

UCLA

Occasional Papers

Title

Smart Teaching and Learning Strategies in Pre-writing Activities in Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/45g336rs>

Authors

Baba, Suria
Aziz, Zahara Abdul

Publication Date

2009-05-14

Smart Teaching and Learning Strategies in Pre-writing Activities in Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language)

SURIA BABA, PhD

Malaysia Teacher Training Institute, Malay Language Campus, Kuala Lumpur
suriabb@yahoo.com

ZAHARA ABDUL AZIZ, PhD

Associate Professor, National University Malaysia
zaharaukm@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative case study of four smart schools' teachers using purposive sampling. The study unveils the implementation of smart teaching and learning strategies in pre-writing activities in Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language). Pre-writing activities include reading, free writing, brainstorming, mind mapping and listing. These activities revolve around student centered learning, thoughtful learning, group work, and also media in the implementation of teaching and learning. There is Integration of Learning Theories based on Brain Based Learning Theory in the prewriting activities. Qualitative data from triangulation of data from non-participant observation, interviews, document analysis as well as vignette and concept maps. Validity is through six segments: triangulation from multisources, experts' review, long-term observation, peer checking, investigator's position, and collaborative ties with participants. Reliability is determined by the researcher, who uses triangulation and an audit trail. The key findings of the study are as follows: First, prewriting activities include brainstorming activities and mind mapping, reading and interpreting data from print and electronic media. The ability to convey information helps to develop critical thinking. Second, the efforts of smart teachers strengthen learning and teaching which inculcate analytical and critical skills to solve problems. Third, a cyclical model is created from the interviews and observations made during the prewriting activities. Efforts to make smart teaching and learning a success require teachers as well as students to think creatively. Fourth, smart characteristics are related to the integration of brain-based learning theory.

Keyword: pre-writing activities, smart teaching and learning strategy, brain based learning theory, cyclic pattern model, Malay language, Bahasa Melayu

Introduction

Writing invokes different learning experiences to students depending on the level of writing skills they have. Many students find writing difficult, with personal presumptions and learning experiences hampering and exacerbating their learning process.

A dynamic pedagogic orientation of the teachers' approach in teaching of writing skill is needed to overcome this perennial predicament amongst students, and the smart teaching and learning strategy of the Malaysian Smart School program (Malaysian Smart School Blueprint, 1997) contributes a lot to solve this setback. The fundamental principle of this strategy is the student-centered learning that underpinned by the Brain-based Learning Theory principles of relaxed alertness, active processing and orchestrated immersion (Caine & Caine, 1991). Teaching devices, coupled with the theory and the Ministry's strategy help to "clarify the concept to be learnt and the understanding of the expected students' performance" (Olsen, 1995). Pre-writing (Emig, 1971), suggested the recursive process utilizes the students' past experiences to construct new meaning while integrating to formulate new understanding, contributes to effective learning.

In this qualitative approach study on Malaysian Smart School teachers, purposive sampling of respondents from Form Four classes were carried out through multi-source techniques with Merriam's (1998) six basic strategies applied to ensure internal validity. These strategies of triangulation by multiple sources, members check, ample research period, experts' views, collaborative working relationship between the participants and the researcher, as well as worldview and theoretical orientation ensured the collected data's authenticity and validity. The findings of the study conclude that cyclic pattern of the prewriting process occurs recursively and it manifested the brain-based learning theory that leads to active processing, relaxed alertness and orchestrated immersion of effective learning process among the students. Hence, Aristotle's saying of "what we have to learn to do, we learn by doing" is emphasized within the Cyclic Pattern Model the researcher illustrated in this study. It will greatly nullify Wolfe's (2001) observation

that we miss many opportunities to engage our students in more authentic learning process.

With that obstacle, writing process through pre-writing is the first stage of the writing process and it is also a time of discovery or unearthing ideas. Pre-writing can condense swirling mists of thought into words on paper. There is no need to think about order or how to condense. The objectives are to produce as many ideas as possible. Activities that are involved in prewriting process are collecting ideas through reading, freewriting, brainstorming, mind mapping and listings (Raimes, 1983).

In this paper, I would look into smart teaching and learning strategies in pre-writing process which are underpinned by brain based learning theory. The question arises as to how does pre-writing process enhance student centred learning and thoughtful learning whilst brain based learning theory is underpinned by three basic pillars; relaxed alertness, active processing and orchestrated immersion (Caine & Caine 1991) . Recursive writing process is thus related or interconnected with the brain because as the activities takes place, the brain works actively and this reduces adrenalin rush. This process leads to orchestrated immersion of pre-writing process.

Background of the Study

Students were taught to speak, read and write through various approaches, methods and techniques in order to achieve proficiency in the language. Specifically, the main objective of writing is to enable students to write a composition during which they are guided through the process of writing, pre-writing-planning, drafting, revising and editing. This is to ensure that students are given proper guidance when producing a good piece of writing. Ironically, writing is still the skill most students are least proficient in.

Statement of the problem

Although a sizable portion of time is being given to develop writing skills yet students are unable to produce good pieces of essay writing. This problem becomes worse when

there is no support on how to prepare the draft before getting into the full writing phase . This is when very often we notice in our students' composition that ideas are left out or ideas presented without being fully developed. It can be deduced that the method of writing strategies show students are lacking the cognitive strategies of generating and developing ideas in the topic they chose to write on. Thus, they lack the skills to elaborate on the points they are writing, and they lack cognitive strategies to reflect on what had been learnt. White and Arndt (1991) suggested questions will prompt to help stimulate thinking, to draw on experiences and to develop and shape ideas. As such students have the opportunity to openly express their ideas and thoughts and keep them actively involved in the lessons. The Malaysian Ministry of Education (2002) reports that teachers were rated at a low to medium level when conducting writing skills in the Malay language classrooms. This shows that the teaching and learning strategy during the writing process are at a low level among secondary school teachers being observed. Hence, this research is looking at smart teaching and learning strategy during Malay language writing skill classroom.

Research Questions

This study has been designed to address the following questions:

- a) how does a student centred learning develop from a process of prewriting?
- b) how does prewriting process create and develop a thoughtful classroom
- c) how does brain based learning theory evolve in prewriting process

Review of the literature

Emig (1971) a writing theorist view writing as a way of expressing how and what we think and as an effective means of learning. Specifically, as a fundamental procedure in pre-writing process is how writers collect information, process it in some manner and then present it to the reader. The process involved collecting of ideas through reading, selecting, evaluating, brainstorming, mind mapping and making decisions about the relevance and the irrelevance of the information to the topic. Hence, writing also involved learners putting words in meaningful context. Learners connect their past

experiences and construct new meaning, integrating them to reformulate new understanding.

Much of the success in writing depends on what has occurred before the students begins writing. Raimes (1983) said that there are a number of ways of teaching writing. They stem from the basic assumptions that writing means writing a connected text and not just single sentences, that writers write for a purpose and having readers, and that the process of writing is a valuable learning tool for all of our students. Responding to students' writing is very much a part of the process of teaching writing. It is not just tacked onto the end of a teaching sequence, a last chore for teachers and a bore for students. Rather, it is important as devising materials and preparing lessons. More often than not, the sequence of a classroom writing follows this sequential pattern, that is, selection of topic, preparation for writing and prewriting activities.

This learning process had been empirically proven to be very effective in rising the students' writing skills levels (Siti Hanim, 1998; Campbell, 1998; Mohd Amin, 1998; Healy & Martha, 1997; Curriculum Development Centre, 1989; Maimunah Samat, 1989; Raimes, 1983; Byrne, 1979; Emig, 1971; Arapoff, 1975). Teaching devices coupled to the Learning Theory approaches and the Ministry's strategy help to "clarify the concept to be learnt and the understanding of the expected students' performance" (Olsen, 1995).

Many teachers use graphics to help students organize thinking. These are called mind mapping or thinking maps, webs, fishbone maps or graphic organizers, they have proved to be particularly effective at increasing students' understanding and retention of information. Perhaps this is because these visual devices make it possible to see connections between aspects of the information that are not obvious in a linear form, such as outline or a narrative. The structure of these frameworks resembles the structure used by the brain to organize information. Remember that the various aspects of a memory, or of a learned fact, are not stored in a single, specific location in the brain, but are stored in networks. Images are stored in the visual cortex, sounds in the auditory cortex and so forth. This may be why visually mapping information has proved productive for enhancing students' storage and retention of information: It mirrors the structure used by the brain. These organizers have a number of uses. They can be used during prewriting to

help students brainstorm aspects of a topic they might include in their composition (Wolfe, 2001). When they recall how powerful visuals are storing and recalling information process it is not surprising that they play a role in many visual organizers used such as mind maps. By the time the students are ready to write, they are much more likely to really understand the ideas and are much better prepared and motivated to write through process writing (Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 1999). Thus, prewriting is a process in which there is a rich source of information for the writers, in addition to serving as vehicles for students' reflection while refining their thinking

From brain research, as Olsen (1995) said that have come to understand that the brain is a pattern-seeking device in search of meaning and that the brain is a pattern – seeking device in search of learning. Thus, the most usable and useful curriculum for classroom teachers would be one that is made clear for teachers and students about what concepts to be learned and how those understandings would be used in the real world. So with prewriting process it had been shown that the brain works along the activities.

Methodology

Qualitative approaches are conducted through multisource techniques: interview, non participant observation and documents which includes vignettes and concept map. Respondent from purposive sampling are chosen from Malaysian Smart School Teachers who teaches a Form Four Classroom (upper secondary school in Malaysian Education System). According to Merriam (1998) six basic strategies are used to enhance internal validity such as, firstly, triangulation using multiple sources such as non participant observation, interviews and document analysis to confirm the emerging findings. Secondly, the strategy of “members check” are carried out by taking data and making tentative interpretations back to the respondents and getting them recheck the transcripts to see whether they are plausible or not. This procedure has been carried out throughout the study Thirdly, the research project was carried out for about eight months, a long period to ensure the respondents produce patterns in their practice of teaching. This process is to gather data in order to increase the validity of the findings. Apart from that

through peer examination, researcher had asked expert opinion in order to seek for comments and suggestions on the findings as they emerged.

Researchers had built rapport with the participants of the study to the point where they were disclosing their teaching activities and practices. During data collection a number of techniques were taken to ensure the reliability of the study. These techniques are audit trail, triangulation and the researcher remains neutral and unbiased.

The researcher carried out simultaneously the data collection and the analysis of the data because without the ongoing analysis the data can be unfocussed, repetitious and overwhelming. So data that had been analysed during data collection are both parsimonious and illuminating. Futhermore, managing the data using NVivo software (Bazeley, 2002) had resulted in the systematic analysis of the data. During coding process, respondent had been labeled as Reseach Respondent 1 (RR1), and observation as obsv, interview as intv, document as doc, and teaching and learning as t&l so as to make the work systematically and easier in retrieval the data while process takes place.

Results

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions has be drawn. Data gathered from multi sources; interview, observation and documents analysis and were frame between the research respondents.

Question 1: How does a student centred learning develop from a process of prewriting? The finding is being synthesized in the the table below

Table 1 Documented, Observation, Interviews, and Data Matrices in Pre-writing Activities to develop and generates student centred learning

Data Type (Documented Data)	Data Type (Observation Data)	Data Type (Interview Data)	Enhancing student centred learning
By the end of this lesson, the students are able to; 1. Gained information from the reading sources (T&L1,RR1)	Students are asked to read from 11 newspaper clippings and discuss their findings (Obsv.1)	Articles read will provide additional ideas to be shared with peers. (PR1, Intv..1)	Student collect, choose, and analyse the gathered information while expanding their knowledge
2. Increase their knowledge on the relevant issues being discussed from their reading ((T&L2,PR2)	Students read, discuss, summerise and present their findings. Students compose the outline of the essay to be written (Obsv.2)	These articles are learning devices and students will glean relevant information from them. More readings will be needed from other sources. (Intv. 2)	Student did the analysing of the information which they gathered from the newspaper clippings. The tasks done enhanced their capability in choosing the information needed
3. Read on the issue of snatch-thefts from reference books (T&L 3, RR3)	Students asked to read articles with accompanying pictures of snatch theft cases (Obsv.3)	The inference from dialogue in the story shows some connections to snatch theft cases highlighted by the media. (Intv. 3)	Provide extra information to support their views in discussions and writing. Student are able to connect the situation and do more thinking and reading
4. Read or refer to newspaper and magazines for information (T&L4 , RR4)	Students search for information on topics of Science and Technology products. (Obsv.4)	From their reading, the students knew the importance of Science and Technology products. (Intv.4)	Collect, choose and summerise information and these activities helps the student work on the task given

Table above shows the examples of teaching and learning (T&L) approaches pattern utilised by the research respondents. The data was taken from a series of the smart

learning and reading activity strategies in pre-writing process. There is a marked differences in the frequencies of the reading activities carried out by the four Research Respondents (RR) through observations (obsv.) and interviews(intv.).

Question 2: How does prewriting process create and develop a thoughtful classroom

Table 2: Documented, Observation, Interview and Mind-mapping Activities Matrices of Smart Learning to enhance thoughtful learning classroom

Data Type (Documented Data)	Data Type (Observation Data)	Data Type (Interview Data)	Mind-mapping Activities characteristics
<p>By the end of this lesson, the students are able to write a good composition</p>	<p>RR1: Class, to conclude Im had drawn a picture of a family with a child holding hands to portray a happy family. A picture is worth a thousand words. So, we ask Im why is it so? Im: If a family is healthy, it shows that the amily is happy.</p>	<p>Researcher: Could you explain the role of the mind map? RR1: when they look at the mind map, they can recollect things from their memories and form them into a mind map of their own. Then they'll arrange and group their ideas accordingly. This mind map looks simple yet creative and it'll assist them to write as well as have fun. The students' ideas are presented clearly in these graphics.</p>	<p>Correct usage of information from the mind map can illustrates the actual capablity of the students to synthesise information by presenting them into relevant graphics. These graphics are analogic representatives of their undersatnding of the topic.</p>
<p>(RR1,Doc.5) By the end of this lesson, the students are able to list down relevant information</p>	<p>(T&L 5) RR2: carry on listing down your ideas...list it down according to specific categories in a graphic mind map as I had taught you. Student: Draw a mind map or in point form, sir?</p>	<p>(Intv. 5) Researcher: You had asked your students to present teir ideas in graphics? RR2 : I always encourage my students to use mind maps, but students like to choose simpler</p>	<p>The collected information are analysed according to their categories, elaboration, and examples given. The points are listed to show their analytical thinking.</p>

(RR2, Doc2)	RR2: Any which one will do.	ways. Today they had chosen to use the linear points form.	
	Obsv, 2	(Intv.2)	
By the end of this lesson, the students are able to present and discuss the composition main points	Student 1: We'll list it in point forms, won't we? Student 2: We are going to elaborate these points then, aren't we?	Researcher: Please explain the role of a mind map? RR3 : Mind map is easy to understand.. it has categories, groups, structured, and students can links all their ideas in arranged manner.	The ability of the students to arrange the points, elaboration, and examples well as well as good presentation show their cognitive maturity.
RR3/DoC. T&L 8	(Obsv.8)	(Intv.8)	
By the end of this lesson, the students are able to present their composition main points well RR4/Doc.Obsv .3	If that's so, can you complete your mind maps sooner? Teacher draw a mind map using the 4W1H (<i>who, what, why, when dan how</i>) questions concept to guide the students to enable them to elaborate their points.	Researcher: This mind map is the basic guide in writing? RR4 : I asked them to elaborate to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions, hence they had to think of how to do so. They still have to elaborate their ideas. These steps are necessary to train them to think properly so as not to veer off topic in their elaboration.	From this activity, the students are able to categorise the points according to the 4W1H questions concepts. The arrangement of the points from various sources are well done. Ability to list the information sequently helps the student thinks critically and analytically
	RR4/Obsv.3	Intv. 3	

The data from Table 2 above shows the mind mapping activities carried out by the research respondents enabled the students to categorise the information in graphic form.

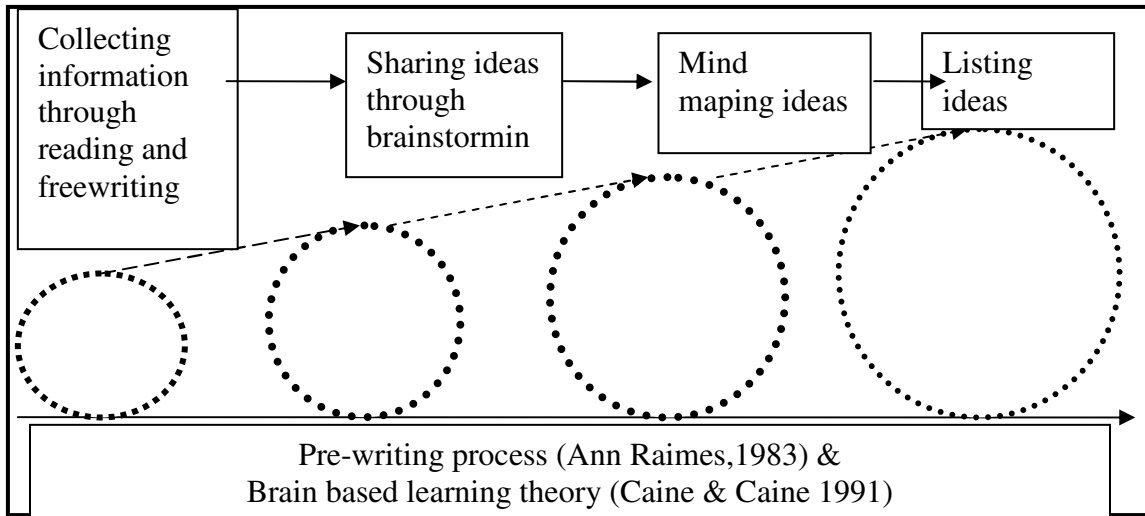
It also shows that the students are able to synthesise these information by their abilities to transform them into graphics. These graphics are the analogic representation of their cognitive maturity. These tasks are the developing process in enhancing thoughtful and thinking classroom.

Summary:

Prewriting of Smart Teaching Strategies Frequency: A Summary

Smart Teaching Strategies	RR 1	RR2	RR3	RR4
Free writing	5/10	6/10	7/10	4/10
Mind mapping	7/10	5/10	8/10	4/10
Brainstorming	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10
Listing of points	8/10	6/10	8/10	6/10

Question 3: how does brain based learning theory evolve in prewriting process. The findings has been transformed into a model of cyclic pattern of smart teaching and learning strategy comprising pre-writing process underpinning by brain based learning theory. *Cyclic pattern model* had drawn the pre-writing process occurs recursively, to and forth and not linear process. The integration of brain based learning theory manifested during this pre-writing process which involved collecting information, freewriting process, brainstorming, mind mapping and listing the ideas. Thus the three important pillar underpinning the study are active processing, relaxed alertness and orchestrated immersion does circulate along this prewriting process as shown in the model below.



**Cyclic Pattern Model :
Smart teaching and learning strategy underpinning Pre-writing Process**

Discussion

Student centred learning classroom is being developed through the task given by the teachers through pre-writing activities. As research respondent1 (RR1), RR2,RR3 and RR4 had carried out activities to enhance the involvement of these student in constructing their own meaning in gathering information thus made the lesson meaningful. As Emig (1971) state the recursive process of prewriting enable the writers to look to and forth the information thus need the ability in refining the information. While Raimes (1983) noted that the pre-writing is important activities in gathering information will increase and improved the thinking process (Arapoff, 1975). Hence, these are activities done by the teachers during prewriting process is an important part in writing and it generate and develop a student centred learning and thoughtful learning (Ministry of Education Malaysia’s Report , 2002).

In utilizing the thoughtful and student centred learning classroom, this non linear activities accumulates ideas from note taking to synthesing of knowledge provide a different level of thinking; understanding, knowledge, analyzing, synthesing and evaluating. The pre-writing process (Raimes 1983), through recursive activities (Emig, 1971) accommodate and improved thinking process (Arapoff,1975). Those activities

accumulate the ideas and information of the writers through active processing in a relaxed situation as it goes recursively and create an orchestrated and whole ideas together (Caine & Caine 1994).

Conclusion

Writing should be taught as a process of discovery. Rather than giving feedback after writing is done which happens during writing product approach, teachers should intervene to guide students through the process so that they know which areas they should rework on. Other research also shows that feedback is more useful between drafts, not when it is done at end of the task. Apart from that, the pre-writing involve the active processing of the brain, with a relaxed situation and immersed deeply around the topic being discussed.

As Aristotle supposedly said, “ what we have to learn to do, we learn by doing.” Concrete experience is one of the best ways to make strong, long-lasting neural connections. These experiences engage more of the senses and use multiple pathways to store and therefore more ways to recall information. This is probably why we remember what we experienced much better than what we have heard or read. True, it is not possible for students to experience everything we want them to learn, but we probably miss many opportunities to engage students in more authentic learning (Wolfe, 2001). Thus, brain based learning is interconnected in the prewriting process.

Bibliography

- Arapoff, N. (1975). Writing: A thinking process. English Teaching Forum. Vol.13
- Bazeley, P. (2002). The evolution of a project involving an integrated analysis of structured qualitative and quantitative data. *Inst.J. Social Research Methodology* 5 (3): 229-243.
- Byrne, D. (1979). Teaching of writing skills. Essex. Longman
- Caine, R.N. & Caine, G. (1994). *Making connections. Teaching and the human brain.* Parsippany, New Jersey: Dale Seymour Publications.

- Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education Malaysia. (1989). Process writing in composition. CDC Special project.
- Emig, J. (1971). *The composing process of twelfth graders*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Healy Ann E, & Martha Walusayi(1997). Strategies for writing. A Basic approach. NTC Publication Grp
- Maimunah Samat, (2001). Malay language pedagogy. Writing skills. Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia Malay Language Institute.
- Merriam, S (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco. Josey-Bass Publishers.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia's Report (2002). Pemantauan kolaborasi sekolah bestari terhadap strategi pengajaran dan pembelajaran. (Collaborative monitoring on smart school teaching and learning strategy)
- Olsen, K. (1995) *Science continuum of concepts for grades K-6*. Kent, WA: Center for the future of Public Education
- Raimes, A (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. New York. Oxford university press
- Siti Hamim Stappa, (1998). *The process approach to ESL writing*. Faculty of Language Studies. National University of Malaysia
- Teachers' Curriculum Institute (1999). *History alive! Engaging all learners in the diverse classroom* (2nd edition) California Mountain View,
- White Arndt (1991). *Process writing*. Essex Longman Publisher.
- Wolfe, P (2001). *Translating research into classroom practice*. Virginia, ASCD,