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Peer Conferencing and Teacher-Student Conferencing as Alternative or Combination Revision Strategies

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It is a fallacy to assume that Form Five students in Malaysian schools have already mastered composition-writing strategies. Classroom teaching reveals that they still need to be assisted through effective strategies in composition writing in preparation for the SPM Examination Teachers therefore need to identify an appropriate strategy to assist them in essay writing. The strategies suggested are peer conferencing (Strategy 1) and teacher-student conferencing (Strategy 2) as revision strategies. The objectives of this study are to find out whether these revision strategies are able to improve their writing and to investigate which revision strategy can better assist students in composition writing. Results of the study showed that all students managed to get higher scores regardless of the strategy used. However, students that used Revision Strategy 2 achieved better scores than students that used Revision Strategy 1. It is suggested that teachers should use the strategies either in isolation or integrate both revision strategies in the teaching of writing composition. This is also the view of Campbell (1998) who says that peer and teacher feedback complement each other.

Introduction

Writing is a systematic, conventional system of communication that is dependent on speech and the writing mechanism. It is one mode of communication that people use to express ideas, reflections and feelings on certain matters, put across intentions or arguments, narrate incidents or explain a phenomenon or an issue.

White (1991) views writing composition as a process that involves processes like generating ideas, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and

evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written and searching language to express exact meanings. Claudia (1990) quotes that writing is a creative art, where our writing is not just simply a translation of completed thoughts into words on a page.

Writing has been considered one of the most difficult skills to acquire in language learning among second language learners. They view writing assignments as one of the most difficult tasks when compared to other tasks given by their teachers. Lee (1992) says that “if writing is such a complex undertaking so painful to me (and I dread it) imagine how much more it will be for our students! And yet teachers give composition topics to our students, believing (or pretending to believe) that writing is easy”.

The role of writing in the Malaysian context is very important. In the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination*, writing accounts for 70% of the total percentage of the marks for the English Paper. In addition, with the implementation of the new English examination format which combines the old syllabus with the 1119 syllabus, the learner has to have a lot more preparation for the writing component which has even greater demands.

As a result of the big emphasis on writing, most English language teachers, especially those from the rural areas, desperately search for ways to teach it. Although these teachers have tried different strategies and approaches to improve the writing performance of the students, the results of the English Paper at SPM level show that levels of attainment are still low.

Statement of the Problem

Students of Form Five in Malaysia schools are required to sit for the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination*. The Examination consists of Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 3 which tests Reading, Writing and Speaking skills respectively. Both Paper 1 and Paper 2 have writing components but the most complex task is the one in Paper 2, section C, where they are required to write an essay of about 350 words on a selected topic out of five options given. The topics are mainly narrative, descriptive, argumentative, informative or discussive. It is a fallacy to assume that students in Form Five have already mastered composition-writing strategies because of their experience in composition writing for their PMR (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah*) Examination when they were in

Form III. Classroom teaching reveals that students in Form Five still need to be assisted through effective strategies in composition writing in preparation for the SPM Examination.

Teachers therefore need to identify an appropriate strategy to assist students in essay writing for the Form Five SPM Examination. The two strategies suggested are peer conferencing or peer-reviewing as a revision strategy and teacher-student conferencing as a revision strategy. Both the strategies are able to help students to share their experience, and involve some degree of investigation or exploration of the topic. With proper guidelines given to the students and also guidance from the teacher, these strategies can assist students in essay writing for the Form Five SPM Examination.

Reid (1993) strongly recommends peer-reviewing and states that if students are to master writing as a communicative process, they must not only write regularly but also regularly try out their drafts and get feedback from a variety of readers. Leki (1990) states that the essence of peer response is students providing other students with feedback on their preliminary drafts so that the student writers may acquire a wider sense of audience and work toward improving their compositions.

Reid (1993) has pointed out some benefits of peer reviewing. Among them, peer review and peer discussion of texts help ESL writers at all levels of writing proficiency to understand their interactive relationship with their readers. Besides, when faced with the questions from fellow students, varied interpretations and misunderstandings dramatize the necessity of the writers providing verbal signs that will enable readers to draw on their own resources to make intended meaning. Peer conferencing can also reinforce a system of values central to the classroom community: respect for negotiation and cooperation, a spirit of mutual responsibility and a setting for respect and trust. He believes that students in peer review groups learn and practice a 'language of response' that they can then use to articulate ideas about their own writing. Furthermore the concept of audience provided by peer response allows writers to think not just about readers as readers but also to actually read the text through the eyes of potential readers, trying to judge the meaning these readers would make. Peer review also shows student writers that not all readers construct the same meaning from a single text. Finally, students learn to identify their audience and analyze the social context in which their audience or their discourse community will read their writing. The student writers would begin to adopt the

perspectives of their audiences and to assess their writing in terms of how their readers may react to or comprehend their text.

Teacher-student conferencing is a face-to-face conversation between a teacher and a student or writer of the composition. Reid (1993) states that one advantage of interaction between the teacher and students is that the teacher-reader is a 'live audience', and this enables the reader to ask for clarification and check comprehensibility of oral comments made. This dialogue would also help the writer sort out problems as the teacher would be in a position to help in decision-making. During teacher-student conferencing, a teacher can discuss a revision plan, which is suitable for the specific student.

Students need feedback of their work to see how they are doing and what kind of improvement they need to make. Teachers can give feedback on different areas. They may focus on the structures, sentence variety, paragraph unity, cohesion and other aspects that can improve the writing further. Teachers therefore play different roles when they intervene during conferencing. As stated by Reid (1993) and Sperling (1994), teachers become the audience or reader in order to ask questions about the purpose of the essay. Chitravelu (1995) says that teachers serve as reader rather than judge. Here they respond to the ideas and content of the students' writing.

Beason (1993) states that teachers conducting conferences with students offer more directives than student peers when commenting on students' drafts. They are also more focused on form. Ferris (1997) discovers that students apparently took the teachers' comments or requests quite seriously.

Purpose of the Study

One area that needs to be examined is which revision strategy is effective for these students. The process may need a long period and both teachers and students may have difficulties at the initial stage. Nevertheless once students have mastered the appropriate revision strategies that are introduced to them, the quality of their end products could be improved.

The rationale in selecting this topic is to determine which revision strategy best serves the needs of the students of Form Five in composition writing. It is also to create an awareness among teachers regarding the problems they face in composition.

The objectives of the study are to find out whether these revision strategies are able to improve Form Five students' writing and to investigate which revision strategies: Peer Conferencing strategy (Strategy 1) or Teacher-student Conferencing strategy (Strategy 2), can better assist students in composition writing.

Research Questions

In the process of conducting the study, the following research questions need to be considered: -

- i. Are these revision strategies able to improve students' writing?
- ii. Which revision strategy, Peer Conferencing (Strategy 1) or Teacher-student Conferencing (Strategy 2), can better assist students in composition writing?
- iii. How do the students and raters view these strategies?

In order to answer the first two research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated.

- H1: There is a significant difference in the scores of writing of compositions written before and after using the strategies.
- H2: There is a significant difference in the scores of compositions revised and rewritten using 2 different strategies: Strategy 1 and Strategy 2.

However, answers for the third research question will be based on observations, interviews, and reports by the raters at the end of the third week.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research are: -

- i. The research for the case study is conducted on a small scale of Form Five students who are primarily in a rural area.
- ii. All the students in the sample are from the same secondary school.

A number of points should be considered before the results of the study can be generalized to other ESL learners. Any conclusions drawn

from this study must be viewed as preliminary and be supported by further research on more ESL learners at various levels.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the outcome of this study would provide empirical evidence to investigate and ascertain that revision has played an important role in assisting students in Form Five in composition writing. The study will also determine the specific areas of difficulty that students at this level face when writing compositions. Based on the study, appropriate guidelines would be suggested in order to help these students to develop their composition writing skills by using these two revision strategies, and finally enabling them to be better and more competent writers in the composition-writing task. The results of the study would also further encourage English teachers to promote revision strategies in the teaching of writing to second language learners.

Methodology

This study focuses on a case study design to explore how peer conferencing and teacher-student conferencing play their roles in the essay writing task assigned to the subjects.

The subjects of this study are Form Five students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sri Intan, Machang, Kelantan. The school is a rural secondary school located in the outskirts of Machang, Kelantan. Based on their previous examinations in Form IV, the standard of their English is rather poor and the scores for their essay writing in Paper 2, Section C are also low. About 75% of the Form Five students are unable to write using proper grammar. In addition they are unable to express themselves efficiently in their writings.

The subjects will be selected based on the scores of their English Language Writing Composition result conducted in the Final Semester Evaluation in Form IV in October, 2002. 50 students whose scores ranged from 10 – 20 in Paper 2, Section C will be short-listed. Twenty students both males and females will be selected randomly from the list. The twenty students will then be randomly divided into two groups, Group A, which is using Strategy 1 and Group B, which is using Strategy 2 (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Subjects Involved in Revision Strategy 1 and 2

	Group A	Group B
	Revision Strategy 1 (Peer Conferencing)	Revision Strategy 2 (Teacher-Student Conferencing)
Number of subjects	10	10
Initial Score	16 - 19	12 - 19

Subjects in group A and group B are given practice on how to handle peer conferencing and teacher-student conferencing in detail. The three raters involved in the study are invited to attend the briefing together with the subjects so that they would have a clear picture on how the whole process would be carried out.

The topics for the compositions are based on the past year SPM Examination questions. The topics selected are narrative type of essays. This is again based on the past records which show that about 80% students like to attempt narrative type questions during their composition writing examinations in Form IV. They feel more comfortable and are more familiar with narrative type essays as compared to other genres. By choosing familiar topics, subjects would have lower anxiety during the revision process.

Both subjects in Group A and Group B are required to write on the same three topics given. The topics are:

Topic 1: An unforgettable moment

Topic 2: End the story with "Finally the old man came back home."

Topic 3: Begin the story with "Is that really you? Where have you been all these years?"

During prewriting, subjects in Group A, revision strategy 1 (peer conferencing), are asked to spend time in a group and share their experiences and their investigations/explorations of the topic. In the group, subjects ask each other questions and provide alternative viewpoints. They are given a checklist to guide them in the process (Appendix 1). The group members ask for advice, share ideas and opinions during revision of their compositions. They help their peers to clarify and to provide more detail as the peer reviewers ask questions when they are confused. Subjects are required to hand in their draft at the end of the day. The next day, their drafts will be given back and the scores are recorded. The same procedure is repeated on the next day. For each

conference the peers help each other to improve on the organization, content, grammatical errors and the sentence structures in their essays. Each subject has to write three drafts for each topic given. All the drafts collected are given to the raters to access and scores are recorded after each evaluation.

Meanwhile, subjects in Group B, revision strategy 2 (teacher-student conferencing), are to sit in a group and share their experiences and their investigations/explorations of the topic. During the draft stage, each subject brings a copy of his or her essay for selected group members. The members then read each paper and provide written responses for the individual writer before discussing on the changes. Here the teacher intervenes by becoming the eleventh member of the group. She provides an additional perspective asking questions the group members may not have asked and making suggestions that may help facilitate the conversation. By intervening early, she encourages the students to further their own thinking on the subject by seriously considering their thoughts as valid and relevant. A check list will also be given to guide her in the process (Appendix 2). At the same time, the teacher provides a larger context for their exploration. She also uses one of the students' essays as a model, (not the entire essay but a section of it), to conduct a mini-lesson on grammar followed by an evaluation on the model. The purpose is to help students shift from creating (drafting) to analyzing (revision). Subjects are given another day to make the necessary corrections and hand in their second draft. They are required to submit their final essays on the following day. If they have further problems to discuss, the teacher conducts an individual conference with the subject. All the drafts are given to the raters to mark and all the scores are recorded. Similar to Group A, subjects in Group B have to write three drafts for each topic.

For each topic, the subjects are given one week to carry out their conferencing with their peers for Group A and with their teacher for Group B. After they have completed their revision with the first topic, they will proceed with the second topic in the second week. The same procedure is repeated for the third topic. The whole process is carried out in three weeks.

The instrument used to evaluate students' writing performance is based on the SPM continuous marking scheme. The SPM marking scheme consists of eight bands, namely Band A: 36 – 40 marks, Band B: 31 – 35 marks, Band C: 26 – 30 marks, Band D: 21 – 25 marks, Band E: 16 – 20 marks, Band Ui: 11 – 15 marks, Band Uii: 6 – 10 marks and Band Uiii: 0 – 5 marks. Detailed description for the assessment of

continuous writing is given in Appendix 3. The summary of the description is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: SPM Category Descriptions for the Assessment of Continuous Writing

Grade	Errors	Language	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary Wide and	Paragraph	Topic	Interest
A 36-40	Occasional/ First draft	Entirely Accurate	Varied Able to use various types complex sent	Wide and precise	Well- planned unity linked	Addressed with consistant relevance	Aroused and sustained
B 31-35	Occasional – minor first draft	accurate	Show some variation of length, type, complex sentences	Wide enough with some precision – spelling nearly always accurate	Some planning, unity & appropriate linked	relevant	Aroused and sustained through most of the script
C 26-30	Simple structures are used without error – mistakes when sophisticated structure	Largely accurate	Some variety and length but tendency to use single type	Wide to convey meaning but lack of precision– spelling errors when sophisticated word	Some unity but link is not always appropriate	Relevant but lack originality and planning	Aroused but not sustained
D 21-25	Errors throughout but doesn't hamper reading	Sufficiently accurate	Some variety but not clear purpose	Adequate to show intended meaning but not precis- simple words spelt correctly but more spelling errors	Are used but lack of planning and unity	Some relevance, lack of liveliness and interest value	Sustained but not for long
E 16-20	Sufficiently frequent, hampered reading	Fairly accurate	Simple structure used unlikely to sustain accuracy	Limited – hard to understand	Lack of unity and haphazardly arranged	Partially relevant	Not sustained

Ui	Many serious errors swe/mwe	Limitations of subject matter	Simple sentence often repetitive	limited	No paragraphs but meaning fairly clear	Some points are relevant	Not sustained
Uii	Errors are multiple	Able to get some sense	A few accurate sentences mainly one-word type	limited	No paragraphs but meaning fairly clear	Some points are relevant	Not sustained
Uiii	Entirely impossible to read						

Three independent raters were selected to the collection and analysis of the data. They are experienced teachers, have more than ten years experiences in teaching Form Five English and also have attended seminars in evaluating SPM essay scripts organized by the Ministry of Education.

All the three raters were briefed on the study being conducted and were required to attend a training session conducted by the researcher to familiarize them with the two revision strategies that were going to be employed in the study. The raters were given detailed descriptions of each of the revision strategies and how they were to be carried out. They were also required to note students' reactions and problems when each revision strategy was employed. They also had to note the number of grammar and sentence structure errors each subject made in every draft they wrote. This was to see whether the revision strategy is helpful in reducing errors in this aspect.

The scores given by the three raters were recorded and analyzed using the T-test. For each essay, the mean scores were calculated based on the scores given by the three raters.

Findings and Discussion

The scores in Table 3 show that before revision strategies were introduced, all the subjects in Group A and Group B were having problems in their tasks. Nineteen subjects were in Band E and one subject was in Band Ui. In the beginning, the meanings in their essays were fairly clear but errors were sufficiently frequent and serious enough to hamper reading. They even had problems with simple structures and the use of vocabulary was limited. There were frequent spelling mistakes, even in simple words.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis for Subjects' Scores Using Strategy 1 and Strategy 2

Subject	Strategy	Old score	Band	Topic 1	Band	Topic 2	Band	Topic 3	Band
1	1	17	E	20	E	22	D	23	D
2	1	18	E	21	E	22	D	23	D
3	1	19	E	20	E	21	D	24	D
4	1	17	E	19	E	21	D	22	D
5	1	18	E	19	E	20	E	22	D
6	1	18	E	19	E	21	D	23	D
7	1	16	E	18	E	19	E	21	D
8	1	16	E	19	E	21	D	22	D
9	1	17	E	20	E	22	D	23	D
10	1	18	E	21	D	23	D	24	D
1	2	18	E	22	D	27	C	31	B
2	2	12	Ui	23	D	27	C	31	B
3	2	19	E	27	C	33	B	35	B
4	2	17	E	22	D	29	C	31	B
5	2	17	E	22	D	29	C	30	C
6	2	18	E	28	C	29	C	32	B
7	2	16	E	21	D	26	C	34	B
8	2	16	E	23	D	25	D	29	C
9	2	17	E	21	D	26	C	31	B
10	2	18	E	22	D	26	C	32	B

However, after Revision Strategies (Strategy 1 for Group A and Strategy 2 for Group B) were taught to these 20 subjects in both groups, there were some improvements in their scores. For Topic 1, 9 subjects still maintained Band E, 8 subjects obtained Band D while the other 3 subjects were in Band C. The subjects in Band D had shown improvement in their language used. There were some varieties of sentence types and lengths but the purpose was not very clearly seen. Their use of vocabulary was usually adequate to show the intended meaning but there was no development to show precision. Some words were spelt correctly but generally there were still many spelling errors.

For those who were in Band C, the language used was largely accurate and simple structures were used without error. Mistakes occurred only when more sophisticated structures were attempted. Vocabulary was wide enough to convey the intended meaning but still they lacked precision. There was a tendency of showing some varieties of structures and lengths but the subjects usually used one type of

structure. Some spelling errors occurred when more sophisticated words were attempted.

For Topic 2, one subject still maintained Band E. However, nine managed to obtain Band D, another nine subjects were in Band C while one subject was in Band B. The subject who scored Band B had used accurate language with minor errors. The vocabulary was extensive enough to convey the intended meaning with some precision. There was a tendency towards sentence variation of length and type. The spelling was nearly always accurate and the paragraphs showed some evidence of planning, had unity and were usually appropriately linked. The piece of writing was relevant to the topic and the interest of the reader was aroused and sustained through most of the composition. In short, the scores had shown slight improvement even though there were a few subjects who repeated the same mistakes as was found in Topic 1.

Finally, for Topic 3, eight subjects managed to obtain Band B, two subjects were in Band C while 10 were in Band D. No one was placed in Band E. Overall, all the 20 subjects had shown some improvement.

Table 4 shows a descriptive statistics of the scores. The mean scores of Topic 1 (21.35), Topic 2 (24.45) and Topic 3 (27.15) were higher than the initial score (17.1). It shows that, regardless of the strategies used, students benefited from them and showed some improvement in the scores of their compositions.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCORE	20	12.00	19.00	17.1000	1.5183
TOPIC_1	20	18.00	28.00	21.3500	2.5397
TOPIC_2	20	19.00	33.00	24.4500	3.7902
TOPIC_3	20	21.00	35.00	27.1500	4.7714

Table 5 shows the T-test of the scores. The scores for the three topics, regardless of the strategies used, showed a significant difference than the initial score as $p < 0.05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 that says there is a significant difference in the scores of writing of compositions written before and after using the strategies is accepted.

Table 5: One Sample T-test

Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Topic_1	37.595	19	.000	21.3500	20.1614	22.5386
Topic_2	28.849	19	.000	24.4500	22.6761	26.2239
Topic_3	25.447	19	.000	27.1500	24.9169	29.3831

Table 6 shows the differences in the mean scores of the two strategies for each topic. It can be seen that subjects using Strategy 2 (teacher-student conferencing) showed higher mean scores for the three topics.

Table 6: Group Statistics

	Strategy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Topic_1	strategy 1	10	19.6000	.9661	.3055
	strategy 2	10	23.1000	2.4244	.7667
Topic_2	strategy 1	10	21.2000	1.1353	.3590
	strategy 2	10	27.7000	2.3594	.7461
Topic_3	strategy 1	10	22.7000	.9487	.3000
	strategy 2	10	31.6000	1.7764	.5617

Table 7 shows the result of an independent T-test. This was to see if there is any significant difference in the writing scores for the three topics using different strategies. The F-test shows that there is an equality of variance for the scores of the two strategies as $p > 0.05$. As the Levene's test shows that there is an equality of variance in the two groups, the T values in the first row will be used to test the next hypothesis. As $p < 0.05$ for the three topics, it shows that there is a significant difference in the scores of compositions written using Strategy 1 and Strategy 2. Therefore Hypothesis 2 that says there is a significant difference in the scores of writing of compositions after using Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 is accepted. This can confirm that Strategy 2 helps subjects get better scores than subjects that use Strategy 1 in composition writing.

Table 7: Independent sample test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TOPIC_1	Equal variances assumed	3.467	.079	-4.241	18	.000	-3.5000	.8253	-5.2339	-1.7661
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.241	11.788	.001	-3.5000	.8253	-5.3018	-1.6982
TOPIC_2	Equal variances assumed	4.329	.052	-7.850	18	.000	-6.5000	.8280	-8.2395	-4.7605
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.850	12.956	.000	-6.5000	.8280	-8.2894	-4.7106
TOPIC_3	Equal variances assumed	2.122	.162	-13.975	18	.000	-8.9000	.6368	-10.2379	-7.5621
	Equal variances not assumed			-13.975	13.748	.000	-8.9000	.6368	-10.2682	-7.5318

The final research question deals with how students and raters view Strategy 1 and Strategy 2. The reactions of the subjects and raters towards Peer Conferencing and Student-Teacher Conferencing were determined through interviews, observations and reports by the raters during the revision processes at the end of the writing tasks.

Based on the interviews, all the 10 subjects in Group A agreed that revision was an important part of composition writing. They shared the same point of views that the revision strategy had helped them during the course of their writings. All of them stated that they were not familiar with the revision strategy prior to the study. Peer revisions had helped them to discover meaning and that led them to reformulate their texts. They were also able to organize their ideas and main points as their peers had helped them to become aware of their purpose and audience when writing. One of the subjects said that the most helpful point through this peer revision strategy was the collaborative value towards working together with other people. He seemed more relaxed in his approach to writing especially when he was able to share, discuss and argue his ideas with his peers:

I am able to discuss my mistakes more openly with my peer compared to my teacher for my friends are of the same standard as me. I could see my mistakes clearly when my friends pointed them out. I felt so much easy writing together with my friends for I have someone to discuss with.

I can get suggestions, ideas from my friends during the writing activity. These really helped me to have more ideas and points to write my composition.

I find that it is fun to discuss with my friends. We can argue our point of view and show suggestions to our friends. Furthermore, I can get their ideas, which never come across me.

Besides getting ideas from my friends, it made me more careful with my grammar for I am so scared that they might laugh at my mistakes.

This is the activity that I have never tried before. I find that working together is more effective than writing alone. If I am stuck, I can ask my friends immediately. My friends understand me better than any other person.

Subjects in Group B also seemed to agree that revision was an important part of composition writing. They also shared the same idea that learning revision strategy where they had to work with their teacher had helped them during the course of their writing. All of them also

stated that they were not familiar with the revision strategy prior to the study.

All the 10 subjects agreed that with the feedback from their teacher on different areas such as structures, sentence varieties, paragraph unity, cohesion and others, they could improve their writing further. The revision strategy had enlightened them on how to be a better writer and they were more aware of the content during the second draft and third draft. They could reorganize their paragraphs with the comments provided by their teacher. It thus made them become more confident in writing. Getting better grades from one draft to another also acts as an encouragement and catalyst for the students to keep on writing. The subjects tend to be active participants for they knew that the teacher was watching them writing. During the individual conferencing session, the interaction between teacher and student had helped them in the improvement in the subject's writing skills.

Some of the comments made by the subjects in Group B are as below:

Teacher can help me to explain my grammatical errors and sentence structure problems. By pointing my errors to me, I could understand my mistakes better.

I feel more comfortable and more confident to write my essay for I can get the immediate feedback from my teacher. Now, I understand why I have made such silly mistakes in my previous writing.

Teachers are more experienced and are experts for they have been teaching in the school for so many years. They can easily see my mistakes and help me to improve in my writing. How I wish my teacher would continue these activities until I finish school. I am sure I would score A for my writing later.

Before this program is carried out, I was in the dark. Thank you to my teachers for pointing out my silly and unforgivable mistakes. I promise to keep on writing and be a good writer one day.

I am able to interact with my teacher immediately when I have difficulty in continuing with my next paragraph. Teachers would help us to solve our problems in writing for they could see our mistakes easily. In short, they are the best people to consult.

The three raters strongly agreed that revision is a vital part in the composing process for the students. All of them noted that all the subjects were of the same standard at the initial stage. They were inexperienced

and unskilled. They also believed that the two revision strategies can be implemented in the writing class.

All the three raters chose teacher-student conferencing as the most effective and helpful strategy for the subjects. They shared the same opinions by saying that:

- i. The teacher is the best person to correct the students' mistakes and guide them in various aspects of revision.
- ii. Students are able to discuss with the teacher face to face in full confidence.
- iii. Students can receive immediate and correct feedback from teachers, as they are able to recognize students' areas of weaknesses.
- iv. The students have the advantage of personal guidance during the individual conferencing sessions.
- v. Teachers can also have immediate feedback from students concerning organization, content, unity and the message they want to convey.

As for the peer-conferencing, the three raters agreed that there were some improvements in their students writing. Since all the subjects were of the same standard, they found that the students had the difficulties in responding to comment on the organization, contents and unity. Peers would approach the written text from a different angle as compared to the teachers. Comments from peers over the drafts would only help the writer in the process of writing. They just ask the questions to the extent of pushing an early draft of writer-based prose to reader-based prose. Thus, there were not many changes during the drafting. Nonetheless, all the subjects reacted actively during the peer conferencing and thus student-centered learning had taken place. This would give the students the opportunity to be independent and be aware of teamwork. The raters further agreed that peer-conferencing could be carried out in classroom teaching at the initial stage for it would be helpful for the students who do not have any idea on how or what to write. Through peer-conferencing, they would get more ideas and suggestions from their friends and they would be able to produce better writing.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall scores achieved by the subjects in Group A and Group B showed an improvement after using revision strategies (either Strategy 1 or 2) in their compositions. When the scores of the compositions obtained using both the two revision strategies are compared, it can be seen that the subjects using Revision Strategy 2 or the Teacher-Student Conferencing Revision Strategy achieved the highest overall scores. All the ten subjects, or 100%, were able to achieve the acceptable competency level for SPM Examination as the results show that eight subjects (whose scores ranged from 31 – 35) were in Band B, while only two subjects (whose scores ranged from 26 – 30) were in Band C.

Based on the verbal interview with the subjects in both groups, all of them agreed that revision strategies have played an important role in composition writing. They gained a lot of experience and guidance either from their peers or teacher during the composing process. They were also aware of the role of purpose and audience in writing. As for the three raters, they also shared the same ideas that revision is a vital part in the composing process for students. All of them noted that all the subjects were of the same standard at the initial stage. They were inexperienced and unskilled writers who needed guidance in order to produce good writing that would meet the criteria of the higher bands. They also agreed that the two revision strategies could be implemented in the writing classes.

The findings of this study and the implications of the use of the two revision strategies enable various suggestions and recommendations to be made in improving composition writing. Revision strategies should be implemented in the classroom so that the students can be trained to complete their assigned tasks effectively.

Malaysian students who basically depend on the teacher or regard the teacher as 'knowing all', can be trained to be more independent learners or writers through the use of peer-conferencing revision strategy. Students can conduct peer-conferencing with the aid of the checklist that was used in this study. To enhance the students' ability in the use of this revision strategy, it is suggested that the students be given training to identify specific types of errors rather than for random, general errors. For example, teachers can relate the questions in the checklist to specific grammatical errors commonly made by the students or which have been discussed in the class. This would help the students to carry out their task. Teachers should also clearly define the various criteria that students

need to look for in their peers' compositions especially in matters related to content and organization of the compositions.

It is suggested that teachers should integrate both the revision strategies, that is, the peer-conferencing and teacher-student conferencing. By doing so, it enables the teacher to spend some time with the unskilled writers through teacher-student conferencing and thereby help them to improve their writing through individual attention. Revision can also become an avenue for students to learn from each other as they exchange creative ideas, opinions, and suggestions with their peers during peer-conferencing. Campbell (1998) says that peer and teacher feedback complement each other. Peers would approach the written text from a different angle compared to the teacher. Comments from peers over the drafts would help the writer in the process of writing. Sometimes peers can ask questions to the extent of pushing an early draft of writer-base prose to reader-based prose. Teachers, on the other hand, usually help writers in the product of writing, giving students the 'authority' or evaluative point of view. The two different perspectives would enhance the learning experiences of writers.

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APPENDIX 1

Checklist: Peer Conferencing Revision Strategy

Instructions:

1. When the first draft of the essay is ready, use this list to go over it and look for errors.
2. Put a check mark (/) or (X) for each item on the list after you have reviewed the writing for that item.
3. After you have checked the draft for all items listed, return it to your friend.
4. Your friend will rewrite it and make the corrections.

1. Thesis Statement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Does the thesis statement state the main idea adequately?b. Does the thesis statement show the approach or attitude to the main idea?
2. Unity	Do the supporting ideas and examples show the writer's attitude toward the main idea?
3. Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Are more supporting details needed?b. Is enough evidence provided to support the main idea?c. Is the evidence that is provided convincing?
4. Coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Are all the paragraphs logically connected to one another?b. Do the sentences flow logically one after the other?c. Are transitions needed to make the sentences clearer?
5. Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Is the writer's purpose clear?b. What did the writer want to convey to the reader? Was this achieved?
6. Sentence, clauses & Punctuation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Each sentence and name begins with a capital letter.b. Each dependent clause is connected to an independent clause that completes its meaning.c. Every dependent clause either ends with a period, a question mark, or exclamation mark or is joined properly (not with only a comma) to another clause.d. Every clause (and sentence) has at least one verb and one subject.

7. Verbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All verbs use the correct tense for the meaning. b. All past participles (eaten, gone, etc.) used as verbs have BE or HAVE auxiliary verbs in front of them. c. Every present-tense verb (or auxiliary) for singular, third-person subjects (he, she, Mr. Ali, the company, etc.) ends with an "s".
8. Number Agreement	Singular articles (a/an) are not used with plural or non-count nouns.
9. Pronouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pronouns agree in singular or plural with the nouns they represent. (e.g. Cats are adorable. They are often chosen as pets.) b. Each pronoun – you use is clearly related to a noun or nouns that come before it.
10. Words & Word Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The words you have used are in the correct form (verb, noun, adjective, etc.) b. You have checked the spelling of words you are not sure about. c. You have looked up word meanings you are not sure about in an English – English dictionary.

APPENDIX 2

Checklist: Teacher-student Conferencing Revision Strategy

NAME OF SUBJECT: _____

NAME OF TEACHER: _____

Use the following questions below as guidelines. After reading the draft discuss with the writer your opinion.

QUESTIONS GUIDELINES	TEACHER'S COMMENTS
<p><u>INTRODUCTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are you getting on in your writing? 2. Where are you now in your draft? 3. Can you tell me more about this idea? 4. What do you plan to do next? 	

<p><u>INTENTION:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you think the main ideas are clearly stated?2. What specific changes need to be made in the draft to achieve overall purpose?3. Does the writer make clear how all parts of the draft relate to his/her purpose?4. Are the data (examples, detail, facts, experiences) used in the draft relevant and adequate to the writer's purpose and for the audience?5. Does the essay have a definite structure? Example: Introduction, Paragraphs 1, 2 3 etc., Conclusion?6. Do the paragraphs have a unity?7. Are the ideas written in order of importance?	
<p><u>ARGUMENTS:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does each paragraph have a main point?2. Do you have any suggestions for changes in the main points of the paragraphs?3. Does the essay have an effective introduction and conclusion?4. Do you have any suggestions for changes to make it more effective/interesting?	
<p><u>SYNTAX/SENTENCES:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Should any of the sentences be deleted or rearranged?2. Is the meaning in any of the sentences unclear?3. Are there mistakes in the punctuation?4. Are there any spelling mistakes?5. Are the capitals where they belong?	

APPENDIX 3

Category Description for the Assessment of Continuous Writing for SPM Examination

A 36-40	Apart from occasional slips first draft language is entirely accurate. Sentence structure is varied and shows that the candidate is able to use sentence length and type to achieve and intended effect. Vocabulary is wide with precision. Punctuation is accurate and helpful to the reader. Spelling is accurate the whole range of vocabulary used. Paragraphs are well planned, have unity and are linked. The topic is addressed with consistent relevance. The interest of the reader is aroused and sustained.
B 31-35	The language is accurate occasional are either minor or first draft slips. Vocabulary is wide enough to convey intended shades of meaning with some precision. Sentence show some variation of length and type. Spelling is nearly always accurate. Paragraphs show some evidence of planning, have unity and are usually appropriately linked. The piece of writing is relevant to the topic and the interest of the reader is aroused and sustained through most of the composition.
C 26-30	The language is largely accurate. Simple structures are used without error; mistakes may occur when more sophisticated structures are attempted. Vocabulary is wide enough to convey intended meaning but may lack precision. Sentences may show some variety of structure and length but there is a tendency to use one type of structure, giving it a monotonous effect. Spelling of simple vocabulary may be correct but errors may occur when more sophisticated words are used. Punctuation of simple structures is accurate on the whole. The composition is written in paragraphs, which may show some unity, although links may be absent or inappropriate. The writing relevant but may lack originality and planning. Some interest is aroused but not sustained.
D 21-25	The language is sufficiently accurate to communicate meaning clearly to the reader. There will be patches of clear, accurate language, particularly when simple structures are used. There may be some variety of sentence type and length but the purpose is not clearly seen. Vocabulary is usually adequate to show intended meaning but this is not developed to show precision. Simple words are spelt correctly but more spelling errors will occur. Paragraphs are used but show lack of planning or unity. The topic is addressed with some relevance but the reader may find compositions at this level lacking in liveliness and interest value.
E 16-20	Meaning is never in doubt but errors are sufficiently frequent and serious to hamper reading. Simple structures may be accurate but a script at this level is unlikely to sustain for long. Vocabulary is limited either too simple to convey precise meaning or more ambitious but imperfectly understood. Simple words may be spelt correctly but frequent mistakes in spelling

	and punctuation make reading the script difficult. Paragraphs lack unity or are haphazardly arranged. The subject matter will be relevant to the topic but only a partial treatment is given. The high incidence of linguistic errors is likely to distract the readers from any merits of content that the composition may have.
Ui 11-15	Scripts in this category will show considerable limitations of subject matter, usually because of the candidate's lack of linguistic skills. There will be many serious errors of various kind throughout the script but they are mainly one word type; i.e. they could be corrected without rewriting the whole sentence. Although communication is established, the frequent errors may cause blurring. Sentences will be simple and very often repetitive. There may be no paragraphs but meaning is fairly clear.
Uii 6-10	The reader is able to get some sense out of the script, and but errors are multiple in nature, requiring the reader to read and re-read before being to understand. At this level, there may be only a few accurate sentences, however simple. The content may be comprehensible, but the incidence linguistic error is so high as to make the meaning blur. This type of script also may be far short of the required number of words.
Uiii 0-5	Scripts of this category are entirely or entirely impossible to read as pieces of English. Whole sections may make no sense at all. Where occasional patches of clarity occur, marks also may be of the required. The mark '0' should only be given if the letter makes no sense at all from the beginning to end.

NB: No script will fit neatly into anyone of the categories described above. The appropriate mark for a script is therefore determined by deciding which category most neatly reflects its characteristics. Examiners should not construct any hierarchy of characteristics when allocating a mark, but should assess the letter as a whole before deciding on any category.