Exploring English Descriptive Writing Vocabulary Acquisition through Creative Pedagogical Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Review on previous English as a second language (ESL) interventional programmes in Malaysia has indicated limited emphasis on creative pedagogy. Particularly in writing classes that include descriptive writing, a genre that requires writers to be creative and expressive, a significant portion of learners were found to suffer from poor proficiency. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the impact of creative pedagogical strategies on ESL learners' descriptive writing. Under classroom research, it adopted the action research design with a single case study to monitor upper secondary school learners' writing with an emphasis on sentence construction and vocabulary. The data collection involved focus group interviews, written tests, and evaluation of students' written work. It was revealed that creative pedagogical strategies were effective in improving students' descriptive writing performance. The main findings derived included five themes as the following: ability to describe pictures using complex vocabulary, learning new words, acquisition of various adjectives and verbs, ability to show emotion or feelings, and acquisition of skill for delivering meaning with precision. We propose a chain of parallel action-related research plans to further investigate creative teaching approaches and to encourage similar creative pedagogical strategies by English teachers in the country.

Keywords: action research; ESL writing skills; sentence-construction; vocabulary; creative pedagogical strategies; descriptive writing

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian government under the auspices of the Ministry of Education has been determined in ensuring a high standard of English proficiency in the country through numerous initiatives and at various education levels curriculum revision (Rashid, Rahman & Yunus, 2017; Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014), which include curriculum revision and constant teacher training programmes and capacity building. Despite the series of intervention, students in secondary school are still found to be weak in writing skills, especially in descriptive writing and vocabulary (Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016; Yunus & Chien, 2016), even though it is the genre that is favoured by many students for *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), a national examination of secondary education; the shortcoming includes the inability to satisfy the requirements of the assessment. Meanwhile, the weakness in vocabulary is alarming as vocabulary knowledge has been recognised to be vital in boosting language proficiency and to have a positive connection to language progress (Laufer, 2005; Lewis, 2000; Mashhadia & Jamalifar, 2015; Nation, 2001; Sulaiman, 2017). Reasons that contribute to the failure to acquire proper vocabulary among students are conventional teaching trends and less effective instructional materials, apart from socioeconomic background, the extent of exposure to language, participation level, low interest in learning and students' negative mindset as well as attitudes (Kusuma, Adnyani, & Taharyanti, 2017; Mashhadia & Jamalifar, 2015).

Scholars have recorded evidence from English language learners who found classroom pedagogical instructions to be lacking creativity, due to conventional and monotonous teaching approaches in writing (Fauziah, 2018; Marhatus Sholeha, 2019; Sahathevan, Nisha & Hamidah, 2020). The situation serves as the impetus for creative pedagogical strategies.

IMPETUS FOR CREATIVE PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

As the occupational and educational tapestries are influenced by the 4th Industrial Revolution, the demand for a workforce with creative skills is high. Teachers understand their students possess different abilities such as language skills, personalities, interests, motivation, confidence and thus, they are the agents of change through teaching (Philip, Tan & Anak Janda, 2019; Tan, William Jospa, Nur-Ehsan, & Mohd-Mahzan, 2021, Kandasamy et al., 2022).

In writing classes, the lack of creative pedagogical strategies often challenges how students learn to write, particularly descriptive writing. Drilling and memorisation are common strategies in many schools where teachers provide model essays for students to memorise and rewrite the paper to pass examination (Lim & Varghese, 2013). The lack of creativity in teaching methods and techniques, content creation and evaluation procedures negatively affect learning (Jaelani, 2017; Nachiappan et al., 2018).

The term "creative pedagogical strategies" refers to the practice of teaching in making learning more interesting and effective through a teacher's creative imagination. It involves providing the subjects, or in an educational setting – the students with contexts that explicitly require imagination and stretch their generative, evaluative and collaborative capacities (Cremin, 2006; Cremin & Barnes, 2018; Harifin & Nur-Ehsan, 2018). Despite the endless possibilities to manipulate the strategies to teaching and making the learning process fun (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004), the present study reports an action research project that adopted the definition of Cremin's creative teaching (2006). It included only five strategies which are games-based, project-based, visual-thinking, task-based, ICT/mobile-based, and character-based. In the present study, the focus was

on how creative pedagogical strategies improved learning writing skills and encourage students to participate in the writing sessions within the classroom environment based on Cremin's creative teaching model.

PAST RESEARCH AND DIRECTION OF STUDY

Several quantitative studies (e.g., Hapsari, 2016; Nim, 2017; Soffianny, 2017; Soraya, 2016) have indicated that it is crucial to analyse students' creativity level which is high, moderate and low in order prior to choosing the teaching strategies. However, the present study agrees with Bono (1992) and Robinson (2001) who suggest that writing is not limited to certain creative individuals but it can be taught to everyone with imagination and intelligence. These studies claim that positive effects are shown in both groups with high creativity and low creativity.

When incorporating technology in classroom practice through creative pedagogical strategies, English language users were found to be able to acquire good vocabulary in writing (Carbajal, Francisco & Salvador, 2018; Nurul Kamalia, Melor & Mohamed Amin, 2018). Online interaction in virtual classrooms and mobile learning (m-learning) have also demonstrated significant positive effects on students' vocabulary in writing (Annamalai, 2018, Kim Hua & Mohd Nor, 2012, Nur-Ehsan et al., 2013) in helping learners to express their views, think creatively, display imaginative skills, improve sentence pattern and metaphorical expressions, and expand lexeme (Manara, 2015, ORELT, 2012). When compared to conventional teaching method, integrating mobile-assisted language learning in teaching is superior in helping learners memorise a long list of words or phrases (Mohamed Ali, 2018, Harwati et al., 2017).

In addition, teaching module (Nursazwani et al., 2018) and innovational tools such as 'Popsicle Simile' (Imy Tracy & Melor, 2016) and 'Tarsia Puzzle' (Omar and Nur-Ehsan, 2019) have demonstrated positive impact on students' vocabulary retention through creativity. Similar results were seen when authentic and a variety of designs and multimedia tools like film-inspired writing activities are used (Lidawan & Joaquin, 2018) with an additional benefit of upholding communicative language teaching content.

Driven by the insights from past research, the present study aimed to explore creative pedagogical strategies and their impact on English language learners' vocabulary acquisition in the context of secondary education in Selangor, Malaysia with the following research question: How does the implementation of creative pedagogical strategies help to improve vocabulary acquisition in descriptive writing among secondary school learners?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study adapted four guiding frameworks: Social Constructivism Theory (SCT), Communicative Language Theory (CLT), Harmer Writing Process and Creative Practice Model as illustrated in Figure 1:
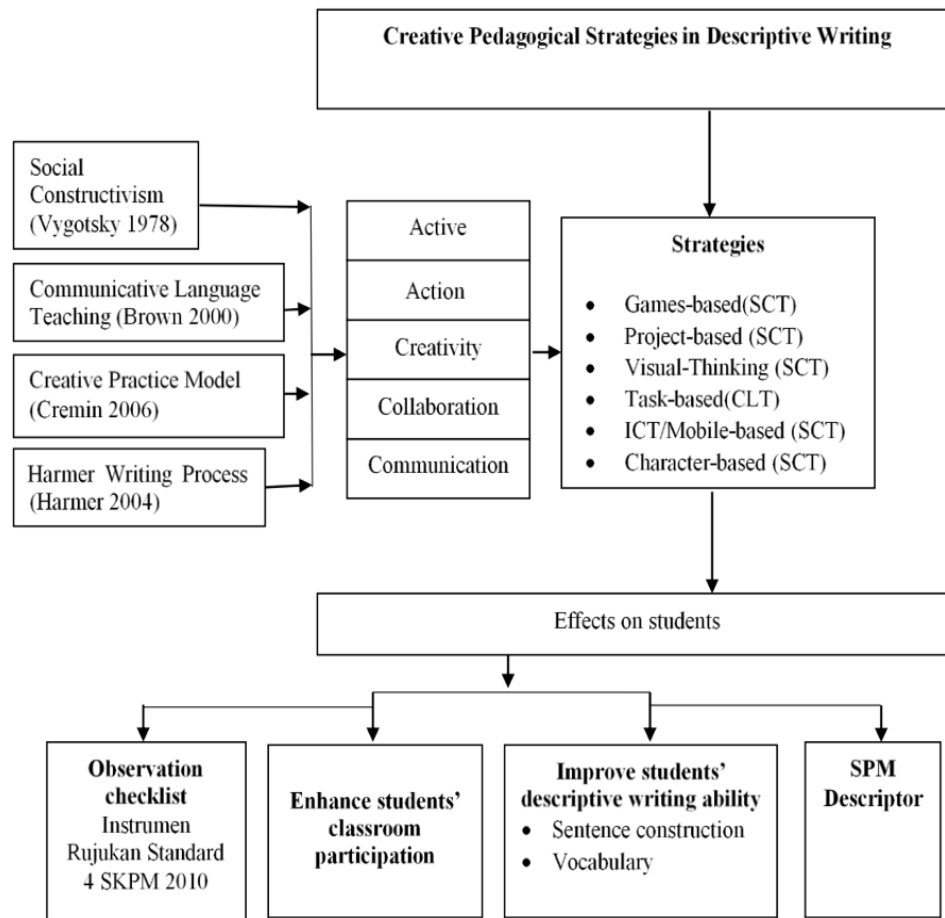
FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework of research

The main driving theory in the study was SCT (Vygotsky, 1978) that highlights the concept of Zone of Proximal Development. Scaffolding becomes a key feature in which it describes a situation where teachers or the more able peers assist and guide students or other less able peers to share knowledge by constructing new knowledge in a minimum way. In this study, students were grouped and continuously exposed to different peers for a productive and insightful sharing during teaching and learning. Active and action-oriented learning, communicative and creativity skills incorporated in this study were also part of SCT. To incorporate a constructivist learning theory in the classroom, the teacher must refrain from giving direct instruction to the students but rather must set a learning environment that allows students to imagine, articulate, express, illustrate, perceive, and apply new information with minimal supervision. Lessons were developed to incorporate game-based activities, project-based activities, visual thinking, ICT/mobile-based activities and character-based pedagogical strategies.

Meanwhile, CLT is "an approach to language teaching technique that emphasizes authenticity, engagement, student-centred learning, task-based activities, and communication for real-world, practical purposes," (Brown 2007, p.378). The strategy reflecting CLT is in the form of task-based activities in which students use authentic language for task completion, such as real-life scenarios and other project-based assignments (Davut, 2020).

Cremin's (2006) creative practice model shapes the creative pedagogical strategies and materials in the intervention period. The components of creative pedagogical strategies include innovation, ownership, control and relevance, to which Jeffrey and Craft (2006) added co-participation. Three interrelated dimensions of creative practice are teachers' characteristics, pedagogy, and class ethos. The interplay of these three dimensions is central in understanding creative practice. The core features of dimensions of creative practice that was applied in the study were: (a) the elements of curiosity and questioning, (b) connection making, (c) originality, and (d) autonomy and ownership.

The study also adopted Harmer's (2004) writing process consisting of four connected and recursive stages that include planning/pre-writing, drafting, editing, and the final draft. The product-based approach focuses on linguistics knowledge and the end product, emphasising on the "tasks, in which the learner imitates, copies, and transforms the model provided by the teacher and/or the textbook" (Nunan, 1999, p.272). Despite having several variables to be investigated, the present article reports only part of a larger research project, namely the impact of creative pedagogical strategies on vocabulary acquisition.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts an action research design (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1998) with a single case study approach under classroom research (Dornyei, 2007) to employ creative teaching strategies and materials in a Form Four ESL classroom. Kemmis and McTaggart designed a systematic spiral model with four stages called the 'Action Research Planner'. This model shows how reflection leads to the next stage of planning, which is not separate from the previous stage but is rooted in the action and reflection stage. The results of this study were anticipated to assist teachers at the research site in gaining further insights to teaching creatively and for students to improve their descriptive writing skills. This approach of action research emphasizes collaboration with the participants – the pupils from whom problems are investigated, and thus moving away from the limited view of traditional research that upholds researcher as the only 'expert' in diagnosing the problem (Stringer, 2007). In this area of education, the knowledge and skills of those who participate in the teaching and learning process can be enhanced through it (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

Recent action research studies on learners' writing skills mainly employed quantitative or mixed-method approaches (Al-Naibi, Al-Jabri & Al-Kalbani, 2018; Halimatus Sa'diyah, 2017; Jesson et al. 2018; Mohammad, Ghazali & Hashim, 2018; Rizky 2020; Sulaiman 2018) as opposed to action research studies that were purely qualitative (Abraham, 2016; Fauziah, 2018). The existing gap drives the decision to use a qualitative approach in the present study.

STUDENTS' PROFILE

The target group of students comprised 18 male and 20 female ESL students of Form Four (aged 16) from a school in Selangor, Malaysia. Many of them had difficulties using English for written and communicative purposes, hence their hesitance to participate actively in the classroom. Having the fundamental knowledge of English, they were taught all the four language skills in their lower secondary years. Evidenced by the past test results, they found it challenging and to some extent intimidating when using English in writing. Most of the time, traditional pedagogical strategies

were employed as a teaching approach. Customised resources have been used to improve learning outcomes. Their language skills were assessed using SPM rubric descriptors for writing tasks which require the students to compose an essay of no less than 360 words. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study selected a small number of participants that could provide an understanding and perceive the issue at hand (Creswell, 2012; Silverman, 2013). Only one class comprising weak students was selected in this study from among four classes.

THE INTERVENTION

During the first two weeks of the study (see Table 1), lessons comprised the introductory sessions for introducing and explaining the study, describing students' roles and the data collection methods, conducting ice-breaking sessions, and distributing consent forms. Each session was conducted for one hour per week as approved by the school authorities. Weeks 3 and 4 marked the beginning of the actual lesson upon planning. The objectives of all the lessons were based on SPM descriptors, involving mini creative strategies and authentic materials which was a collaborative approach of student-centred learning and communicative actions through scaffolding. Each folio was updated beforehand with vocabulary lists and classroom diary related to topics that were conducted and updated in the group with infographics. The ideas of topic revolved around daily life routine locally. Lessons went on the following weeks for 4 months within 3 cycles based on 4 phases of Kemmis and McTaggart's model: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Strategies were all integrated and in various ways. Meanwhile, the teacher maximized authentic use of materials throughout the sessions in and out of the classroom. A follow-up activity was conducted via mobile learning and to encourage students to share experiences and to write. The teacher provided feedback and edited errors on the spot as everyone learnt via WhatsApp. The second part of the lesson was the reflection of the activity, correction, error identification, and simple enrichment activity related to a similar topic.

TABLE 1. Summary of entire lessons in the study

Cycle	Writing Stages	CEFR Descriptors	Topic	Strategies and Materials employed	Time Frame
Cycle 1 Lesson 1 & 2	Pre-Writing		Introduction, Consent, Ice-breaking (Snowball War and Guessing Game), Creating WhatsApp Group & Written Test 1	Game & content-based Visual Thinking & Content-based	First 2 weeks of Jan *Semi-structured Interview*
Lesson 3 & 4	Pre-Writing/ Drafting	Students will be able to write simple sentences and notes to describe	4 Squared Grammar Show don't Tell!	Content & activity based Character & mobile based	3rd & 4th week of Jan
Lesson 5 & 6	Drafting /Editing	Students will be able to write one simple paragraph to describe	Mystery Skype Edited Connect Creatively	Technology and visual thinking based Technology and visual thinking	1st & 2nd week of Feb

Lesson 7 & 8	Editing/Final Version	Students will be able to write simple paragraphs	Build your support	Game and visual thinking	3rd week of Mar
Week 9	Written Test 2(4th week of Feb) *Focus Group Interview 1 Amend Intervention				
Cycle 2 Lesson 1&2	Pre-Writing/ Drafting	Students will be able to write simple sentences and notes to describe	Shake it Off!	Task and project-based	2nd & 3rd week of Mar
			Behave	ICT, mobile, and Project-based	
Lesson 3&4	Drafting/ Editing	Students will be able to write one simple paragraph to describe	Dot the points	Visual thinking and task-based	2nd & 3rd week of Mar
			Talk by Police	Task and character-based	
Lesson 5&6	Editing/ Final Version	Students will be able to write simple paragraphs	Bully Fact Sheet	Task & project-based	4th week of March
			PowToon Video	ICT & project-based	
16TH week	*Written Test 3(1st week of April)* *Focus Group Interview 1 Amend intervention				
Cycle 3 Lesson 1&2	Pe-Writing/ Drafting	Students will be able to write simple sentences and notes to describe	Recycling / 3R	Visual thinking & task-based	2nd & 3rd week of April
			My Product	Project & task-based	
Lesson 3&4	Drafting/ Editing	Students will be able to write one simple paragraph to describe	Let's compete	Game & task-based	3rd & 4th week of April
			Pick and Run	Game & task-based	
Lesson 5&6	Editing/ Final Version	Students will be able to write simple paragraphs	Scan me	Game and AR-based	4th week of April
	Written Test 4(2nd week of May) *Focus Group Interview 1				

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The study involved focus group interviews which were carried out with six students who volunteered, after each cycle. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights and reflection on the effects of the teaching and learning strategies and materials used during writing class particularly (i) reflections on what had happened during their learning in the study (ii) their experiences and expectations of their learning and (iii) suggestions for improvement for the next cycle.

WRITTEN TEST

The written tests were comprised of questions on descriptive writing and tailored in line with the objective of the module and curriculum specifications. The elements of creativity were incorporated into the test using a variety of questions. Written Test 2 was carried out in the Observation phase in Cycle 2 to measure students' status in Cycle 1 after the implementation of the intervention in the first cycle. Finally, Written Test 3 was given during the observation stage of the second cycle after the implementation of the amended intervention. It was carried out to identify whether there was improvement in students' writing skills. The frequency of the same type of errors further indicated which part of the essay that most of the students were underperforming to set a focus on selected areas to be tackled in detail. The written tests also functioned as a benchmark on where and how more to improve besides noting how much they have improved mainly in sentence construction and vocabulary.

SAMPLES OF STUDENTS' WRITTEN WORK

Examples of the paragraph written by the students throughout the classroom activities were gathered and examined to discover their strengths and weakness as in vocabulary and sentence construction based on the SPM rubrics to maintain consistency. The sample works ranged from products, sentences, paragraphs, essays, or messages. These examples also aided in the data collection on students' requirements as well as analysed based on peer observation results.

PEER OBSERVATION

The written tests and the lesson plans were validated by three experts. They were senior teachers with vast knowledge and positions in and outside the school. Before the changes were made in Cycles 2 and 3, the outcome and planning drafts were shown and discussed. Matters highlighted include problems or issues that occurred when outsiders view the planning. Apart from the feedback, the experts also helped to identify mistakes or areas that could be misinterpreted by target audience. Then, the researchers gained permission from these experts to conduct the teaching and learning sessions.

LESSON PLAN

The lesson plan consisted of two main parts which were (i) objectives and learning outcomes and (ii) five to seven proposed descriptive writing-related activities in each cycle. This is to ensure that the teachers were aware of the topics and ideas and would gain in-depth understanding as well as prepare before the teaching and learning session is conducted. The second part consisted of teaching and learning with the order of easy to difficult in a hierarchical manner using a variety of strategies and materials. The lesson activities included topic/subtopic, objectives, learning outcomes, strategies, teaching aids, steps to conduct teaching and learning session with enrichment activities. These activities were all based on theories, main element of creativity, and were in line with the curriculum specification and needs analysis. The activities proposed were developed in such a way that teachers could also adapt and integrate at other levels.

LESSON PROCEDURE

The students were assigned tasks in groups to first brainstorm and participate in activities starting with the pre-writing stage. This was followed by drafting, editing, and finalising stages, each spanning 2 weeks. All the activities were creatively designed with the integration of various teaching and learning strategies such as project-based, character-based, mobile-based, visual thinking, game-based, ICT-based, and content-based also including authentic and realistic materials. Since creative pedagogical strategies were used, the students were more encouraged to use their prior knowledge along with the input given beforehand via WhatsApp and portfolio. As the students communicate and write, they were able to activate their ideas and language methods for the task at hand. Initially, they started with simple activities to construct simple sentences and use minor vocabulary in the form of pre-writing. Later, they constructed more compound and complex sentences and paragraphs in the drafting stage. Eventually, they came up with paragraphs or a short essay in the editing and finalizing phase. Richer vocabulary and sentence construction levels were emphasized in the final phase. So, when a topic was proposed in the same theme, they had their prior knowledge and added knowledge and skill already learnt and practiced which enabled them to organise their points to write better paragraphs. This avoided the situation of students not attempting the task at all. All these phases were triggered through creative pedagogical skills to write descriptive text focusing on vocabulary level. The final stage consisted of feedback and sharing from peers. Then, students sat for a written test which was designed to be interactive but was still aligned to the national examination format to emphasise the newly acquired language components and skills as well as to evaluate their performance in vocabulary, sentence construction, and idea generation. Later, in response to the result obtained during each cycle, the next cycle lessons were modified based on an agreement between the teacher and experts who then evaluated and verified the lesson plans throughout the first until the last cycle. All comments given were rectified according to the plan before the lesson was carried out.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interview content was coded, a process that was driven by the inductive process. One of the researchers, through WhatsApp, interviewed seven students and four teachers and carried out written test 1, teacher's observations 1 and 2 based on the selected research question as a form of primary data. She then planned and conducted the creative lessons in Cycles 1-3. Cycle 1 acted as the pilot study for the present research. By considering all the primary data, we were able to create descriptive coding called open coding. We then proceeded to the next stage, making a comparison between the codes using the constant comparative method (Silverman, 2010).

Meanwhile the written test was analysed using content analysis in line with the current SPM descriptors. Percentage scores were assigned at the end of the analysis. Comments and feedback were given based on the errors made by students based on the assessment criteria. The frequency of the same type of errors also indicated which parts of the essay students were weakest in, before establishing a focus on the selected areas to be tackled in detail. Furthermore, in cycles two and three, the highlight was given to sentence structure and vocabulary performance. The written test also functioned as a benchmark with respect to where and how to improve further besides noting how much the students had improved, mainly in sentence construction and vocabulary. Accordingly, this provided further insight and detailed view of how to generate

creative pedagogical strategies to address students' shortcomings. The marks for each section was awarded as an indicator signifying achievement to support students' improvement.

During peer observation, the observer indicated 'yes' or 'no' according to the items to evaluate the teaching and learning sessions in all cycles. The evaluation was based on observing the students' participation level from a checklist. The observation checklist data for each session was then analysed to gauge participation. These aspects included the level of attention during the lesson, active involvement in the learning process, giving comments or voicing questions about the instructions, including collaboration and communication aspects. The scales ranged from high, medium, to low.

RESULTS

The study aimed to discover the usefulness of creative pedagogical strategies in the descriptive text in terms of vocabulary. Based on the analysis of research findings, students' vocabulary was improved through the use of creative pedagogical strategies. The improvement itself was seen in their writing tests at the end of each cycle, sample work during the cycles, focus group interviews, and guided reflection notes. The description of the combined methods, qualitative case study, and action research are indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Key Findings of 3 Cycles

CYCLES	THEMES	FINDINGS
1	Ability to describe pictures using complex vocabulary	a. showed progress in acquiring multifarious words to describe a place, object, person and setting b. familiarity of the learning content and prior knowledge assisted in vocabulary usage c. used simple and few artistic languages such as figurative, idioms, proverbs and flower language d. provided to allow the reader to feel and see a picture of the description to describe e. applied five senses and to show positive and negative feelings f. recalled and constructed simple sentences spontaneously but vividly
	Learning new words	a. embedded new words throughout the sentence construction and frequent use of regular words b. geared to replace, substitute, paraphrase the information, and retrieve the meaning to suit their description to project a clearer and more attractive description c. practised learnt words on daily basis in speaking, writing and browsing the Internet
2	Acquisition of various adjectives and verbs	a. employed a variety of words and fascinated the readers by enabling them to imagine what is being described b. able to retrieve appropriate vocabulary from live and updated news and happenings around the world independently c. showed rather than telling their feelings in words d. minimized and tackled the interference of their mother tongue
	Ability to show	a. able to impress readers through detail description to show the emotion and reveal emotions b. Wh-questions aided in generation ideas thus identifying

3	emotion or feelings	suitable vocabulary c. applied five senses that stimulated thinking and instilled a sense of gloom to the essay and give readers a turbulence of feelings
	Acquired skill for delivering meaning with precision	a. very minimal repetition of the same words b. more sentence and sequence connectors c. able to use double words and phrases instead of only single word d. improved quality of vocabulary and used more sophisticated words

CYCLE 1

It was promising to see students picking up slowly but steadily. Although they felt slightly intimidated at first, they began to participate actively in the group and memorised words better as the cheerful and accommodating class ambience influenced them.

ABILITY TO DESCRIBE PICTURES USING COMPLEX VOCABULARY

Participants admitted that they realised differences in their progress, as one noted that (with English translation): "for me it increased a bit…my writing level …. like more than 5 to 6 words already…. There were more compound sentences and (I) used as many adjectives and adverb like that day…before activity to help us remember …. to describe more detailed…it takes time and it's like we can be good overnight…need to practise and have more English class…" (FGI_1_S4). Some example of sentences and words that were used by the students in Written Test 2 are: "Massive downpour, beating down furiously, recoup, lent a helping hand, get back on their feet, war zone, terribly saddened, muddy and smelly, rebuilt their lives and many more".

The five sense activities according to themes were covered during the mini-lessons in Cycle 1 as the basis of generating, developing, and elaborating ideas. Below is the data from the focus group interview 1 (Participant 6):

> like my vocabulary is better on this topic…like no one ever went in so deep…. always had to complete literature syllabus and copy everything from the (black)board…. Like the five senses and what words to use… interesting all activities…. we had to create own ideas... nice... (FGI_1_S6)

This was further evident when students were tested during the interview to produce phrases or sentences describing a flood scene vividly although these words were adequate but not developed to show intended precision. It was noted that they could recall and construct sentences spontaneously after a few weeks of the mini-lessons. Below is the extract from focus group 1:

> all our things were carried by the strong water and destroyed (FGI_1_S2)
> like 'saddening scene to have the dead body floating (FGI_1_S5)

LEARNING NEW WORDS

It was promising to see students who were generally weak to finally be able to use new words although the sentence construction was ungrammatical. Some of the new words in their sentences were: "rose high level, accompanied, threatening, crowded, stench, unbelievable, courage and strength, terribly saddened, muddy and smelly, rebuilt their lives, suffer, devastating, onslaught, literally trembled, fear, corporate bodies, NGO's, clean-up activities" and so forth (Doc_Anal_WT2).

Students' relentless efforts in wanting to learn and willingness to learn more and complete given tasks were facilitated by the teaching and learning activities. The effort was noticeable when students were found to describe the following during focus group interview 1:

> I can read some words…. find new meaning of words…friends help or dictionary when you
> allow us to bring…then google or dictionary application…. same way…. listen to pronunciation
> …. like can do on my own more than disturbing many people…. waiting when next
> to bring for activity…. hahahahahaha…. like lar. (FGI_1_S5)

> Translated version: yes…we learnt half of it…like when we read and use the words in our sentences
> … (we) refer to the table given… many new words…and also look at the examples like beach….
> paddy field…. sun…wind….so detailed … learning is one thing…but must know how to use….
> don't rush….one title may take many weeks to teach…. slowly…more and more…(FG_1_S4)

CYCLE 2

The main concern and expectation were not always about students using jargon or ostentatious words but ones that are accurate to convey the intended messages. In this case, details to describe the place, object, or person. The core aim of a descriptive essay is to invoke the readers' all five senses. Once the topic is ready, students should identify the sensations or feelings that the participant wished to associate the subject. The first and foremost task of the participant would be to provide a vivid sensory account that supports their essay.

ACQUISITION OF VARIOUS ADJECTIVES AND VERBS

Some words and sentences that provided an elaborate description are as such:

> Commenting in an abusive manner - They said, "if you not giving your money we will hit you.

> Suicide - when she came home, she just locked herself in the bathroom and her mother just heard a
> sound of gun-shot.

> Enjoy bullying - she's my friend. I always ask her to bring my bag to class, buy my food and do anything
> what I ask. (Doc_Anal_WT3)

Meanwhile, Participant 4 through authentic and real-life events understood that:

> Translated version: "stories……yes…. now we can use more words …. the right ones to describe…
> not just simply write…we learn a variety of words… adjectives and rich verbs…. like how people
> feel…. then think…. then act…. correct right? that day Sean and Salman…. cannot forget…scary..."
> (FGI_2_S4).

More samples that empowered their written test and group work are, "anti-bully campaigns, bothered, anxiety, traumatised, gossiping, mentally troubled, viral, sacrificed, twice older, weird" (Doc_Anal_WT3) and "sympathy, heartbreakers, nuisance, irritating, tension, secret victim, show-off, online identity, name-calling, be strong and learn to protect, don't lose faith, bully disaster, treat everyone with respect, takes place outside the school, security cameras install" and more (Doc_Analy_SSW_C2).

ABILITY TO SHOW EMOTION OR FEELINGS

Descriptive words to describe an incident or emotions should provide the readers with a feeling of impression and both positive and negative emotions such as excitement, sorrow, happiness, depression, and movements. For instance, "hitting hard, greatly thankful, hottest, depression, loneliness, abusive behaviour, teaching, trickery, attacked, mentally abducted, fat-shamed, break the off, vibration, satisfy, grip, suffer, brave, excited, happy, pressured, physically bullied, traumatised, attracted, jealous, nightmare, embarrassment, upset and threatened, anxious, stand up for others, stay alert, don't lose faith, finish it off, take revenge, ignore, fear to go to school, hot-tempered, unhappy and down, critic" and more (Doc_Anal_SSW_C2 and Doc_Analy_WT3).

Participant 1 mentioned that the level of vocabulary should be better off which could be aided through Wh-questions. She stated that "...like not like standard 4 or 5 level… all powerful and clear words to use…. Must be detailed…. explain what happened... Wh-questions help too …the mistress…. creative but it helped to do the factsheet and answer questions" (FGI_2_P1). Wh-question was emphasised throughout the lessons to set a framework for the students when they run out of ideas.

Besides, their experiences are considered valuable and they were given the courage to share what they have heard, felt, smelt, seen, and tasted. These were mandatory to be included in their descriptive essays. Participant 2 concurred this statement by saying, "you have to make it longer and more……if possible words that cannot be said in the months…must describe exactly what we feel…. or see…like the 5 senses…and all... you always say reader must imagine what we describe… use real things…. real life things…try to teach us…. like it..." (FGI_2_P2).

Having the readers feel the occurrences in the essay and creating a turbulence of feelings is necessary and this can only be done by selecting impactful words or putting words that invoke emotions in the essay.

CYCLE 3

In Cycle 3, students' responsibility was to create meaning with precise words and to avoid verbosity. The use of clear verbs should help the reader create a strong mental picture and make it sound more comprehensible. This was identified in the theme below – acquired skill for delivering meaning with precision. A descriptive essay contains the power of language and all sensory details to bring the subject to life and instil its importance.

Students acknowledged that the supporting materials had assisted them in learning suitable and many new vocabulary items related to the topic. A very common trait among weak language writers is the tendency to repeat the same words throughout the essay due to limited vocabulary. Here, students conceded that they managed to reduce repetition and substitute words with their synonyms for descriptive emphasis. This is further supported by the students' statements obtained from focus group interview 3 as stated in the exchange below:

S6:	ya …like I never liked writing essay but now I change my mind…. like …. can do we can so something…can... describe… use more words and all
S6:	like for me …I've learnt a lot from you …. from this …I'm more confident…. i learn my vocabulary…and writing skills also feel better…. improved
S1:	yes …power…. about earth…recycling…all nice words that we use in essay…now like I can write a short essay...last time one sentence also not enough words…hard
S4:	<arrrrr…. ia lebih kepada bahan-bahan bagi…lepas tanya kawan tanya kawan yang lebih baik in English dan ask ….hehehehehe….somehow cuba lah….. go step by step kan>arrrrr…its more to referring to the materials give…. after that ask friends…. ask those who are better in English and ask…somehow try lah ... go step by step right…(FGI_3)

DISCUSSION

Using authentic and technology-laden activities, the pupils appeared to understand what they wrote, find relevant discussions to favour their opinions, provide lengthier elaboration of their ideas, examples, facts, ideas, statements, evidence and think of different points of view and write a clearer inference. The positive finding concurs with earlier findings Imy Tracy and Melor (2016), Lidawan and Joaquin (2018), Omar and Nur-Ehsan (2019) and Sulaiman (2018). Less repetition, more substitutes, and less grammatical mistakes were observed. Choosing the right words and replacing words with other suitable words takes time as was shown in this study because the words need to move readers emotionally and mentally to fulfil the criteria of descriptive writing. In addition, the ideas also need to be well-knit. With some of the participants,' the logical connection in sentence writing was also met on a small scale with minor errors. Here, decision-making to avoid any vague or awkward meanings were entirely their choice, although guidance was given in many forms. After many years of emphasis on grammar, the shift that includes idea generation so that students could learn to communicate in written form as found by Manara (2015) and Mukundan et al. (2013) is highly promising.

The students were very much influenced by their L1 and the most spoken language, the national language. They are still in the early stage of exposure although they are already in Form Four (age 16) and by the moment they get through the end of secondary education, it is presumed that they would have attained the primary education level of language writing competence. One of the tough disputes of language skills among the students is the concern that essay writing in English cannot be easily acquired. Creative pedagogical strategies demonstrated to be able to remedy the situation by granting the students a chance to construct better sentences with fewer mistakes and be on track with the topic and required task no matter how new they were to the concepts and activities.

As illustrated by the analysis of research findings, many of the learners had no major mistakes and the majority attempted to write succinct sentences. Some of the students have shown that they can cope with words from a variety of categories and meanings to convey a message to

the reader with the help provided and despite having low language competence. The more they were exposed to, the more they were encouraged to expand it and use it in an advanced mode. The participants also displayed the use of Wh- questions. They used as many verbs and adjectives as possible, albeit simple and common based on their level of understanding. They were specifically taught to use vocabulary that invokes emotion. The use of idioms and proverbs were visible at this stage.

Other than that, the use of the five senses also helped the participants to elaborate and become more descriptive in their work. The pre-learning, during and post-learning assisted them to represent ideas and descriptions. Likewise, the materials that were provided consisted of many different perspectives; a topic can lead the participant to context beyond their knowledge aside from their prior knowledge. The findings supported earlier studies by Englert & Dunsmore (2015) and Lidawan and Joaquin (2018) that suggest using online materials such as films, advertisements, music, and videos helps to improve one's vocabulary and interaction through contact with their own context of writing.

The participants' adapted more by searching for vocabulary that brought about an in-depth meaning to their descriptions. They agreed that they learnt many new words and needed to choose words carefully that convey accurate meaning. Despite the difficulties to read and understand meaning of words, the participants attempted to use new words in their sentences. Some claimed that they note new words and browse online dictionaries and use Google to search and understand the meaning of words while others were assisted by their peers. Collaboration and interaction through group work to support learning was also useful as it led to greater autonomy and engagement in the process of learning.

CONCLUSION

The various creative activities designed for the intervention period have fulfilled all the objectives of the study in improving students' writing skills and learning. The pedagogical strategies aided the teacher in efficiently managing a class of 38 students. Group work promoted a greater level of motivation and participation since the students worked with peers, while communicating ideas and practising language skills. When compared to the other teaching approaches, creative pedagogical strategies are not fixed in structure as they break free from the strategies employed by teachers when using a conventional teaching routine. The nature of creative pedagogical teaching is fluid and it has managed to reduce the possibility of students feeling bored and restrictive. Therefore, this particular approach has a potential to be added to a teacher's teaching repertoire for future classroom management and measurement of learning gain in language classroom. Nevertheless, the present study is a case study which is not meant to be generalizable to the population but rather to provide in-depth data involving an intact classroom in an urban area. Teachers are encouraged to attempt creative pedagogical strategies and to integrate them into future action research projects across cultures and disciplines by involving other language components which may include grammar, lexis, discourse components, speaking, and reading skills. Another addition is also to have peer observation in the classroom or a survey to obtain feedback which would allow teachers to improve their pedagogical practices and encourage students to learn from a variety of creative teaching strategies.

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