

THE EFFECTS OF THE PROCESS-GENRE APPROACH TO WRITING
INSTRUCTION ON THE EXPOSITORY ESSAYS OF ESL STUDENTS IN A
MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

by

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July 2007

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ambigapathy Pandian, for his invaluable advice and guidance throughout the course of this study.

I want also to express my sincere appreciation of my colleagues and friends: Ms. Mabel Lim Poh Gaik, Ms. Suriya Kumari, Ms. Ng Yim San and Ms. Ratnavali Sanmugam, for the patience, effort and sacrifice of their time, in assisting with the rating of the essays, and Mr. Tan Swee Guan for kindly allowing access to his students and classes.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Anthony Tan for his help and guidance with the statistical analysis of data.

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**KESAN PENGGUNAAN PENDEKATAN PROSES-GENRE TERHADAP
PENGAJARAN PENULISAN ESEI EKSPOSITORI DALAM KALANGAN
PELAJAR YANG MEMPELAJARI BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI KEDUA
DI SEBUAH SEKOLAH MENENGAH DI MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Beberapa kajian di Malaysia menunjukkan bahawa pendekatan pengajaran penulisan yang mementingkan produk penulisan menjadi pendekatan pilihan dalam kelas ESL di Malaysia. Banyak kajian dan hasil kajian yang menunjukkan bahawa terdapat keburukan dan kelemahan menggunakan pendekatan ini. Terdapat bukti yang menunjukkan bahawa fokus terhadap produk penulisan gagal memberikan kesedaran tentang proses penulisan atau pengetahuan genre yang merupakan aspek yang sangat penting untuk mengembangkan kemahiran menulis yang berkesan. Keberkesanan pendekatan yang berunsurkan pengajaran yang mengintegrasikan ketiga-tiga aspek, iaitu produk penulisan, proses penulisan dan pengetahuan genre dalam penulisan telah dilaporkan dalam beberapa kajian terkini. Ketiga-tiga aspek ini penting dan diperlukan untuk mengembangkan kemahiran menulis.

Tesis ini menyelidiki keberkesanan melatih pelajar ESL Malaysia dalam menggunakan pengetahuan dan kemahiran proses genre untuk menulis esei ekspositori. Secara khusus, kajian ini bertujuan menilai keberkesanan kaedah pengajaran yang berorientasikan proses genre dalam membantu pelajar mengembangkan strategi untuk

menulis esei yang berkualiti. Sebanyak enam puluh pelajar tingkatan enam rendah daripada empat buah kelas di sebuah sekolah di Pulau Pinang dipilih untuk kajian ini. Mereka dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan sasaran: (1) kumpulan kajian yang menerima pengajaran penulisan kaedah proses genre, dan (2) kumpulan kawalan yang menerima pengajaran penulisan yang fokus terhadap produk penulisan. Setiap kumpulan menjalani enam belas sesi latihan lapan puluh minit setiap sesi. Penilaian dilakukan sebelum latihan, sebaik sahaja latihan selesai dan tiga bulan selepas latihan tamat.

Analisis skor esei peserta menunjukkan bahawa pelajar yang menerima pengajaran kaedah proses genre dapat melahirkan idea mereka secara bertulis dengan lebih efektif dan dapat mengembangkan pemikiran yang relevan dan sesuai tentang tugas menulis berbanding dengan pelajar yang menerima pengajaran penulisan yang berfokus terhadap produk penulisan.

Didapati bahawa pendekatan yang menggunakan kaedah penulisan proses genre tidak membaiki kemahiran dalam cara penyusunan idea mahupun penguasaan bahasa. Namun demikian, didapati bahawa pendekatan ini meningkatkan kemahiran menulis secara amnya. Analisis laporan sendiri peserta dalam soal-selidik menggambarkan bahawa pendekatan pengajaran penulisan proses genre mendorong pelajar lebih peka terhadap strategi penulisan konseptual dan meningkatkan kesanggupan mereka menggunakan strategi penulisan untuk mengarang. Pendekatan ini juga memberi kesan yang berkekalan untuk seketika tanpa pengajaran baru. Oleh kerana keberkesanan yang dilaporkan, adalah dicadangkan supaya pendekatan pengajaran penulisan proses genre dijadikan sebahagian dalam sukatan pelajaran MUET.

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ABSTRACT

Several Malaysian studies have indicated that the traditional product centred approach to writing instruction is still the approach of choice in many Malaysian ESL classrooms. There has been much research and a proliferation of literature that highlights the disadvantages and weaknesses of such an approach. It has been demonstrated that its focus on the product fails to promote either an awareness of the writing process or genre knowledge that is so crucial to the development of effective writing skills. The efficacy of instructional approaches that integrate the three aspects of product, process and genre knowledge of writing have been reported in a number of recent studies. It is believed that all three aspects are necessary for the development of writing proficiency.

The study reported in this thesis investigated the effects of training Malaysian ESL students to apply process-genre writing knowledge and strategies in writing expository essays. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a process-genre oriented writing instruction in helping students to develop the strategies that will help them to write better essays. Sixty students from four lower Form Six classes in a secondary school in Penang were selected for the study. The subjects were assigned to

two treatment groups: (1) an experimental group that received process-genre writing instruction, and (2) a control group that received product centred writing instruction. Each group was given sixteen eighty-minute sessions of treatment time. The subjects were tested before treatment, immediately after treatment and three months after the treatment period.

Analyses of the subjects' essay scores revealed that the students who received process-genre oriented writing instruction were able to communicate their ideas in writing more effectively to the reader and developed more relevant ideas to support the purpose of their writing task, compared to the students who received product centred instruction. Instruction in process-genre strategies neither promoted better ability in the way they organized their ideas nor their control of language. Nevertheless, it enhanced their overall writing proficiency. Analyses of the students' self-report in questionnaires revealed that instruction in process-genre strategies promoted the students' awareness of conceptual writing strategies and willingness to apply practical writing strategies to compose. Furthermore, the effects of the writing instruction were sustainable over a period of time without further instruction. Due to its efficacy as reported in this study, it is suggested that process-genre oriented writing instruction be incorporated into the Malaysian University English Test syllabus.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The role of English as a language of importance in international trade, the global Informational Technology (IT) market and the imminent path to globalization are factors which cannot be ignored if Malaysia hopes to become a fully developed nation and highly competitive global player by the year 2020. There is therefore, a clear need for the future generations of Malaysians to master the language. The English language had played a dominant role as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction in English medium schools which formed the backbone of the education system of pre-independence Malaysia (Ambigapathy, 2001). That was until the Malaysian Education Ordinance of 1957 which adopted the recommendations of the Razak Report advocated that “after ten years English would be relegated to the status of a second language” (ibid.: 71). Soon after that, Bahasa Malaysia gained National Language status and further national policies helped to strengthen the role and position of Bahasa Malaysia in the schools curriculum.

According to Ambigapathy (2001), the same policies that had helped to strengthen the position of Bahasa Malaysia seemed to have also led to a general decline in the standards of English. Voices of concern over the declining standards of English were raised after more than two decades after English became a second language, and the government responded by formulating and implementing policies to arrest the decline

in the early nineties. The government had begun to recognise that the role of English in education needed to be strengthened for Malaysia to achieve its goals (Rajaretnam and Nalliah, 1999). A truly significant shift in the government's policy on the role of English in Malaysian education was reflected in the announcement of English as a medium of instruction for science and technology courses in universities, by the Prime Minister himself in 1993 (Ambigapathy, 2001).

This change is important as it heralds the government's decision to reinstate English as the medium of instruction for scientific and technological subjects like medicine, engineering and computer science in institutions of higher learning (Ganakumaran, 2002). In line with this change in policy, Science and Mathematics in Primary and Secondary schools have been taught in English since 2003. This is a logical and pragmatic move, as in this age of IT, much information that is needed for acquiring knowledge is being disseminated in English. Moreover, in the fields of Science and Technology, Business studies and IT, reference materials and publications that are necessary for tertiary studies are primarily written in English. Therefore with the English language set to make a comeback as the medium of instruction in the key subjects of Science and Mathematics at all levels of education, writing in English will no longer be restricted to English language courses in the Arts and Social Sciences in universities.

1.2 Background to the study

Malaysia as a developing country cannot afford to neglect the fact that the English language is the lingua franca of international affairs and in the nation's constant strive

to upgrade and improve the standard of English, various plans and measures have been implemented. The fact that the general proficiency of the English language of our students has been deteriorating is not a secret (Ganakumaran, 2002; Ambigapathy, 2001). Students are accepted into universities regardless of their level of proficiency in English and this would probably account for the fact that many Malaysian graduates are not proficient in the language. Many educationists and academics have acknowledged that urgent measures had to be taken to check the declining standard of English of students undertaking tertiary studies (Rajaretnam and Nalliah, 1999). One of these measures was the introduction of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) in 1999 (Ambigapathy, 2001).

Although English is a compulsory subject for all students from Year One to Form Five, it has never been taught in Form Six before the introduction of MUET. This meant that most students except for the dwindling number who took Literature in English for the Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM), would have no formal contact with the English language at the pre-university level (Ganakumaran, 2002). MUET was introduced with the main purpose of filling that 'vacuum' where there was no formal English language learning for the students. Thereby, not only aiming to ensure continuity in the study of English but also that students being admitted into universities will have an adequate command of the language (see Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia, 1999).

Furthermore before the introduction of MUET, all public and private higher education institutions had in place some form of English language classes for students reading for their first degree. Each university had its own entrance tests and set its own standards to

determine the proficiency of the students. And within the universities, different faculties required their students to take different types of English courses which focused on the specific language needs required by their disciplines. The aim of these courses was to provide the “necessary language skills in order for students to cope and succeed in their academic disciplines” (Ainol Madziah, 2001: 1). It was also noted that the measures of English language proficiency often took the form of the “institutional (tailor made) proficiency tests” (ibid.: 1). However, this disparity was finally resolved for with MUET, there now exists a common curricula and standard certification to gauge the English language proficiency of students aspiring to enrol in universities.

With these objectives in place, MUET’s syllabus was specifically designed to “equip students with an appropriate level of proficiency in English to enable them to perform effectively in their academic pursuits at tertiary level” (Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia, 1999: 1). MUET emphasises the teaching, learning and testing of the four language components of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although the writing component carries only a weight of twenty-five percent of the total mark, it must be stressed that writing is a very important key skill that undergraduate students should master. This is because, it has been suggested that how well students would eventually succeed in their academic pursuits at the tertiary level, from examinations and coursework assignments to applications for scholarships and job applications, would to a larger extent be decided by how well they can write (Tribble, 1996).

Writing is such an important learning tool because it helps students to understand ideas and concepts better. A study carried out by Sommers (2002) and a team of researchers at Harvard University which traced the writing experiences of more than four hundred

undergraduates undergoing different courses over a period of four years, revealed that an overwhelming majority of the students believe that writing helps them understand and apply the ideas of a course. Although students may read to gather information, it is eventually through writing that their ideas are clarified and their thoughts made visible. Writing is one of the important means by which students actively transform the passive knowledge and information in their minds into their own language.

Chandrasegaran (1991) points out the importance of being able to write coherent, well organized expository essays at university because academic assessment is almost entirely based on these written products in coursework and examinations throughout the duration of the courses. It is her contention that students who lack “effective written communication skills” are disadvantaged as they will be unable “to produce clear and convincing arguments to demonstrate their understanding of their subject” (vi). Writing either as a process or product contributes to learning uniquely as it is a skill which invokes the higher cognitive functions like analysis and synthesis. Emig (in Protherough, 1983: 7), observes that these higher cognitive functions develop most fully particularly with the support of written language.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Although the teaching of writing has undergone major changes in the last two decades, Malaysian ESL students still seem to be receiving inadequate or outmoded writing instruction. Heng and Chan (1996) observe that the Malaysian ESL classroom “has yet to experience the paradigm shift from product to process writing” (94). Chitravelu (in Tickoo, 1994: 28) laments the sad state of affairs that prevails in Malaysian writing

classes with his revelation that “little instruction in writing is offered at primary and secondary school levels” and that “writing was seen as an ancillary skill supporting the learning of grammar and, rarely as a means of expressing comprehension” (ibid.: 103). Malaysian research on writing instruction are few and far in between but the studies that have been carried out nonetheless reveal that writing instruction in Malaysian ESL classrooms is still predominantly form focused, despite the ESL teachers outward endorsement of more current pedagogy like the process approach to writing (Samuel, 1996). In her research which presented case studies of five ESL teachers in secondary schools, Mahaletchumy (1994) discovered that her teachers focused on structure and content when teaching writing and also responded to student writing by emphasising surface level errors and mechanics of the language. However, what is disturbing is that Mahaletchumy found these typical characteristics of a prescriptive and product centred approach being taught in what were labelled by the teachers themselves as ‘process writing lessons’. Mahaletchumy’s findings revealed the inconsistency and disparity between what teachers profess and what they actually carry out in their writing classes. Bhajan Kaur (1995) confirmed these findings in her study of the current practices of Malaysian ESL teachers. Chuang (1995) presented her case study of a composition teacher who claimed to use a process oriented approach but when providing feedback to her students “responds only to the mechanics across drafts” (55). These studies reveal that writing instruction in Malaysian writing classrooms is still very much product oriented and that teachers will fall back on their own tried and tested methods although outwardly appear to endorse more current approaches.

This predicament is not confined to Malaysian schools alone nor other L2 settings, but prevails in first language (L1) writing classes too. Investigators in L1 settings reveal

that despite the findings of process-oriented studies and their positive implications for writing instruction, practice lags far behind research and theory (Burhans, 1983; Chandrasegaran, 1991). Thus it would be pertinent to explore the reasons why in spite of its many weaknesses, the traditional product-centred approach to writing instruction is still being practiced in many Malaysian writing classes.

One of the main reasons why traditional writing instruction is still dominant in Malaysian ESL classrooms must be because “the attitudes that teachers have toward writing strongly influence their own teaching practices” (Beach and Bridwell, 1984: 312). As process-oriented writing instruction with its emphasis on the process of composing rather than the product was introduced to Malaysian ESL classrooms in the late 1980s, it would be a safe assumption that the majority of all the active ESL teachers in Malaysian schools today learned to write in traditional product-oriented classes. These traditional classes focused on the use of ‘good’ English that was seen as the key to successful writing. However, ‘good’ in the context of traditional writing classes most likely alluded to linguistic features and seldom to rhetorical concerns.

The writing teachers who grew up learning to write in the traditional product-oriented classes would then bring into their own writing classes the same preconceptions that have been forged through their own learning experience which they are reluctant to let go off. This is confirmed by Murray (1984) for he observes that teachers naturally want students to “study what we want them to study and to learn from it what we or our teachers learned” (7). Hence, although much effort has been made by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in the attempt to revolutionise the teaching of writing, the result seems to have been anything but disappointing for “the teaching of writing in

Malaysian classrooms remain too structural and teacher centred” (Jariah, 1996: 85). Not surprisingly then, the pervasive obsession with error identification, accuracy and surface-level correctness is the focus of our writing instruction today. Inevitably, grammatical and mechanical aspects of the language become the focus in the marking of compositions.

Another reason is that ESL teachers in particular “overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers” (Zamel, 1985: 86). Therefore their students’ compositions are only seen as products to be judged solely for the assignment of grades. This L1 phenomenon is also reflected in the Malaysian ESL context, largely propagated by an education system that places heavy emphasis on examinations as the only yardstick for measuring academic achievement. Hence writing instruction in Malaysian classrooms inevitably focuses on the written product rather than the process of composing or the student’s intention for writing that produces the prevalent but familiar situation where “teachers have told them (students) what to write but never how to write” (Jariah, 1996: 85). When this happens the students get the impression that eventually it is what they have to say (product) that is more important than how (process) they say it. Students then tend to produce writing that they think their teachers would approve of rather than to allow themselves the freedom of expression.

The status quo discussed in the preceding sections needs urgent redress for the current situation in the Malaysian ESL writing classroom is crying out for change. According to Jariah (1996):

At tertiary level, students are expected to know how to express themselves clearly and effectively through their writing especially when given writing projects. However many of our students find themselves at a loss (85).

In a survey that was conducted by the Department of English Language at University Pertanian Malaysia to gauge the actual situation in the Malaysian writing classroom, more than half of the English teachers (n=49) surveyed voiced their dissatisfaction with the writing ability of their students (Heng and Chan, 1996: 95)

It was the dissatisfaction with the traditional product-centred approach in writing instruction which was the catalyst that initiated the search for new direction in writing research in the West. Process writing emerged from the American writing classroom as a result of that quest (Heng and Chan, 1996: 94). The pioneering research of Emig (1971) to study the composing processes of her twelfth graders was described as “an expedition into new territory, an investigation of the writing process” (Buxton, in Emig 1971, v). Since then the composing strategies of student writers have become the major area of concern in writing research. Most notably, a series of studies by Flowers and Hayes (1980, 1981) helped to establish the theoretical foundation for that line of research. These studies have influenced classroom teaching of writing in a dramatic way when educationists started to adopt and revise their writing curriculums to accommodate the ‘new’ approach – the process approach. Hairston (1982) described this change as “a major paradigm shift in the teaching of composition (in Faigley et al., 1985: xiv). And the process approach has had such a widespread influence on the teaching of writing throughout the English speaking world ever since (White and Arndt, 1991; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983).

However, in the last twenty years much discussion has been generated over which approach to teaching writing would be the best and, product and process-centred approaches have always “dominated much of the teaching of writing that happens in

the EFL classroom” (Badger and White, 2000: 153). According to Badger and White (2000), writing in the process oriented approach mainly concerns linguistic skills, like planning and drafting and unlike the traditional product approach, there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge, like knowledge of grammar and structure of the written text. The process approach writing class also operates on the principle that L2 learners develop their writing skills unconsciously rather than learn the skills formally (ibid., 2000). Therefore the role of the teacher would be to facilitate the students’ writing and to draw out their potential rather than to provide input or stimulus. In contrast to the traditional approach, the process approach is very much student-centred.

As the shift from product to process gathered momentum, the views of the process proponents in ESL settings like Zamel (1983) have been challenged by product proponents and other writing researchers. The debate over the approaches is not a new phenomenon but one that has been an ongoing concern amongst writing researchers and teachers ever since Emig’s ground-breaking study was published more than three decades ago (Kamimura, 2000). Reid’s (1984) main criticism of Zamel’s study was that her views had failed to take into consideration the majority of ESL students who fell outside the “advanced” writers category as many were “inexperienced” writers who first needed to “develop their understanding of academic prose” (151). Others like Horowitz (1986a) argue that process proponents are too obsessed with the writer’s internal mental processes that they overlook teaching other equally important aspects of writing like requirements, conventions and task types related to the social nature of writing. Badger and White’s (2000) criticism of the process approach is that it tends to have “a somewhat monolithic view of writing” where “the process of writing is seen as the same regardless of what is being written and who is writing” (154).

Clearly, there needs to be an approach that bridges the essential differences between product and process oriented approaches. Researchers like Kamimura (2000) and Badger and White (2000) have suggested that it is a feasible solution not to view the two approaches as a dichotomy but rather as being complementary to each other. However, the social purpose of writing and the fact that writing takes place in a social situation must be taken into consideration by scholars (ibid.). Wiemelt (1994) contends that “writing is both a cognitive and a social process” (2). Fulkerson (2005) postulates that the emergence of composition as genre is a reflection of the concern for the social aspect of writing at the turn of the twenty first century. The relationship between genre and social context is at the heart of current genre-based pedagogies because it has been determined that social situations give rise to genres (Bawarshi, 2003). It has been pointed out that writing instruction that gives excessive attention to only one particular level of writing, be it product, process or social purpose “gives students a limited, unbalanced and inaccurate view of how writing works” (George, 2001: 666). Therefore it has been recommended that:

compositionists stop separating the work of composition neatly into competing categories but, instead examine what those categories have in common, what each leaves out, what each adds to the others, and how each changes the ways writing courses might take shape (ibid.: 666).

It can be deduced then that a highly plausible measure that can be taken to address the imbalanced focus that each theoretical position advocates, lies in the synthesis of the theories of composing to create an integrated pedagogy of writing instruction. Subsequently, this study aims to explore the viability of the synthesis of approaches that considers the theories of product, process and genre oriented approaches to writing instruction.

However, recommendations for improvement should be informed by empirical findings in an ESL or better yet, Malaysian context as certain existing circumstances that are unique and peculiar to a particular research context cannot be duplicated in experiments. In fact, Krapels (1990) emphasises the importance of research context in L2 writing. Regrettably, to date only a few studies on the composing processes of Malaysian ESL students have been carried out by local researchers. Lee (1989), Zubaidah (1990), Lee (1992) and Rajendra (1999) are the only studies I could identify in my search. The findings of these studies reveal that Malaysian ESL students tend to focus extensively on surface level demands of the writing task while paying scant attention to the rhetorical concerns of the task although skilled writers were more aware of rhetorical considerations in composing.

Recommendations by these researchers generally point to a reconceptualisation of the process of writing by both teachers and students as a thinking and problem-solving process for the main purpose of communication rather than a product centred and form focused one that emphasises grammar and correctness. Other recommendations emphasise the need for a transformation of Malaysian ESL writing instruction to be more student-centred and strategy based. In the area of instructional approaches in writing, only one study (Ng, 2003) was undertaken which was an attempt to explore the effects of a mixed-mode approach to the teaching of writing to students in a secondary school. With local context studies in this important area so sorely lacking, how are our educationists, policy makers in education related matters and language teachers ever going to gauge the effectiveness of current methods of writing instruction in schools across the nation.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The main aim of this study is to acquire data on the effects of writing instructions on the essays and writing strategies of Malaysian form six ESL students, and to investigate whether the process-genre approach to writing instruction would significantly affect the quality of the students' essays. The overall aim of this study is translated into more specific objectives which are expressed in the form of the research questions and hypotheses below:

1.4.1 Research Questions

1. How would the process-genre approach to writing instruction affect ESL students' written products compared to the traditional product oriented approach?
2. In what areas or aspects of writing would the process-genre instructional approach help ESL students to improve on?
3. What effects would the process-genre approach to writing instruction have on the essays of ESL students of different levels of language ability?
4. Would the effects of the process-genre instructional approach be sustainable?

1.4.2 Hypotheses

1. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will obtain higher total scores that are sustainable than those who received product oriented instruction.

2. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will obtain higher sub-scores that are sustainable for overall effectiveness of their essays than those who received product oriented instruction.
3. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will obtain higher sub-scores that are sustainable for content of their essays than those who received product oriented instruction.
4. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will obtain higher sub-scores that are sustainable for organisation of their essays than those who received product oriented instruction.
5. Students who received writing instruction in the product oriented instruction will obtain higher sub-scores that are sustainable for language than those who received process-genre approach.
6. Students in all three ability groups who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will achieve improvement that is sustainable in their total essay scores compared to those who received product oriented instruction.
7. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will develop more writing strategies than those who received product instruction.
8. Students who received writing instruction in the process-genre approach will develop greater sense of awareness of the reader and purpose of writing than those who received product oriented instruction

1.5 Rationale of the study

The fact that the writing problems exist even after the students have received several years of essay writing instruction in secondary school is definitely cause for concern.

The current emphasis on structure, mechanics and linguistic knowledge in the teaching of writing sidelines the importance of teaching writing as a process and ignores the social nature of writing. This study is expected to provide insight into whether an integrated approach to writing instruction would facilitate ESL students' writing proficiency. The findings of this study will have significant pedagogical implications for ESL curriculum planners, textbook writers and teachers. Furthermore, it is expected that this study will shed light on the feasibility of incorporating process-genre oriented writing instruction into the MUET language programme.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This is an experimental study that aims to investigate the effects of adopting a process-genre approach to writing instruction in a Malaysian ESL teaching and learning situation. The findings of the study should therefore be interpreted in the context to the following experimental conditions. The experiment involves explicit instruction in process-genre writing strategies that encompass the entire composing process to selected Form Six ESL students whose ages range between eighteen to nineteen years. Due to time and administrative constraints, the subjects were limited to only sixteen eighty-minute sessions of instruction which added to an effective total of twenty one hours of instruction. It must be pointed out that the integration of process strategies successfully into one's repertoire of writing requires consistent application over a period of time, therefore the findings should be interpreted within the effective time frame.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The following section below highlights key terms that are used in this study and provides detailed explanations to their enhance meaning.

1.7.1 Invention

The term invention was derived from the classical rhetoric of philosophers Aristotle and Cicero and was considered a rhetorical art that scholars employed to generate effective arguments. It is still relevant today for the current understanding of the role of invention in writing is that of a strategic problem-solving process which is the key concept of the cognitive approach to writing (Galbraith, 1992). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Hayes and Flower (1986) and Faigley (1985) refer to invention as the process of finding ideas or discovering what to write before the actual act of composing. Some researchers like Galbraith (1992), Faigley (1985) and Spack (1984) also refer to the process of invention as a process of discovery and use both terms interchangeably. However the emphasis on invention in writing research is only a recent development (Faigley, 1985) with the introduction of heuristics “as a label for systematic procedures of discovery” (Spack, 1984: 653). It is a term mainly associated with the prewriting planning that writers engage in. Invention strategies to help students generate ideas and find out what to write that have been put forward include prewriting activities like freewriting (Elbow, 1973), brainstorming and free-association lists (Tompkins, 2003; Kinney, 1979), mind-mapping, list making and cubing (White, 1995; Cowan and Cowan, 1980).

1.7.2 Composing

Writing researchers generally use the term composing and writing interchangeably in their texts. Holbrook states that “successful writing should emphasise the total writing process, including prewriting, drafting, and revising” (1984: 3) and cites Neill (1982) in the same article who referred to the composing process as one which comprised the prewriting, drafting and revision stages. Spack (1984) refers to the writing process as the “composing process” and the written product as the “composed product” (650). In her study, Zamel (1982) refers to the writing process research carried out by Emig (1971), Perl (1980) and Murray (1980) as “research on the composing process” (196). Therefore composing and writing are synonymous concepts, not separate processes and neither is composing one of the subprocesses or stages in the writing process like prewriting, drafting and revising.

1.8 Conclusion

The findings of recent research on writing instruction has indicated that there is a need for teachers of writing to integrate both process-oriented and product-oriented knowledge in their instruction. Both are important in writing instruction and practice because it is necessary to create a balance between focus on linguistic form, prescribed by the product-oriented approach and focus on cognitive processing, prescribed by the process-oriented approach. Whilst the product-oriented instruction has come under much scrutiny and criticism relatively recently, it must be pointed out that this seems to be the prerogative of L1 pedagogy. Subsequently, it cannot be assumed that what is true in L1 writing instruction is necessarily so in L2 situations especially in ESL situations.

This study has as its main objective to investigate the effectiveness of explicit writing instruction in helping ESL students to develop appropriate writing strategies that will improve the quality of their essays. The experimental instructional approach integrates not only the perspectives of both the product-oriented and process-oriented approaches but the genre approach as well, thereby encompassing the views of all three mainline instructional approaches to the teaching of writing.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to: (1) place the study within a theoretical framework by reviewing studies of writers' strategies for composing; and (2) examine the different approaches to writing instruction.

2.2 Conceptions About The Writing Process

In the last two decades major developments in writing research have led to new methods of teaching writing being formulated. The main catalysts for this change are two-fold stemming from writing researchers' concern that traditional product oriented approaches may not be adequate training for all students writing for different disciplines and also the concern with how students compose written texts (Faigley et al., 1985). One of the most important developments in terms of widespread and far-reaching impact on writing instruction until recently is the understanding and teaching of writing as a process. Almost every current article and book on writing is still concerned with the 'process' in one sense or another and the emphasis in writing instruction saw a general paradigm shift from product to process-orientedness between the 1970's and 1980's (Smith, 2000; Applebee, 1986; Faigley et al., 1985).

Early studies with the intention of improving the quality of students' writing have led researchers to the discovery that their composing processes should be the main focus of writing research. These 'fledging' pedagogical studies include: studies on methods of invention; (Odell, 1974; Young and Koen, 1973) which led to studies on the nature of planning; studies on how students combined sentences; (Mellon; Kerek et al.; in Faigley et al., 1985) which led to research into how written text is produced, and studies on revision processes (Hansen, 1978) which revealed the complex processes involved in writing. Researchers like Britton (1970) and Graves (1975) even proposed a three stage linear model of composing incorporating the main processes of planning, production and revision that make up the writing process.

However, in a groundbreaking study, Emig (1971) argued against the linear model of composing. In observing eight twelfth graders as they wrote, Emig utilised the think-aloud protocol technique that required her subjects to give voice to their thoughts while writing. The findings enabled Emig to ascertain that the composing process involved prewriting, planning, composing, rewriting and pausing. Emig concluded that these composing sub processes are recursive rather than linear in nature. Emig's study has often been regarded as the forerunner of process research as it marked the turning point or defining study that dictated the course writing research was about to take from then on. Other researchers from the mid-1970s onward began to use different methods in their studies to examine the strategies that writers use when composing text. These methods include think-aloud protocols (Flower and Hayes, 1980); *post-hoc* interviews (Sommers, 1980); and observing student behaviour while composing (Matsubishi, 1982; Pianko; in Faigley, 1985). Most notable among the studies on the composing process is Flower and Hayes who established a theoretical foundation and a model of

composing (Figure 2.1) through a series of studies based on cognitive science. The research paradigm shift from product-centredness to process-centredness is certainly apparent.

However, the cognitive science approach soon came under criticism from writing researchers who are of the opinion that the cognitive concept of producing text is oversimplifying a very complex creative process (Bizell, 1982) and that writing is a social act which is inseparable from the context where it takes place (Bazerman, 1983). The concept of context can be exemplified by students writing for different academic disciplines like physics, law or social studies. These researchers saw the learning of writing as a process of socialisation, like Dewey (1915) who proposed the concept of classrooms as “miniature communities” and Clark et al. (1983) who suggested that most writing skills were learned in the context of the social life of the classroom. Another feature of the then new paradigm was the focus on the writer as the creator of the text and language learner which led to the process approach to writing instruction (Raimes, 1991).

Although the process approach was more student centred and opened up more opportunities to develop students’ abilities to address the rhetorical concerns of writing through process strategies, it has its drawbacks (Bazerman, 1980). Badger and White (2000) argue that the main disadvantages of process instruction was that firstly, it assumes all types of writing to be equal and can therefore be produced by engaging the same set of processes every time and secondly, that students are not given adequate linguistic input and guidance to be able to write successfully. Bizzell (1982) states that process instruction fails to give adequate emphasis to the conventions of different

academic discourse that would help prepare students for the different types of academic writing at the tertiary level. Another shortcoming of the process approach is that one of its main strategies - peer review - may lead students to have very unrealistic views of their true writing abilities as peer reviewers have no formal training in language or writing instruction (Horowitz, 1986c).

It was the dissatisfaction with the process approach that had been widely adopted in writing classes that sparked the genre movement that began as an experiment in Australia (Martin, 1986; Martin and Rothery, 1986; Cairney, 1992). The development of genre theory in writing based on the linguistic definitions of Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1994), was the catalyst for the genre movement which has been most successfully adopted and practised in Australia (Johns, 2002). Process-based writing instruction was the instruction of choice in Australian classrooms in the late 1980s although genre theory had by that time made groundbreaking progress through the work and research of genre theorists like Martin and Callaghan (Cope et al., 1993). Genre theorists, teachers and even parents voiced concern over what they had termed the process approach's progressivist view of writing that was not helping the student writers to develop their language and that although it appeared quite efficient at motivating students to write the effect was not sustainable. They were collectively opposed to what they perceived as the eventual and inevitable institutionalisation of process writing into the school-based curriculum that would "effectively dispense with the traditional curriculum with its formal grammar, rules of punctuation and spelling lists" (ibid.: 239).

In Japan, research in the problems in ESL writing there suggest, that genre-based instruction would be relevant for Japanese students because the greatest challenge for them seem to be “in the creation of coherent and cohesive texts as whole entities” (Rabini, 2003: 127). This is because ESL instruction in Japan tends to focus on the language at the sentence level, thereby not providing for adequate practice in putting whole texts together that is much needed for academic writing at the tertiary level (ibid.). Furthermore, the emphasis on writer-reader relationship and cultural-schematic relationship in genre writing would be helpful because in Japan the responsibility of successful communication shifts to the reader instead of the writer as “there is a different way of looking at the communication process” (Hinds, 1987: 144). Therefore, genre writing would be beneficial in this situation as generic structure is emphasised in writing instruction (Jarrell, 2000). In addition, ‘in field’ data collected by Jarrell (2000) also point to the effectiveness of genre-based writing with primary school children in Britain.

According to George (2001) and Fraiberg (2002), the writing pedagogies that have been dominant over the past thirty years were primarily developed by the process movement and that we are currently at the turn of the twenty first century, in a post-process era of writing instruction. In the process approach to writing instruction the emphasis is on the act of writing itself and how the text is created is very important (Kitao and Saeki, 1992). Studies that have been carried out by L2 researchers like Ammon (1985), Diaz et al. (1985) and Hildenbrand (1985) on writing programmes that promoted the core process approach writing strategies of planning, revising, editing and audience awareness have reported the effectiveness of the approach in improving the quality of student writing. However, the cognitive process approach that focused on

individual cognition in writing was increasingly being challenged by post-process scholars like McComiskey (2000) and Howard (1998) who contend that writing is both a cognitive and social process.

Matsuda (2003) and McComiskey (2000) theorise that the term post-process is but an extension and not an outright rejection of the writing process but rather one that also considers the importance of sociocultural and interactional contexts of writing. The importance of social context in writing is stressed in what Flowers (1989) calls a dialectal relationship between context and cognition where the two processes work together. Post-process writing instruction focuses on social aspects of culture and context where the students are introduced to the idea of cultural values that are embedded in texts. Both Fulkerson (2005) and McComiskey (2000) argue that the post-process era of writing instruction is an integration and negotiation of converging but often contentious process and social theories of writing instruction that have been developed over the last thirty years. It is therefore apparent that post process pedagogy promotes de-emphasis of the clear distinctions between the main approaches to writing instruction and incorporates and garners the strengths of the different approaches.

2.3 The Theoretical Framework

Contemporary views of composing can be grouped around these three main theoretical positions: the traditional perspective, the cognitive perspective and the social perspective (Tribble, 1996; Faigley et al., 1985). It is the intention of this section to: (1) provide the theoretical structure of this study by discussing the perspectives, strengths and weaknesses of the three mainline approaches to writing instruction