in writing will be able to write better and improve their writing skills. The importance should be given more towards the steps in writing and not the final product. Therefore teachers need to ensure that students are exposed to the different stages in writing instead of the focusing on the final product.

ABSTRAK

Penulisan esei dalam Bahasa Inggeris merupakan satu kemahiran yang sukar bagi pelajar menguasai dan guru juga menghadapi masalah untuk mengajar kemahiran tersebut.. Kajian ini menyiasat bahawa penggunaan kaedah ‘process writing’ dapat meningkatkan kemahiran bertulis di kalangan pelajar Tahun 5. Satu kumpulan kajian sahaja terlibat dalam kajian ini Tiga puluh pelajar sekolah rendah telah menjadi responden dalam kajian ini. Instrument kajian yang digunakan ialah ujian pra, ujian pos dan soalan temuduga untuk guru. Kajian ini dijalankan selama dua minggu pada waktu pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Sebanyak lima langkah dalam rawatan kaedah ‘process writing’ dikendalikan termasuk ‘pre-writing’, ‘drafting’, ‘rewriting’, ‘editing’ and ‘publishing’ dalam kajian ini. Intervensi dijalankan keatas kumpulan kajian. Satu ujian pra diberikan kepada kumpulan kajian dan satu ujian pos diberikan selepas intervensi. Seorang pemeriksa kertas terlibat dalam penandaan ujian pra dan ujian pos untuk mengekalkan keesahan markah yang diberi. Markah ujian di analisa dengan menggunakan sistem SPSS. Kandungan esei di kaji untuk melihat keberkesanan rawatan tersebut. Seramai empat orang guru ditemuduga untuk mendapatkan maklumat bagaimana mereka mengajar penulisan dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan member pendapat mereka mengenai penggunaan kaedah ‘process writing’ dalam pengajaran penulisan Bahasa Inggeris. Keputusan yang positif diperolehi. Ini menunjukkan sekiranya pelajar didedahkan kepada langkah-langkah yang diperlukan dalam penulisan esei Bahasa Inggeris maka mereka dapat menulis esei yang lebih baik dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan dapat meningkatkan kemahiran mereka dalam menulis esei. Keutamaan harus diberikan kepada langkah-langkah yang terlibat dalam penulisan berbanding dengan produk yang terakhir. Jesteru itu guru-guru harus memastikan pelajar-pelajar didedahkan kepada langkah-langkah dalam penulisan esei bahasa Inggeris dan bukan sahaja utamakan produk terakhir yang dihasilkan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There have been moments when many of us sit to write, nothing seems to come, not even a single word. We usually sit and stare at a blank paper hoping an idea will soon pop up but it doesn't. We wonder high and low what to write and try our very best to communicate with an unseen audience. Likewise for many students, writing is an arduous task and many of them struggle to fulfil it. What makes writing so difficult? Everyday many second language teachers face a great challenge in teaching writing to young second language learners. Writing is seen not only as a daunting task but often as one of the most difficult skill to be mastered. It demands the integration of diverse cognitive, memory, linguistic, motor and affective skills which together contribute to the writing processes.

Writing is not only the process the writer uses to put words to paper but also the resulting product of that process which is conditioned by its audience and genre. As writing in a second language is further complicated by issues of proficiency in the target language, first language literacy, and differences in culture and rhetorical approach to the text, instruction in writing can effectively improve student

proficiency in a number of key areas.

Writing is an extension of listening and speaking for a second language learner. Therefore, students should be given opportunities to build, extend and refine oral language in order to improve written output. Being aware of the various stages in the development of writing skills and the main issues that concern teachers of writing, we can take actions to resolve them.

Writing affords students an opportunity to clarify their thinking. Through the process of writing, students recognize what they know and what they still need to learn. Graves has observed that "writing makes sense of things for oneself, and then for others" (cited in Bright, 1995, p. 36). Writing promotes intellectual growth as students connect their prior knowledge with new information and refine their concepts (Kresst & Carle, 1999). It enhances understanding and retention (Clark, 2007; Gere, 1985; Langer & Applebee, 1978). "Writing's greatest gift is the ability to help us learn" (Moore, 1994, p. 290).

Most teachers of writing courses concentrate on the written product and view their roles as mainly of assessors and correctors. In the recent years, there has been an increase in emphasis on the links between writing process and the written product. Many educators are positive towards the process approach and think that the students will benefit greatly from this approach (Raimes 1983, Stewart and Cheung 1989, White and Arndt 1991).

As writing is not automatically learned, teachers are encouraged to lead students through the steps that reflect the writing process to enable second language learners to learn the skills of writing. Learning opportunities are created when learners interact with their peers and teachers by focusing on matters of shared interest and that contain opportunities for learning.

The teacher's role is to create an environment in which students will want to write and can learn about writing. The writing process is not confined to writing. It involves the writers in thinking, discussing, reading, planning, writing, editing and rewriting. It is a recursive process in which the writer may begin to write, then make changes and rewrites parts before he or she produces the final paper.

1.2 Background of the Study

The background will discuss the overview of the English Language writing component in The Integrated Curriculum for Primary School, how writing is taught in Malaysian classroom, attitude students have towards learning English especially writing in the second language and performance of students in English papers during the examination.

In The Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR English Language Curriculum), English language is taught from Year 1 at the primary level of education until the end of the secondary level where the syllabus is topic and skill based. The topic provides the content whereby language skills are developed. The syllabus includes the language component, positive moral values, literary elements, the principles of language skills and grammar integration. The language skills of listening, reading and writing form the core of the primary English curriculum. Learners use these skills to talk to and to write to people, to obtain information from various sources and to enjoy a poem or story read to them. The skill of writing is taught to enable learners to express their ideas clearly on paper in legible handwriting or to communicate via the electronic media if the facilities are available in school (Page 3, Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris KBSR, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001).

According to Zamel (1983), writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts, constructing meaning and assessing it at the same time. “Writing in process approaches is seen as predominantly to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge about grammar and text structure” (Badger and White 2000: 154). The skill of writing focuses on developing learners’ writing abilities beginning at the word and phrase levels and progress to the sentence and paragraph levels. For those who are able and capable they must be encouraged to write simple compositions comprising several paragraphs. In writing simple compositions, learners are taught the various steps involved in writing such as planning, drafting, revising and editing. Although much of the writing at this level is guided, the amount of control is relaxed for learners who are able and proficient in the language. (Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris KBSR, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001, p.8) Attention is paid first to the content and meaning and then to the form. All learners are encouraged to write for different purposes and for different audiences. Of late, there has been too much emphasis on examination and the ability of attaining excellent grades so the students tend to ‘memorise’ writing scripts and set sentence structures instead of developing their ideas clearly and excelling in writing skills.

However despite the holistic curriculum and integrated use of the four main skills, writing is still a problem among students (Chitravelu, 1995). A good evidence is a study conducted by Jamali and Hasliza (1995) who investigated students’ perception in the importance of being proficient in English in 42 rural schools in Selangor. The findings from the study revealed that 23% of them perceived themselves as being the least able in writing skills. Jamali and Hazliza argued that this situation is significantly related to the students’ lack of exposure towards the target language and lack of practice in using the language for communication.

The traditional teacher-centered approach is a method that has long been used in teaching and learning. This approach is currently still being used by many teachers. The approach leads students to be passive and they do not have an

opportunity to give or find information on their own. The information gained by the students is mainly what they hear from the teacher. They are the receiver of materials and the teacher is the transmitter of the material. The teacher comes into the class, presents or delivers materials while the students sit and listen comprehending the information given. Today, such an approach is considered less effective in the teaching and learning process. In supporting this, Ebenizar (1997) stated that most of the time these teachers do not teach the students the strategies used or applied in writing essays. The common practice in the classroom is that these teachers would introduce the title of the essays and give a few main points for the students to elaborate on. Then, the students are required to write without any guidance by the teacher. The teachers just make assumptions that the students are able to write on their own. The students are left with no other choice but to write the essay independently. After the essays are marked and given to the respective students, feedback given by the teacher is often not helpful (Loh, 1999). This is attributed to some teachers having the tendency to focus more on giving feedback on grammar. Students, then only correct the grammar aspects but they still do not know how to improve the essay. Indirectly this causes frustration to the students and discourages them to write. This situation prolongs and students will not be able to make much progress in writing especially in expressing and organizing their ideas and elaborating their points (Loh, 1999).

Teachers too have the tendency to rely on model essays and workbooks as the main source to help students obtain good grades (Loh, 1999). Writing activities becomes meaningless this way. The teachers only focus on essay writing where as students should be introduced and exposed to a variety of writing activities like poem, portfolio, writing lyrics of songs and short stories (Ebenizar, 1997). Thus this makes the writing classroom 'dry, boring and rigid', especially when the focus of the writing class is now turned to spotting the potential examination questions (Loh,1999).The writing activity is confined to writing essays, copying the model essays and memorizing the points of essays (Chitravelu, 1995).

When it comes to writing, most of the students would avoid it (Ebenizar, 2007). They consider writing as a difficult task especially when they do not know how to express what they have in their mind. They believe with the lack of vocabulary in them and limited practice using the language obviously stops them from being a good writer. These negative beliefs and attitudes in students have caused many teachers to complain of not able to re-train their students to be better writers.

The Primary School Evaluation Test, also known as Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (commonly abbreviated as UPSR in Malay), is a national examination taken by all students in Malaysia at the end of their sixth year in primary school before they leave for secondary school. It is prepared and examined by the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia), an agency that constitutes the Ministry of Education. The English examination is divided into 2 papers, Paper 1 and Paper 2. Paper 1 contains 40 multiple choice questions which test the vocabulary level of students, using social expressions, grammar, punctuation, spelling and comprehension questions based on a liner and a non-linear text. Paper 2, has 3 subjective questions. Students describe a picture in 5 sentences, transfer information from a text into a table and write a short paragraph on a choice made from the information in the given text and writing a guided essay based on three pictures. Therefore in order to get good grades, students need to perform well in both Paper 1 and Paper 2. However, many students failed to do well in Paper 2 because they are not often able to write good essays. The researcher has been an examiner for the UPSR English paper and has seen that students mainly have difficulty in writing the guided essay.

The common writing lesson taught in Malaysian classroom involves a short brainstorming in the classroom on the topic for points or ideas, an introduction to the vocabulary or choice of words to be used and the students write the essay. The teacher collects and marks the essays providing some level of comments necessary and awards the suitable marks. Copying is another form of writing commonly used to

expose students to writing. Students are given model essays of different genres to copy as another way of students learning to write.

Thus, there is a need for teachers to guide the students to write effectively and not just because they need to do so. Therefore, using process writing could help the students to plan, revise, rearrange, re-read and produce multiple drafts before they are able to produce a good composition. This form of approach has been widely accepted and practiced in many countries. This approach also allows the students to learn and practice the different stages in the process before reaching their final product of writing. Leki (1991) states that the process approach is an approach to teaching writing that places more emphasis on the stages of the writing process than on the final product.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In Malaysian schools, students start learning English since they were in primary schools. Despite being taught to write English for more than six years, students are still unable to write good essays (Chitravelu, 1995). Students often perceive writing essays as a negative experience because the teacher often gives a lot of negative criticism. Due to this students always try to avoid writing for the fear of making mistakes. They do not enjoy writing and have negative perceptions towards writing activities. (Ebenizar, 1997)

In schools students are usually not exposed to the various stages in writing. Teachers provide various types of materials leading towards writing. In addition, teachers seldom write out the types of expressions used for a particular writing task. Students need to be introduced to the steps in writing as it will help them be better writers to come and know what is required in a writing task.

Mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning. Some language learners and teachers believe, students' writing in second language generally produce texts that contain varying degree of grammatical and rhetorical errors development. The writing process as a pedagogical tool is only appropriate for second language learners if with regard to their attention is given to linguistic development. Hence, the different stages in the process writing approach are able to help students build their linguistic development

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of process writing in improving students essay writing skills. The study also seeks to discover the perceptions of teachers towards using the process writing approach in teaching writing skills in their classroom.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This research intends to meet the following objectives:

- Investigate the effectiveness of process writing in improving students' essay writing skills
- Investigate the perception of teachers in using the process writing approach.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated for the purpose of this study. The research questions are as follows:

- I. Is process writing effective in improving students' essay writing skills?
- II. What are the perceptions of teachers in using the process writing approach?

1.7 The Significance of the Study

In view of the fact that many second language learners are weak in their writing skills, teachers must find ways and means to improve their skills. The writing process is not just about writing sentences but there are many aspects of writing that these learners should possess in order to be good writers.

Since the Malaysia Education System puts emphasis on examinations, teachers teach to ensure these learners produce good results. There are some teachers who at the same time make their lessons fun, creative and interesting to draw these learners' attention. Writing skills can be improved in many different ways. Students' need to be given ample opportunities to write in their writing classes. Thus, this study may be significant to the teachers and the learners in order to develop and improve their writing skills.

The results of this study is expected to provide useful information for readers, especially for English teachers about process writing and how it can be used in teaching writing effectively. Errors in writing in a second language can occur when students are grappling with new subject matter and difficult topics. Learners are often unsure of what they want to express which results in making mistakes. Students, overall have many ideas but do not have enough language to express these ideas in a comprehensive way. The process approach technique ultimately helps students to become autonomous learners.

This research hopefully will assist English teachers to seek ways in reducing the problems faced by students in writing and provide insight in explaining the promising role of process writing in language teaching and learning in the classroom. It will also provide additional input to other researchers who are interested in carrying out a research in the same field with certain interests. This research will serve as an example where researches could be done in other language skills as well as other learning processes that seem to be a problem with different students with different learning abilities. Lastly, this technique will serve as a guide for teachers who face the same writing problems with their students and they will be able to use it as a guide to overcome their problems.

1.8 Scope of the study

This study involves primary school students who are from an average Year Five class. They come from an urban school in the district of Johor Bahru , in the state of Johor. Thirty students are chosen for this research that is in an average class from a total of ninety-seven Year Five students. They consist of Malay boys and girls.

The study primarily investigates how process writing approach enhances pupils' writing abilities which will improve their guided essay writing. In relation to

the study, thirty samples of students' writings will be collected from the pre-test and post-test respectively from the experimental group. The essays collected will then be analysed to distinguish the effectiveness of using process writing in teaching writing. The essays will be marked holistically according to the standard format of the Primary School Evaluation Test, (UPSR) marking scheme. It will look into whether these students have improved in writing guided essay in the post-test, as compared to the ones written in the pre-test. This is to determine the effectiveness of the treatments administered.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

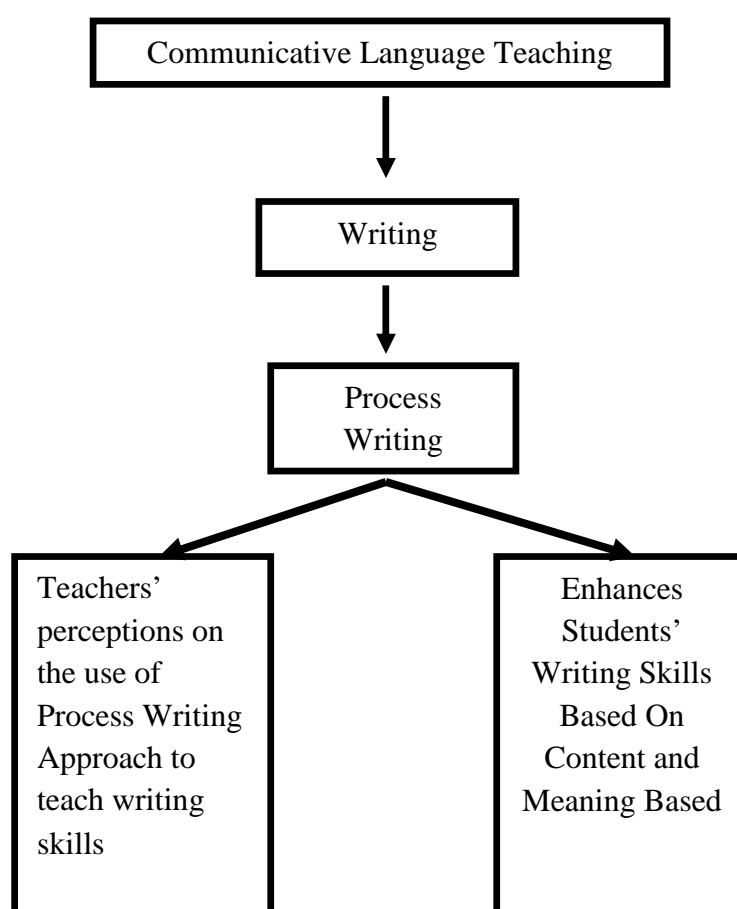


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

The Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework used in this study. The first part of the framework comprises the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory. Writing is one of the essential skills discussed in this study which comes under CLT. The approach used to teach writing is the Process Writing Approach which is focusing on enhancing students' writing skills. The second part of the framework also looks at the perceptions of teachers on the use of Process Writing Approach to teach writing skills.

1.10 Definition of Terms

The important terms used throughout this study are as follows:

Guided composition

A guided composition is one that is outlined, with key concepts, so that a student does not have to start out with a blank piece of paper. They are provided for those who have little writing experience and who want some tutoring to write the required essays. Guided writing is an individual or group activity where learners use word maps to organize their ideas and write texts. It serves as a scaffold to independent writing. Teachers discuss and model writing strategies with students.

Process writing

An approach to writing that emphasizes working through various stages of the process, from brainstorming to recording and organizing the writing task to become an independent writer.

Content

The ideas, facts or opinions that are contained in a piece of writing

Meaning

The things or ideas that someone wants you to understand from what they say.

Form

A way of writing or saying a word.

Perceptions

The way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted.

1.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, the poor performance in English Language in the schools and public examinations arouse the awareness to take measures to improve students' performance in the English Language. One way by which students

can improve their marks is by producing better written work, especially in their guided essays.

Overall the study mainly intends to investigate whether the use of process writing will help students to enhance their writing abilities in their guided composition and expose teachers to the process writing approaches as well as know what their views in using this technique.

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