

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the results that examines the use of an integrated sentence modelling approach to writing. The findings of this study, based on a detailed analysis of the data collected from the students' rewrites and an interview guide with the four students were analyzed and triangulated to answer the two research questions raised in this study: (a) To what extent does sentence modelling practice improve the quality of writing among low proficiency students in the classroom? and (b) To what extent do students find the integrated sentence-modelling approach helpful?

To What Extent Does Sentence Modelling Practice

Improve the Quality of Writing?

The data was collected from four students who, identified as low proficiency students had failed in their English language paper in the PMR and SPM public examinations. Since improvement in the students' writing is one of my major objectives and surface level errors are the most frequent errors in guided compositions (Bridwell, 1980), the quality of writing is examined in terms of usage, mechanics and sentence structure. Attention is also paid to the paragraph format and unity of sentences because these factors are considered relevant in determining the quality of compositions. Therefore, this study involves a detailed analysis of the compositions that includes identification of surface level errors, paragraph format, unity and sentence structure in the first and second writing samples.

The findings are first presented quantitatively by looking at the total scores of the quality of writing in the first and second writing samples of the four students. The total scores are based on five subcategories: paragraph format, unity, usage, mechanics and sentence structure. Mechanics is again subdivided into capitalization, punctuation and spelling. Sentence structure is examined in terms of complete and well-formed sentences. The findings are then presented qualitatively by discussing the relationship between such factors and quality of writing.

Table 1 reports the scores given by an independent rater to the seven categories mentioned above in the Writing Samples 1 and 2 of the four students in study, the difference in scores between Writing Samples 1 and 2 and the total increase in terms of the seven categories as well as the total scores of Writing Samples 1 and 2.

Table 1

Total scores of Writing Samples 1 and 2 of Students A, B, C and D

Category	Writing Sample 1				Writing Sample 2				Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2				Total increase for 4 students
	Student				Student				Student				
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	
Paragraph format	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Unity	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	+1	0	0	+1	+2
Sentence structure	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	+1	+2	+2	0	+5
Usage	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	+1	0	0	0	+1
Capitalization	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Punctuation	3	2	1	1	4	1	3	2	+1	-1	+2	+1	+3
Spelling	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Total scores	21	19	18	17	25	20	22	19	+4	+1	+4	+2	+11

The scores are based on an adaptation of Coop’s Analytic Scoring Guide (1983 [see Appendix D])). In this analytic scoring guide, a maximum score per component is 4

points; all the seven components were equally weighted. The total score is then obtained by summing the ratings on each of the seven categories. This total score is used as the measure of the overall quality of writing skill.

It can be seen from Table 1 that there is an overall improvement in the quality of writing based on the total scores in the Writing Samples 1 and 2. The data in the last row shows that the most overwhelming increase is seen in the scores of Student A and Student C (+4), and the least increase is in Student B's scores (+1) followed by a moderate increase in Student D (+2). It should be noted that Student A appears to be at the higher end of this low proficiency group as she has obtained the scores of 75% (twenty-one out of twenty-eight). Hence, Students B, C and D are identified as the lower end of the low proficiency group. Their scores ranged from 61% to 68%. It seems then that Student A who is at the higher end of this low proficiency group is able to make greater gains in the writing quality. Student C, on the other hand, is also able to make a remarkable gain in terms of total scores although she was initially at the lower end of the low proficiency group. This is likely because she participates actively in the sentence modelling practice in the class. The positive increase in the total scores of the Writing Samples 2 indicates that the students can improve in the quality of writing if they model the sentence patterns.

An analysis of both the writing samples of the four students laid open a most interesting feature: the scores for paragraph format were high. All the four students were accorded four points in Writing Samples 1 and 2. This meant that the students were able to write a title on the top line, skip a line between title and body, indent the first sentence and even maintain adequate margins in both the writing samples. Probably these students were introduced to the paragraph formatting during their

Bahasa Melayu lessons. Therefore, it is likely that there is a transfer of the four students' prior knowledge gathered in their L1 writing class to their L2 writing in a similar genre. This perhaps enables them to make less mistakes with paragraph formatting in writing compositions with a similar genre, that is, guided compositions.

The scores for unity in Writing Samples 1 were also high. Students A, B and C had 3 points as they were able to write sentences with more than half the sentences related to the topic. Student D scored 2 points as she wrote sentences with at least one sentence related to the topic. There was no improvement in the scores for unity in Writing Samples 2 of Students B and C but there was an increase of 1 point for Students A and D. That meant Student A was able to write all the sentences that are related to the topic. Student D, on the other hand, also made some progress by writing sentences with more than half of these sentences related to the topic. It is possible that the key words provided in the guided compositions enabled the students to construct sentences in context, thus explaining the high scores for unity. The high scores for unity also indicate that these low proficiency students had fewer problems in this area even before they were introduced to the sentence modelling approach.

The most marked improvement is noticed in sentence structure with a total increase of +5. Generally, the scores for sentence structure were low in Writing Samples 1. The independent rater gave 2 points to Student A who wrote two complete sentences out of four sentences. Students B, C and D, however were given 1 point each as they wrote only one complete sentence out of four sentences. By contrast, Students A, B and C managed to write three complete sentences out of four sentences in Writing Samples 2. They were, thus given 3 points for sentence structure. Only Student D, the weakest among the low proficiency group had 1 point as she wrote one

complete sentence out of four sentences. Interestingly, Students B and C showed the most outstanding improvement (+2) in sentence structure in Writing Samples 2. The results, therefore indicate that the sentence modelling practice that was integrated with speaking, reading and listening can help to improve the quality of writing among the low proficiency students. Thus, it can be assumed that there is a positive correlation between the sentence modelling practice and quality of writing in terms of sentence structure.

For usage, all the four students had low scores in Writing Samples 1. The independent rater gave 1 point as all the students had four or more errors in usage. However, in the Writing Sample 2, Student A had a score of 2 as she had three errors in usage. She showed the most impressive improvement with an increase of +1. There was no increase in scores for Students B, C and D. These data indicated that the peers in the class were incapable of detecting and identifying the errors during revision. Thus, peer response did not seem to play a positive role in the improvement of surface level problems. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this data does not indicate that there was no reduction in the number of usage errors between the writing samples because the analytic scoring guide does not take into account students who had more than four errors.

The scores for capitalization and spelling were high for all the four students. The four students were given a maximum of four in Writing Samples 1 and 2 as they were able to capitalize the first word in every sentence and all proper nouns and "I" and no other words were capitalized. Likewise, a maximum score of four was awarded to all the students as they were able to spell all the words correctly. Apparently, there was also a transfer of knowledge in L1 writing in these two components.

Table 1 also shows that Students B, C and D had low scores for punctuation as compared to the other subcategories of mechanics in Writing Samples 1. Students C and D had 1 point because they had more than four errors in punctuation. Only Student A was given 3 points because there was one error in punctuation. Student B scored 2 points because she had two punctuation errors only. By contrast, in Writing Samples 2, there was a general improvement in punctuation for all the students except Student B who incidentally created more errors in punctuation.

Nonetheless, information is needed on the types of surface level errors such as usage and mechanics as well as sentence structure quality which I maintain as factors that contribute to the quality of writing. Thus, the answer to research question one will be discussed in greater depth with case studies of the four students in terms of usage, sentence structure and mechanics. Incidentally, all the four students are female students and the students are identified by letters A, B, C and D.

Case Study of Student A

Student A's proficiency level of English is considered the highest based on the total scores of Writing Sample 1 (WS 1). Essentially, she is an extroverted person. She shows keen interest and participates actively in class activities by reading sentences on the transparencies, listening and constructing sentences that model the target structure. She attempts to speak English and seems interested in learning English because she feels that she may need English for the future.

Usage and mechanics

First, the types and frequency of errors in usage and mechanics are analyzed in Writing Samples 1 and 2. Usage here refers to errors in the verb forms and verb

omission. Mechanics here refers to spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Below are the full text of Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 of Student A.

Figure 2. Full texts of Writing Sample 1 and 2 of Student A

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
<p>Painting The House</p> <p>In the weekend, Anne was decided to redecorate her bedroom with colourful and attractive. Anne didn't like and old curtains. It is dark colour. She also didn't like wallpaper colour walls.</p> <p>It was too much when do alone. So she asked her father for help. First, her father carried a good at the corridor. Then, he cleaned at room and took off all wall paper.</p> <p>After that, her put a new of wall paper. He close pink colour with her blue design. It between Anne and her father work together. They whole day to put up a new wallpaper.</p> <p>The next day, they were painted all the frame of the window. When the paint was dried she put up new. After that, when they were finished, they carried all the furniture at the corridor again.</p> <p>They were so tired and wash finished to redecorating. The bedroom looks very attractive. The both they pleased are only spent about \$16 for buy paint, wallpaper and curtains.</p>	<p>The thief</p> <p>Last Saturday night, a thief broke into my house while we were away. Actually, nobody stayed in the house at the time. We all had gone to see the film "Senario The Movie" at Sungai Wang Plaza cinema</p> <p>The thief broke into my house between 8.00-11.00 p.m because we left the house at 8.00 p.m Before leaving the house, we made sure we locked all the doors and the windows, of course. When all the door was locked, the thief didn't know how to get out from my house. So he got out by the windows by breaking the windows at the back of the house.</p> <p>When we got home after finishing watching film at the cinema, I was very shocked because the light on. "That was funny" I said. I was sure I turned off the lamp before I went out from my house.</p> <p>I looked at the front window but nobody inside. When my wife got inside the room, she found a television set and the money missing. After that, I called the police and told them the story. About 25 minutes, the police came to my house. They looked for clues.</p>

Table 2 shows the types and frequencies of errors in Student A's writing samples.

Table 2

Types and number of errors in Writing Sample 1 and 2 of Student A

Types of errors	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
Usage			
verb forms	8	1	-7
verb omissions	2	1	-1
Total errors for usage	10	2	-8
Mechanics			
punctuation	1	0	-1
Total number of errors	11	2	-9

As shown in Table 2, there is a reduction in the number of usage errors (-8). WS 1 was characterized by a large number of errors in usage: she made a total of ten usage errors. She made only two errors in WS 2. Further analysis of WS 1 revealed that Student A is seemingly confused with the use of simple past tense and present tense and the passive form of the past tense with errors as seen in the following sentences: *Anne was decided to redecorate her bedroom* and *They were painted the window frames*.

However, these errors were clearly absent in WS 2 after the exposure to the sentence modelling practice exercises that emphasized the past tense form (both active and passive forms) for narrative compositions. The correct tense form was evident in the sentences which make use of the target structures such as: *Last Saturday night, a thief broke into my house while we were away* and *After that, I called the police and told them the story*. These data thus indicate that Student A is able to reduce the frequency of usage errors substantially especially verb forms in WS 2 by modelling the target structures. Hence, the quality of the composition in terms of usage errors shows a vast improvement over the original.

For mechanics, the maximum score of four was accorded to both capitalization and spelling in the two writing samples (see Table 1). For punctuation, Student A had a high score of 3 in WS 1 which meant that there was only one error in punctuation. And, the score of 4 in WS 2 shows an improvement over WS 1. This data is encouraging because it indicates a positive relationship between the sentence modelling practice and quality of writing, at least in terms of punctuation.

Sentence structure

The analysis of the compositions for sentence structure is focused on malformed sentences. Contrast all the malformed sentences extracted from WS 1 and WS 2 of Student A in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Comparison of malformed sentences in Writing Sample 1 and 2 of Student A

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
(1) It between Anne and her father work together.	(1) Actually, nobody stayed in the house at the time.
(2) First, her father carried a good at the corridor.	(2) When we got home after finishing watching film at the cinema, I was very shocked because the light on.
(3) It was too much when do alone	
(4) They whole day to put up a new wallpaper.	
(5) They were so tired and wash finished to redecorating.	
(6) The both they pleased are only spent about \$16 for buy a paint, wallpaper and curtains.	

It can be seen that there are more “grossly malformed sentences” in WS 1 compared to WS 2. Malformed sentences are sentences that are grammatically incorrect, incomplete and are intuitively unacceptable by the rater. In addition, the intelligibility of the text is the criteria to classify sentences as grossly malformed sentences. For example, Sentence 1 in WS 1, *It between Anne and her father work together*, is classified as grossly malformed sentence because it is incomplete, incorrect and unintelligible as it contains numerous grave errors such as verb form, missing verb and fragmented sentence. Such errors affect the overall sentence structure. Similarly, sentences 2-6 in WS 1 contain grave grammatical errors, thus rendering these sentences unintelligible. In contrast, there is no grossly malformed sentences in WS 2. Instead, there are more comprehensible sentences as seen in Sentence 1: *Actually, nobody stayed in the house at the time*. Although there is still an error in terms of wrong choice of word, it is a more correct and complete sentence. Such an error in the sentence does not render the sentence incomprehensible. While Sentence 2 contains

only verb tense errors, these errors again do not affect the intelligibility of the sentences. The results, therefore indicate that there is a reduction in the number of grossly malformed sentences in WS 2 which inadvertently contribute to an improvement in the quality of writing as seen in terms of sentence structure.

Table 3 below shows a count of the number and the different types of target structures used in WS 1 and WS 2.

Table 3

Types and frequencies of target structure used in Writing Sample 1 and 2 of Student A

Types of target structure	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
after clause	0	0	0
when clause	3	3	0
before clause	0	2	+2
while clause	0	1	+1
because clause	0	1	+1
prepositional phrases	3	2	-1
sentence connectors	2	0	-2
adverbial phrases of time	1	1	0
Total number of occurrence	9	10	+1

From Table 3 it can be seen that there was a minimal increase in the total number of target structures used (+1) as well as the use of different types of target structures in WS 2 (+2). For instance, Student A used four different types of structures (when clause, prepositional phrases, sentence connectors and adverbial phrases of time) in nine sentences in WS 1. She, on the other hand, used six different types of target structures in ten sentences in WS 2. The new structures used were the *before*, *while* and *because* clauses. Incidentally, she dropped the use of sentence connectors in WS 2. Probably these new structures were introduced in the first lesson and thus the impact was greater. Though Student A used four different types of target structures in

nine instances in WS 1, there were gross usage errors in all these sentences. For example, this sentence in WS 1, *In the weekend, Anne was decided . . .* contains verb form error as well prepositional phrase error. Similarly, verb form errors and other usage errors such as the wrong use of pronouns are seen in a number of sentences in WS 1 (see Figure 1). It is noteworthy that verb form errors occur more frequently than the other usage errors. Yet, it is obvious that Student A has managed to model the *while*, *before* and *when* clauses, without errors in usage and mechanics as seen in the following sentences in WS 2 such as *Last Saturday night, a thief broke into my house while we were away* and *Before leaving the house, we made sure we locked all the doors and the windows, of course* (see Figure 1 for other examples). She also succeeded in improving the structure of sentences which model prepositional phrases such as in the following sentences: *When my wife got inside the room, she found a television set and the money missing* and *After that, I called the police and told them the story*.

Intriguingly, some sentences in WS 2 still contained some usage errors as seen in the following sentence such as *When we got home after finishing watching film at the cinema, I was very shocked because the light on*. Perhaps the error *after finishing watching...* occurred because of her overzealous enthusiasm to emulate the sentence pattern *after + gerund*. Nonetheless, Student A used the past tense form and the commas more correctly by making use of such target structures in most sentences, thus explaining why Student A made less errors in usage and punctuation. Subsequently, she made only two errors in WS 2 (see Table 2). This data, thus reveal a strong association between the target structures used and the quality of writing, seen as a

reduction in the number of errors. Still, it should not be generalized from these data that she has mastered the use of the past tense.

Case Study of Student B

Student B's English proficiency level is lower than Student A based on the scores of Writing Sample 1 but comparable to Students C and D. She attempts to speak some English in class although she is rather a quiet girl. She makes an effort to be active in all the practice exercises and she tries to answer questions whenever possible. However, she does not like to read materials in English because of her lack of proficiency in the language.

Usage and mechanics. Below are the full text of Student B's Writing Samples.

Figure 4. Full text of Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 of Student B

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
<p>Painting The House</p> <p>Last weekend, Anne was decided the redecorate for bedroom. She choose the colourful in the bedroom to look attractive. She didn't not like the old are curtains because the dark and Anne didn't not likes wallpaper because decrepit at the walls.</p> <p>She didn't not was redecorate too much for alone. Because she asked her father for help. The first, her father carried the some thing in the cutton to the corridor. After then, they cleaned the room to took off the wallpaper.</p> <p>After that they put a new wallpaper. They choose a pink wallpaper with blue wallpaper. Anne and she father took the whole day to put the walls up the new wallpaper. Next day they painted the frames at the window. When the paint dry, they put at up the curtains. When they finished the carried a furniture again.</p> <p>Were a so tired after finished the redecorating the bedroom looks very attractive Both the pleased because only spent just \$16 for buy the paint, new wallpaper and curtains.</p>	<p>A thief</p> <p>Last night, a thief broke into my house. There was nobody in the house. At the time we all has gone to see the film. The thief must have a key to broken into my house at between 8-11 p.m. When the thief finished taking, jewelery, he left, my house.</p> <p>Before leaving, he locked the doors and windows. Of course, the thief did not, want any body no he broken the house. But a thief got into my house by breaking the glasses of the window at the back in my house. When all my family got home from the cinema, we noticed light on in my house. 'That's funny', I said. I am very sure that I was turn-ed off the lights before we went out to see the film.</p> <p>I looked around the house especially the front window and it was nobody inside. When my mother got inside the room, she found that the television set and money was missing. After that, my mother told, my father to call the police to come and looked for the case with the clues that we have.</p>

The types and total number usage errors, punctuation and the difference in number of occurrences between Student B's writing samples are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Types and number of errors in Writing Samples 1 and 2 of Student B

Types of usage errors	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
Usage			
verb forms	9	7	-2
verb omissions	3	0	-3
Total number of usage errors	12	7	-5
Mechanics			
punctuation	2	4	+2
Total number of errors	14	11	-3

With reference to Table 4, Student B is clearly able to reduce the frequency of usage errors substantially in WS 2. She made a total of 12 usage errors in WS 1. However, she made only seven errors, a reduction of five errors in WS 2. Like Student A, the most frequent errors were the verb form errors. Examples of such errors include: *Anne was decided the redecorate for bedroom* and *She choose the colourful* . . . In brief, Student B had similar problems with the use of simple past tense and present tense and the passive form of the past tense in most of the sentences (see full text above). Likewise these errors were not identified and corrected although WS 1 was revised by her peers. Nevertheless, the data in WS 2 show that the quality of the composition in terms of usage errors especially verb forms exhibit a vast improvement over WS 1 after the exposure to the sentence modelling practice exercises which emphasized the past tense form (both active and passive forms) for narrative compositions. In other words, this improvement cannot be attributed to the peers in the class or even the time factor.

For capitalization and spelling in both writing samples (see Table 1), there were no difference in the scores. Like Students A, C and D, Student B had a maximum score of four. On the contrary, there was an increase in punctuation errors in WS 2. In WS 1, there were two errors in the text. Incidentally, Student B had four errors in WS 2. For example, Student B placed the commas wrongly as seen in the following sentence: *When the thief finished taking, jewelery, he left, my house*. Probably her overzealous enthusiasm to model the target structures has resulted in her failure to understand fully the use of commas. This is also evident in a number of other sentences constructed in WS 2 (see full text).

Sentence structure

Figure 5 shows all the malformed sentences extracted from Student B's writing samples.

Figure 5. Comparison of malformed sentences in Student B's Writing Samples 1 and 2

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
(1) She didn't not like the old curtains because the dark and Anne didn't not likes wallpaper because decrepit at the walls.	(1) At the time we all has gone to see the film.
(2) She didn't not was redecorate too much for alone.	(2) The thief must have a key to broken into my house at between 8-11 p.m.
(3) The first, her father carried the same thing in the cutton to the corridor.	(3) When the thief finished taking, jewelery, he left, my house.
(4) Were a so tired after finished the redecorating the bedroom looks very attractive.	(4) Of course, the thief did not, want any body no he broken the house.
(5) Both the pleased because only spent just \$16 for buy the paint, new wallpaper and curtains.	(5) But a thief got into my house by breaking the glasses of the window at the back in my house.
	(6) I am very sure that I was turn-ed off the lights before we went out to see the film.
	(7) I looked around the house especially the front window and it was nobody inside.
	(8) After that, my mother told, my father to call the police to come and looked for the case with the clues that we have.

Interestingly, Figure 5 shows that there are more malformed sentences in WS 2 (8 sentences) as compared to WS 1 (5 sentences). However, on closer examination of these sentences in both samples, the number of grossly malformed sentences in WS 1

outnumbered the number of malformed sentences in WS 2 (see p. 40 for definition). Although there are eight sentences in WS 2 that contain some errors in verb forms, commas, articles and pronouns, these sentences are intelligible. Like Student A, the sentences in WS 1 contain grave errors in verb forms, articles, fragmented sentences, vocabulary, pronouns and prepositions, thus rendering these sentences incomplete and unintelligible. These errors affect the interpretation of the whole sentence and subsequently the overall sentence structure. This is clearly exemplified in the following Sentence 1 of WS 1: *She didn't not like the old curtains because the dark and Anne didn't not likes wallpaper because decrepit at the walls.* Clearly Student B made less grossly malformed sentences and more correct and complete sentences that contribute to an improvement in the quality of writing in terms of sentence structure.

For comparison of the target structures used and the number of grammatical mistakes, Table 5 reports the types and frequencies for each of the target structures used in Writing Samples 1 and 2.

Table 5

Types and frequencies of target structure used in Student B's Writing Samples

Types of target structure	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
after clause	0	0	0
when clause	2	3	+1
before clause	0	2	+2
while clause	0	0	0
because clause	2	0	-2
prepositional phrases	2	1	-1
sentence connectors	1	0	-1
adverbial phrases of time	2	1	-1
Total number of occurrence	9	7	-2

The number of occurrences of target structures used were similarly high (9) in WS 1, indicating that Student B was well aware of these structures even before she was introduced to them. Although Student B used five different types of target structures (when and because clauses, sentence connector, adverbial phrases of time and prepositional phrase) in nine sentences in WS 1, these sentences still contain very grave errors that render these sentences unintelligible as in the following sentences: *Because she asked her father for help and When the paint dry, they put at up the curtains*. There were 14 grammatical errors in WS 1. Like the other low proficiency students, her peers were unable to help in the revision as envisaged in the process writing.

Unlike Student A, Student B used less of both the target structures (-2) in terms of number and the different types in WS 2 (-1) such as when and before clauses, adverbial phrases of time and prepositional phrases. Subsequently, there were only 11 grammatical errors. Student B has unmistakably managed to model the target structures such as *last night*, *when* and *before* clauses in WS 2 as seen in the following sentences: *Last night, a thief broke into my house and When the thief finished taking, jewelery, he left, my house*. By doing so, Student B inadvertently used the correct tense form (see full text for examples). She also succeeded in improving the structure of sentences that model the prepositional phrases such as: *After that, my mother told, my father to call for police to come and looked for the case with the clues that we have*. In most sentences, Student B correctly used the past tense form with less errors.

It is interesting to note that although there was a drop in both the frequencies of occurrence and the use of different target structures, there was still a reduction of usage errors in WS 2. Perhaps she is able to model the target structures which stress

on verb forms and punctuation, enabling her to construct more correct and complete sentences. Thus, the data indicate that a reduction in both the number as well as the different types of target structure used, do not necessarily mean a decline in the quality of writing as seen in terms of error-free compositions.

Case Study of Student C

Considering the total scores of WS 1, Student C’s level of English proficiency is comparable to Students B and D. She too attempts to speak English during all the English lessons. She expresses her concern for the use of English especially during her coming practicum in Petaling Jaya schools. Like Student A, she participates actively in the oral sessions of the sentence modelling practice activities.

Usage and mechanics. Figure 6 shows the full texts of Student C’s Writing Samples.

Figure 6. Full texts of Student C’s Writing Samples 1 and 2

Writing Sample 1
Decorating room
<p>Last weekend Anne was look her bedroom. She was decided to redecorate her bedroom. She like colourful attractive. She didn't lik the old colour the curtains.</p> <p>She can't do it with herself. So she asked her father to help, because she can't do alone. First her father carried things to her corridor. After her father help her to clean the room. He also took off the wallpaper.</p> <p>After that she put the new wallpaper. She chose colour pink paint the walls and the cutains a blue design. Anne and her father paint the walls at the whole day. She also put up put up a new wallpaper.</p> <p>In next day they also paint a frames. When the paint dry she put up a new curtains. After when finished of all this she carried the furnirute again. When they the fined after finished work. They redecorating looks to the room it looks very attractive. Anne was very happy. The both of paint and wallpaper only spent \$16.</p>

Writing Sample 2
A thief
<p>Last night, a thief broke into my house. There was on body into the house.</p> <p>At that time, we all had gone to see the film, the thief must had broked the house between 8-11 p.m. Before leaving the house, he locked the doors and windows of course! But the thief got into the house by breaking the window at the back of the house.</p> <p>When we got home from the cinema, I noticed that the lights was on. "That's funny" I said. I'm very sure I turned off the lights before we went out from house.</p> <p>I looked in the front of the window there went nobody inside the house. When we got inside, I found the television set and some money were missing.</p> <p>Then, I called the police and the police came and looked for the clues.</p>

Table 6, based on the full texts in Figure 6 shows the overall total for usage and mechanics errors between Student C’s Writing Samples.

Table 6

Types and number of errors in Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 of Student C

Types of usage errors	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
Usage			
verb forms	15	3	-12
verb omissions	1	0	-1
Total number of usage errors	16	3	-13
Mechanics			
punctuation	8	1	-7
Total number of errors	24	4	-20

There is an impressive difference in the number of usage errors between WS 1 and WS 2 (-13) as seen in Table 6. By contrast, Student C made the most number of grammatical errors, totalling 16 in WS 1. Like the other low proficiency students, her problem was particularly in terms of verb forms. Examples of errors in usage include: *Anne was look her bedroom* and *Anne and her father paint the walls . . .* This data revealed that Student C, too did not have an understanding of the past tense forms, both active and passive forms. Such verb form errors and to a lesser extent verb omission were prevalent in every sentence (see full text on p. 48).

Again, these errors especially verb form errors were distinctively absent in WS 2. In fact, Student C showed the greatest improvement among the four low proficiency students, a reduction of 20 errors. Perhaps her enthusiasm stemmed from the fact that she was very much motivated to improve her English proficiency so that she could practice it during her practicum stint in Petaling Jaya. It is, therefore, heartening to

note that the quality of the composition in terms of usage errors shows a substantial improvement over the initial.

In terms of mechanics, there was no change in the scores for capitalization and spelling. In brief, she was given a similar score of 4 for both the samples (see Table 1). For punctuation, however, she made eight errors and a score of 1 was given in WS 1. Again, she had the most number of errors in punctuation among the four low proficiency students. Marked improvement was once more seen in punctuation in WS 2. Thus, the data reveal a consistent and positive relationship between sentence modelling practice and quality of writing in terms of error-free compositions.

Sentence structure

For sentence structure, Figure 7 below shows all the malformed sentences extracted from Writing Samples 1 and 2 of Student C.

Figure 7. Comparison of malformed sentences in Student C's Writing Samples

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
(1) She like colourful attractive.	(1) There was on body into the house.
(2) When they the fined after finished the work.	(2) At that time, we all had gone to see the film, the thief must had broked the house between 8-11 p.m.
(3) They redecorating looks to the room it looks very attractive	(3) Before leaving house, he locked the doors and windows of course.
(4) The both of paint and wallpaper only spent \$16.	(4) I'm very sure I turned off the lights before we went out from house.
	(5) I looked in the front of the window, there went nobody inside the house.
	(6) When we got inside, I found the television set and some money were missing.
	(7) Then, I called the police and the police came and looked, for the clues.

The difference in the number of malformed sentences can be distinctively seen in Figure 7. WS 1 contains a lower number of malformed sentences (4) than WS 2 (7). As above, sentences in WS 1 are more grossly malformed sentences (see p. 40 for definition) because of errors such as wrong verb forms, fragmented sentence and

missing commas. For example, *They redecorating looks to the room it looks very attractive* of Sentence 3, contains the errors mentioned, making it unintelligible and incomprehensible which then affects the overall sentence structure. In the same way, the other three sentences in WS 1 contain similar errors such as missing verbs, missing pronouns, wrong verb forms and articles. In comparison with WS 2, evidently Student C is able to construct less malformed sentences and more correct and complete sentences. Although the number of malformed sentences is more in number in WS 2, there are no grossly malformed sentences.

It is, therefore, fitting to examine if the number and the types of different target structures used have a bearing on the quality of writing. Table 7 below compares the types and the number of target structures used in Writing Samples 1 and 2 as well as the difference in the frequencies between the two samples.

Table 7

Types and number of target structure used in Student C's Writing Samples

Types of target sentence structure	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 & WS 2
after clause	2	0	-2
when clause	2	2	0
before clause	0	2	+2
while clause	0	0	0
because clause	1	0	-1
prepositional clauses	1	1	0
sentence connectors	2	2	0
adverbial phrases of time	2	2	0
Total number of occurrence	10	9	-1

From Table 7, it can be seen that Student C used these structures in ten occurrences in WS 1. Like Students A, B and D, she could use these structures even before the introduction of these structures in the sentence modelling practice exercises.

Although she used these target structures in ten instances in WS 1, there were still 24 grammatical errors. There were errors such as wrong tense form and these sentences were also devoid of commas as seen in: *After her father help her to clean the room* (see Figure 6 for more examples). In WS 2, Student C, inadvertently used the past tense form and punctuation correctly by making use of target structures such as *before*, *when*, *adverbial phrases of time* and *sentence connectors* such as: *When we got home from the cinema, I noticed that the lights was on*. Subsequently, in WS 2 she made only four errors. It should be noted that there was a decrease in the number of occurrence for each of the target structures used (-1) as well as the number of different types of target structures (-1). Student C used six different types of target structures in WS 1 but only five in WS 2. This seems to be a common trend among the lower end of the low proficiency students. She dropped the use of *after* and *because* clauses and instead she used the *before* clause. Like Students B and C, the reduction in the number of occurrence as well as the different types of target structure do not necessarily mean a deterioration in the quality of writing in terms of error free compositions. It should be pointed out here that low proficiency students can only benefit if they model such sentence patterns which focus indirectly on grammar.

Case Study of Student D

Student D's proficiency level of English is the lowest based on the total scores of WS 1. She is a very quiet girl and she does not try to speak in English. Basically, she is very much an introverted girl. Several of my attempts to get her involved in the sentence modelling exercises failed because she did not even want to try. My interview with her confirms that she is afraid of making mistakes in the class.

Usage and mechanics. Figure 8 shows the texts of Student D's WS 1 and 2.

Figure 8. Full texts of Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 of Student D

Writing Sample 1	Writing Sample 2
<p>PAINTING THE HOUSE</p> <p>Weekend, Anne was decided to redecorate bedroom. The bedroom looks attractive. She wants a new bedroom and attractive. She thought to colourful be attractive. Anne didn't like to see the old curtains. This curtains took dark. Anne didn't like see the wallpaper at walls in his house. She wants see all attractive.</p> <p>Anne was do it too much be alone. She asked her father to help. First work his father carried the corridor. After then was cleaned room. They didn't took off old wallpaper. She wants see the house attractive.</p> <p>After that Anne and father put new wallpaper. Anne choose the wallpaper pink with blue design to put up of wall. Took Anne and his father work whole day to put up a new wallpaper.</p> <p>Next day Anne and his father painted the frames, when the pain dry, they put up the curtains on frames. When finished painting Anne and his father carried at furniture again. Anne and father tired when finished redecorating. They happy to looks bedroom and the house attractive. Both be pleased when only spent \$16 to buy paint, wallpaper and curtains. The house look attractive, Anne and father happy.</p>	<p>A thief</p> <p>Last night, a thief broke my house. Nobody at the house, because at the time we all had gone to see a film. The thief must have my house 8-11 p.m.</p> <p>Before leaving, I locked the doors and windows of course! Before I come back from cinema, a thief got my house by breaking the window. When I got home from cinema, I noticed my house light on.</p> <p>I looked to front window but nobody inside. When my spouse got inside she found television set and noticed the money missing. I called the police. After that, the police came and look for clues.</p>

Table 8 displays the total usage and punctuation errors in Student D 's writing samples based on the full texts in Figure 8.

Table 8

Types and number of errors in Writing Sample 1 and Writing Sample 2 of Student D

Types of usage errors	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
Usage			
verb forms	10	2	-8
verb omissions	4	3	-1
Total number of usage errors	14	5	-9
Mechanics			
punctuation	6	3	-3
Total number of errors	20	8	-12

From Table 8, it can be seen that there are distinct differences in the number of usage errors. In WS 1, she made a total of 14 usage errors but she made only five errors in WS 2. More verb form errors and to a lesser extent verb omission were detected in most of the sentences in WS 1, a common trend too, among the low proficiency students. However, these errors, notably the verb form errors were not visible in WS 2 (-8). Again, the data is indicative of a positive association between sentence modelling practice exercises and quality of writing in terms of error free composition. Apparently, the sentence modelling approach is able to address the usage errors successfully, thus explaining the low count of usage errors in WS 2.

Like the other three low proficiency students, the maximum score of four was accorded to both capitalization and spelling in both samples (see Table 1). Once again for punctuation, a difference in score was recorded in WS 2. There were six errors in WS 1 and a score of 1 was given. But, the score of 2 in WS 2 shows a distinct improvement over WS 1 as she had only three errors in punctuation. This data is promising because it indicates that the sentence modelling practice can help to improve the quality of writing at least with punctuation.

Sentence structure

Figure 9 below shows a comparison of all the malformed sentences extracted from WS 1 and WS 2.

Figure 9. Comparison of malformed sentences in Student D’s Writing Samples

WS 1	WS 2
(1) She thought to colourful be attractive.	(1) Last night, a thief broke my house.
(2) Anne was do it too much be alone.	(2) Nobody at the house, because at the time we all had gone to see a film.
(3) First, work his father carried the corridor.	(3) The thief must have my house 8-11 p.m.
(4) After then was cleaned room.	(4) I looked to front window but nobody inside.
(5) They happy to looks bedroom and the house attractive.	

Elements of grossly malformed sentences are again prevalent in the text of WS

1. For example, in Sentence 1, *She thought to colourful be attractive* contains errors such as wrong vocabulary, missing pronouns and nouns, thus making this sentence incomprehensible. The other four sentences in WS 1 are also characterized by gross errors of verb forms, prepositions, fragmented sentences and pronouns, hence affecting the overall sentence structure. In comparison, WS 2 has less grossly malformed sentences. It should be pointed out that although the sentences in WS 2 are characterized too by a number of errors in mechanics and usage, these do not affect the intelligibility of the text as exemplified in this sentence: *Last night, a thief broke my house*. Interestingly, the number of malformed sentences is higher than Students B and C who are also identified as the lower end of the low proficiency students.

The types and number of occurrences for each of the target structures used in WS 1 and WS 2 as well as the differences in the frequencies between the two samples are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Types and frequencies of target structure used in Student D's Writing Samples

Types of target sentence structure	WS 1	WS 2	Diff. bet. WS 1 and WS 2
after clause	0	0	0
when clause	2	2	0
before clause	0	2	+2
while clause	0	0	0
because clause	0	1	+1
prepositional phrases	1	0	-1
sentence connectors	2	0	-2
adverbial phrases of time	2	1	-1
Total number of occurrence	7	6	-1

It can be seen from Table 9 that there is also a small decrease in the number of occurrences of the target structure (-1) but no change is recorded in the number of different types of target structure used between Writing Samples 1 and 2. Likewise Student D was aware of such structures even before the introduction to them as she was able to make use of four different types of target structures in seven sentences in WS 1. Student D also used four different sentence patterns such as *when*, *before* and *because* clauses and *adverbial phrases of time* in six sentences in WS 2. Yet, she is not capable of eliminating errors such as verb forms and punctuation. For instance, there were 20 grammatical errors in WS 1. Conversely, by making use of such target structures, Student D has correctly used the past tense form and the placement of the comma as seen in the following sentences: *Before leaving, I locked the doors and windows of course.*, and *When I got home from cinema, I noticed my house light on.*, thus explaining why Student D made less errors in usage and punctuation in WS 2. She made only eight errors in WS 2. Interestingly, Student D still has a substantial number of usage errors in WS 2 as compared to Students B and C, identified as the lower end of the low proficiency group. This goes on to show that her introverted nature impeded her active participation and subsequently hindered the learning process. This finding confirms that low proficiency students must be able to model the sentences that focus indirectly on grammar in order to benefit from the sentence modelling approach. Once more, the number of occurrences of the target structure or the mere use of different types of target structure does not necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of writing in terms of error free compositions. More important, it should be pointed out here that, like all the low proficiency students, they can only benefit if they model such sentence patterns which focus indirectly on grammar.

Generally, the students writing in WS 1 are characterized by the lack of grammatically correct sentences and poor sentence construction, that is, the students made glaring errors in the construction of verb forms. However, the sentences in WS 2 are evidently more comprehensible and contain less errors especially in terms of usage, as all the students have made use of the target structures exposed in the specially designed exercises (see Appendix C). Clearly these students show greater improvement in their writing by modelling the target structures.

In conclusion, a comparison of Writing Samples 1 and 2 of Students A, B, C and D confirmed that there was an overall improvement in quality especially in terms of usage, sentence structure and less on punctuation. In fact, these low proficiency students produced a narrative that was generally superior particularly in terms of the sentence structure and usage and less on punctuation. This improvement could be attributed to the use of target structures which placed more emphasis on the correct verb forms and punctuation. Thus, these low proficiency students who are exposed to the integrated sentence modelling approach demonstrate greater fluency in writing by making a lower number of usage, mechanics and sentence structure errors.

To What Extent do Students Find the Integrated

Sentence Modelling Approach Helpful?

Although the use of the sentence modelling approach helped the low proficiency students to improve in the surface level quality of their writing, an important question may be raised in this study pertaining to the perceived usefulness of this approach from the students' perspective: To what extent do students find the integrated sentence-modelling approach helpful? The answers to this research question

are made available by conducting individual interviews with the four students in Bahasa Melayu because of their low English proficiency level.

Students' opinion regarding the sentence modelling practice exercises

The students agreed that the exercises designed to teach target structures were beneficial because it enabled them to detect a pattern after reading all the sentences. They felt that they could learn the rules of grammar indirectly and make generalizations, thus making learning easier for them, specifically concerning the target structures. In the earlier part of the findings on research question 1, the data from the writing samples indicated that there was an overall improvement with usage and sentence structure (see Table 1).

From the interview, all the four students were emphatic that the sentence modelling approach was helpful in improving their writing (see Appendix F). These low proficiency students recognized the usefulness of the model sentences in the practice exercises that provided a pattern they could follow. All the four students felt that they were able to practice and model the sentence patterns. Students C and D, in particular, mentioned they needed the models as reference. All four of them also noticed that writing was easier because they knew how to make use of the target structures in their compositions. Moreover, all the students realised that they made fewer mistakes with verb forms if they modelled the target structures such as the adverbial clauses of time. This finding is consistent with findings by Ellis (1993) on grammar activities as “activities which encourage learners with the help of the teacher, to try to discover a particular grammar rule, to learn about grammar point for themselves” (ibid:10 in Hopkins and Nettle, 1994).

However, Student D was less confident about her progress. She felt she had made some progress but it was not sufficient. In fact, Students B and D had their reservations about applying the *rules* to writing. Although they agreed that they were able to apply the rules, essentially they felt that they had not mastered the use of the model sentences to enable them to write an error-free composition. This is not surprising in the case of Student D because the improvement in her writing is only minimal and the improvement in Student B's writing is also lower compared to Students A and C. They commented that there were still a number of errors in their final compositions. This seemed to confirm the earlier finding of this study that the students may have improved with usage but they had not mastered the use of past tense yet. Nevertheless, they were able to detect some differences in the way they carried out the final writing task. What is important is that they perceived writing the final draft to be more interesting because they were less anxious with the usage errors and mechanics of writing.

The students also pointed out that they enjoyed constructing sentences with the target structures. These exercises do not contain abstract terminology and therefore are able to reduce the writing fears among these low proficiency students. It also indicates that once the students understood from examples of model sentences how to proceed with the exercises, it is possible to "manipulate language structures at their own level of understanding" (Stotsky, 1975, p. 58).

Students' preference of the writing approach

Students' responses concerning their preference of the writing approach indicate a strong concern for a hybrid of both the process and sentence modelling approach (see Appendix G). These low proficiency students preferred a marriage

between the process writing and sentence modelling approach. The students in the present study were in favour of the hybrid approach because of their desire to improve their writing and their belief that successful writing was one which was error-free.

More specifically, Students A and C indicated that they preferred the sentence modelling approach in the initial stages because the teacher gave clear explanations and the sequenced practice exercises integrated with listening, speaking, reading allowed them to be aware of the grammatical rules in writing. This finding is important to the low proficiency students because the sentence modelling practice exercises made them focus on one aspect of writing at a time, that is, usage, mechanics and sentence structure.

On the other hand, all the four students also observed that the process approach would definitely help them to generate more ideas, thus giving them more motivation and confidence while writing. This is an interesting finding because it shows that the low proficiency students need the sentence modelling approach initially. Then, this approach coupled with process writing would positively enhance writing. This finding is consistent with the findings of Caudery (1995) that “process approach may need some adaptation for the second language classroom”.

Students B and D, on the other hand, had more reservations for the sentence modelling approach compared to Students A and C even though they felt there was an improvement in their final compositions. Both Students B and D felt that they needed more written exercises for reinforcement to further improve their writing ([sic] untuk pengukuhan, beri latihan tulisan). It therefore, shows that the lower end of the low proficiency students preferred more practice exercises to further reinforce what they had learned. Clearly, even from the small number of respondents to this questionnaire,

low proficiency students prefer to adopt a *process and product* approach but they definitely find the sentence modelling approach more helpful..

Other issues emerged from the questionnaire. Students A and C had also shown much keenness to try something new. Incidentally, both of them were extroverted in nature and they were observed to be particularly interested in the practice exercises. Student C had made the greatest gains because she was motivated to use English in her practicum. This is unlike Student D who had only minimal improvement in the final writing sample. Student D, being an introverted girl, was afraid of making mistakes in the class. Thus, she did not participate actively in the sentence modelling exercises integrated with speaking, listening and reading activities that focused on grammar indirectly.

In sum, the results indicate that model sentence with target structures is a logical strategy for low proficiency students, at least in terms of reduction in surface level errors. And generally, motivated students and better students fared better than students who are introverted and less motivated.