


Chapter in Book

Digital PNKA+e table enhances MUET Writing Task 1

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Abstract: As one of the productive skills, writing is an onerous task for students. Even though the vocabulary level used in the stimulus (either an email or a letter) for Writing task 1 should not exceed level B2 of CEFR, the form sixers will still struggle to analyse the prompts and identify the keywords. Therefore, their answers would normally contain irrelevancies and inaccuracies. On top of that, they would briefly elaborate their answers. The innovation of digital PNKA+e table is a type of graphic organizer which is designed to guide the students to analyse the prompt, determine the keywords and elaborate their answers. This innovation was tested on 21 form sixers from a class to determine its effectiveness in Writing Task 1. The students underwent two cycles of teaching and learning sessions for six weeks, each cycle evolving on the previous one. In the first cycle, students were given digital PNA+e table's (without 'K') instructions and modelling method to familiarise with the intervention before the post-test 1. In the second cycle, the table was enhanced by highlighting the significant keywords (K) plus the finding of synonyms for the keywords. The results show that the digital PNKA+e table could help students to improve in Writing Task 1 as the mean score increased from 15.4 (pre-test) to 22.9 (post-test 1) and then it climbed to 26.7 (post-test 2). This innovation is replicable and easy to comprehend. This innovation can also be commercialised through online marketplaces or other channels such as bookstores once it turns into a module for teaching MUET Writing Task 1.

Keywords: PNKA+e table; MUET Writing Task 1; graphic organisers.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the year 2021, MUET has a new format for all papers. The changes have affected the paper format, the time allocation for each paper, the scoring for all papers, the band used for the test and the descriptors of user for bands awarded. From 2021, the writing paper has two tasks, namely, Task 1: Guided Writing and Task 2: Extended Writing. This innovation will only focus on the teaching and learning for Writing Task 1 which is also known as guided writing.

Based on my teaching experience, my students in English Writing classes would normally listen to my explanations, brainstorm with their peers before the outcome (essay) and subsequently, present in groups. During the presentation time, I would check, correct, or reaffirm their points or ideas. However, even after they underwent all the strategies and methods, I noticed that the students still scored very low in the aspect of content. They always forgot to insert the words provided in the "Notes" and overlooked the keywords that are significant in the stimulus. Most of them only answered the prompts in question forms but ignored the prompts in statement or sentence forms. On top of that, they always elaborated briefly. Thus, there was an arising need to implement a strategy that could aid the students to write a better response for Task 1. This PNKA+e table, a graphic organizer, gives a different way of teaching and learning to guide the students.

Graphic organiser can improve learners reading comprehension and thus the PNKA+e table is used to kill two birds with a stone as the students need to comprehend the stimulus before responding to the task. Qi and Jiang (2021) highly recommend teachers to use graphic organisers because it helps students' learning efficiency and lead students to identify the main points in reading. The quasi-experimental with control and experimental groups of junior 3 conducted by Qi and Jiang (2021) aims to find the effect of graphic organisers on students' development in English reading comprehension. After the instruction, they found that the mean of the experimental class (83.88) was higher than the mean of the control class (75.76). Hence, after the intervention of graphic organizer, the overall sustainable development in English reading comprehension of the experimental class was better than the control class.

In another quasi-experimental research, Styati and Irawati (2020) found that students in the experimental group performed better on writing quality in terms of content, vocabulary, and mechanics than the students in the control group. The students in experimental group could arrange their writing well orderly. The researchers concluded that after utilising the graphic organisers, the students managed the organization better dan generated ideas effectively for writing.

In Gustina and Syarif's (2020) research, they found that students of grade XI of SMAN 3 Lubuk Basung had improved in their reading comprehension after the intervention of using graphic organizer strategy. This research was conducted in two cycles where each cycle had 10 questions of reading test. The average of reading comprehension test in pre-test was 61.67. In cycle 1, the average of students score was 71.25 and after doing cycle 2, it had improved to 78.75. Thus, the students were able to comprehend text well. Other than that, researchers also claimed that the intervention had helped the students to be more confident because they were active in giving responses and explanation in class.

Although there are various research papers on the effectiveness of incorporating graphic organisers into educational settings, there are lack of pre-existing literature about utilising graphic organisers in MUET Writing Task 1's lesson. Hence, this paper intends to investigate the effect of using digital PNKA+e table on improving the students' skill in Writing Task 1.

2. METHOD & MATERIALS

Although graphic organisers are very successful tools for teaching writing, teachers must be cautious when choosing or creating graphic organisers to incorporate into learners' writing (Lancaster, 2013). Besides that, according to Egan (1999), learners need clear and easy graphic organisers and thus teachers must model and experience the instructional task before requiring students to use it independently. This graphic organiser, PNKA+e table is carefully planned and designed to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning sessions. The following table shows the template of PNKA+e table.

P	N	A+e
Salutation		
Para 1		
Para 2		
Para 3		
Para 4		
Para 5 or Closing		
Sign off		

Figure 1. The template of digital PNKA+e table

The ‘P’ on the table refers to prompts which can be in a sentence form or question form while the ‘N’ refers to Notes given in the stimulus. In the practices, students need to determine and highlight the ‘K’ which is keywords from all the paragraphs. This table is used at the beginning of the scaffolding process, where the teacher provides a lot of support. The use of the table will be removed once the students can grasp the framework and are able to identify the keywords.

This intervention was carried out using Kemmis and McTaggart’s (in Burns, 2009) spiral model which comprises of four steps of action research i.e. planning, action, observation, and reflection. For Cycle 1, I gave a pre-test and post-test 1 to find out students’ scores in Writing Task 1 before and after the implementation of digital PNKA+e. The result from cycle 1 was evaluated to make the next cycle better in improving students’ scores for Writing Task 1. Then, I revised my plan and ameliorated. In this second cycle, students were asked to highlight the keywords so that they would use them in their elaboration. The scores of post-test2 in the second cycle were collected to compare with post-test 1. In this research, the data from the test results (i.e. pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2) were analysed using descriptive statistics. The maximum score achievable is 60 and it was marked accordingly based on the band descriptors given by MPM.

All the pretest and posttests’ questions were analysed via two websites to verify the level of tests not exceeding B2 level. These two websites are <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/textanalysis/> and <https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/wordlists/text-inspector> These two websites are recognized by Malaysian Examinations Council. The pre-test was selected from past-year question MUET Session 1, 2021 while the post-tests were selected from MUET Writing Companion Book (Yat et al., 2021). The purpose of giving different questions was to avoid topic bias and topic familiarity (Qi & Jiang, 2021). Therefore, reliability and validity could be guaranteed. The time allotment for each test was 25 minutes.

The notion highlighting and finding the synonyms of elements would be the essence of the importance imparted in implementation of this cycle 2. During teaching session in cycle 2, I displayed models which highlight the significant words. Furthermore, I also illustrated where to put the synonyms for elements based on the context. Rather than focusing on how to use the table, this cycle 2 was carried out for the students to understand the importance of elements in elaboration imparted upon them before giving responses (A+e) regarding the prompts. One example of teaching material is displayed in Figure 2 and Figure 3 below.

Part	P (Question/Statement)	N	A +E (with PNA+e)
1.	Greetings/Salutation		
2.	I heard that the History Club members had wonderful time in Malacca. I was a little sad that I was not able to join the trip because I sprained my ankle during sports practice just before the trip.	Great!...	
3.	I heard that the members visited a few interesting historical places in Malacca . Which historical places did you enjoy visiting?	Describe (two historical places)	
	Synonyms for the word enjoy: excited, fun, intriguing, enjoyable, convivial atmosphere, relish...		

Figure 2. Sample of modelling to display for students’ comprehension

From: Afwan
 Subject: Fantastic Trip to Malacca

Hello Zhi Wei,

How are you? Sorry that you missed the trip to historical places in Malacca due to your sprained ankle. I hope you are recovering well. I had a great time in Malacca with 20 History club members and two teachers.

We visited four historical places in Malacca. Among these four tourist hotspots, I really enjoyed visiting two interesting historical places which are Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum and A Famosa. The exceptional culture of Baba Nyonya can be seen and indulged in the renowned Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum. I was excited to have the opportunity to see valuable century old Baba Nyonya traditional costume, wood-work art and antique furniture. All the displayed items which I saw in the museum have its own fascinating story to tell. Besides, our tour guide, Mr. Lim who is a Baba has shared a lot of intriguing facts and stories about Baba Nyonya or also known as Chinese noble descendants who adopted the Malays culture. Another must-see attraction is A Famosa. This fortress is one of the oldest remains of European architecture in Asia and thus it is an enjoyable place for sightseeing. So, I took a lot of photos and selfies there. I had fun walking around this place.

Figure 3. Suggested answer to show the students during teaching session in cycle 2

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Cycle 1

When students were tested before the intervention, their scores were quite low in pretest as the mean score was only 15.5. After the intervention of PNA+e table (earlier version), the mean score climbed to 22.9. Table 1 below shows the students results in pretest and posttest 1 and its difference of scores between these two tests.

Table 1. Results of pretest and posttest 1 and its difference of scores between these two tests.

Students' ID	Pretest	Posttest 1	The difference of scores between Pretest and Post-test 1
1	11.5	28	16.5
2	18	21	3
3	14.5	22	7.5
4	23	30	7
5	12	15	3
6	12	21	9
7	15	27	12
8	35	27	-8
9	15	28	13
10	11	20	9
11	12	14	2
12	16	23	7
13	14	26	12
14	10.5	20	9.5
15	14.5	13	-1.5
16	12	22	10
17	13	30	17
18	14.5	26	11.5
19	16	29	13
20	13	19	6
21	21	21	0
SUM	323.5	480	
MEAN	15.4	22.9	

Based on Table 2, the results suggest that intervention of digital PNA+e had an effect on the post-test 1 scores. Specifically, the results suggest that the students had improved in Writing Task 1. Overall, all the students managed to improve their Writing Task 1's skill except three students. Seven students out of 21 students managed to score higher by more than 10 marks compared to their pretest.

3.2 Cycle 2

In the second cycle, the intervention of digital PNKA+e managed to guide and help the students to achieve higher scores. The table of PNA+e table is ameliorated to be PNKA+e Table 2 below shows the students results of posttest 1 and posttest 2 along with the difference of scores between these two tests.

Table 2. Results of posttest 1 and posttest 2 and its difference of scores between these two tests.

Students' ID	Posttest 1	Posttest 2	The difference of scores between Pretest and Post-test 1
1	28	30	2
2	21	30	9
3	22	32	10
4	30	33	3
5	15	21	6
6	21	32	11
7	27	37	10
8	27	36	9
9	28	26	-2
10	20	26	6
11	14	20	6
12	23	31	8
13	26	30	4
14	20	20	0
15	13	19	6
16	22	23	1
17	30	28	-2
18	26	31	5
19	29	30	1
20	19	20	1
21	21	20	-1
SUM	480	561	
MEAN	22.9	26.7	

Table 2 shows the mean score of post-test 1 was 22.9 but after the intervention of cycle 2 which focused on the keywords and the synonyms or words associations of the keywords, the mean score increased to 26.7. These results suggest that the intervention of cycle 2 had an effect on the post-test 2 scores. Hence, the results suggest that the students had improved after the intervention of cycle 2. All in all, the digital PNKA+e table had a positive effect on the students' performance in the aspect of content Writing Task 1.

4. DISCUSSION

The results highlight the effectiveness of digital PNKA+e table for Writing Task 1. This finding is aligned with the research papers conducted by Gustina and Syarif (2020), Qi and Jiang (2021), and Stayati and Irwati (2020). Lancaster (2013) mentions that teachers must be cautious when selecting or

designing graphic organisers to incorporate into students’ writing. Therefore, the graphic organiser designed was carefully planned before asking the students to utilise it in their Writing Task 1. As a result, this innovation has effectively boosted students’ confidence to elaborate their answers as their responses in Writing Task 1 were longer after the intervention of Cycle 1.

To expound clearly, this improvement is displayed on Figure 4 and Figure 5 for comparison of before and after intervention in Cycle 1. Figure 4 is an excerpt from script written by a student before the intervention while Figure 5 is an excerpt from the type-written script using digital PNA+e table after the intervention of Cycle 1. Before using PNA+e, students could give or list two activities but without further elaboration. The example in Figure 4 shows that the student could list two activities which are aerobics and quiz related to health but did not explain how these exercises could be fun and beneficial.

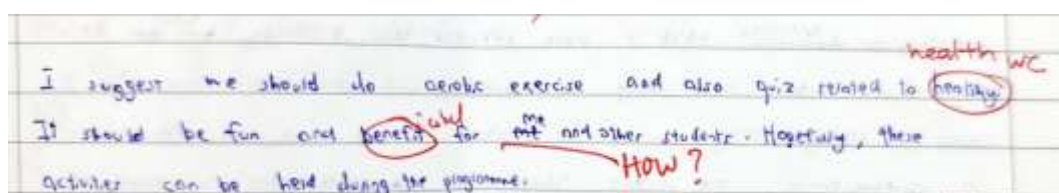


Figure 4. Script written by a student before intervention

After underwent the intervention of using digital PNKA+e table, students could elaborate more in their responses as the results in the finding section show the mean scores had increased. The sample except in Figure 5, shows how a student could elaborate more about the two activities required in the stimulus after the intervention in Cycle 1. However, based on the results shown in the finding of Cycle 1, four students could not achieve at least 20 marks out of 60. Due to this, the need of cycle 2 arose and thus the innovation of digital PNA+e table is upgraded into digital PNKA+e table where the “K” stands for keywords.

2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -disappointed -could not join -sprained ankle -many happy face -what i missed 	Describe (two activities)	<p>Im sorry to hear that you sprained your ankle. You don't need to be disappointed and please take care of yourself. Yes, there are two activities we play. First, we bought? a magic show for them. They all were acted surprised watching the show. There is also a puzzle game, divided into several groups to play and the winning group can get gifts, so they are all serious.</p>
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Figure 5. Script written by a student after the intervention of cycle 1 using the digital PNA+e table

After the intervention of Cycle 2, the digital PNKA+e table had guided the students to write better than Cycle 1 as the results show that all the students managed to get at least 20 marks out of 60. Indeed, the upgraded version the table is more effective than the older version.

Additionally, the use of digital table enabled the students to receive the feedback from teacher in real-time. So, they could make corrections or ask questions in the blink of an eye even though they were not physically in the class.

Next step to empower the innovation include incorporating this digital PNKA+e table into Writing Task 1's module. This strategy is flexible to be used in collaborative learning and blended learning approaches. It is also easily replicable in the teaching and learning session.

To sum up, the use of graphic organizers is effective in helping the students to have better writing quality because they can elaborate more in writing. Besides, it is timesaving in teaching and learning as students could comprehend the table and do well in writing at faster pace compared to the previous teaching and learning session. Plus, the digital table is convenient for students to receive feedback and teachers to check the students' work.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students' scores in Writing Task 1 have improved all through the pre-test to post-test 2. The average score increased from 15.41 in the pre-test to 22.86 in cycle one and 26.71 in cycle two. In other words, the digital PNKA+e, a technique that was employed, contributed to the students' performance in Writing Task 1. Other than that, the digital PNKA+e table helped the students gain more confidence in Writing Task 1 as they would elaborate more in their responses even after the first cycle of intervention. Furthermore, as an educator, the use of digital PNKA+e table has allowed me to give instant feedback to my students. With that, the students could read my comments and improve themselves in real-time. Using this PNKA+e table is time-saving in teaching and learning sessions compared to the previous strategies or methods used. With this, students took shorter time to comprehend and score higher in their Writing Task 1.

Overall, these findings suggest that the use of digital PNKA+e table is an effective technique that can enhance students' performance in Writing Task 1. This graphic organiser designed or created had undergone a careful plan to make it easy to comprehend. In addition, the students were also provided with several samples of answers for Writing Task 1 as modelling approach for them to understand the concept of digital PNKA+e table. This is to take heed of what Egan (1999) claims that a graphic organiser must be easy to comprehend and thus educators must model and experience the instructional task before letting the students utilise the graphic organiser.

This table can also be used in a traditional place-based classroom method. So, it can be utilised in blended learning approach where instructors can record videos for use as supplemental course material that designed to help students with the concepts of digital PNKA+e table. Then, students can do the exercises in physical classroom. It is indeed flexible to utilised in various teaching and learning approaches. As for me, I also had tried to disseminate this digital PNKA+e table through my YouTube videos and many MUET candidates have followed my lessons using this table. This table can be incorporated into the module of teaching MUET Writing Task 1 as it is replicable and effective in guiding the students to write better in Writing Task 1. This environmentally friendly innovation is an added bonus as using the table digitally can save more papers.

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