

Improving the Level of Achievement in Essay Writings Among Non-Native Speakers of Malay Language Based on a Systematic Model

**Norfaizah Abdul Jobar^{1*}, Mohd Hazreen Shah Hassan²,
Wan Nur Aida Sakinah Wan Jusoh³, Marizatul Syafrida Mahmood⁴**

^{1, 2} Faculty Language and Communication, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris,
35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

³ Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Bahasa Antarabangsa, Lembah Pantai,
59200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁴ SMJK Nan Hwa Sitiawan, Jalan Lin Chen Mei, Taman Singa,
32000 Sitiawan, Perak, Malaysia

**Corresponding author: norfaizah.aj@fbk.upsi.edu.my*

Received: 18 February 2025; **Revised:** 10 April 2025; **Accepted:** 24 June 2025; **Published:** 30 June 2025

To cite this article (APA): Abdul Jobar, N., Hassan, M. H. S. ., Wan Jusoh, W. N. A. S. ., & Mahmood, M. S. . (2025). Improving the Level of Achievement in Essay Writings Among Non-Native Speakers of Malay Language Based on a Systematic Model. *PENDETA*, 16(1), 189-200. <https://doi.org/10.37134/pendeta.vol16.1.16.2025>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.37134/pendeta.vol16.1.16.2025>

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to analyse the achievement of non-native speakers of the Malay language in constructing the content of essay, before and after being exposed to a Systematic Writing Model based on a Linguistic Functional System. Concurrently, it is also to analyse the effectiveness of the model in Malay essay writing. The study employs a quantitative design in the form of quasi-experimental and surveys. Samples include 60 non-native speakers from three secondary schools in Perak state. The research instruments comprise students' essays writings and questionnaires based on the effectiveness of the planned model. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to identify the differences in students' achievement before and after the model was applied in the teaching and learning process. Data from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively and inferentially using Statistical Package for Social Science v25 software. The findings of the study show that there were significant differences in the achievement of the content construction of students' essay writing before and after the application of the model was introduced. The mean score for student achievement in the pre-test was 8.83 ($sp = 2.973$) and increased to 14.48 ($sp = 2.325$) in the post-test. Overall, there was a significant difference in the achievement of scores of pre-test and post-test with a t -value of -20.943 and $sig = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). The research hypothesis was accepted because there was a significant difference in the students' essay writing achievement. Additionally, the findings from the questionnaire explain that the Systematic Writing Model is easy to use, and students felt happy to apply it in their essay writing. This model is expected to help students with problems in the construction of essay content to produce more coherent and quality writings.

Keywords: designed model; essay writing; content

INTRODUCTION

In producing effective essay writing, the written text produced must have the characteristics of perfection incorporated as a complete organization in the constructed text. This is because writing skills are complex, and a person's language experience develops parallel along with writing skills (Othman, 2005). Writing is also a difficult activity that requires communication skills and is hard to develop, especially involving second language learners of Malay language (Shokprour, Nasrin & Mohammad Hossien, 2014). Therefore, to produce meaningful sentences in writing, skills that involve effective sentence structures and procedures are essential. Furthermore, students should have adequate language knowledge such as letter formation, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar in addition to being able to state topics, formulate ideas, construct paragraphs, and construct supporting sentences and

conclusions (Santoso, 2019). According to Bahari et al. (2021) students' learning experience in secondary school has a significant impact on students' writing performance. However, in writing Malay essays, there are still students who are not able to master these skills (Hasnah Mohamed, 2016) despite having attended secondary school. This is because there are several major constraints that underlie problems in essay writing such as the influence of the environment, students' ability and teaching techniques. Therefore, one of the methods widely used to assist these students' writing is to indicate their errors in using the target language (Loan, 2019).

It is not easy to organize the teaching and learning process of essay writing. Teachers must explore and implement a variety of methods and techniques that are appropriate to help their students in their daily learning (Che Su, 2018). The activity of composing an essay not only aims to see the results of the essay but more to 'how' the composing process is done so that it can be applied in other subjects. Since students' weaknesses in essay writing impact their achievement in the Malay language examination, it is crucial for teaching and learning practices in schools to emphasize essay writing skills (Ariffn & Janan, 2017). According to Butt (2000), a quality essay content should include aspects of standard and cohesive language as well as the ability to explain ideas accurately. This feature is important to explain the whole idea in writing so that it reaches the reader. In addition, the selection of correct discourse (textual) markers is important in ensuring that sentence construction is coherent and meaningful (Abdul Jobar, Norzan & Mohd Rusli, 2019). In this regard, teachers need to teach how to arrange the content to increase the relationship between the content according to the title (Adas & Bakir, 2014).

Students often struggle with constructing coherent sentences in essay writing due to grammatical issues and difficulties in maintaining a logical flow of ideas (Rafie & Modirksamene, 2012). According to Liu and Liu (2013), teachers emphasize grammar, word choices, and syntax that do not exceed the level of discourse when teaching and learning essay writing at school level that these students find it difficult to regulate their essay writing. Furthermore, teachers also often focus on the 'results of the essay' rather than the composing process itself, emphasizing content writing over composing strategies (Petit, 2003). However, this focus on isolated linguistic elements often overlooks the importance of guiding students in structuring their writing holistically. Thus, the systematic application of theory in developing more organized writing needs to be examined to reduce this problem. An introduction to the elements of theme (sentence starters) in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory can help students write effectively. To further enhance this approach, Hall's Grammar—rooted in SFL—provides a structured framework for understanding how language functions within different contexts, reinforcing the importance of coherence and cohesion in students' writing. This is acknowledged by McCabe (1999), who states that the attention given to the theme can be a useful tool for assessing second language writing outcomes.

Moreover, theme and '*Rema*' can be useful criteria for writers as a tool to isolate and construct more coherent ideas in writing (Khadijeh & Sima, 2012). The theme is known as "starting point for the message" or "the ground from which the clause is taking off" (Halliday, 1994). As such, the Systematic Planned Model is constructed based on the three meta-functions of language introduced in Functional Systemic Theory and adapted to the elements found in Hall's Grammar. General introduction of themes to teachers and students enables students to minimize problems in writing (Arunsirot, 2013). Thus, this study was conducted by mobilizing the elements of the theme (starting sentence) to facilitate students to start writing in a directed manner. Therefore, it is important to study the comparison of students' essay writing achievement before and after applying the Systematic Planned Model and to identify the effectiveness of this model in students' essay writing, especially the content area.

Statement of Problem

Mother tongue is the first language accepted by everyone and a language that is commonly used in daily life. According to Abdullah, Mahamod and Nor Shaïd (2016) before formal schooling, children's language development is shaped by their social interactions and surrounding environment. Therefore, it is not surprising if educators face problems in teaching the Malay language to the non-native students. Mohamed Zuki and Wan Mohamad (2017) have stated that learning Malay as a second language is not an easy process. In addition, Amir (2013) also stated that the Malay language is difficult to understand although it is easy to learn. Therefore, drilling is needed by the second language learners to learn the

Malay language. The existence of the mother tongue is a barrier to learning the standard Malay language among non-native students and it has caused students' learning performance to be affected (Mohamad, 2016). Ibrahim (2017) stated that Standard Six public examination, UPSR (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah*) or the Primary School Assessment Test results of the second language students, especially the Tamil speakers are at a low level. This scenario is the biggest challenge for Malay language educators who teach these second language students to write essays (Ali & Othman, 2018). Apart from teaching the Malay language, in upholding the national language, educators also need to ensure that the second language students' mother tongue is not increasingly marginalized (Mohamed Zuki and Wan Mohamad, 2017).

Second language learners sometimes follow the influence of the structure and grammar of their first language during the use of the Malay language either in writing or in their speech. In addition, through the analysis of Iban students' Malay essay writing, Hwa and Subramaniam (2017) found that students often make grammatical errors in terms of phrases, sentences and choice of words. This statement is supported by Ismail and Hamzah (2018), explaining that errors in language use are often influenced by second language students during the Malay language mastery process. Furthermore, the high frequency of language errors in learning Malay among Malaysian students has affected the performance of learning Malay as the target language. (Chye & Subramaniam, 2012). These language errors are further exacerbated by conventional teaching and learning practices, which primarily focus on sentence structures, grammar, and vocabulary rather than discourse-level proficiency (Daisy, 2006). Thus, students find the difficulties in constructing simple sentences.

However, writing skills can be improved through various learning strategies. Using effective methods is one of the factors for improving students' achievement in writing (Che Hassan & Abd. Rahman, 2011). This is because to produce an effective writing, it is necessary that the text has the characteristics of coherence, clarity and perfection that are summarized as an organization in the text (Abdul Jobar, 2017). Therefore, awareness of theme structure is very important in reducing this problem because 'theme' function can be useful criteria for writers as a tool to isolate ideas and build more coherent ideas in writing (Arunsirot, 2013). This is because the awareness given by the teacher regarding the theme system (starting sentence) can help students build more coherent sentences (Al-Otaibe, 2021). In addition, students can use various cohesive devices in essay writing, but the variation is highly dependent on the competence of students (Nuswantara, Rohmah & Kusumawardani, 2019). Therefore, a mechanism to reduce this issue needs to be examined in depth by paying attention to tools capable of helping students write systematically.

In short, it can be concluded that there are some problems that will be faced by second language students in writing their Malay essays. Among the most notable problems they face is in terms of sentence structure and the spelling of which is often followed by the mother tongue. Learning a second language is not an easy process, especially with many environmental factors that influence the language they use daily. As such, further studies need to be done to ensure that this issue can be minimized. Thus, this study evaluates a structured model incorporating Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to enhance the teaching and learning of essay writing among second-language students.

Research Questions

The study was conducted based on the following research questions:

Q1: Does the Systematic Planned Model significantly impact non-native students' performance scores in essay writing?

Q2: How do non-native students perceive the effectiveness of the Systematic Planned Model in improving their essay writing skills?

H1: Non-native students who receive instruction based on the Systematic Planned Model show a significant improvement in their essay writing performance scores.

Literature Review

This section will detail submissions on past studies. Through the highlights of past studies, it is believed that it can help researchers examine aspects of past studies that can be used as a platform in this study. The focus of this past study involved studies related to the effectiveness of the techniques used in the teaching and learning practices related to the application SFL in essay writing and studies related to key issues in essay writing.

Application of Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in Teaching and Learning

Several previous scholars have been active in the study of the use of SFL theory in teaching the essay writing. However, due to the lack of research in the teaching of Malay language essay writing, a further study on this was conducted. Among the past researchers who focused on the effectiveness of the application of SFL theory in the teaching and learning of essay writing practices are Foley (2013), Krisnawati (2013), Joko Nurkamto and Sofwan (2013). These scholars examined the ability of students to choose themes in producing their writing after SFL theory and concepts are introduced in several phases. These studies show that the selection of themes is very important to produce quality writing. In addition, this study explains that the understanding of the theme helps in improving the construction of sentence structures in the paragraphs and can be used as a tool to channel information in essay writing for the convenience of teachers and students. The findings also detailed that, the application of the theme has a positive impact on the techniques of teaching and learning essay writings in the classroom.

Besides, a study conducted by Liu and Liu (2013), Arunsitot (2013) and Al-Otaibe (2021) who examined the need for and importance of theme in essay writing, found that students who understand theme can improve on coherence in essay writing. In addition, there are some issues in students' theme selection while writing essays such as the existence of a new theme, blank theme, wrong textual theme selection, the problem of using multiple themes, themes not related to rhyme and wrong thematic layout. According to scholars, the problems involving the themes prove that students fail to write coherently because they lack the knowledge to begin their sentences. This study proves that the selection of a suitable topic sentence helps students to write effectively.

Issues in Essay Writing

There are several past studies related to issues in essay writing that lead to the best method of writing such as researchers Jalil (2016), Mohamed (2016), Rubiaton Ibrahim and Jamaludian (2018), Nazeer and Wan Mohammad (2018) and factors influencing essay writing such as Ismail & Hamzah (2018), Abdullah, Mahamod and Nor Shaid (2016). Jalil (2016) conducted a study that aims to analyse students' behavior, when students write open response essays and explain the similarities and differences in the behavior of low -performing form two students based on gender (male and female). Overall, poor essay writing results due to lack of teacher guidance to male and female students (low -performing) while writing open -response essays. In addition, the study of Mohamed (2016), examines the problems in essay writing based on the application of track change. The results show that students' errors in writing can be reduced. This is because students can check and correct their errors in essay writing immediately. Next, Ibrahim and Badusah (2018) conducted a study to explore the processing of ideas of two students in essay writing using BoGraf technique. The results of the study prove that there is an increase of students' ideas in essay writing and sentence structures that are more organised based on the content of the essay. Besides, the study of Nazeer and Wan Mohammad (2018), examined the idea of construction of six students in essay writing using the FINE Module in which the use of graphics should be used as a technique to stimulate students' ideas effectively. The use of graphic materials such as pictures, illustrations, frames, plans, cartoon advertisements, dialogue excerpts, and notes in the teaching and learning of essay writings can trigger student ideas more easily.

These studies explain that there is a need for teacher's guidance as well as effective teaching aids to enable students to write systematically. However, the study found that there are several issues that can be added to ensure the effectiveness of teaching aids such as building a topic sentence in a paragraph as a stimulus to generate ideas. Issues that affect students' writing are also examined to obtain an initial picture of the problem occurring. Among the researchers involved are Abdullah, Mahamod

and Nor Shaid (2016) who conducted a study to note the factors that influence the writing of Malay language essays of secondary school students around the district of Manjung, Perak. The findings of the study show that the main factors that influence the writing of students' essays are at a moderate level involving teaching and learning factors. In terms of gender differences, it was found that there were no significant differences in factors that influence the writing of Malay essays among students. A study by Ismail & Hamzah (2018), explained that in the process of second language mastery, errors in the use of language are often committed by second language students such as the use of the prefix in Malay language, "*di-*", the prefix "*meN-*"its allomorphs, as well as errors in the choice of terms in the writings of Chinese students.

Based on previous studies, there are several techniques that can be applied to minimize non-native students' errors in Malay essay writings. Therefore, this study fills the gap in essay writing among non -native students by constructing a writing model that focuses on 'Tema' and ensures teachers implement effective teaching and learning essay writing methods among non-native students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quasi-experimental and survey design were used in this study. As recommended by Wiersma (2000), quasi-experimental involves pre-test and post-test for groups of students and is appropriately applied due to the involvement of students in existing groups (Clark & Creswell, 2015). Pre-tests will be administered prior to the introduction of the Systematic Planned Model learning approach to assess their writing abilities. Following that, the students were given a post-test six times after the Systematic Planned Model was introduced. The post-test question items have the same format as the pre-test question items. Following the collection of pre and post test scores, a graph of differences was created to compare the results. Table 1 shows the pre- and post-test analysis. an experiment performed on the dependent variable following a change in the independent variable in relation to the dependent variable (Hua, 2016). If there is an increase in post-test scores when compared to the pre-test used in this study, it demonstrates the effectiveness of using the Systematic Planned Model in students' essay writing. The survey design was implemented using a questionnaire to determine students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the Systematic Planned Model. Survey research is a quick, low-cost, and accurate way of gathering information from a large number of survey respondents (Lay and Khoo, 2019).

Table 1 *Pre -test and post-test design*

Group	Pre test	Intervention	Post test
Group	S ₁	X	S ₂

Source: pre-test and post-test design (Sidek 2002)

The Study's Location and Samples

The study was conducted in three secondary schools of national type under the Perak State Education Department. The schools are located in Muallim and Manjung districts. The samples included 60 Form four students. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 students from Form 4 classrooms.

Data Collection Methods

SPSS v25 was used to analyse pre-and post-test data, as well as questionnaires. Data analysis was carried out following the collection of pre and post-test data. The data will be displayed in the form of frequencies and percentages. The t-test was used to determine whether there were significant differences before and after the Systematic Planned Model was introduced to test the hypotheses. of the study. The analysis of the pre-test and post-test results allows conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of the Systematic Planned Model in students' essay writing.

Research Instruments

To answer the first research question, a test on opinionated essay writing and a Systematic Planned Model was conducted. The topics for the essay writing test were selected from the Form Malay language textbook. Individually, the questions must be answered within a time limit of 20 minutes. The Systematic Planned Model is explained three times to the three teachers who participated in this study. Based on the rubric provided, the essay writings were evaluated by the five Malay language teachers who are also Paper 1 Malay Language SPM subject examiners who have about 10 years of teaching experience. Figure 1 is the Systematic Planned Model:

Figure 1 *Systematic Planned Model*

Sentence (Ayat) + FOCUS (FOKUS)	Sentence (Ayat) (FOCUS + CONTENT) (FOKUS + ISI)	Question + Content? (Soalan + ISI?)	Answer + How (Jawapan + Bagaimana)	(K1) Effect/Why (Kesan/Mengapa) (K2) Positive Conclusion (Konklusi Positif) (K3) Negative Conclusion (Konklusif Negatif)	(K4) Conclusion (Kesimpulan) (K5) Idiom/ Proverb (Kata Peribahasa / Pujangga)
It is common knowledge that ... (FOCUS)... needs to be clarified in this discourse so as not to be an issue that threatens national harmony. (Umum mengetahui bahawa ... (FOKUS)... perlu diperjelaskan dalam wacana ini agar tidak menjadi isu mengugut keharmonian negara)	Therefore, ... (FOCUS) is with ... (CONTENT)... (Oleh itu, ... (FOKUS) adalah dengan ... (ISI)...)	The question that often arises is what is the meaning of... (CONTENT) ...? (Persoalan yang sering timbul ialah apakah makna... (ISI)?)	As a clear definition, the meaning of (ISI) ... is... (PURPOSE)... As a method,... (How)... Sebagai pendefinisian yang nyata, makna... (ISI)... ialah... (MAKSUD) ... Sebagai kaedahnya,... (Bagaimana)...	(K1) As a result, (K2) This matter can be realized if... (VALUE) (K3) However, if this matter is underestimated then... (K1) Ekoran daripadanya, ... (K2) Sekiranya, perkara ini dapat direalisasikan maka... (NILAI) (K3) Namun begitu, jika perkara ini dipandang remeh maka...)	(K4) The point is,... *(K5) The proverb/idiom,... (K4) Intihanya,... *(K5) Persis peribahasa/ pujangganya, ...)
Relation to the concept of SFL - Selection of Sentence Starter (Kaitan dengan konsep SFL – Pemilihan Pemula Ayat)					
Based on the Interpersonal theme (comment) (Dibina berdasarkan tema Interpersonal (komen))	Based on the Interpersonal theme (question) (Dibina berdasarkan tema Interpersonal (tanya))	Based on Textual Themes (additional discourse-markers) (Dibina berdasarkan Tema Teksual (penanda wacana-tambahan))	Based on Textual Themes (additional discourse-markers) (Dibina berdasarkan Tema teksual (penanda wacana-tambahan))	Based on; (K1) Textual themes (discourse-causal markers) (K2) Ideational Themes (Environmental conditions) (K3) Ideational Themes (state-environment) (Dibina berdasarkan; (K1) Tema teksual (penanda wacana-musabab) (K2) Tema Ideasional (Keadaan-lingkungan) (K3) Tema Ideasional (keadaan-lingkungan))	Based on; (K4) Textual themes (discourse-period markers) (K5) Textual Themes (discourse-additional markers) (Dibina berdasarkan; (K4) Tema teksual (penanda wacana-tempoh) (K5) Tema Teksual (penanda wacana-tambahan))

The teaching techniques using this planned model were described three times to the five teachers involved in this study. Each answer was evaluated by the Malay Language subject teacher of the class and also analysed by the researcher based on the rubric provided. This model has also been listed below Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPPO - LY2021W06191). In order to answer the second research question, questionnaires were used to collect information from non-native students regarding their views on the Systematic Planned Model. The questionnaires comprise of two sections; Section A consists of the respondents' demographics profile and Section B identifies students' views on the effectiveness of the model introduced. The Likert scale was used, which allows respondents to express their level of agreement on the Systematic Planned Model. Students have five options, namely Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NT), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The Likert scale is used to explain the respondents' responses based on the researcher's objectives (Sakaran, 2003). According to Weiner (2007), open-ended questions or Likert scales are more accurate and suitable for gathering opinions about the aspects studied.

Validity and Reliability

The written test instrument was reviewed by three Form 4 Malay language teachers to ensure that the test questions were appropriate and aligned with the Secondary School Malay Language Revised Curriculum. The pre- and post-test instruction was also reviewed to ensure that the language was clear and easy to understand for the participants.

The Cronbach's Alpha index was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire instrument. This questionnaire's instrument was obtained and modified from a study of Jamsari (2019), with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.845. According to Weiner (2007), Cronbach's Alpha values with high reliability are equal to or greater than 0.70.

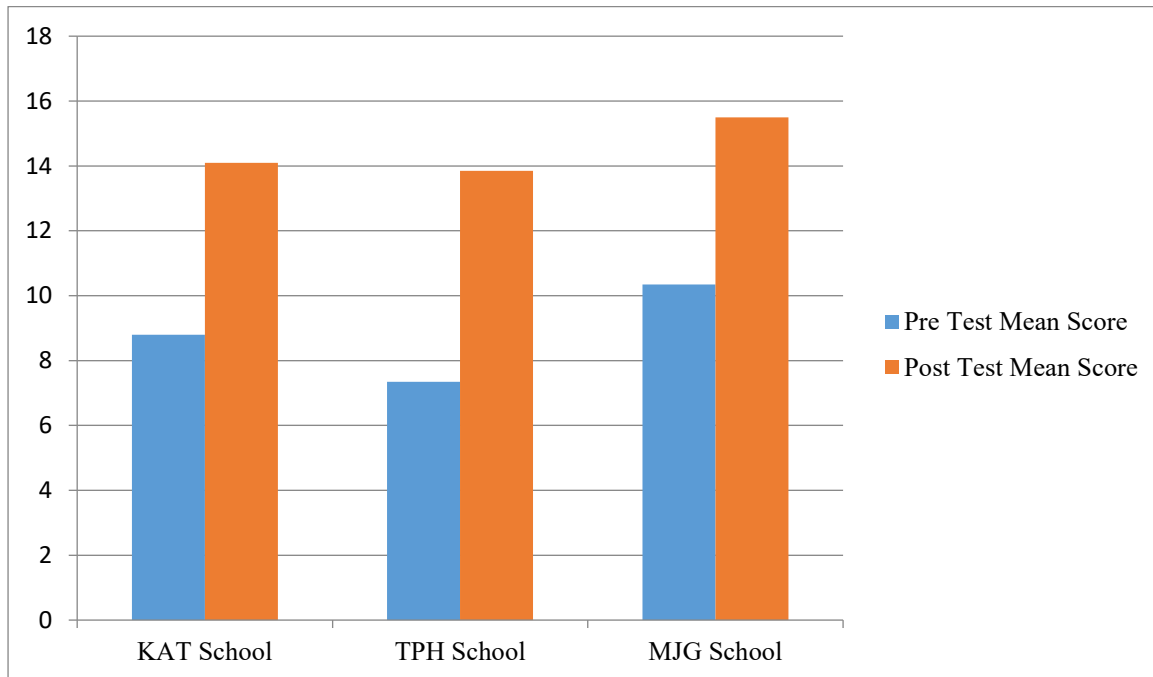
The scoring rubric is distributed to three Malay language teachers with more than ten years of experience teaching Malay in secondary schools. The researcher provides instructions on how to assess and assign accurate scores using the rubrics provided. The inter-rater agreement value for ten test set items examined by three teachers was 0.76, indicating a good level of agreement ($0.6 < k < 0.8$) and a significant level. As a result, the reliability results showed that the rubrics provided meet the study's requirements.

FINDINGS

Analysis Of Students' Performance

The pre-test and post-test results were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. There was a significant difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test, according to the findings. A comparison of pre-test and post-test scores is shown in Figure 2. MJG school (Manjung) had the highest average score for the pre-test, 10.35, followed by KAT School (Catholic) (8.8) and TPH School (Tapah) (8.8). (7.35). Only two (3.3%) of the 60 participants who took the pre-test received 13 marks and one participant (1.6%) scored the lowest, two marks. However, all three schools have shown a significant increase in scores in the post-test. Three participants (5.0%) showed an increase of 10 marks in the post-test as compared to the scores for the previous pre-test. The smallest difference in scores between pre-test and post-test was only two marks obtained by the three participants (5%). Overall, there was an improvement in score among the participants for the post-test after the Systematic Planned Model was introduced. Manjung school recorded the highest mean score, 15.5, followed by KAT School (14.1) and TPH School (13.85). The total mean score for the three schools has increased from 8.83 with a standard deviation of 2.793 to 14.48 with a standard deviation of 2.325.

Figure 2 Differences in Mean Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test



Ho1: There Is a Significant Difference in The Achievement of Students' Essay Writing

The paired-samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores for the pre-test and post-test. Table 2 presents the results of the t-test. The pre-test mean score was 8.83, with a standard deviation of 2.973, and the post-test mean score was 14.48, with a standard deviation of 2.325, according to the t-test analysis. The increase in mean score was significant from 8.83 to 14.48, which is 5.650. This means that students' achievement has improved after implementing the Systematic Planned Model's teaching and learning practices. The t-test analysis also revealed that the t-value was -20.943 and the sig = 0.000 (p 0.05). This shows that the post-test essay writing content construction outperforms the pre-test essay writing content construction. The null hypothesis (Ho1) is accepted as a result of this significant difference.

Table 2 Significant differences in student essay writing achievement

Paired samples	Mean	Standard deviation	t	t-test	P
Pre-test	8.83	2.973	-20.943		0.000
Post- test	14.48	2.325			

Analysis of the Effectiveness of a Systematic Planned Model

The effectiveness information of this planned model focuses on only six key questions. The following are the data obtained after the planned model was introduced.

Table 3 *Questionnaire on the Effectiveness of Planned Models*

Items	Frequency / Percentage (%)				
	SD	D	NT	A	SA
Q1. I can describe the content of the essay in a more organized way after studying the planned model.	-	-	-	41 (68.3)	19 (31.7)
Q2. I was able to produce an essay of more than 120 words using a planned model	-	-	2 (3.33)	46 (76.6)	12 (20.0)
Q3. The use of a planned model helped me construct more coherent sentences.	-	-	4 (6.66)	49 (81.6)	7 (11.7)
Q4. The use of a planned model made it easier for me to construct content-rich paragraphs in a systematic manner.	-	-	-	32 (53.3)	28 (46.7)
Q5. The planned model is very easy to understand.	-	-	3 (5.0)	42 (70)	15 (25)
Q6. The planned model can be used in all forms of essay writing.	-	9 (15.0)	-	40 (66.7)	11 (18.3)

The data from the survey showed the application of the planned model in the writing of student essays has shown a positive effect. For question S1, a total of 41 students (68.3%) agreed while 19 students (31.7%) strongly agreed that the planned model has helped them to describe the content of the essay in a more organized manner. The use of a planned model showed effectiveness when 46 students (76.6%) and 12 students (20.0%) respectively agreed and strongly agreed that the planned model helped them write essays of more than 120 words (S2). In the construction of coherent sentences, 49 students (81.6%) agreed, and seven students (11.7%) strongly agreed that a planned model can create an element of coherence in the sentences they construct. Coherent sentences are very important because they can help students produce sentences that are interrelated with each other.

Next for question Q4, a total of 32 students (53.3%) agreed, and 28 students (46.7%) strongly agreed that the planned model has helped them construct a more systematic paragraph of rich content. This proves that a structured essay allows the reader to identify the main ideas presented by the students. In terms of students' understanding of the planned model, a total of 42 students (70.0%) agreed, and 15 students (25%) strongly agreed that the planned model is very easy to understand. Finally, Q6, a total of 40 students (66.7%) agreed that this model can be used in all types of essay writing while 9 students (15%) disagreed. This demonstrates that students understand the importance of different content construction in each type of writing. In general, it can be concluded that students readily accept this model when writing essays.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH SUMMARY

This study can be used by teachers to research and determine the important content in essay writing, as well as what should be focused on when teaching essay writing, particularly to second language students.

Research Question 1

The findings of this study can suggest a more systematic approach to teaching and learning essay writing. This is because teachers, particularly those who teach second language students, frequently face the problem of producing students with good writing skills. The findings show that when the Systematic Planned Model was implemented, the students' scores improved in all three schools. This model is called ASJaBaK for the convenience of teachers and students, which is an acronym for each item that should be in the content of essay writing. The increase in scores occurred as a result of the writing system's systematic structure. Consistent with Foley's (2013) views, the findings of his study show that students have knowledge limitations in writing involving various genres and frequently use the same theme elements (sentence starters). There was a noticeable change in the production of writing

style after the application of theory-based essay writing methods was introduced for two semesters. In addition, the study by Al-Otaibe (2021), also found some issues in the selection of the sentence starters when students write essays such as the problem of linking ideas and the selection of appropriate sentence starters. Therefore, this model provided to students by constructing appropriate theme sentences (sentence starters) can minimize the problem. Indeed, this study demonstrates the importance of theme selection in ensuring good essay writing. Themes in essay writing that are introduced gradually and in a structured manner allow students to write effectively and with quality (Joko Nurkamto & Sofwan, 2013).

Research Question 2

This study is also capable of providing a solid writing formula to construct an essay capable of attracting the attention of examiners in particular, and other readers in general which requires a sustained effort. This is because to meet the criteria for quality writing, it is necessary to cover a variety of topics, particularly the continuity of ideas built into the writing. According to the students' perspectives, the Systematic Planned Model assisted them systematically in expanding the content and developing a more structured writing style. The results of this study are similar to the findings of Ibrahim and Badusah (2018) and Nazeer and Wan Mohammad (2018), which proved that the use of the Systematic Planned Model in teaching and learning of essay writing also had a positive effect on the mastery of students' essays writing. The Systematic Planned Model explains the method of idea mapping and description in an organized manner. As such, based on this study, students were able to write their ideas based on the main content of the essay easily because each topic sentence is built through a variety of stimulus sentences. Thus, changes and improvements in teaching techniques should be used as a guide for Malay language teachers so that Malay language teaching and learning practices can be implemented effectively. However, based on the findings, it was found that four students were not sure whether the Systematic Planned Model was able to help them write coherently. According to the survey results, the students do not understand the true meaning of coherence. Furthermore, Jalil (2016), who conducted a study related to students' behaviour explained that students need adequate concern from teachers while writing essays. Thus, the teacher should provide maximum guidance so that each construction of the essay content can be conveyed effectively. It has been proved that as many as 9 (15%) students are aware of the different needs for each essay content structure

CONCLUSION

Globally, teachers have developed various methods for teaching essay writing. However, no single approach can be deemed universally the best. Continuous efforts are necessary to innovate writing techniques based on theoretical foundations and current educational needs. While this study demonstrates that incorporating theme (sentence starters) in essay writing can enhance student achievement, further research is needed with a larger sample size, a framework suited to students' backgrounds, and applications for first-language learners. This will ensure broader effectiveness, higher validity, and greater support for teachers in improving the teaching and learning process.

Acknowledgement

The University Research Grant-Fundamental (GPUF) 2019-0199-107-01 funded this paper. Researchers would like to thank the Research and Innovation Management Centre at Sultan Idris Education University in Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia for the opportunity.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah N. A., Mahamod Z., & Nor Shaid N. A. H (2016). Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penulisan karangan bahasa Melayu pelajar sekolah menengah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*, 6(2), 1-9.
- Abdul Jobar N. F (2017). *Analisis wacana dalam penulisan karangan murid bahasa kedua* (Tesis Doktor Fasaiah yang tidak diterbitkan). Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.
- Abdul Jobar N.F., Norzan M., & Mohd Rusli N.F. (2019). Analisis tekstual dalam penulisan karangan murid bahasa kedua. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 4(26), 93-103.
- Adas D., & Bakir A. (2014). Writing difficulties and new solutions: Blended learning as an approach to improve writing abilities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9), 254-266.
- Ali N. H., & Othman Y. (2018). Strategi pembelajaran kemahiran menulis bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa kedua dalam kalangan pelajar Melanau daerah Daro. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*, 8(1), 33-41.
- Al-Otaibe M. (2021). Saudi students' argumentative essays from the perspective of theme-rheme: An analysis of the misuse of theme and rheme. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 8(1), 48-6.
- Amir J. (2013) *Bahasa Melayu: Suara dari bawah*. Kota Samarahan: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Ariff N. A., & Janan D. (2017). Keberkesanan kaedah pengajaran bersama dalam meningkatkan pencapaian penulisan karangan murid tingkatan 4. *PENDETA Journal of Malay Language, Education and Literature*, 8, 59-65.
- Arunsitot, S. (2013). An analysis of textual metafunction in Thai EFL student's writing. *Novitas-ROYAL*, 7(2), 160-174.
- Bahari A. A., Kussin H. J., Raja Harun R. N. S., Mohamed M., Abdul Jobar N. F. (2021). The limitations of conducting collaborative argumentation when teaching argumentative essays in Malaysian secondary schools. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(3), 1111-1122.
- Butt, D. et al. (2000). *Using functional grammar; an explorer's guide second edition*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.
- Che Hassan C. Z., & Abd. Rahman F. (2011). Pelaksanaan pengajaran dan pembelajaran kemahiran menulis di sekolah rendah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu (MyLEJ)*, 1(1), 67-87.
- Che Su N. (2018). Pengaruh bahasa ibunda terhadap pembinaan struktur ayat bahasa Melayu sebagai Bahasa asing. *Jurnal Linguistik*. 22(2), 10-19.
- Chye Y. C & Subramaniam V. (2012). Analisis kesilapan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Melayu oleh pelajar asing. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 12(2), 667-692.
- Clark, V. L. P., & Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Understanding research: A consumer guide (2nd edition)*. Boston, USA: Pearson. Pearson Education.
- Daisy, O. Almaden. (2006). An analysis of the topical structure of paragraphs written by Filipino Students. *The Asia-Pacific Education Research*, 15(1), 127-153.
- Foley, J A. (2013). Developing academic writing in a business-oriented university. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 170-190.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* London: Edward Arnold.
- Hua A. K. (2016). Introduction to methodology framework in research study: A case study. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 17-24.
- Hwa O.C., & Subramaniam V. (2017). Faktor timbulnya pengaruh bahasa pertama dalam mempelajari Bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa kedua. *Jurnal Ullum Islamiyyah*. 20, 35-45.
- Ibrahim R. (2017). Faktor dalaman dan luaran yang mempengaruhi penguasaan Bahasa Melayu murid-murid Cina. *Kertas Projek Sarjana Pendidikan*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Ibrahim R., & Badusah J. (2018), *Kemahiran menjana idea karangan menggunakan teknik bogran dalam penulisan karangan murid sekolah rendah, seminar on transdisciplinary education STED*, IPG Sarawak, 11-12 Disember 2018.
- Ismail A., & Hamzah Z. A. Z. (2018). Analisis kesalahan dalam penulisan pelajar bahasa kedua dari aspek morfologi. *Jurnal Linguistik*, 22(1), 24-31.
- Jalil A.G. (2016). Tingkah laku dan proses semasa menulis karangan respons terbuka murid berprestasi rendah. *Proceeding of ICECRS, International Seminar on Generating Knowledge Through Research UUM-UMSIDA*, 25-27 Oktober, 951-958. Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Jamsari S.N.F (2019). *Kesan penggunaan teknik AMKeBaK dalam penulisan karangan bahasa Melayu*. (Tesis Sarjana tidak diterbitkan), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.
- Joko Nurkamto F. & Sofwan A. (2013). Improving student's competence in developing a paragraph of discussion texts using theme-rheme negotiation with cooperative learning method. *Jurnal Pengembangan Humaniora*, 13(1).
- Khadijeh R., & Sima M. (2012). Thematicity in published vs unpublished Iranian TEFL theses. *Theory and Practice Studies*, 2(6), 1206-1213.

- Krisnawati E. (2013). Applying theme and rheme in Indonesian EFL student's writing: an attempt to improve cohesion and coherence. *The International Journal of Language and Applied Linguistics Word*, 2(2), 133-142.
- Lay, Y. F., & Khoo, C. H. (2019). *Pengenalan kepada pendekatan kuantitatif dalam penyelidikan pendidikan*. Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
- Liu, J. & Liu, L. (2013). An empirical study on application of theme theory in the field of writing pedagogy. *English Language Teaching*, 6(5), 117-128. doi: 10.5539/elt.v6n5p117.
- Loan N.T.H (2019). A case study of teacher feedback on Thai university students' essay writing. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*. 19(2), 127-138. <http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2019-1902-08>.
- McCabe, A. M. (1999). Theme and thematic patterns in Spanish and English history texts. (*Doctoral Dissertation*), Aston University.
- Mohamed H. (2016). Meningkatkan kemahiran menulis menggunakan *treck change*. *Journal of Learning Instructions*, 13, 135-159.
- Mohamad M. Y.(2016). Kekerapan penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Melayu dalam kalangan murid sekolah jenis kebangsaan Cina. *Kertas Projek Sarjana Pendidikan*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Mohamed Zuki K. N., & Wan Mohamad W. M. R. (2017). Sikap dan motivasi murid Bajau dalam mempelajari bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa kedua. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*, 7(1), 24-33.
- Nazeer N., & Wan Mohammad W.M.R. (2018). Penjanaan idea dalam penulisan karangan dengan menggunakan Modul PERHALUS. *Prosiding Seminar Penyelidikan Peringkat Kebangsaan 2018*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Nuswantara K., Rohmah Z., & P. Kusumawardani, R (2019). Corpus-based analysis of cohesive devices in academic essays written by Indonesian students: Across-gender analysis. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 27(4), 2265–2284.
- Othman H. (2005). Penilaian tahap penguasaan kemahiran menulis dalam Bahasa Melayu murid Sekolah Kebangsaan kebolehpercayaan instrumen. *Persidangan Serantau Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*, 16 18.9.2005, Tanjung Bunga Pulau Pinang.
- Petit, A. (2003). The stylish semicolon: Teaching punctuation as rhetorical choice. *English Journal*, 92(3), 66 - 72.
- Sakaran, U. (2003). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach. 4th Edition*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Santoso D. (2019). Developing academic writing materials for learners of English education department based on accelerated learning approach. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 27(2), 863-875.
- Shokprour, Nasrin & Mohammad Hossien. F. (2014). A survey of the students and intern's EFL writing problems in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9(1), 147-162.
- Weiner, J. (2007). *Measurement: Reliability and Validity Measures*. Boston: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg, School of Public Health.
- Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research Methods in Education: An Introduction*: Ally & Bacon, Boston, MA.