Improvising essay writing skill for form 1 students by using The Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) Model

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model in enhancing essay writing skills among Form 1 students. Writing proficiency is a critical component of academic success, yet many students face challenges in organizing their ideas and expressing themselves clearly in written form. The SRSD model, a research-based instructional approach, integrates cognitive strategies for planning, writing, and revising with self-regulation techniques, empowering students to become more independent and effective writers. This research utilized a pre-test and post-test design with both experimental and non-experimental groups to evaluate the impact of SRSD on students' writing skills. Findings indicate that 10 students who received SRSD instruction demonstrated significant improvements in organization, coherence, and content quality in their essays compared to the control group. The results suggest that SRSD can be an effective tool for educators in secondary schools to improve students' writing abilities. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting SRSD as a valuable instructional strategy for literacy development and provides insights for educators seeking to enhance writing instruction for young learners.

Keywords: Essay writing, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), Form 1 students

INTRODUCTION

This study delves into the significance of conceptual writing in Tamil language education. By examining the current landscape of Tamil language teaching and learning, this research aims to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with developing student's writing skills. The study will shed light on the importance of effective teaching strategies and the role of SRSD Model enhancing the writing process.

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Background of the study

Tamil, one of the world's oldest languages, is primarily spoken in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Union Territory of Puducherry, and by Tamil communities in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and across the globe (Steever, S. B., 1998). Tamil education in Malaysia has a long and significant history. As one of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Tamil-speaking Indian community has been at the forefront of efforts to establish and maintain Tamil primary schools, include Tamil language studies in the national curriculum, and promote the language through various community-led initiatives.

Today, Tamil primary schools are known as Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT) and are an integral part of the Malaysian education system. As of recent statistics, there are 528 SJKT schools across Malaysia, primarily concentrated in states with significant Indian populations such as Selangor, Perak, and Negeri Sembilan. These schools follow the national curriculum, offering education from Year 1 to Year 6, with Tamil as a core subject (Ministry of Education, Malaysia 2022).

Tamil language education is offered as an elective subject in Malaysian secondary schools. Students who have completed their primary education at SJK(T) or have a Tamil background can opt for secondary-level studies. The secondary school Tamil curriculum is divided into two main levels: lower secondary (Form 1 to Form 3) and upper secondary (Form 4 and Form 5). Students' proficiency in Tamil is assessed through national examinations. In Form 3, students sit for the Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) examination, which includes Tamil as a subject. For upper secondary students, the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination, taken in Form 5, offers Tamil as an elective subject. Success in these examinations provides students with formal recognition of their Tamil language skills and benefits their future educational and career prospects (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021).

The PT3 Tamil language examination is divided into five sections. Section E comprises the essay writing component. Students are given a total of three essay topics from which they must choose one and write a composition of 180 words. This section carries a total of 40 marks. The first essay topic is usually a conceptual essay, the second is a descriptive essay, and the final topic is an argumentative or debate essay.

Problem Statement

Students face notable challenges when writing conceptual essays, which often results in incoherence, lack of clarity, and limited depth in their work (Duncan, 2007; Graham & Perin, 2007). Many students struggle with sentence structure and vocabulary, and their lack of sufficient background knowledge makes it difficult for them to analyze and present information effectively. Consequently, they often produce essays that are unclear or contain inaccurate information, reducing the quality of their writing (Bruning, Schraw & Norby, 2010).

In Malaysian schools, traditional teaching methods typically emphasize rote learning and memorization, which do not adequately equip students with the skills needed to plan, structure, and self-regulate their writing. As a result, students often create essays lacking coherence, clarity, and complexity, which negatively affects their grades in exams, where essay writing is critical (Applebee & Langer, 2011). This study investigates whether the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach can enhance students' ability to organize and communicate ideas effectively, ultimately improving their conceptual essay writing skills.

Research purpose

The researcher has two primary objectives for this study:

1. To identify the challenges faced by Form 1 students in writing conceptual essays.
2. To improve the conceptual essay writing skills of Form 1 students using the SRSD approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Firstly, the research conducted by Zennure Elgun Gunduz and Ismail Dogan Unal explains that activities based on multiple intelligences enhance engagement and proficiency in language learning, including writing skills. The research supports the effectiveness of multiple intelligence approaches in developing personalized and effective learning environments. The quasi-experimental designs found in Bas and Beyhan (2010) studies prove that the MI approach provides better educational gains compared to traditional methods. As Campbell (1999) pointed out, the positive impact of MI activities on students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning is often cited. The difference between MI research and this study is the approach, the article, the subjects of the study, and the research method.

Surat, Shahlan; Rahman, Saemah; Mahamod, Zamri; Kummin, Saadiah (2014) conducted a study on essay writing. This study examined how metacognitive strategies (planning, knowledge application, monitoring) affected the essay writing of 18 students from an urban low-income area. Students wrote essays and then reflected on their process. The analysis showed a lack of significant planning and knowledge (declarative and conditional) for effective writing. Furthermore, no one demonstrated a complete procedural knowledge for constructing strong essays. These findings suggest that interventions or instructional modules are needed to improve students' writing skills. The researcher chose this study because it contained information about improving essay writing skills.

Ting, Sun, Chuang Wang, and Yi Wang conducted a study using the SRSD approach. This research aimed to assess the overall average effect of SRSD on English writing outcomes and to examine the extent to which the effect was moderated by outcome facets (writing product, type, and measurement type), and methodological facets (assignment, time, and methodology). A total of 43 effect sizes were extracted from 22 primary studies published or written in the past decade. The results indicated that SRSD has a large effect on writing ability. The connection between the conducted study and this study is the same approach. However, the differences include the c A study was conducted by Geres-Smith and Rhonda using the 'SRSD' approach.

The Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach has been successfully used to improve students' writing. SRSD emphasizes addressing the complex needs of learning.This study confirms that students can improve their writing skills through the SRSD approach.The connection between the conducted study and this study is the same approach and writing skills. However, the differences include the country, university students, language, and the type of essay.ountry, university students, language, and the general essay.

Amber B. Ray and Tara Mason conducted a study using the SRSD approach. This approach was used to teach middle school students with learning disabilities strategies for writing research-based essays, aiming to prepare them for academic success. The study aimed to explore the effects of a Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach, implemented by special education teachers using technology tools, on the source-based argumentative writing skills of middle school students with learning disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to evaluate the impact of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach on improving conceptual writing skills among form 1 students. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The study was conducted over a four-week period and consisted of pre-tests, interventions, and post-tests to gauge the effectiveness of the SRSD model. Additionally, a survey and interviews were conducted to assess the challenges students faced while learning conceptual writing and to gather insights on their experience with the SRSD approach.

Initially, a pre-test was administered to 20 students of form 1 to establish a baseline of their conceptual writing skills. This test allowed us to identify specific writing challenges, and the data collected served as the foundation for tailoring the SRSD intervention. The students were divided into 2 groups: the control group received traditional instruction in conceptual writing, while the experimental group received structured instruction based on the SRSD approach. Both groups consisted of 10 students, ensuring balanced and comparable results. In addition to the pre-test, a survey was administered to identify the students' initial perspectives on writing and to outline the difficulties they often encountered.

The SRSD intervention itself was structured around 6 key stages: building background knowledge, discussing writing strategies, modeling the strategies, memorization of steps, providing support, and fostering independent performance. Over the four weeks, each stage of the SRSD model was introduced incrementally. For the experimental group, instruction began with background knowledge on organizing conceptual writing, followed by collaborative discussions on the importance and application of SRSD strategies. The instructor then modeled these strategies in writing exercises, allowing students to observe effective writing practices firsthand.

After four weeks, a post-test was administered to both groups using the same assessment criteria as the pre-test. The post-test results provided a comparison of the students' writing abilities before and after the SRSD intervention, allowing us to evaluate the SRSD model's impact on their writing proficiency. The control group's results were used as a baseline to understand the difference that the SRSD method made in the experimental group. Alongside the post-test, qualitative feedback from students in the experimental group was gathered through structured interviews to gain insights into their perspectives on the SRSD strategy and how it influenced their writing skills.

Finally, data from the pre-tests, post-tests, surveys, and interviews were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from the test scores were presented in tables, enabling a clear comparison of improvement levels between the two groups. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed to highlight themes, challenges, and student feedback on the SRSD approach. This mixed-methods approach ensured a comprehensive analysis of the SRSD model's effectiveness in enhancing students' conceptual writing skills, offering valuable insights into how structured, strategy-based writing instruction can address writing challenges effectively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
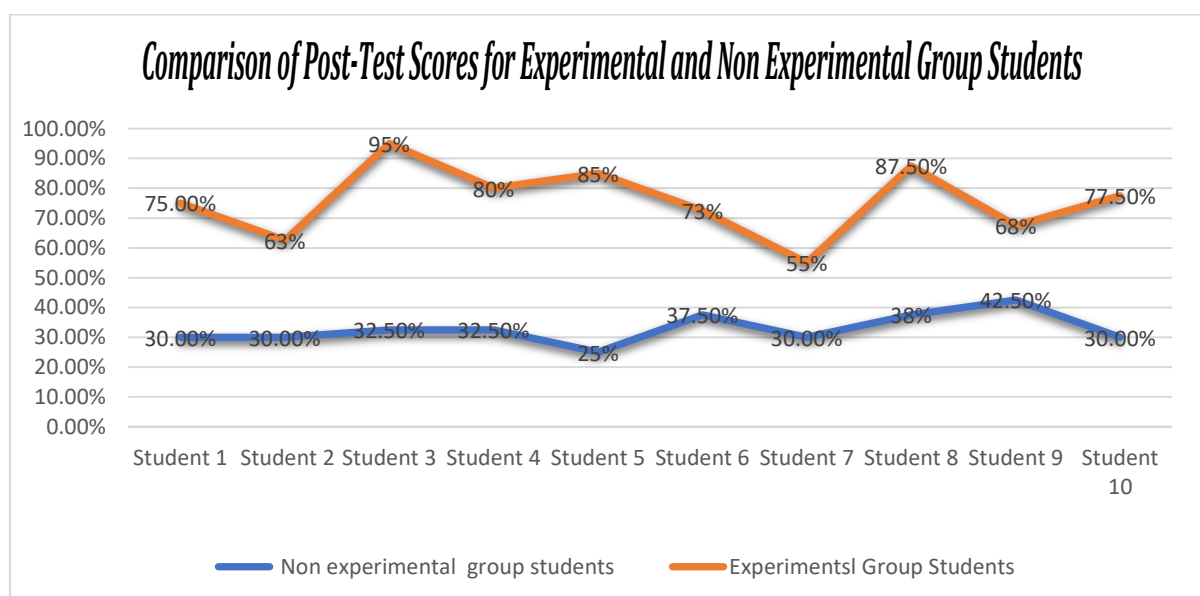
Identified Challenges Faced by students in the Pre-Test

Table 1: Challenges Faced by Students in the Pre-Test

Challenges Faced by Students	Yes	No
The students' explanations are unclear.	15 (75%)	5 (25%)
The students do not use linguistics.	10 (50%)	10 (50%)
The students make many spelling errors.	12 (60%)	8 (40%)
The students wrote few ideas.	14 (70%)	6 (30%)
The students do not provide examples.	13 (65%)	7 (35%)
The students do not use conjunction words.	5 (25%)	15 (75%)

The pre-test results revealed several common challenges faced by the students in their writing. A significant number of students struggled with clarity of expression, often presenting unclear and incoherent ideas. Many also lacked the ability to use figurative language to enhance their writing. Additionally, spelling errors were prevalent, hindering the overall quality of their work. Furthermore, the students exhibited limited idea generation, failing to develop their ideas fully. The majority of students were unable to support their arguments with relevant examples, and many did not effectively use conjunctions to connect their thoughts. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these specific writing challenges.

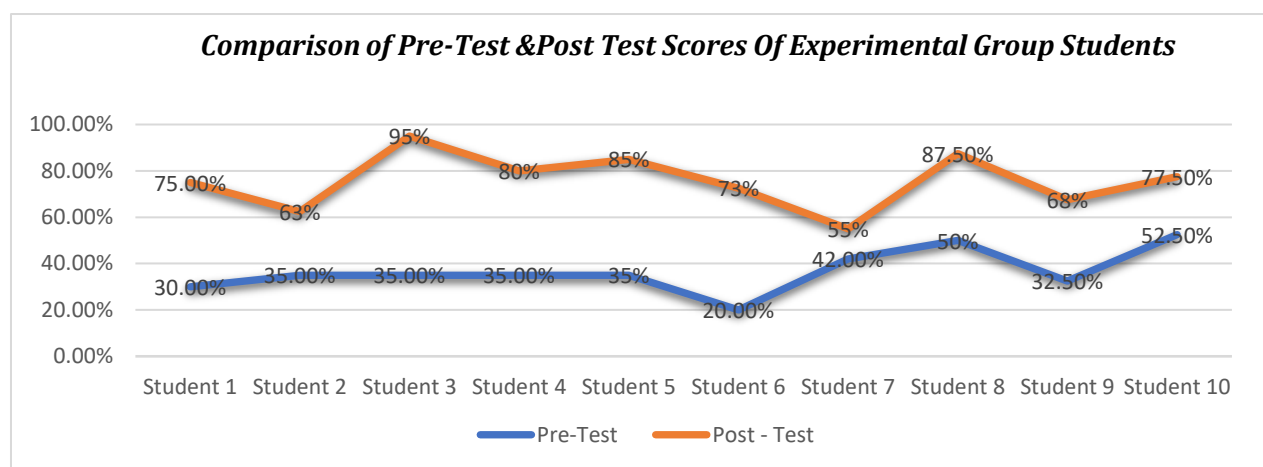**Comparison of Post-Test Scores for Experimental and control Group Students**

Chart 1: Comparison of Post-Test Scores for Experimental and Controlled group Students

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This chart compares the post-test scores of students in experimental and controlled groups, with the experimental group exhibiting significantly higher scores than the controlled group across all students. For the experimental group, scores fluctuate between 55% and 95%, indicating some variation in performance among students. The highest score, achieved by Student 3 at 95%, and the lowest, recorded for Student 7 at 55%, reflect the diverse levels of improvement. In contrast, the non-experimental group's scores remain relatively consistent, ranging from 25% to 42.5%, with no significant peaks. This suggests that students in the experimental group generally performed better, potentially due to the use of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) Model, which was implemented as the intervention.

Comparison of Pre-Test & Post-Test Scores of Experimental Group Student

Chart 2: Comparison of Pre-Test & Post-Test Scores of Experimental Group Students

This chart illustrates a comparison between pre-test and post-test scores for students in the experimental group. The post-test scores (shown in orange) are consistently higher than the pre-test scores (shown in blue) across all students, indicating a marked improvement in performance after the study. While the pre-test scores range from 20% to 42.5%, the post-test scores vary more widely, from 55% to 95%, with noticeable peaks for certain students, such as Student 3 (95%) and Student 8 (87.5%). This substantial increase in scores suggests that the experimental intervention, which utilized the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) Model, significantly enhanced the students' learning outcomes. The SRSD Model is an evidence-based instructional framework aimed at improving students' academic performance, particularly in writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model for teaching essay writing to Form 1 students has shown promising results in enhancing their writing skills. By equipping students with structured strategies for planning, drafting, and revising, as well as fostering self-regulation techniques, the SRSD model promotes both skill development and independence in writing. Students who practiced SRSD demonstrated noticeable improvements in organization, coherence, and content quality in their essays, suggesting that this model is effective in supporting young learners in developing essential writing skills. These findings highlight the potential of SRSD as a valuable pedagogical approach for educators aiming to improve literacy outcomes in secondary education.

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