

Research Article

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory in Enhancing Narrative Writing Skills in Malaysian National Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This research explored the effectiveness of Social Development Theory in enhancing narrative writing skills. Besides that, this study incorporated the main communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity thinking (4C's) of 21st century learning skills to enable the students to practise narrative writing skills in a social environment by using an online learning platform via mobile devices. The narrative writing activities were practised by using a created writing module which is known as 4C's to WRITE. There were several issues in narrative writing skills among students as they were unable to generate proper main ideas and improper usage of the elements of plot, causing frequent errors in the grammar and vocabulary structures. There were 55 Form 4 students who participated in this study. These students are from two different secondary schools which are from Penang, and Kedah in Malaysia. They took part in the treatment phase for 10 weeks. The researcher used a mixed-method data collection to collect the data in this study. The instruments that were employed were pre-test and post-test for qualitative data collection, while participant observation for qualitative data collection. The findings indicated that the students significantly benefited from this study as there was an improvement in their post-test for both schools. This reveals that peer scaffolding and procedural scaffolding from Vygotsky's Social Development Theory permitted the students to communicate, collaborate, as well as use their critical thinking and creativity thinking to identify the main ideas, organise the ideas into a few paragraphs by following the elements of plot for writing a story, as well as use proper grammar and vocabulary features. This study recommends that policymakers and educators could create more writing modules for different types of writing skills and encourage students to practise with their peers using technology platforms to foster their overall writing skills.

Keywords: Social Development Theory; Technology Platform; 4C's of 21st Century Learning Skills



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1. INTRODUCTION

In this globalisation world, there is a huge advantage when students are able to write appropriately in English language. Nevertheless, students in Malaysia face a number of issues in writing skills when compared with other three skills (Ghulamuddin, Mohari, & Arifin, 2021). Therefore, the researcher in this current study incorporated Vygotsky's Social Development Theory to practise narrative writing skills with the students by using a created writing module which is known as 4C's to

WRITE via technologies. The 4C's are communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity thinking (Azhary & Ratmanida, 2021). Vygotsky (1978) explained that social interaction is vital for the students to overcome their problems in the learning process. By involving social interaction, students are able to identify the area of their weaknesses and discuss with peer to overcome them.

On the same spectrum, Vygotsky (1978) stated that the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a major construct in his theory of learning and development. The Zone of Proximal Development is known as the space between what a student can do without assistance and what a student can do with guidance or in collaboration with more peers in the learning process. Thus, in this study, to enable students to improve in their narrative writing, the researcher included two scaffolding methods which were peer scaffolding through communication and collaboration among peers which enabled them to use their critical thinking and creativity thinking as well as procedural scaffolding by using a narrative writing module (4C's to WRITE).

2. METHOD & MATERIAL

The researcher conducted this study by using a mixed-method data collection method. The researcher collected the data by using both quantitative and qualitative data collections. This study was held for 10 weeks. There were 55 students from two secondary schools from two states who joined this research. The school is addressed as School A which is in Penang and School B is in Kedah.

The quantitative method encompassed pre-test and post-test while the qualitative method was through participant observation. The purpose of conducting the pre-test and post-test was to evaluate the students' ability to write a narrative as before and after the treatment. Moreover, the aim of accompanying the participant observation was to observe the students' progress during the treatment phase whether they were able to communicate, collaborate, as well as use their critical thinking, and creativity to complete the narrative writing assignments.

The language teachers from both schools were required to mark the pre-test and post-test essays according to the given rubric by the researcher. The researcher created a marking rubric based on Brown's (2007), Jacobs et al.'s (1981) and Wong's (1989) marking rubrics. In addition, the researcher designed a participant observation checklist to observe the students' activities in the Google Classroom via mobile devices. The findings for quantitative were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 while the participant observation's outcomes were categorised according to common themes.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Pre-Test and Post-Test

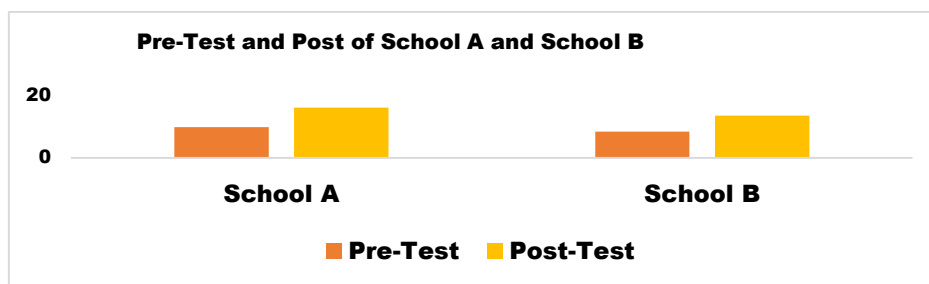


Figure 1. Overall pre-test and post-test scores from School A and School B.

From Figure 1 for School A, the outcome of the within group comparison shows the students' post-test ($M = 16.12$, $SD = 2.04$) and the pre-test ($M = 9.78$, $SD = 2.33$). On the other hand, for School B, the results designate that the students' post-test ($M = 13.53$, $SD = 2.67$) and the pre-test ($M = 8.33$, $SD = 3.06$). Consequently, the findings from Table 1 indicate that the results within group comparison is comparatively higher than their pre-test scores of both schools.

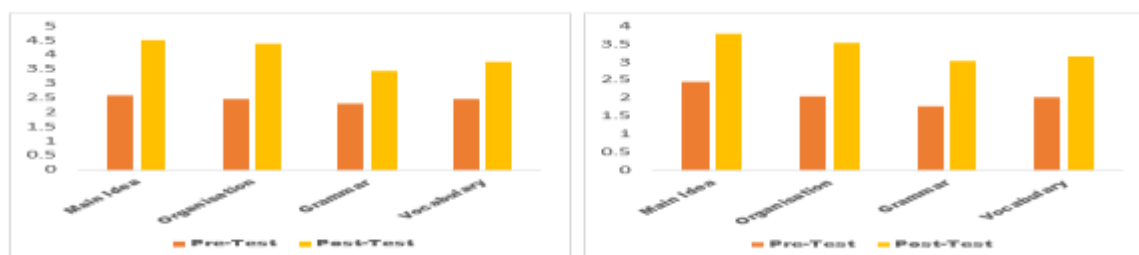


Figure 2. The mean difference between the pre- and post-tests' scores for each element (School A and School B).

The researcher had done the analysis for each aspect of narrative writing which includes main idea, organisation or plot, grammar, and vocabulary for the both schools as stated in Figure 2. The findings displayed that there was a significant effect in their post-test essay when compared with the pre-test. It revealed that the post-test results for both schools for each aspect of narrative writing element was relatively higher than their pre-test essay scores.

3.2 Participant Observation

Data for the participant observation were collected by using a checklist when the students used the Google Classroom via mobile devices. There were 36 items for the participant observation under five scales which were very "very frequently (VF)", "frequently (F)", "occasionally (O)", "very rarely (VR)", and "never (N)". After that, the researcher evaluated the feedback from the checklist from Week 2 to Week 9 for both schools and displayed the findings from both schools into a few common themes as stated below:

3.2.1 Communication

Students from each group were able to communicate with their group members and slowly showed improvement in their discussion. This is because they were able to differentiate the main ideas and the elements of plot from the given sample essays.

3.2.2 Collaboration

Students were able to collaborate with one another, as well as with their group members as they were able to insert proper answers for in their narrative writing worksheets. Apart from that, as they were collaborating, they were able to understand the proper way of writing a narrative essay.

3.2.3 Critical Thinking

Students slowly showed their progress in grammar and vocabulary features as they were able to apply the proper grammar, and vocabulary features to construct their sentences to write a story. They were also able to apply their critical thinking while working with their peers.

3.2.4 Creativity

Students were able to use their creativity thinking to develop their storyline by inserting proper grammar and vocabulary structures. They were also able to explain the characters, plot, moral values, themes, and conclusion.

3.2.5 Usage of Online Learning Platform via mobile devices

Technology platform enabled the students to communicate and collaborate with their group members to overcome their weaknesses in narrative writing which they were unable to do in classroom activities due to time constraints. Henceforth, the technology platform had given a room for the shy ones to freely provide their ideas during the treatment phase in this study.

4. DISCUSSION

According to study, the findings demonstrated that the students were able to improve in their narrative writing skills by incorporating the elements of 4C's of 21st century learning skills as they were able to communicate and collaborate to overcome their weakness. On top of that, the students were able to use their critical thinking and creativity thinking to write their narrative essays. This is supported by the study which was conducted by Yu, Mohammad and Ruzzana (2019). Other than that, integrating a proper writing module is essential to guide the students to improve themselves in writing skills as stated by Syam (2020). Aside from that, using technology enabled the students to engage in their learning process when compared with conventional approached as technologies help them to learn better and solve any problems easily as they are able to quickly search for the answers (Chen, Li, Huang, Han, Hwang, & Yang, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the need of social environment to carry out the learning session, so that students would be able to rectify their weaknesses group discussion. Moreover, writing skills is an on-going process, so they need a lot of practices to master it successfully. Furthermore, nowadays, students are keen in using their technology tools in their daily lives. Thus, incorporating technology platforms is paramount as students can continue to learn writing skills. However, when educators decide to include technologies to practise writing skills, they need to prepare authentic writing material, so that it serves a guideline to be used in technology platforms. The findings of this study illustrate that students were able to improve in narrative writing skills with the help of peers and authentic writing module. Overall, the researcher recommended that in future, policymakers or educators could prepare proper writing modules or materials to teach other types of writing, use proper teaching pedagogies which are aligned to the current atmosphere to promote equitable learning, as well as implement technologies for easy-to-access information and fun learning to practise what they learn.

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