

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING PROSE-MODEL APPROACH IN IMPROVING ESL LEARNERS' WRITING SKILL IN DEVELOPMENT AND ARRANGEMENT THEIR IDEAS

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Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of the prose-model approach in improving ESL students' writing performance in development and arranging their ideas in writing. A total of twenty-eight students in Form Two are randomly selected as subjects for collecting the data. Experimental design is used in this study to suit the need of the research done. For the first step, the pre-writing test is used to identify the primary writing skill. Then, after the 'treatment' is given, the post-writing test is used to show the effectiveness of using the prose-model approach to improve the students' writing skills. The experiment of the prose-model approach assessment will then be conducted (with the help of the English teacher) within allocation time. Their pre-writing test and the post-writing test were observed and marked. This process was done for at least three months. The students' achievement (in grade) was analysed and presented in reports, figures, and percentages. The data collected was based on using the prose-model approach, before and after by comparing the grades they get from the pre-writing test and post-writing test. For teachers, it is crucial to find a way to improve students' writing performance. Writing is a complex and creative process. What they present in their writing gives us a picture of their level of growth in thinking. Therefore, a new technique is needed to help students to write better in the English language.

Keywords: Prose-Model, writing development, writing performance

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four skills ESL is taught in all secondary schools in Malaysia, but it is not an easy skill to teach. According to Chitravellu, Sithamparam, and Choon (1995),

writing is a complicated process. However, proficiency in writing in English as a second language (ESL) can be improved by using the 'Prose Model Approach'. It is a belief that the use of the 'Prose Model Approach' can help teachers in Malaysia to evaluate their secondary school students' writing performance.

Prose-Model Approach is an approach that asks the question, "How do writers write?" rather than "What do writers write?" One good way to learn how to write is to follow the example of those who can write well. In this approach, reading is integrated to see the printed words, the shape and order of sentences, and the texture of paragraphs. The prose model approach of teaching writing maintains that people can develop and improve their writing performance through directed reading. L2 learners' writing largely depends on what they read, and reading can improve their L2 writing skills.

The approach makes students perform better at writing when provided with prose-model stimulus than when asked to write a descriptive or narrative piece without any models. It is through a step-by-step process that they will learn to imitate and produce a good essay. This may be what many students need, an example to look at and follow step-by-step.

Nowadays, the writing skills mastery among ESL learners in Malaysia should be commanding or average. They should write an essay or product containing suitable and exciting content, using the correct linking words in delivering the content. However, we can see that most ESL learners are still struggling in their writing where they sometimes do not know how to organize their thoughts, what information to edit or remove, repeating basic mistakes such as misspelling, and plenty more, which as a result, disrupt the flow of the writing and automatically make it bad writing as a whole. Writing is one of the major problems faced by students.

One factor that might be why all this happened stems back to the writing process itself. It is a fact that most Malaysian students cannot write in English for many reasons. Students might not be exposed to the writing process correctly or at all in some cases. They are not taught the importance of the writing process itself, where they have to go through stages such as editing, revising, and others that will help them in their writing skills. Instead, some students

are told by their teachers that they can skip through the process as long as the final product is good enough, which might be why students are struggling in their writing.

Due to this matter, there will undoubtedly be some implications, especially towards the students themselves. Of course, the significant effect is where students do not know how to express their ideas in their writing. This is bad because sometimes, students come up with brilliant thoughts. However, unfortunately, because they do not know how to incorporate those thoughts in their writing, they abandon those ideas, making their writing dull and uninteresting for readers. Not only that, poor writing skills will hamper ESL learners' motivation and confidence where they will feel that their writing is not up to scratch with their peers who employs more variety in their writing in terms of choice of words, how creative they organize their thoughts and not to forget, the minor mistakes have done as compared to them.

In response to this problem, the researcher seeks to understand the problems that ESL learners face in writing. This study will explore the prose-model approach in writing and try to find out whether this approach does help ESL learners in their writing skills. She strongly believes in this approach where learners are made to believe that writing is not merely a task where they take a pen and write whatever is going through their minds without proper planning or any writing sample. Instead, it is like an evolution of their first thought which will go through some process where they might imitate a model or a sample of writing, try to add or subtract more ideas into it, how they plan to incorporate those ideas in their draft, how they revise the content based on the feedback from their peers, making suitable corrections before publishing, and lastly where they will share the final product with the readers. By going through all these processes, the researcher is sure that the quality of the writing is ensured, but most importantly, the standard of writing among ESL learners is at the level where it is supposed to be.

In recent SLA research, much emphasis has been placed upon the role of attention, awareness, and noticing, which have been viewed as crucial issues in L2 learning by many researchers. There are several types of feedback in L2 writing instruction, such as teacher's essay correction, reformulation, and peer feedback. A model essay written by a native speaker may also be a beneficial resource if it can function as a feedback tool. Some scholars believe that modeling of native speaker writing may improve writing performance better than teacher error correction. Saeidi and Sahebkhair (2011) stated that "Models are important to every writer

and when appropriately integrated into the context of the writing process, they become a powerful and effective teaching tool.” L2 learners have to be exposed to various types of reading material since it is challenging to acquire L2 writing skills by writing alone.

ESL learners' always thought it would be easy to write an essay since the skeleton was already provided. However, Christensen (1993) stated that she had neither seen nor written anything similar, and she found it to be a tremendous task. Sometimes the information and what they wanted to say was easy enough to find, yet organizing it into a proper expected manner was very difficult. She also claims that often ESL learners are told to write an essay. The essay should contain an introduction, body, and conclusion. They can even describe in detail what accompanies each part of a good essay, yet when putting pen to paper, all the knowledge goes upside down and does not have a flow.

This could lead the students to become often frustrated. They have seen and know what is expected, but they still do not have the skills to develop a similar masterpiece without a guiding hand. Therefore, the prose-model approach was invented. Way, Joiner, and Seaman (2002) demonstrated that “Students performed better at writing when provided with prose-model stimulus than when asked to write a descriptive or narrative piece in the absence of any models.” It is through a step-by-step process that they will learn to imitate and produce a good essay. This may be what many students need, an example to look at and follow step-by-step.

The objectives of the study are as follow:

- a) To analyse whether the prose-model approach affects writing skills among ESL learners.
- b) To investigate, the scores of the post-writing test show a significant difference from the pre-speaking test after the students are treated with the prose-model approach before the post-test.

2.0 METODOLOGI

2.1 Research Design

The experimental design will be used for this study. This design will be used because it suits the need of the research to be done. Experimental research, particularly the true experimental design type (a between-group design) labeled by Creswell (2008), served the research purpose. This is because the students need to be introduced to what the prose-model approach is and how they are supposed to go over the process to complete it. The design will make us off all the students in this class to effectively produce their writing skills based on a topic given.

The pre-writing test will first be taken as a guideline on what and how they are supposed to make the prose-model approach. The prose-model approach is then introduced to the students constantly on how to improve their writing skills by developing and arranging their ideas based on the notes given in the limited period for the post-writing test. In the end, a post-speaking test will be conducted on the same topic they have given. The researcher will observe it to give marks and band.

2.2 Research Instruments

This study used a pre-writing test and a post-writing test. It will be conducted for three months. Quantitative data consisted of pre and post-writing test scores. A writing test given at the beginning of the study was selected as a pre-writing test, and a test given towards the end of the study was selected as a post-writing test.

2.3 Sample Population

Twenty-eight form two students in a school in Shah Alam will be chosen for this study. Their level of English proficiency will be of the same level. They will be chosen irrespective of their gender, race, and social background. The prose-model approach will be conducted in their writing class during the English period.

2.4 Data Analysis

Identical pre-writing tests and post-writing tests were used to test the achievement of students of the treatment group. The score sheets of the pre-writing test and post-writing test were obtained for each individual. The individual scores based on the rubric (marking scheme) for the pre-test and post-test will be recorded. The percentage of the marks will be calculated and presented in table form. To find out the effectiveness of using the prose-model approach in evaluating students' writing performance, the results of pre-test and post-test will be compared.

3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Pre-writing Test and Post-writing Test

For this study, the twenty-eight samples required to be seated for a pre-writing test at the first and post-writing test will be given after the treatment is introduced. Marks given are upon 20%, and the marking is done with the help and advice from the class's English teacher. The result for the pre-writing test and the post-writing test are stated in Table 1.

Table 1: Result of Pre-Writing Test and Post-Writing Test

Samples	Marks		
	Pre-Writing Test (upon 20)	Treatment Prose-Model Approach	Post-Writing Test (upon 20)
1	14		19
2	12		16
3	17		19
4	11		17
5	14		18
6	13		17
7	11		18
8	12		16
9	9		19
10	8		14
11	10		16
12	10		15
13	9		15

14	9		14
15	9		16
16	8		17
17	13		17
18	10		15
19	13		17
20	12		15
21	12		18
22	13		18
23	12		19
24	8		16
25	8		16
26	13		18
27	11		16
28	11		16
Total	$312/ 560 \times 100 :$ 55.7%		$467/ 560 \times 100 :$ 83.4%

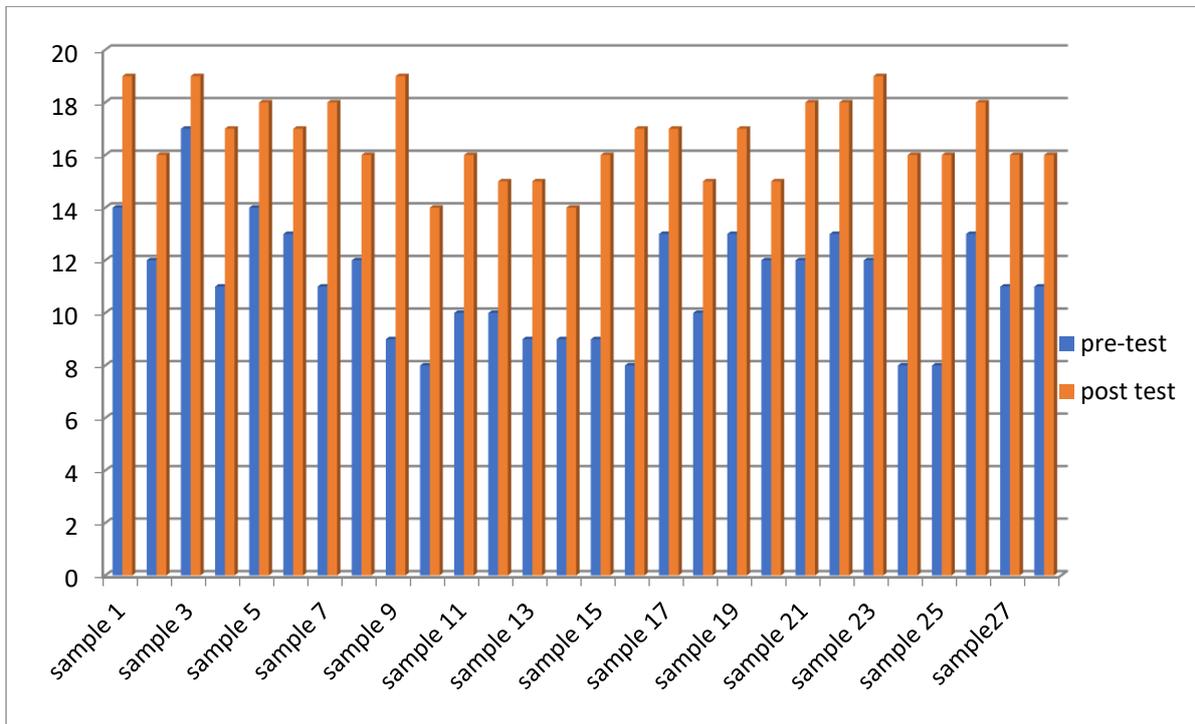


Figure 1: Pre-Writing Test and Post-Writing Test

Based on Table 1 and Figure 1 shows above, we can see the positive effect on the students' performance in their final writing marks (post-writing test). Based on the drilling

done during the 'treatment' using the prose-model approach, the students checked their mistakes in their previous writing and corrected them in their following writing product. As a result, they could write and show better performance, as there is an attractive 27.7% of their final total marks during their post-writing test, which was conducted three months after their pre-writing test.

Each respondent gives positive achievement on their performance in their final writing marks. As we can see respondent 1, her pre-test is 14, and her post-test is 19. She shows increment five marks after being treated by the prose-model approach. From her post-writing essay, we can see her ideas have been well developed, and her word choices are excellent. She also arranged her sentences excellently. Her essay was smooth and well written.

As we can see, the lowest mark for the pre-writing test is 8. 4 students get eight marks as their pre-writing test. They are respondents 10, 16, 24, and 25. After being treated with the prose-model approach, all of them show increment. Respondent 10 get 14 marks on his post-writing test. Respondent 16 get 17 marks on his post-writing test. Respondents 24 and 25 get 16 marks on their post-writing test. When we compare their pre-writing essays, they have similar issues where they do not know how to use and expand the words given. They do not know how to build sentences and link them together to make a paragraph. So, by making a prose-model approach where they need to imitate or model others, they learn how the words work and make them beautiful. Their post-writing essay show achievement where they can join the words and sentences creatively and insert some bombastic words to make their essay completed.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysed, it is not surprising to see the average result in their pre-writing test, where overall marks are only 55.7%. Some improvement in their writing performance can be seen where they managed to upgrade their result to 83.4% of the total marks they scored in the post-writing test. So, we can conclude that the prose-model approach affects writing skills among ESL students. After analysing the data and the findings, it is true that the prose-model approach effectively evaluates students' writing performance. Therefore, it can be a primary reference for other teachers to apply it in their English language lessons. It

can also be one of the techniques in the teaching field to improve the result in the PT3 examination and also at the same time increase the usage of the English language in students' writing activities.

Therefore, by improving the outcomes, the English language will be accepted among students and use it confidently in their writing with others after realizing the importance of the English language to today's life. Teachers need to erase the traditional beliefs, which say that 'English is a difficult subject'. This can be done only by finding the answer on; 'What is the best way to teach it to our students, especially in writing?' As a result, teachers should pull students into the excitement of learning through strategies that can build a thriving learning environment.

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