The Effect of Genre Approach on Malaysian *Orang Asli* EFL Students' Descriptive Writing

Jonathan Phan

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Malini Ganapathy

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

email: jpkjpersonal@gmail.com, malinik@usm.my

Abstract: The indigenous *Orang Asli* in Malaysia who do not use English on a daily basis consequently have low English proficiency and poor writing skills. Their existing EFL situation coupled with the ongoing problems in gaining access to proper education further stifles their language development. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the genre approach in improving secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students' descriptive writing, and their perceptions of using the genre approach as a framework to overcome challenges in learning descriptive writing. This quasi-experimental study was conducted in a secondary school in Pahang, Malaysia. Quantitative data is sourced from students' pre-test and post-test scores, and also a self-report questionnaire on their perceptions towards the genre approach. The approach shows evidence of improvement in students' descriptive writing and could have a larger effect than the process approach currently taught in schools. Their perception towards the approach was positive – they were able to improve their writing in the post-test as they believe that the approach has helped them improve their writing skills. Thus, the genre approach for teaching *Orang Asli* students can be further improved by incorporating more localised content so that it meets the learning needs of *Orang Asli* students lacking in English writing skills. The approach has the potential to be implemented in both indigenous schools and rural schools with low proficiency students, which provides support to EFL teachers in improving their teaching practices catered to the *Orang Asli*.

Keywords: *Orang Asli*, genre approach, EFL, descriptive writing, secondary school

INTRODUCTION

The English language plays a crucial role as the lingua franca of the modern world, such as Malaysia which views English as a strong second language with highly proficient users (Baskaran, 1988; Education First, 2019). Under the Malaysian education system, students of all ethnicities learn English via formal instruction in primary and secondary schools, and are expected to have an adequate level of communication due to it (Omar & Noor, 1981). However, many still have poor English writing skills upon leaving secondary school (Ahmad, 2014; Hiew, 2012; Jalaluddin, Awal, & Bakar, 2008; Yamat, Fisher, & Rich, 2014). According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (2013), 50% candidates who took SPM English in 2011 did not meet the minimum standards of writing set by the Cambridge International Examinations. In fact, many of these students originate from rural schools, such as the indigenous minority known as the *Orang Asli* who also suffer from the same fate (Khan, 2017; Kassim & Adnan, 2005; Khan, 2017; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018).

Based on the current CEFR English language syllabus shared among urban and rural schools, *Orang Asli* students under the mainstream curriculum learn and use English as their foreign language (EFL) due to the infrequent language use in their everyday lives (Darus, 2010). Despite relying mainly on formal instruction in learning English, these students face commitment issues towards attending school and its lessons – mainly caused by poverty, low attendance, and dropping out (Abdullah, Mamat, Zal, & Ibrahim, 2013; Nor, Roslan, Mohamed, Hassan, Ali, & Manaf, 2011; Singar & Zainuddin, 2017). The existing EFL situation coupled with the ongoing problems in gaining access to proper education further stifles their language development (Wreikat, Kabilan, & Abdullah, 2014).

As per the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which provides an action plan for improving the country's education system, governmental initiatives have been successful in steadily narrowing the achievement gap between rural and urban schools (Malaysian Examinations Syndicate, 2020; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013, 2017). Nonetheless, the fact that there is an English proficiency gap between urban and rural schools clearly shows that not much is being done to help the *Orang Asli* learn English better, especially in terms of writing skills. Hence, there is a need to look into viable EFL teaching practices that can enhance their writing. The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the genre approach in improving secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students' descriptive writing. Therefore, the research questions of this study are as follows:

1. To what extent is the genre approach effective in improving secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students' descriptive writing?
2. What are the perceptions of secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students of using the genre approach as a framework to overcome challenges in learning descriptive writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching English Language Writing in Malaysia

In Malaysian ESL classrooms, the current English language syllabus prescribes the process approach as a means to writing – students are taught to "plan, draft and edit work appropriately" (Curriculum Development Division, 2018, p. 35). The process approach views writing as a

complex and recursive process (Hyland, 2003). According to Stanley (1993), process writing is beneficial as it encourages students to write creatively and further improve on it through positive feedback.

However, based on past studies many teachers are still in favour of the traditional product approach (which focuses on form rather than the process) rather than the prescribed process approach (Palpanadan, Salam, & Ismail, 2014; Palpanadan, Ismail, & Salam, 2015). The many factors that influenced teachers' unwillingness to adopt a new strategy include time constraints, workload, teacher beliefs, and more importantly, language accuracy (Chow, 2007; Pour-Mohammadi, Abidin, & Cheong, 2012). As teachers are already used to the form-focused product approach, the ability to write accurately with proper grammar is highly prioritised; writing is taught by focussing on a text's structure and content rather than learning how to execute the processes of brainstorming, drafting and revising.

Nonetheless, the process approach may not be suitable for teaching Malaysian EFL students as they face challenges in learning process writing (Rahim, Rustam, Primsuwan, Amat, Yusof, & Tahir, 2017; Pour-Mohammadi et al., 2012). According to Rahim et al. (2017), students who were taught the process approach wrote out of scope and context as they could not understand and make use of the concepts of process writing. This problem is attributed to the passive nature of Malaysian students (Mustapha, 1998), and may be further exacerbated by their existing low language proficiency (Ghabool, Mariadass, & Kashef, 2012; Jalaluddin et al., 2008). Given that the performance of students' in writing is greatly affected by teachers' instruction (Shafie, Maesin, Osman, Nayan, & Mansor, 2010), the genre approach to writing has the potential in improving the writing of low proficiency *Orang Asli* students.

The Genre Approach to Writing

In comparison with the aforementioned product and process approaches, the genre approach to writing views "genre as a product in writing" (Dirgeyasa, 2016, p. 47), and therefore "focusses on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts" (Lin, 2006, p. 69). According to Hyland (2004, 2007), students in the genre writing classroom are exposed to explicit instruction of text structures and language use, targeting specific goals in context (Hyland, 2004, 2007). Hyland (2007) states that low proficiency students (i.e. having poor vocabulary and grammar) under the genre approach can learn and internalise writing skills better as it focusses on linguistic resources rather than writing strategies.

The genre approach to writing is represented using Rothery's (1994) model for teaching genre writing, as shown in Figure 1. It is a three-phased teaching and learning cycle for teaching written genres: *Deconstruction*, *Joint Construction*, and *Individual Construction* (Rothery, 1994). The teacher provides model texts for students to read and critically deconstruct the text in identifying its linguistic features and ideology. Then, the teacher leads students in creating the exact genre through collaborative writing. Consequently, students attempt to write the learned genre independently with little to no assistance from the teacher. Throughout the cycle, the teacher re-establishes the field and context of the genre, while reducing the amount of scaffolding in helping students write.
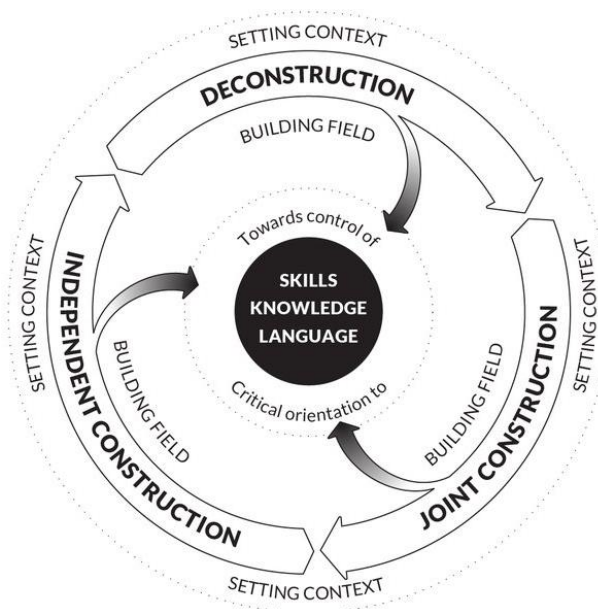
Figure 1: Rothery's (1994) Teaching and Learning Cycle. Adopted from Rose and Martin (2012, p. 66)

The teaching and learning cycle is embedded within Vygotsky's (1978) theory of sociocultural learning and especially the notion of instructional scaffolding provided by the teacher to the student in acquiring genre writing skills. In the context of language writing, the teacher provides a temporary support, or scaffolding, to the student until they can perform the task of writing independently. This scaffolding in the form of explicit, direct instruction can be adjusted to suit the students' current cognitive ability represented by their writing ability; more assistance is given to struggling students, less for those who have become familiar with writing.

Serving as the conceptual framework of this study, Rothery's (1994) model provides the fundamentals of genre instruction in the form of writing lessons based on the three distinct phases. In order to improve their writing skills, *Orang Asli* students are taught how to deconstruct descriptive texts, rewrite them collaboratively with the teacher, and then attempt to write the learned texts by themselves.

Past Studies on Genre Approach

Past studies on the genre approach have been done in EFL classrooms with low English proficiency students worldwide (Ahn, 2012; Firkins et al., 2007; Gibney, 2012; Ko, 2010), in which the genre approach had a positive effect on students' writing. Ahn (2012) carried out an action research study on low-proficiency students to determine whether the genre approach improved their report and essay writing after 10 weeks of intervention. The approach was found to have increased students' awareness of various text genres, confidence, and positive encouragement.

Gibney (2012) used the genre approach to teach students to write the memoir genre for 7 weeks. The experiment showed that students were able to strengthen their writing skills by sharing ideas and problems peer-to-peer, inspiring each other in the process. The study highlights the importance of meeting students' needs in ensuring a successful implementation of genre pedagogy, and providing optimum scaffolding in the best interest of learners.

Ko (2010) conducted a longitudinal study on two EFL learners for six years, focussing on the effects of genre approach at their school and home. Results showed that it helped them develop their narrative writing skills. Firkins et al. (2007) conducted a quasi-experimental study on the genre approach to writing on 32 students with low English proficiency, covering the procedural and report genres within 840 minutes of intervention. The approach was successful in engaging students with the text and identifying its linguistic features, motivating the students and making it relevant to them.

However, the effects of the genre approach on Malaysian students are understudied (Dripin, 2010; Yap, 2005). Dripin (2010) carried out a qualitative study on upper secondary students to explore the effects of the approach on the report genre. Students exposed to genre instruction wrote better reports and achieved control of the genre. Yap (2005) also introduced the genre approach to 19 students in a Malaysian secondary school, targeting the explanatory genre. Students' writing performance improved under the genre approach as their scores increased significantly after intervention. The gap in literature of the genre approach in Malaysia highlights the necessity for this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a quasi-experimental design to compare the pre-test and post-test results of two classes in which participants are not randomly assigned (Creswell, 2012). This design was chosen as it does not require the creation of artificial groups which may impede ongoing lessons. Pre-test and post-test scores were used to answer the first research question, whereas quantitative data from the questionnaire were used to answer the second research question.

Participants

This study uses purposive sampling to select the sample suitable for achieving the aim of the study. A rural secondary school in Pahang, Malaysia was chosen, given the viable number of low English proficiency *Orang Asli* students available for research. Two classes with 20 students each were chosen for the study, totalling 40 students. The selected participants were Form 4 students aged 16 at the time of the study, with more male students than female (30 and 10 respectively). In terms of gender, the sample chosen is a representation of the entire school student population. However, only 13 students (65% participation rate) from each class successfully completed both the pre-test and post-test, and 17 students (85% participation rate) from the experimental group answered the questionnaire.

Instruments

Three instruments were used for this study, namely 1) the lesson plans, 2) students' pre-test and post-test, and 3) a student questionnaire. Lesson plans for the genre approach were developed based on the current Form 4 CEFR-aligned English syllabus, with adaptation from past studies (Ahn, 2012; Chaisiri, 2010).

For the pre-test and post-test, students were asked to write a 350-word descriptive essay about their hometown. Both tests are identical with the same question and format as to reduce the threat to internal validity on students' scores. Nonetheless, the threats of external validity restrict the findings to only *Orang Asli* upper secondary students in rural schools.

A questionnaire was adapted from Tuan (2011) to collect students' perceptions on learning descriptive writing through the genre approach. Its contents were validated by ESL experts, and then sent to be translated to Malay by a professional to facilitate students' comprehension. The translated contents were also verified by Malay language lecturers prior to distribution. To ensure the validity and reliability of the translated questionnaire, it was tested for its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha.

Procedure

Permission was sought from the university, JPN Pahang and PPD Kuantan to conduct the study. One English language teacher from the selected school was trained to teach descriptive writing using the genre approach. Two available Form 4 classes were selected for the study – Class A (experimental group) was taught the genre approach whereas Class B (control group) was taught the process approach based on the existing curriculum. The intervention was conducted for a duration of four weeks, with weekly sessions lasting an hour each, totalling up to 240 minutes of treatment. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the study, and the post-test was conducted after the final lesson. Upon completion of the post-test, a questionnaire was distributed to Class A to collect perception data from the students.

Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test were analysed using the independent samples t-test and one-way ANCOVA. For this study, ANCOVA is more suitable as the t-test does not take pre-existing differences of both classes into account, given that Class B has better overall academic performance than Class A. This is done by statistically adjusting the means of post-test scores using the pre-test scores as the covariate "to control for pre-existing differences on the dependent variable" (Newsom, 2020, p. 1). On the other hand, the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics. Data generated by SPSS Version 26 was tabulated according to percentage (%) and mean ($\bar{x}$).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent is the genre approach effective in improving secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students' descriptive writing?

Initially, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test mean scores of both groups. Based on Table 1, the control group performed better in both tests. This was because the class selected for the control group (Class B) has a higher academic placement than the experimental group (Class A), putting them at a disadvantage. Therefore, one-way ANCOVA was conducted to accurately compare the effectiveness of the genre approach in improving students' scores after intervention. The pre-test and post-test results are

interpreted based on the overall score followed by their respective sub-scores. The sub-scores make up the aspects listed in the Cambridge English Writing Assessment Scale (UCLES, 2014) – *Content* (C), *Communicative Achievement* (CA), *Organisation* (O), and *Language* (L).

Table 1: Comparison of Both Groups pre-test and post-test mean scores before Adjustment

	Pre-test			Post-test		
	Mean	Std. Error	95% CI	Mean	Std. Error	95% CI
Experimental	4.85	0.767	[2.764, 0.767]	7.62	0.984	[3.548, 0.984]
Control	8.77	1.099	[3.961, 1.099]	10.23	1.321	[4.764, 1.321]

The pre-test scores were plotted on a histogram to show that the values are normally distributed, as shown in Figure 2.
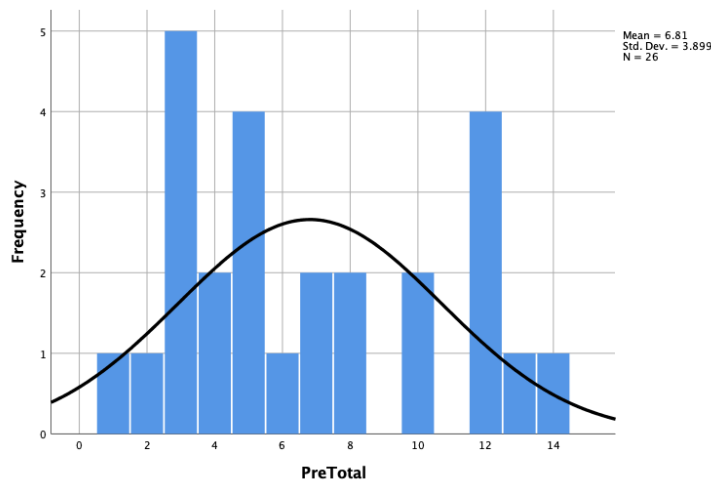

Mean = 6.81
Std. Dev. = 3.899
N = 26

Figure 2: Histogram of Pre-test Scores

Table 2: Comparison of Both Groups pre-test and post-test mean scores after Adjustment

	Pre-test	Post-test		
		Mean	Std. Error	95% CI
Experimental	6.81	9.639	0.703	[8.186, 11.093]
Control	6.81	8.207	0.703	[6.753, 9.660]

Table 2 shows the adjusted means of post-test scores using the pre-test as the covariate. At the end of the intervention, the mean scores of both groups increased after treatment. The experimental group achieved higher post-test scores than the control group, with 9.639 and 8.207 respectively. Based on Table 3, the data indicates the post-test scores that were significantly adjusted by the pre-test based on the low *p*-value (p<0.05). However, there was no significant difference in the post-test mean scores [$F_{(1, 23)}$=1.805, p=0.192], whilst adjusting for pre-test scores. Hence, it is evident that the experimental group performed better than the control group, but the post-test scores between both groups showed no significant difference.

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	342.592	2	171.296	31.455	0.000
Intercept	17.669	1	17.669	3.244	0.085
Pretest	298.131	1	298.131	54.745	0.000
Group	9.830	1	9.830	1.805	0.192
Error	125.254	23	5.446		
Total	2538.000	26			
Corrected Total	467.846	25			

To ensure that the assumptions for ANCOVA are fulfilled, the adjusted post-test scores were also tested for normality using Levene's test. Based on Table 4, equal variances of both experimental and control groups can be assumed as the *p*-value of 0.108 is significant (p>0.05), which showed that both groups are homogenous.

Table 4: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.796	1	24	0.108

The adjusted post-test scores were also plotted on a histogram to show that the residuals are normally distributed, as shown in Figure 3.
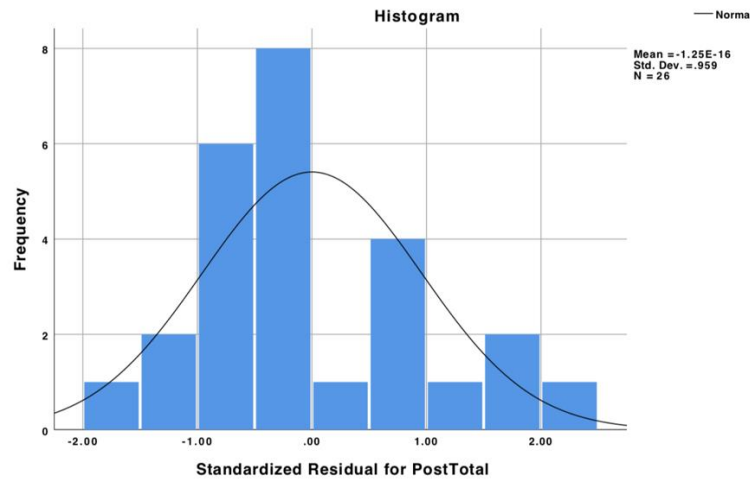

Figure 3: Histogram of Adjusted Post-test Scores

Table 5 shows the adjusted sub-scores of the experimental group whereas Table 6 shows the adjusted sub-scores of the control group. By comparing the mean values of both tables, both groups improved their sub-scores after treatment. The experimental group achieved higher CA and L scores with 2.671 and 2.293 respectively. However, the p-values of the post-test scores were not statistically significant (p>0.05), and that the difference in means might be attributed to the normal fluctuation of data. It is worth noting that the limited sample size may have impacted the p-values negatively which indicates an absence of evidence (Jaykaran, Yadav, &

Kantharia, 2011). Therefore, the finding provides support that the genre approach might be successful in improving the aspects of *Communicative Achievement* and *Language*, but not for *Content* and *Organisation* in students' descriptive writing.

Table 5: Pre-test and Post-test scores of the experimental group after Adjustment

Aspects	Pre-test	Post-test		
		Mean	**Std. Error**	**95% CI**
Overall	6.81	9.639	0.703	[8.186, 11.093]
C	2.31	2.707	0.313	[2.060, 3.354]
CA	1.73	2.671	0.225	[2.206, 3.137]
O	1.04	1.626	0.214	[1.184, 2.068]
L	1.73	2.293	0.189	[1.901, 2.685]

Table 6: Pre-test and Post-test scores of the control group after Adjustment

Aspects	Pre-test	Post-test		
		Mean	**Std. Error**	**95% CI**
Overall	6.81	8.207	0.703	[6.753, 9.660]
C	2.31	2.755	0.313	[2.108, 3.402]
CA	1.73	1.867	0.225	[1.402, 2.332]
O	1.04	1.759	0.214	[1.317, 2.201]
L	1.73	2.169	0.189	[1.777, 2.560]

The statistical pre-test and post-test findings gives evidence for the effectiveness of the genre approach towards the improvement of *Orang Asli* students' descriptive writing, specifically in terms of communicative achievement and language. Students who were exposed to genre instruction achieved positive test scores for the overall text (Mean=9.639), and increased sub-scores on the aspects of *Content* (Mean=2.707), *Communicative Achievement* (Mean=2.671), *Organisation* (Mean=1.626) and *Language* (Mean=2.293). This finding is in tandem with past studies (Ahn, 2012; Firkins et al., 2007; Gibney, 2012) whereby the genre approach had a positive effect on low proficiency students' writing skills.

Based on the results, it is possible that the genre approach would have a larger effect on students' descriptive writing compared to the process approach, specifically in terms of the communicative achievement and language. Students from the experimental group obtained higher test scores than the control group, with overall mean scores of 9.639 and 8.207 respectively, CA sub-scores of 2.671 and 1.867 respectively, and L sub-scores of 2.293 and 2.169 respectively. This finding is similar to Dripin (2010) and Yap (2005) whereby students exposed to genre instruction showed more improvement than the process approach prescribed by the Malaysian English language curriculum for secondary schools. Nonetheless, the fact that the p-values were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) together with the lack of improvement on the aspects of content and language could be attributed to the limited sample size and the short intervention period of this study.

Research Question 2: What are the secondary *Orang Asli* EFL students' perceptions of using the genre approach as a framework to overcome challenges in learning descriptive writing?

After the post-test, a questionnaire was distributed to students from the experimental group to self-report their perceptions and experiences in learning descriptive writing under the genre approach. The questionnaire was first tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, followed by analysing the 5-point Likert scale responses using descriptive statistics. Based on students' responses, the overall Cronbach's alpha value for the questionnaire was reported at 0.935. The values for the constructs were between 0.710 to 0.830. Therefore, the internal consistency of the overall questionnaire and its respective constructs achieved an acceptable level of more than 0.70 (UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, 2020).

Table 7: Internal Consistency of the Questionnaire

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Field and Context	3	0.830
Deconstruction	4	0.710
Joint Construction	2	0.792
Independent Construction	4	0.764
Descriptive Genre	3	0.747
Overall	18	0.935

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed based on the constructs set by the teaching and learning cycle for genre writing as well as the type of genre used for this study, which was descriptive writing. Based on mean scores of 18 items, it is evident that students are receptive to the genre approach for descriptive writing, in which they agreed to most statements except for two (Mean=3.00).

Table 8: Students' Perception towards the Field and Context

	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
I can understand the possible contexts of the genre.	5.88	47.06	11.76	17.65	17.65	2.94
I can use my background knowledge to understand the genre.	11.76	23.53	23.53	41.18	0.00	2.94
I can express my personal opinions towards the genre.	11.76	23.53	35.29	23.53	5.88	2.88

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree; 2 - Agree; 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

Table 8 shows the students' perception towards the field and context of the genre lessons, in which they generally agree to all statements, with mean values ranging from 2.88 and 2.94. Most students agreed that they *can understand the possible contexts of the genre* (47.06%). They disagreed that they *can use their background knowledge to understand the genre* (41.18%), but some agreed or were neutral towards it (23.53%). A majority of students were

neutral on whether they *can express their personal opinions towards the genre* (35.29%), followed by equal agreement and disagreement (23.53%).

Table 9: Students' Perception towards Deconstruction

	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
I can understand the purposes, audiences, content and organisation of the genre.	0.00	35.29	52.94	0.00	11.76	2.88
I can understand the language of the genre after being taught.	11.76	41.18	41.18	0.00	5.88	2.47
I can understand the organisation of the genre after being taught.	5.88	35.29	47.06	11.76	0.00	2.65
I am aware that each genre has different writing conventions.	5.88	29.41	58.82	5.88	0.00	2.65

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree; 2 - Agree; 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

Table 9 shows the students' perception towards the deconstruction aspect of the genre lessons, in which they generally agree to all statements, with mean values ranging from 2.47 to 2.88. Most students were neutral on whether they *can understand the purposes, audiences, content and organisation of the genre* (52.94%), with some agreement (35.29%). An equal number of students agreed or were neutral on whether they *can understand the language of the genre after being taught* (41.18%). Many students were neutral on whether they *can understand the organisation of the genre after being taught* (47.06%), followed by agreement (35.29%). Most were neutral on whether they *were aware that each genre has different writing conventions* (58.82%), followed by agreement (29.41%).

Table 10: Students' Perception towards Joint Construction

	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
I know what to write in my essay after being taught.	17.65	17.65	29.41	35.29	0.00	2.82
I know how to write my essay after being taught.	17.65	17.65	47.06	11.76	5.88	2.71

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree; 2 - Agree; 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

Table 10 shows the students' perception towards the joint construction aspect of the genre lessons, in which they generally agree to all statements, with mean scores ranging from 2.71 to 2.82. A majority of students disagreed that they *know what to write in their essay after being taught* (35.29%), followed by neutral (29.41%), and strongly agree and agree respectively (17.65%). They were neutral on whether they *know how to write their essay after being taught* (47.06%), but some strongly agreed and agreed respectively (17.65%).

Table 11: Students' Perception towards Independent Construction

	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
Writing many drafts can help improve my own essays.	0.00	35.29	41.18	17.65	5.88	2.94
Teacher's feedback helps me with the content of the essay.	11.76	58.82	11.76	17.65	0.00	2.35
My final essay has improved after my teacher's feedback.	5.88	23.53	47.06	11.76	11.76	3.00
Learning writing techniques are necessary and useful to write any text-types.	52.94	29.41	5.88	11.76	0.00	1.76

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree; 2 - Agree; 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

Table 11 shows the students' perception towards the independent construction aspect of the genre lessons, in which they generally agree to most statements, with mean values ranging from 1.76 to 3.00. Many students were neutral on whether *writing many drafts can help improve their own essays* (41.18%), with some agreement (35.29%). They agreed that their *teacher's feedback helps them with the content of the essay* (58.82%). Some were neutral on whether *their final essay has improved after their teacher's feedback* (47.06%), but some agreed (23.53%). Nonetheless, most students strongly agreed that *learning writing techniques are necessary and useful to write any text-types* (52.94%).

Table 12: Students' Perception towards the Descriptive Genre

	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
The descriptive genre is good enough for my English level.	11.76	29.41	17.65	35.29	5.88	2.94
I can understand the descriptive genre given.	11.76	35.29	23.53	17.65	11.76	2.82
Knowing descriptive writing makes me want to write more.	5.88	17.65	52.94	17.65	5.88	3.00
I can write better after learning descriptive writing.	0.00	47.06	17.65	29.41	5.88	2.94
I know that the writing style and rules of descriptive writing are different from other genres.	29.41	11.76	29.41	23.53	5.88	2.65

Scale: 1 - Strongly Agree; 2 - Agree; 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly Disagree

Table 12 shows the students' perception towards the use of descriptive writing in genre lessons, in which they generally agree to most statements, with mean values ranging from 2.65 to 3.00. Some students disagreed that *the descriptive genre is good enough for their English level* (35.29%), but the other 29.41% agreed to the statement. Most agreed that *they can understand the descriptive genre given* (35.29%). Most were neutral towards whether *knowing descriptive writing makes them want to write more* (52.94%), with some agreeing or disagreeing (17.65%). They agreed that *they can write better after learning descriptive writing* (47.06%). However, their opinion on *knowing that the writing style and rules of descriptive writing are different from other genres* are divided between strongly agree or neutral (29.41%).

Overall, it is evident that students are receptive to the genre approach in learning descriptive writing. They agreed to most statements but responded neutrally towards *my final essay has improved after my teacher's feedback* and *knowing descriptive writing makes me want to write more*. Although most students believe that the approach has helped them to improve their writing skills, there is still a need to look at teachers' actual practices to see to what extent teachers can provide optimum feedback as prescribed by the genre approach, which may be hindered by their unwillingness to adopt a new strategy (Chow, 2007; Pour-Mohammadi et al., 2012). This may also influence students' motivation to write more as their writing performance varies based on the instruction received (Shafie et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The key findings highlight that the genre approach shows promise in improving *Orang Asli* EFL students' descriptive writing and could have a larger effect than the process approach currently taught in Malaysian secondary schools. Their perception towards the approach was positive, as they were able to improve their writing in the post-test, believing that the approach has helped them improve their writing skills. However, some students still faced challenges writing their descriptive essays despite being exposed to the genre instruction, notably their weakness in content and organisation. Therefore, this study recommends that the genre approach can be further improved by incorporating familiar local topics in the content that *Orang Asli* students can relate to (such as describing their cultural practices and local cuisines) so that it meets the learning needs and interest of *Orang Asli* students lacking in EFL writing skills (Kassim & Adnan, 2005; Khan, 2017; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). The study is significant to secondary schools in Malaysia with a notable *Orang Asli* student population as the genre approach has the potential to be implemented in both indigenous schools and rural schools with low proficiency students. By using the genre approach, the teacher in the EFL writing classroom can further improve on their current methods as they are better informed of their students' needs. However, the limited scope of the descriptive genre suggests that more research needs to be done on different texts such as narratives and persuasive writing. This study also recommends future research to increase the number of subjects, time of treatment, and carry out random assignment of subjects to further reduce the pre-existing differences of the experimental and control groups.

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