

Centre for English Language Studies
University Birmingham UK

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As Part of a Master in Arts (TEFL/TESL)
Research Paper 2008

Discuss the difficulties Malaysian students appear to have in writing in English, and discuss how a process approach implemented at ELW helps Malaysian students improve their writing skills from the age of 7 to 13.

1. Introduction

The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. Writing also involves composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing. Perhaps it is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of "writing down" on the one end, to the more complex act of composing on the other end (Hadley, [1993]). It is undoubtedly the act of composing, though, which can create problems for students, especially for those writing in a second language (L2). Compared to students writing in their native language (L1), however, students writing in their L2 have to also acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques and skills.

This paper explores the difficulties students in Malaysia elementary school face when it comes to writing in English and how a process approach in writing might help them to achieve better writing results. The paper involves a qualitative study of how a process writing curriculum implemented during the young age can see results in students' work over the 6 years of elementary English writing class. First the paper will look at 5 students' work at the different age group and identify the difficulties they face in writing. Next the paper looks at how stages in process writing can help them improve in their writing and build their confidence through the process writing approach.

2. Literature Review

There are several ways to approach writing in the classroom. It should be said at the beginning that there is not necessarily any 'right' or 'best' way to teach writing skills. The best practice in any situation will depend on the type of student, the text type being studied, the school system and many other factors. Thus, this paper would examine how

process approach can be used to improve students' writing. Conventionally, there are two types of writing methods; there are the product and process writing. (National Centre for Education Statistics, [1996]).

2.1 Product writing stages

The product approach is a traditional approach, in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage.

Stage 1

Model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques.

Stage 2

This consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure.

Stage 3

Organization of ideas. This stage is very important. Those who favor this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.

Stage 4

The end result of the learning process. Students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.

2.2 Process Writing Stages

Process approaches to writing tend to focus more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. Such an approach can have any number of stages, though a typical sequence of activities could proceed as follows:

Stage 1

Generating ideas through brainstorming and discussion. Students could be discussing qualities needed to do a certain job, or giving reasons as to why people take drugs or gamble. The teacher remains in the background during this phase, only providing language support if required, so as not to inhibit students in the production of ideas.

Stage 2

Students extend ideas into note form, and judge quality and usefulness of ideas.

Stage 3

Students organise ideas into a mind map, spidergram, or linear form. This stage helps to make the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more immediately obvious, which helps students with the structure of their texts.

Stage 4

Students write the first draft. This is done in class and frequently in pairs or groups.

Stage 5

Drafts are exchanged, so that students become the readers of each others work. By responding as readers, students develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, and thus can improve their own drafts.

Stage 6

Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.

Stage 7

A final draft is written.

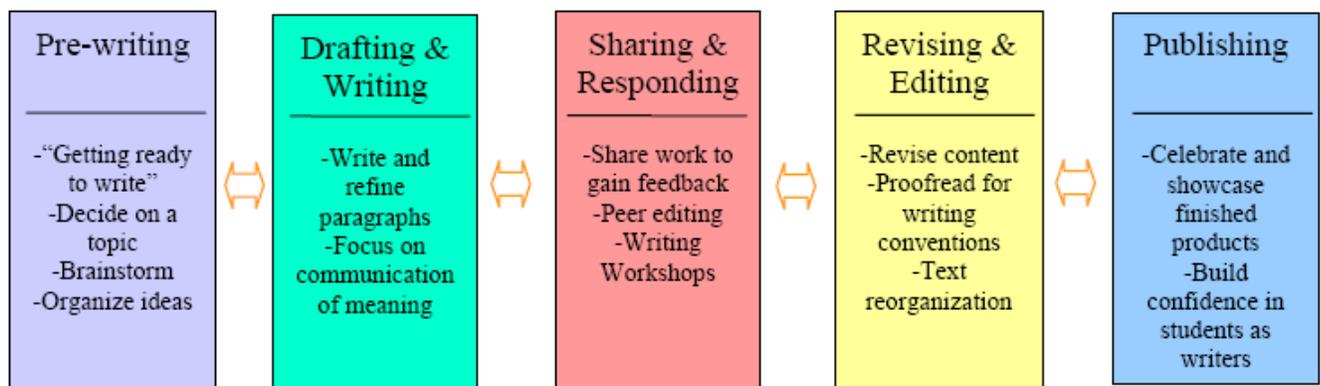
Stage 8

Students once again, exchange and read each others' work and perhaps even write a response or reply.

The process oriented approach refers to a teaching approach that focuses on the process a writer engages in when constructing meaning. This teaching approach concludes with editing as a final stage in text creation, rather than an initial one as in a product oriented approach. The process oriented approach may include identified stages of the writing process such as: pre-writing, writing and re-writing. Once the rough draft has been created, it is polished into subsequent drafts with the assistance of peer and teacher conferencing. Final editing and publication can follow if the author chooses to publish their writing (Murray, 1972). The last two decades saw an emergence of new practices that moved beyond rote repetition and technical instruction. Instead, writing was taught as a vehicle for creative expression and critical thought. Rather than focusing on spelling, grammar, and other writing conventions, the holistic process emphasizes the actual process of writing. It concentrates on writing as a recursive process in which writes have the opportunity to plan, draft, edit, and revise their work (Hillocks, 1987; Murray, 1982). The writer is taught to review and revise several drafts, which enables and encourages new ideas. The grammatical changes and conventional editing occur during the revision or editing stage (Ablator, Barnum & Kaplan, 1999; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Furthermore, since grammar and conventions are not the focus of writing, the writing process may be adopted for use even with young writes in kindergarten (Sealy, Sealy, & Mill more, [1979]).

Writing is a uniquely individual undertaking and the same individual may use different methods to express him or herself. Characteristically, the writing process approach recognizes that there are many stages to writing and that these stages are fluid and overlapping (Bereuter & Scardamalia, 1983; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Murray, 1982). However, researchers and educators have identified several logical steps that most writers go through, displayed in Figure 1 (Graves, 1983,1991; Tompkins and Hoskisson, 1995; and Poindexter and Oliver,1999). The 3 key areas in Process writing are as per Figure 1 is Pre-writing, Re-writing and Writing or publishing.

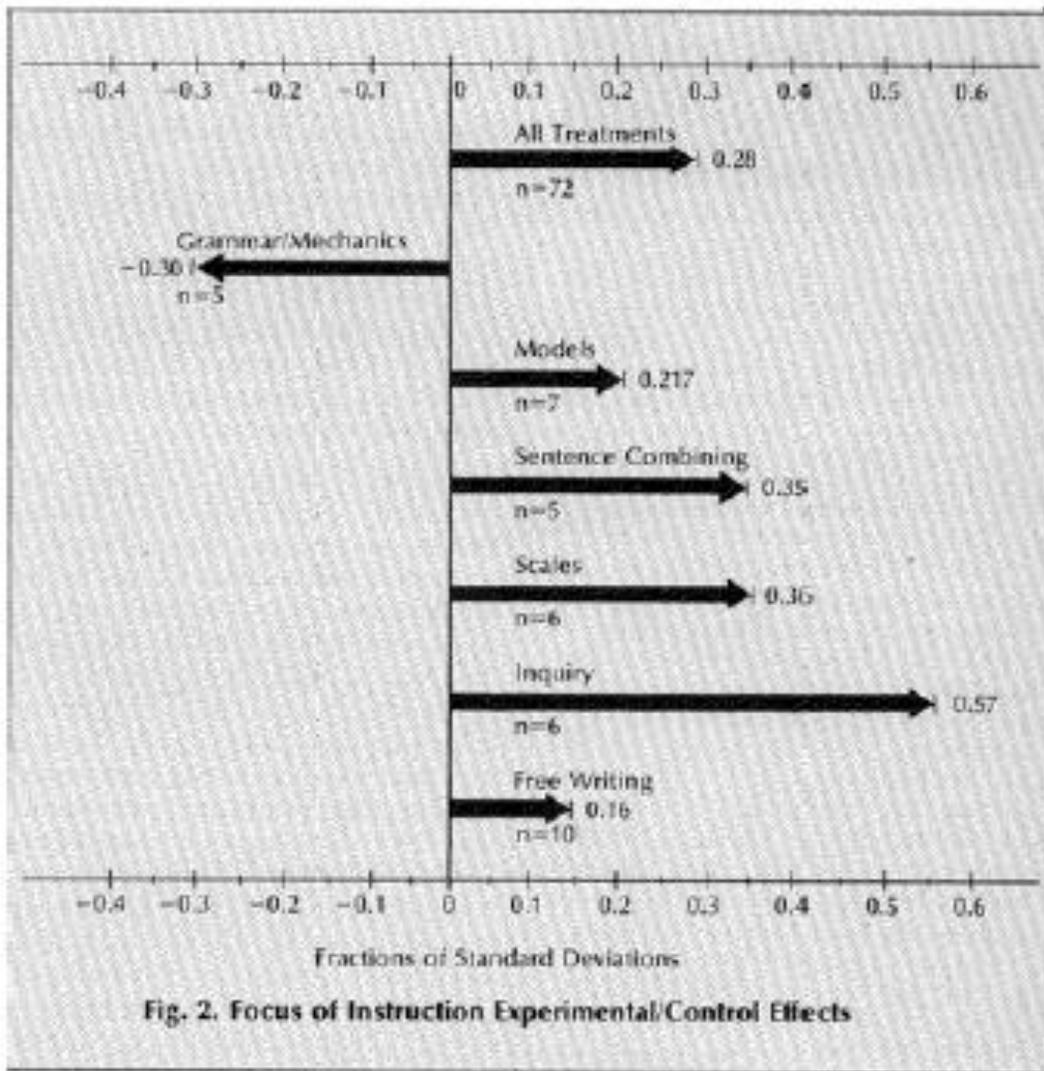
Figure 1. The Writing Process¹



¹ Based upon research by Graves, 1983,1991; Tompkins and Hoskisson, 1995; and Poindexter and Oliver, 1999.

A review looked at 2000 studies focused on identifying school instructional methods most successfully enhanced writing ability (Hillock, 1987). The meta analysis revealed that teaching through inquiry was the instructional method with the greatest impact on the quality of the students’ writing and grammar/mechanics has the least impact. In this method, students use sets of data and, in a structured manner, incorporate them into writing. Students may record, describe, and present evidence while taking into account set criteria. For example students may be given information about a particular subject, such as pollution, smoking is dangerous, etc, and then be asked to consider ways to help solve the problem.

The results from the meta analysis research is shown in Figure 2 (Hillock, 1987) below. The research findings indicate that having students go through the steps of observing and writing had greater impact on the quality of writing than did more traditional teaching using model writing.



2.3 A Summary of the Differences

Process driven approaches show some similarities with task-based learning, in that students are given considerable freedom within the task. They are not curbed by pre-emptive teaching of lexical or grammatical items. However, process approaches do not repudiate all interest in the product (i.e. the final draft). The aim is to achieve the best

product possible. What differentiates a process-focussed approach from a product-centered one is that the outcome of the writing, the product, is not preconceived.

Process writing	Product writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text as a resource for comparison • ideas as starting point • more than one draft • more global, focus on purpose, theme, text type, i.e., reader is emphasized • collaborative • emphasis on creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imitate model text • organization of ideas more important than ideas themselves • one draft • features highlighted including controlled practice of those features • individual • emphasis on end product

Each approach has its own advantage over the other. Process writing approach encourages students' creativity through generating of ideas using tools like brainstorming and discussion of topics. This gives the students confidence in handling the next topic or writing as compared to the rote learning or imitating model text of the product approach. The more than one draft approach used in process writing, allows students to reevaluate and improve on ideas, it also gives the teachers a platform to feedback to the students on their grammar and vocabulary. Process writing approach of collaborative nature allows the teaching of writing to be more enjoyable as students work in groups to share ideas and carry out discussions, all these works towards generating interest in writing among our students from the various age groups.

In general, the approach used will depend on the teacher, the students and the genre of the text. Certain genres lend themselves more favorably to one approach more than the other. Formal letters, for example, or postcards, in which the features are very fixed, would be perhaps more suited to a product driven approach, in which focus on the layout, style, organization and grammar could greatly help students in dealing with this type of writing task.

Other genres, such as discursive essays and narrative, may lend themselves to process-driven approaches, which focus on students' idea. Discursive activities are suited to brainstorming to brainstorming and discussing ideas in groups, and the collaborative writing and exchanging of texts help the students to direct their writing to their reader, therefore making a more successful text.

3. Analysis of Students' Writing

3.1 Students' background

The samples of 5 students are from a diverse age group of 7 to 16. They come from a Chinese medium instruction school in Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language. The reason why the particular group of students were chosen is because the Chinese students make up nearly 90% of the students learning in English language centers in Malaysia, therefore making the study more compelling to evaluate whether the process method of teaching writing is able to help these group of students who have no interest in writing English at a very young age due to the inherent flaw in the education system. The table below is a summary of the sampled students' work from an English language centre.

Age Group	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16
Name	Yi Lean	Is Ying	Melanie	Jet Pin	Chow
Sample	A	B	C	D	E
Essay Title	- Myself Mind map	- A beach outing - Lazy Sally	- The Mysterious Old Man - Sentence construction	- A Robbery	- My Ideal Housing Estate

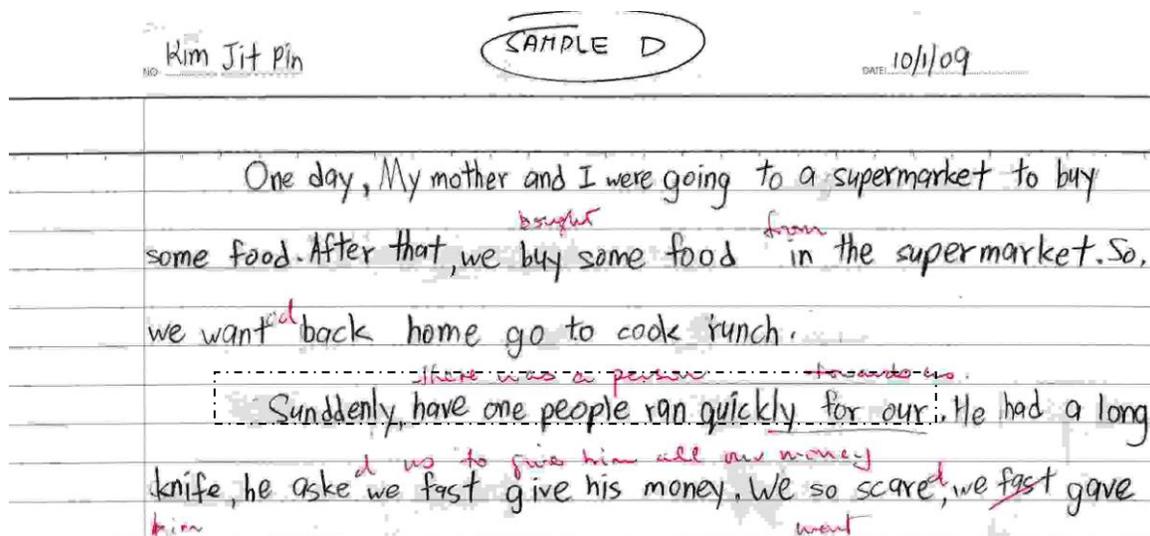
Table1. Sample Student Age Group

3.2 Problems faced by students in their writing

In general some of the problems faced by the students in their writing stem from a deeper macro problem where the curriculum for the 7 -12 group does not have essay writing component in schools. The teachers in general focus on grammar drilling through

worksheets, writing skills are seldom taught in schools. The group of sampled students is from a Mandarin stream education curriculum where all subjects are taught in their mother tongue except for English and the Malay language. Therefore students lack exposure to the usage of English other than the stipulated 2 hours of lesson per school week. Students in general lack the ability to generate ideas on their own without the helping words or assistance by teacher. As students are not taught brainstorming skills and mind map during the elementary stages of learning English thus they exhibit the lack of ability in generating ideas in their writing, this can be seen from student D where students in his or her age group would have the ability to generate essay up to 200 words for examination purposes.

Student D is a new student into the centre, and it can be observed from his writing that he is not able to generate sufficient content for the topic ‘A Robbery’ for his age group where existing sample students C and E are generating 300 to 450 words essay. Student D commits simple past tense and preposition mistakes. “**Suddenly have one people** run quickly for us“, a typical translation structural mistake (see Appendix A6).



Looking at the existing students, Student A (see Appendix A1) commits simple grammar mistakes like simple past tense for the verb take, student A used “taked”. Student A was not able to generate a creative content about myself other than the typical model taught to young learners using product writing. Student A only list down the typical family members, hobbies and favorite things. This is a typical controlled practice output by

student using a product approach. Student A (see Appendix A1) also exhibit difficulty in organizing his thoughts based on the links drawn in his or her unclear mind map.

Student A3'(see Appendix A3) works on 'A Beach Outing' shows a content that lack depth, where the student has written strictly based on the pictures and the keywords given. Interpretation of the picture itself was guided narrowly to describe what was seen, not much discussion or brainstorming was carried out as by the students to give ideas that are more than the picture, for example describing the day or the journey to the beach itself. Student A3 committed simple mistakes like simple past and present continuous tense. The Student is not able to distinguish the use of appropriate tenses; hence there are frequent changes in tense from simple past to present continuous tense. Students tend to get confuse when reporting a past action, in this case student may not have learned the use of past continuous tense. Student A4 (see Appendix A4) showed better content from a single picture aided essay, the student was able to generate content based on the 8 helping words given. The work was produced with a single draft, with a controlled practice of arranging the content of the story based on the sequence of helping words. The lack of vocabulary seen could be due the single draft habit that does not allow the teacher to scaffold the students' passive knowledge on a better word to use. Instead the focus was on the end product.

Student A5 (see Appendix A5) exhibit better vocabulary standard, she does not do much reading, but is trained to remember vocabulary through sentence construction (see Appendix A5), she forces herself to fit in the vocabulary into the topics she is given. Therefore, her overall content usually lacks creativity as she is not able to sustain her writing throughout the essay. It can be seen that her first paragraph is a model text memorized, and after the first paragraph, there is a drastic drop in the level of words used. A typical product writing output, where students throw in chunks of memorized text in the essay.

Memorandum

SAMPLE C

No.:

Date:

The Mysterious Old Man

What stared insolently from the pallor of his face was a pair of intense eyes framed by dark circles of fatigue. Yet his eyes remained focussed and alert, undaunted by the ranks of strangers.

It all started three weeks ago when an old man moved in to the house that located beside Jason's house and became his neighbour. The old man seldom greeted his new neighbour although they greeted

Student A7' (see appendix A7) work on my Ideal housing estates showed fluency in terms of the content produced, with occasional grammatical errors, but the depth of content is once again lacking due to the lack of discussion carried out with peers or teachers, where students could be scaffold to talk about the security aspects, facilities that ideal in a housing estate, the mixture of residence in the housing estate in terms of race, instead the student was just writing about simple ideals of away from city, having plants and so on. Therefore was not able to write to 360 words required for his or her level.

In terms of level of vocabulary shown at the age of 13 -14, student D showed a very basic level of vocabulary with the usage of basic verbs ' buy' , 'run', 'scare', 'eat' and 'happy'. The student was unable to draw on his or her passive knowledge in their own production as in the works of the other students. The lack of the second draft process, exchange of draft and discussion with the teacher to scaffold the students during the writing process impeded the students' ability to level up their own production.

4 How a Process Writing approach can help these students

Looking at the Pre-writing stage or planning out what is to be written, is an essential step in the writing process and students should be equipped with the basic skills of Discussion, Brainstorming and organizing ideas. Most students, however, spend on average only about 3 minutes to prepare for their writing (National Centre for Education Statistics, 1996). Students spend little time thinking and planning how to express their thoughts before writing them down and therefore are not accessing information and ideas that could possibly enhance their writing.

For the sample student A to E (excluding student D), the basic skills taught to students are brainstorming skills and mind mapping, so students from sample A and B are trained to do simple mind map and brainstorming. Simple topics like 'my school' or 'myself' is chosen for the writing lesson and my focus for the first few lesson is to encourage students to work in pairs or groups depending on the class size to carry out simple one or two words discussion or simple sentence brainstorming . This trains them into understanding the idea of brainstorming or discussion when the next topic is given. Weaker students would usually struggle with a brainstorming session, therefore I usually use a combination of the mind map to organize ideas and generate ideas at the same time with question triggers tags 5W and 1H. 5 W being the What, Who, When, Where, What and the How (British Council, 2005). For students age between 5-6, drawing and colouring of mind map or tree diagram is encouraged as they organize and generate ideas through their mind map. The same age group of students as they progress the levels with me like sample C, the focus on pre-writing shifts stage shifts into more discussion and the quality of ideas as compared to the earlier samples it's a matter of moving from fluency of writing in terms of generating contents to quality of the content in terms of vocabulary, creativity and quality ideas in the content written.

The next stage of process writing in my classes is to focus on the re-writing stage where corresponds to stage 4 to 6 where students writes their first drafts. It is an important component to the writing process is its recursive nature, which allows students to revise their work continually. This process allows student to take into account new ideas and thoughts and to have the opportunity to incorporate it into their writing. The research team (Bereiter, 1982) also found that children have much more extensive knowledge

about a topic than reflected in their typical writing. They argue that when children stop writing it is not because they run out of things to say, but because they do not yet have adequate methods of articulating what they know, thus by allowing students to write and rewrite, we are helping them to learn how to tap into their knowledge. It is during the re-writing stage that I focus on models, sentence combining and inquiry as my main instructional method to improve on the students' writing. For students in sample A and B sentence combining is used as a step up after students have mastered generating and organizing ideas through mind map. And it is through sentence combining I then correct the grammar mistakes based on what has been taught so far in the syllabus. For students in sample C in the age group 11-12, she has gone through the fundamental of generating and organizing ideas, this student has been with me for a span of one year. She is part of my class that has a story book as part of tutorial syllabus. It's a mimic of the literature component but I use it for reading activity, comprehension and to improve students' writing through model text and vocabulary.

Therefore it is a weekly routine that students need to highlight vocabulary that they do not understand and find the meanings of the word through the use of dictionary in the classroom. Then later on as part of their homework they would need to construct sentences using the new word as shown in sample C construction of sentence. It is through this I would then use words from this activity to the rewriting stage as I get students to give me better vocabulary in their draft. So for example a student from Sample A writing uses action verb like 'walk' would then through the reading program would have learned new word like 'stroll', and this progress is monitored as I plan my writing classes from the age group 7-8 to 11-12 through the process method of teaching writing in the curriculum.

Its is also through my evaluation of the process writing with my students that I realized that the focus of grammar in the teaching of writing has the least impact and this concurs with some research that has been carried out in the past.

The inquiry approach is commonly used by for students in the age group 15-16 sample E where students are doing argumentative essay writing. For younger age group this process is combined into the brainstorming process where students verbally list down

their points in the class as the cognitive understanding for the students age 6 to 12 would not be ready take on argumentative topics.

This is subjective where traditional methods of model writing still has its advantages when it comes to dealing with students who have progressed and mastered basic skills of process writing. For student sample C , she is trained in some form by through model writing to improve her vocabulary as seen from her sentence writing exercise, on top of that she is exposed to read novels like ‘Mr Midnight’ and Mr Mystery’ during her lesson at the centre with me to pick model text. Her quality of work is one of the more successful sample students I have at the moment that is product of process and a small combination of product writing in the classroom but the student stills lacks creativity in generating a good storyline.

4.2 Implementing process writing approaches in classrooms

Other than using the process writing approach in the classroom, I also ask to see the students’ writing either the writing brought home or the writing kept in folders in school. This usually allows me to monitor their writing progress or whether learning has taken place in terms of language, content and creativity of writing. Students in Malaysia usually hate to write in English, therefore for children classes I tend to initially focus on fluency of writing instead of accuracy through writing games, mind map and art. For example, using a ‘missing person’ writing activity using a poster and pictures can engage the children is learning the real objectives of the lesson which is learning to describe a character. This if it was done in public school would have bored the students where typical teachers just spoon feed the key words to be in the activity and get the student down to writing in one single draft.

I am usually faced with constant intake of students at the age group of 13-14 that is of sample D standard and it becomes a daunting task to teach them writing when some of them are already put off by writing in English. Thus, I usually instill the habit of writing in my students right at the very young age. My focus is primarily in the content, not the mechanics of expression. It is easy for us as teachers to spot misspellings, faulty word usage, and shaky punctuation. Perfection in these areas escapes most adults, so I usually don’t demand it from by beginning students as shown in my sample A to B students. In

tandem to the process writing stages what matters most in encouraging writing initially are words, sentences and ideas. Perfection in mechanics develops slowly. The table below gives a summary as to how process approach has helped them in their writing at the various stages of the age groups.

Age Group	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16
Name	Yi Lean	Is Ying	Melanie	Jet Pin	Chow
Sample	A	B	C	D	E
Essay Title	- Myself Mind map	- A beach outing - Lazy Sally	- The Mysterious Old Man - Sentence construction	- A Robbery	- My Ideal Housing Estate
Process Writing Implementation	Pre-Writing Skills taught: Brainstorming, Mind Map with 5Ws , 1H to generate and organize ideas. Drafting & Rewriting: Refine ideas, grammar and sentence combination	Pre-Writing Skills taught: Brainstorming, Discussion, Mind Map with 5Ws , 1H to generate and organize ideas. Drafting & Rewriting: Refine ideas, grammar and sentence combination & Vocabulary Sharing & Responding is done at a very basic level to scaffold passive knowledge from students	Pre-Writing Skills taught: Brainstorming, Discussion, Mind Map with 5Ws , 1H to generate and organize ideas. Drafting & Rewriting: Refine ideas, grammar and sentence combination & Vocabulary Sharing & Responding: this is done through inquiry process	NA (New Student)	Pre-Writing Skills taught: Brainstorming, Discussion, Mind Map with 5Ws , 1H to generate and organize ideas. Drafting & Rewriting: Refine ideas, grammar and sentence combination & Vocabulary Sharing & Responding: this is done through inquiry process
Teaching Aids/Resource	Drawing/Colouring Blocks/Pictures Story book reading	Drawing/Colouring Blocks/Pictures Story book reading	Story book reading		Story book reading

Table 2. Summary of Process Approach Implementation for Sample Group

5.0 Conclusion

This paper has shown how students' writing can be improved through process writing by showing the essay of a sample student D, a new student into a writing class versus the sample work of students from age 6 to 12 being trained to write using the process approach using the various stages from the basic pre-writing, rewriting and the final writing stage. Students from sample A to C has proven from the qualitative output of work is far better than a new student that is not taught how to write and his quality of work (sample D) is lower than that of students who are younger and has gone through process writing approach. A few key determinants of producing quality stands out, including teaching students how to plan for writing (via pre-writing) through discussion, brainstorming and generating ideas through mind map. Other components of combining sentences, and to engage in the process of inquiry is used as students develops cognitively. Teaching students to use even one or two stages of the process writing enhances their abilities significantly. Together, these findings and results provide a compelling rationale for using process writing as a method of instruction in my classrooms and doing so helps my students to develop their writing interest and confidence for the future.

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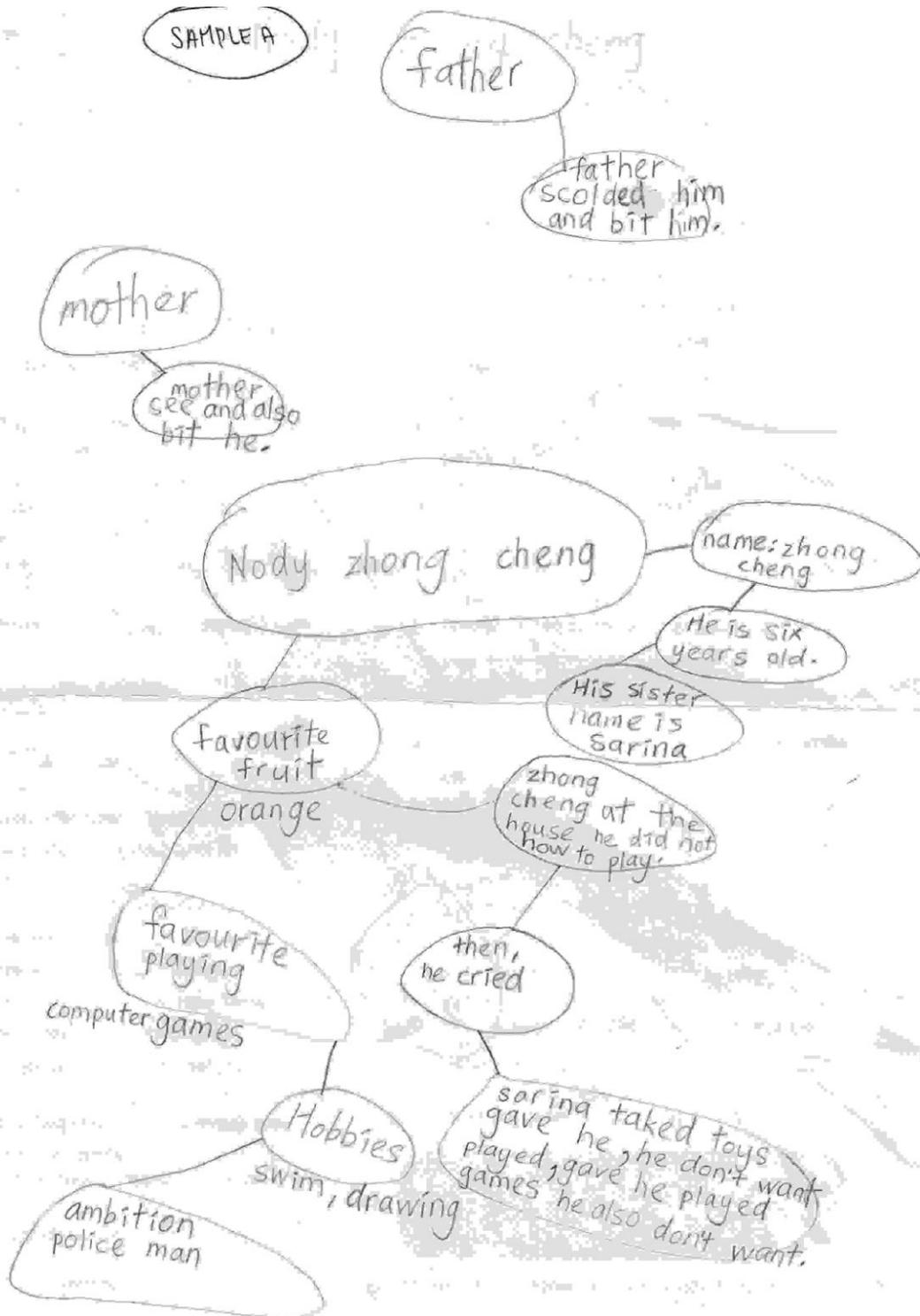
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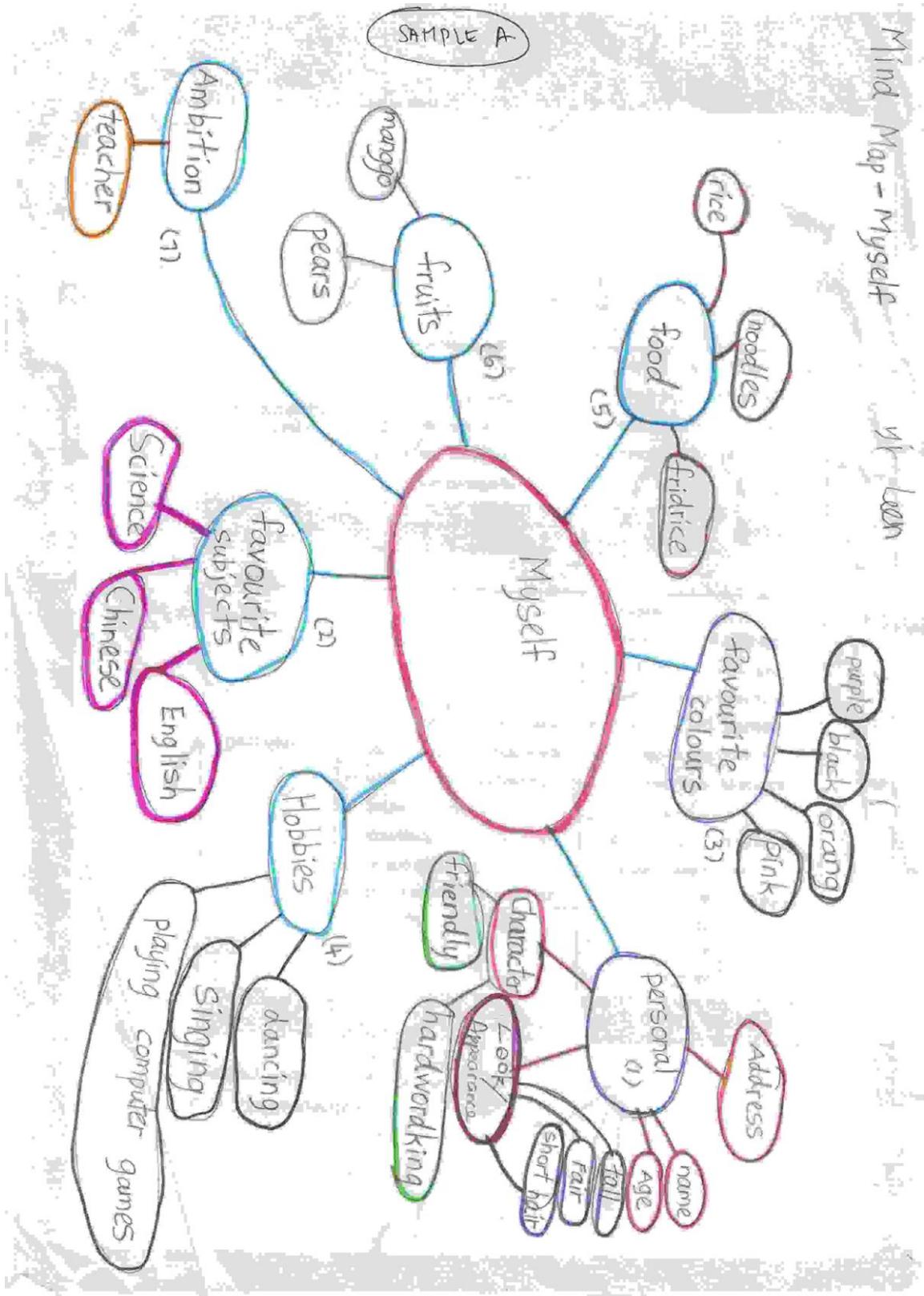
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APPENDIX A1:



APPENDIX A2:



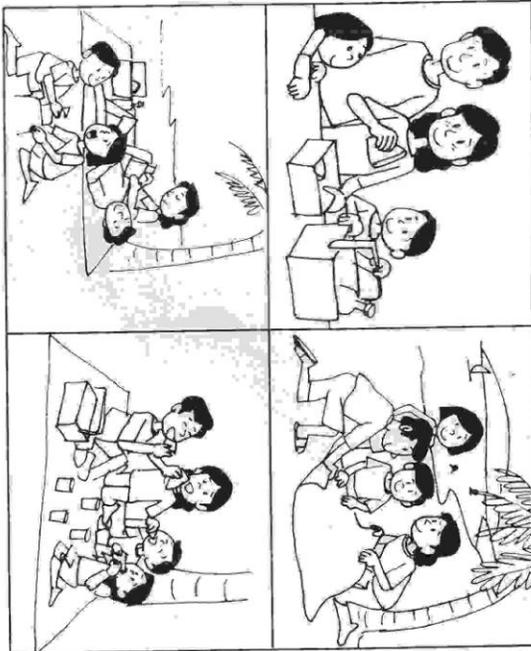
APPENDIX A3:

shaddy - give cover from the sun
dozed off - fell asleep
construct - build
aroused - woke up
sumptuous - delicious
enjoyable

9/8/08

A Beach Outing

Look at the pictures carefully and write a composition of at least 60 words. You may make use of the helping words.



Helping words

1. grin - wide smile
2. overjoyed - delighted
3. sandwiches

APPENDIX A3:

A Beach ^{Outing}
Outing

SAMPLE B

9/8/08

One day, I ^{prepared} ^{go for a} plan food to ¹ picnic with mother. There ^{ware} is drinks, sandwiches and so on. Then our car ~~of~~ taking dad get to the seaside. Got to the field of eye, we put the straw mat down. Then, dad lies on the straw mat, mother reads the book, younger sister and younger brother play ^{ing in} the sand. Dad got up, we have our lunch. We ^{took} take sandwiches and drinks. We take mood to go home unwilling to part with.

Model/Sample composition - given

APPENDIX A4:

NO. Si Ying DATE: 2 October 2005

Sally was a lazy and greedy girl. One day, she ate ¹ sweets and chocolates in her bedroom. She ~~threw~~ ² throws her candy wrappers everywhere in her bedroom. ~~Although there was a lot of rubbish in her room, but~~ ³ she still ~~don't~~ ⁴ bother to throw the litters away.

There were ants and cockroaches in her ⁴ room. Sally refused to clean up her room. Her ⁵ room was untidy ~~yet she did not know~~. She ~~kept~~ ⁶ keep on eating sweets for another ten minutes until her mother ⁷ came in. When her mother came in, she saw Sally's room was so ~~untidy~~ ⁸ and messy.

At last, Sally noticed there were ants and ⁹ cockroaches. Her mother ~~got~~ ¹⁰ get angry. Sally was scolded by her mother. Sally knew she had learnt a lesson. She ~~dares~~ ¹¹ ~~not~~ ^{would} throw rubbish everywhere again.

(119 words)

~~02/10/08~~ 02/10/08

SAMPLE B

SECTION D COMPOSITION

Exercise 1

80 words

Look at the picture carefully. Write at least ~~eight~~ sentences about it. You may use the helping words given.



lazy and greedy
refuse to
candy wrappers
scolded by mother

sweets and chocolates
clean up
ants and cockroaches
learnt a lesson

APPENDIX A5:

Meanie

SAMREC

No.:

Date: 5-5-08

1) ruffle - mess up, to disturb the peace
→ Her hair was ruffled after the wind blew.

2) placid - calm, quiet, peaceful
→ Joan admired the scenery of the placid waters of the lake.

3) ripples - a small wave on the surface of a liquid
→ As the wind blows, ripples could be seen on the surface of the pond.

4) prevail - to be widespread, to persuade
→ Those shoe designs still prevail among social.

5) fog - a mass of condensed water vapour near the ground
→ I saw some fog in the early morning.

6) appreciate - understand, realize
→ I still don't appreciate the meaning of the word.

7) perch - to be located
→ My school perched at Jalan Kebun Teh.

8) slope - inclined surface
→ Many trees are grown at the slope of the mountain.

9) rampart - protection
→ Embankment was built beside the river as a rampart.

10) peasant - farmer.
→ The peasant grows vegetables in his farm and waters them every day.

11) bounteous - generous

APPENDIX A5:

/ /
/ /
No.:

SAMPLE C

Date:

The Mysterious Old Man

What stared insensibly from the pallor of his face was a pair of intense eyes framed by dark circles of fatigue. Yet his eyes remained focussed and alert, undaunted by the ranks of strangers.

It all started three weeks ago when an old man moved in to the house that located beside Jason's house and became his neighbour. The old man seldom greeted his new neighbour although they greeted him. He went out early in the morning and be home late at midnight. When he was home, he always took a black bag. Everyone wondered what he had in the bag that was so 'precious to him as he ^{care of} took it so carefully, afraid that someone might steal it.

One day, Jason was walking down a street. He saw the old man, also holding the bag. The old man recognized Jason and when he saw him, he resolutely pushed it away and rushed headlong into the crowd. Jason felt even

APPENDIX A5:

No.:

Date:

more curious about the old man. Since then, Jason always called call the old man as 'the mysterious old man'.

Overwhelmed with curiosity,

Jason decided to find out what he was holding.

One day, there was a chance for him to see it. The old man came back in the afternoon and took his

bag. Jason saw him took out some pieces of paper. stared After some time, Jason saw tears flowed down his cheeks. and stare at it. That was the exact moment that a

gust of wind blew. Two pieces of paper flew before Jason. He saw that there was a photo pasted on one of the papers paper and lines of words in the another paper.

Jason stared at the photo for a while and looked at the old man. The old man was now at his front gate, asking Jason to return the two pieces of paper impatiently. When the pieces of paper reached the old man's hand, he snatched it away and rushed into his car and sped off.

Jason thought for a long time why was the old man wanted the paper back so much. In a flash, he realised

APPENDIX A5:

No.:

Date:

what the problem was. The old man was searching the boy in the photograph.

Overwhelmed by the knowledge, Jason felt pity of him. He wished that the old man will find his son back as fast as possible. He also swore not to let other people know what the problem was and became a secret between Jason and the old man.

415 words

APPENDIX A6:

Kim Jit Pin

SAMPLE D

DATE: 10/1/09

One day, My mother and I were going to a supermarket to buy some food. After that, we ^{bought} buy some food ^{from} in the supermarket. So, we want^{ed} back home go to cook lunch.

Suddenly, ^{there was a person} have one people ran quickly ^{towards us} for our. He had a long knife, he aske^d we ^{to give him all our money} fast give his money. We so scare^d, we ~~fast~~ gave ^{him} his all money. Then, he ran quickly away. We go home aske^d to mine ^{father}. After that, my father ^{took} takes my mother and I ^{myself} go to a police station.

^{went home a few supper / taken some food at} We go to eat food and back home. A few days ^{later} ago, a police man ^{my} call^{ed} to mine father the people in the price station. We felt very happy.

APPENDIX A7:

Chow

SAMPLE E

My ideal housing estate.

In my dreams, I would like to ~~grow~~^{grow} up fast, become very well-to-do and to get ~~the~~ everything I fancy. But the most one of my dream is to live in a housing estate I like.

Sometimes, I will stare blankly into my ideal housing estate.

My ideal housing estate must ^{be} near the sea and far from the town. The sea is spacious and vast, the sand is clear and tiny. Everyday, I can see the sun ^{sun-set / sun rise} shade and the sun-up. There must ^{have} a pavilion and a piano. ^{so that I} That can let me hair down and helps me ^{to} unwind.

I ~~want~~ like the peaceful and nature, so it must ^{be} far ^{It must be} distance from the town. There were ~~not~~ the noisy like the car or the developed economy. That will makes me agitated and not have ^{the} vigour to do ^{things} anything.

Then, beside my house. I will plant some ~~of the~~ trees or flowers to spent my time. The plants can makes the air cool and fresh. Because there far from the town, the mists and clouds will not ^{be} seen in this wonderful land. Every morning, I can ^{take} make a deep breath around those plants and flower. That ^{can be} healthy ^{for} me.

AZONE