

INCORPORATING INTELLECTUAL PLAYFULNESS
IN WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR HIGH ABILITY ESL
STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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for High Ability ESL Students in Malaysian Secondary Schools

Field of Study: **Teaching of English as Second Language (TESL)**

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore intellectual playfulness a construct adapted from Fine (2014) which marries open-ended tasks with opportunities for risk-taking and complete engagement. The study has implemented playfulness and ambitious instruction into teaching of writing of high ability students. It is an effort to conceptualize an alternate reality for high ability students to move towards learning dispositions and have cognitive rigor and pleasurable engagement in ESL writing classroom. The study was conducted using qualitative research approach where analysis done using interviews, classroom interactions, students' and researcher's journal entries and students' compositions. The findings has indicated the phrase 'What if...' that used as instructions in the writing tasks has promoted learning and self-discovery among high ability students in the writing classroom. In searching the changes of intellectual playfulness from three qualities that is stated in Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness, the findings has revealed open-endedness gave students freedom and flexibility to move and engage in higher order skills as well as the empowerment to explore their thoughts without restrictions. The findings further specified students were moving from the continuum of being risk-adverse to being risk-takers and redesigning their knowledge i.e writing beyond examination needs in the writing tasks. They were also attentive and focused in the writing lessons and seem to lose track of time since they completely absorbed or engaged in the task. The three qualities of intellectual playfulness explored in this study has provided a promising platform for high ability adolescents in conceptualizing a pedagogy that links cognitive rigor and engagement in writing as suggested by Fine (2014). The findings has highlighted intellectual playfulness

extended students horizon beyond the text book knowledge to real-world experiences and promoting creativity in their writing. The study also presented contributions to individual qualities through high cognitive flexibility, high learning goal orientations and high cognitive engagement which constitute a new learning disposition in the context of writing in school that enables students to discuss more effectively the affordances of engaging with intellectual playfulness. It is hoped that the findings of this research rejuvenates high schools to boost rigor of traditional academic of knowledge and provides opportunities for high ability students to navigate writing with rigor and pleasure in ESL writing classroom.

Penerapan ‘Intellectual Playfulness’ dalam Pengajaran Penulisan untuk Murid ‘ESL’ Berkeupayaan Tinggi di Sekolah Menengah

Abstrak

Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk meneroka ‘intellectual playfulness’ yang diadaptasi daripada konstruk Fine (2014) yang menyatukan tugas terbuka dengan menyediakan peluang untuk pengambilan risiko dan penglibatan sepenuhnya. Kajian ini mengimplementasikan kaedah ‘playfulness’ dan instruksional yang mendorong ke dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran penulisan murid berkeupayaan tinggi. Ia adalah satu usaha untuk mengkonseptualisasi satu realiti alternatif untuk murid-murid keupayaan tinggi untuk berubah ke arah sifat pembelajaran dan mempunyai keterlibatan kognitif dan penglibatan yang menyeronokkan dalam kelas menulis ESL. Kajian ini dijalankan menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kualitatif di mana analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan temuduga, interaksi kelas, catatan jurnal murid dan penyelidik dan karangan murid. Penemuan ini menunjukkan frasa ‘Bagaimana jika...’ yang digunakan sebagai instruksi dalam tugas penulisan telah mempromosikan pembelajaran dan penemuan diri di kalangan murid keupayaan tinggi dalam kelas penulisan. Dalam mencari laluan ‘intellectual playfulness’ dari tiga sifat yang dinyatakan dalam Teori ‘Fine of Intellectual Playfulness’, penemuan-penemuan yang mendedahkan keterbukaan memberi murid kebebasan dan fleksibiliti untuk berubah dan terlibat dalam kemahiran aras yang lebih tinggi serta pemberdayaan untuk meneroka pemikiran mereka tanpa batasan. Penemuan ini seterusnya menunjukkan murid bergerak daripada kontinum pengambil tidak berisiko kepada pengambil berani berisiko dan merancang semula pengetahuan mereka i.e menulis di sebalik keperluan peperiksaan dalam tugas menulis karangan. Mereka juga memberi penuh perhatian dan fokus dalam pembelajaran menulis dan ketidaksedaran masa berlalu kerana terbenam atau terlibat sepenuhnya

dalam tugas. Ketiga-tiga sifat 'intellectual playfulness' yang diterokai dalam penyelidikan ini memberikan platform yang menjanjikan untuk remaja yang berupaya tinggi dalam mengkonseptualisasikan pedagogi yang menghubungkan kognitif dan penglibatan sepenuhnya secara bertulis seperti yang dicadangkan oleh Fine (2014). Di samping itu, penemuan ini menonjolkan 'intellectual playfulness' yang memperluaskan horizon murid dalam melangkaui pengetahuan buku teks kepada pengalaman dunia nyata dan mempromosikan kreativiti dalam penulisan mereka. Kajian ini turut menunjukkan sumbangan terhadap kualiti individu melalui fleksibiliti kognitif yang tinggi, orientasi matlamat pembelajaran yang tinggi dan penglibatan kognitif yang tinggi yang membentuk sifat pembelajaran baru dalam konteks penulisan di sekolah, membolehkan para murid membincangkan dengan lebih berkesan kemampuan untuk melibatkan diri dengan keseronakan intelektual. Diharapkan hasil kajian ini dapat menghidupkan semula sekolah menengah untuk meningkatkan keterampilan pengetahuan akademik tradisional dalam penulisan dan menyediakan peluang untuk murid berkemampuan tinggi mengemudi penulisan yang rapi dan mendapat keseronokan di dalam kelas penulisan ESL.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 A Vignette

It was Thursday. I had English with my 4 Science One the last two periods. The students in this class had been streamed based on their PMR (Lower Secondary Examination) examination results. PMR is a public examination that all the students were required to take. This group of students took this examination previous year and had obtained straight 'As' (7 'As') as well as gained 'A' for English language. In the school, this students were labelled as the crème of the crops because of their overall excellent results for all the subjects in PMR examination.

It was a writing lesson and as usual most of the students were writing quietly in my classroom, which is a common scenario during the English writing period. Some had completed their essays and were working on other subjects that were due soon; some met with me for extra help. Suddenly, a group of students sitting at the back of the class found a printed paper near the Book Corner.

"Wow, Ms. Hema, did you see this?" one girl asked and brought the paper to me. "Do you know who wrote it?" "It looks like some type of fanfic," her friend guesses. "It really has some specific details." She showed me the document. "Oh my God! It is interesting right, teacher?"

Gwen (a female student) excitedly began to describe to her friends how fanfiction worked. Her friend Pauline (a female student who sits next to Gwen), shared some ideas as well. Looking at the group of students' getting enthused, I called both of the girls to write about fanfics at the computer in the classroom. I did this in the hope of documenting the students' understandings more fully. Both of them obliged, and wrote a dialogue of one page which looked like an online chat. The dialogue had

abbreviations and emoticons (symbols typed to express feelings) and a back-and-forth structure. The rest of the students suddenly became active and discussion started in the classroom. Seeing, such enthusiasm on the issue I decided to let them speak their hearts out after the matter.

Gwen started the conversation by giving brief definition of fanfics, and followed by an elaboration from Pauline:

Gwen: First of all.... A Fanfic is something like...you know a story or a dream or things that just occurred to 'pop 'into your mind. As for myself, I normally like to write about my dreams... but most people don't understand me.... except for Pauline ...hmmm...she loves to read my fanfics...

Pauline: For me Fanfics is like a story that you make up...it can be anyone like for me, I fancy cartoon characters or for you guys maybe even a character from a video game. It can be any genre that you want. I have read a lot of fanfics and trust me... some are really stupid and ridiculous, whereas the rest are weepies.

The other students agreed with them and one of the students suddenly said,

'Why can't we write something fun like fanfic than this typical essay of speech, that is so bore and mundane? Nicholas (a male student), suddenly made a sly comment

"Well teacher, why not give us something new, challenging and fun to write".

The rest of the students in the class agreed with him. Then one of the girls retorted,

"Teacher, will you allow us to write something of our interest in the classroom?"

The questions the students raised were really intriguing. I knew the voices of these high ability students in this kind of learning environment had remained somewhat unheard. And I knew from tradition, high ability students who perceived the ease of achieving highest grade in school settings had placed them at peril of becoming grade-orientated and reiterating work previously known, than being driven to learn

new things that could prepare them for competitive world of higher education. However, all this evoked a number of questions in me: How could students move away from the norm that writing was completed in school with the awareness of meeting the demand of a grading system? Why did students feel writing have become a ‘bore’ chore in their school life? Why did the students feel teachers are not giving them the freedom to write something of their interest? What did they mean when they said, “why not give us something new, challenging and fun to write?”

1.2 Context of the Study

In the vignette, none of the students have denied that writing had become an activity of least interest to them. The situation above indicates that as how low proficiency writers deserve support to master writing skills, the high ability writers deserve support for challenging and engaging tasks to develop and transform their writing into a meaningful one and eventually making them a writer of the 21st century.

Literacy is no longer simply about comprehension and writing (Shoffner, de Oliveira, & Angus, 2010). Redefined, literacy is multimodal; the skill set of the student includes various formal and informal expressions and communications, whether spoken, gestured, written, or graphic (Olthouse & Miller, 2012). Literacy in the digital age is also more on social and writing for a global audience differs from paper/pencil writing in a classroom (Williams, 2008). There is a general agreement in the literature that there is less evidence about writing than about reading (Fisher, 2012). International studies such as the Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) use indicators from reading as proxy measures for literacy and do not include writing in their assessments.

Sommers (2002 cited in Foo, 2007) has pointed that writing is an important learning tool because it helps students to understand ideas and concepts better. Besides, writing is an important means that help students actively change inert knowledge and information in their minds into language. Through writing ideas can be explained and thoughts made noticeable. Furthermore, Emig (1977 cited in Protherough, 1983, p. 7) observed writing is a skill which summons higher cognition functions like analysis and synthesis, either as a process or product, which contributes to learning uniquely as well as these higher cognitive functions develop most fully with the support of written language. Taking this into consideration, it can be surmised that writing most probably plays a conclusive role in determining success of a student as one moves on the higher domains of educational achievement.

Writing is an intentional, social communication that involves literacy as well (Kok & Miller, 2007). It is well pointed that writing encourages students to interrogate one's interpretations of others' utterances as well as of one's own personal experiences and beliefs in order to add to the ongoing dialogue in some way that enriches the community's understanding of the relevant area of experience (as cited in Haneda & Wells, 2012). This is exactly what literacy serves in the lives of people and institutions. Hence, Zamel (1983), a pioneer in ESL writing research, feels writing process as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (p.165).

Some researches in the field of writing such as Cutler and Graham (2008), Pollington, Wilcox and Morrison (2001) also have characterized traditional instruction in teaching of writing typically based on textbooks or worksheets, organized around a series of skills and instruction determined by the teacher. Furthermore, students did not select topics and audience was limited to the teacher. On the other hand, students

find it difficult to resolve the conflict between what they were required to write in school and what they wanted to write for themselves. Time constraints often caused students to "go through the motions" to complete a school writing according to a prescribed procedure (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Also, students are aware that they can be intellectually lazy as they churned out school writing according to the required format; on their own, their writing led them to probe below the surface (Winebrenner, 2001). Within the student's frustrations and desires lies the question: Why do many English teachers do not engage their students in a discourse on the aesthetics of writing?

A modernist writing curriculum failed to encourage proficient writers because it did not allow students the chance to experiment with various approaches beyond the traditional structure (Wartchow & Gustavson, 1999, p.20). By encouraging students to move beyond convenient structures, teachers can help them discover that what they have to say was important and there were many ways to organize their thoughts to form convincing, coherent arguments. The next section discusses the scenario of writing in Malaysian high school.

1.2.1 Writing in Malaysian High School

Although the teaching of writing has undergone major changes in the last two decades, Malaysian ESL students still appear to be receiving inadequate or outmoded writing instructions (Kok & Miller, 2007). Since 1994, Chitravelu had mourned the sad state of concerns that overwhelms in Malaysian writing classes because "little instruction in writing is offered at primary and secondary school levels" and that "writing was seen as a supplementary skill supporting the learning of grammar and, rarely as a means of expressing comprehension"(p.28). Teachers believe that 'practice makes perfect' and train students to learn in a certain manner in which they are expected to

respond in predictable ways rather than to write and think critically (Kok & Miller, 2007). Therefore, teaching of writing in Malaysian classrooms appear to be teacher-centred though ample of efforts have been taken by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia to reform teaching of writing.

It is not difficult to outline a justification for such grimness as most classes are with a lot of students, an ancient practice of 'teaching as telling', the pressures postured by examinations which encourages artificial content coverage. Zamel (1985) also described that ESL teachers in particular "overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers" (p.86). Thus, students' composition are only seen as products to be judged solely for grades. This L1 phenomenon is also revealed in the Malaysian ESL context, largely flourished by an education system that places substantial importance on examinations as the only yardstick for determining academic achievement. Under such a situation, students become operators of the learnt language structure and teachers become the editors or proof readers who are interested in accuracy of language than skills improvement that eventually reduces students' creativity in writing activities (Luchini, 2003). When this happens, the students get the impression that eventually it is what they need to say to get good grades is important than how they say it. As a result, students tend to write what they think their teachers would consent and deprive themselves from voicing out their own expressions (Kok & Miller, 2007).

In Malaysian school scenario, examinations are treated very seriously. Tests and examinations are normal fare throughout the school life of a typical student. Kok and Miller (2007) also expressed that teacher's paid closer attention to classes that are taking public examinations, and in particular to students place in top classes. Students are trained to score as can be seen from the many examination revision books

published, and the seminars and holiday camps that teach them examination techniques for particular school subjects, as well as to analyse past questions and improve memory skills (Kok & Miller, 2007). These techniques also raise students' awareness of examiners' expectations and marking schemes. For example, in the area of essay writing, students are reminded that grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, content, length, style and organisation are the evaluation criteria.

With this emphasis on succeeding in examinations, most Malaysian students experience school as preparation for these, rather than as gaining a broad education. Many students worry more about test marks than anything else (Kok & Miller, 2007). This is aided by the practice of many teachers who operated from a positivist standpoint on knowledge and learning. Kok and Miller (2007) describe that teacher is the authority, transmitting truths that is unproblematic in a one-way flow of information to their students. Besides, many Malaysian teachers attune by the use of drills, rote learning, memorising of model answers and homework (Kok & Miller, 2007). Underlying most of work is the teachers' believe that 'practice makes perfect' and train students to learn in a certain manner. Hence, students are expected to respond in predictable ways rather than to write and think critically.

Therefore, Hussin (1998, cited in Kok & Miller, 2007) describes that Malaysian students as having 'diffusive' and 'passive' mental modes. Being passive is reflected in a quiet manner in which students pay attention in class. Even, when there is a legitimate point to be made or question to be asked, students mostly choose to remain silent. There is usually no confrontation between teachers and students. Koo (2004) claims that many Malaysian students have the practice of 'submissive literacy' rather than 'assertive literacy'. As the term suggested, submissive literacy tends not to question information received or its sources. On the other hand, Koo (2004) defines

assertive literacy is a practice where the participant “exercises some responsibility for the origin of ideas in the source of text and comments upon it or has some reasoned commitment to or detachment from the source text” (p.77).

Holme (2004) proposes that writing should be an everyday reality and meaningful in creating a writing rich environment. So, the class becomes a community of writers and students respond positively to a supportive writing atmosphere (p.64). Besides, Holme (2004) claims immaterial of their age or level of ability, students needed to feel that writing is fun. In short, they should be viewed as authors and real writers by teachers and given opportunities to engage in writing as "professionals" do. This research seeks to address these concerns especially among ESL high ability students in secondary school.

1.2.2 High Ability Students and Writing

Every student is unique and exhibits his or her own personality, “giftedness” or “high ability” characteristics present themselves differently. A high ability student may be one who has strengths in particular academic areas but is average (or struggles) in others. There are many different types of giftedness beyond the advanced learner, which is giftedness across a broad spectrum of children with varying abilities, for instance twice exceptional students who are high ability learners, learning disabled kids whose abilities may be masked by socioeconomic factors and finally gifted under-achievers who have not been sufficiently stimulated and challenged (Indiana Association for the Gifted).

While, it is difficult to define giftedness or high ability in a single statement, there seems to be a handful of perspectives that may be used to gain a better understanding. In this research, the gifted students are not referring to the disabled kids or gifted under-achievers. The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education

Act and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (2002) defined learners with gifts and talents as:

Children and youths who give evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to develop such capabilities fully. (p.4)

According to National Association for Gifted Children, a gifted person is someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression. Another definition given by the Indiana Code is a student with high abilities as one who:

performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests. (p.4)

In terms of language learning, these learners may excel in many language arts areas from reading and literary analysis to creative writing, poetry, and prose (National Association for Gifted Children). There are challenges involved in educating these high ability children as their talents and characteristics may present themselves in many different ways. Olthouse (2012, cited in De Olivera & Pereira, 2015) describes these students need specifically personalised instruction and given opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth and complexity (than just being given “more” work) so, they are able to continue learning at a hastened pace. High ability or potential learners have the potential for showing an exceptional level of performance, thus it is crucial to provide a continuum of appropriate education so they may strive to reach their true potentials.

Gross (2004) points that researchers have specified that learning needs of numerous gifted students are not met in the typical classroom which makes them to barely experience academic challenges. Thus, this scenario encourages them to seek the easy path and work well below their true potentials (Siegle & McCoach, 2001; Winebrenner, 2001). To illustrate this scenario, a young bright second grader attributes his failure to the fact that he is not given any opportunities to attempt something new and complex (Rogers, 2007).

Besides, Olthouse (2012b) has pointed out that high ability writers have specific characteristics such as intellectual precocity with language which means writers often have above-average reading ability, broad reading interests, and rapid learning. In addition, in the digital age, they write in new and varied formats (Olthouse & Miller, 2012a). Keeping in mind these characteristics that can be supported and enhanced, these students can move beyond writing for another "A" to writing that can be heard and make a contribution as they want. This means, the freedom to try out new formats rather than be restricted to specific structures or formulas (Olthouse, 2012b).

Furthermore, Callahan (2005) has urged educators to consider ways to guide the delivery of instruction of gifted students from underrepresented population. In United States, Batalova and McHug (2010), describe finding effective ways to educate high-ability English Language Learner remain an important task since the number of such students are increasing. In line with this, De Olivera and Pereira (2015) suggest that high-potential students should receive instruction that includes advanced educational opportunities whereby teachers can provide challenging materials that supports their contents and English language development simultaneously. So, it is crucial to create lessons and instruction substantively different that allows these students to investigate materials with greater depth and complexity which makes

students to be engaged in both rigor and pleasurable classroom. Hence, intellectual playfulness might be useful in promoting in-depth learning and enable high ability students to re-conceptualize existing knowledge and/or generate new understanding in writing. Throughout the discussion above, it is evident that researcher has used different terms such as “gifted”, “talented”, “high ability” and “high potential” in describing students that can be considered to have higher cognitive abilities.

Therefore, the Indiana Association for the Gifted surmised, students’ “giftedness” or “high ability” or “high-potential” can affect a broad spectrum of their life’s (such as leadership skills or the ability to think creatively) but can also be very specific (such as a special aptitude in math or reading). Upon scrutiny, these terms in this research is related to describe a group of individuals who are higher than their peers in terms of abilities and potentials academically. For the purpose of uniformity, this research uses the term “high ability adolescent” in referring to adolescents whose academic abilities and potentials are greater than those of their peers.

Based on the above discussion, if we look at teaching of English in the area of writing many researcher and teachers are more focused on students who struggle with writing. Thus, a more challenging issue which has not been paid a lot of attention by many researcher is on how to deal with students who have the ability of being exceptional writers. This population of students may exhibit skills that are often overlooked by simply focusing on grade level standardized assessments. Just as a struggling writer warrants support to master in writing, the high ability students also deserve an opening to help them develop and nurture their unique talents in writing.

This research aims at exploring intellectual playfulness that may contribute to learning goals (develop new skills, master new tasks or understand new things) and transformation in high ability adolescents' compositions. As such, this study adapt and explore Fine's suggestions that playfulness can be used to create a secondary instruction in teaching of writing especially for adolescents. She terms the instruction as intellectually playful that could probe students to explore and experiment in writing. More specially, Fine (2014) defines intellectual playfulness as instruction organized around tasks that are open ended and have many effective strategies, absorbing in the sense of supporting immersive "flow" experiences (Csikszentmihalyi,1997) and finally opportunities for intellectual risk taking. Using these three qualities: open ended, absorbing and risk taking is one way that exceptionally high ability writers in secondary school can be challenged in today's classrooms and may provide a promising platform for high ability adolescents in conceptualizing a pedagogy that links engagement and cognitive rigor that align with their needs and capabilities in writing (Fine, 2014).

Since, studies in this important area is greatly lacking with local context, this research is unified by a commitment in giving high ability students opportunities to engage in both rigor and pleasure classroom by infusing intellectual playfulness in teaching of writing. In this regard, it is the variation of students' experiences with regards to emerging practises and dispositions which most probably makes a difference. In other words students' experiences are of central interest to this research.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Much of second language writing research conducted in the last 35 years focused on either the aspects of composing or the social-cultural context of writing (Scardamalia & Bereitmer, 1987; Schultz & Fecho, 2000, Graham, 2006a; Prior, 2006), the role of motivation as well as self-efficacy variables on writing (Hayes, 1996; Zimmerman & Reisemberg, 1997; Klaussen, 2002; Pajares, 2003), the role of topic interest for writing (Albin, Benton & Khramtva, 1996; Hidi, in press) and learning disabilities (Graham & Perin, 2007b). Accordingly, some of the researches done in Malaysia on second language writing are on English essay writing and common errors among rural students (Marlyna Maros et al, 2007; Saadiyah Darus & Kaladevi Subramanian, 2009), errors interference of the Malay grammar and use of Bahasa Malaysia in teaching of writing in English (Razianna Abdul Rahman, 2005; Siti Hamin Stapa & Abdul Hameed Abdul Majid, 2006; Marlyna Maros et al, 2007; Mohd Sofi Ali, 2008) and applying correct grammatical rules in writings (Saadiyah Darus & Kaladevi, 2009). However, most of the previous researches on adolescent writing are conducted with low proficiency writers and minimal research attention seem to be directed towards high ability adolescent writers. Thus, high ability students appear to be strikingly under-researched and under-represented group of critical stake holders for second language writing (Pei-Ling Tan, 2009).

Many high ability students also do not have their learning needs met in the typical classroom and rarely experience academic challenge or rigor, which does not bode well for their involvement in the academic talent development process (Archambault et.al., 1993; Gross, 2004). Therefore, research has suggested that the “unchallenging curriculum” has had a negative effect on high ability students because they tend to work well below their true potentials and complacent with their safe

performance learning environment (Siegle & McCoach, 2001; Winebrenner, 2001). In Malaysian context, Koo (2004) claims that Malaysian high ability students practice 'submissive literacy' (tends not to question information received or its sources) than 'assertive literacy' (exercises some responsibility for the origin of ideas in the source of text and comments upon it) in writing as they respond in set ways to examination questions to secure good grades. However, researchers argue that the realistic appraisal of high ability students' academic ability is to prepare them for the competitive world in higher education (McCoach & Seigle, 2003; Gross, 2004; Rogers, 2005, 2007). Unfortunately, findings from studies show dominated discussions of students focusing on conventional writing for school and examination purposes that do not encourage in developing their writing skills beyond these requirements.

Findings of research appears to be pointing towards one direction; what seems to be missing in high ability adolescents is higher learning goals (cognitive rigor) and affective experience of engaging pleasurable in academic work. To ignore the importance of either one of these dimensions is to do students a weighty disfavoured (Fine, 2014). The Partnership for the 21st Century Skills (2014) articulates that creativity, imagination and play as crucial 21st century student outcomes. However, these results are more unclear from young people's classrooms and lives (Elkind, 2007; Brown, 2009; Gray, 2013) due to tapering of school curricula and increase pressure for testing. This research is grounded on these convictions and looks at the area of playfulness to give students a beginning point for new learning in both the cognitive and affective domains.

Playfulness is believed to be a trait that applies throughout lifetime, but few have discovered, determining and defining playfulness beyond early childhood (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Bundy, Nelson, Metzger & Bingaman, 2001; Barnett, 2007). However, understanding the role of playfulness among children, adolescents, and adults have been explored recently (Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005; Barnett, 2011; Saunders, Sayer & Staempfli, 2007). These are some findings of research that indicate positive connections between literacy, learning and play, at elementary level - using language to develop scripts through sociodramatic play, learning more complex knowledge through play and encouraging literacy development (reading and writing) through symbolic play (Gentile & Hoot, 1983; Isenberg & Jacob, 1983; Hall, 1991), at adolescents stage incorporating good learning principles through video games (Gee, 2005; Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008), cognitive playfulness promoting creative capacity (Pei-Ling Tan, 2009) and at adults level enhancing creativity and spontaneity (Glynn & Webster, 1993; Barnett, 2007) and better academic achievement (Proyer, 2011a). Furthermore, findings also show that playfulness can effect in individual and organizational learning (Lieberman, 1977) and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

In Malaysian context, there appears to be no indications of literature that sightsees play and playfulness among adolescents in a learning context. In sum, playfulness and literacy has been studied primarily with children, but literature on adult playfulness is less plentiful and even lesser on adolescents. Nonetheless, there seems to be a gap in the literature when it comes to examining play as a contributor to development of L2 writing in adolescents.

As it is argued, dimension of play can contribute to important learning goals but such potentials have not been fully realised or explored in many educational contexts including in the middle grades (Gee, 2005; Steinkuchler & Duncan, 2008; Bergen & Fromberg, 2009; Adachi & Willoughby, 2013). Conklin (2014) has suggested play in classrooms may point to vital qualities of instruction that are largely missing especially in today's middle grade classrooms and framework of teaching. The playfulness of interest in the current study, while most likely is related to play of adolescents, is directing on the concept of intellectual playfulness by Fine (2014) i.e. instruction organized around tasks that are open ended, absorbing and intellectual risk-taking which has been adapted for this research. It is this conception of play as an exploratory, intrinsic, individual drive that is the focus of the current study. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the potential benefits of intellectual playfulness in relation to high ability adolescents writing in classroom.

1.4 Current Study

Play is a multifaceted construct existing on multiple levels, and the current study is focused on intellectual playfulness – a term given by Fine (2014). The play of interest in the present study, is related to play of adolescents and more on disposition dimension of play. In this study, the meaning of intellectual playfulness is two-fold. Firstly, it is what teacher researcher incorporates into writing instruction (playfulness) to promote it among students. Secondly, it is the students' cognitive rigor that may develop while participating in the writing class.

In this research, the word playfulness is used to refer to the writing instruction because of its non-literality and exists well beyond the world of pedagogy and theory, plus it has ineffaceable association with both positive engagement and open-ended thinking (Huizinga, 1971; Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003) as well as to take a

playful stance is to depart from what is predictable or mandated in order to engage in pleasurable improvisation (Fine, 2014). At a more physical level, however, there is also tradition of empirical research that connects the divergent nature of playful activities to academic learning in young children, and an emerging conversation about the need for professional workers who possess skills associated with playfulness (Fine, 2014). Looking into these two components of literature exposes a baffling gap surrounding playfulness when it comes to adolescents learners. Hence, perhaps intellectual playfulness might be a promising way to infuse high school classrooms with opportunities that support both rigor and pleasure.

This study also plots approaches in employing what Cohen (2011, p.278) and others have referred to as “ambitious” instruction. This instruction is organized around what traditional taxonomies classify as high-order cognitive processes (Bloom, 1956; Marzano & Kendall, 2007) and is designed to support students with complex essential questions (Sizer & Sizer, 2000). Such goals move beyond the ‘back to basics’ focus on current policies and high-stakes tests. Most classrooms are spaces to submissively sit and listen as well as contains tasks that ask students to remember or minimally apply what they have been told. Teachers cover the content, but not the level of thinking that is demanded for that content so students get the same learning experiences as they are getting in the past (Jackson, 2012). Mehta and Fine (2012) describe this current policies encourage students toward mastery by tightly controlling the learning process.

At this moment, to visualise classrooms where students doing rigorous work and also being pleurably engaged in the process is like asking too much. Fine (2014) stresses that cognitive rigor is important, but affective experience is also essential for engaging pleurably in academic work. Hence, to disregard the importance of either

one of these scopes when it comes to writing is to do students a weighty disfavoured. The study is grounded in these convictions.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore intellectual playfulness that may contribute towards learning dispositions of learning goals (develop new skills, master new tasks or understand new things) and facilitate in high ability adolescents' composition writing. As shown in figure 1.1, intellectual playfulness refers to a type of cognitive quality that centrally involves being a risk-taker, undertaking willingly open-ended tasks and being absorbed (complete engagement). Therefore, the study hopes to guide high ability students by giving opportunities to move beyond form and content in writing to have cognitive rigor and engagement as mutual supportive priorities when intellectual playfulness is incorporated into the pedagogy. In other words, creating an academic rigor in the ESL writing classroom.

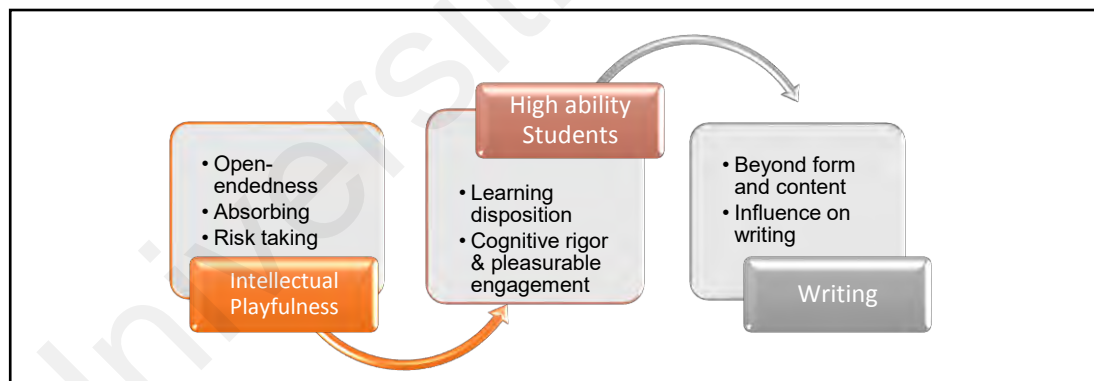


Figure 1.1 Focus of the Study

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

Research Objective 1: To investigate how intellectual playfulness is acquired among high ability students during the writing lesson in a Malaysian ESL writing classroom.

Research Objective 2: To study how intellectual playfulness can influence in high ability students compositions.

1.7 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do high ability students acquire intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing class where it is promoted?

Research Question 2: How does the intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class help them with writing?

1.8 Theoretical Framework

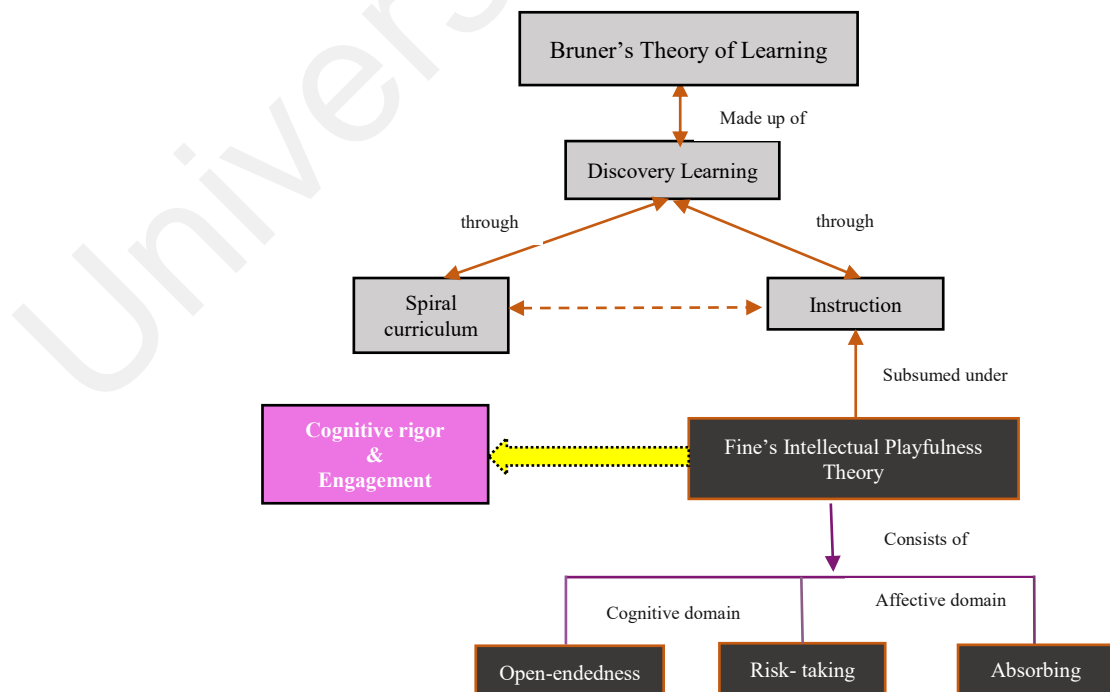


Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework draws on the concept of intellectual playfulness in a school environment to show the significance of play as a learning disposition that establishes dynamic engagement with new learning developments despite the constraints of a traditional learning culture. Since, intellectual playfulness has not been studied yet in the adolescents classroom context, there is ambiguity about which conceptualization of play would be most helpful in exploring intellectual playfulness in this specific context.

Due to the fact, that the main topic of this study is intellectual playfulness, it is necessary to have a theoretical framework that is centred on some theory or concept of play. According to Bjorklund and Pellegrini (2000), play appears to be an activity that is universal (and adaptive) for children until adolescence. Therefore, researcher works from within the paradigm of play as learning disposition, which is one's dispositional approach - engagement and orientation to the activity (Krasnor & Pepler, 1980; Rubin et al., 1983). As such, a close examination of Fine's theory on intellectual playfulness is viewed in this research. This study also explores adolescents learning writing through Bruner's theory of learning to provide a platform for analysis and discussions. The framework presented in the following section exposes the lenses through which intellectual playfulness is viewed in this study.

Bruner's theory of learning is converged in this framework to espouse intellectual playfulness. Bruner emphasizes discovery learning as important because it provides opportunities for students to construct their own meaning rather than simply memorizing the given meaning (Bruner, 1961). Opportunities are provided for students to construct new knowledge and new meaning from authentic experiences. Discovery learning makes students as active, engaged participants in the process, promotes autonomy, responsibility and independence as well as enhance their intrinsic

motivation for learning. This learning is more resistant to forgetting (Bruner, 1961). In other words, for Bruner learning is a very active process in which the students are directly involved in the manipulation of the content which they can select and transform. Therefore, to be successful in learning, the learners must be actively engaged in the process, not sitting quietly and listening to a teacher explain something (Bruner, 1961). Discovery learning can be seen through the notions of instruction and spiral curriculum that plays an important role in Bruner's theory. It creates an environment in which one can discover new knowledge for oneself.

Spiral curriculum enables students to construct more sophisticated understandings. After mastery of the initial topic, the student "spirals upwards" as the new knowledge is introduced in next lessons, enabling him to reinforce what is already learned (Bruner, 1960). In other words, learners re-visit ideas but at increasingly complex level and in the end, a rich breadth and depth of knowledge should be achieved (Bruner, 1961). Thus, it is hoped with intellectual playfulness what the students gradually achieve is a rich breadth and depth of information that seem to be not normally evident in curricula.

Another notion in this theory is instruction. The purpose of instruction is not to tell the students what they ought to learn but rather to create an interesting, conducive and stimulating environment in which they can discover knowledge with the teacher's support (Bruner, 1973). The researcher adapts four characteristics of the theory in this study. The instruction is determined to make sure it relates to learners' predisposition and facilitate interest towards learning. Next, the content is planned accordingly, so it can be easily grasped by the learner. Thirdly, in order to be advanced in learning, learners must be interested in the materials. Therefore, materials are chosen based on popular culture and is presented in sequence to provide opportunities to acquire,

transform and transfer learning. Finally, learning does not only occur when one finds the right answers but also occurs through failure. Bruner (1961) believes grades are not helpful in learning process and learners must “experience success and failure as information” (p. 26) as well as it is the teacher’s responsibility to provide feedback since without it learning is incomplete.

In addition, Fine’s Theory of Intellectual Playfulness in this research can be subsumed under the notion of instruction in Bruner’s Theory as the components are related. Fine’s Theory is introduced in search for deeper learning in high school and lamenting the lack of instruction that invites students into pleasurable open-ended thinking. Fine theorizes that a promising path forward would be pursuing instruction that involves intellectual playfulness – a construct that marries open-ended problem solving with opportunities for risk taking and absorbing/flow that promises a platform for conceptualizing a pedagogy that marries engagement and cognitive rigor in a way that aligns with the needs and capabilities of adolescent learners (Fine, 2014). In other words, to explore what it might mean for high school students to treat cognitive rigor and pleasurable engagement as mutually supportive priorities. This theory is ultimately taking steps in the direction of deep learning that all our high school students deserve.

The first quality of the Fine’s Intellectual Playfulness theory involves planning tasks that involve the real measure of open-endedness where there is collection of flexible approaches than fixed solutions. With such a task, students have to deal with the complex challenges of conveying their perceptions to others in powerful ways to ensure cognitive rigor. The second quality in the theory is risk-taking which is a reward for learning and learners have to be able to venture a bit, to be willing to try out ideas about something new (Brown, 2000, p.149). Challenges and risk-taking are often elements of a play experience and taking risks in play prepares students to take risks

in the classroom environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Risk-taking in this context is related to learning oriented dispositions with learner is focused on increasing competence, learning new skills, understanding new concepts and essentially “to get smarter” (Dweck, 2000, p.15). It is aligned to create opportunity to bring “good kind of messiness” to tasks that otherwise would be lifeless (Fine, 2014).

The last quality in Fine’s theory is absorbing/flow. This has been described by Fine (2014) as experiencing pleasure not only in the sense of fun but in the sense that involves the experience of satisfying absorbing; individual who finds being absorbed and lost track of time due to the existent of being engaged in the task that requires them to work at the edge of their knowledge and skills. Over here, it could be stated as a complete engagement which refers to one being enthusiastic and having complete immersion in an activity. Complete engagement in play is also related somewhat to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of flow - a deep, effortless involvement in an activity in which the person loses sense of self and time. “Optimal flow” experiences happen when an individual involves in an activity that offers a level of challenge that matches his ability, rather than overwhelms it and when the activity presents no challenge to the person’s skills, the result is boredom (Csikszentmihalyi,1990). Hence, the three qualities in Fine’s theory has a strong basis for interlocking rigor and pleasure in the learning process.

The comprehensive theoretical framework of Bruner’s Learning Theory which subsumes Fine’s Theory of Intellectual Playfulness under the notion of instruction has possibility of creating discovery learning and showing the process students undertake to gain rigor (complexity) and engagement in their writing. This theoretical framework is grounded based on the constructivist view of learning that shifts focus from the structured teaching, which is knowledge transmitted from teacher

to the student, to student's construction of their own cognitive structures. The students employ their cognitive structures to learn from intellectual playfulness and teacher facilitates the learning. The meaningfulness of intellectual playfulness and learning depend on the suitability between the task and learner's prior learning/cognitive structure. Likewise, Brown et. al (1989) points, that understanding is indexed by experiences and should be situated in authentic activities which greatly influence students approaches to learning.

The elements in the theoretical framework also serves as a guide to plan lessons for intellectual playfulness and elicit data for analysis, as well as thematically analyse and interpret students' development b intellectual playfulness. These elements are interconnected and has high probability to create cognitive rigor and engagement among high ability students in ESL writing.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

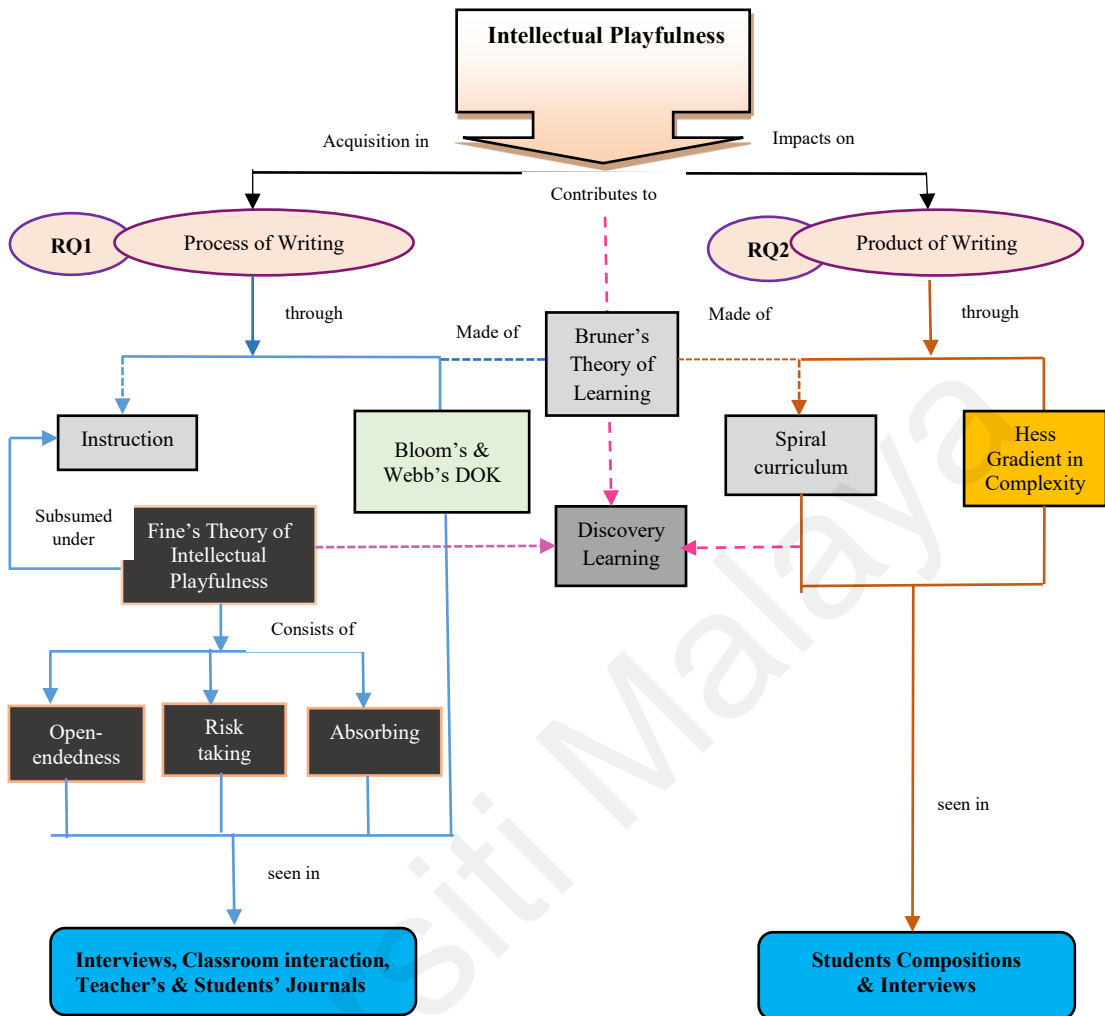


Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework

The diagram (Figure 1.3) above represents the conceptual framework of the research. This research comprises of “intellectual playfulness” The purpose of the intellectual playfulness is to investigate how high ability students acquire “intellectual playfulness” as embedded in a particular instructional model and how the acquisition of “intellectual playfulness” might impact on their actual writing in the ESL writing classroom. The two components in this research are process of writing and product of writing.

The first component scrutinizes the acquisition of intellectual playfulness which is research question one, followed by second component which analyses the impact or influence of intellectual playfulness on students' writing which is research question two. The first component for intellectual playfulness is prepared on the basis of instruction under Bruner's Theory of Learning and complexity of writing activities using Bloom's and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). In the notion of instruction, three qualities drawn from Fine's Intellectual Playfulness Theory is subsumed under Bruner's Theory of Learning. This three qualities comprises of open-endedness, risk taking and absorbing are connected with theoretical and empirical research of variety positive learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, to seek and develop solutions for the first component, the research focuses on interviews, classroom interactions, student journals and researcher's journal as a guide on how intellectual playfulness is acquired in the writing classroom. Classroom procedures designed on the basis of the three positive qualities and students' reflections on the lessons aiming at cognitive rigor and engagement that mutually contributes to each other. The acquisition of intellectual playfulness from the task, and instruction which is obtained from students' responses and inputs, through classroom interactions, interviews and journals where they learn, engage and demonstrate learning at higher levels to create cognitive/academic rigor. Thus, learning and changes in individual cognitive structures during the process of writing is connected to research question one.

The second component is to discover the influence or impact of intellectual playfulness in high ability students' writing. It can be determined using Hess Gradient in Complexity to analyse the composition they have written and looking at the depth of their writing through the notion of spiral curriculum in Bruner's Learning Theory. Thus, student's interview is also used as guide to seek the impact of intellectual playfulness in making them as talented writers in and out of school. This component is related to research question two.

The two components of process and product of writing are in relation of promising a platform that allows discovery learning among students. Hence, it is hoped that these two components leads to cognitive rigor and engagement that aligns with high ability adolescent's needs and capabilities in writing and create learning goals-oriented individuals in writing who tend to exhibit more adaptive responses to complexities and challenges, which is characteristic of 21st Century learning (Dweck, 2000, p. 15)

1.10 Significance of the Study

With expansion of educational research and the revolutionary changes in the adolescents' world of today, this study of intellectual playfulness is with the hope to create cognitive rigor and pleasurable engagement as mutually supportive priorities in their writing seem to be timely and a worthy endeavour. This study among high ability students in a Malaysian ESL classroom has not yet been investigated and is needed for several reasons.

This study could provide educators more knowledge and insights on how to go about incorporating intellectual playfulness in their writing classrooms. This research can be a pioneering effort in opening more minds of educators to realise the importance of intellectual playfulness which can provide being more user-friendly and fun in approaching one of the key elements skills in the lives of adolescents – writing.

Play's significance in childhood education is widely accepted. However, there seem to be very little literature that has explored play and playfulness among adolescents in a learning context. This research hopes to have implications and a new understanding of playfulness pedagogy in the context of intellectual playfulness among Malaysian's high ability students. It gives an understanding on the facilitation of learning that students take which could be a unique contribution to the field of playfulness. Besides, the research expects to shed some light on the role of intellectual playfulness in development of students writing that can be a contribution to prepare these students for adulthood. From this study, it is strongly expected that students obtain insights from intellectual playfulness to develop their writing skills beyond acceptable writing for school and examination purposes (working more on learning goals than performance goals).

This research also provides policymakers in the education system with practical data that reflects students' views on the existing curriculum in schools in addressing issues on teaching of writing. Findings from this study is expected to enable policymakers to consider platform with intellectual playfulness that can provide changes to teaching of writing effectively. The activities planned for the lessons in this study can be an important form of reference to serve as a teaching model of writing for high ability learners in the future.

This study is significant on a personal level as well. In the experience as an educator, I have witnessed instances of significant learning and growth facilitated by play and a playful environment. Play seems to be of great value in learning, but it is difficult to identify and articulate the specific connections. Therefore, this study provides some practical research on the potential future benefits of intellectual playfulness in the Malaysian secondary classroom that has not been explored. The findings of this study could serve as a jumping-off point for further studies.

1.11 Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions are embedded in this research:

1. Play is a complex phenomenon that engages a person on many levels including the cognitive and affective domains.
2. Play is an integral part of the work of growing up.
3. Playfulness promotes creative capacity.
4. Intellectual playfulness learning experience is impossible to replicate because the people and activity will never be exactly the same, therefore will always create different experiences.
5. High ability students are the correct research population.
6. The students are honest and accurate in sharing their perceptions and understandings of intellectual playfulness in the classroom.
7. Constructivism is prevalent in education literature and is an underlying assumption of qualitative research.

1.12 Definition of Related Terms

The following terms used throughout this study are defined to clarify their usage during the course of this study.

a) Absorbing/Flow

A word used by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) to describe a state one reaches when their perceived skills match the perceived challenge of the task that they were doing. When in a state of flow, the individuals are completely absorbed by an enjoyable activity they seem to forget time, filled with joy, and lose their sense of self as they concentrate fully on the task.

In this research absorbing is complete engagement of the students physically and mentally through the given instructions and lessons.

b) Academic Rigor

An environment in which each student is expected to learn and demonstrate learning at high levels (Blackburn, 2008). It is a combination of the rigor in the tasks that students are asked to do (expectation), the rigor of standards for students' responses and the rigor of support (support) and accountability for top-quality work (demonstrate).

c) Assertive literacy

A practice where the participants 'exercise some responsibility for the origin of ideas in the source of text and comments upon it or has some reasoned commitment to or detachment from the source text' (Koo, 2004 cited in Tan & Miller, 2007, p.77).

d) Cognitive Rigor

Encompasses complexity of content, the cognitive engagement with that content, and the scope of the planned learning activities (Hess, 2006b).

e) Creativity

Refers to a person, process, or product considered to be both new and useful, imaginative and productive (Bleakley, 2004, p. 466; Dineen, Samuel, Livesey, 2005, p. 155).

f) Deep learning

It refers to learning with understanding (Williams, 1992, p. 45) and deep learners are excited by learning, form connections and try to organise and structure their learning (Biggs, 1987).

g) Gifted Person

A gifted person is someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression (National Association for Gifted Children).

h) High ability Students

i) Students who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests (Indiana Code, p.4).

ii) Learners who have mastered the fundamental reading skills are ready for high-level applications of those skills in critical reading, expository writing, oral communication, linguistic and vocabulary development, and foreign language (VanTassel Baska, 1966). In this research “high ability adolescent” is referring to adolescents who had been chosen to be in a High Performing School based on their outstanding performance in the National School Examination. This group of adolescents also had been streamed into the first class of Science Stream after undergoing an English examination which tested on grammar, vocabulary, comprehensions and writing.

Being in the first class, they are considered to have academic abilities and potentials greater than those of their peers in other classes.

i) Higher order thinking skills

The “ability to apply principles and generalizations already learned to new problems and situations,” “analytic skills,” “problem-solving skills,” the “ability to synthesize and integrate information and ideas,” as well as the “ability to think creatively” (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 20). Higher order cognition entails both critical and creative thinking skills.

j) Intellectual paralysis

Students being in a position where they are unable to draw on their existing knowledge to creatively think about potential reactions and being overwhelmed by their inability to 'get the right answers' (Dweck , 2000).

k) Intellectual playfulness

A term given by Fine (2014) which means a secondary instruction organised around tasks that are open-ended, absorbing (flow) and finally intellectual risk taking. In this research intellectual playfulness refers to a type of cognitive quality that centrally involves being a risk-taker (or risk taking), undertaking willingly open- ended tasks and being absorbed (total engagement).

In the study the meaning of intellectual playfulness is twofold. Firstly, it is what teacher researcher incorporates into writing instruction to promote it among students. Secondly, it is also the students’ cognitive rigor that they may develop while participating in the writing class.

l) Intellectual precocity

Writers who often have above-average reading ability, broad reading interests, and rapid learning (Olthouse & Miller, 2012).

m) Learning disposition

In this research, a learning disposition is defined as a prevailing cognitive and emotional state towards the content being learned and the learning process. It is assumed that a disposition is not a fixed trait but a disposition that could be learned or acquired and is dynamic and flexible. (Dweck, 2006, p.6).

n) Literacy

i) Literacy is multimodal; the skill set of the student includes various formal and informal expressions and communications, whether spoken, gestured, written, or graphic (Olthouse & Miller, 2010).

ii) Literacy in the digital age is also more social and writing for a global audience differs from paper/pencil writing in a classroom (Williams, 2008).

In this research, literacy is referred to both the given definition given above.

o) Open-ended

A variety of answers are possible and students can often answer at the level of their ability and allows for more student involvement since they are asked to contribute more of their own personal ideas (Fine, 2014).

p) Play/playfulness

Play typically refers to content or activity, while playful and playfulness refer to the attitude or state of mind. Both terms can be used interchangeably (Sutton-Smith, 1997). In this research the terms is used interchangeably.

q) Risk-taking

The willingness to venture into the unknown and viewed as eagerness to try something new and different without putting the primary focus on success or failure (William, 2008). In this research risk-taking is the students desire to try something new without

worrying about the grades which involves the necessity and desirability of communicating their thoughts and ideas through their compositions.

r) Submissive literacy

A practice where the participants tend not to question information received or its sources, even when there is a legitimate point to be made or question to be asked, students mostly choose to remain silent as they are reluctant to voice their opinions, probably to avoid humiliation and conflict. They just respond in set ways to examination questions to secure good grades (Koo, 2004).

s) Surface learning

Refers to rote learning (Williams, 1992, p. 45) and surface learners focus on unrelated parts, treat tasks as an imposition, and often simply memorise (Biggs, 1987).

1.13 Summary

This first chapter provides an overview of this study which explores intellectual playfulness the convergence of cognitive rigor and engagement in meeting the needs of high ability students in a secondary education classroom. The chapter begins with a vignette of a lesson in a high ability students' writing classroom. To better illuminate the topic of this study, context of the study is presented. This sets the stage for the statement of the problem, purpose, and research questions. Research and knowledge gaps are identified and an argument is presented for the conduct, significance and contributions of this study Next, the overview of the research design is presented. The theoretical framework looks at two theories; Bruner's Theory of Learning and Fine's Intellectual Playfulness. Fine's Theory is subsumed under the notion of instruction in Bruner's Theory to allow students to discover their own learning in their writing. Next, the conceptual framework is discussed to further clarify on how acquisition of intellectual playfulness in the process of writing and influence or impact of intellectual

playfulness on the product of writing (students compositions) in investigating the research questions. Then, it is followed by discussion on the significance of the study for educators, policy makers and stake holders. Finally, assumption of the study, definition of terms and summary are presented.

Universiti Malaya

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter provides a critical review and synthesis of extant literature in terms of i) brief definition and aims of playfulness generally, history of play, followed by notion of play/playfulness in the domain of education, and the new and emergent intellectual playfulness ii) description of academic and cognitive rigor and is followed by theories in practice. In doing so, it provides a scholarly context for this thesis, pointing to knowledge gaps and areas where research is limited. In this way it makes an argument for the significance of the study.

2.2 Play/Playfulness

Origin of play in early childhood can be traced to the 1920's. When Jean Piaget began a project observing his own children which later became one of the bases for modern understanding of child development (Bjorklund & Blasi, 2012). Exploratory play leads them to new understandings; repetitive play supports them in strengthening newly acquired skills. None of this diminishes the pleasurable nature of engaging in play but it confers weight on activities that might otherwise seem purposeless. Far from frivolous, play is an integral part of the work of growing up (Brown, 2010).

The extensive nature of play and playfulness makes it difficult to arrive at a clear understanding of what these words meant. Though everyone plays occasionally and knows what playing feels like, it is difficult to make theoretical statements about play because of its elusive nature. The difficulties in conceptualizing play are exasperated by the fact that various academic disciplines approach play so differently. "Some study the body, some study behaviour, some study thinking, some study groups or individuals, some study experience, some study language – and they all use the word

play” (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 6). While the prospect of arriving at one, satisfactory definition may be dubious, examining various definitions provide a starting point for our exploration of playfulness among adolescent learners.

Before launching into various definitions of play, playful and playfulness, it is important to distinguish between these three words. According to Sutton-Smith (1997) play is often used to refer to content or activity (game, festival, event), while playful is used to refer to the attitude or state of mind (light-hearted, fun). Boyer (2012) defines playfulness, or a playful attitude in learning as an indifference to extrinsic payoffs which allows a new response for the person or a new transformation of information. Barnett (1990) added that imagination, humor, emotional expressiveness, curiosity, openness, communicativeness, flexibility and persistence are attributes related to play and playfulness.

A comprehensive review of literature on play by Rubin, Fein, and Vandenburg (1983) led them to define play by three dimensions, behavior, context, and disposition. Studies on the behavioral dimension typically focused on cognitive or social level (Piaget, 1962). Research on the contextual dimension of play focuses on variables such as space, time, social constraints, or body states. The third dimension, dispositional tendencies, includes tendencies to act in certain ways even under varying conditions. Six aspects of play dispositional was found by Rubin et al. (1983) in the literature which included play as an intrinsically motivated behavior, a focus on the process over the product, play rather than exploratory behaviors, nonliterality, freedom from external rules, and active engagement.

In the dispositional dimension, play also provides one with the sense of control and mastery (Apter, 1991; Caillois, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It also offers a challenging activity that requires skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and fully absorbs individuals to the point where they can lose track of time and want to prolong the activity. In other words, play is characterized by concentration and focus (Apter, 1991; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Its outcome is uncertain (Caillois, 2001) and there are clear goals and immediate feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Though, there are many nuances to play, in general play is defined as pleasurable, separate from the real world (through imagination or rules), intrinsically motivated, and often spontaneous.

Lieberman (1977) is among the pioneers to postulate the construct of playfulness as the “essence” of play. She describes physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humour as quality of playfulness. Lieberman’s work of playfulness in children is served as the foundation for many of the studies related to play. Similarly, Dunn (2004) found that the characteristic of playfulness comprises of imagination, humour, emotion expression, taking the initiative discovering new things, curiosity, and openness as well as communicating ability that has similarity to Lieberman’s dimensions. Barnett and Kleiber (1984, cited in Cornelli, 2010) replicated Lieberman's work and has confirmed the five playfulness factors with preschool children, but noted that the components of playfulness are mediated by gender, intelligence, divergent-thinking ability, and home environment. It is important to note, children’s playfulness are characterized by pleasure, spontaneity, imagination, curiosity, and a sense of humour (Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005).

Beyond childhood, Lieberman (1977), Rogers et al. (2000) and Staempfli (2006), have done research that connects playfulness to adolescents. Lieberman (1977) suggested “playfulness to be seen as behavior that goes beyond the childhood years as it has major implications for childrearing practices, educational planning, career choices, and leisure pursuits (xi).” Thus, Lieberman (1977) discovers two types of playfulness in adolescence, “academic” and “socio-emotional”. Yarnal and Xian (2011) also affirm that junior high and high school teachers encourage academic playfulness in the classroom than socio-emotional playfulness. In contrast to her findings about childhood playfulness, Lieberman noted that adolescent playfulness is a “much more differentiated behavior” than she originally believed.

Staempfli (2007) found parallels in adolescents’ playfulness to playful children, in terms of physically animated, socially engaged, mentally spontaneous, emotionally fluid, and humorous (p.5). Besides, Barnett’s (2007) empirical evidence conceptualized young-adult playfulness as a predisposition to transform situations in novel, flexible, creative, and humorous ways. This was supported by Yarnal & Xian (2011) who described adolescent playfulness reflects several characteristics of young-adult playfulness such as physical activity, social engagement, spontaneity, and humor, which suggest similarities between the two age groups.

In adult playfulness Guidard, Ferland, and Dutil (2005) has identified five components of playfulness: creativity, curiosity, sense of humour, pleasure and spontaneity. The creativity, curiosity and spontaneity corresponds to Lieberman’s (1977) cognitive and physical spontaneity. These characteristics share some conceptual similarities with adolescent and childhood playfulness, though they are using different terms. Thus, the essence of playfulness is a state of mind that manifests

itself in many ways. When a particular activity is pursued in this playful state of mind, the activity is often described as play.

The purpose of presenting these explanations is to familiarize with the many constructs of play/playfulness from childhood to adult. As mentioned earlier, different attributes of play/playfulness are studied in various disciplines. However, it can be surmised that childhood, adolescents or adult share the same conceptual in play/playfulness which is creativity, curiosity, sense of humour, pleasure and spontaneity. The next section explores studies done in play.

2.2.1 Studies of Play/Playfulness

Playfulness is thought to be an attribute that applies throughout the lifespan but very few have explored playfulness beyond early childhood. Only recently the research on playfulness has moved towards understanding the function of playfulness among school aged children, adolescents, and adults (Barnett, 2007; Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005; Saunders, Sayer & Goodale, 1999; Staempfli, 2007). A strand of research has sprang up from the year 1960 that specifically explores the intersection of play and elementary level academic learning such as development of abstract thinking (Vygotsky, 1976), creativity (Li, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1968), cognitive flexibility (Lieberman, 1965), social perspective taking (Smilansky, 1968), host of skills related to critical and creative thinking (Fisher, Hirsch-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2010), high-order cognitive processes (Marzano & Kendall, 2007) and in adult intrinsic motivation (Amabile et al., 1994; Proyer, 2011b), creativity and spontaneity (Barnett, 2007; Glynn & Webster, 1992, 1993), positive attitudes towards the work–place and job satisfaction and performance, innovative behaviour (Yu et al., 2007) and academic achievement (Proyer, 2011a).

Early research on playfulness is the relationship between playfulness and factors that co-occur with it. Gender, intelligence, culture, therapy, divergent thinking, and creativity are among the factors that have been studied in relationship to playfulness. Some researchers have been particularly interested in playfulness among gifted children (Armstrong, 1998; Barnett & Fiscella, 1985). Armstrong (1998) lists playfulness as one of the 12 qualities of genius. Children of higher than average intelligence has scored higher on some of the characteristics of playfulness, including social spontaneity and cognitive spontaneity, but are equal or lower on others, such as manifest joy, physical spontaneity, and sense of humour (Barnett & Fiscella, 1985). Hence, the relationship between intelligence and playfulness is not straightforward.

Lieberman (1977) is one of the first researchers to study playfulness with regard to divergent thinking. Lieberman studied 93 children in New York City and has concluded that playfulness and divergent thinking are significantly and positively related. Barnett and Kleiber (1982) examine the relationship between playfulness and divergent thinking task scores in young children while taking into account both intelligence and gender differences. This study shows a need for more research on the relationship between playfulness, gender, and divergent thinking (Barnett & Kleiber, 1982). The relationship between playfulness and creativity has also been studied in the Japanese culture by Taylor and Rogers (Taylor, 1992; Taylor & Rogers, 2001) who has observed 164 young children. However, the qualitative data has suggested that playfulness and creativity may co-occur (Taylor, 1992; Taylor & Rogers, 2001).

At the secondary education level, Gee (2005) studies on the use of video games among adolescents. She explores how the play that goes on in gaming incorporates good learning principles, including players acting as producers rather than consumers; trying new things and exploring; customizing according to one's own interests and abilities; having a sense of agency, ownership, and control; and challenging problems that are "pleasantly frustrating" (Gee, 2005). And indeed, some research on young people's engagement in video games indicates that playing certain kinds of video games have advanced young people's reasoning and problem-solving skills (Adachi & Willoughby, 2013; Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008).

Another quantitative study done by Pei-Ling Tan and Mc William (2008), with adolescents using play and they define playfulness in terms of intellectual curiosity and intellectual creativity. The findings emerge as highly significant in explaining that cognitive playfulness seem to be as important as a learning disposition that promotes creative capacity in terms of students' willingness to experiment with new ideas and engage with innovations. Though the quantitative findings that is discussed above are not generalizable to all learning in school settings, some important theoretical understandings and insights can nonetheless be drawn.

Therefore, the basis for commending play lies in its multidimensional educational impact; play educates cognitively, emotionally, socially and physically (Bergen, 2009; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Based on the above review, we can deduce for one play and playfulness has been studied extensively in the context of learning for children but there is very little study among adolescents in an educational settings. Next, the researcher also provides a robust warrant for arguing that playful exploration can involve a great deal of cognitive rigor, building conceptual understandings and developing dispositions to approach open-ended tasks with interests and skills which

this study aims to look at. The following section discusses how play is conceptualized in literacy, human development and learning.

2.2.2 Play and Literacy

Literacy can be loosely defined as, “the ability to read and write” (Tsao, 2008, p.515). Following the theory of social construction, it is apparent that literacy skills may evolve naturally during play for young children. Prior to the mid-1900s, the common view is that play should be something that must be experienced outside of school walls (Hall, 1991, p.3). Hall also notes that teachers are teaching literacy in a very controlled manner. The result of this is impacting students in a negative way; “Children had to ignore everything they knew about learning and submit to the ownership of their learning” (Hall, 1991, p.4).

Research within the last 25 years or so indicates a more positive connection between literacy, learning and play. Researcher asserts that play has enhanced a child’s emotional, social and cognitive development. In addition social interactions encourage children to learn through authentic experiences. Likewise, early childhood researcher Klenk (2001) mentions social interactions during play “do not hinge on formal instruction, they were authentic and purposeful” (p.150). Perhaps one reason for the shifts in thinking is the increased need for literacy in everyday life. Therefore, the role of play in the construction of practical literacy and communication skills is important to document.

In a meta-analysis of play studies, Hall (1991) found that a number of research reports reflect the relationships between play and literacy. Two of the relationships stated in the report which emphasizes ‘play as a fundamental cognitive activity in preparation for more complex cognitive activities such as literacy and symbolic behaviour in play is related to the understanding of a representational system like

written language'. Therefore, the report suggests that play offered in developing literacy skills in a creative setting which means implementing literacy and play in the curriculum is developmentally appropriate for young children.

On the other hand, Kane (2004) states education has been unable to understand or endorse the value of "the play ethic" because it dividing off "rational and irrational recreations" (p.75). Therefore, it has rejected and denied the value of play as a 'multi-literacy' for 21st century life and work. While this study took a multi-level approach to understanding play within the formal schooling environment context, the scope of this research concentrates on the individual micro level analysis which is to explore students' personal experiences and attitudes.

2.2.3 Play and Learning

Play theories focusing on cognitive development are often influenced by the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005). In these theories, cognition refers to the mental processes of the brain that facilitate understanding and the development of intellect. For Piaget (1951), children's stages of cognitive development is parallel to play and helps to consolidate the learning that occurs in these stages. Learning occurs through adaptation which requires a balance of assimilation (acquiring new information) and accommodation (altering cognition to fit the reality of the world). In short, Piaget views play as a tool that promoted assimilation and provided a means to strengthen newly acquired skills.

For Vygotsky (1976), play helps children to develop abstract thinking and provides an activity in which children are often stretched beyond their current understanding. In addition, it provides an opportunity for them to progress in their development through a process he refers to as the 'zone of proximal development'. In this zone, children are able to progress from their actual level of ability to their

potential level through the help of a teacher or more capable peer (Lambert & Clyde, 2003). Moyles (1989) describes that play also provides reciprocal learning opportunities for children and teachers. Newman, Brody and Beauchamp, Pui-Wah and Stimpson (2004, cited in Hyvonen, 2011) have construed play and games are significant in promoting learning and fostering development, but teachers' attitudes and policies regarding the use of play in teaching vary greatly.

Optimally, play in educational situations not only provides a real medium for learning, but also enables discerning and knowledgeable adults to learn about children and their needs (Moyles, 1989). Therefore, teachers are able to understand where children are in their learning and general development, which in turn gives educators a starting point for promoting new learning in both the cognitive and affective domains. On the future trend about play specifically in education, Veen & Vrakking (2006) describes it includes teachers thinking about activities that motivates and challenge children in the school context.

Learning through play can also be seen through children's ability to learn to use a variety of strategies, such as conceptualizing, reasoning and solving problems (Bransford et al., 2000). Play can provide numerous possibilities for developing such strategies, particularly when children is encouraged to adopt the role of expert. In a role of expert, children are free to act according to their wishes and knowledge and likely to be successful in those actions. In fact, researchers note children appear to seek conceptual understanding of the essentials of appropriate strategies (Hyvonen & Kangas, 2010). Children are both problem solvers and problem generators and pursue novel challenges (Bransford et al., 2000); they likely do so in order to naturally promote learning in play (Hyvonen, 2008b; Hyvonen & Kangas, 2007).

As seen, there is a growing body of evidence supporting many connections between play, learning and development. Nevertheless, researcher points to a lack of play and playful methods in schools particularly the poor integration of play with the curriculum (Bergen, 2009; Pui-Wah, 2010). Some researcher has also questioned the quality of play and the opportunities for playful learning environments that have been missed (Bergen, 2002; Hujala et al., 2010). One reason for both of these issues lies in teachers' epistemologies of play because they often understand play and learning as dichotomous concepts which are difficult to integrate, either in thinking or in practice (Pui-Wah & Stimpson, 2004).

This is because play often been identified as a mechanical and teacher-led activity. Therefore, teachers perhaps need a new insight for play and learning, and merely increasing play possibilities in the classroom is not adequate for enhancing play and learning (Pui-Wah & Stimpson, 2004). This new insight is required to relate teachers' pedagogical knowledge to play-based teaching and it is something that might have not been explored.

In the Western, playfulness has provided children with openings to be able to discuss freely and discover disposition dimensions and discover unconventional approaches for supervising their daily concerns, and using their senses to illustrate the world in a very healthy and organised manner (Fineman, 1962; Freyberg, 1973; Singer & Singer, 1977; Glickman, 1984). Fisher & Frey (2010) stress keeping playfulness towards learning is essential to acquire the adaptive skills which is necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

It can be deduced that playful learning in adolescence is certainly not the same thing as playful learning in early childhood. But this does not mean that it is any less important. To the contrary, finding ways to support adolescent learners in learning playfully is more critical because it is less intuitive (Fine, 2014). Since intellectual playfulness is our central focus, it is ‘play as a learning disposition’ that is probed more in this study. Before moving further, it is useful to understand what is meant by learning disposition.

Many educators and non-educators see learning disposition as synonymous with the disposition to academic achievement. However, Dweck (2000), makes a clear distinction between the two, indicating that learning goals are very different from, and often in conflict with performance goals. An individual’s performance goals are focused on “winning positive judgment of one’s competence and avoiding negative ones”, while an individual’s learning goals are characterised by a desire to develop “new skills, master new tasks or understand new things” (Dweck, 2000, p. 15). In other words, although both types of goals can lead to high achievement, generally, learning goals-oriented individuals tend to exhibit more adaptive responses to complexities and challenges, which is characteristic of 21st century learner (Dweck, 2000). While performance goals oriented individuals have a higher tendency to feel overwhelmed by their inability to ‘get the right answer’ and experience intellectual paralysis in the face of challenging problems that encompass multiplicity and ambiguity (Dweck, 2000).

To put in simple words, students who are intrinsically motivated to learn new things and acquire new skills are likely to appreciate the opportunities presented to extent their range of abilities and competencies. By contrast, students who are primarily focused on ‘getting the right answer’ and winning positive judgments of their

competence, are likely to resist experimenting with such contemporary learning, if they appear to be ‘outside’ traditional pedagogical expectations and structures (McWilliam, 2008).

For the purpose of this research, learning disposition is defined as a prevailing cognitive and emotional state towards the content being learned and the learning process. It is assumed that this disposition is not a fixed trait but could be learned or acquired and is dynamic and flexible (Dweck, 2006, p.6). The subsequent section reviews on the elements that are related to intellectual playfulness such as academic rigor, cognitive rigor and engagement.

2.3 Academic Rigor

In an academically rigorous classroom, the teacher anchors student learning around a core curriculum that requires high thinking demand. Blackburn (2008) defines academic rigor as creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, is supported so that one can learn at high levels and demonstrates learning at high levels. She also adds the academic rigor has three parts of approach that consist of expectation, support and demonstrate which assures students can thrive and be successful in the classroom (Blackburn, 2008). Another definition of academic rigor given by Smart (1995) is:

Students’ thinking that is rigor and visible in their spoken and written voices, in their visual imagery and use of metaphor and symbolism...The thinking is evident in the connections students make to their own lives and to other reading other knowledge that they have. The rigor comes through students’ participation in their own learning. (p.94)

McCollister and Saylor (2010) describe the optimal school learning environment especially for gifted or high ability students is one where academic rigor is the standard. This rigor is needed both to stimulate students intellectually and

enhance their academic growth. Through academic rigor students learn to use the full range of their talents and intellectual abilities to address authentic and complex academic tasks in professional and real-life events when they are challenged (Sayler, 2009b). Rigorous academic environment represents true communities of learning, encouraging both students and teachers to be risk-takers, engaged in open-ended learning processes utilizing effectively their existing knowledge while striving to create new knowledge (Hess, Jones, Carlock & Walkup, 2009). Academic rigor is also facilitated by well-planned instruction but driven by student's interest, learning styles and vigorous efforts.

Rigorous instruction means engaging children in developmentally appropriate content that allows them to connect prior knowledge with new learning, and leads them to asking more questions, and discovering more information (Hess, Jones, Carlock & Walkup, 2009). Blackburn (2008) describes academic rigor of an instruction is a combination of the rigor in the tasks that students are asked to do (expectation), the rigor of standards for students' response and the rigor of support (support) and accountability for top-quality work (demonstrate). Therefore, rigorous instruction could motivate each student to develop high expectations for academic progress. Likewise, academic rigor encourages students to take ownership of their own learning and builds capacity for lifelong learning (Bain 2004; Finkel 2000).

In education, academic rigor is commonly applied to lessons that encourage students to question their assumptions and think deeply, than to lessons that merely demand memorization and information recall (Finkel, 2000). While some educators may equate rigor with difficulty, many educators would argue that academically rigorous learning experiences should be sufficiently and appropriately challenging for individual students or group of students, not simply difficult (Bain, 2004; Finkel,

2000). Thus, rigor also should give them a sense of personal accomplishment when they overcome a learning challenge (Finkel, 2000).

Allen (2012) describes academic rigor has four main components:

- i. students know how to create their own meaning out of what they learn,
- ii. they organize information so they create mental models,
- iii. they integrate individual skills into whole sets of processes, and
- iv. they apply what they've learned to new or novel situations. (p.3)

In short, it is this kind of intellectual discipline that educational, industrial and political leaders have called absolutely necessary if need to compete economically with the rest of the world, especially in education standards (Allen, 2012).

2.4 Cognitive Rigor

Another term that is interrelated to rigorousness is cognitive rigor. Cognitive rigor encompasses complexity of content, the cognitive engagement with that content, and the scope of the planned learning activities (Hess, 2006b). Current research on the factors influencing students' outcome and contributing to academic richness as well as student engagement supports the concept that learning is optimized when students are involved in activities that require complex thinking and application of knowledge (Hess et.al, 2009).

Ensuring that curriculum is aligned to "rigorous" grade-level content standards is in itself, insufficient for preparing students for the challenges of the twenty-first century (Hess, Carlock, Jones & Walkup, 2009). Therefore, teachers must offer students with challenging tasks and demanding goals so that students can reach higher goals, and enhance both surface and deep learning of content (Hattie, 2002). In other words, in classroom practices rigorous can take many forms.

In this research, the focus is on the students' cognitive rigor and engagement which is explored through intellectual playfulness in their learning and can provide an academic rigor in the classroom. Daggert (2007) defines in rigorous learning a greater concern for quality and conceptual thinking are focused than quantity and memorization. In other words, it is the quality of thinking, not the quantity that is of concern. Also, learners move from mere comprehension to higher-order thinking as rigor increases (Nordvall & Braxton, 1996; Payne et al., 2005) and conceptual transformation (Cope & Staehr, 2005; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

In addition, meaningful content is focused in rigor (Jensen, 2005; Parkes, 2001) gives opportunity for students to transfer learning (McKeough et al., 1995; Parkes, 2001) and to progress through time. Also, process over product is emphasized in rigor (Brooks and Brooks, 2001). In sum, this research is framed using the term cognitive rigor to engage students in more rigorous learning as rigor draws attention to meaningful content (Jensen, 2005; McKeough et al., 1995; Parkes, 2001) and prepares students for transfer learning (McKeough et al., 1995; Parkes, 2001).

2.5 Affective Engagement

Another aspect related to intellectual playfulness is student's engagement. Student's affective engagement consists of multiple dimensions such as relationship between student and school community, student and school adults, student and peers, student and instruction, and student and curriculum (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). In the context of this study, the researcher looks at the relationship between student and instruction, student and curriculum to get the connection of complete engagement. In an analysis of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), Williams (2003) examines a construct of engagement consisting of "belonging" and "participation" is deduced that, "On average, schools with high levels of engagement

tends to have high levels of literacy skills” (p. 56). Viewing this, student’s engagement does have a promising driving force in creating high achieving students.

Yazzie-Mintz (2010) states the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE, 2009) which is a research and professional development project directed by the Centre for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University in Bloomington has designed to help schools ascertain students believe about their school experiences and provide assistance to schools in translating data into action. Challenges that frequently upsurge in the HSSSE report is students boredom (HSSSE, 2009). The report shows high school student’s boredom is caused by materials that are not challenging, lack of relevance and value and no interactions with teachers. In short, it could be deduced students are reporting lack of rigor and relevance in school.

Although in Malaysia, it appears that we do not have any similar kind of HSSSE surveys done, we have findings of a research that indicate Malaysian students do feel alike. For instance, a research on Form Four (Year 10) urban students’ perceptions on writing by Kok and Miller (2007) show the reasons for writing merely ‘to complete’, ‘to follow instruction’, ‘just for teacher’ and ‘just to prove to our English teacher I have done his work’. Thus, one could deduce that students write just to get through in classroom, examination and to comply with teacher’s instruction to complete it. Similarly, to the report in HSSSE, students in this research seem to have lack of rigor and engagement in their writing at the beginning.

Cognitive engagement and productive academic achievement is important attributions of an engagement with classroom work and poor learning outcomes have been shown if there are disengagement (Ferguson, 2009). In this research, psychological involvement is also checked because it openly affects academic outcomes. Glanville and Wildhagen (2007) describe psychological involvement as

negative and positive affective responses that is developed from students such as boredom or interest with classroom instruction, the sense of belonging to school and the notion that school learning is valuable. Higher order thinking activities encourage students' psychological engagement because they have control over their learning actions (Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran & Nichols, 1996).

The above discussion shows that rigor and engagement seem to have priorities in student's life and being excellent is not just a set of scores to climb above a benchmark, but a culture in which each student is connected to the school, engaged in learning and achieving academically.

2.6 Intellectual Playfulness and Creativity

Is creativity related to intellectual playfulness? Can it help to develop high ability students own sense of what counts as high-quality creative work? Torrance (1972) found the most effective way for stimulating creativity involves both cognitive and affective qualities. Following this line, it is believed that intellectual playfulness could have its face value that facilitates creativity since intellectual playfulness is looking at the cognitive and affective qualities as mutual priorities for learning. Besides intellectual playfulness which has attributes of play provides a ground for creative activities and processes.

Saracho (1992) states to some extent, play and creativity may share the structure of cognitive and affective processes. Past research has emphasized that playfulness can affect creativity. Lieberman (1965) and Barnett (1990) also reported significant relationships between playfulness and creativity. Berg (1995) considers that playing is one way to explore oneself, allowing them to remove the existing boundary, using new methods to learn new skills. Yu (2004) indicates that playfulness is helpful for creativity performance. Similarly, Tseng (2002) considers playfulness

and humour are positive attitudes to creativity and acceptance to new ideas. In short, playfulness could help to sophisticate divergent thinking and solve creative problems.

Students in school tend to think of learning as a worthy activity with clear right and wrong answers. Sometimes, they have opportunities to adopt differing positions but rarely play with ideas in their purest form. Torrance (1972) states creativity is the ability to recognise instructions and bend to create valid but new forms. Thus, encouraging playfulness in learning could create creativity because it is often not linked to convention (Eyre, 2016).

It may be very appealing to students who find traditional learning to be routine and unrewarding. However, it helps to put students in control of his or her own learning and make them more confident as a learner. To learn is to create a personal understanding of new knowledge and learning encompasses creativity, which simultaneously entails intellectual playfulness that might be a platform in helping students to have dispositions in learning.

2.7 What is lacking?

From the above review, there is a strong basis for interlocking roles of rigor and pleasure in the learning process. Unfortunately, high schools provide far less fertile ground for such conversations above. When it comes to cognitive rigor, a rich literature describes the dominance of low-level cognitive tasks as a mainstay secondary education (Cohen, 2011). Teenagers are eager to engage in tasks, intellectual and otherwise, that involves uncertainty and risk. Nevertheless, as teachers know too well that boring is the teenager's word of choice for their school experiences. Hunter and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) assert, "It is not typical to imagine a teenage bored and despondent...school for most young people is a dull and uninspiring place" (p.28). This is agreed upon by Yazzie-Mintz (2010) through the National Survey of High School

Student Engagement which has verified, that almost three quarters of adolescents year after year find their classes lacking in challenge, authenticity or relevance.

Besides, secondary school teachers teach more students and see each of them only for fewer hours per day making it difficult to create opportunities for sustained inquiry. High-stakes standardized testing can greatly influence the teaching of reading and writing. Many teachers change their literacy curricula in order to train students to take the test (Harman, 2000). According to Higgins, Miller and Wegmann (2006) rather than focusing on meaningful learning experiences, many schools spend a lot of time preparing students to take state assessments by engaging them in test-like activities.

On top of this strong orientation towards national based assessment, Kok and Miller (2007) express that Education System in Malaysia has generally produced students who are exam-orientated and unable to operate autonomously. Koo (2004, cited in Kok & Miller, 2007) has stressed that high importance is placed on scoring good grades in the examination which further establishes the need to memorize and regurgitate even in the discourse of assessment. These pressures have amplified in recent years but they are a part of long-standing cultural tradition that configures mastery of disciplinary content as a central value of schooling, secondary schooling in particular (Cohen, 2011). According to this tradition, teachers are conceptualized as keepers of what Cohen (1988) calls a 'scholastic inheritance', which they are responsible for transmitting to their charges through a process of 'teaching as telling'.

Besides teenagers are expected to sit hour after hour passively receiving 'serious' academic content, but they are seldom engaged in tasks that involve real room for exploration. Mathews (2002, cited in Higgins, Miller & Wegmann, 2006) contends that opportunities for combining fun and learning are being squeezed out by test

preparation. This vision flies in the face that process of meaning making and focus on depth rather than breadth (Gordon, 2009). However, it remains universal in part because most teachers emulate the ways that they themselves were taught (Fine, 2014).

There are some valid justifications for the above perspectives. Chapman et. al (2012, cited in Fine, 2014) describe that adolescents are indeed developmentally primed to be more interested in testing boundaries and in engaging with each and other than in doing what adults ask them to do. Fine (2014) raises a question of what would happen if high school teachers continue to support students in building skills and also took seriously the idea that their students are ready and eager to tackle open-ended challenges that entail real uncertainty and risk. It is in considering Fine's question, this research attempts to pursue what would it look like to make this shift and what would it take to accomplish it? Hence, in exploring these questions this research looks at the idea of intellectual playfulness.

2.8 Theories in Practice

In this study, the researcher depends on learning theory and play. This section discusses these two theories - Bruner's Learning Theory and Fine's Intellectual Playfulness Theory. Fine's Intellectual Playfulness Theory is subsumed under the notions of instruction in Bruner's Learning Theory. These two theories are related and used in this study in relation to intellectual playfulness.

2.8.1 Bruner's Learning Theory

Bruner's theoretical framework supports the belief that learners construct new ideas based upon existing knowledge. A major theme in Bruner's theory is that 'learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concept based upon their current/past knowledge'(Kearsely,1994b). It also involves transformation of information, deriving meaning from experience, forming hypotheses and decision

making. Therefore, cognitive structures are used to deliver meaning and association to experiences as well as to allow the individual to go beyond the information given. Kearsley (1994b) states that Bruner strongly believes that the educator should try and encourage students to make choices and determine principles by themselves. The educator's task is to interpret information that is to be learnt into a format suitable to the learner's present state of understanding and consolidate it in a spiral manner (Kearsley, 1994b). In other words, this enables students to continually build upon what they have already learnt.

By telling students that they are tested at the end of the term, teachers can make students to memorize what they have been taught in their classes and obviously, students remember what the teacher told them because they want to obtain good grades. However, this has only a limited effect and little to do with education. In reality, the teacher has failed to convince students that the learning is relevant to their lives, interesting on its own, or worth pursuing for an extended period of time. According to Bruner (1966), basically the failure of schools lies in the failure in engaging students in their own learning. Hence, schools fail in bringing about meaningful and lasting education which makes students passive consumers of the materials and inactive inquirers or explorers.

Bruner (1966) states that discovery learning is important because it provides opportunity for students to construct their own meanings rather than simply memorizing. Bruner's learning theory provides meaning and association to experiences which permits the individual to "go beyond" the given information. Opportunities are provided for learners to construct new knowledge and meaning from authentic experiences. Bruner's (1986) theory places importance on the spiral

curriculum design which is a key concept that is presented repeatedly throughout the curriculum, but with deepening layers of complexity.

By following a spiral curriculum, Bruner (1960, cited in Kearsley 1994b) states learners “continually builds upon what they have already learned” and a rich breadth and depth of knowledge is achieved in the end. Two purposes are served with this procedure, one is the previously learned concept is reviewed and this improves its retention. Second, the topic may be progressively elaborated when it is reintroduced leading to a broadened understanding and transfer of learning. Thus, input and structure provided for instruction through the appropriate environment for learners, results in the construction and rationalization of newly formed understanding of concepts and knowledge (Bruner, 1986). Hence, people with high levels of ability can advance their knowledge with the amount of knowledge they know and strategies available to them (Koroscik, 1993).

Next, the purpose of instruction for Bruner (1966) is to create an environment in which a person can discover new knowledge and to guide as well as to support learners to construct new knowledge for themselves. Thus, instruction is not to tell the students what they ought to learn but rather to create an interesting and stimulating environment that allows the learners to develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter (Bruner, 1973). Bruner (1966) emphasizes four characteristics of effective instruction which is personalized, content structure, sequencing and reinforcement emerge in his theoretical constructs. These characteristics is subsumed into Fine’s Theory of Intellectual Playfulness which has qualities of open-endedness, risk taking and absorbing.

2.8.2 Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness

Chapman et.al (2012) surmises that adolescents are undeniably developmentally primed to be more able in engaging in abstract thoughts than their younger peers and more interested in testing margins than abiding in what adults ask them to do as well as having a deep inquisitiveness about the world they live. Fine (2014) suggests these inquisitiveness to be taken as assets by high school teachers and approach the ideas that their students have prepared and keen to confront open-ended challenges that entail real uncertainty and risk.

However, the current common scenario in classroom is most of the teachers abide by the pedagogy governed in school which means they must break the skills that is to be tested. This can be done by breaking into the smallest component parts and practice with students until they demonstrate mastery. Such climate emphasizes greater fastidiousness with respect to instructional practice but fails to look at the roles of open-endedness, risk taking and absorbing (complete engagement) when it is important to set the platform for deep learning (Fine, 2014).

In making this shift, this research explores theory of intellectual playfulness which is subsumed under the notion of instruction in Bruner's Theory of Learning. Theory of Intellectual Playfulness comprises three qualities; open-ended, absorbing and risk-taking which has variety of positive learning outcomes in theoretical and empirical research as stated by Fine (2014). The three qualities in the intellectual playfulness theory is discussed below.

2.8.2.1 Open-ended

There are several conceptions of open-ended that has emerged from the review of literature and teachers perceptions on how they defined open-ended activities. According to Hertzog (1997), open-ended activities are advocated as a strategy to modify curricula by allowing students to have opportunities to work on their own levels, in their own interest areas, and in their preferred learning styles.

Fine (2014) defines open-ended task or activities as having many valid strategies and answers which means not a single absolutely correct answers and a variety of answers are possible. This is in contrast to 'closed-tasks' where students have to answer in a particular way. Since, there is no single correct answer, students can often answer at the level of their ability (Fine, 2014). In other words, more choices students have, more open-ended is the activity and it allows for more students involvement since they are asked to contribute more of their own personal ideas. This means the outcome of classroom work could be richer as variety of ideas is expressed which students can further compare and discuss. In this way, the students' autonomy in their own use of English can be developed and allow teachers to have a good idea on what the students are capable of producing.

Besides, creativity (Torrance, 1966) and divergent thinking (Guilford, 1967) are closely associated with open-ended activities. Open-endedness is a part of process modification that is needed for identified gifted students (Maker, 1982). This process modification is defined by Maker as related directly to open-ended activities that is "freedom of choice" (p. 49). Pollack (1988) also finds that open-ended questions encourage independent thoughts as well as creativity. Bartz (1982) suggests the use of open-ended teaching strategies, as oppose to rote drill, in foreign-language instruction for identified gifted students. In sum, as early as in 1982, literature describes open-

ended activities as something that has no right or wrong answers and provides students with choices about their learning in specific curricular areas. In open-ended activities, students have choices about what to do, how to do it and what if anything would be their product (Hertzog, 1996). Hence, when open-ended activities are used successfully, teachers could reflect students' true abilities and potentials.

2.8.2.2 Risk-taking

Risk-taking is defined as willingness to venture into the unknown. It is viewed as eagerness to try something new and different without putting the primary focus on success or failure (McWilliam, 2008). Beebe (1983) defines risk-taking as a situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choice between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choice is uncertain; there is a possibility of failure. A common denominator underlying learning dispositions is the ability to take risks and welcome errors (McWilliam, 2008). Thus, the tendency to "take risks is related to success in second language learning" (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p.262).

According to Brown (2000), learning is the reward for taking risks and learners have to be able to gamble a bit, to be willing to try out hunches about something new (p.149). As Lemke (2002) aptly pointed out, "the very nature of learning requires risk-taking and we will never be able to learn new things if we are not ready to experience both success and failure" (p.19). This is further elaborated by Dweck (2000) in describing two sets of qualities in learners which is learning goals and performance goals. Learning goals qualities are associated with adaptive responses to challenges and problem, self-confidence which in turn brings about a form of optimistic persistence and the liability to take risks in learning, primary because failure is not measured as of personal inadequacy (Dweck, 2000 cited in Pei-Ling Tan, 2009). In contrast, learners who pre-dominantly exhibit performance goals responses are likely

to experience intellectual paralysis when face with challenging problems and find themselves in a position where they are unable to draw on their existing knowledge to creatively think about potential reactions, being overwhelmed by their inability to 'get the right answers' (Dweck, 2000).

These dispositions are in turn influenced by the learners' achievements, goal orientations, which can be predominately learning oriented or performance oriented. Dweck (2000) describes a learner who is focused in increasing competence, learning new skills, understanding new concepts and essentially “to get smarter” is related to learning oriented qualities (p.15). Though, both goals are universal and can lead to higher achievement ideally as the general consensus is that school system with the numerous high stakes standardised testing, tend to develop students who are primarily performance oriented (Dweck, 2000). Claxton (2004) emphasizes though these students might achieve the academic grades and educational qualifications they desire, their inability to cope with complexity and difficult challenges render them ineffective 21st century intellectual knowledge workers who need to “know what to do when they [don't] know what to do” (p.1).

In writing, risk-taking could be related to the necessity and desirability of communicating one's thoughts and ideas creatively in a language classroom (Claxton, 2004). Challenges and risk taking are often elements of a play experience, thus, taking risks in play prepares students to take risks in the classroom environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This would create higher order thinking in their piece of writing and, with the feeling that they can take more risks, they will overcome some of their fears of failures and become more authentic in their writing (Claxton, 2004). Furthermore, exercising risk-taking demands students to challenge academic norms, standards and sometimes themselves (Wintrol & Jerenic, 2013). Collins, Woodward,

Harste and Burke (1984, cited in Bialostok, Whitman & Bradley, 2012) describe risk-taking as being central to cognitive processing.

Besides, risk-taking leads to independence, a disposition where children “know what they’re supposed to be doing...make decisions” and the willingness to engage in risk taking in the classroom is believed to foster learning (McCarthy, 2005 p.33). Nevertheless, the current system in schools have made students to define themselves by their ability to perform in a system that rewards them “for uncovering and then delivering what the teacher wants” (Badenhausen, 2010, p.28). To sum up, those who embrace risk are moving beyond the routine of what is expected. This act of moving beyond the routine and taking a risk has become the very source of pleasure and makes risk-taking valuable, both as a skill and as an attitude (Wintrol & Jerinic, 2013).

2.8.2.3 Absorbing (Complete Engagement)

Csikszentmihályi (1990) defines being absorbed or in flow is a state that one reaches when their perceived skills match the perceived challenge of the task that they were doing. He also describes that in a state of absorbed, the individuals are completely immersed by an enjoyable activity they tend to forget time, filled with joy and lose their sense of self as they concentrate fully on the task. This is the state that they are in, when doing their best work and most productive (Csikszentmihályi, 1990).

Csikszentmihályi et.al (2005) have identified necessary conditions to achieve a state of being absorbed or in flow (complete engagement) are clear with attainable goals that is within one’s skillset, ability, high challenges and skill level. They also have described when students are in complete engagement, their goals are clear, the challenges are high, their skills match the challenge, and teachers can get immediate feedback from students as well as adjust so that the students’ needs can be met. In

other words, teachers know what their students know and what they can do, thus teachers can match students' skill levels to an appropriately challenging task.

This stretches the students' skills to their limits in pursuit of a challenging goal. The flow experience, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes, is a "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement." And, as the enjoyment of the sensation seem to come from involvement in an activity itself, than from the rewards they receive. For this purpose, it is important that teachers plan lessons that are rigorous and on the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy especially for the high ability students (Csikszentmihályi, 1990).

Beveridge and Milner (2006,cited in Whitson & Consoli, 2009) find that students who are challenged and in control of their learning are more focused as well as more valuable learning experiences. They also conclude that instruction should be challenging but not unrealistic (p.44). In short, maybe students cannot experience of having complete engagement all day, every day, but at least for a start they can experience it more often than they do now. Students experience greater enjoyment and engagement when they perceive themselves to be in control, active and competent (Shernoff & Csikszentmihályi, 2009).

The discussion above elucidates the three qualities open-endedness, absorbing and risk taking as identified by Fine (2014) in intellectual playfulness. These three positive learning outcomes are deemed vital in executing the teaching and learning instruction for high ability ESL students and ensuring the success of this research. As such, this research aims at exploring intellectual playfulness that may contribute to learning goals (develop new skills, master new tasks or understand new things) and transformation in high ability adolescents' compositions.

2.9 Summary

The literature on play is extensive, however, very little of that literature addresses the adolescent's play/playfulness. The goal of this chapter is to explore the literature that is relevant to understanding play/playfulness in adolescent's learning. A broad overview of the play/playfulness is provided. This leads into discussion of studies that have been conducted in play/playfulness and followed by a closer inspection of play in literacy and learning. Since, most of this literature focuses on children, some studies that focus on the adolescent's and adult experiences of play are presented. Although, most of the play are intended for children, they provide important background information for understanding the role of intellectual playfulness a term given by Fine (2014) in adolescents learning. As such, the important elements in the intellectual playfulness such as academic rigor and cognitive rigor, affective engagement and creativity are discussed. Finally, the study has provided insight on the theory that actually most helpful in understanding intellectual playfulness in adolescents learning.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the methodology designed for conducting the study on intellectual playfulness among high ability adolescents writing in a secondary school in Malaysia. To explore intellectual playfulness among adolescents, a generic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) is employed. On the basis of theoretical framework and conceptual framework the methodology is designed to address the issues raised in research questions emerged from the statement of the problem. First, the research design is discussed and the research type of this study is elaborated. This is followed by description of the research site, participants, lessons and methods of the data collection. Then, it is continued with the analysis that is used to pursue the research objectives and address the research questions. Lastly, the means for establishing trustworthiness is discussed.

3.2 Research Design

The present study employs the generic qualitative research approach which is also called as basic qualitative, or simply, interpretive (Merriam, 2009). Generic qualitative studies exhibit some or all of the characteristics of qualitative endeavour, focusing the study through the lens of a known methodology but deviate from its intent, rules, or guidelines in a way that they see as beneficial to the study (Merriam, 2009).

Some researchers like Morse (1989), Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003) and Delamont (2006), offer critiques on generic qualitative method on the issues regarding congruence of epistemological and theoretical perspective. However, researchers like Lim (2011), Sandelowski (2010), Merriam (2009), Thorne (2004, 2008) and Litchman (2010) have counter-argued this critique that all three generic approaches are actively

engaged in questions of congruence in research design, and the ways in which the theoretical and epistemological positioning of the researcher is interlinked with other aspects of the research design. Kahle (2014) also asserts these concerns can be addressed through a clear thinking-through and justification of research choices and linkages within the study.

In a basic interpretive qualitative study, the researcher is interested in how people make meaning and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2002). The focus of this study is the experiences of the high ability students, an effort to understand their experiences related to the paradigm of play which is intellectual playfulness in the ESL classroom. Merriam (2002) indicates that the basic interpretive qualitative study is always framed by some concept, model, or theory. Thus, for this study it is framed using the key concept of intellectual playfulness.

This key concept is emphasising at the individual's experiences, to increase knowledge on learning of writing and significance of Burner's Learning Theory and Fine's Intellectual Playfulness in the ESL writing classroom. In exploring intellectual playfulness, the study focuses on the aspect of Merriam's interpretative description. Interpretative description is built on constructivist epistemology and frames the interpretivism theoretical perspective (Merriam, 2009; Thorne, 2008). Various methods that is used in this study includes interviews, private documents (student journals and compositions and researcher's journal) and documentary records (transcripts of classroom interactions-student-student).

With regards to research methods or techniques, interpretive description draws on the techniques that is associated with grounded theory such as coding data into units of meaning in order to find commonalities and differences within the research participants. However, the goal of using such techniques is not to develop (grounded)

theory, but to provide an interpretive description of classroom practices, a basis for planning and formulation of curriculum in writing and significance of the theories used in this research.

3.3 Selection of the Setting

A grade 'A' national-type secondary school in an urban area in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is identified as the ground for this study. This school is one of the four fully-aided 'A-grade' government schools located in Kuala Lumpur. There are three other schools in this area too. The selected school, a co-educational school is officially started in 2003 and has 367 students and 32 teachers at the beginning. At the moment the enrolment of students are 1222 and the number of teachers have increased to 82. The school has 8 classes in every form which totals to 40 classes from Form 1 (Grade 8) to Form 5 (Grade 11). According to the English panel head, eighty percent of students enrol in this school are staying at the heart of the town and residential areas while another twenty percent of the students are from distant areas (Zaireen Abidin, personal communication, January 6, 2016). This school is categorised as Cluster School in 2012 and High Performance School in 2014.

In terms of ethnicity, about fifty seven percent of the students are Malays/*Bumiputeras*, thirty percent Chinese, eleven percent Indians and two percent belongs to other minor ethnic groups. The majority of the students come from more privileged homes while the rest are from middle income families. A very small group of them belong to the less privileged families. In terms of gender, majority of the students are girls compared to boys. Most of the students in this school have good proficiency in English, as it is a commonly-used language for them and few moderate users of the language (Zaireen Abidin, personal communication, January 6, 2016). That in essence, characterises the school in terms of the diversity of its population.

3.4 Student Participants

Qualitative research typically uses purposeful samples to provide “information rich cases” to best illuminate the topic of study (Patton, 2002). The question of an appropriate sample is crucial in a well-planned research investigations (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs 1994). The selection of participants for this research is based on purposive sampling from a class of thirty students. Therefore, the first class in Form Four (Grade 11), 4 *Cendana* is selected for this study. Four *Cendana* is the first class of Science stream (Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Additional Mathematics are compulsory subjects) which consists of sixteen Chinese, eight Malays and six Indians students. This first science class is chosen because it is considered the best class among all the other science classes in Form Four. This is based on the students’ academic performances in their trial examinations and *Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3* (PT3, a Malaysian public examination for students at the age of 15). All the students in the first class have obtained A’s for the subjects of English, Science, *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay Language) and Mathematics in both examinations as a requirement to be placed in the first class (Zaireen Abidin, personal communication, January 15, 2016).

Furthermore, the students are required to take a diagnostic test for subjects like *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay Language), English, Science and Mathematics during the first week of the school. The results of the test is used to confirm students’ eligibility to be placed in the first science class. The English Panel Head of this particular school explained for English diagnostic test that the students took is subjective in nature. They are tested for three components, grammar and vocabulary, responding to literature text and poem as well as writing an essay. Besides, the English Language teacher of the particular Science class chosen for the study explains that the students in that class always write good essays. Their scoring grades for essay which is based on the SPM

(*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) marking scheme normally ranged from A+ to A- and seldom attains marks below the stated grade (Norazyanti Zubaidah, personal communication, January 15, 2016). SPM is *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* a compulsory Malaysian public examination taken by students at the age of 17 to 18 before they can continue their tertiary education.

Additionally, this group of students is identified due to the following reasons:

- i. The average age of these high ability students are sixteen and categorised as adolescents. They are considered as one of the 'at risk' groups in terms of under-researched and under-represented group of critical stake holders in our education system. This is due to the fact most of these students are 'cream of the crop' in their schools and rarely the school authorities allow this group of students to become samplings for research since it would disrupt their daily lessons in school. Furthermore, the teachers that are teaching this group of students normally tries to complete their teaching syllabus as quick as possible. Once the syllabus is completed the students are drilled on how to answer examination questions in order to score an 'A' for their examination. This practice is a norm in most of the schools with high ability students because they are the targeted students to uphold the school's name by increasing the percentage of all the subjects in the SPM examination.
- ii. They are more vulnerable to the influences of technology, socioeconomic development, global mass media, and Western cultures. These influences would possibly lead adolescents to experience changes in their writing within their true potentials. As such this study,

uses various popular culture as a means of providing opportunities for students in using their prior knowledge to create meaning for their writing lessons.

In this study, many of the students show eagerness and interest in being a part of the study. So, selecting the key participants is not a difficult task. The key participants are selected based on purposive sampling (Patton, 1980) to capture a sense of multiple student perspectives in this study. Ten interested students are identified for the interview sessions. However, after conducting all the four lessons, only six students' interviews are used for data analysis. The other four interviews not taken for data analysis since the students were absent during the lesson two because of their involvement in school activities or school based competitions. The final key participants are two Malays, two Chinese and two Indians who has participated as key informants in this study. The participants consist of boys and girls. However, this study is not looking at the category of gender or ethnic.

Before beginning the research, consent forms are given to the students and their parents. Researcher has conducted a short briefing session with the students and parents in the school with permission from the school authorities prior to conducting this research. The researcher also further explained all the details in the consent forms before they agreed to sign it.

3.5 The Present Study

In planning the task for this study, the objective is two-fold. One, the task to have relevance to the students and functions as learning goals. Next, to elicit necessary data for analysis with the aims of the study. The following section illustrates the feasibility study that is done before the actual study is finalised. This is followed by the actual lesson. In explaining the actual study, the researcher has presented the references that

is used as guidance in planning the lesson, discusses the phrase ‘What if...’ which is embedded in the instruction and finally the details of the four lessons and in relation to the data collection.

3.5.1 Feasibility Study

A pilot study is carried out for the purpose of testing the teaching materials and instructions as well as to evaluate the research instruments – the qualitative interview questions prior to the data collection for the actual study. In conducting the pilot test, the researcher made efforts to confirm the setting, choice of participants and interview methods are as similar as possible to those planned in the actual study. Besides, the pilot study functions as practice with regard to the positioning of recording equipment such as the Dictaphones.

In selecting the participants for the pilot study, the same criteria for the selection of participants in the actual study is applied. The target participants in this study are the high ability students from a High Performing School. However, the number of participants for the pilot study is only ten students which is fewer than the actual study. The writing task in the pilot study is a close version of the actual planned writing task. The task is to write a movie review. The movie that is used in the pilot study is Pixar’s Disney movie ‘The Good Dinosaur’. The phrase ‘What if...’ is introduced and embedded in the task which the students use when they are writing the review. Students’ responses of the lesson through interviews and their journals allow the researcher to make some changes in the actual lesson plan.

The first interview session with the two volunteered participants provide opportunities to refine, rephrase and clarify some questions in the interview guide. Subsequent, interviews with another two volunteers validate the changes made in terms of evidence by the nature of answers and information that is acquired from the

participants. In other words, prior to actual research, the interview questions for the students are pilot-tested with four students. This is to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions for the students.

The research also paid attention to the time taken to conduct each interview since they are school students. As Jacob and Furgerson (2012) state that an interview should not exceed one and a half hours, so that due consideration is given to the other participants who may have to free up time to participate in the interview. During the pilot study, each interview sessions took around forty minutes to complete. Hence, this has established that the instrument satisfies the commended time frame for an interview.

3.5.2 Actual Study

The study is based on the national English Curriculum Specification for Form 4 (2003) produced by the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education in Malaysia, which adopts a communicative stance to language use, states to provide essential conditions for the students to develop their abilities to interact with others in the spoken and written language. In other words, it extends students of English language proficiency to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and future workplace needs.

Besides, students should be provided the opportunity in developing their skills in relating content to their own experiences and interest. These aims are reflected in all the writing tasks that is planned in the four lessons. Apart from the aims in the English syllabus, Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix which comprises of Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) (1999) is used to enrich the lesson plans and instruction in the writing task. This pedagogical plan

also included information about how the students' composition going to be analysed by the researcher to indicate their cognitive rigor in the task.

The lesson plan which is conducted and revised in the pilot study, adopted a playfulness approach to teaching of writing. An analysis is carried out on four compositions from the pilot study illustrated good examples of playfulness task within this age group and certified that the instruction with the phrase 'What if...' is intriguing, challenging and relevant for the students. The following sections discusses the documents for reference in planning the lesson and analysing the compositions.

3.6 References for Guidance in Planning the Lessons

The proposed teaching lessons are tailored based on the English Curriculum Specification for Form 4 (2003) produced by the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education and Cognitive Rigor Matrix (Hess, 2009) which comprises of Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. The following section briefly discusses the document.

3.6.1 Curriculum Specifications Form 4 English Language

The English Language Syllabus which is detailed out in the Curriculum aims to extend learners English language proficiency to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and future workplace needs. The learning outcomes of the syllabus specify the skills to be achieved by learners in the three areas of language use which is Interpersonal, Informational and Aesthetic. Language for interpersonal enables learners to establish and maintain friendships and to collaborate with people in undertaking certain things while language for informational purposes enables learners to use the English language to obtain, process and give information. Finally, language for aesthetic allows learners to enjoy literary texts at a level suited to their language proficiency and develops in them the ability to express themselves creatively.

The goals of this research connects with the skills to be achieved under the area of language for aesthetic. This research is providing students a platform through intellectual playfulness which allows them to enjoy the literary texts which could be in any form at a level that is par with their proficiency and opportunities to express themselves creatively in their writing.

Besides, educational emphases means outlined in the syllabus is to help learners to prepare for the world of work and social life. In this respect, this research uses playfulness to create intellectual playfulness in writing to prepare adolescent for the 21st Century Education with the specifications in the hope of contributing towards building of a modern and progressive Malaysian society. Education emphases on thinking skills and preparation for the real world is utilized in the lesson plans. Critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to analyze information, make decisions, solve problems and express themselves accurately and creatively in the target language.

In helping students to achieve this skills, the phrase ‘What if...’ is embedded in the lesson to heighten their higher order thinking skills. Meanwhile, emphases on preparation for the real world means preparing learners to meet the challenges of the real world by focusing on language use in society. In this research, it is accomplished by making use of popular culture and real-life issues for the writing task. Students are also presented with opportunities outside of the classroom task in lesson two which has allowed them to meet people outside of the classroom and use real-life situations in writing ‘haibun’.

This lesson planned also complies with the important considerations for teaching which focuses on the teaching and learning activities. In order to bring effective learning, lessons are activity-based and learner-centred and revolves around real-life tasks to ensure relevance in giving students every opportunity to engage in real or simulated activities. The researcher also took into considerations that students are able to cope with the task that is planned and care is taken to ensure that they are not operating at a frustration level. They are given freedom in structures and vocabulary to ensure successful completion of the task as stated in the curriculum specification.

On the other hand, in the curriculum specification also states that other considerations that need to look into is the use of imagination and creativity to extend the experiences of the learners, to reinforce what has been learnt and to create challenging language tasks. Therefore, this consideration is in line with this research which attempts to create a challenging writing task that facilitates students to use attributes of playfulness such as imagination and creativity in completing the task.

3.6.2 Cognitive Rigor Matrix- Revised Bloom Process Dimensions and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK)

The lessons are also planned by taking into consideration of complexity in the writing activities using the Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) and Webb's Depth of Knowledge which forms the structure for cognitive rigor matrix (2009). This matrix is used to extend the level of complexity in the four writing activities. Bloom describes the type of thinking one needs to complete a task. Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) helps to formulate lessons that practice and develop thinking skills over a wide range of cognitive complexity.

Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 3.1) categories in the cognitive skills are required to accomplish a task and it describes the type of thinking processes required. In other words, categorizing activities according to their levels of construct. Likewise, students are provided with tasks that allows them to have higher order thinking in their learning. This is because learning activities with higher order thinking can transform or organize information into new and unique products (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Nevertheless, Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) has limitations because many verbs in the taxonomy perform at multiple levels and do not express the intended complexity implied by the taxonomy.



Figure 3.1 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

Source: <http://www.kurwongbss.qld.edu.au/thinking/Bloom/blooms.htm>

This gap in the Revised Bloom Process Dimensions (2005) is filled with the use of Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Depth of Knowledge (DOK) categorizes tasks according to the complexity of thinking required to successfully complete them. Webb addresses how deeply one has to understand the content to successfully interact with it. In other words, Webb's Depth of Knowledge, looks more closely to the depth of content understanding and scope of a learning activity, which manifests in the skills required to complete a task from beginning to end (e.g., planning, researching, drawing conclusions) (Hess, 2009). Identifying DOK levels (see Figure 3.2) in writing task

helps to articulate how deeply students must understand the related content to complete the given task.

Also, Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge Model is not a taxonomy as Bloom's. Webb's levels are described as "ceilings" that entitle how deeply or extensively students are expected to transfer and use the knowledge they have acquired and developed (Hess, 2006). For instance, learning experiences at a DOK-1 level expects students to develop and demonstrate background knowledge or understanding of a specific topic. While a DOK-2 level challenges students to scrutinise and explain how academic concepts and skills can be used to accomplish tasks and analyse specific topics. DOK-3 level engages students to think strategically about how and why they can transfer and use what they are learning to accomplish and explain outcomes, results and solutions. Thus, a learning experience at DOK-4 level boosts students to think extensively on what can be further done with the deeper knowledge and understanding they have acquired and developed as well as how to personally use in a real world contexts. In sum, the depth of knowledge for all the four lessons plan in this research are kept constant to a DOK-3 or DOK- 4 learning activity. This enables students to acquire and develop knowledge learnt to new writing tasks of higher levels of complexity. In short, it provides an opportunity for students to develop rigor by advancing the current level of thinking.

Level	Main Focus	Example Tasks
One	Recall	List, Identify, Memorize, Measure, Report, Tell, State
Two	Skills/Concepts	Graph, Estimate, Compare, Categorize, Identify Patterns, Predict, Summarize
Three	Strategic Thinking	Assess, Construct, Compare, Investigate, Develop a Logical Argument, Draw Conclusions
Four	Complex Thinking	Design, Connect, Critique, Analyze, Apply Concepts, Prove

Figure 3.2 Webb's Depth-of Knowledge

Source: Webb, 2002

Both Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's depth of knowledge serve as an important function in education reform in terms of standards development alignment (Hess, Carlock, Jones & Walkup, 2009). Since cognitive rigor encompasses the complexity of content, the cognitive engagement with that content, and the scope of the planned learning activities, combination of Bloom's Taxonomy and Depth of Knowledge forms a comprehensive structure for cognitive rigor matrix (Hess, 2009). It indicates how deeply students are expected to think about what they are learning and how broadly they are to express and share what they have learned. The cognitive rigor matrix can enhance instructional and assessment practices at the classroom level.

Each intersection of Bloom-Webb in the cognitive rigor matrix (See Appendix D) provides a focus on differing complexity (Hess, 2009). The cognitive rigor matrix vividly connects, yet clearly distinguishes, the two schemata, allowing educators to examine the rigor associated with tasks that might seem at first glance comparable in complexity (Hess, 2009). For instance, differing levels of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy has been associated in developing the writing task. The levels that are used are the higher order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating and creating. Similarly, to see depth of knowledge, a DOK-3 or DOK-4 learning activity which requires a great deal of integration of information was fit in planning the lesson.

Thus, in using the cognitive matrix to plot the cognitive rigor in writing which denotes the level of Bloom's Taxonomy and DOK will be [4, 3] or [4, 4]. Using this, the researcher can discover the extent to which the lesson targets level of cognitive rigor compared to the [4,3] cell which requires application of learned concepts to new situations (Bloom 4) but requires some decision making to complete the task (DOK-3). To conclude, from Bloom's Taxonomy to Webb's Model as shown in Figure 3.3

creates cognitive rigor that can enhance writing opportunities for students in making them to be competent writers based on their proficiencies.

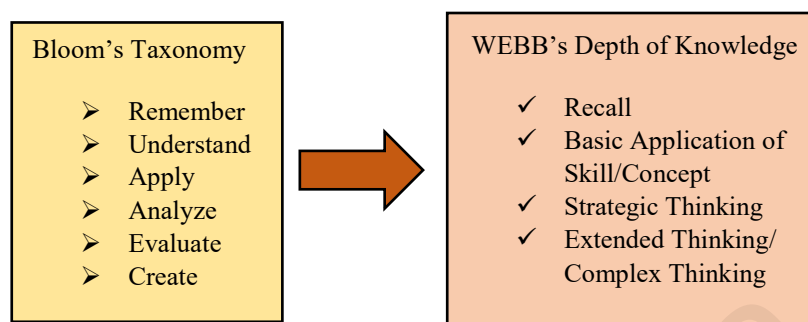


Figure 3.3 Bloom's to Webb's DOK: Cognitive Rigor

Source: http://standardsco.com/PDF/Cognitive_Rigor_Paper.pdf

The aforementioned discussion gives an overview of the documents that is used as source of references in this research. Relevant and suitable tasks for the four lessons are planned as a source of exploring intellectual playfulness among students. Besides, in all the lessons the instruction with the phrase 'What if...' is embedded in the writing tasks which has provided an opening for the students to play with this phrase in writing their compositions. In the next section, the phrase, 'What if...' is discussed.

3.6.3 The Phrase 'What if...'

This phrase 'What if...' is a stem or question that is associated with high order thinking level in the Revised Bloom's taxonomy (2005) of 'create' that could provide opportunities for students to be challenged and connect to the writing materials. 'What if...' is also related to creative thinking which involves in discovering, creating and imagining and has novelty of flexibility and originality (Brookhart, 2010). These features coincide with some of the attributes that are related to playfulness such as imagination, curiosity, emotional expressiveness (Barnet, 1990).

The phrase 'What if...' is introduced and embedded in all the lessons in the study. This phrase which has questioning strategy can stimulate curiosity or demand problem solving, ask questions about paradoxes, dilemmas, and novel problems and approaches (Crowl et al.,1997; Kauchak & Eggen, 1998). It also supports students open expression of ideas in writing their compositions. The aim of the phrase in this lessons is seen as an instruction of furnishing students to be able to reason, reflect and make sound decisions on their own as well as apply to new situations or life outside of school. According to Brookhart (2010) this kind of thinking is considered by 'a series of transfer opportunities than as a series of recall tasks to be done'. Therefore, the phrase 'What if...' can help students to exercise their creative muscles in promoting intellectual playfulness in the writing classroom.

3.7 The Lessons

The study is conducted over a period of a semester and the duration of each writing lessons is one hundred twenty minutes. The goal of the writing lessons is to explore how intellectual playfulness has been promoted in writing classroom and if it has created rigor in students' composition. The four lessons are planned using the themes of 'People', 'Environment', and 'Social Issues' as outlined in the Form Four English Language Integrated Secondary School Curriculum Syllabus in Malaysia (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia,2003*).

Lesson 1 which focuses on characters and events in a movie is related to the theme of 'People'. As for lesson 2 which is on using the five senses during a nature walk at the park is directly related to the theme of 'Environment'. Next, lesson 3 which emphasises on comparing and contrasting advertisements on different festivals is related to the theme of 'People' and 'Social Issues'. Finally, lesson 4 is to prepare a speech on

creating awareness of happenings in the world is related to the theme of ‘Environment’.

The lessons use different types of inputs such as movies, poems, YouTube videos and television commercials which has elements of play such as humour, fun and spontaneous. The criteria for the inputs chosen for teaching is based on the prominent popular culture that is related to the adolescent’s life generally. The learning is analysed based on Fine’s Theory of Intellectual Playfulness. All the four lessons are displayed in Appendix C (C1, C2, C3 & C4) and discussed in detail in the following section.

3.7.1 Lesson 1 – Movie Review (Inside Out)

In schools, teaching and learning of writing often focuses on the platform that formal school setting provides in educating adolescents. However, adolescents can learn about writing from an array of sources, including entertainment media. This is particularly vital because adolescents actively seek out entertainment media. These entertainment media provides them the kind of information they want, in ways that appears relevant to them. However, this is often not the case for formal schooling, for reasons that may not easily change in the near future (McKee, 2012).

In lesson 1, the movie Inside Out is used as an input to explore intellectual playfulness in the classroom. The task required the students to write a movie review. Inside Out is an American 3D animation film produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. The director is Pete Docter, who has directed famous family-friendly Pixar animations such as Monsters Inc. and Up and he never fails to disappoint, for this piece of work feels like a sister to his previous works, only even better.

This one hour and thirty four minutes movie centers on five personified emotions - Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear, and Anger. They live in Headquarters which acts as the control centre for Riley in her mind, and they advise her throughout her everyday life, by pressing buttons and levers, like a gaming console. All was well in Riley's life, until her family moves to San Francisco to start a new life. There, havoc and turmoil starts to spread in the control centre and leaves the five emotions in angst.

After viewing the movie, students' task is to write a review based on the movie. In this lesson, the instruction phrase 'What if'...' is introduced. Students are given complete freedom in addressing the task. Furthermore, they are encouraged to use 'What if...' in writing their movie reviews. The phrase seem to have given space for students to be critical in analyzing and evaluating the movie.

3.7.2 Lesson 2 – Creating a 'Haibun'

Poem is a part of the Form 4 English Syllabus which is incorporated in the literature and language. In literature, students are required to analyse the given poem and to answer the given structured questions which is more of answering comprehension prose. In the language section, there are various activities for poem in the text book for instance writing a limerick, acrostic poem and cinquain poem. However, according to a senior teacher who has been teaching English in the school for nearly 20 years, poem is not really emphasized in terms of writing in the classroom as it is not tested in the examination (Parimala, personal communication, April 12, 2016). In addition, in the examination focus for poem is just to answer given questions based on the poem. So, writing poem is something that is rarely done in writing classroom.

In lesson 2, the task of creating 'haibun' is used to explore intellectual playfulness in the high adolescent's writing classroom. For most students 'haibun' is a new term that they have come across. 'Haibun' is one of the subcategories in poem. It is actually narratives that are intertwined with short poems. The prose in 'haibun' tells a story, gives information, defines the theme and could create a mood through tone. 'Haibun' also is another way of taking narratives in another direction and adds insight or another dimension to the prose. 'Haibun' was first used by a Japanese poet Matsuo Basho in the 17th century. The array of 'haibun' is wide and often includes short story, essay, autobiography, prose poem, diary and travel journal. The basic unit of composition in 'haibun' is paragraphs and poems. However, there isn't a rigid way of writing 'haibun', the writer is given freedom to write using their imaginations and creativity on the arrangements of the paragraphs and poems. The writer also could use symbolism to deepen the emotional impact and end with a surprise.

In this lesson, the students are taken to a park out of the school. They are given the freedom in exploring the park using their five senses. Students take notes of what they feel is significant to them while being in the park. Once they have returned from the park into the class, they are introduced to 'haibun'. Again, they are not provided with any structured way of writing the 'haibun'. They can choose how and what they want to write in the 'haibun' relating to their experiences at the park. Again in this lesson, the phrase 'What if...' is embedded in the lesson. Students are encouraged to use the phrase in writing the 'haibun'. In this lesson, the phrase has provided students with an option of analysing and being imaginative in creating haibun.

3.7.3 Lesson 3 – Compare and Contrast

In lesson 3, TV commercials are used for writing task of compare and contrast. TV commercials are used because of the following reasons. One, they are normally short and last only 30 to 50 seconds which makes it easier to select, manipulate and prepare. Furthermore, TV commercials are catchy and designed to be entertaining as well as contains authentic content which provides culture and critical thinking (Smith & Rawley, 1997). Finally, they are easily accessible to be viewed many times.

In this lesson, students have viewed three television commercials on festivals which display different messages and values that one can uphold. Students are given opportunity to view the television commercial twice since the duration of each commercial is only for 50 seconds. After viewing the TV commercials, they are given a task of comparing and contrast three commercials based on their own terms or categories. They are not provided with any categories as they are normally given in their previous writing lessons of compare and contrast compositions. They need to identify which categories they wish to compare and contrast as well as provide evidences from the TV commercials. In this lesson the phrase ‘What if...’ is still used to enhance their composition writing.

3.7.4 Lesson 4 – Speech

Writing a speech is a common task in the students’ previous classrooms. This is because writing a speech is one of the questions that they might be tested in their SPM examination. So, writing a speech is not something new for them. However, in their examination and previous writing classroom students are given short notes or guide to write a speech. They are required to write the speech by elaborating the short notes or the given guidance. According to some of the students that are involved in the research

during the classroom interactions, the previous writing task is kind of easy for them as they are not required to think of the content and just elaborate what is given.

In this lesson, students are shown three different types of text. One is a short text on pollution which students have to read and give their views. Next, students are shown two flyers with minimal words and themes in the flyers is centred on environment. Again, students have to discuss and give their views about the flyers. The discussions on the flyers has sparked a lot of interests among the students compared to the earlier text. Students seem to be debating and arguing on their views which has created a very lively classroom. The last text is a YouTube video on Keya's story. Similarly, the theme of the story is based on environment and the video has provided a personal touch for the students in the classroom. They have equally shared so many things during the discussion of the video about Keya. Some of them even have related their own personal experiences to Keya's story.

After looking at all the texts, students given an imaginary role of young ambassador to the United Nations and asked to write a speech addressing on environment. They are given freedom in choosing the focus of their speech. This lesson is conducted at the media room in the library where students have freedom to search for sources through internet or any materials available at the library as references for their speech. They are allowed to use any types of texts that they deem to be suitable in making sure the message is conveyed to others.

After writing the text, students are also encouraged to record their speech and sent it to the teacher-researcher. However, the presentation of their speech is just a reinforcement activity. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on their written compositions. Finally, in this lesson the phrase 'What if...' has endowed them with an

imaginary role of a young ambassador and how they would write a speech to be addressed in the United Nations.

3.8 Procedures for Data Collection

This research is a qualitative study in exploring intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing classroom. Four lesson plans are planned using different inputs based on Form 4 English Syllabus for teaching of writing in the classroom. Data from multiple sources such as interviews, student journals, researcher's journal and documentary records (transcripts of classroom interactions–student-student interactions and students' composition) are collected. Multiple sources of evidences are recommended for a good generic qualitative data (Merriam, 2009; Lim, 2011). All the multiple data are analysed and triangulated to increase the rigour of the data collection procedures (Neuman, 1997). The different data collection procedures discussed below.

3.8.1 Recordings of Classroom Interactions (Student-student Interactions)

Classroom interactions especially student-student interactions are recorded for tapping the complex ways of students' responses and engagement in the writing classroom with intellectual playfulness. The recordings are transcribed and has given scope for tracking the moments of engagement in intellectual playfulness.

3.8.2 Interview

In-depth interview sessions is conducted with ten students to obtain their views on intellectual playfulness. The participants are selected based on purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to capture a sense of the multiple student perspectives as well as their willingness to participate in this research. Consent forms are signed before conducting the interview sessions (Appendix B1) with the participants. Besides, they are put at ease by promising confidentiality of their identities and all the information obtained from them to be used only for the purpose of this research.

In addition, an interview protocol which is a list of instruction and guidelines for the conduct of the interviews is developed as suggested by Creswell in Gay and Airasian (2003, p.215) (Appendix B3). The instruction and guideline are read to the participants before conducting the interview sessions. The interview questions are open-ended (Appendix B4) and participants have options for responding as well as can voice their experiences unrestricted by any perspectives of the researchers or past research findings (Creswell, 2012). This is an ideal method for the researcher to discover from the interviewee's perspective on what is known about the concepts in question (Chenail, 2011).

In using open-ended questions, Boyce and Neale (2006) suggested the number of questions are limited to 15 though other probes that would aid in eliciting more information from participants can be added. In this study, the number of questions are limited to 13 but follow up questions and prompts based on the answers given by the participants are spontaneously included. The prompts for any of the questions are used to stimulate more information when the participants do not extend their answers. Thus, as recommended by Robson (2002) and Yin (2003) the interview guide is considered flexible to be accustomed during interviews to facilitate the interview situation.

In a one-on-one interview the researcher asks questions and recorded answers from only one participant at a time (Creswell, 2012). The rationale of conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants after the end of the lessons is to ensure participants able to deliver immediate feedback on the writing task which is still vivid in their minds. Prior to the actual research, a feasibility-test with four participants on the open-ended interview questions are done. This is to ensure validity and reliability of the interview questions in the actual study to elicit opinions related to the two research questions of the study.

The interviews are audio-taped, transcribed and analysed to gather the necessary information to enrich the data of this study. Henceforth, the interview sessions with the six students help to gather information on the familiarity of the different genres for the four writing tasks, the role of the phrase ‘What if...’ in the process of their writing and how the qualities of intellectual playfulness is promoted in their writing classroom.

In the actual research, researcher has carried out informal semi-structured interview during the course of the study. The first interview is conducted before the research to obtain their views on past literacy practices and the learning of writing. The next interview is done after conducting the lessons to seek their perceptions on learning of the writing in the context of intellectual playfulness. These interviews are audio-taped and transcribed. The data is used to check and supplement other data sources to strengthen the claims made.

3.8.3 Student Journals

Documents cover writings of students in two aspects. All the students have written their compositions according to the tasks given during the lesson and write their reflections upon completion of teaching and learning of each lesson. The compositions and journal writings are preserved as documents for analysis. This type of documents are labelled as private documents (Creswell, 2012).

All the participants have written their reflections and responses in their personal journals upon completion of each lesson. They are given a journal response guide to assist them to write their views down (Appendix E). However, they are encouraged to share any other views than the given guides in the journal. A journal response is important since students can write their thoughts more openly since they are given freedom to write their thoughts without any restrictions. The researcher has

assured confidentiality of their written responses and reflections in the journal. Student journals have provided an important source of data to facilitate the development of an 'emic' perspective in this research.

3.8.4 Students' Composition

All the students' composition from the four writing tasks with different genres are collected and analysed. The researcher and two independent teachers have analysed students' composition according to the Gradient in Complexity. A few compositions that is collectively selected and agreed by the researcher and two independent teachers are used for the findings and discussion on the influence of intellectual playfulness in students writing. Some samples of students' composition are shown in Appendix G.

3.8.5 Researcher's Journal

The researcher has jot down interesting moments and personal reflections on happenings during the lesson in the ESL writing classroom. The researcher has taken note on students' interests, level of participations, words and actions by students which the researcher feels is important. The researcher also has revisited the journal entries as the research proceed and add in further reflections (See Appendix F).

3.8.6 Gradient in Complexity

The Gradient in Complexity for informational and literary texts by Hess (2013) is selected and adapted to analyse the compositions in support of cognitive rigor in this study. The gradient shows the complexity and depth of their writing. In the gradient, the remarks in the descriptor column shows four factors; purpose and meaning, structure and discourse, language features and knowledge demands. On the other hand, remarks in the row of the gradient is progressing from simple writing to complex writing (See Appendix H2).

3.9 Role of the Researcher

The researcher has taken the role of teacher-researcher in exploring intellectual playfulness among high ability students. The researcher has taken the role because the teachers that are teaching in the school reluctant in conducting this research lessons. The reason being, one, they are unversed with the concept of Intellectual Playfulness and second, they are involved in teaching form 5 English classes and need to complete the syllabus before the students sit for the SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) examination. Furthermore, the researcher, does not know the group of students except a brief introduction about them from their English teacher. The researcher is involved in conducting the lessons, recording the classroom interactions, writing reflections of the lessons and keeping journals of the students' reflections on the lessons for sense making in the classroom.

The primary focus of the study is the students' experiences. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) state in qualitative research, the experts are the participants and researcher is perceived as the primary research instrument because they can make inferences on observed data and by talking to people (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 2010). Hence, the researcher's involvement in the writing lessons in the classroom is merely an effort to understand the students' experiences that is related to intellectual playfulness.

3.10 Data Analysis

This process of data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Merriam, 2009). Data collected from various sources as mentioned above is analysed and triangulated to answer the research questions. This triangulation from multiple sources is essential to ensure the findings in the study is credible (Creswell, 2007). In order to analyse and interpret the various data, they are categorised based on the coding system.

The data is organized and labelled according to some organizing scheme that makes sense to the researcher as suggested by Merriam (2009). This is done to make an easy access in identifying notations as needed in the write up of the analysis (see Appendix Ia). Then, the obtained data is read and reread several times to obtain a general sense of the data. This is followed by process of identifying the segment from the data that is responsive to the research questions which could be the potential answer or part of an answer to the research questions in the study (see sample in Appendix Ib).

The researcher also has compared the unit of information with the next data by looking for recurring regularities in the data. The unit of information in the data is finally combined into categories. Creswell (2007) states the core elements of the qualitative data analysis starts with reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for segments and then is combined into broader categories or themes. Finally, the data is compared and represented in tables. This research has followed all the above mentioned stages and analysed the data to answer the research questions of intellectual playfulness among high ability students.

3.10.1 Acquisition of Intellectual Playfulness

To answer research question 1 on acquisition of intellectual playfulness, a combination of methods which consist of students' responses through classroom interactions, interviews and journals are used. All the data is read and reread in search for extensive themes, coding and classifying themes and finally conducting constant comparisons. A predetermined codes are coded at the forefront using theory of intellectual playfulness. However, this approach became too compressing and researcher has opted for a more inductive approach and labelled for themes as they emerge. These themes are coded mostly at the phrase and sentence level. Notations are made when a theme in one participant's data related to a theme of another participant's. The goal is to

derive broad themes from the data in relation to the research question, the theoretical framework, and the literature review (Skerrett, 2011).

Then, a table showing each lesson is created and themes that has arose in the data are written in search for cross-references. This is followed by placing the themes within the predetermined categories of Open-endedness, Risk-taking, and Absorbing - the three main characteristics of Intellectual Playfulness Theory as suggested by Potter & Levine-Donnerstein (1999) using existing theory or prior research as initial coding categories. The findings describe the occurrence of codes representing the intellectual playfulness suggested by Fine (2014). In the discussion section, researcher has summarized how the study validated Fine's Intellectual Playfulness Theory. There is, however, some themes that are abandoned because they do not shed light on the research questions.

3.10.2 Influence of Intellectual Playfulness

To answer research question 2 on the influence or impact of intellectual playfulness on writing, the participant's individual compositions are analysed by looking at the depth and complexity of learning in order to identify cognitive rigor in their writing. This study does not recommend to grade the composition, merely to analyze using the Gradient in Complexity descriptors (see Appendix H2) to discover the influence of intellectual playfulness in students writing. The compositions are checked and analyzed by the researcher and two experienced teachers who volunteered to help in this research. These experienced teachers are also SPM English paper examiners. They read through the compositions, provide comments and have placed the compositions in the best suited descriptor in the gradient complexity. This analysis done by the researcher and teachers are used to answer research question 2.

Table 3.1 shows the connection amongst the research questions, sources of data and analysis of data. It gives a view of how they are aligned with each other.

Table 3.1

Orientation of research questions, sources of data, participants and analysis of data

Research Questions	Sources of Data	Participants	Analysis of Data
RQ 1:			
How do high ability students acquire intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing class where it is promoted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Student journals • Researcher's journal • Classroom interactions • Lesson plan 	Student	Analysis on the lesson with the phrase 'What if...' and Intellectual Playfulness qualities of open-endedness, risk-taking and absorbing.
RQ 2			
In what ways does the intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class help them with ESL writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compositions • Teacher's comments • Gradient of Complexity • Interview 	Student	Analysing the composition using the Gradient of Complexity

3.11 Trustworthiness

A research study must guarantee some level of credibility if it is to contribute to human understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher of this study is guided by the design principles of intellectual playfulness which displays the academic rigor and engagement in the classroom. Validity is vital to all types of research. "Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data, and findings in research. Nothing in research is more important than validity" (Bernard, 1995, p. 38). Validity in research is often based on the standards of internal and external validity, precision and reliability.

The standards by which validity is determined are different depending on the paradigm under which the research is being performed and the interpretivist paradigm suggests criteria called trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The trustworthiness criteria is seen through a different light nevertheless is parallel to those of rigor.

Trustworthiness is divided into credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability which is followed in seeking the intellectual playfulness among high ability students in writing. Each of these are described in the next section and how they are addressed throughout the research process.

3.11.1 Credibility

Charmaz (2000, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) described that credibility is a type of internal validity and achieved by assessing the researcher's interpretation of the data. This criteria acknowledges the constructivist view of multiple realities and seeks to confirm that the participant's experiences and understanding of the phenomenon are accurately represented by the researcher. In this study, credibility is assessed through methodological triangulation which is the use of multiple methods for the collection of data. This research has involved the collection of data through classroom interactions, interviews and documentation. For example, classroom interactions in the classroom is used to guide questions that is incorporated in the interviews. Data gathered from the documents and compositions are used to confirm and solidify the themes from the interviews. Thus, variety of data and methods have worked in concert to verify and clarify the phenomenon of intellectual playfulness among adolescents.

Merriam (2002) states that prolonged engagement builds credibility in a research study. Therefore, participants must spend enough time "in the context being studied to overcome the distortions that are due to their impacts on the context, their own biases, and the effect of unusual or seasonal events" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 30). In this study, the duration of time spent with students aid this process with the hope, they are accustomed and comfortable with the researcher's presence in the classroom in exploring intellectual playfulness among them.

3.11.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which a research study could be duplicated and produce similar findings (Erlandson, et al., 1993). The paradigm of qualitative analysis recognizes that exact duplication is impossible. Dependability is first achieved through the feasibility study and field testing of data collection instruments. This is to ensure the data that is received reliable with the questions that is asked. Furthermore, the researcher maintains an audit trail that provides documentation and details about “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 2002, p. 207). In this study, the audit trail consists of detailed descriptions of data collection techniques, transcripts from interviews, remarks from classroom interactions, researcher’s journal and student reflective journals, students’ composition and other data analysis notes which is used to answer the research questions of intellectual playfulness.

3.11.3 Confirmability

Erlandson,et.al (1993) explains confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are the focus of the study and not the biases of the researcher (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Yet again, the qualitative paradigm rejects the notion of complete objectivity. Thus, the primary means for establishing confirmability is audit trail. A confirmability audit focuses on the product of the research to confirm that the findings follows the data collected in the study (Erlandson, et al., 1993). The audit trail describes the dependability section that provides information to track the findings of the study to their sources. Confirmability can also be established through triangulation which provides an opportunity for multiple perspectives to inform the study. As mentioned previously, this study includes triangulation of data collection methodology to display the intellectual playfulness.

3.11.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the research study can be applied to other contexts (Erlandson, et al., 1993). In this study, thick, rich descriptions and purposeful sampling help to ensure transferability. The purpose is to provide adequate information such that the reader is able to determine for themselves the transferability of the research to their particular context. Detailed descriptions of the vignette of the lessons and extensive quotes from the interviews provide the reader with a basic experience of intellectual playfulness in the classroom.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Before embarking on the fieldwork, the normal research procedure is sought from the concerned authority to conduct the study in the classroom. The researcher has obtained permission letters from various related departments; the Educational Policy Research Development (EPRD), and Educational Department of Federal Territory to conduct the research (see Appendix A1 and A2). All the research instruments – interview protocols, interview questions, lesson plans and gradient in complexity that are employed in this study is sent for approval. All the data collection procedures and instruments is accompanied with Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form (Appendix B1) is submitted to the Educational Policy Research Development (EPRD).

The students participate in this study are below 18 years of age and is considered minors. Parental consents is given to Head of Senior School to seek permissions from the parents (Appendix B2). In the Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form to students, it is made clear that participants are voluntary and they could choose to withdraw from the study at any stage if they are not comfortable without any penalty or comments. They are informed that all comments and responses are anonymous and treated as confidential. In this regard, it is highlighted to the school

authority that the study is not to harm the students' learning process rather it is to heighten their learning to create an academic rigor and pleasurable engagement. The contact details of the researcher is clearly stated on the Participant's Information Sheet/Consent Form should the participants have any questions, concerns or complains about the conduct of research.

3.13 Summary

This chapter has specified the research purposes and questions guiding this study. It has outlined the research methodology and methods chosen as well as data collection procedures implanted to address the research questions. Ethical considerations and procedures are also discussed. In doing so, this chapter sets the scene for the results and discussion chapters that follow.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Overview

This study that is conducted in a high ability Form Four ESL class, explores intellectual playfulness in the writing class. By privileging students' voices and meaning-making towards intellectual playfulness, the researcher hopes to explain students' perspectives pertaining to intellectual playfulness on writing. The study is driven by two research questions. The first research question is how do high ability students acquired intellectual playfulness in ESL writing class where it is promoted? The second research question is in what way does the intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class help them with the ESL writing? The findings are organized based on the research questions.

Data is obtained from the following sources of data: classroom interactions, in-depth interviews, student journals, students' composition and researcher's journal (see Chapter 3 – procedures for data collection, p.89). All these data are collectively used to answer the research questions. The data from interviews are transcribed and coded as well as themes are extrapolated and organized according to the research questions. Meanwhile, data from the students and researcher's journal are arranged into themes. Then, the multiple sources of data is triangulated and discussion represent in figures or tables is used to support the analysis of the findings in answering the research questions. This analysis of the findings is central to understanding if intellectual playfulness is able to provide a platform for cognitive rigor and engagement among high ability students in the ESL writing classroom.

4.2 Process of Writing

Research question one provides insight into the development of intellectual playfulness, the process the students has gone through over the period of one semester.

Research question one aims to look at: a) what has transpired in the classrooms as students acquired intellectual playfulness, b) how they acquire different aspects of intellectual playfulness over the course of four lessons. To answer these, the researcher has inspected the lessons and responses from the students on the activities.

In order to look at the acquisition of intellectual playfulness, the researcher has attempted to describe students' experiences in writing i.e before the study is conducted because the researcher wants to analyze the shifts or transitions they have experienced. This is followed by a discussion on the overview of the lessons that are taught in order to facilitate the acquisition of intellectual playfulness. Next, what has transpired in the four lessons are analysed to scrutinize how students have acquired intellectual playfulness and how the different aspects of intellectual playfulness has manifested themselves in the lessons. Finally, different aspects across the four lessons is analysed thematically to inspect students' development.

4.3 Students Previous Experiences in Writing

Knowing students initial perceptions is essential in order to know their responses to intellectual playfulness. The primary focus is on how these students have perceived, experienced and understood writing in their previous classroom context. Their initial perceptions are obtained through the conducted interviews. In other words, this section attempted to capture the views of the students with the purpose of understanding how they have experienced the reality of teaching and learning of writing in the previous writing classroom. The excerpts below illustrate responses given by the students when they are asked on their views of writing lesson that they normally have in their

classroom prior to the study. The code labelling used in the excerpts are explained

Appendix I. The following views on writing are expressed by students.

Excerpt 1: *Students Views on Writing – Format*

It's like teacher will just tell us SPM has this format, like maybe INL1/Magdalene/14
there are five questions and then one of them is like one word essay
and then we have to like go according to it and then see the points
and then make sure we don't get away from the topic.

Based on the excerpt 1, for Magdalene the pedagogy of writing is driven by requirements in the examination i.e SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*/Malaysian Certificate of Education) format. Similarly, other students in the excerpt 2 have echoed this views and elaborated on the English SPM examination (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) format. *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*/Malaysian Certificate of Education is an examination taken by all the Form 5 students (Year 10) before they end their secondary school education. The results of this examination is used to gain entry in various higher learning institutions to pursue their tertiary education. For these students, the English SPM examination (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*/Malaysian Certificate of Education) format involved in responding to the format and topic, having a 350 words of length in the essay and having good grammar, vocabulary as well as writing what the teacher wants as shown below.

Excerpt 2: *Students Views on Writing – Format & Topic*

Teacher will give us a topic to talk about, then she will tell us the INL1/Lau/15
format, how it should be. Then, we should write based on the format
and the topic.

Teacher will tell us to understand the points, use all of it, write in a INL1/Gana/20
correct format and make sure we write 350 words.

Teacher gives a title, then we just write. INL1/Rubena/14

Make sure you follow the format and as long as we are good in INL1/Cheer/23
grammar, follow the format and write, teacher normally says we are
on the right track to get an A.

All I need to do is give what the teacher asks. There is always a criteria INL1/Razif/24
that we must satisfy, that's all.

Writing in the school is just for the purpose of getting good grades. INL1/Adrian/8

Writing is structured, has a format and criteria to be followed. INL1/Faz/22

The students have defined the purpose of writing narrowly in terms of examination performance. Because of examination driven, the goal of writing is solely to get an 'A'. The responses of students in excerpt 3 attest to this.

Excerpt 3: Students Views on Writing – Examination

I only write for the sake of writing in the exam. Just to get an A for my exam. INL1/Virgil/6

I write just to finish the assignment given my teacher and to make sure I get an A in the exams. INL1/Rubena/6

Of course, I write because I want to make sure I get an A for my writing, so I tend to listen what my teacher wants in the essay and just write that. INL1/Maha/8

I don't really get to actually express my feelings because I'm afraid that maybe teacher wouldn't like my style of writing or maybe there's something wrong in the writing itself and she won't give me an A for my essay. Getting an A for my writing is important to me. INL1/Norry/8

I write just for marks because they give you a topic and you have to write about it. So it's basically just for marks to get an A in the exams. Since from one we have been doing that and I am used to it. INL1/Razif/8

It is something you write in order to score in examination. INL1/Syafiq/20

From the responses above, these learners may not invest time and efforts in writing for learning goals but merely for performance goals. This has revealed that many students of this class failed to see the relevance of writing beyond the context of school. In addition, from my own experience as an English teacher, the traditional method of instructions dominate and leaving little space for learning goals in writing. Thus, examination is defined as performance of writing rather than allowing students personal meaning-making, exploration of understanding, thinking, interpretation and creativity.

While students have acknowledged that the pedagogy is strongly driven by examination, there are some miscellaneous responses on what is writing as shown in excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4: *Students Views on Writing – Examination*

I like writing when I'm not under pressure like, during exam. INL1/Harley/8

Only time I feel that I truly wrote a decent essay was during exams and not in actual classes. INL1/Sharifah/12

Harley has expressed that he couldn't write under pressure while for Sharifah the only time she could write is under pressure. This indicates examination could be a boon or bane for some students. It is bane for some students who have preferred a relax atmosphere and enjoy writing while boon to others that need the pressure of so called 'examination' in order to write well. It can be deduced that for some students writing is just a 'chore' of examination while others feel they want to write for their own personal gains despite examination.

From all the excerpts above, it is quite apparent despite students' various personal responses, they do agree in one common thing that securing an 'A' for writing in the examination is vital for them. That is the reason to write accordingly to what would give them good grades in examination (performance goals) happens to be more important compared to writing what they want to write as personal fulfilments and meaning making that comes as secondary to them.

On the other hand, upon further probing, student's remarks on what writing is in the classroom and what they like it to be is illustrated in excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5: *Comparison of Students' Views on Writing*

What students think of writing in their classroom?

Most of the time our writing lesson are kind of dry and dull INL1/Virgil/6

To be honest, most of the time I feel the writing lessons are boring INL1/Maha/8

Writing should not be rigid as what we have been doing in classroom previously INL1/Stephanie/17

There aren't many writing activities that we do nowadays in the classroom. So, we don't really get to write that much other than exams INL1/Harley/14

Our writing lessons hardly have anything interesting for us to look forward to. INL1/Razif/8

What students would like writing to be?

I think that writing actually can be fun because you can, like, really tell what you feel but in our class we are not given that opportunity. INL1/Priya/15

It should allow us to explore anything and everything which is like....umm...Err.it is like taking a challenge in what we are writing. Somewhat like taking risks. That would make me feel happy about what I have written. INL1/Maha/17

I would prefer to be given freedom in writing...like...to allow my pen and paper dance to the tune of my thoughts in my mind INL1/Keshav/14

From this excerpt, the voices of discontent among the students in relation to their previous writing classroom is important to be noted. It can be established that student's views that writing in the classroom has failed to engage them. Besides, students state that most of the writing done in class is only for the purpose of writing for examination. Indirectly, audible voices are seeking and hoping for an inaugural in writing composition and not only regurgitating writing that is needed in the examination. On the other hand, students have shared what they like writing to be. For instance, they want opportunities to be able to express and explore in writing as well as being challenged in writing i.e like to be able to take risks in writing. Therefore, there appears to be discrepancies between the kind of students writing experiences in the classroom and what they are hoping for.

As conclusion, student's responses of their experiences in their previous writing classroom show: a) purpose of writing is examination driven in terms of task and requirement, b) the goals of their writing is solely to get an 'A' (performance goals), c) they have their own envision of what they like writing to be. Thus, the rational of this initial perceptions has provided a platform to conceptualize lessons that aligns with the needs and capabilities of students through intellectual playfulness. The subsequent section provides an overview of the four lessons which describe generally the structure of the planned lessons and the expected outcomes. This is followed by explanation on how each lesson is analysed to answer research question one.

4.4 Overview of the Lessons

In this study, four writing lessons are explored using the genres such as persuasive writing, poetry writing and expository writing. The genres chosen conformed to the Malaysian Form Four English Language Integrated Secondary School Curriculum Syllabus (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2003*). Details of each lesson is described in Chapter 3 (The Lessons, p.83). In each lesson, students are given different tasks and required to write different types of compositions. The duration of each lesson is one hour twenty minutes. The researcher collects the compositions after each lesson. However, for lesson two (activity out of the school) a few students unable to complete within the duration of the lesson. They are given extra time but the compositions are still collected within the same day.

Table 4.1

Structure of the Planned Lessons

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Features
Task	Writing movie review (Movie 'Inside Out')	Writing 'haibun' (A short tour to the park)	Writing compare & contrast composition (Advertisement on 3 different festivals)	Writing a speech (Text – flyer and YouTube video)	Based on popular culture
Objectives of the lessons	Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (revised bloom taxonomy 2005) + Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK) = Cognitive Rigor Matrix				Cognitive rigor of the writing task
Similar features of the lessons	Instruction with the phrase 'What if...' embedded into the lesson				Higher order thinking question stem
Characteristics in the task	Imagination, Curiosity, Openness, Flexibility, Being creative and Humour				Playfulness

Table 4.1 illustrates the structure of the planned lessons. The first category displays the tasks of the four lessons. The lessons use different types of inputs such as movies, walking in park, advertisements, flyers and YouTube videos. The inputs chosen are based on popular culture that is related to adolescent's life generally. According to Evans (2014), artefacts of popular culture can serve as advanced organizers which students can synthesize ideas to them. The planned lessons also have characteristics related to playfulness such as imagination, curiosity, openness, flexibility, being creative and humour that is presented in the task to provide opportunities and challenges for students in writing. For instance, in lesson one movie 'Inside Out' has elements of humour and imaginary which has sparked interest and curiosity among the students to venture the given writing task. Similarly, openness and flexibility in the writing task has enabled students to share their views and writing the review of the movie without any restrictions. The playfulness provided in the lesson is to prompt students to use variety strategies such as conceptualizing, reasoning and solving problems in their writing.

Furthermore, objectives of the lessons are formulated by superposing Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (revised bloom taxonomy 2005) and Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK). This is done to enable students to exercise or practice, develop higher order thinking skills over a wide range of cognitive complexity which could result in cognitive rigor. Bloom's Taxonomy which describes the type of thinking processes necessary when one is faced with new tasks is used to develop activities that requires the transfer of knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Bloom's descriptors of analyse, evaluate and create is used to design the lessons. On the other hand, DOK 3 (Strategic thinking) and DOK 4 (Extended thinking) of Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK) are used in the writing task to look more closely at the depth of content understanding and scope of learning activity.

In planning the four lessons, DOK-3 (Strategic Thinking) or DOK-4 (Extended Thinking) learning activities are employed. This means a great deal of absorption of information is required and students need to reinforce what they have learnt previously and engage with the content. In short, Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Hess, 2006b) are blended in planning the writing tasks. For instance, the planned task for lesson 3 is to write a compare and contrast composition by viewing television commercials. In order to write the composition, students need to analyse and evaluate the television commercials before deciding on creating the categories to compare and contrast. In Bloom's Taxonomy, these three levels are placed on the higher continuum. Meanwhile, using the Webb DOK, DOK-3 activities are applied in relation to the complexity of the content and the required task for this lesson.

Therefore, the lesson is planned with the preponderance of task correlating to [4,3] (Bloom's-Analyze, Webb's-Reasoning) and [4,4] (Bloom's -Analyze, Webb's-Extended thinking) or [5,3] (Bloom's-Evaluate, Webb's-Reasoning) and [5,4] (Bloom's-Evaluate, Webb's-Extended thinking) in the cell of cognitive rigor matrix. This means researcher can discover the extent to which the lesson targets the level of cognitive rigor compared to the [4, 3] cell, which required analysing on how parts relate or differ (Bloom 4) and some decision-making and justification (DOK-3). Using the cognitive rigor matrix to plot the cognitive rigor of the writing task can help the researcher to discover the extent to which the students level of cognitive rigor in writing. The details of cognitive rigor matrix is described in Chapter 3 (Cognitive rigor, p.78).

The four writing tasks have a similar feature which is the question stem or phrase, 'What if...' embedded into the lesson. The phrase, 'What if' is introduced in the first lesson and used subsequently in the other lessons. The phrase, 'What if...' is a higher order thinking question stem at the highest level in the Revised Bloom's taxonomy (2005) of 'create' that could provide opportunities for students to be challenged and connected to the writing materials. The phrase is used to compel students to hone their natural abilities to analyze, evaluate, create and question bases to encourage them to have depth of understanding. It is also hoped with this phrase students could make personal connections that could establish the relevance and value of learning for them.

For instance, in lesson 4, students have to address the task of, ‘What if’ they were given the role of a young ambassador to address a speech on environment. In preparing the speech the students are very meticulous in their tasks as they feel it is a huge responsibility given to them. They are gathering, analyzing and evaluating information from the presented flyers, YouTube videos and their own knowledge for the purpose of writing the speech. The phrase seems to have empowered them with an important role which the students have taken seriously. More examples of ‘What if ...’ embedded in lessons are described in the analysis of each lesson in the following section.

In short, the lessons are planned: a) using the popular culture as input in the writing task, b) objectives of the lessons are formulated by collaborating Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Revised Bloom Taxonomy 2005) and Webb’s Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK), c) higher order thinking question stem using the ‘What if...’ is embedded in the task, d) characteristics related to playfulness is presented in the writing task. The next section presents how the analysis of the four lessons that explore intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing classroom. Pseudonyms are used for students in the vignettes of all the four lessons to ensure their anonymity.

4.4.1 Lesson 1 & Vignette – “We are the ‘What if...’ Reviewers”

In lesson one, the writing task is to write a movie review. In order to do that, students view a movie entitled ‘Inside Out’. The movie is about five characters who personified emotions such as Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear, and Anger and to explore their roles in the life of a young girl. A more detailed description of the movie is provided in Chapter 3 (Lessons 1, p.84). This lesson aims to enable students to analyse, evaluate and create a movie review. In other words, it requires higher order thinking to complete the task. For instance, in analysing, students have opportunities to analyse abstract themes and

perspectives in the movie. The planned task also resides in the DOK-3 (Strategic /Reasoning) or DOK-4 (Extended thinking) of Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge. This requires the students to synthesize information from the movie before justifying conclusions made by them in writing the review. In other words, in the Cognitive Rigor Matrix, the task correlates to the [4, 3] (Bloom's- analyse, Webb's-Reasoning) or [4, 4] (Bloom's-analyse, Webb's- Extended Thinking) cell of cognitive rigor. The writing task has given students freedom and flexibility in writing the review as they are not provided with a pre-determined structure. In addition, the phrase 'What if...' is introduced and embedded into the writing task. Students are encouraged to use the phrase so that they could exercise imagination and creativity in writing the review. The vignette below describes an episode in lesson 1.

At the start of the lesson, I wrote the phrase 'What if...' on the board. Students looked at the board and turned around to their friends whispering and repeated 'What if...', 'What if...' I asked them, "What comes to your mind when you look at the phrase 'What if...?'" Razif rose to his feet with his hands in the air to draw attention to the comments he was going to make, "What if we were given the freedom to do as we wish?" (CIL1/Razif/1). Other students in the class cheered and jeered him. Then, other students began sharing their views on 'What if...' which created a zealous environment in the classroom. Some gave serious thoughtful views such as Virgil pointed by, "What if there were no exams in school?" (CIL1/Virgil/2), while Yasmin cheekily said "What if I'm exempted from doing any school homework?" (CIL1/Yasmin/3)

Next, the class view a movie entitled 'Inside Out'. As the movie was going on, Norry who was sitting quietly at the back row of the classroom said, "Wow...I didn't know our brain has so many characters in them and this is how they think" (CIL1/Norry/4). The thirty students were absorbed in the movie. Some, even requested to watch the movie again. I (the teacher) reintroduced the phrase "What if..." during the activity. Beginning of the lesson, students have shared their views on the phrase playfully. Then, I asked them to use the phrase in writing the movie review. Jasmine who was not very vocal in the class since the lesson started, suddenly asked, "So, we are allowed to make changes in the movie using "What if..." (CIL1/Jasmine/7). Before I could respond, Rubena proudly answered, "Yes...because we are the "what if..." movie reviewers so we have the power to make the readers to see the movie from a different perspective" (CIL1/Rubena/8). The other students clapped and cheered for her. Maha, a school perfect stood in support of Rubena and excitedly commented, "I like this activity...Emm...it is like we have to think differently of other possibilities which would help the movie makers in future" (CIL1/Maha/9).

Then, the students began to write the review individually. After completing their reviews, some students volunteered to present their review in the class. I noticed that students felt proud and wanted their friends to know what they wrote in the review. I did allow some students to present seeing their enthusiasm to share their reviews with others. However, only ten students managed to present due to time constraint. During the presentation noises of agreement and disagreement, mocking, wit and laughter filled the classroom.

The above description provides a glimpse into lesson one on how intellectual playfulness seem to be acquired in the writing classroom. In the following section, the researcher further describes students views on Lesson 1 by painting a more complete picture of this particular lesson through details from students' interview responses, classroom interactions, followed by students' and researcher's journal.

4.4.1.1 Incorporating Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 1

A prime purpose of the lesson on intellectual playfulness is to shift students out of their previous understandings of teaching and learning of writing to a place where they take responsibility for their own learning. The previous understanding of teaching and learning writing in school, most of the time is rigid and controlled with students focus only on grades. Intellectual playfulness by contrast is a way to involve a great deal of cognitive rigor, building conceptual understandings as well as approach open-ended tasks with interest, pleasure and skill (Fine, 2014).

A movie is used as an input in exploring intellectual playfulness in lesson 1 and students' interactions in the classroom and responses from the interviews are analysed as shown in excerpt 6, 7 and 8.

Excerpt 6

Wow...I didn't know our brain has so many characters in them and this is how they think. CIL1/Norry/4

Yes...look at the partition of emotions and how they work...this movie plot is really unique. CIL1/Adrian/ 5

From excerpt 6, Norry and Adrian's interactions stipulated the movie's unique concepts that have sparked their interests in the movie. This is important because the movie has created necessary initiation for the students to analyse it for writing the review. This is further supported by student's responses during the interview in excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7: *Students' Responses to the Lesson (L1/I)*

When I actually watch this movie it's more on emotions and feelings so it actually help me to imagine...umm, like the importance of the emotions *lah*. Like, without anger, there isn't sadness, happiness and all that. I could actually imagine myself. As I was watching, I was already forming a lot of ideas that I would want to write in the review. INL1/Razif/17

The movie, sort of opened my mind to various possibilities. Like, I was thinking of directing a movie or even coming out with such a movie. When I saw the movie, I concluded that, "Wah" to make a movie like this is would be unimaginable. Like, we wouldn't have thought of, "Ooh okay, let's make something out of Joy!" like it's so weird, right? So, I think it made me feel like if the director can think differently, so can I, in writing a review that is something different. INL1/Rubena/22

I find the activity really interesting because we could actually write whatever we feel and our views of the movie does matter. INL1/Norry/27

Razif describes the input of the lesson i.e the movie has facilitated the freedom to imagine. As a result, he is able to generate more ideas to be shared in the review. Similarly, Norry is interested in the writing task because freedom given in expressing one's ideas. In other words, the task has provided her with freedom to produce something that is related and meaningful to her. Besides, Rubena conveys the movie has made her to think diversely i.e differently in writing the review. This indicates students have opportunities to construct new knowledge and new meaning from their experiences.

Another significant finding in this lesson is the student wants to emulate creativity shown in the movie by showing their own creativities. They are bold in producing a different movie review than the ones normally read. In other words, students are gradually feeling comfortable to move to a higher level of thinking. In summarizing all the students' responses on the writing activity in lesson 1, Gana (Excerpt 8) has concluded:

Excerpt 8: *Students' Responses to the Lesson (L1/2)*

There are three things about this task I find is interesting. One, we have not done anything like this in the class so far. So, something new and refreshing kind of task is surely a big welcome to the world of writing for me. Secondly, the movie to me was directed very creatively, which made me to write my review you know look from a new perspectives. Finally, I enjoyed my time during the lesson because the task was fun to do. I had freedom in expressing how I felt about the movie, doesn't matter if I don't follow the normal structure that teacher usually asks us to do...Emmm...what was important is that I can express myself on the piece of paper. INL1/Gana/2

Gana deduces that students are having a first-hand experiences compared to their previous writing classrooms. His reasons being, a) choice of input used in the lesson i.e movie from Disney Pixar is interesting and triggered students to think diversely in completing the writing task, b) freedom in writing the review without any restrictions. In other words, this first-hand experiences has given students the opportunities to indulge in pleasurable learning process and provides freedom in communicating ideas that is mattered to them. Students also commented on the phrase 'What if...' which is embedded in the writing task as shown in excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9

'What if..?', 'What if...?'	Class
What if we were given the freedom to do as we wish?	CIL1/Adrian/1
What if there were no exams in school?	CIL1/Virgil/2
What if I'm exempted from doing any school homework?	CIL1/Yasmin/3

In excerpt 9, students' initial remarks on the phrase 'What if...' that is introduced during the lesson is filled with irony. This reason being they are playfully stating preferences they wish to have in school. In other words, the phrase 'What if...' is creating an environment of being familiar with some roles of the phrase i.e in this case demonstrating changes that students wish to have in life. Besides, students are involved in a more serious discussions related to the phrase, 'What if...' as shown in excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10

So, we are allowed to make changes in the movie using “What if...” CIL1/Jasmine/4

Yes...because we are the “what if...” movie reviewers so we have the power to make the readers to see the movie from a different perspective. CIL1/Razif/5

I agree. I for one was thinking what if Sadness was portrayed as the protagonist in the movie? CIL1/Norry/6

Hey...Norry, that would have been terrible...hmm... the whole movie would have made us in a sombre mood, ya CIL1/Adrian/7

Well...remember there are always two sides of a coin... maybe it is possible the movie could be dull, but remember in the movie I felt Sad was the smartest. Forget about her sad face but look at how she was giving ideas to solve the problems. So, maybe it could have been more interesting making her the ‘heroine’ of the movie. CIL1/Norry/8

In excerpt 10, students have defined the phrase ‘What if...’ as allowing them to give different perspectives and creating other possibilities of how the movie could have been. Over here, students are seen to be thinking and analysing the movie more in depth. This is also supported by their responses in the interview in excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11: *Students’ responses on ‘What if...’ (L1)*

Actually, at the beginning I didn’t get it. I was like, so lost, because ‘What if’ is something new being asked to use in writing. Well, it is just a normal phrase I have come across...so was thinking what was so big deal about this phrase. However, as I watched the movie, I started to think like, ‘Wah, like what will happen if Joy isn’t there? So, I started to ask myself many questions especially about the plot. INL1/Magdalene/45

Well, I am sort of person like, oh this is like this so I accept it. But in this lesson the instruction pushed me to imagine. I think my imagination skills expanded because I was imagining things like, ‘What if...the negative emotions such as Anger and Fear try to help Riley? I could just put it in my writing to make it more distinctive. INL1/Rubena/74

I think the phrase was trying to help us to think out of the box, like more than what was shown or other possibilities when writing review. That was good because we could give our views on how the movie could have been better. So, if there is another sequel of Inside Out 2, maybe Disney productions could consider our views. INL1/Norry/85

In excerpt 11, students has spoken explicitly on the phrase “What if...” Magdalene describes the phrase is something commonly heard but the inclusion of ‘What if...’ into writing is rather new. For her, the phrase has made her to think of other possibilities in creating ideas to write her review. Magdalene’s views is concurred by Norry who describes it as *thinking out of the box*. On the other hand, Rubena states the phrase has given her more room for imaginations in making her writing unique.

From the responses, the phrase ‘What if...’ has provided students with the opportunities of playing with possibilities and imaginations in generating ideas. On the other hand, merely asking students to write a movie review would have led them to have divergence but it would not have been enough to ensure cognitive rigor. Thus, the phrase ‘What if...’ has given students a framework to engage in a cognitively rigorous thinking. In sum, the analysis of the writing task in lesson 1 has provided: a) freedom in expressing their ideas, b) higher level of thinking, c) engagement in a cognitively rigorous thinking, and d) pleasure in the learning process.

4.4.1.2 Manifestation of Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 1

Intellectual Playfulness is manifested through three aspects that is open-endedness, risk-taking and being absorbed i.e flow as mentioned in Fine’s Theory of Intellectual Playfulness. In the following section, the researcher further explores if students are undertaking willingly the open-ended tasks, being a risk-taker and being absorbed (complete engagement) in the task.

a. Open-endedness

Open-endedness in this study looks at how students undertake willingly the open-ended tasks. The task is designed to unfold high ability students' cognitive rigor as they work through writing compositions. In this section, the researcher's aim is to explore students' voices on the open-endedness task and how this can be a potential contribution to ESL students in writing. The movie review task serves as a starting point of what is meant by a playfulness task. Firstly, the tasks that is planned involves a real measure of open-endedness where there is a collection of variety effective ways to write the movie review than a predetermined structure. This measure provides a tap into student's desires in wanting to create and write. The movie review provides a stage in which the students have to deal with complex challenges of conveying their perceptions to readers in powerful ways. The embedded instruction of "What if..." into the task helps to build strong relationships with open-endedness and allows students to construct their own knowledge. Excerpt 12 displays students' responses when they are asked if they like open-endedness in the task which they work with.

Excerpt 12: Students' Responses to Open-Endedness (L1/I)

This is kind of new for me. I can't say that I dislike it because I have freedom in expressing my ideas or what I want to write. INL1/Magdalene/39

It gives me.... more opportunities to think. I actually prefer things like this where my ideas are not limited or constrained. So, I prefer this kind of task. INL1/Sharifah/50

Yes, because I have more freedom in my words and thoughts in my writing. There are no limitations to my responses. I can imagine myself in that situation...errr...like putting myself in the shoes of the 'characters'...which is really thought-provoking and fun. INL1/Norry/51

Yes of course. It's always better than satisfying a set of criteria. In an open-ended task, you can write what you wish to share with others that is what I call the best way to address the task than being told this is how you are supposed to write the composition. INL1/Razif/58

You can just write what you think. When we are not allowed to be open with our views or ideas, it is kind of easy actually because we just write based on what teacher has suggested or given, no need to think much. But open-endedness of this task makes me to think than just writing what teacher wants. I prefer this. INL1/Rubena/48

We can express ourselves in different perspectives and point of views. We are not confining ourselves to just one view. We can look at another person's views and plan new ideas from their point of views. INL1/Gana/47

As shown in excerpt 12, six students' responses have drawn attention to the benefits of undertaking the open-ended task. All the students' responses are indicating similar meaning, i.e. freedom in approaching the writing task. The freedom appears to make them to be a thinker and active in learning than being confined to specified demands expected by the teacher. They seem to have opportunities to see from different perspectives in writing. In other words, by willing to take the open-ended task students have indicated of having freedom to be challenged and creating a response reflective of their abilities and interests.

Students also share their personal responses in their journal on how the writing lesson allows them to experience open-ended tasks. These details shown in the students' journal further supports the findings from the interviews.

Excerpt 13: *Entry L1/1*

It allows me to think deeply and question myself on a deeper level to address the task. Compared to regular writing tasks, which I normally don't need to think deeper to get ideas for the essay as most of the time superficial ideas are sufficient. EL1/1/Sue

It gave me an opportunity to produce good ideas and contribute more of my personal ideas. EL1/1/Tan

I feel I was able to show my true potential in writing and it makes the task less stressful and easier to accomplish. EL1/1/Maha

From the journal entry, Sue's positive evaluation of being able to take the open-ended tasks has made her to engage in challenging and meaningful work. This is an explicit instance of opportunity for students to move on to the higher level in terms of thinking and having depth in learning. Tan shares a sentiment that the open-endedness of the task allows him to construct own ideas and meaning. On the other hand, Maha has written assertively that in taking the open-ended task, has enabled her to be the prospective writer that she always wanted to be. In other words, students' reflections illustrate they are being indulged in the given tasks with greater depth. The idea here indicates their knowledge becomes deeper when they can use it not only in the context of what they have been taught, but use it also to associate or describe something in a different, yet related context. This could allow students to take charge of their learning.

In my own entry (excerpt 14), I have seen students being more acceptable and free to engage in the open-ended tasks. They have freedom to tussle with ideas in their own relaxed way since no interferences from teacher in setting any guidelines for their writing. At the beginning, they are not convinced of the freedom given in writing the review as they prefer. But, slowly as they begin writing the review they come to a consensus that this writing class which incorporates the concept of intellectual playfulness is different from their previous writing class. This mind-set has allowed them to be themselves and venture the open-endedness in the task.

Excerpt 14: *Researcher's Entry L1/I*

Since it was my first class with the students, at the beginning they were not relaxed because they felt I would be sharing whatever happens in the class with their English teach. I had to assure them that whatever happens in the class is just between them and me. In fact I told them to imagine that this is new class with a new lesson and I just want them to enjoy the lessons. After the reassurance, they felt at ease and started to open up. The students were filled with amazing ideas with the freedom given in writing the review. However, some of them still occasionally asks me if their idea can be accepted. I gave them the freedom to decide and that made them happy. I could see a lot potential in the students when given a task which was open-ended.

REL1/2/2016

Looking at all the above responses and reflections, the position of willingness to undertake open-ended task appears to show that students are moving along a route of building complexity and depth in their thinking and learning. Academically, open-endedness seems to have paved a path in providing the students to move and engage in skills that lies at the top of Bloom's learning taxonomy - analysis, evaluation and creation and Webb's DOK Level 3 (Strategic thinking/Reasoning) at minimum. Furthermore, by taking the open-ended task they have opportunities in being autonomous in their writing. The essence of this quality seize much promises and usefulness in showing their true abilities in writing.

Besides, it provides a development for being competence writers in school and after leaving school which is aligned with educational emphases means outlined in the syllabus to help learners to prepare for the world of work and social life. This has potentially effect changes within the students, especially in the conventional school culture that is generally perceived to be more focused on compliance than on freedom. All these indicate, students are experiencing independent thinking and learning which is a key sign of rigor in the writing classroom (Jackson, 2012).

b. Risk-taking

Risk-taking is another characteristics of intellectual playfulness. It is one of the most important qualities in learning second language. The usefulness of taking risk is not only for promoting the expression of students' opinions but allowing students in taking ownership of writing their movie review in this lesson. In this section, the researcher explores if the students are risk-takers or risk-averse learners in this lesson and how risk-taking helps them to progress in their writing in the ESL classroom.

As preamble to the writing lessons in this research, the students are asked if they are risk takers in their previous ESL writing classroom. There are mixed responses from them. Some of them has answered with a definite affirmation while some established they are not and a few others are 'indecisive' or 'neutral'. Excerpt 15 highlights some interesting responses from the six students.

Excerpt 15: Students' Responses to Risk-Taking before Lesson

I am not a risk-taker. I have no confidence in going out of my comfort zone. You know when I am always getting an A for my essay, so I will just write like how I am doing it now. INL1/Magdalene/33

I don't know... I don't know or I'm not sure. I suppose I haven't been in a situation where I have to take risk. I would definitely debate with myself and think it through if I were to take a risk, would it benefit everyone else including myself. If taking risks benefits me and others then I feel more comfortable taking the risk but if not I won't take the risk. There must be a gain in taking the risk, right? So, it depends on the situation. INL1/Sharifah/34

Occasionally, not always. Sometimes I'm not sure whether a particular phrase is correct. So, normally I get a rough idea of it and I use it. For some stories I'm afraid that it is straying away from the topic. That's the usual fear, so, if it's just a little I don't mind taking the risk. But if it's a lot then I don't think I will. INL1/Norry/38

Nop... not when it comes to marks. Because marks are, for now marks are the most important thing for me. If I lose marks I lose everything. For one, my parents will be disappointed with me and people normally look down on someone who gets low marks. INL1/Razif/46

Sometimes...I'm afraid of the consequences. Like, what will happen next? It is a risk to me when the teacher sees differently and doesn't accept what I have written. I am not sure what the teacher would think of my writing...hmm...normally in our writing class she will say this is what is required in your essay so I just write what she wants... INL1/Rubena/33

As seen in the responses, Magdalene repeatedly has admitted being reluctant in taking risks. The reason being she has been always getting good results previously and does not feel the necessity of taking risks. Similarly, Sharifah has expressed the fear of being a risk-taker unless there is an assurance of getting good rewards. In other words, the students have scripted the benefits are indefinite in taking risks. This makes them in deciding not to be a risk-taker. On the other hand, some students like Norry

and Gana appear to be probationary risk-takers. They have tried taking risks in writing previously in terms of trial and error kind of learning. If by taking risks the reward provides good grades, the drive to be a risk-taker continues. However, if it doesn't yield good results, they would definitely abandon the idea of taking risks in writing in the near future. In addition another student, Rubena prefers to practice 'submissive literacy'. She prefers to respond in predictable ways based on her awareness of the teacher's expectation and marking schemes than exercising some responsibility on her own ideas (Koo, 2004). Finally, exists another group of students who fear that society eventually looks down on them if they are failures. For these students like Razif, he only wants success and not willing to be a risk-taker.

On the whole, the findings before incorporating intellectual playfulness in the writing classroom indicates that taking risk is something uncommon or not favoured by the students when it is related to writing compositions. They are not willing to 'pay the price' for taking risks. The 'price' here refers to their grades. For these students, the grades determine the success they need in life. So, they are not willing to risk it. As a result, they prefer to practice submissive literacy than assertive literacy i.e respond in predictable ways in writing than exercising some responsibilities on their own ideas for writing.

After completing lesson 1, students are questioned again if the lesson has helped them to be risk-takers. Interestingly, all of them agreed that the lesson has stimulated them to take risks. However, the degree of the risks they have taken and their reasons for taking risks varied. Excerpt 16 shows the students' responses:

Excerpt 16: *Students' responses to risk-taking after lesson*

Yup, because I felt there was no restrictions on how we write so no one will say it's wrong. So, I was like I'm just going to write whatever I feel. It's writing from my mind. Previously we were only allowed to write what is right, and not.... what is right to others or ourselves. INL1/Magdalene/36

Yes...because when I express my feelings it might not be....err some people might not be able to relate to what I wrote. So it's a risk for me to write whatever I feel without caring about how other people would feel about my writing. So, that's the risk that I took. INL1/Sharifah/39

Yes, it allowed me to practice my writing skills and pushed me out of my secured zone. Plus, the "what if..." gave me a drive and direction on my writing. INL1/Norry/42

Yeap. In a way to write what the brain wants without editing it or worrying how the teacher would grade it. INL1/Razif/51

Yes, because it's like, I just write whatever I think. Then we let teacher see what we wrote. So, it's sort of a risk because we don't know what teacher would think or how she accepts our essay. INL1/Rubena/39

Absolutely! Being able to take risks in this writing task made me bold to express what I want to say, write something new and different. Maybe to some they might feel it is different or not logical. But in this writing task I felt it didn't matter ... whether people think it is right or wrong. All I know was I had freedom to write as how I would review the movie and it is straight from the panel of my brains as in the movie. INL1/Gana/44

The responses from excerpt 16 illustrates how risk-taking plays a role in students writing the movie review. Interestingly, to some extent they have agreed that being a risk-taker, have empowered them with their own voices in writing the movie review. Gana has expressed that being a risk-taker has made him to be bold to write any of his ideas without any hesitations. For him, being bold means writing in a new perspective and differently although others might agree or disagree with his writing.

On the other hand, Magdalene who previously not willing to take risk, now appears to be keen in being a risk-taker. The reason being, for her the task does not impose any restrictions. Likewise, Sharifah, who is a 'fence sitter' earlier, has shared same sentiments of being able to express her ideas openly without worrying of others acceptance of the ideas. In other words, both these students are taking accountability

of their ideas as they feel their views should be heard though there could be acceptance or rejection by others or even the teacher in this matter.

As for, Norry and Razif, being able to take risks in this task given them opportunities to move out from their usual comfort zone of writing. This has provided them with opportunities to show their true potentials and move from their previous routine of writing in the classroom to engage in a cognitively ambitious task. In comparison, Rubena has clearly expressed freedom given in addressing the task comes with a risk. She has taken the risk but is still concerned of the teacher's acceptance of her essay.

There seems to be an emergent of different opinions in being able to take risks. However, to some extent all of them are collective in their willingness to try out hunches about something new (Brown, 2000). The students are in agreement in wanting to take risks in writing the composition yet they seem to still have some concerns about the teacher's acceptance of their compositions since she/he grades them. Clearly, the underlying reasoning or concerns that still exists is students' anxiousness in obtaining good grades. The countless information that is obtained in the interview sessions is further triangulated with the students' reflections from their journal entries. Excerpt 17 displays the journal entries:

Excerpt 17: *Student's Entry L1/2*

There were no specific format or boundaries to the writing task. This automatically lifts the walls that restricts my ideas and thoughts on writing the review. EL1/2/Adrian

Allowed me to try a new ways of writing and to step out of my comfort zone. EL1/2/Sue

When I read my essay, I felt satisfied and told myself... Yes, this is what I wanted to write in my essay. EL1/2/Maha

I decide in employing a style or structure outside the norms or expected conventions. So, taking risk in this lesson kept my writing alive and unpredictable not just for readers but also for me. EL1/2/Virgil

From excerpt 17, students comments specify in being a risk-taker, there is not a precise way of attempting the task. It is also interesting to note students using the phrase ‘out of my comfort or secure zone’ in their journal entries and during interview sessions to indicate their feelings. This further solidifies that risk-taking has given them self-confidence which in turn brings about a form of optimistic demand to venture into the unknown (McWilliam, 2008).

Excerpt 18: *Researcher’s Entry L1/2*

The students want to do well and aim for excellence. They are eager to try something new but at the same time were afraid to do so. I could sense they were worried when pushed out of their comfort zones though the eagerness to try something new was there. They kept asking me if their essay would be graded. When I assured no grading is involved, I could see them feeling at ease and comfortable. As much as the urge to take risk was apparent among the students similarly the fear that it might threaten their grades and hopes of getting all A’s in their SPM was also obvious. REL1/2/2016

Based on my own reflection as shown in excerpt 18, I have noted that students are willing to take risks in this writing lesson because their compositions are not graded for examinations. Unfortunately, they are still reluctant of taking risks in writing beyond this research classroom. They fear the possibility of not obtaining high grades and being a disappointment to everyone including themselves. This is further illustrated in the discussion as shown in excerpt 19.

Excerpt 19

Miss Hema, are you going to give us marks for the compositions? CIL1/Stephanie/9

Stephanie, why so *kiasu*? You want to get the highest mark again? Teacher, she is ‘mark-craze’. CIL1/Razif/10

Stef...why can’t you just for once enjoy what we are doing in the class than thinking of marks? Write something crazy or bizarre for once than thinking of the exams. CIL1/Adrian/11

Stephanie let your hair down for once. Teacher, told us at the beginning remember not going to grade us and we can be the writer we want. So, show your talent in writing. CIL1/Norry/12

I just wanted to confirm, *mah*. CIL1/Stephanie/13

No, Stephanie there won't be marks given for any of the Teacher compositions that I am going to give you.

Happy now Stef...don't worry. Be like me I told myself, 'What if... CIL1/Adrian/14
I am a famous movie reviewer? Just let your ideas flow, *la*

In excerpt 19, Stephanie wants to be a risk-taker but seeking surety in making sure that the composition is not given grades. Grades seem to hold a prominent role in these student's life even in deciding to be a risk-taker. However, other students have shown readiness and encourage Stephanie to try something new and different without putting the primary focus on grades. Hence, this group of students seem to be aware that learning is the reward for taking risks and they have to be able to gamble a bit (Brown, 2000).

All these responses and discussions has conformed Bruner's call in providing opportunities for learners to construct new knowledge and new meaning from authentic experiences. Being a risk-taker appears to have provided students with an opportunity to develop as writers beyond the needs of getting higher grades in examinations alone. As a consequence, risk-taking has productively challenged the existing structured writing which they have been exposed to all this while in their previous writing classroom.

c. Absorbing (Complete Engagement)

In this section, the researcher describes the quality of thoughts and purposes students bring to their involvement is crucial to being engaged in the lesson. It is necessary to explore in greater details through close examination of the interview, reflections and classroom interactions to convey a deeper understanding of engagement. In Entry L1/3 researcher provides a relevant account of her reflections during the lesson:

Excerpt 20: *Researcher's Entry L1/3*

They enjoyed the movie and were actively participating in the discussion after viewing it. They were more than willing to speak up and participate. The content of the movie became more integrated in their minds. It didn't seem like something that's purely intellectual but more of relating to their lives. When they were working on the movie review, they stopped over to look at their peers draft and criticised each other in an enjoyable manner. REL1/3/2016

During the presentation some laughed at their friends review and at each other's witty comments. They were often vibrant in their responses and spirited about certain reviews that was evident through their passionate comments. The students were also avid to present their movie review even after the school bell rang. REL1/4/2016

The environment in the classroom and students' participation has indicated they are having a good time i.e fill with joy and lose their sense of self as they are fully concentrated on the task. In short, they are completely immersed in the task and enjoyed the experience of learning, a state of absorbed or flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). They also seem to have forgotten the time while being absorbed in the task. This is further evident from the student's request in excerpt 21.

Excerpt 21

Can we just continue with the presentations? I want to see other reviews of the movie. CIL1/Maha/15

Can Adrian (monitor of the class) ask Mrs. Teoh (the Mathematics teacher) if we can just stay on here and finish all the presentations? CIL1/Virgil/16

Yes, let us finish the presentation first. I am sure Mrs. Teoh won't mind. Adrian, please convince her...just for today, yah! CIL1/Sue/17

Adrian, please huh...I want to present my review next. CIL1/Virgil/18

The most striking thing that is notable from the discussion in excerpt 21, postulates students are experiencing excitement in sharing their reviews with their peers. This has led them indirectly to lose track of time due to the feelings of being absorbed in the writing task. This kind of thinking not only allows them to be cognitively rigorous but also cognitively absorbing (Fine, 2014). This opinions are further supported by students' responses and comments from the interview in excerpt

22 when the researcher raises a question on how actively they are engaged in the writing and what makes them to be engaged in the writing.

Excerpt 22: Students' Responses on Being Absorbed (L1)

I really liked the movie which was a key point of being interested in writing the review. For instance in the review I was analysing and wrote about the most important characters in the movie such as Joy and Sadness. INL1/Magdalene/41

Can I be honest, writing class was never been my 'cup of tea'. In previous writing lessons, I would be bored maybe because it was not challenging for me. Most of the time I just wait for the lesson to be over. But, today's lesson I felt interested and was enjoying the lesson, so much so never wanted it to end. The moment I began to write the review, my brain was like being a part of the movie - having so many possibilities that I would like to share in the review. INL1/Sharifah/49

The movie was a good choice I would really say. I was glued watching the movie. I also liked the phrase 'What if...' which made me to imagine myself in handling some possible and awkward situation in life. It was like my thinking cap was constantly blinking with ideas, ha ha ha ha (laughter)... INL1/Norry/54

I thought that we could continue the lesson and we could share more and say more about the movie review presentation. INL1/Razif/61

I was really involved, first, a really amazing movie. Next, when I was writing the review, I was not only analysing but being critical about the plot and characters of the movie. INL1/Rubena/52

Yeah, it's like, something very new. It was like very, very new because we never had this type of class in school before. Writing the review was fun as I was constantly thinking how to be different in writing the review. Besides, it was more entertaining when we were listening to other reviews being presented. I really had a good time during the activity. INL1/Gana/48

From the responses in excerpt 22, most of the students (Magdalene, Sharifah, Norry & Rubena) have highlighted the interest in the task is sparked due to the movie. Indirectly, this has steered students' attention and stimulated their desires to continue their engagement in the writing task. Besides interest, students (Sharifah, Razif, Gana) have related that enjoyment of being able to think and share their ideas in the review made them to be immersed in the activity. This enjoyment in the activity has allowed them to demonstrate their competencies (Csíkszentmihályi, 1993).

On the other hand, some students are also experiencing engagement in the sense of concentration. Razif, for instance salutes the sense of having concentration in the task which has made one to lose track of time and want the lesson to be extended. The occurrence of concentration is related to the depth of cognitive processing in making meaningful learning (Csíkszentmihályi, 1993) which makes one to lose track of time when being involved in an activity.

The student journals entries (excerpt 23) in which they have written their reflections on how the writing class has helped them to be totally engaged further solidify the responses from extract 22.

Excerpt 23: *Entry L1/3*

The movie was an important factor in making me connected to the activity. The movie was not only interesting but educational with good values. This helped me to engage mentally more than physically in the activity. EL1/3/Cheer

For me I was totally engaged because I could write without hesitation of what to write in this writing class. EL1/3/Syafiq

I enjoyed watching the animated movie during the lesson. It really taught me lot of moral values. When completing the movie review, I had constant desire to create something new and original on the page. I had the opportunity to explore my creativity in writing. EL1/3/Sharifah

When I was writing the movie review, I wrote what came to my mind. I was also constantly chanting the “*what if...*” to make my review more interesting. The whole process of writing the review, from watching the movie till we presented was really exciting. Just wished that we have this kind of activity in our daily English writing class. EL1/3/Kit

It captured my attention in trying out new things. We hardly get an opportunity like this in our previous writing classes. An opportunity to feel a relaxed atmosphere in the class, no pressure felt and not to mention freedom in writing the review. Also a “kudos” to the teacher for choosing the movie. It was really interesting and I could relate the movie to my brain. With all this in a package, I was totally having a good time during the writing lesson. EL1/3/Yasmin

In excerpt 23, students have provided some insights in showing how they are really involved in the task. Similar to the responses in the interview, student's interests is aroused from the movie which mimics the real-world situations. This interests seem to enhance their understanding, confidence and directive of writing. Furthermore, Kit aptly has written that enjoyment in the task is provided by the phrase 'What if...' The instruction with the phrase 'What if...' acts as an enhancer in challenging their thinking intellectually and encouraged them into exploration. Therefore, it indicates that having more concentration in the tasks and able to take control of their writing. On the other hand, for Yasmin the writing task has provided a good package by creating an atmosphere of relaxed, stress-free and sovereignty in learning. These views illustrate a significant dynamic classroom where students could have attention, enjoyment and concentration in the task.

From the students' responses and views on being able to have complete involvement, they are positive to have enjoyment in the writing lesson and being allowed to take charge of their writing. They are absorbed in the task because of attention, enjoyment and complete concentration that has occurred throughout the writing task. This is aligned with their needs and capabilities that has made them to be engaged in writing the review.

The three qualities of intellectual playfulness that is discussed indicate a positive response of creating rigor and engagement in the first lesson. Although, there is some concerns among the students at the beginning to shift from their familiarised writing lessons in school, eventually they are willing to consider to move out of their so called 'grade zone'. This is because they could recognise that the playfulness in the task and its possible contributions to their acquisitions of writing. Specifically, their involvement in terms of being cognitively absorbed in the task appears to match their

skillset and abilities in writing. Therefore, being absorbed in the task has taken them to a state that reaching their perceived skills that matches perceived challenge of the task that they were doing (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). In other words, being absorbed in the lesson stretches the students' skills to their limits in pursuit of a challenging task. The next section follows the same steps done in Lesson 1 to discuss the findings on Lesson 2 with a different genre in writing.

4.4. 2 Lesson 2 & Vignette –The Quest of Senses

In lesson 2, student's task is to write a 'haibun'. The lesson is planned with the preponderance of task correlating to [4, 3] (Bloom's - Analyse, Webb's-Reasoning) and [4, 4] (Bloom's - Analyze, Webb's -Extended thinking) in the cell of cognitive rigor matrix. Before going to the park, the researcher has obtained permission from the school administrator to take the students to the park outside the school. On that day, they are given a brief explanation on the task. They are asked to use their 5 senses and jot down every significant experiences they encounter in the park. After the briefing, students walk from the school to the park with teacher-researcher and is assisted by their English teacher. Their English teacher is assisting in ensuring the students safety when they are in the park. Once, they have reached the park students are given freedom to explore any part of the park. The details of the lesson is explained in Chapter 3 (Lesson 2, p.85).

The purpose of the lesson is to give opportunity for students to analyse and create 'haibun'. The writing task and the phrase 'What if...' has allowed students to select, outline, explain or reorganise elements of any significant events into something they consider would have been better by giving their views in a form of prose. Again the task has provided freedom for students to write the 'haibun'. Students are informed of some specific patterns that can be used for writing 'haibun' but they are not

conditioned to follow the shown structure. In fact, they are encouraged to use their creativity and produce a 'haibun' that they would like to compose. 'Haibun' is a new activity for the students in this classroom. Most of them have never heard of 'haibun' before this and is really eager to learn it. The vignette shown below illustrates the students' responses and enthusiasms in writing 'haibun'.

Before going to the park, students are gathered at the 'skylite' of their school. "Yesss!!! All rightt!!" I have received responses from the adventurous group of boys and girls. They are really thrilled when they know they are going for a short walk at the park near the school. I guess for these students it is something unconventional in having this kind of activity for their language class in school. A few doubtful students have raised questions, such as "Going to the park?" (CIL2/Keshav/1), "Outside of school, you mean?" (CIL2/Sue/2), "Are we allowed to do so?" (CIL2/Faz/3)

Reysa, a petite girl told her friends, "I don't believe we can do that. "She (referring to the researcher) is just pulling our legs." I have assured them we are going for a walk at the park. A short briefing is given before leaving the school. During the briefing, they are told that they can explore anything that is happening at the park using their five senses. Then, their English teacher informs and reminds them on their safety. After the briefing, we walk leisurely in single file to the park.

Along the way to the park, some students have observed their surroundings and jot down some notes. Once, they have reached the park, they part their own ways with their peers. I could see some students are sitting on the grass; some walking on the reflexology stones; some observing few old men and women doing their morning exercises; their eyes wandering around to register details; some standing, with their

eyes fixed on a certain tree; some leaning against bench, sketching a certain landmark; some squatting, scrutinising tiny insects on the flowers in the park.

None of them complaint of the morning sun, though some seems to be perspiring and more importantly none of them even glance at their watches. It is like that they are not in a hurry to leave. They are immersed in their own observations, unruffled by the slowly increasing traffic outside the park. Cars have started to build in numbers, moving slowly passing by along the park. The students also attracted inquisitive on-lookers since it is uncommon to see students in a park doing this kind of class activity. Some of the students even stop to query the park users.

When it is time to leave, a few of the students moan, “The walk is too short” (CIL2/Reysa/6). “There are many things to see, to hear, to touch, to smell, and to feel if only you can give us more time”, said a frustrated Nabil (CIL2/Nabil/7). Sue, who wants more of the walking activity ask, “When is our next lesson walking to the park?” (CIL2/Sue/10). “Maybe your English teacher can take you next week”, replied the researcher. They are eagerly looking forward for the next activity at the park. Once the students have reached the classroom, I explain and discuss with them about ‘haibun’. They are interested since it is something they have not attempted in the writing classroom.

However, there are some murmurs from the students indicating being worried about writing the poem. Keshav said, “We have not really written a poem in the class” (CIL2/Keshav/12). I have encouraged them by stating, “This could be a good start in trying to write the poem.” Furthermore, I have explained, “When writing ‘haibun’, everything is acceptable. There is no right or wrong.” I also told them if their poems are not understood, it is treated as an abstract - abstract can be subjective. I could see the relief on their faces which has made them feel a whole lot better.

Adrian, who is taking note of everything I said suddenly, raised his hand and asked, “Can we use the ‘What if...’ in writing our ‘haibun’ like in our previous lesson.” With the mention of the phrase ‘What if...’, before I could answer Razif interrupted, “Adrian of course *lah*. I am going to use “What if...” to write my ‘haibun’ about the changes I would love to see in the park” (CIL2/Razif/19). Other students also have their own perceptions of using the “What if...” in writing their ‘haibun’ but keep seeking reassurance from me if they can write these perceptions. I just explain to them to write what they want to express and be judge of their own perceptions. At that point, I realise that they are worried to do something that I might not accept. At the end of the lesson, when I have compiled their ‘haibun’, I feel so impressed looking at their write-ups, a real consolation. Most of the students’ ‘haibun’ are good, some really outstanding. I equally marvelled by the students’ product.

4.4.2.1 Incorporating Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 2

In lesson 2, a short activity walking to the park outside of the school is conducted. The instruction with the phrase “What if...” is still embedded in the task of writing a ‘haibun’. The task that is piloted for this lesson is an attempt to create an environment that could make the students feel light-hearted, entertaining and analyse beyond the seen scenario. In the following section, the findings of the analysed lesson is illustrated to present the acquisition of intellectual playfulness in Lesson 2.

Excerpt 24

Going to the park?	CIL2/Keshav/1
Outside of school, you mean?	CIL2/Sue/2
Are we allowed to do so?	CIL2/Faz/3
I don’t believe we can do that. She is just pulling our legs.	CIL2/Norry/4

Based on the excerpt 24, students' reactions and comments have shown they are surprised and have doubts in partaking a task outside the school. The phrase like *...pulling our legs* which carried a sense that the teacher is playing a prank on them. This also indicated having activities outside the school is not something norm in their previous writing classroom. There is significant accounts in excerpt 25 from the researcher's reflection on students walk to the park.

Excerpt 25: *Researcher's Entry L2/1*

On their way to the park most of them were engaged in their own exploration and used their five senses to take note of their surroundings. Once in the park, some were talking to the visitors at the park, some boys joined the exercise session of 'tai chi' with a group of senior citizens at the park, while a few of the girls just sat at the fountain and jotting down some notes.

REL2/1/2016

The researcher's entry displays students are engaged in their own explorations and have noted their surroundings. Similarly, once at the park, students have different ways of exploring and taking notes by scrutinizing events or happenings in the park. This shows that opportunities are given to students to enable them to construct new knowledge from authentic experiences (Bruner, 1966). In other words, students are taking accountability of their own learning.

In the classroom during the writing process, the researcher has noticed that students are exchanging notes with their peers on their experiences of the task done in the park. Thus, during the interview sessions they are questioned about these experiences. Students' responses are illustrated in excerpt 26.

Excerpt 26: *Students' Responses to the Lesson (L2/I)*

Going outside the classroom during school hours! This is a new, INL2/ Magdalene/4
I mean almost four years in school, I've never done any activity
like, this before; actually going outside of school at this time.
Doing this kind of learning activity is the first for me. But it was
really exciting, I really enjoyed it, I think we should do it more.

Well, for one we were actually out of the school. And although I INL2/Sharifah/4
was sweating a lot, but it was...fine, it was good. And the fact that
you taught us this, it's very different in the sense freedom to write

Actually at first I was thinking like why we have to go for this INL2/Norry/6
walk, but later on I was having a good time. Usually, I don't even
have time to go for a walk in the park. So, I use this chance 'lah',
to explore my skills in writing a combination package of poem
and narrative.

At first, I was sort of like surprised because it's... not a normal INL2/Gana/4
thing to go out and take a walk during school hours. Must be
kidding to do that. But then, when we walked just now, I sort of,
looked at the park and thought, Oh this is something that we could
do, maybe once a week and not something that's like... once a
year or once a month thing. I was able to write better because it is
from my experience of the five senses. Furthermore we were
always surrounded by buildings. So, it was nice to, like stepping
into the nature.

In excerpt 26, students have collectively agreed that classroom task outside the school is something uncommon for them. Magdalene has claimed that it is a first time experience of doing a task outside the classroom. This view is supported by Gana who has suggested that task outside the school could be infused into the learning constantly. Furthermore, Sharifah expresses that being outside the school to do an activity has provided more freedom in writing.

On the other hand, at the beginning Norry is not excited of going out of school. But, later she has described the task outside school does provide opportunity to explore her skills in writing. On the whole, students appear to have a growing preference in doing writing task outside their school for a change. This provides them more freedom to explore their writing skills. Some students also share some different views as shown in excerpt 27.

Excerpt 27: *Students' Responses to the Lesson (L2/2)*

Well, I walked around the park and yeah I enjoyed it a lot. And it helped me a lot in expressing my ideas because sometimes teachers give us to write on something that we haven't even experience before. In this activity we were able to use the 5 senses. So, it was like so many things I wanted to write after the experience.... Besides it was really stress free writing. INL2/Razif/5

We went to the park and able to see what is happening in the park. There were some, I'd say interesting things that happened in the park. More of unusual thing actually, when we go to a park, there won't be construction. So it gives me an idea to write my 'haibun' differently. INL2/Rubena/2

In excerpt 27, both the students describe that learning from real experiences and use of five senses connects them more to the writing of 'haibun'. Rubena further adds that experiencing unusual happenings during the activity i.e construction going on during their visit to the park has given inspiration on writing something different. In other words, the authenticity of the task has provided students with real life learning and encourages them to analyse as well as to show credibility in their writing. The above responses show the task outside the school plays a central role of creating an environment to write 'haibun'. In addition, the phrase 'What if...' which is introduced in Lesson 1 is still embedded in this particular activity. In excerpt 28, student's relevant comments on the use of this phrase are demonstrated.

Excerpt 28: *Students' Responses to the Lesson (L2/3)*

For me, the phrase 'What if...' made me to think, here we are in the middle of city and I felt it's really a shame to have so many trees and due to construction they were being cut just beside the park. So, in my 'haibun' I wrote 'What if...' in the cities we can build a forest park and everyone could just go there. INL2/ Magdalene/29

The instruction of 'What if...' did help me. As I was writing I was thinking 'What if...' the park has more nature, like more stones, like going back to stone age kind of park. Not saying going backward but to infuse modernization into the past...I'm sure for us teenagers we will be excited to have that kind of park. INL2/Sharifah/25

Yeah, actually I was thinking of 'What if...' there were no trees. Yeah, so like no more photosynthesis process, no more carbon dioxide and I thought of all that. 'What if...' there is no more tress, I was imagining a park without trees... INL2/Norry/31

Yes because I can think about every possibilities that would happen, like what would happen if the park is filled with trees instead of all the buildings that are being constructed now. So, it let me think of how important it is to have trees in our world. INL2/Razif/33

It helped because the first thought came to me was ‘What if...’ the park was integrated in the school, you didn’t have to walk outside, walk through the cars to go to the park and, so it helped generated some thoughts. INL2/Rubena/28

The instruction helped me to dive into my imagination. I can actually imagine what happens if there’s no trees here or what happens if we decided to build houses around the park, what if we decided to open shops there. That’s how the phrase, “What would happen if” triggered my imagination to write the ‘haibun’. INL2/Gana/31

A noticeable eminent views of the students in excerpt 28 shows the role of ‘What if...’ in this lesson. Students have conveyed that the phrase provides opportunities to stretch their imaginations beyond the seen experiences. This has made them to think differently and built many possibilities with open-endedness of the phrase in producing ideas. In other words, the phrase ‘What if...’ has helped to broaden the students’ horizon in writing the ‘haibun’. This indicates ‘What if...’ phrase is related to the quest of imagining and creating possibilities for students. Hence, the function of the phrase ‘What if...’ is not to tell the students what they ought to learn but rather to allow students to develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter (Bruner, 1973).

In conclusion, writing ‘haibun’ is a first-hand activity for most of the students because it is never done in their previous writing classroom. Writing of poems are included in the Form 4 English syllabus but no emphasize is given to it. This is probably because writing poems is not a skill that is being tested for examination. In major examination, poems are just given as comprehension skills. In short, the analysis of writing task in lesson 2 has shown: a) students are taking accountability of their own learning, b) freedom to explore their writing skills, c) experiences allow students to

"go beyond" the literal meaning and develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter.

4.4.2.2 Manifestation of Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 2

This section further explores and describes the manifestations of intellectual playfulness in Lesson 2 through the aspects of open-endedness, risk-taking and absorbing.

a. Open-endedness

The task in lesson 2 is designed with immersion of a real measure of open-endedness. Students are not given a predetermined structure in writing the 'haibun'. In creating the 'haibun', students are given freedom in exploring based on their preferences. The context of their learning is outside the school for a change. Excerpt 29 displays the students' remarks on willingness to undertake open-ended task.

Excerpt 29: *Students' Responses to Open-Endedness (L2)*

Every time, we are doing something, we are doing it unconsciously. We don't really think, Oh! I'm doing this. So, I walked on the field, I walked through the park, I didn't think, Oh! I'm looking at this, my feet is touching the ground, the leaves are creating shadows on the ground, stuff like that. So yeah it created a space for me to associate something not only seen by naked eyes but beyond it too. INL2/Magdalene/17

Yeap, I was willing to try the task which was like telling me figure out on your own. Such task which was visible to any ideas allowed me to think every aspects of the park. INL2/Sharifah/19

Yes, because the given task didn't limit my imagination. The best thing no restrictions on how I'm supposed to write. INL2/Norry/18

I prefer doing something without restrictions, maybe my own way, my style. And this task provided me with that. INL2/Rubena/19

We can look into different aspects of the walk, it is not like, we saw the trees, we saw some people, we can write different things, write about the things that we did and beyond. It helps me to be creative because the freedom to write whatever we want. INL2/Razif/16

Being able to indulge the task which is open-ended helped me to be creative because there's no boundaries set by the teacher. We actually learn different ways, new ways to write our compositions, like today how we incorporated poem and narrative to write the 'haibun'. INL2/Gana/20

Based on student's responses in excerpt 29, all of them have agreed that open-endedness of the task allow them to have the flexibility in writing the 'haibun'. For instance Sharifah, Norry and Rubena have stated flexibility is given in coming out with ideas based on the observations and knowledge. This flexibility that they mentioned is referring to not having any limitations in terms of the structure and style of writing the 'haibun'. In other words, similar to lesson 1, in this lesson students are taking ownership of their own learning.

On the other hand, Razif and Gana have express freedom and flexibility given in taking open-ended tasks is related to creativity. They believe the freedom given by the open-endedness of the task has created a platform for them to be creative in writing. This connects to Pollack's (1988) discovery that open-ended questions have encouraged independent thoughts and creativity. Magdalene and Razif also have described open-endedness of the task allows them to create ideas beyond what is seen. This is an indication the students are creating and looking beyond the literal meaning of seen things or event at the park.

Hence, through creating meaning of what the students have seen and experienced at the park, they seem to understand the subject matter so well and able to make another representation (figurative meaning) of it. This ability represents a concept that links to the higher levels in Blooms Taxonomy. In other words, students' willingness to undertake open-ended task has provided opportunities to create a response reflective of their abilities and interest (Hertzog, 1997). These details are further supported by a sequence of students' reflections from their journal entries as shown in excerpt 30.

Excerpt 30: *Entry L2/1*

There is no fixed guidelines to be followed in completing the writing task. I was able to generate my imagination in order to put all my feelings in the writing. I can write using my own style when describing the event. Other than that, I can voice out the changes that the park has experienced which totally ruined my childhood memories due to the selfishness of human beings. EL2/1/Sharifah

We were not given any specific topic or tied down to a specific format. Because of that I had the freedom to write what I wanted to convey. I also could arrange the narrative and poem in any way I wanted. EL2/1/Yasmin

The open-endedness in the task allowed me to write based on my capability and creativity even though it was my first time writing 'haibun'. EL2/1/Yan

I had freedom to arrange how to include the narrative and poem in writing the 'haibun'. There are no rules such as I can only add narrative or poem at the end or the beginning in writing the 'haibun'. Besides, there is no limitation on the length of the 'haibun'. So, it was the quality of my writing that matters and not the length of 'haibun'. EL2/1/Marcus

Using five senses to observe and to write was really an exciting task. What an individual senses differ greatly from one another. In this task I experienced open-endedness because no restrictions on the things that I could observe and write about. I wrote using different a combination of prose and poetry. And I think writing 'haibun' opened up a whole new experience in writing for all of us. EL2/1/Rubena

The student entries in the journals show similar sentiments to the responses in the interview. Again, students collectively have established that open-endedness seems to have given them freedom in writing various ways. For some students, the open-endedness of the task provides new experiences in writing while others talk about the freedom in the structure of writing 'haibun' and freedom to write based on their abilities.

On the other hand, Sharifah has commented that willingness to take open-ended task gives an opportunity to compare her childhood memory of the park and the transformation the park has undergone. This is in line with Bruner's learning theory (1966) that defines organization to experiences allows an individual to "go beyond" the information given or what is known to them. Following these entries, students'

willingness to undertake an open-ended task has created a path of giving them freedom and flexibility in being expressive as writers.

All the above analysis on open-ended task in lesson 2 indicates that students have freedom and flexibility in their path of learning. This freedom and flexibility also create a platform for them to be creative in writing. Besides, open-endedness of the task allows students to access higher order thinking skills such as creating. This evidence shows that students are being challenged to think at higher levels. Thus, the extent to which students are challenged to think at higher levels is a reflection of cognitive rigor taking place in the classroom (Paige, Sizemore & Neace, 2013).

b. Risk- taking

This section determines if high ability students are willing to be a risk- takers in lesson 2 and how it has facilitated them to advance in their writing in the ESL classroom. Excerpt 31 displays the students' responses from the interview and if the task has helped them to be risk-takers.

Excerpt 31: Students' Responses to risk-taking (L2)

Yeah because I won't be judged, marks won't be given. So, I'm willing to write the 'haibun' differently. INL2/Magdalene/14

I think the feeling of taking a risk and not knowing exactly how it's gonna end, that adrenaline rush is quite thrilling. If it doesn't end well, well I would take it as a learning experience. But, taking risk makes me dare to be more creative. It makes me feel, okay if I take more risks, I might feel like the chance of succeeding is still there, so it's nice. INL2/Sharifah/17

I think *ya*. When we actually write what we feel, not everyone feels or agrees with us. So, maybe one doesn't really like the way we have expressed in our writing, so it's a risk, but not too high. INL2/Norry/16

Well... when I take risk, it tend to bring a major impact towards my whole writing. It is very different. So, I'm also partially afraid that teacher or anyone who is reading it wouldn't accept. INL2/Razif/17

I felt was taking a risk because I was writing something that is real. So, when writing something that is real and happening, it is more like reporting live events, so it is taking a risk. INL2/Rubena/14

It was a risk because I've never written poem before. So it's like, maybe I want to take a risk in writing the 'haibun'. What was more risky was combining narrative and prose to create 'haibun' which I've never tried. It was different from the any types of writing that we had done in class previously.

INL2/Gana/18

In excerpt 31, the six students appear to have interest in being risk-takers. Sharifah has described that being a risk-taker is exciting though its results is uncertain. The uncertainty here is defined by Beebe (1983) as a situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choices between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choices is uncertain; there is possibility of failure. Quite the opposite of Sharifah, Magdalene is willing to be a risk-taker because she feels it is safe since no grades are given for this task.

As for Rubena and Gana, they have stated they are taking risk because the task is something new and of real time. In other words, writing something based on real events entails some risks which is related to learning oriented qualities. As Dweck (2000) has described learner who is focussed in increasing competence, learning new skills, understanding new concepts and essentially "to get smarter" is related to learning oriented qualities (p.15).

On the other hand, Razif and Norry still take risks though they have some fears if others accepts their writing. These responses also indirectly indicate that students from "elite schools" ("best of best institution") have been driven their whole lives by a fear of failure (Deresiewicz, 2008). All these views are further supported from the students' reflections in their journals as shown in excerpt 32.

Excerpt 32: *Entry L2/2*

I was willing to be a risk taker because of the opportunity to write whatever I feel in a new way. EL2/2/Cheer

It allowed me to experiment my writing skills since I have not attempted such a composition before. I dared to take risk because I can use my skills in writing to my heart's content as well as the absence of grades gives me pleasure in writing as I wish. EL2/2/Lau

It allowed me to express my own opinion towards the nature which is close to us and always neglected. I only wrote interesting part that I have seen in the park. I might not be able to write like this if it was in the exams. So, that is the risk I took. EL2/2/Sharifah

I think I took risk by writing something that I had experienced in reality. Usually I write something based on the given ideas. That normally does not involve so much of my true personal feelings, views and creativity. EL2/2/Rubena

I was able to try new ways to write without being afraid of being wrong. It made me brave in allowing me to be expressive and creative in my writing as it was not graded for marks. EL2/2/Kit

In Entry L2/2, students (Lau, Sharifah & Kit) describe their willingness to take risks since no grades given for their writing. Besides, Rubena articulates the risk is writing based on real experiences and not on given contents. Over here, the students are exercising risk-taking demands that challenge academic norms. Another example that students are gradually willing to take risk could be seen in a short exchange as shown in excerpt 33 when they are writing 'haibun' in the classroom.

Excerpt 33

Miss Hema...Can I write using the 'What if...' on some views that not everyone can accept but to me if makes sense? CIL2/Yasmin/16

Some students laughed and one boy chuckled and teased at her blunt question... Class

Yasmin...you want to write some 18sx stuff huh...{laughter} CIL2/Syafiq/18

Not that. I asked because I'm [typically] worried if what I'm writing going to sound stupid but I'm really eager to share my thoughts and curious what others think. CIL2/Yasmin/19

So, Yasmin...why second thoughts? Just share your thoughts as one has to stand on their views if they believe in them, *ya* CIL2/Adrian/20

Based on the students' exchanges in excerpt 33, Yasmin voices her concerns of taking risk in using the phrase 'What if...' in her writing. Her concern is if her ideas would be accepted. Though, the other students laugh at her, they do not snub her. In fact, one of the boys, Adrian encourages her to be bold in sharing her views in the composition. This exchange shows some students have the urge of wanting to be risk-takers and peer encouragement could play as a motivating factor to inspire them. Hence, this makes risk-taking valuable, both as skills and as an attitude (Bialostok, Whitman & Bradley, 2012).

Students relate the qualities of risk-taking is connected with an appealing, comforting presence of the playfulness in the task and instruction which they are willing to accept. In this way, they are able to engage intellectually with the content at deeper level where they are not looking at the surface layer of information. In short, when grades are not specified in writing, students appear to feel more comfortable in taking risks, exploring and writing their thoughts creatively.

c. Absorbing (Complete Engagement)

This section looks at the characteristics of being absorbed or complete involvement as shown in this lesson. Firstly, the researcher provides a relevant account of her reflections at the park which indicates students' involvement of being engaged in the writing task.

Excerpt 34: *Researcher's Entry L2/1*

I noticed how immersed they were in their thoughts. Some were sitting on the grass, jotting down notes; some pulling out dry grass, the boys were wandering around to record details; some standing around the small fountain with their eyes glued on the splashing of water; some stepping on the reflexology stones, sketching a certain sense; some girls squatting, scrutinising tiny insects on the homes. None of them complaint of the heat, though some were dripping like a seeping pipeline. In fact, no one realised how long they have been at the park. They were not in a hurry to leave. They were just engrossed in their own observations, unperturbed by the slowly increasing heat or people in the park. REL2/1/2016

In the researcher's entry in excerpt 34, students are engrossed in their own observations of the happenings at the park which has made them to treasure and totally being involved in the activity out of the school. It is interesting to note student's reactions when the researcher informs them it is time to leave the park. The researcher has written:

Excerpt 35: Researcher's Entry L2/2

The students complained that time given to be at the park was rather short. REL2/2/2016
I gave them nearly forty five minutes to be in the park. They stated numerous things to see, hear, touch, smell and feel. Most of them suggested we just continue the class in the park. I could sense the excitement they were having in the park. They were reluctant to leave. A few of them asked when they could go for the next 'outing'. They asked me to have more writing activities outside school because it was enjoyable and gives room to construct more ideas to write in their compositions.

The entry in excerpt 35 indicates that students acknowledge that first-hand experiences of walking to the park and being in the park seem to help them in making the content more memorable. This sentiments are also captured in excerpt 36 with students who has completed the 'haibun' in the classroom.

Excerpt 36

Teacher, to be honest this is the best writing activity I have done since Form 1. I will always remember this tour to park and writing 'haibun'. I never thought I would have so much of fun writing a poem. I never liked poem but now I have second thoughts. CIL2/Norry/25

Norry, I feel the same. I like the use of five senses. We touch, see, feel and relate it to our experience which broaden my ideas in writing the 'haibun'. CIL2/Harley/26

Miss Hema, maybe you can suggest to our teachers to have activities like this for writing. CIL2/Yasmin/27

In excerpt 36, students are seen giving suggestions to have a similar writing task in future. This is probably because the students are completely immersed in an enjoyable activity and filled with joy i.e state of doing productive work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, positive affective responses that develop on the part of the students, such as interest on the classroom instruction shows the notion that

school learning is valuable (Glanville & Wildhagen, 2007). Furthermore, the level of engagement is obvious from students' responses in the interview session in excerpt 37 that has sustained their complete involvement.

Excerpt 37: Students' Responses to Being Absorbed in the Task (L2)

I was really focussing about every details from the beginning of the walk till the end, like how it feels, what I see and hear. For instance I was even observing a colony of ants on the ground, which I nearly stepped on them and how they scattered around to save their lives...stuff like that. INL1/Magdalene/20

I actually felt motivated. I was walking around the park and even sat on the swings to recall how it feels playing in the swing. My mind was crowded with everything that I saw, heard, smell and felt. It was fun, it was really fun. INL1/Sharifah/22

Yeah, yeah. I was actually recalling and visualizing again everything that happened in the park as I was writing the 'haibun'. INL1/Norry/21

Totally. First of all I was enjoying the activity from the point we walked to the park. It allowed me to explore the park. It was refreshing having writing activity outside classroom. Next, I was occupied with so many ideas which I wanted to display in my 'haibun' when we write in class. INL1/Razif/22

Going out during school hours itself was something exciting. So, I was really being attentive to capture all the happenings in the park. Writing in a different style also made me occupied to think deeper and on different aspects of the subject. So, the whole process really got me engaged in this task. INL1/Rubena/18

For me the lesson was interesting, different and challenging. It made me to be constantly on my toes as I was jotting down every interesting details in the park which I can use to write 'haibun'. INL1/Gana/23

Student's remarks in excerpt 37 indicate they are really engaged in the task, where they have experienced the feelings of joy and satisfactions. Magdalene, Sharifah, Rubena and Gana declare being absorbed in the task has aided them to be more focused and connected. One student (Sharifah) has described that she is feeling motivated when she is immersed in the task. Similarly, Norry and Razif describe that they are cognitively absorbed in the task which helps them in creating ideas to write. This shows the state that they are most productive because their perceived skills match the perceived challenge of the task that they were doing (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). In

addition, students' reflections in the journal entries in excerpt 38 supports the views in the interviews on their engagement of the task.

Excerpt 38: *Entry L2/3*

I really enjoyed this activity. It was something like a mixture of indoor and outdoor activity instead of just sitting in the classroom and writing some dull essay. Because it is different from our classroom activity, I was completely involved throughout the lesson. EL2/3/Cheer

A new method of learning which I felt played a role in keeping me totally engaged. It's the first time out of my many years in school we were going out on a short trip and writing a composition. The whole new experience gave me an enjoyable mood and eagerness to write. EL2/3/Lau

By being able to go out and walk around the park, had certainly made me feel relaxed. We did not get an opportunity like this, to leave class, explore, have fun before putting our ideas onto a piece of paper. EL2/3/Yasmin

Honestly, I am a nature lover and when it comes to write about nature, I'll was totally involved. The activity was fun and made me excited to write the 'haibun'. EL2/3/Norry

As a student, I've the chance to relax my mind in nature. It was indeed a relaxing activity to have in our fully-packed learning schedule. It enabled me to experience a real moment before writing the 'haibun'. The first-hand experience really engaged me in putting my thoughts in writing. EL2/3/Stephanie

Students use some descriptors such as *enjoyable, pleasurable, relaxing* and *fun* to describe their involvement in the activity. Most of the students (Lau, Yasmin and Stephanie) chime sentiments of having learning activities out of classroom have made them to be engaged more meaningfully which provide opportunities to generate fruitful ideas in writing the 'haibun'. In short, students believe that the writing task has produced a comfortable atmosphere, sustained their attentions which has brought an element of enjoyment and fun in their writing lesson.

Looking at these three qualities of intellectual playfulness in lesson 2 indicates that students have grown to be more willing to try open-ended tasks and being risk-takers in comparison to Lesson 1. Students are also completely involved in the task since the activity is done outside of the school. They are cognitively, physically and

emotionally engaged in completing the writing task. To illustrate further intellectual playfulness in ESL writing classroom, a comprehensive accounts of the findings from lesson 3 is presented.

4.4.3 Lesson 3 & Vignette – Bring it on!

The task in lesson 3 is to write a compare and contrast genre composition. Based on the Form Four syllabus on the theme of people and social issues, three television commercials that depicts the celebration of festivals in Malaysia is used in conducting this task. The selected television commercials are short clips integrated with some humour elements. It also contains some moral values and traditional experiences that allow high proficiency students to explore topics like identity, appearances, human values or any other relevant themes that is evident from the television commercials. More details of the television commercials are described in Chapter 3 (Lesson 3, p.82).

The instruction with the phrase “What if...” is still embedded in making the task more thought-provoking. The lesson aims to provide opportunities for students to analyse in depth the television commercials, to identify and determine the categories or features they are going to choose to compare and contrast in writing the composition. The idea of analysing in depth here means the ability to transfer knowledge i.e knowledge becomes deeper when they can use it not only to address a problem in the context in which it has been taught, but can also use it to understand or explain something in a different, but related, context (Pellegrino & Hilton 2012).

Writing a composition of comparing and contrasting is not a new writing task for the students. The students have done this type of genre previously in writing. Yet, the only difference in the task is students are not provided with any categories or features to compare and contrast. Students have the freedom in exploring and selecting the categories on their own as well as how they wish to compare and contrast in their

compositions. The objective of the writing task is for students to compare and contrast the three television commercials.

In order to do that, they have to analyse and evaluate the television commercials before creating the categories. These skills of analysing, evaluating and creating falls under the higher level in Bloom's taxonomy. On the other hand, to know the complexity of the content and the required task for this lesson, DOK- 3 (Strategic Thinking/Reasoning) or DOK-4 (Extended Thinking) activities from Webb's DOK is applied. Hence the lesson is planned with the task correlating to the [4,3] and [4,4] or [5,3]and [5,4] cell of cognitive rigor matrix. The two coordinates denote the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and DOK respectively. This means researcher can discover the extent to which the lesson targets the level of cognitive rigor compared to the [4, 3] cell, which requires analysing on how parts relate or differ (Bloom 4) but requires some decision-making and justification (DOK-3). Below is the vignette of the lesson.

There was pin drop silence in the classroom. All eyes were glued watching the television commercials. Once the commercial ended, Rafiz stood up and said, "Can we watch it again" (CIL3/Rafiz/1)? Gana, who was sitting in the middle row added, "We want to watch Sam and his friends again" (CIL3/Gana/2). Students argued on which television commercials to watch again. The class became alive with students arguments. Since the television commercials were short in duration, I played them again to satisfy all the students. While watching, students burst into laughter when they heard a well-placed humorous line in the television commercials. Similarly, I noticed emotion of sadness especially among the female students during one of the television commercials. Yan, a student who was sitting in the last row raised her hand slowly and uttered her wish on sharing something personal with all of us. With teary eyes, she expressed some events shown in the television commercial was similar to events that

had happened in her life. I could see shocking expressions of some students when Yan revealed the events. They started to whisper among each other.

To ease the tension that seemed to be covering the students in the classroom after Yan's admission, Adrian, the class monitor stood up and remarked that the television commercials were entertaining and a good way of expanding ideas to write composition. Immediately, Keshav responded and jokingly teased Adrian "Of course, it is good because only now you will use your brains to think" (CIL3/Keshav/3). The whole class laughed and one girl remarked, "Adrian, Keshav is just jealous because he knows you write better than him" (CIL3/Norry/4). The playful argument went on for a while and I had to intervene. Once settled, they started to write the compositions. Suddenly a soft voice from my right hand corner queried, "Teacher, you have not given us the elements that we are supposed to look for to compare and contrast" (CIL3/Melissa/5).

Before I could respond to her, Gana interjected, "Melissa, in wonderland *huh*...teacher already told us to identify the categories we wanted to compare and contrast on our own, *lah*" (CIL3/Gana/6). "That makes this activity more interesting and challenging, we create the categories", said Keshav (CIL3/Keshav/7). "Exactly, Melissa no more spoon-feeding. Let us search for our own categories" added Syafiq (CIL3/Shafiq/8). The class was filled with laughter. The students seemed to be having a pleasant time in completing the task. Syafiq again stated "Teacher, I like the way the emotions shown by the characters in the television commercial. They are prompting us to construct ideas and the phrase 'What if'...Gosh! it really pushes me to the back of my mind like in 'Inside Out' movie to imagine beyond for suggestions of improvement to be done in the television commercials" (CIL3/Shafiq/9). Keshav, from the back stated, "I agree with you and let us bring it on, bro" (CIL3/Keshav/10). The

classroom environment was lively and pleasing because students are in complete involvement during the writing classroom.

4.4.3.1 Incorporating Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 3

The earlier vignette is another example of showing the acquisition of intellectual playfulness in the writing classroom. The following section discusses the findings from the vignette in showing students understanding of intellectual playfulness and the impact in their learning.

Excerpt 39

Teacher, you have not given us the elements that we are supposed to look for to compare and contrast. CIL3/Melissa/5

Melissa, in wonderland *huh*...teacher already told us to identify the categories we want to compare and contrast on our own, *lah*. CIL3/Gana/6

That's what makes this activity more interesting and challenging, we create the categories. CIL3/Keshav/7

Exactly, Melissa no more spoon-feeding. Let us search for our own categories. CIL3/Shafiq/8

Excerpt 39 depicts the interactions that happen during the lesson as shown in the vignette. The students' discussions show they are unfamiliar of writing a compare and contrast composition based on television commercials and without any given categories to aide them. So, it is considered as first time experience for them in making a decision of selecting and justifying the categories chosen to write the composition.

Furthermore, in excerpt 40, students indicate that they could relate their personal life's to the television commercials that they have watched. Students show emotions of happiness and sadness in the vignette when they are watching the television commercials. This builds a good rapport through the input given in the lesson with their prior experiences to yield ideas for the composition. In addition, the phrase, 'What if...' plays as a stimulus for them to imagine and provide some suggestions on improving the television commercials.

Excerpt 40

Teacher, I like the way the emotions shown by the characters in the television commercial They are prompting us to construct ideas and the phrase ‘What if’...Gosh! it really pushes me to the back of my mind like in ‘Inside Out’ movie to imagine beyond for suggestions of improvement to be done in the television commercials. CIL3/Shafiq/9

I agree with you and let us bring it on, bro. CIL3/Keshav/10

This view is further supported from the student’s interview when they are asked about the activity done in the classroom. The findings are illustrated in excerpt 41.

Excerpt 41: *Students’ responses to the lesson (L3/1)*

For today’s lesson, I think it’s really interesting especially watching the television commercial on the rubber boy. I cried a little because it was really sad. The television commercial was interesting as they were not only focusing on the festival. There’s actually a lot of message hidden in the television commercial. When I wrote, I didn’t think about one, it’s like, I think about other themes like love, understanding and society. When I wrote, I actually realised that there was some hidden messages that we can actually compare without us realising. INL3/ Magdalene/2

I prefer television commercials because in our class we’ve been reading and reading the whole year. So, this is nice for a change. I prefer things like this because it allows me to really get in touch with my feelings. The traditional compare and contrast, we were given a topic and told specifically what we are supposed to write. But in this lesson, we were supposed to think and produce the categories we want to compare and contrast. We were given to be in charge of our writing. INL3/Sharifah/2

There were few things that I like about today’s lesson. Firstly, I could actually analyse, compare and contrast the television commercials. Next, we were given to watch television commercials which is better than the text. The television commercial also covered all the three main festivals celebrated in Malaysia with a valuable message apart from the festival greetings. Finally, we were not required to follow a structured details when we compare and contrast the television commercial. INL3/Norry/2

Today’s lesson was inspiring because television commercials evokes a lot of emotional senses and shows significant meaning. Besides, the way the message was delivered in the television commercial was... how to say... quite unique. All three television commercials were unique in their own ways. They have the same foundation that was built on foundation of family during the festive season. So, it gave me a lot of rooms for ideas in writing the composition. INL3/Razif/3

I enjoyed the lesson thoroughly. A good choice of television commercials which had many hidden messages like the rubber boy shows that even young children faces peer pressure. The *Deepavali* television commercial, it's like younger generation are really getting modernised and different. One of the areas that I compared was the hidden messages, so I analysed a bit more on the story. If you're just watching it as whole, okay it talks about festivals but with the hidden messages I could also talk about the society, how people behave, what it really tells us people in Malaysia.

INL3/Rubena/2

This activity really touched my heart, It was emotionally challenging because it's not just about the festive season. The three television commercials was a good selection because they were unique, have the same basis which is emphasising on family bond and appreciating one's custom besides conveying the festive messages. And I also felt that this activity managed to raise my level in empathising others.

INL3/Gana/3

As elucidated in excerpt 41, Sharifah and Norry have collectively agreed that the task gives them autonomy to write without using a prearranged details in comparing and contrasting the television commercials. Sharifah, further compares this lesson to the typical writing classroom that has controlled her creativity in writing. In the typical writing classroom, categories to be compared and contrasted is specified by the teacher. Furthermore, this task that is incorporated with intellectual playfulness has appeared to invoke students' potentials to analyse in depth. To analyse in depth here refers to students using critical thinking, coping with complexity, questioning and embracing intellectual questions in selecting the categories before writing the composition. Besides, most of the students (Magdalene, Razif, Rubena and Gana) are happy with the selection of the television commercials that has allowed them to relate to their emotions and experiences.

In addition, the students describe the television commercials is integrated with hidden messages or implied meaning to be conveyed to the audiences. This has allowed them to surmise what messages that is being conveyed in the television commercials. This coincides with Bruner's (1966) learning theory which permits the individual to "go beyond" the given information. In doing so, the hidden messages or implied meaning provided them with significant strong themes on family, culture and

society that gives a lot of room for ideas to write the composition. Hence, television commercials could be deduced as a good tool to acquire cognitive rigor among adolescents.

Another significant component of intellectual playfulness in writing the compare and contrast composition is the instruction with the phrase, 'What if...'. Students have shared the importance of the phrase in this particular task as shown in excerpt 42.

Excerpt 42: Students' Responses to the Lesson (L3/2)

Firstly, the task was really challenging and it sort of opened my mind to... a lot of 'what if's'..., not just one. I can think of 'what if...' in the television commercial like some things that didn't happen. How would that be... ahh... helped me to compare and contrast even better? In fact my range of ideas was even wider, not just in one aspect. INL3/ Magdalene/43

In this task, 'what if' kept me thinking of suggestions to add or change like the features in the television commercial. In a way it encouraged me to think outside the box. I was using the 'what if' in the last paragraph of my composition by giving suggestions for the television commercials. INL3/Sharifah/40

The 'what if' looks like a simple phrase but has powerful impact in my writing. Never thought such simple phrase can make me to think deeply and make my writing more 'desirable' for me. But I am not sure how others will feel. In this activity 'what if' was like a catalyst that helped broaden my thinking to another perspective. INL3/Norry/38

In this lesson, 'what if' helped to strengthen my ideas to be able to write more creatively. This is because no guidelines were given. So, in my mind I was like thinking 'what if...' I compared how the video was taken or 'what if...' I compared the feelings that was created in the television commercial. It allowed me to compare what I wanted to share with others. So I was really satisfied with what I wrote in my composition. INL3/Rubena/41

The phrase helped in my writing because I was thinking what if the characters acted differently in the video. For instance at the end of the 'Deepavali' television commercial maybe the girls could have shown more respect since this video will be viewed by many people. INL3/Razif/44

For this lesson ‘what if’ made me bold to analyse criteria that I would want to compare and contrast. It spurred me to look at every angle of the television commercial. In my mind I was thinking what if I compared the impact of the television commercials on audience or what if the advertisement showed only the aspect of positive views of all the festivals. I enjoyed how the ‘what if’ gave me freedom of my thoughts. INL3/Gana/39

As depicted in excerpt 42, some patterns that students feel emerged using ‘What if...’ are, *range of ideas wider, suggestions to add, catalyst to broaden thinking, and freedom of thoughts*. Magdalene reveals that it provides her with a wide range of ideas in writing the composition. Students also agreed they could analyse from various aspects and perspectives using this phrase. This could be seen from Gana’s claim that ‘What if...’ has spurred him to look at every angle of the advertisements which has given him freedom of thoughts. Equally, Norry describes the phrase is functioning as a *catalyst* to be able to observe from another perspective and making writing more *desirable*. When she is further probed on what she means by *desirable* in writing, she has excitedly conveyed the phrase, ‘What if...’ has helped in making her writing a composition worthy of reference for others.

On the other hand, Sharifah has exposed the phrase, ‘What if...’ plays a role in giving suggestions which encourage one to *think outside the box*.” When Sharifah is queried further on the quote, *to think outside the box*, she hints it means to think and look at things in a different manner than what they are used to be. Sequentially, Rubena and Gana proudly have remarked the phrase ‘What if...’ has made them to be bold in analysing the criteria that they want to compare and contrast. In other words, the phrase ‘What if...’ which is embedded in this task help students to stretch their mind beyond the knowledge of text book and have freedom to express their views. This further make students in providing suggestions and better range of ideas from various aspects. Cognitively, the phrase, ‘What if...’ pushes students to analyse in depth the television commercials. This indicates students to have deeper learning involving processes at

the top of learning taxonomies such as analysis, synthesis, and creation, as opposed to recall and application. Hence, it guides students to create different thoughts in writing from what they are used to.

In conclusion, the incorporation of intellectual playfulness in lesson 3 has : a) given autonomy in providing them ideas for writing, b) pushed them to think and work at higher skills in the learning taxonomy i.e engaged them in a cognitively rigorous thinking and c) exemplified that television commercials can be a good tool to acquire cognitive rigor among adolescents.

4.4.3.2 Manifestation of Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 3

The previous section has displayed the findings on how the task using television commercials and phrase ‘What if...’ helps students’ acquisition in writing the composition. In this section, the researcher further explores how the qualities of intellectual playfulness is manifested in lesson 3.

a. Open-endedness

The task design in lesson 3 is similar to lesson 2 in the sense a predetermined structure or elements is not provided for students to write the composition. The freedom of selecting and deciding their own categories to compare and contrast is given to the students in this classroom. Excerpt 43 shows students’ responses on the open-endedness of the task.

Excerpt 43: *Students' Responses to Open-endedness (L3)*

I enjoyed the open-endedness of the task because I could express freely my thoughts. I was not afraid of anyone judging and saying you can't write this. Of course there were some filters but in a way, you don't have this sort of nagging feeling that someone is going to tell you that you are wrong. So, it gave me freedom to write. INL3/ Magdalene/13

Yeah, this activity maybe a bit too open-ended for some people but for me it was kind of challenging my writing skills. It gave me the freedom to explore many themes. It definitely opened up my horizons because I was not confined to certain ideas only. I could think exactly how I want to write. INL3/Sharifah/14

I like the open-endedness given in this task, like I can actually write what I felt worth to be compared. There's no specific categories given, so, it's up to us what we want to write. INL3/Norry/15

Personally, in this task I wasn't really willing to undertake the open-endedness of the task. This was because I felt with too many choices, you actually have no choice. So, I can't decide which to compare and what should I write without given guidelines as used to... Maybe I prefer some guide for this composition, makes the task simpler. INL3/Razif/12

In school all the essays that we write it's always with guidelines, I mean they give you what you are supposed to write, like how it's supposed to start, how it's supposed to go, how it's supposed to end and it's just like that. Sometimes we were also warned to write in certain ways or we could be penalised. We can't really blame the teachers because they were helping us to get 'A's in the examination. But this task gave me freedom in creating my own guidelines so I was glad to be able to write using my own. INL3/Rubena/13

I feel it makes me to think differently and write anything that flows into my mind. Furthermore, I'm a flexible person and I prefer writing whatever comes to my mind. The open-endedness of the task gave me opportunity to be more creative and not basically relying solely on given guidelines and facts. INL3/Gana/15

Based on students' responses in excerpt 43, they describe willingness to take open-ended task have provided them with freedom and flexibility in expressing their ideas in writing. The freedom that the students have mentioned is in relation to exploring themes and creating categories for writing composition. Gana describes open-endedness of the task has created opportunities to be more creative in writing the composition. However, Razif provides a rather contradictory response by claiming that freedom of many choices has made him to have difficulties in deciding on what to

write. Thus, for this writing task he specifically prefers to have guidance given in writing the composition. A sequence of details from the journal entries further support students' views in the interview as shown in excerpt 44.

Excerpt 44: *Entry L3/1*

Today's writing task was very open-ended because I could choose from any aspects of the television commercial that I wanted to write. I could write anything from the structure or literary devices to the mood and theme of the television commercials. EL3/1/Reysa

No boundaries. I was not restricted to any rules in this writing class. I think it has helped me to be able to explore more ideas out of the box EL3/1/Sue

I was able to decide how I wanted my writing to be. I was not limited by anything. Besides I was able to suggest changes in certain features of the television commercial using the 'What if...' phrase. EL3/1/Harley

I was not being graded and there was no fixed perspectives to write from. Two things which allowed me to willingly attempt the open-ended task. Furthermore, I could find more ideas to write about especially complex issues. EL3/1/Tan

There are no topics or fixed guidelines given to us. I have space to share my ideas and come up with my own critics, comments and opinions. EL3/1/Chin

Reflections obtain from the students' journal entries in excerpt 44 supports the responses from the interview that open-endedness of the task has given them freedom in choosing what they want to write. For instance, Reysa explains she could write anything from the organisation to the literary devices in comparing the television commercials. On the other hand, Harley states the open-endedness of the phrase 'What if...' helps him in giving suggestions in the composition. Besides, Tan and Sue are in agreement that open-endedness of the task has allowed them to think ideas that are complex and *out of the box*. *Out of the box* here most probably referring to ideas that are different and from a new perspective in writing this composition. Thus, there seems to be similar opinions agreed in the journal entries and interviews with regards to open-endedness of the task.

The task using the television commercials is a switch from the traditional writing classroom. Students are able to explore and experiment their ideas as they are able to relate their experiences to the given task. Besides, in taking the open-ended task, they seem to be able to infer and analyse the “hidden messages” or “implied meaning” shown in the television commercials by analysing them in depth. This has provided them in presenting ideas at a deeper level in the sense of the involvedness in their composition. On the other hand, most of the students prefer the freedom and flexibility in the task to decide their own selections of categories. This concurs with Bruner’s theory (1966) that learning process is active and involves transformation of information, deriving meaning from experience, and decision making. In other words, this activity has provided opportunities for students to go beyond the information shown in the television commercials. Hence, by willing to take open-ended task students have freedom and flexibility in deciding the components of ideas for their compositions.

b. Risk-taking

To further illustrate manifestation of intellectual playfulness, this section looks if students are being risk-takers or risk-averse in this lesson. Below are the responses from the students to indicate if the writing lesson helps them to be risk-takers.

Excerpt 45: *Students' responses to risk-taking (L3)*

I was willing to try search for categories in this lesson because I know I won't be penalized since we are not writing for exams. So, in some ways I feel safe to try the new things and write differently. INL3/ Magdalene/5

Yea, allowed me to be a risk-taker because it was a writing class activity. In terms of risk-taking for exam, I am not sure I would have but in general, yes, I know there are more options and no one correct way of writing. INL3/Sharifah/6

For me this lesson was without boundaries. So, I was willing to identify my own categories. Some of the categories I chose might sound silly but I was willing to give a shot. For me, being a risk-taker comes with certain 'dangers'. But I am willing to take the risk. INL3/Norry/5

In our previous writing class, we were always asked to write based on the given categories. We were told to follow everything if not we will lose marks. So, I was always worried about the marking and grades. But this time we were given opportunity to step out of that and do what we really want to write, that was the risk in choosing our own categories to write the compositions. What if...my selections was unsatisfactorily to teacher came to my mind. But, I decided to forget about the teacher and just write what I wanted to write on the categories I have chosen... INL3/Rubena/7

Yes, we were allowed to compare in any possible aspects. For me, in this class, it was very difficult to sort out and select boundaries. There were a lot of perspectives, so... I felt unnecessary taking risk in choosing the categories. INL3/Razif/6

Normally, in class we just follow the format or what teachers ask us to do. Sometimes, we have to read how others have written and emulate it. But we didn't learn to write how we want to. We didn't write like... ourselves. So, I didn't have the opportunity to show my talent as a writer. But in this lesson I felt I was given that opportunity. So, being able to take risk helps me to create my own identity in being a writer. INL3/Gana/7

In excerpt 45, Gana believes that risk-taking has allowed him to create his own identity of being a writer. It has provided him an opportunity to show his true abilities in writing. On the other hand, for some students (Norry & Rubena) the risks are in being selective to choose the right information and narrowing down the scope of categories to write the composition. It is a situation where one person has to make decisions on options of different interests (McCarthy, 2005). As for Norry, she declares the risks she takes for the categories selected by her is being regarded as

‘silly’. This proposition of being ‘silly’ is qualified by the juncture of Beebe (1983) describing that willingness to appear foolish is related to risk-taking. For Rubena, teacher’s acceptance of the categories does cross her mind but she decides to abandon that thoughts. The risk she has taken is writing the composition based on categories that she has identified and selected from the television commercials. On the contrary, Razif is not keen in taking risks for this particular lesson. He claims that it is pointless in taking risks by sorting and selecting choices from the massive categories that could be obtainable from the television commercials. The reason of his displeasure is identified from the students discussions when writing the composition during the classroom interactions as shown in excerpt 46.

Excerpt 46

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| I always thought risk is something dangerous. But as I am writing this essay I realise that being able to take risk in writing just makes me to think how to write an essay worth reading by others and to show my skills as a writer. | CIL3/Yasmin/3 |
| Yeah, I was also thinking have to avoid risk. But taking risk in writing this essay helps me to say what is on my mind. I can just be myself. I know this is what I wrote and not something I wrote because teacher said so. It is kind of excites me to write more. | CIL3/Sue/4 |
| Excites you!!! I was like.....Ahhhhhh...no notes given...our teacher normally do...So, I am like, WHAT? With so many choices and no limits...Emmm...I can ...write so many things <i>la</i> , which to choose and write.... | CIL3/Razif/5 |
| Ha...Ha...that shows you are not the adventures type of person. I see it as teacher giving us freedom to think...all this while like you say we just use what is given and write...which actually I feel too easy but this is challenging. That makes writing interesting and meaningful for me. | CIL3/Adrian/6 |
| Well...Maybe...I am too lazy to think. So I prefer the easy way... why want to burden my brain <i>la</i>I know I am good in English and I just want to get an ‘A’. | CIL3/Razif/7 |

In this exchange, Razif appears to be not in favour of taking risks in writing the composition compared to the others. He prefers to embrace the routine whereby categories are provided for them in completing this writing task as in their typical writing classroom. This provides an easy way of completing the task. On the other hand, his peers in the conversation seems to be in favour of taking risks. They deduce that being a risk-taker has enabled them to have pleasure in discovering new categories and to know their own potentials as versatile writers. Apart from the interview and classroom interactions, student reflections from the journals in excerpt 47 are further used to consolidate how the lesson has helped them in being risk-takers.

Excerpt 47 : *Entry L3/2*

I think there was a risk as we had to make a choice on the categories we wanted to compare. As I was looking at the messages in the video as a point of comparison, I found myself trying to analyse people's thinking and motives. I think this is quite risky as we have no way of knowing how our interpretation is seen by others. EL3/2/Reysa

My style of writing was very different from what I normally do in the classroom. So, I was moving out of my normal writing style. That was the risk I was taking in this task. EL3/2/Harley

It helped me to be a risk-taker by giving me courage to experiment new things in the way I write. In this activity I felt I was being trained to be a good writer and not for the purpose of examination only. EL3/2/Tan

I've taken a risk by giving an honest and brave opinion for each television commercial. I also could give suggestions using the 'what if' by providing the changes I would do. For me, this was a risk I was taking in answering this task. EL3/2/Jasmine

Today's writing class has allowed me to be a risk-taker because I've to interpret the messages in the television commercial on my own. The risk I'm taking is if my interpretation and choice of chosen features is accepted or disagreed by others. EL3/2/Aziz

In excerpt 47, students accept that the writing task is a shift from the comfort of what is known and safe into something that is risky and unsure. However, there is some mixed responses on their views. Some students like Reysa, Jasmine and Aziz admit of being risk-takers. They have pointed that the risks in writing the composition

is to put aside the probability of their identified categories being accepted by others. What matters and appears to be important for them at that moment of time is in showing their true writing abilities. Another example could be seen from Harley and Tan who have scripted that being able to take risks have helped them to *try-out new things* in writing. Over here, they also indicate they are gradually moving away from the practices of writing only for examination.

To wind up, the findings in this lesson show some mixed reactions from the students. Most of the students are willing to take risks and gradually moving out of their comfort zones i.e typical practices in writing classroom. They are moving beyond the typical practices and what is expected from their writings. This act of being risk-takers is mutually valuable for students in the sense of building their skills and change of attitudes in writing. Besides, taking risks appears to have motivated students to move to a higher level in the learning taxonomy since they are analysing and interpreting the hidden messages or implied messages seen from the television commercials. The task also indirectly appears to have helped in building some depth of knowledge because students are required to make decisions in identifying and choosing their own categories to write the composition. In other words, risk-taking appears to have provided a platform in giving opportunities for students to progress in higher order thinking levels and have depth of knowledge in their writing. This concurs with Bruner's theory of spiral curriculum where learners constantly builds upon what they have already learned but with deepening layers of complexity (Bruner, 1986). They are building new layers in the sense of creating their own categories on what they want to compare and contrast in their composition writing.

c. Absorbing (Complete Engagement)

The most observable indicator of students' engagement in this lesson is their involvement and enthusiasms in writing the composition. Excerpt 48 exhibits the indicators from the students' reactions in the classroom.

Excerpt 48

Teacher, I really enjoyed this activity...It's different because we have to analyse the categories that we wished to compare. The normal compare and contrast we have done in class, our teacher will provide the categories and we elaborate based on that. Pretty easy and most of us would write the same thing since we are comparing the same categories. CIL3/Misha/10

Asha, I agree the writing we have done before was much easier. This one that teacher gave us...a lot of thinking needed... But interesting, I felt it was personalised too because we make our own decisions in choosing the categories. CIL3/Keshav/15

Yeah, I never thought I would be glued searching for categories to write. CIL3/Cheer/16

In excerpt 48, Keshav describes the activity is interesting because it is personalized and cognitively challenging. Cheer, further has supported by stating being acutely focused during the search of categories to write the composition. This is an indication that students are experiencing greater enjoyment and engagement when they perceived themselves to be in control, active and competent (Shernoff & Csíkszentmihályi, 2009). From the above exchanges, the students have admitted the pleasure and involvement they find in the task. These views are further enhanced by responses from the interview in excerpt 49.

Excerpt 49: Students' responses on being absorbed (L3)

Can say it was fun because I was into the lesson. We can actually analyse three different television commercials from different perspectives. INL3/Magdalene/21

I felt the choice of television commercial gave me the engagement in the lesson. The television commercials kind of motivated me in igniting ideas. So for me it made learning more interesting and was not bored as I was usually in our writing class before this. It was much easier to pay attention as you know what you think matters. INL3/Sharifah/22

As for me, the feeling of being relaxed and stress free when we were doing the task. So, it was something nice. For me, the lessons that we had so far allowed us to be kind of being playful in the sense having fun with the given task. This made me to realise having the right choice of activity in writing can actually make writing a memorable and fun lesson. Though this task pushed me to think beyond, I was satisfied to apply it in my writing. INL3/Norry/21

For me, I was completely involved in the lesson because of the choice of commercials shown to us. Television commercials are good tools in making us to write to an excellent level. We normally only refer to text, words and all that, but this was different; visual with humour elements, so it was easier to be a part of the task. INL3/Razif/20

I think this task prepared me to write like, beyond the boarder of the school. So, that was something fresh from our normal routine just writing for exams. So that made me engaged in the task. INL3/Rubena/24

Yes, it's very fantabulous. I personally don't like books, I like things that one can see and elaborate ourselves. Gives me room to think something more than what is actually shown. The television commercials and the phrase 'what if' both kept me on my toes in writing this composition. INL3/Gana/25

In excerpt 49, students' engagement in the task could be construed in few terms. Most of them have agreed that process of being absorbed in the task has prepared them to apply skills or learn new ones when they are faced with challenging activities i.e think and write beyond. This means, when one has sufficient skills that is needed to cope with challenges of a situation, it allows that person's attention to be completely absorbed in the activity (Csíkszentmihalyi, 1990). In short, as described by Csíkszentmihalyi (1990) a holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement and enjoyment of the sensation that seem to come from their involvement in an activity itself, than from the rewards they receive.

On the other hand, some students (Magdalene, Sharifah, Razif & Gana) claim that selection of television commercials with some humour elements that they can relate to their experiences has made it easier for them to be connected in the task. Gana further added the television commercials and the phrase 'What if...' offers a hand in

furnishing his attentiveness in writing the composition. All this comments are further strengthened by the researcher's reflection in the journal as shown in excerpt 50.

Excerpt 50: *Researcher's entry L3/1*

The students showed a great amount of enthusiasm in engaging themselves in the television commercial. When they were watching the television commercials a variety of emotions was exhibited especially the female students. Students also requested to view the television commercials for a second time. After watching, they were active in sharing their thoughts and feelings. They explored various ideas related to the television commercials. I was taken aback looking at the ideas they presented in comparing the television commercials. It was unexpected and beyond my expectations. REL3/1/2016

From researcher's entry, it can be noted that students are engaged with the content of the television commercials and motivated to pursue their own thoughts and responses. They are cognitively putting in, extra efforts in writing the composition. Furthermore, the researcher has confessed in her entry that students' ideas are beyond her expectations. This indicates as they master the challenges in the activity, they appeared to have developed greater level of skills and involvement in the task. Thus, it has created intellectual engagement that ultimately has embarked them towards the continuum of being a talented writer and indirectly demonstrate their self-growth in writing. Exploration of various sources in Lesson 3 indicate being absorbed in the task has made students to enjoy the freedom given in exploring and developing their own ideas. In other words, this has provided concentration which is related to a meaningful learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Engagement with the content has allowed the students to stretch their thinking beyond their typical writing routines. This seems to indicate very likely a depth of cognitive processing is taking place. In this lesson, students' complete involvement with the television commercials and the phrase 'What if...' has created cognitive and psychological engagement to the task. In sum, these brought students interest to the notion in considering that meaningful learning is valuable in writing classroom.

The findings of all the three qualities of intellectual playfulness in the lesson 3 designates students are feeling more comfortable and willing to undertake open-ended task, to be risk-takers and finally being absorbed in the lesson. There is voices of disgruntlement of being a risk-taker could be heard in this lesson since one wants an easy way in completing the task. But most of the students are more than willing to take risks in writing the composition. This signposts more students are willing to jump into the wagon of changing and write something new from their typical composition writing. To sum, intellectual playfulness is presumed to be playing a significant role in facilitating students to develop their own identities as writers and be in control of their learning actions.

The next section looks at the final lesson on playfulness task using the phrase ‘What if...’ This section also explores if the acquisition of intellectual playfulness that has been brought into the classroom is evident as the other three lessons. In other words, how far students are willing to undertake open-ended tasks, being a risk taker and being absorbed in the lesson 4.

4.4.4 Lesson 4 & Vignette- ‘The Young Ambassadors’

In lesson four, students’ task is to write a speech. The lesson is planned with the task correlating to [4, 3] (Bloom’s-Analyze, Webb’s-Reasoning) and [4, 4] (Bloom’s-Analyze, Webb’s-Extended thinking) or [5,3] (Bloom’s-Evaluate, Webb’s-Reasoning) and [5, 4] (Bloom’s-Evaluate, Webb’s-Extended thinking) in the cell of cognitive rigor matrix. Before writing the speech, some texts, some flyers (only pictures and few words) and a YouTube video depicting on environment is shown to the students. An overview of all the three types of text is discussed with the students. The purpose is to get students responses on different texts in conveying messages to the audience. Then, students are given a task, “What if they were the ambassador of United Nations and

they need to prepare a speech that they would present at the United Nations?” Students are allowed to choose any types of texts that they prefer and would be useful in presenting an effective speech. They could use flyers and video as references in their speeches or any other texts that are suitable. This writing lesson is conducted in the AVA1 room (a multimedia room) in the school. The room is located in the library and have a cyber corner. Students are given freedom to search for information. Detailed lesson is explained in Chapter 3 (Lesson 4, p.87).

This lesson is aimed in giving opportunities for students to analyse, evaluate and create a speech for a specific audience. In this task, the instruction with the phrase ‘What if...’ provides an empowerment for the students as an ambassador to suggest their views in solving the problems faced in the earth. In order to address this issue, they need to identify, analyse and evaluate suitable texts which they are going to use in the speech. Therefore, for students to analyse and evaluate information from multiple sources also means identifying the complexities of different perspectives found in each text before they could deliver a speech. These are the levels and skills that students need in completing the writing task. Once again, the task has provided freedom for students in choosing their texts and style of writing in producing the speech that would be addressed in front of audiences from around the world. The vignette below provides a short description of the conducted writing lesson in the classroom.

“Pictures speak louder than words”, claimed Adrian (CIL4/Adrian/2). “Yes, I feel when we see pictures, they urge us to put on our thinking caps to explore more things through the pictures,” added Kit Yan (CIL4/Kit Yan/3). Gana, raises his hand and excitedly said,

The small man down there, it's sort of like, the small part of the whole world trying to stop this atomic bomb, yet we are so weak because we are not united. It's like, one man doing a job of hundred men. Imagine how long we need to complete the job. So, it's sort of telling me that we are doing it but our actions are not enough. We only have one man chopping down the atomic tree, which we actually need more. (CIL4/Gana/4)

Sharifah intervened suddenly and states,

For me usually when I see flyers they use attractive colours like brighter colours. But in this one they had used dark colours such as black and grey. They are like sombre colours which to me represents seriousness. To show that something bad is happening and I also think that the man is trying to do something that he's not supposed to by chopping down the very big tree. So, Mother Nature is reacting towards him, as you can see the clouds and thunderstorms (CIL4/Sharifah/5).

In other words what you are trying to say is, "Mother Nature is saying, okay if you're cutting me, what if I strike you with disasters and all that" stated Magdalene (CIL4/Magdalene/6). Rubena stood up excitedly and proclaimed, "So, from this lesson it is like what if our actions were given a counter reaction" (CIL4/Rubena/7). Sharifah, shouted "Yea...my exact thoughts too" (CIL4/Sharifah/8). As the discussion was going on, the researcher raised question on the instruction using the phrase, 'What if...' in this task. Students responded positively and one of them said, "I feel proud when we are trusted and given a role, what if we were a young ambassador and what would we say" (CIL4/Yan/9).

Cheer, who was sitting at the behind row stood up and said, "Imagine, we were given such an honour and what we say is heard by people from all over the world" (CIL4/Cheer/9). The other students responded to this view with an eruption of cheers and noises. Faz, who was all the while sitting quietly and listening to his friends views, raised his hands to say, "For me, in this lesson 'What if...' could be used to show examples in the speech and help in making the audience to think so they have realisation, repent or make changes" (CIL4/Faz/10).

The atmosphere in the class was lively and students were energetic throughout the lesson. It is like I have switched on the right button that has ignited healthy discussions in the classroom. Although, students are actively involved, it never got out of control. They merely having good time in the class and enjoying themselves as shown through their engagement on the given task.

4.4.4.1 Incorporating Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 4

The vignette provides an insight of intellectual playfulness in exploring connections between texts in a writing classroom. In this lesson, intellectual playfulness is explored through different types of text such as flyers, text and YouTube videos. The task is to engage the students with the content, explore and apply it to the settings outside of the classroom. From the vignette, students are making connections from the given flyers and eagerly participating by sharing their views. An interesting sight to note from the vignette is students are excited in giving different perspectives and meanings from the texts provided. Some of the interpreted messages from the flyers are shown in excerpt 51.

Excerpt 51

The small man down there, it's sort of like, the small part of the whole world trying to stop this atomic bomb, yet we are so weak because we are not united. It's like, one man doing a job of hundred men. Imagine how long we need to complete the job. So, it's sort of telling me that we are doing it but our actions are not enough. We only have one man chopping down the atomic tree, which we actually need more.

CIL4/Gana /4

For me usually when I see flyers they use attractive colours like brighter colours. But in this one they had used dark colours such as black and grey. They are like sombre colours which to me represents seriousness. To show that something bad is happening and I also think that the man is trying to do something that he's not supposed to by chopping down the very big tree. So, Mother Nature is reacting towards him, as you can see the clouds and thunderstorms.

CIL4/Sharifah/5

Mother Nature is saying, okay if you're cutting me, what if I strike you with disasters and all that. CIL4/Magdalene/6

So, from this lesson it's like what if our actions were given a counter reaction. CIL4/Rubena/7

From excerpt 51, Gana is making interpretations and associations of the man in the flyer in making meaning related to the environment while Sharifah is interpreting the colours shown in the flyer to construct the meaning related to environment. It is interesting to note how students have demonstrated that same picture could have different meanings and messages from different aspects. On the other hand, Magdalene and Rubena communicate and deduce that the interpretation they gain from their peers show a spontaneous effect in every action that one does. Hence, from the excerpt it is obvious when students are given opportunities, they are able to give constructive interpretations and meaning. Students' views in the vignette are further supplemented with the responses from the interview in excerpt 52. These are the students' comments on the activity.

Excerpt 52: Students' Responses to the Lesson (L4)

Today's lesson was quite special because it was related to something that the world is facing today. So, it's actually trying to tell us that teenagers also have a hand to play. Through this lesson we were able to realise that we actually can fight for our future. The video, the text as well as the pictures shown actually was like connected to us. I think I can actually write better speech by construing what they were trying to convey. INL4/ Magdalene/3

The activity on different texts allowed me to convey different messages. If you're trying to provide some realisation to the community that I think that hosted app is the most effective. This is because for me and others, when we see a picture, it's like a picture says thousand words. When conveyed properly, it can be really powerful. As for the YouTube videos, I felt I could reflect on my own reactions. The speech we were going to deliver is most important. Thus, we should display with facts and happenings beyond our knowledge. I was really inspired to write a meaningful speech that can motivate people into realisation and using it as reference for future. INL4/Sharifah/4

All the text were good mediums to convey messages on environment. I was really comfortable writing the speech because I actually can convince people to listen to what I'm saying and persuade others to think about the environment.

INL4/Norry/6

To be honest, I liked the first flyer. What I understood is like, it going to rain and a man was cutting the only shelter he had. So, he was bringing bad luck to himself because without the trees, any lightning that hits, will hit the highest, highest object. Since there is no trees, it will hit him and not the tree. So, he is actually harming himself when he is hurting the nature. The picture actually evoked my responsibility as an occupant of the world preventing human selfish act of destroying the earth.

INL4/Rubena/4

We can just explore what we think through You tube video and interpret ourselves. I was really motivated seeing the girl's plight. I felt like a wake-up call for us to help the environment compared to the other texts. I really liked the message she told the world. I really could relate to her experiences. The video made me to think in depth of writing a good speech.

INL4/Razif/6

For me, I like the flyers shown because they can invoke many messages. Though we may need time to understand the picture but we were free to interpret. In our previous class, we were usually given a text which is considered long and most of the time I lose interest in reading the text. When compared to YouTube video, we can see and hear the message that was being delivered. If the person in the video didn't have the ability to convey the message well, people won't be able to know the message and the viewer will feel bored listening to her talking in the video.

INL4/Gana/5

In excerpt 52, students spoke explicitly and assertively of the activity done in the classroom. They have endorsed that the flyers and YouTube video are good tools that support them in developing rigor ideas in writing the speech. Most of the students agreed that the task is associated to their experiences because the content is linked to the current problem that is faced in the world due to environment. Students have given numerous views on the texts that is used for this activity. For instance, some students like Sharifah, Rubena and Gana describe the flyers provide opportunities to interpret and derive meaning from their experiences. This has made them to be active explorers of the texts and flyers.

All of them have agreed the short video from YouTube is a stimulator that helps them to write and deliver a worthwhile speech which could *invoke realisation* to people and as a *future reference*. At the same time, students feel the role of instruction ‘What if...’ in this writing lesson has given them opportunities to provide their views for betterment of the environment. For example, the vignette shows students enthusiasm on the role that is given to them in presenting their views in the United Nation as a young ambassador. Excerpt 53 displays more examples of students’ excitement on the given role as young ambassador through the phrase ‘What if...’

Excerpt 53

I felt proud when we were trusted by given a role, what if we were a young ambassador and what would we say. CIL4/Lau/12

Imagine, we were given such an honour and what we say will be heard by people from all over the world. CIL4/Razif/13

For me, in this lesson the ‘What if’ could be used to show examples in the speech and make the audience to have realisation, to repent or make changes. CIL4/Keshav/14

In excerpt 53, students describe the phrase ‘What if...’ in the lesson has entrusted them with a role to play. They feel being appreciated and their point of views are given due considerations. Besides, Keshav claims that the phrase has allowed them to provide some examples as solutions to the problems. This shows that the phrase is seen as furnishing students in making sound decisions on their own and applying it to new situations or life outside the school. This is further complemented by students’ responses from the interview in excerpt 54.

Excerpt 54: *Students' Responses on 'What if...' (L4)*

I think in this task, “What if” applies to the society, the government, like we could do so much but we were just seeing and not doing anything about it. So, when it comes to “What if”, I think we can think of things like, what if we plant more trees, like what if we come out with a device or a plan that could make difference to us.

INL4/Magdalene/9

The issues that have been brought up for all these lessons, it relates to me, but at the back of my head I know that I don't have the opportunity to actually voice out my opinions. So, the “what if” is very diverse and they led me to many perspectives. I shall call the counter-answering. Through the “what if” technique, it will lead me to many points and I can write an excellent speech addressing the issue.

INL4/Sharifah/7

What if... Yeah actually if we use the phrase, “What if” in this task when we don't take actions to do something to avoid environmental issues, that can cause a lot of trouble to human beings. I feel the phrase “What if” is important because it helps one to imagine. When you use the phrase, “What if” you start to imagine about the consequences that would happen. The phrase “What if” makes you to think out of the box or what will happen if this still occurs. So, I feel that's really important for someone to have that phrase in writing the speech.

INL4/Norry/10

In my opinion, “What if...” is very useful when we want to know what may happen and what could have happened if we did not do it. So, it is like, what if we didn't cut the trees or what if all the trees were gone and we have nothing left or what if the effects of all these things that we do might just rip the whole world apart. So, “what if” here expands every single thing that we are talking about? It goes from looking at the surface to the inner level just by looking at one perspective.

INL1/Rubena/15

I think the use of “What if” for this lesson was inspiring because usually when we write, it's just writing to your schoolmates, writing to your class, a speech in front of the school but we were rarely given opportunity for bigger picture like, sets of platform. So, I think “What if” plays a role in making us to think of writing a speech out of the school context and delivering in a meaningful way.

INL4/Razif/7

I think the phrase “What if” is important because let's say you're writing about the picture, a picture has thousand messages which you can view from various different point of views. So, let's say if you view it from an environmental point of view, you would be thinking from an environmental point of view, what will come out, or what if I view from the economics point of view, and what would I be writing in my speech. For me “What if” gives me to look on more perspectives.

INL4/Gana/15

In excerpt 54, Magdalene has claimed the phrase, ‘What if...’ is useful in initiating solutions to problems, for instance *creating a device or counter-plan*. As for some students like Norry and Rubena the phrase has helped them to be imaginative and expand ideas comprehensively and thoroughly. Similarly, Sharifah and Gana have indicated that the phrase provides possibility to look at more perspectives. This has led them in being diverse in writing the speech. Besides, both of them has indicated the phrase ‘What if...’ as being useful in providing opportunities to voice their views in the speech. While for Razif, the instruction with the phrase ‘What if...’ provides a role in exercising and far-reaching one’s views out of school context. Thus, ‘What if...’ in this lesson appears to have brought features that allows them to be imaginative, being comprehensive and thorough, having diversity in writing and applying their roles in writing out of school boundaries. This has opened up a new dimension for students to generate rigor in the writing classroom. In short, rigorous instruction allows to connect their prior knowledge with new learning and has led them in asking more questions, and discovering more information (Hess, Jones, Carlock & Walkup, 2009).

4.4.4.2 Manifestations of Intellectual Playfulness in Lesson 4

The following section further illustrates intellectual playfulness is established from the qualities of open-endedness, risk-taking and being absorbed in Lesson 4.

a. Open-endedness

The task that is designed for this lesson is different from other lessons because students are provided with different types of texts. They are required to write and deliver the speech through any medium of their interests. Students are given credit of having the power in delivering their ideas and knowledge to a wider group of audience. They are given complete freedom in writing the speech. Excerpt 55 illustrates the students’ comments on the open-ended of the task.

Excerpt 55: *Students' Responses to Open-endedness (L4)*

The pictures say like a thousand words and I think that's what makes me willing to take the open-ended task. Besides we can write and talk on any issues on environment and it's based on what we see and interpret from the texts given to us. The task given, did not limit our ideas in writing the speech but gave us a wider option. INL4/ Magdalene/21

The open-endedness of the task allowed me to convey things differently. I had the freedom to deliver the message in the speech orally. I was able to convey the message with a powerful and strong voice. So, for me by willing to take the open-endedness of the task gave me the freedom in writing the speech and creating an actual video presentation. INL4/Sharifah/18

The open-endedness in the task allowed me to write about everything and anything which of course related to environment. I was able to give my views without any restrictions since we can see from different perspectives from the text, video or picture. INL4/Norry/14

It was open-ended because in today's task no instruction like, we should write our speech on the climate change, the challenges or what was the cause. The freedom of topic and the role I was given made me more comfortable in writing the speech. For instance, I wanted just to write on the effects of climate change. I believe that different people have different aspects they would focus in their speech. INL4/Razif/19

For me the open-endedness of the task allowed me to talk on any issues that I wanted. It's not like... usually in class we were instructed on what to write like the cause or the effects. But in this task, I can write everything and use different ways of expressing things. INL4/Rubena/24

Yes, especially the flyers with pictures. The first text, like when we read the text, we sort of know what they were saying, like we can put our thoughts into the text. But the flyers with pictures and YouTube video allowed me to interpret in many ways. I think that's what makes me to willing undertake the open-ended task. INL4/Gana/21

From students' responses in excerpt 55, most of them has agreed the task permits them to be active explorers' i.e exploring their views in variety ways, such as writing on any issues pertaining to the environment. It can be deduced, that willingness to take open-ended task seem to have given them flexibility and freedom in writing the speech. Besides that, Magdalene and Sharifah have resonated open-endedness of the task provides them with broader alternatives in writing the speech and able to convey the messages in the speech in a substantial and influential manner.

Furthermore, Razif, Norry and Rubena have commented unlike their previous composition writing in their typical classroom, no restrictions are applied on what aspects should be focused in their speech. This has provided them with their own freedom of choices on the topic to be addressed for the speech. An interesting and noteworthy fact on this findings is about one student, Razif. In the previous lesson, he is against the freedom given to complete the task but in this lesson he appears to be very appreciative of the role and freedom given in writing the speech. Finally, for Gana undertaking the open-endedness task has given him room to interpret the meaning of different texts in many ways. A sequence of details from the students' journal entries in excerpt 56 further supports the above views.

Excerpt 56: *Entry L4/1*

The task itself did not give specific boundaries to our answers. The possibility of designing our speech is opened up to us without fear of errors. EL4/1/Lau

We were not given any specific pointers that limits on what we want to talk about. This allowed me to try different things. EL4/1/Yasmin

I was able to interpret what I saw from the texts shown in my own way. It did not have to be a specific object or thing from the text. EL4/1/Harley

I could write anything I wanted about climate change in bringing my message on environmental changes across. My choice of text is wide and I have the freedom of choice, not bounded by any pre-structured formats. Writing from flyers was also open-ended because I am free to explore any hidden messages and themes in the picture. EL4/1/Tan

The instruction of the task was not structured so I was able to write anything I want as long it is relevant and justified. The task helped me to think differently and pen down everything that was on my mind without any restrictions. EL4/1/Maha

Student's journal entries reflect that open-endedness of the task has opened up new possibilities in writing. Most of the students has written the absence of guidance which is normally provided in writing a speech appears to be a blessing in disguise. This allows them to be able to give their views and perspectives spontaneously in their writing. Besides, Tan has stated that open-endedness of the task provides him with

freedom and broader choices in writing the speech. For some students, like Harley and Maha, features of open-endedness in intellectual playfulness is a breakthrough because it has presented them with opportunities to interpret freely and write what is in their mind. Thus, open-endedness in the task appears to indirectly provide students the freedom of being able to voice their views in writing the speech.

They also appear to be in the path of exploration and trying different ways of writing a speech. In this task, open-endedness has given the students a platform to cognitively engage in skills that requires them to analyse, interpret and evaluate before writing the speech. In short, students appear to view that open-ended task has given them freedom and flexibility as well as empowerment to explore their thoughts without any restrictions in this lesson.

b. Risk-taking

This section further demonstrates the risk-taking component in intellectual playfulness among students in lesson 4. The responses in excerpt 57 display if the writing lesson has helped them to be risk-takers.

Excerpt 57: Students' Responses to Risk-taking (L4)

Definitely yes, since I am trying to write something that I'm not so certain and I've never tried before. I am trying to... approach a topic that I'm not very familiar, so that definitely makes me a risk-taker. INL4/ Magdalene/17

I think the previous lessons allowed me to be more of a risk-taker. Writing the speech was not much of risk-taking for me. The risk I felt was more like how much people can accept my views or ideas that was presented and conveyed in my speech. INL3/Sharifah/14

I believe in this task I am being a risk-taker because I have freedom to actually say anything. I am expressing my own feelings and what I think about it. Different people have different views. Like from the picture shown, one can think of it from a bad way or good way like, when one of my friends said, "One person can do this much, so how much can ten people do". And in that picture even though you can perceive in a negative way, you can also perceive in a positive way like in having ten people it would help to make something better or other way round ten people making things worst. INL4/Norry/12

In today's lesson I am taking risk because as I write the speech, I am fully responsible for what I say in the speech. So, let's say if I criticise someone, so I would be responsible to anything that comes after that though I'm being honest with my views. INL4/Razif/13

Taking risk...in the sense that we are trying new things. Besides we rarely do speech in front of our teachers, only during oral. It gives me an opportunity to be more courageous when writing. I can try some new styles like I added 'haibun' in my speech. INL4/Rubena/20

It is risk-taking for me because the picture has a lot of hidden messages that can be interpreted. I could write from different perspectives maybe positive or negative. So this makes me a risk-taker as I am not taking any sides. INL4/Gana/18

Excerpt 57 shows that students are more at comfort of being risk-takers in lesson 4. This is illustrated in the opening remarks by Magdalene and Rubena about being able to try something new, indefinite and unversed. For instance, Rubena is bold in trying to use different styles such as inserting 'haibun' in between the speech writing. On the other hand, Norry, Razif and Gana express the relief they have in being able to take risks which is the objectivity in expressing their own feelings immaterial of others acceptance. Finally, for Sharifah the risks in this lesson is less challenging compared to previous lessons. The risks she takes is on the level of acceptance by others on the views and ideas given in the speech. In other words, the risk she has taken is writing what is relevant and significant to her. The student journal entries in excerpt 58 further consolidates how the lesson helps them in being risk-takers.

Excerpt 58: *Entry L4/2*

To put it in simple words, the audience do not judge our writing. We are the true evaluators. Our writing is a form of expressing ourselves, not to be judged ultimately. Therefore my speech can be unsatisfactory to some but it shows my true identity as a writer. EL4/2/Lau

I wasn't thinking about grades anymore as I normally do when I write. It was more of being brave in coming out with ideas to write a speech. Maybe my speech can be imperfect but I am glad I wrote what I really wanted to tell the world. So, I guess that's the risk I took. EL4/2/Faz

This task enables me to be a risk-taker by overcoming my insecurities and making me to come out of my secured zone in writing. EL4/2/Yasmin

Being required to not only write the speech but present the speech was something of a challenge. It involves risk as I really can't gauge how my peers will react. It was like taking a big leap and requires a lot of confidence. Giving my personal views on an issue widely discussed is also a risk because people may have their own outlooks about it. The biggest risk is when we try to come up with creative opinions and to think out of box which is something rarely done in a writing classroom. EL4/2/Rubena

It is risky because not everyone would share the same thoughts and opinions. Today's writing lesson allowed me to be a risk-taker by giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts on a globalised topic for future generation. EL4/2/Maha

It was risk-taking for me because I have to understand and interpret the messages beyond the pictures and video. But it gave me excitement in playing with my ideas. In fact, I did not feel fear or worried of interpreting the shown pictures or video since all of us have our own perceptions. EL4/2/Melissa

In these entries, students describe that in being able to take risk has allowed them to step out of their secured zones and be open to various experiences in writing the speech. For example, Faz describes as a risk-taker, the quest of being brave in providing his thoughts and ideas are more important than seeking for good grades. Most of them has described that learning is significant because fear of their thoughts or views might be right or wrong has shifted and turn into becoming a secondary concern at this moment. For example, Melissa has reflected the excitement of being able to play with ideas and being wrong is the least concern. This comments hint that students appreciate the invitation of being challenged in writing to show their true potentials.

In the given task, risk-taking seems to have delivered a space for students to play freely or explore ideas which has challenged them cognitively since their abilities are stretched from their typical routines in writing. Hence, being risk-takers, actually has challenged and pushed students to write a speech beyond their normal practice in writing classroom as well as to actively explore materials that they have identified as meaningful from their point of view. In conclusion, findings indicate that students are happy with the texts that has given them a lot of room to interpret without having fear

of being right or wrong. Being risk-takers in this task gradually has made them to discover their potentials in writing than being worried of their examination grades which has always been their main priorities.

c. Absorbing (Complete Engagement)

The vignette of the lesson shows there is obvious involvement of the students in their eagerness in writing the speech. Some noticeable indicators could be seen from the students' interactions in the classroom.

Excerpt 59

I am excited about writing this speech. CIL4/Maha/12

Hey...I am too...imagine writing a speech where I want the whole world to listen to what I am delivering. CIL4/Virgil/13

Can both of you just focus on writing the speech? I am trying to pay attention to write my speech. I want to think of some humour or like punch lines so not fusty *la* for the audience. CIL4/Lau/14

Humour and punch lines...Wow...you are really into this speech writing, huh. Anyway, for my speech I added 'haibun' we learnt previously. Bet you the audience will be going *oooh* and *aahhh...ha ha ha..* CIL4/Virgil/15

That sounds good and kind of something new...Can I read your speech once you have done it. CIL4/Maha/16

Sure and tell me what you think of it, *ya*. CIL4/Virgil/17

Exchanges among the students in excerpt 59 exhibits their excitement in writing the speech. This is evident when Virgil affirms of using her previous knowledge from the previous lessons in writing the speech. She wants to incorporate 'haibun' that she has learnt in the previous lesson into the speech. This illustrates students' interest and attention in making sure of writing a good speech for audience. In other words, learners continually build upon what they have already learned (Kearsley, 1994b). The exchanges are further triangulated with responses from the interviews. Excerpt 60 displays the students' remarks on how actively they are engaged in this lesson.

Excerpt 60: *Students' Responses to Being Absorbed (L4)*

The task got my undivided attention. I paid attention and was involved in the learning process. Despite having to learn the same content as I have in my usual class, this different and versatile activity seized my thoughts to write a memorable speech. INL4/Magdalene/23

In this lesson, I like the texts shown to us. The texts made me feel completely immersed into writing the speech. The texts especially the pictures and video of Kayla was the prelude of how important the speech I am going to write. I was more attracted to pictures and visuals than merely words. So, I think it helped me to like share my ideas in writing the speech. INL4/Sharifah/20

This fourth lesson was more of pulling me into the whole writing thing. I felt alive and excited writing the speech in the classroom. INL4/Norry/17

In completing the speech I was focussed all the time and kept thinking on how to write a speech which is meaningful for everyone. INL4/Razif/21

I think this task prepared me to write for a wider audiences. So, I was more cautious in making sure that the speech was meaningful for the audience. That made me to concentrate and focus in the task. INL4/Rubena/26

It did engage me because writing this speech made me feel my writing did have a value. Not merely writing but also to present the speech made the writing exercise more meaningful to me. Again I didn't know I would be totally engrossed in a writing classroom since normally I would be waiting when our English classroom lesson would be over. INL4/Gana/23

Based on the comments in excerpt 60, students seem to denote that engagement in the writing lesson creates a *learning atmosphere* and motivates them to be *active participants* in their learning. Some students (Magdalene & Razif) describe that being actively engaged in the activity has made them to be attentive in the writing classroom. On another note, Sharifah contributes her involvement in the writing task is initiated by different texts used in the lesson. The texts that is used in the lesson contributes as a prologue for her to be immersed in the activity. Besides, Gana verifies that writing task is meaningful due to the purpose of writing the speech. On the other hand, Rubena states writing a speech for a large group of audience has made her to be more attentive in writing. All this comments are further triangulated with the students' reflections in excerpt 61.

Excerpt 61: Entry L4/3

The texts that were shown required more thoughts to interpret because they were something like metaphors. That was really interesting. EL4/3/Harley

I was totally engaged in the lesson because I love speaking in public. This lesson taught me to voice out my opinions in written and oral form. EL4/3/Yasmin

Thinking of what I want to write and to convey as an ambassador representing Malaysia at UN helped me to be focussed and engaged in the writing class. EL4/3/Sue

The task was very engaging. I can connect in depth to the message from the texts shown like the pictures and YouTube video which gave me a wider view towards writing the speech. EL4/3/Jasmine

I think it was a great warm-up for me in generating ideas from different texts in writing the speech. I was engaged because task stimulated different thoughts and aspects of the topic that I wanted to write. I will be addressing delegates from other nations, though imaginary it will be beneficial in helping me to express my thoughts as I wish. For me being immersed in the task made my speech count for something. EL4/3/Maha

I think today's activity was likeable because you can analyse the given picture and video showing the happenings around the world. I was able to put the reality of the world into my speech and making sure I wrote a speech that is worth listening. EL4/3/Yan

Similar to the responses in the interview, students have written in their entries that the texts that is used in the activity has triggered them to be cognitively engaged in the task. Besides, some students have indicated that being absorbed in the activity is due to the recognition given to them to play the role of a young ambassador in United Nation. Thus, being engaged in the activity has made them to be cognitively challenged to uphold their roles in writing the speech.

To conclude, students deep involvement in different texts have created an engagement in writing the speech. They are engaged cognitively in exploring the text and develop its meaning from their own point of views. This shows they are in a state of absorbed concentration in which attention is centred and enjoyed an autonomous interaction with the activity (Whalen, 1999). Likewise, when students are entrusted with a role to play, they are motivated to put in extra work and go the extra miles in producing a meaningful and worthwhile speech. Hence, the quality of engagement of

intellectual playfulness in lesson 4 can be considered constructive for students because occurrence of concentration, being attentive, enjoyment and interest in the writing task.

4.5 Intellectual Playfulness – An Exclusive Writing Classroom

This section sums up by analysing all the four writing lessons that is conducted in the classroom and the significance of the instruction with the phrase ‘What if...’ pertaining to writing composition. In the previous sections, each of the four writing lessons are inspected and presented in a detailed picture. In the next section, four lessons are compared and themes that materialised from the data are revealed. There is a horde of potential comparisons that can be made between the lessons but the research question one is used as guide to focus on the comparisons. The research question one is: How do high ability students acquire intellectual playfulness in ESL writing class where it is promoted?

4.5.1 Comparison of Students’ Views on Incorporation of Intellectual Playfulness from Lesson 1 to Lesson 4

In lesson 1, the task of writing a movie review correlates to the [4, 3] (Bloom’s-analyse, Webb’s-Reasoning) or [4, 4] (Bloom’s-analyse, Webb’s- Extended Thinking) cell of cognitive rigor. Students’ responses on the writing task from the interview, classroom interactions and journals show that:

- 1) students build schemata in developing ideas that is stimulated through movie.
- 2) freedom and flexibility in writing the review without a pre-determined structure.
- 3) empowering students to move to a higher level of thinking.

On the other hand, the phrase ‘What if...’ is introduced to the students in this lesson. Initially, the phrase is received with irony but later it has functioned in creating possibilities and different perspectives which has led students to engage in cognitively rigorous thinking. Hence, the analysis of the writing task in lesson 1 displays students have:

- 1) related to the movie in developing ideas
- 2) freedom and flexibility in expressing their ideas.
- 3) moved to higher level of thinking.
- 4) engaged in cognitively rigorous thinking.
- 5) pleasure in the learning process.

In lesson 2, the task is to write ‘haibun’. The lesson is planned with dominance of the task correlating to [4,3] (Bloom’s-Analyze, Webb’s-Reasoning) and [4,4] (Bloom’s-Analyze, Webb’s-Extended thinking) in the cell of cognitive rigor matrix. The findings from this lesson show students:

- 1) growing preference for writing activity outside the school for a change
- 2) construct new knowledge from authentic experiences (Bruner, 1966)
- 3) enjoy playing with their senses in writing

In short, the authenticity of the activity provides students a real life learning which encourages them in being analytical and credible. Besides, the phrase ‘What if...’ in this lesson is likely giving students a room to imagine and create a lot of possibilities with open-endedness of the phrase. Therefore, the phrase appears to be effective in allowing students to develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter (Bruner, 1973).

The analysis of the writing task and the phrase ‘What if...’ in lesson 2 can be concluded as students:

- 1) taking accountability of their own learning.
- 2) "going beyond" what is known to them and develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter.

In lesson 3, the task is to compare and contrast television commercials which conveys the theme of festivals. The task is planned with the preponderance of task correlating to the [4,3] and [4,4] or [5,3] and [5,4] cell of cognitive rigor matrix. Besides, students confess they have done similar task in their previous writing classroom. They describe the only difference is none of the categories or elements to be compared and contrast is provided in this task. The findings seem to reveal that television commercials are useful inputs in helping to build a good rapport with students’ prior experiences to yield ideas for the composition. Students acknowledge that they have freedom of thinking the categories that they wanted to compare and contrast. In addition, the phrase ‘What if...’ has provided them with flexibility of choosing the content they are comparing and to give suggestions with better range of ideas from various aspects. In conclusion, the analysis of the writing task in lesson 3 indicates that:

- 1) television commercials can be a good tool to acquire cognitive rigor among adolescents.
- 2) freedom and flexibility in providing their ideas for writing composition.
- 3) working at higher skills, i.e engaged in a cognitively rigorous thinking.

In the last lesson, students are given role as a young ambassador to explore different types of texts before writing a speech to be presented at the United Nations. The task is planned to correlate into [4,3] (Bloom's-Analyze, Webb's- Reasoning) and [4,4] (Bloom's-Analyze, Webb's-Extended thinking) or [5,3] (Bloom's-Evaluate, Webb's-Reasoning) and [5,4] (Bloom's-Evaluate, Webb's-Extended thinking) in the cell of cognitive rigor matrix. Students' responses from various data validates that the flyers and YouTube video are good tools that has facilitated them in developing rigorous ideas. This is done by interpreting and associating it to the text when writing the speech.

On the other hand, the phrase 'What if...' in this lesson functions to provide students with a role to play. The phrase is furnishing students to make sound decisions on their own by applying to a new given situation or life outside the school. In sum, analysis of writing task in lesson 4 shows students of being:

- 1) imaginative
- 2) focus on profound learning
- 3) more diverse in writing
- 4) able to take a role in writing out of school boundary.

To conclude, the overall comparison of the findings from lesson 1 to lesson 4 is gathered and presented in table 4.2. The table aims to display the themes that appear to emerge from the patterns and sub-categories derived from the findings.

Table 4. 2

Comparison of the lessons with the phrase ‘What if...’

Tasks with the phrase ‘What if...’	Common patterns from lesson analysis	Sub-categories	Common patterns from lesson analysis	Sub-categories
Lesson 1				
Writing movie review (Movie ‘Inside Out’)	- pleasure in the learning process	} Manifest Joy	- higher level of thinking	} Higher order thinking
	- challenging activity in developing ideas	} Relevance		
	- freedom and flexibility	} Spontaneity		
Lesson 2				
Writing ‘haibun’ (A short tour to the park)	- playing with senses	} Manifest Joy	- going “beyond” what is known to oneself	} Complexity
	- ownership of their own learning	} Relevance		
	- freedom	} Spontaneity	- able to analyze and evaluate	} Higher order thinking
Lesson 3				
Writing compare & contrast composition (Advertisement on 3 different festivals)	- Interesting	} Manifest Joy	- higher level of thinking	} Higher order thinking
	- Inspiring			
	- freedom and flexibility	} Spontaneity		
	- good tool	} Relevance		
Lesson 4				
Writing a speech (Texts, flyer and YouTube video)	- playing with texts	} Manifest Joy	- being diverse	} Creativity
	- freedom and flexibility	} Spontaneity	- in depth learning	} Higher order thinking
	- out of school context	} Relevance		
	- good tool			
Categories/ Themes	Playfulness in Learning		Cognitive rigor	

Spontaneity in the sense of control and mastery

Table 4.2 shows multiple common patterns that has emerged from students’ responses from all the lessons. These common patterns are deduced into sub-categories. This is followed by incorporating and grouping the sub-categories under a theme based on literature review. The first group of sub-categories is derived from the patterns establish in all the four lessons are manifest joy, spontaneity and relevant.

Based on the literature review these sub-categories falls into the theme of playfulness in learning. Another, group of sub-categories has derived from the patterns are higher order thinking, creativity and complexity. When these sub-categories are incorporated and grouped, they have specified the theme of cognitive rigor from literature review. The analysis of the findings most likely show the task and phrase ‘What if...’ has created a unique environment for students and allow them to be explorers and active learners in the writing classroom.

Playfulness in learning provides students with learning opportunities that has connected new concepts to students’ daily writing. It appears to have invoked students’ intellectual creativity through the different writing tasks and the phrase ‘What if...’ Besides, students have demonstrated interest and joy in the writing tasks as well as having awareness on the relevance of the writing tasks in their lives. The following categories seem to transpire in nearly every lesson. Students’ engagement are linked to the category of manifest joy. On the other hand, the category of higher order thinking in learning are all connected to cognitive rigor. The findings appear to have shown that analysis of intellectual playfulness made students to be engaged in the task, to have cognitive rigor in the process of writing the composition and able to produce ideas and write in a creative manner.

Table 4.3

Themes on Incorporation of Intellectual Playfulness

Playfulness in learning	Cognitive rigor
Relevance to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Connected to their lives ii. Knowledge beyond school iii. Taking ownership in completing activity iv. Challenging activities Manifest Joy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Interesting ii. Playing with senses and text iii. Pleasure learning process iv. Inspiring Spontaneity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Freedom ii. Flexibility 	Higher Order Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Analysing (Expressing) ii. Insights (Alternative approach and taking risks) iii. Critical Thinking (Evaluating and open-minded) iv. Inferencing skills (Drawing conclusion) v. Creativity (Being imaginative, spontaneity and thinking out of box)

Table 4.3 summarizes the themes and sub-categories manifested in the analysis of intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing classroom. Two main themes, playfulness in learning and cognitive rigor is derived from the patterns that developed and grouped from the students' responses in the process of their writing. A fact that is noteworthy is the elements of playfulness featured across the four lessons appears to connect to students' desire to spend more time in the writing classrooms. The writing tasks and instruction have engaged students in activities with high intellectual challenges, providing opportunities and connecting the writing materials to students' personal and cultural experiences.

The students have taken ownership of their writing and developing imaginative and creative products. When students are at the peak of their creative process, they may enter a state of concentration and focused that shows they are totally absorbed in the writing task. This fluid and elaborative state of mind is referred by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as "flow"/being absorbed. This could results students in being of effortless control and at the peak of their abilities.

On the other hand, the elements in the theme of cognitive rigor has allowed students to play with writing materials and challenged them to think at higher levels. The extent to which students have developed higher order thinking ability depends on how content and context interplay with students' thinking skills, dispositions and abilities (Paige, Sizemore & Neace, 2013). Successful higher order thinking depends upon an individual's ability to apply, reorganize, and embellish knowledge in the context of the thinking situation (Carnine, 1993). In these lessons, they are able to analyze and evaluate the materials like the movie, television commercials, flyers and YouTube videos in depth before expressing their views in the compositions.

The writing task and the phrase 'What if...' also triggered them to infer and have insights from their previous and worldly knowledge which has provided them with new and different ideas to write the compositions. The extent to which students are challenged to think at higher levels happened to be an indicator that has revealed cognitive rigor was taking place within the ESL writing classroom. Furthermore, students are engaged in writing activities that have made them to transform or organize information into new and unique products in some way. In other words, the engagement has made students to gain control over their writing actions and able to express their true potentials or abilities as writers during the process of the writing that has led to cognitive rigor.

In conclusion, multiple-patterns of ideas consisting of sub-categories are found to emerge as a result of incorporating intellectual playfulness in the four planned writing tasks with the phrase of ‘What if...’ The primary pattern of ideas are categorised into the sub categories of, manifest joy, relevance to students and possibilities of ideas. Two main themes are derived from the sub-categories that emerged from this patterns. The sub-categories of manifest joy and relevance to students that has occurred most frequently are clustered into the theme of playfulness in learning. The other sub-category of higher order thinking is grouped under the theme of cognitive rigor. These themes addressed the changing of landscape in the ESL writing classroom which has indicated the importance of reaching the needs of students and making learning engaging as well as relevant (Playfulness in learning). These themes when clustered together could promise cognitive rigor and engagement for students in the writing classroom as well as could be mutually supportive in providing students with opportunities to write beyond the examination requirements.

4.5.2 Comparison of Students’ Views on Manifestations of Intellectual Playfulness from Lesson 1 to Lesson 4.

In painting a picture on the manifestation of intellectual playfulness, this section summarizes the findings of the three qualities of intellectual playfulness; open-endedness, risk-taking and absorbing (complete engagement) by looking at the students development in all the four lessons in the writing classroom.

4.5.2.1 Open-endedness - Freedom and Flexibility

In lesson 1, willingness to take open-ended task has given the students freedom to be challenged and create a response reflective of their abilities and interests. This shows they are studying the given tasks in greater depth, being more focused and constructed meaningful content. This could help them to show their *true potentials in writing* since

they are given freedom in their writing. In short, students' willingness to take open-ended task appears to have given them flexibility to move and engage in higher skills as well as providing freedom in writing their compositions.

In lesson 2, all the six students again collectively has agreed that open-endedness allows them to have flexibility in writing the 'haibun'. Two students (Gana and Razif) specifically has related that freedom and flexibility in taking this open-ended tasks has led them to have creativity in writing. Creativity for them is associated with freedom to write, having no boundaries in writing and able to write composition in new ways i.e taking ownership of their own writing. For instance, in this task, they have full freedom in choosing the theme, style of writing the 'haibun' since no limitations are applied in their writing approach. Similarly, one student (Magdalene) has added that open-endedness of the task gives an opportunity to create beyond what is seen i.e. figurative meaning. In short, willingness to take open-ended task in this lesson has most probably allowed students to have freedom and flexibility, being creative as well as taking ownership of their own writing.

In lesson 3, five of the students describe that open-endedness gives them freedom and flexibility in expressing their ideas for this task. One of them (Gana) even relates the open-endedness of the task gives him room to be more creative in writing the composition. This is because attempting open-ended tasks provided opportunities for students to go beyond the information shown or given in the television commercials. On the other hand, one student (Rafiz) shows dissatisfaction on the freedom and flexibility given in this task. He argues that too many choices happen to make it difficult to identify and decide on which categories to choose for writing the composition. That is one case in isolation compared to most of the other students who are comfortable with the freedom given to them. Hence, by willing to take open-ended

task students have the freedom and flexibility in deciding their choices of categories and being able to be creative in their writing.

Finally, in lesson 4, two students (Magdalene & Sharifah) mutually agreed that open-endedness has provided freedom by giving them a wider options to convey message in a strong and powerful manner. Whereas, four other students (Razif, Norry, Gana & Rubena) favour the opportunities given in taking open-ended task to explore and attempt different ways in writing the composition. As a result, they are able to display their true potentials in writing. In other words, all the six students assert that open-ended task in this lesson gives them freedom and flexibility as well as empowerment to explore their thoughts without any restrictions. This concurs with Fine's theory of intellectual playfulness on open-endedness that provides collection of various approaches in giving students freedom and flexibility to engage themselves on higher skills.

In short, though general consensus is positive on the preferences of willing to undertake open-ended tasks in the writing classroom, one student has identified some obstacles in lesson 3. His criticism is having too many choices is equivalent to not having choices at all, thus he prefers guidance given for the categories in writing this composition. This appears rather ironical. On one hand, freedom appears to be something that is preferred by students in decision making of completing a writing task while on the other hand, the student feels freedom is causing difficulty in making a decision on writing.

This drawback probably has occurred because students are normally guided and trained to write with everything (short notes, key words, etc) given to them. As a result, for students to move away from this convention might take some time. From the example above, it does not mean that the student dislikes freedom in writing but

when there is an alternative of an easier way, one might just want to seize that easy path in writing. Nevertheless, the overwhelming consensus after the four lessons is students being very positive about undertaking willingly the open-ended tasks that have provided them with freedom and flexibility in engaging with the materials and connecting the materials beyond the classroom knowledge. This appears to have given them autonomy in writing since they can construct their own knowledge in writing the compositions and have opportunities to work at their own level, in their own interest area and preferences. In this sense, the students' creativity and autonomy in their writing of composition could be established.

4.5.2.2 Being a Risk-Taker or Risk-Averse

In all the four planned lessons, a playful and relaxed atmosphere is created to provide space in encouraging students to take risks. The tasks and instruction seem to have supported in challenging students to be risk-takers. In earlier stage, before the lesson is conducted, four students from the interview sessions have described they are comfortable of being risk-averse since risks come with an indefinite benefits and can cost their grades. As for the other two students, they appear to be playing the role of a probationary risk-taker; taking risks only if they are sure it provides good grades.

On the whole, before incorporating intellectual playfulness in the writing classroom the findings have demonstrated that most students are not risk-takers when it is related to writing compositions. The reason being they are more concerned about their grades that happens to be their only priorities. Thus, this indicates that they have preferred to practice submissive literacy than assertive literacy i.e respond in a predictable way in writing than exercising some responsibility on their own ideas for writing since that would ensure them with good grades.

Nevertheless, after lesson 1 is conducted, most of the students seem to have a change of heart and mind in being risk-takers. The students have affirmed that they are being open in taking risks for this lesson because it has helped them to be bold in expressing their views in writing. Furthermore, they have collectively appeared to establish that incorporation of intellectual playfulness into the writing classroom provides a safe atmosphere for them to take risk, asking questions and writing their ideas without worrying if it is right or wrong. In fact, they are able to explore ideas from various angles than just merely looking at surface level. This exhibits they are writing what is meaningful for them and with substance. In other words, students are seen as taking accountability of their ideas. Taking accountability here in the sense of being brave on taking responsibility of what they have written though others might not agree or contradict them.

Being a risk-taker in this task gives two students (Norry and Sharifah) opportunities to move out from their comfort zones in writing and show their true potentials. This most likely makes them to engage in a cognitively ambitious task. On the other hand, from the classroom interactions, one student (Stephanie) wants to take risk but is seeking reassurance beforehand. She keeps seeking assurance to ensure that the composition is not given grades. This probably happens because these group of students are always in the league of high-flyers and that makes it difficult for some of them just to disregard the importance of grades. For this particular student, maybe the anxiety is in being a disappointment to everyone including herself. The researcher's reflections complies with this views because grades are always the main key factors in most of this student's life. So, writing beyond examination grades is something that they appear to be still uncomfortable.

In lesson 2, five students seem to be more open in taking risks. For instance, one student (Sharifah) describes that being a risk-taker is an opportunity to succeed. This is followed by four other students (Rubena, Gana, Razif and Norry) being excited of going through the challenges in addressing the task though uncertainty and acceptance of their work is something they have to consent as a result of risk-taking. For these students, being risk-takers have allowed them to be brave in giving their views and experiment writing something new.

Despite the reasons given above by some students, one student (Magdalene) gives a contradictory view on risk-taking. She states that she is willing to take risks in writing the composition in this lesson because she is sure that it is not graded. This reason is similar to Lau, Sharifah & Kit's entries in their journals. They are willing to be risk-takers only when it does not involve grading. They have agreed that the absence of grades has made them to be bold, expressive and creative. Also, they have found pleasure in writing. On the other hand, another student (Yasmin) in the classroom interactions wants to take risk but reluctant. Her reluctance, however, is not due to the absence of grades but afraid that her ideas would not be accepted by the teachers or labelled as 'stupid'.

In lesson 3, five students are more than willing to be risk-takers. They are willing to take risk by gradually moving out of their comfort zones i.e typical practices in writing classroom. These five students are moving beyond the typical practices in writing classroom and what is expected from their writings. For instance, one student (Gana) has claimed the given task allows him to identify his own categories and create his own scope in writing the composition. This was also substantiated by other students (Harley & Tan) in their journal entries. They are willing to take risks because in being

risk-takers, somehow it appears to have allowed them to create their own identities as writers and provide opportunities to show their true abilities in writing.

Besides, there is some notable views on the risks the students are taking in this lesson. For example, one of them (Norry) declares being a risk-taker could mean being categorise as 'silly'. In addition, a few other students (Rubena, Reysa, Jasmine and Aziz) describe that the risks they have taken in writing the compositions is putting aside the possibilities of the identified categories being accepted by others. Thus, this risks may have provided openings in helping students to progress to higher levels in their thinking and building depth of knowledge in writing.

Though, most of the students seem to be content in taking risks for this lesson, one student (Razif) clearly is uncomfortable in being a risk-taker for this particular lesson. His criticism is having difficulties in deciding which categories to choose since there are plenty of possibilities could be established from the television commercials. For this particular student, he is content of writing the composition as how they would have been done in a typical writing classroom with all the categories given by the teacher. In other words, he opts for an easy way in completing this particular writing task and prefers to be a risk-averse in this specific situation.

Finally in lesson 4, most of the students are very comfortable of being risk-takers. Two students (Magdalene & Rubena) have acknowledged by being risk-takers, they are able to try something new, indefinite and unversed. Over here, risk taking appears to be an effective way to provide opportunities for students to progress further from where they are before intellectual playfulness is incorporated in the writing lesson. A few other students (Razif, Norry & Gana) remark risk taking has allowed them to be able to share their standpoints and views without worrying the acceptance of the readers. They describe that learning has become significant because the fear of

their thoughts or views might be right or wrong is a secondary concern now. Similarly, one student (Sharifah) has professed the risk she takes is writing what is relevant and significant to her than writing what would be accepted by most people.

Generally, the students' development in taking risk as being observed through lessons one to four has progressed from the continuum of being risk-averse to risk-takers. They are reluctant to be risk-takers over the anxiety of not obtaining good grades in the examination. As they have progressed from one lesson to another, most of the students, who is uncertain at the beginning, later appears to be willing to become risk-takers. They are willing to move out of the 'comfort' or 'secured zone' that they have always been and welcomed the challenge as well as experience of powerful learning through intellectual playfulness.

However, one student (Rafiz) has his reservation about taking risk in lesson 3. He claims that the freedom given in choosing the categories from the television commercials has frustrated him. He wishes to embrace the routine that is found in typical writing classroom without freedom given to students and categories are provided. This provides him an easy way of completing the task than going through a complex way of choosing the categories. In other words, this student seems to be selective in taking risks. Interestingly, this same student has stated in lesson 4 that the freedom given is less of an issue. He, eventually sees it as a positive aspect because it provides him freedom to push his own creativity and potentials in writing.

On the whole, the comments from the students that are related from their past experiences in writing classroom and psychological dispositions do indicate risk-taking can illuminate difficulties but most of them are willing to move out of their 'secured zone' in taking risks in writing. They have started to feel motivated to engage at a higher and deeper level in writing the compositions. This is particularly significant

to quiver students out of their typical thought processes and patterns of thinking to create cognitive rigor in the writing classroom. This is aligned with the quality of risk-taking in the theory of intellectual playfulness which is related to willingness to try out something new and enhance their competence in writing.

4.5.2.3 Being Absorbed (Complete Engagement) - Supporting Cognition

In lesson 1, students being absorbed into the task is observed as experiencing enjoyment and lost track of time. Most of the students have highlighted their interests in the task is sparked due to the movie that they have viewed. This interests seem to enhance their understanding, confidences and directive of writing which has stimulated their attentions and desires to be engaged in the writing task. Three students (Sharifah, Razif & Gana) have agreed that the enjoyment of being able to think and share their ideas in writing the movie review has made them to be absorbed in the task.

One student (Razif) also expresses that he is experiencing engagement in the sense of concentration. This has led him to lose track of time due to the feelings of being absorbed in the writing task. This indicates that student is welcoming the sense of concentration in the task where one can lose track of time and does not want the lesson to come to an end. Besides, for some students (Norry & Kit) the phrase ‘What if...’ acts as an enhancer in providing more concentration in the task and able to take control of their writing. On the other hand, for one student (Yasmin) the writing task has provided a good package by creating an atmosphere of relaxed, stress-free and sovereignty in learning. In short, most of the students seem to indicate that the quality of intellectual playfulness - being absorbed in lesson 1 has created interest, enjoyment, concentration and a stress-free atmosphere for them.

In lesson 2, students exhibit a range of engagement towards the task. On one end of the spectrum, two students (Magdalene & Sharifah) have acknowledged their experiences of walking to the park and being in the park has made the content more memorable. Progressing on the continuum, most students (Rafiz, Rubena, Gana, Stephanie) have agreed that the writing task produces a comfortable atmosphere in supporting their attentions that convey an element of enjoyment and fun in their writing lesson. Towards the other end of the spectrum, most of the students (Magdalene, Yasmin, Stephanie & Rubena) feel being absorbed in the task has made them to be focused. On the whole, being absorbed in the task seems to have created a comfortable atmosphere, intrinsically motivating students and keeping them focused in writing their compositions.

Students' complete engagement in lesson 3 could be exposed in few aspects. Firstly, most of the students (Keshav, Cheer, Magdalene, Rubena & Sharifah) have described the activity is interesting because it is personalized and cognitively challenging. This is due to the choice of television commercials which they can relate to their experiences and connect to the task. Some students (Magdalene, Sharifah, Razif & Gana) also demonstrated that they are immersed in the task because able to associate to the humour elements in the television commercials which has motivated them to pursue their own thoughts and responses. Hence, being absorbed in the task seems to have brought the students' interest to the notion that this writing classroom learning is valuable.

In the final lesson, student's engagement is presented in being excited and more vigilant on writing the speech. This could be seen when one student's (Virgil) interest to reinforce what she has learnt in the previous lesson to write a good speech. As for another student (Sharifah), engagement is initiated by different texts used in the

lesson. These texts contributed as a prelude for being absorbed in the task. Some of the students (Rubena, Gana, Maha & Yan) has described the writing task is meaningful and worth the time due to the recognition of giving them a role as a young ambassador of the United Nation. This has made them to be more attentive and to give due concentration in writing the speech. So, engagement in this task is more on cognitive level because students feel delighted of the role given to them. They want to produce a good speech for the audience. Hence, the quality of intellectual playfulness being absorbed in lesson 4 is constructive for students because it has generated interest and provided concentration in producing a meaningful speech.

This coincides with Fine's theory of intellectual playfulness on being absorbed (complete engagement) whereby students experience pleasure not only in the sense of fun but in the sense of flow. Flow involves the experience of complete engagement which refers to one being enthusiastic and has complete immersion in an activity. This indicates they have lost sense of self and time that provides a level of challenge that matches their abilities (Shernoff & Csíkszentmihályi, 2009). So, it seems to be evident that high ability students have shown they are absorbed in all the given tasks due to the given opportunities in taking responsibilities of their writing. In other words, for them to be immersed in the task is constructive because it appears to have made them being focused in the task, losing track of time, experiencing enjoyment and creating interest in writing. Table 4.4 summarizes of the patterns manifested from the qualities of intellectual playfulness in displaying the students' development from lesson 1 to lesson 4.

Table 4.4

Patterns emerged from students responses on the qualities in Intellectual Playfulness

	Open-endedness	Risk-taking	Being absorbed
Lesson 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom - Flexibility - Engage in higher skills - Autonomy in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear writing beyond examination needs - Out of comfort zone - Taking accountability - Disappointment to oneself and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interest - Enjoyment - Concentration - Lost track of time
Lesson 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom - Flexibility - Creative in writing - Ownership of their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe in giving views, - Bold in exploring ideas - Opportunity to succeed - Experiment new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interesting - Motivated - Attentive - Out of school
Lesson 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom, - Flexibility - Creative in writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bold in giving ideas - Out of comfort zone, - Creating self-identity - Being silly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenging - Interesting - Attentive
Lesson 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom - Flexibility - Being creative writer - Express their potentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fearless - Explore own thought - Acceptance of their roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interest - Attentive - Concentration

The qualities of intellectual playfulness have brought gradual development in the students whereby they are more willing to take open-ended tasks, moving from being risk-averse to risk-takers and able to have complete engagement in the given task. Therefore, students seem to develop “new skills, master new tasks or understand new things” (Dweck, 2000, p. 15).

4.5.3 Conclusion

In short, the analysis on the findings of intellectual playfulness indicate students are:

- a) given opportunities to explore their interests in new materials, texts, ideas, concepts, and/or procedures which motivates them to be engaged in the learning process.
- b) provided with multiple points of entry in the writing tasks that challenged and gives them flexibility and originality in their thinking.
- c) demonstrating mastery by engaging in complex and high level of generative thinking.

- d) given support in exploring open-ended tasks in order to create new knowledge such as flexible thinking.
- e) taking risk whereby they view being risk-takers as a part of constructive learning.

4.6 Product of Writing

To answer research question 2, the researcher and two independent teachers examined all the compositions from the four lessons. The compositions are examined and analysed using Hess (2013) Gradients in Complexity. The Gradient in Complexity is designed by Dr. Karin Hess to examine the complexity of a text which indicates cognitive rigor of the student. In this research, Gradient in Complexity is used to identify if intellectual playfulness as proposed by Fine (2014) supports cognitive rigor through the students compositions. Therefore, the tool is adapted to suit this current research. The adapted tool is validated by Dr. Karin Hess. The researcher and two teachers have examined and highlighted the evidences in the compositions that match the descriptors in the Gradients in Complexity. This is followed by the measurement of inter-rater reliability among the researcher and two teachers using Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) or k to verify the classification in the Gradients in Complexity. Finally, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the compositions based on the evidences in the compositions are presented.

4.6.1 Gradients in Complexity

Hess's (2013) Gradient in Complexity is utilised to examine students' composition to observe how intellectual playfulness supports cognitive rigor through complexity in their writing. This tool is used because complexity of students' composition could indicate students' cognitive rigor in writing. Complexity relates to the kind of thinking, action, and knowledge that is needed in order to complete a task and how many

different ways are there to do this (Blackburn, 2014). Besides, complexity demonstrates students thinking at a higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Blackburn, 2014). In other words, the Gradient in Complexity is to identify if intellectual playfulness has helped in supporting student's cognitive rigor as proposed by Fine (2014).

Hess Gradient in Complexity is adapted and validated by Dr. Karin (See Appendix H1). However, for the purpose of this study only two categories are focused and adapted from the Gradient in Complexity: i) purpose and meaning, ii) background demands. Both these categories in the Gradient looks at the depth of students understanding in their topics, how ideas are developed in their writing and if risk-taking is involved in expressing their ideas. The category of purpose and meaning evaluates if the students' composition examines/evaluates simple, complex or contested information. Besides, the descriptors for meaning in the student's compositions ranges from narrow focus to more complex concepts, higher level of details with abstract elements.

In the category of Background Knowledge Demands understanding of the topic ranges from general to broader which includes the analysis about connection made. Besides, this category also inspects if students are taking risk in writing the compositions. Both these categories are emphasized based on the purpose of this study which looks at intellectual playfulness in showing how the idea/content composed by the students help in creating cognitive rigor. Finally, the descriptors of these two categories in the Gradient in Complexity range from simple text (1), somewhat complex text (2), complex text (3) and very complex text (4) (See Appendix H2).

4.6.2 Steps in Data Analysis

Students' composition are analysed and categorised by the researcher and two independent teachers. These two independent teachers are selected based on three criteria. Firstly, they have been teaching Form 4 and Form 5 students in a High Performing School and/or Cluster School for nearly 12 years as well as having experiences in teaching and marking students' composition in their respective schools. Next, both of them are examiners for SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) 1119 English Paper 1 (Essay Paper). One of them has been marking for at least seven years while the other senior teacher is a Chief Examiner and has been marking for nearly eleven years. Both the teachers has voluntarily agreed to help in analysing the compositions.

Steps are taken to ensure the most precise classifications of the complexity in the compositions. Firstly, the researcher has given a short briefing on the research that is being done and explains their roles in analysing the compositions. Then, a discussion is held with the teachers on their understanding of Gradient in Complexity descriptors. Both the categories are discussed in detail with the teachers to ensure they could identify the levels that fit the categories.

To establish clarity and reliability check, the researcher together with the two teachers analyse two compositions from the four lessons and tries to determine the levels ranging from simple to very complex for both categories under purpose and meaning and background knowledge. After they have analysed and decide on the levels of the categories in the compositions, a discussion amongst the researcher and the two teachers are conducted to reach to a consensus for any disagreements in the range of levels of the two compositions. In the case, of any disagreements on the levels concerned, they are either expanded or amended.

Furthermore, in identifying inter-rater reliability, it is assessed using the Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) or k . Cohen Kappa estimates the degree of consensus between the two teachers and the researcher. In other words, to measure how much better than chance the agreement is between the two teachers and researcher on the identification of the levels in both categories. The researcher uses Cohen's Kappa because by merely computing the total observed agreement is not a good measure of teacher reliability as people can agree on the presence or absence of a theme in a text just by chance (Bernard, 2000). So, the researcher uses Cohen's Kappa to measure how much better than chance the agreement is between the two independent teachers and researcher on the identification of the given levels in the compositions. Hence, to establish the inter-rater reliability, the identification done by both teachers are compared, followed by comparison of the identification categorised by the researcher and the teachers.

In this research, Cohen Kappa is used to estimate the inter-rater reliability which involves thorough computation for each category by each examiner as shown in Appendix J. Value greater than 0.70 is acceptable for consistency in estimating of inter-rater reliability (Barret, 2001; Stemler, 2004). Based on the results shown, in checking of the identification for the categories of purpose and meaning in the students' composition 1, 2, 3 and 4, Kappa values of 0.82, 0.85, 0.89, and 0.8 respectively indicated the level of agreement between the two teachers while Kappa values of 0.92, 0.77, 0.77 and 0.91 respectively showed the agreement between the researcher and the first teacher and Kappa values of 0.91, 0.92, 0.89 and 0.89 are obtained in showing the agreement between the researcher and second teacher.

In checking the inter-reliability between teacher one and two, on the identification of background knowledge, Kappa values of 0.8, 0.78, 0.89 and 0.8 are obtained while very good agreement values of Kappa 0.72, 0.71, 0.89 and 0.91 are obtained between researcher and first teacher as well as Kappa values of 0.9, 0.92, 0.77 and 0.89 again demonstrated a good agreement between researcher and second teacher for categorisation of background knowledge in composition 1, 2, 3 and 4. The high Kappa values indicates that the reliability of the identification for the categories in the compositions is adequate and enhancing the credibility of the findings.

Once the reliability is established, the teachers are given copies of the compositions from the four lessons to be rated. The researcher has requested the teachers to provide some comments on the compositions that they have examined. Then, all these compositions are sorted according to the collective consensus of the two teachers and researcher on the levels of complexities. This is followed by creating a bar chart in identifying the frequent levels of the complexities in percentage among the students. In addition, a scatter plot is plotted to identify the individual student's level of complexities. Based on the scatter plot some outliers are detected and samples are identified for discussions. This selected compositions are used to discuss the findings of the four lessons pertaining to research question two. The following section discusses the findings shown in the bar chart and scatter plot.

4.6.2.1 Analysis of the Bar Graph

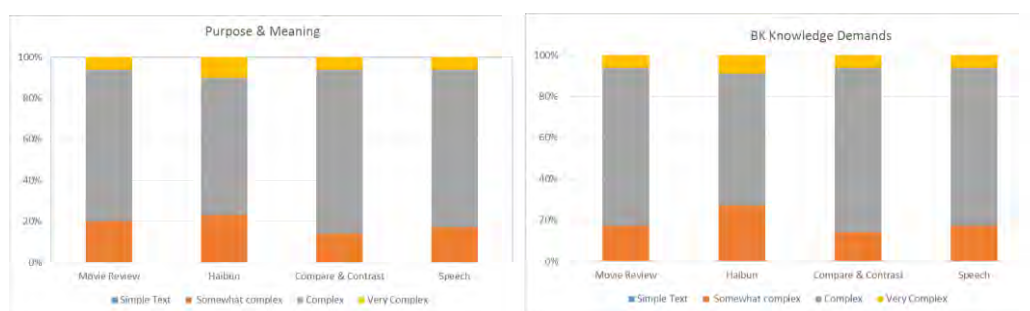


Figure 4.1 Bar graphs

Figure 4.1 displays the percentage of the compositions complexities that is found in both the categories of Purpose and Meaning and Background Demand Knowledge. Based on the bar graphs, it could be deduced that most of the students' composition are rated as complex by the two examiners and researcher for both the categories in the four lessons. It shows a range of 60% -80% students' composition are categorised complex (3) for both categories, while 15% to 30% is categorised under the somewhat complex (2) level and only 5% of student's compositions is branded as very complex (4). However, none of the student's compositions is labelled as simple text (1).

To conclude, the findings from the Gradient in Complexity appears to indicate that most students have interpreted information and not merely presenting as how it is given. The meaning presented in the compositions written by the students seem to indicate they are writing of higher level and in detail as well as providing some recognizable ideas which shows they are indulging in the risk concepts.

4.6.2.2 Analysis of the Scatter Plot

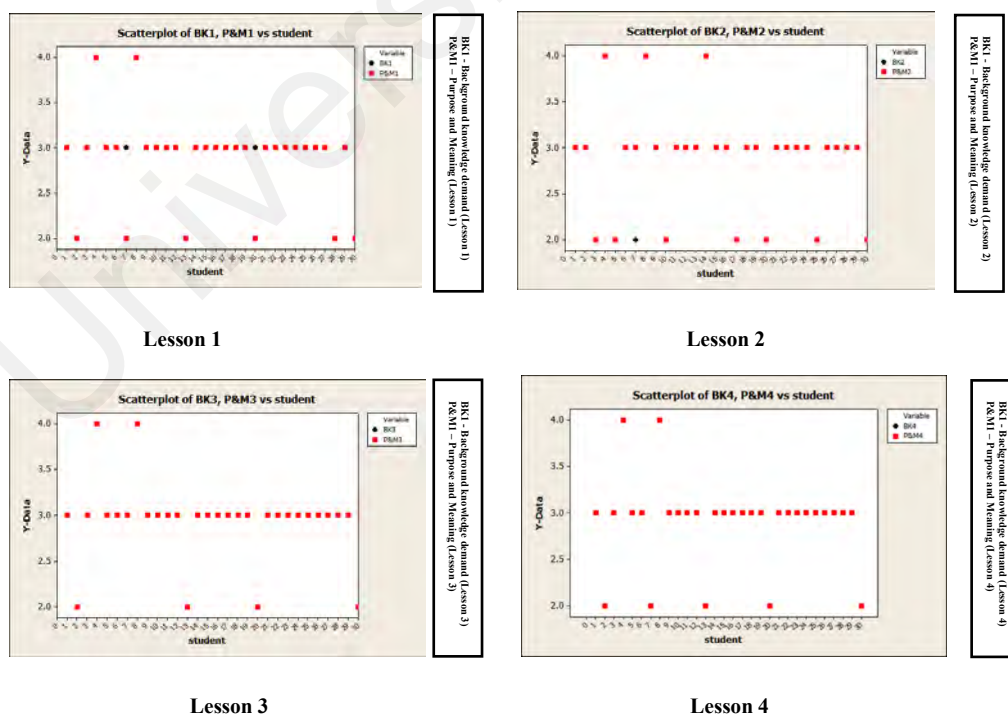


Figure 4.2 Scatter plot

The plotted line graph displays the student's individual composition level in complexity for the categories of i) purpose and meaning, ii) background knowledge demand in the four lessons. The findings from the scatter plot indicates that most of the students' composition are categorised as complex text by the two teachers and researcher. However, there is some existence of different patterns in the scatter plot indicating that student's composition being considered as very complex text and somewhat complex text. The patterns in the scatter plot are illustrated in the table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Descriptions of the Scatter Plot

	Somewhat Complex	Very Complex	Complex
Lesson 1	Faz, Syafiq, Misha	Magdalene, Sharifah	Adrian,Reysa,Aziz,Cheer,Lau, Nabil,Razif,Yasmin,Sue,Harley, Norry,Rubena,Tan,Virgil, Nicholas,Gana,Jasmine,Keshav, Maha,Stephanie,Yan,Marcus, Kit,Priya, Melissa
Lesson 2	Aziz,Cheer,Nabil, Yasmin,Virgil,Jasmine, Marcus, Misha	Magdalene,Sharifah, Norry	Adrian,Reysa,Lau,Razif,Sue, Harley,Faz,Rubena,Tan,Virgil, Nicholas,Gana,Keshav,Maha, Stephanie,Kit,Priya,Syafiq, Melissa
Lesson 3	Reysa, Faz, Jasmine	Magdalene,Sharifah	Adrian,Aziz,Cheer,Lau,Nabil, Razif,Yasmin,Sue,Harley,Norry ,Rubena,Tan,Virgil,Nicholas, Gana,Keshav,Maha,Stephanie, Yan,Marcus,Kit,Priya,Syafiq, Melissa, Misha
Lesson 4	Reysa,Nabil,Faz,Virgil,	Magdalene, Sharifah	Adrian,Aziz,Cheer,Lau,Razif, Yasmin,Sue,Harley,Norry, Rubena,Tan,Jasmine,Nicholas, Gana,Keshav,Maha,Stephanie, Yan,Marcus,Kit,Priya, Syafiq, Melissa, Misha
Frequency	-	Magdalene, Sharifah	Adrian,Lau,Razif,Sue,Harley, Rubena,Tan,Gana,Stephanie,Kit ,Priya,Melissa

Based on table 4.5 which shows the summarization of the scatter plot, both Magdalene and Sharifah's compositions have been constantly categorised as very complex in the four lessons on both categories of purpose and meaning, and background knowledge demand. In lesson 2, Norry's composition is also categorised

as very complex. Thus, three students' composition are categorised as very complex in this lesson. Most of the students' composition are categorised as complex and a few in the category of somewhat complex. In other words, most of the students' composition that is at the level of somewhat complex and complex indicates these high ability students in writing are commonly under this two levels. This could be probably because they are high ability students and placement is done beforehand according to their grades in writing.

Hereafter, for the purpose of this study that explores intellectual playfulness as a platform for supporting cognitive rigor, the researcher studies and discusses samples of compositions from consistent outliers from the scatter plot in the category of very complex. These samples are chosen because the quantitative findings show that intellectual playfulness has managed to provide a platform in making these students to move beyond their routine standards and ability in writing compositions. This does not mean findings from the categories of complex or somewhat complex are not important.

Students' achievements in these two categories could be something that can be expected since they are already grouped as high ability students in the writing classroom. Thus, for the purpose of this study we are looking at the highest level i.e very complex that the students could achieve and how they have achieved it. The findings of this quantitative data is further supported using the qualitative analysis of the compositions and student's interviews as presented in the following section.

4.6.3 Inside Out: The Movie Review

The findings from the compositions in lesson 1 reveals that two teachers and researcher have identified and awarded most of the students' composition under the gradient of complex text (3). Some compositions are labelled as somewhat complex (2) while very few compositions is branded as very complex (4) (See Appendix G). However, none

of the students' writings are labelled as simple text (1) by the two independent teachers or researcher. It is generally observed that the teachers' response towards complexity in students writing are recorded at the end of their compositions. Some comments such as 'Good, A different approach in writing', 'A good piece of writing which indicates maturity in expressing ideas' or 'Excellent critical review of the movie with supporting ideas' are given at the end of the students composition.

The purpose of this findings is to shed some lights if intellectual playfulness has facilitated in students writing by looking at the complexity of their compositions. Complexity is related to cognitive rigor (Blackburn, 2014), thus, it can help to ascertain if intellectual playfulness has provided any platform in relation to students cognitive rigor. In other words, this is to determine if intellectual playfulness supports cognitive rigor which seem to help students to have complexity in their compositions.

Quantitatively, results of the scatter plot has exposed that most of the students compositions are categorised as complex, some categorised as somewhat complex and finally very few compositions is graded as very complex. Based on the scatter plot results, one can deduce that intellectual playfulness does help to produce complexity in students writing to a certain extent. None of the compositions is categorised as simple text. In other words, intellectual playfulness supports students' cognitive rigor to achieve at least some level of complexity in their writing.

In answering research question 2, the focus is on students' composition of the highest degree of complexity (very complex) which is quantitatively an outlier in the scatter plot. Furthermore, this research question is to indicate if intellectual playfulness has facilitated students to perform beyond the expected (their typical writing) in the writing classroom. Thus, in the qualitative findings, students' composition that are awarded the highest level of complexity is discussed to answer research question 2.

The next section looks at this students' composition extracts and responses from their interviews.

Below are some extracts from two students (Magdalene & Sharifah) compositions from Lesson 1 that illustrate two categories in the gradient of very complex.

Excerpt 62 - *Purpose & Meaning (L1/VC)*

The movie Inside Out gives us an idea on how the mind works, though only in positive way. The negative side was not much revealed. Undeniably, a good movie mostly is thrilling, exhilarating and has a good ending. We are human, yet we still cannot reason or understand what other species do. As such, with the recent attack of ISIS in Brussels, we were shocked, scared and angry with their actions for killing innocent peoples. Another example a 3 year old girl was beheaded in public in Taiwan in front of her mother. The criminal was suppressed by the public yet the little girl could not be saved. If there is an 'Inside Out 2', I truly want these questions to be answered.

W/Magdalene/L1/VC(a)

We all know the typical roles of a family as how presented in the movie. What about the mind of a homeless person? The thoughts of a politicians, the characteristics of a fraud? The malicious acts of a terrorists? Easily, I can imagine all the positive characters. For instance a doctor would be muttering procedures under his breath, a teacher would be kind and dedicated, a pilot would be navigating the plane and be alert at all times. Yet, it is tough to imagine negativity.

W/Sharifah/L1/VC(a)

In my opinion 'Inside Out' provides the good image of a typical person who was about to cross the line but eventually did not. We should think positively but we should never think that being sad is feeble thing. Being sad makes us know the definition of failing, of what went wrong and believe it or not, it is a form of comfort for ourselves.

W/Sharifah/L1/VC(b)

Excerpt 62 displays students' extracts from the movie review compositions is based on the category of purpose and meaning. The example shown espouses that Magdalene and Sharifah are examining /evaluating the movie by suggesting that the movie could have presented some extreme negative characters and display happenings in their minds and reasons for their actions. Besides, Sharifah has contested the information on the character of Sadness in the movie by giving it a new positive outlook image. This indicates, they are associating and creating meaning with recent

happenings in the world. They are not looking at surface level but analysing it more in depth to write the movie review. This implies they are being critical on the information shown in the movie. The next extract displays examples of Magdalene's very complex text in the category of background knowledge demands.

Excerpt 63 – *Bk Knowledge Demands (L1/VC)*

'Inside Out' offers a new approach to Sadness. Sadness will clarify what has been lost from childhood and parents. It moves the family towards what it is to be gained- the foundations of new identities for teenagers. W/Magdalene/L1/VC(b)

Throughout the whole movie, there were many messages brought out; family, friendship, emotional management and the most important one think positively, This reminds me of a quote card that was pasted on the wall of my class, 'Think like a proton and stay positive'. We must always remember that we are called to hope. W/Magdalene/L1/VC(c)

Emotions play a crucial role in our lives because they have important functions. Emotions are essential for making good decisions, help us communicate with others, help us to navigate through life. They are the reason we have enjoyment, react to beauty and know friendship as well as love. W/Magdalene/L1/VC(d)

I thought in my head while I was watching the movie, 'What would happen if Riley's emotions were all female. Then everyone would look the same. I guess this was Disney's way of showing no sexism in the community. W/Sharifah/L1/VC(c)

Moreover, the movie tells us that it is risky to be sad. Sadness has been emphasized as an outlet for the body to cry and accept what has happened. Sadness was not wrong for our body but in a way worked as a catalyst to help us deal with tragic event or sad feelings of depression, disappointment and forlorn. It opened a whole new perspective on the emotion of Sadness in our life.

In my opinion, the hidden message of each emotions are how they evolve to be different characteristics of a person. For example, Anger will evolve to become leadership, Sadness evolves to become acceptance, Disgust evolves to become dignity, Fear evolves to be wise and Joy becomes grateful to everything that is. W/Sharifah/L1/VC(d)

In excerpt 63, extracts from the students' composition demonstrate they have exercised new ideas and perspectives in writing by challenging some concepts shown in the movie. For instance, Sharifah has deduced how the characters eventually evolve at the end and explain about the new approach that is found in Sadness. Sharifah analyses the characters by looking at their gender. This shows students are willing to take risk in developing new ideas or perspectives. Besides, students' composition has prevailed broad understanding of the topic by including elaboration or analysis about connections or references made from the movie. For instance, how Magdalene has demonstrated the messages analysed from the movie and its association with a quote from the card pasted in the classroom. Moreover, Magdalene construes the connections and significances of the emotions shown by the characters in the movie to one's life. This analysis is further enriched with the students' responses in the interviews and two teachers' feedback on the compositions. Excerpt 64 displays Magdalene and Sharifah's remark on the compositions.

Excerpt 64 - *Student's responses - compositions*

Usually in class teacher will say, "Okay, you need to write properly with grammatically correct sentences and cannot say sensitive issues", it's like sometimes when we have that strong urge for something, we cannot really express it in our writing. So, that is why I refrain from writing anything that can be associated as being sensitive. But in this essay I was writing what comes in my mind without any restriction.

INL1/Magdalene/30

In my composition, I was able to express what I wanted to tell the readers without being worried if something written is not conformed to the examination format. This is because we are normally told to follow examination style of writing. For once, I felt great writing from my heart and mind.

INL1/Sharifah/35

In excerpt 64, Magdalene and Sharifah have expressed their freedom of being able to take risk in writing their thoughts in the compositions without any restrictions that they have in typical classroom due to examination. In other words, they are able to write based on their knowledge and what is in their minds. In addition, two teachers

have provided some feedback on the compositions that is categorised as very complex. The first teacher comments that the composition indicates an approach of expressing ideas from the other side of the coin like people with negative qualities. She remarks this kind of writing is not something that students would normally write in their typical writing in the classroom. Thus, it made the composition to be more unique, original and stood out as an exceptional piece. The second teacher comments these compositions have displayed different ideas in the sense of students being more critical and have maturity in writing. Both the teachers also agreed the compositions are excellent pieces that depicts high quality writing.

As a conclusion, the extract of the two students' composition, supplemented with the responses from the interviews and teachers' comments indicate both the students are able to show their true potentials in writing. This appears to portray their writings are results of the freedom given in the task through the open-ended task and opportunities to be risk-takers. In other words, qualities of intellectual playfulness has provided a platform to support cognitive rigor which is shown through the complexity of Magdalene and Sharifah's writing. One of the students admits being able to write to their true potentials as a writer without worrying about examinations or grades as shown in the interview. This appears to indicate that both students have implied that examinations or grades are normally a constraint in showing one's true abilities in writing. To further illustrate how intellectual playfulness has helped students with writing compositions, the next section further looks at the findings from Magdalene, Sharifah and Norry's compositions in lesson 2.

4.6.4 'Haibun' – The Park

The findings from the compositions by the two teachers and researcher in lesson 2 disclose Magdalene, Sharifah and Norry's composition are categorised under the gradient of very complex text. These are some extracts from the composition in Lesson 2 that illustrates the two categories in the gradient of very complex.

Excerpt 65 – *Purpose & Meaning (L2/VC)*

Nature and its beauty
Behold of its greatness
Ignorance blinded us
A big mistake by us

We somehow transcended from our original former dull monotonous world into a bright beautiful colourful world. Laughter filled up the fresh air and there was something significant about the feeling that was invoked in me. It was the freedom, the feeling of not being bounded by chains of worries and stress in a prison. W/Magdalene/L2/VC(a)

Trees and birds,
Beautiful creations,
Truly grateful and thankful
For rescuing me,
From the prison of despair.

W/Magdalene/L2/VC(b)

However, we should not underestimate the true prowess and strength of this art as it is adamantly following the principle; fly like a butterfly and sting like a bee. Its true strength is something that you do not want to experience in a real combat.

Beads of perspiration tickled down my temple profusely. Merry chirps of birds in tree boughs seems like greeting us. Soon, they all flew away freely in the clear azure sky. I could still vividly remember the singing voice of birds. Their drops formed as unexpectedly alluring and harmonious melody. I indulged myself with this crazy and restful environment. W/Sharifah/L2/VC(a)

Smell the wild flowers
Butterflies flutter
Scents of spring in bloom

There is a chill breeze in the air. The sun is sparkling in the dear blue, cloudless sky and my eyes filled with shouts and laughter seeing my friends enjoying themselves. As it was still early in the morning, the park was shrouded in mist. W/Sharifah/L2/VC(b)

Standing still everyone
A pair of eyes is observing
Here starts the journey

Down the hill I walk, this road is not unfamiliar to me. Crows are singing horribly to me deafening my ears before but not anymore. The morning breeze freezing my hands and the windy air slap me right on my face ruining the perfect shape of my scarfs. I walk to the view of orange shirts that somehow hurts my eyes. After a moment of silence, someone shouted of excitement before stepping into the green land W/Norry/L2/VC(a)

Excerpt 65 exhibits some extracts from the student's 'haibun' for the category of purpose and meaning. This extracts demonstrated that the purpose and meaning of the composition is implicit or subtle, at times ambiguous and has revealed over the entirety of the composition. For instance, Norry writes, "A pair of eyes is observing", "I walk to the view of orange shirts that somehow hurts my eyes". It is ambiguous on the identity of the pair of eyes or orange shirts to the readers but writer has her own perceptions on who she is describing. When the student is asked on the identity mentioned in the 'haibun', she explains a pair of eyes is referring to a group leader and orange shirts is a group of students at the park. She adds she wants their identities to be anonymous which makes her 'haibun' more intriguing. Another example that is worth noticing, "We somehow transcended from our original former dull monotonous world into a bright beautiful colourful world" (Magdalene) which implies subtly a transition they are having from something dull to interesting.

There is also other examples which display elements of meaning that is difficult to separate and interpret in the students 'haibun' such as "Ignorance blinded us, A big mistake by us" (Magdalene), "After a moment of silence, someone shouted with excitement before stepping into the green land" (Norry), "Their drops formed as unexpectedly alluring and harmonious melody (Sharifah)." Here, their writings are actually drawing a new picture to the reader's mind with the words they have used. Some boils down to the fact that these words are not normally being used by students

but now they are applying it in this particular context. Yet, it is apt to create an exclusive perspective in writing the 'haibun'. It brings out the effect of whatever the writer wishes the reader to interpret its meaning. This is to state that freedom on the use of how the words are brought together i.e the stringing of the words and creating imbedded meaning to the readers.

The following extract in excerpt 66 displays some examples of students' composition from the category of Background Knowledge Demands in the Gradient in Complexity.

Excerpt 66 – Bk Knowledge Demands (L2/VC)

In the trees I see,
The shining glorious light
As the sun makes its way
The symbol of solution

The sensation of freedom acquired through the walk in the park. As my shoulder and arms brushed the cool fresh leaves, countless inspirations was created. Perhaps, this strongly links to the essentials of freestyle or creative writing; a beautiful writing masterpiece which could bring out the writer's emotional throughout every detailed creative sentences. Linking to the fact of not being constricted to anything while enjoying in the park. However, in the cruel dark world, full of dawn hypocrites have destroyed the beauty of creative writing.

W/Magdalene/L2/VC(c)

Shady trees sheltered us
Rustling in the wind
Dropping leaves like crumbs

I headed for the swings. It gave me a sense of nostalgia. As my friend and I swing back and forth, going as high as we could hear giggles escaping our lips for no particular reason at all. Maybe it was just the feeling of being a young child again. Without the worry and pressure of upcoming exams. In that short period of time, the burden of our responsibility were lifted off our shoulders. Our anxieties were soothed as we forget our problems.

W/Magdalene/L2/VC(d)

We left the prison known as school for a haven of green. The park. As we walked we talked, like the lively teenagers we were. The feeling of excitement was in the air as we began our journey. Something we think of as unusual considering the bookworms and geeks, we all are. We laughed in the cool morning air. Chatting away our cares. The nearer we get to the

road the more things entered our line of sight. Such as rubbish, plastic bags and polystyrene packaging. W/Sharifah/L2/VC(c)

The sight of rubbish
That defines mankind
Saddened our hearts greatly

The wind gushed past
Legs reaching up to the sky
Physics brought us back down
If I had a park like this all to myself right in my backyard,
would I be able to relieve these moment I wondered. To be
able to breathe without the judging eyes of society boring into
me. To be free of expectations, prejudiced views and society's
standards. Here, there were no staring eyes only the trees. W/Sharifah/L2/VC(d)

Trees, still and silent
Unjudging,
They bear witness to our antics.

The fresh air awaken me from my Monday blues. Few steps
later, I was standing on a long grey strong stone that hold the
weight of the people who wishes to see the human made
waterfall. Despite the relaxing and calming sounds of the
water hitting one another together with the green surrounding,
the stink smells interrupt my therapy leaving me with thoughts
that this place must have not been taken care properly W/Sharifah/L2/VC(e)

Shimmering shadows
Created oddly-shaped patterns
Yet warm and soothing

I was used to the sun bearing down upon us. I finally noticed
the shadow patterns formed on ground and it made me to look
up. The leaf's mosaic pattern was what formed the shadows. It
was mesmerizing fill I stared instantly at the leaf mosaic and
created an umbrella pattern, securing me from the blazing sun. W/Norry/L2/VC(b)

Light grey clouds tainting
Shades of blue nowhere to be seen
Specks of yellow shine

We began our journey to a nearby park. It isn't exactly a nature
walk, but a walk is better than sitting in the class merely
looking at the pale board. Trees arrange themselves in
symmetrical patterns, each careful to not overlap each other. It
may just be my imagination but it seems that they were just
waking up from their slumber and stretching their arms. Of
course, the used rushing of cars and people to work repeats
itself always on time in the beginning of the day. W/Norry/L2/VC(c)

As it is elucidated in excerpt 66, this category exemplifies compositions thoughtfully weave deeper connections of human experiences in the sense of literary, cultural, historical or political for intended effects that has aided students to develop character traits or explain motivations that provides them. Some examples from the students writing such as, “The sensation of freedom acquired through the walk in the park. As my shoulder and arms brushed the cool fresh leaves, countless inspirations were created. Perhaps, this strongly links are essentials of freestyle or creative writing; a beautiful writing masterpiece which could bring out the writer’s emotional throughout every detailed creative sentences” (Magdalene); “The leaf’s mosaic pattern was what formed the shadows. It was mesmerizing fill I stared instantly at the leaf mosaic and created an umbrella pattern, securing me from the blazing sun” (Norry) and “Trees arrange themselves in symmetrical patterns, each careful to not overlap each other. It may just be my imagination but it seemed that they were just waking up from their slumber and stretching their arms” (Norry). All the extracts seem to indicate profound associations are made from their experiences at the park. The students are being critical in writing the ‘haibun’ about nature and surrounding events that they have observed.

Besides, the extracts indicate students’ willingness on taking risk to develop new ideas, notifying their perspectives or showing dissatisfactions. Some examples from their ‘haibun’ are, “To be able to breathe without the judging eyes of society bored into me. To be free of expectations, prejudiced views and society’s standards” (Sharifah), “However, in the cruel dark world, full of emergence hypocrites that have destroyed the beauty of creative writing” (Magdalene); “We left the prison known as school for a haven of green - The park”, “The sight of rubbish, That defines mankind and saddened our hearts greatly” (Sharifah); “Without being worried and pressured of

upcoming exams. In that short period of time, the burden of our responsibility were lifted off our shoulders. Our anxieties were mollified as we forget our problems” (Magdalene) and “the feeling of excitement was in the air as we began our journey. Something we think of as unusual considering the bookworms and geeks, we all are” (Magdalene). All these examples specify students are willing to take risk in conveying their dissatisfactions or views on various aspects like associating school to prison, to be free from the eyes of society that always judge them for everything, expresses about deceptiveness of destroying beauty of a creative writing and that they are labelled as bookworms and geeks. Students feel that they could use this platform of writing in expressing their perspectives in a subtle manner. Hence, intellectual playfulness has helped in creating a platform by giving them opportunity to be bold in taking risks in their writing.

This analysis of the findings are further triangulated with the students’ response from the interview and two teachers’ feedback on the compositions. Students’ responses on how they felt about the compositions that they have written are shown in excerpt 67.

Excerpt 67 - Student’s responses – Writing ‘haibun’

The experience of going to the park gave me more confidence because we know what we’re talking about. In writing the haibun I was branching out to different sort of aspects. So, in my ‘haibun’ I wrote about the idea of how in the cities we can build a forest park and everyone could just go there. Like I said before, this task created a space for me to associate something not only seen by naked eyes but beyond it too.

INL2/Magdalene/30

I actually was enjoying because before this I didn’t know one can write poem and text together. It was something new for me. I’ve never repeated anything like this in my essays in our English class before. In writing the ‘haibun’ I could express my feelings, opinions and different views easily. This was because the task which was visible to any ideas allowed me to think every aspects of the park. It makes me feel dare to be more creative because this is not for examination.

INL2/Sharifah/35

In writing the 'haibun', I had the best of my imagination to share and no one can tell me my imagination is not acceptable because it is my perception of what to write on the experience at the park. That made me feel good about my writing- like...no restrictions on how I was supposed to write.

INL2/Norry/32

Excerpt 67 shows three student's responses on the 'haibun' they have written.

All the students indicate writing something that is related to the real world is conjured by their imaginations and has made them to write creatively, without restrictions and beyond their typical writing in classroom. It provides them with freedom to explore and being bold in writing 'haibun' using the five senses. Another aspect that is voiced by Sharifah, "It makes me bold to be more creative because this is not for examination" appears to imply that the student has a preconceived idea that writing creatively or different from what is required for examination might be something that would not be accepted by teachers. When the researcher probed Sharifah further, her responses are shown in excerpt 68.

Excerpt 68 - *Student's responses – Teacher's control*

Our teacher normally tells us for examination we are just supposed to write what they have guided us to do in class the 3E you know, Elaborate, Explain and Examples and nothing more or less. We were told we might lose marks if we write something different that the examiner cannot associate with. Once, I wrote a narrative essay and concluded with a cliff hanger. Guess what, the teacher told me I can't just end like that and I was given less marks for that essay. In story books that I read, it is interesting when the author ends with a cliff hanger because it keeps you in guessing mood. So, I tried my luck in my essay once but no more after this...That is why we always write essays that is considered safe in classroom or exams.

INL2/Sharifah/37

So, you think if you write something different or creatively you can't excel in your writing?

Teacher

Absolutely! I told you I tried once and I end up getting less marks for my essay. So, why do it again when you know the results.

INL2/Sharifah/38

Sharifah's responses in excerpt 68, indicate a pre-conception about writing and examination that has been formed in her mind over the years. This has deterred her to write or move beyond the paradigm of examination in school. The drawback of such responses indicate that students are ultimately writing to please their teachers, placing little importance on originality, creativity and their true potentials. In other words, they have been slowly groomed to understand that good writing means only those conform to 'ideal-text' from the teacher's perspectives which enables them to obtain high grades. Since, students aim is to please teachers in order to obtain good grading, they appear to be not challenged in taking risk, becoming original and creative to show their true potentials.

The fear of taking risks, of being different and being insecurity in writing becomes an emotional barrier in showing their true potentials as writers. Nevertheless, in this study when opportunities are given through intellectual playfulness, these students indicate they are willing to take up the challenge. They are prepared to step out to reach their highest and true potentials in writing. This is because freedom and opportunities to take risk is given to them.

This is further supported through the feedback given by the two teachers on the students 'haibun' categorised as very complex. The first teacher writes that the students have written on what is related to them that could express a writer's true opinions and feelings. The choice of words though are ambiguous at times but it has stood out in the 'haibun'. The second teacher is impressed with the students' ability in writing a combination of poem and text. In addition, the students are able to express well the senses they have experienced in the park with good choices of word.

In conclusion, the extract taken from the three students' composition, supplemented by the responses from the interviews and teachers' comments specify that intellectual playfulness has facilitated them in being expressive and bold in giving their views directly or metaphorically in writing the 'haibun'. To further exemplify how intellectual playfulness has helped students in their writing, the next section looks at Magdalene and Sharifah's compositions in lesson 3.

4.6.5 Petronas Festive Advertisements – Compare and Contrast

In lesson 3, Magdalene and Sharifah's compositions of compare and contrast is categorised again as very complex text by the two teachers and the researcher. Sample of students' composition extracts are exhibited in excerpt 69.

Excerpt 69 – *Purpose & Meaning (L3/VC)*

I will start with the tone of the videos. In the *Deepavali* advertisements, the music was catchy and was the type of modern pop music that set the time setting to somewhere in the 21st century. The video starts off with bright lights flashing around and zoomed in shots that look like it's from a music video which further encourages the idea that the setting is in modern times. As for the Chinese New Year advertisement, the music was instrumental and has a sombre feel to it that quietens your inner thoughts, pulls your attention towards the screen and brings out your emotion slowly. The advertisement was filmed in sepia tones which sets the time setting to somewhere in the 20th century, most probably the post-independence period. Meanwhile for the Raya advertisement the tone was very light-hearted as well, full of humour that will get you giggling. Based on my assumption, the time setting is also 20th century with traditional Malay music with the occasional lyrics *Apa nak jadi?* Which adds to the humour of the advertisement.

W/Magdalene/L3/VC(a)

The main difference between the advertisements is the mood of the video. In the first advertisement, boy's mood is light and joking. It starts like a gangster show but suddenly changes to laughter and modern music. It is kind of making fun of a stereotype Indian. The next one has a serious and heavier mood. It shows the lives of the poorer community in our country. The scene where the boy vents his anger on his mother was particularly thought provoking. The last advertisement on 7 brothers has a fun and traditional mood. Old tunes that are in as background music are familiar ones to all Malaysians. The lively banter between the brothers is particularly funny as it is so much as like how we act !

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(a)

Long chains on the neck,
They're all rapper wannabes,
But grandma says no.

Rubber boy he was,
Ashamed and ruined he felt,
Anger towards his mother.

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(b)

To the old sick man,
Trembling shivering man,
Plastic bowl they gave.

Excerpt 69 demonstrates extracts from the compositions for category of purpose and meaning. The extracts exhibit that for the category of purpose and meaning, Magdalene and Sharifah have scrutinised the aspect of tone and mood in comparing the advertisements. Magdalene is describing about the types of music being used in the advertisements and the impact it could bring for the viewers. While, Sharifah looks at the different moods that is created by the characters in the advertisements. Both these students are creating meaning that involves abstract elements in their compositions.

The subsequent extracts in excerpt 70 show examples of students' composition from the category of Background Knowledge Demands.

Excerpt 70 – BK Knowledge Demands (L3/VC)

The Chinese New Year advertisement, although was brilliant, I feel this video should have been used for Mother's Day instead. It does portray some sort of family values but in the video it is more concentrated on the mother and there is no particular indication that the video was taking place during Chinese New Year. In the *Deepavali* advertisement, the message which is about traditions makes it clear that the advertisement is intended for *Deepavali*. As for *Hari Raya* advertisement, though it focuses on the mother it also makes it obvious that they were preparing for a feast during *Hari Raya*. This was obvious because other villagers were also buying meat which was sold everywhere.

W/Magdalene/L3/VC(b)

...the main recurring theme in all videos is still one of family and traditions. In the boys, the generation gap between a traditional older generation and modernised younger generation is put forth. The difference is not only in their ways of dressings but also in their speech and even their choice of names. Rubber boy on the other hand, has a theme of wrong human behaviour,

negative peer pressure that is prevalent even among youths. It is shocking to see how even children can have distorted views of careers in life. If we think deeper on the cause, will not the answer be parents, teachers and the education system? The story about 7 brothers who has theme of a simple and free lifestyle in the villages. The fact that the boys can go out on a boat to buy meat by themselves poses a huge contrast to city kids who are always at home in their rooms.

W/Magdalene/L3/VC(c)

I believe the video on *Deepavali* can be further be improved if the girls in the video had shown some respect towards the old lady. The video has been watched by thousands and millions of Malaysia. Therefore, it would have been a timely reminder to many of the young people out there to be more respectful to the older generations.

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(c)

Imagine, my parents telling me that I am a burden and sighs in disappointment when I do not live up to their expectations. We should treat others the way others the way we want to be treated. The society talks about equality, but some wage was saying they are more dominant and above others. Actions speaks louder than words. In truth, equality starts with treating someone the way should be treated. As parents they are the mirror and reflections to the children's personalities.

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(d)

The young generations,
Portraying all days,
Forgetting the cultures

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(e)

The young generations,
Looking for the wealth,
Forgetting the roots.

What the heck provides a separate table for their grandparents? What kind of cruelty do you have to be to do something absurd as that? When this scene came up, I was so disappointed with the daughter for allowing it to even happen. She has really bad taste in men, her husband is such an asshole. Pardon my French!

W/Sharifah/L3/VC(f)

As clarified in excerpt 70, category of background knowledge demand demonstrates extracts from the compositions on broad understanding of topic and includes elaboration or analysis about connections or references made. For instance, Magdalene has written about the appropriateness of the advertisement in relation to the theme of festive season and gives an elaboration on her disagreement plus some suggestions in the compositions. Magdalene also explicitly writes about the themes of wrong human behaviour, negative peer pressure that is prevalent even among youths

which she is suggesting could be associated to parents, teachers and the education system. She is showing a broad understanding of the issues and references that are associated with the issue.

Similarly, Sharifah is giving some examples on how some aspects of the advertisements could have been improvised in making sure the messages come across to the viewers. On the other hand, Sharifah has brought in the elements that they learnt in Lesson 2 to show the comparison and contrasting features of the advertisements. This indicates Sharifah has taken a higher step ahead in applying what she has learned in the previous lesson to this lesson. Furthermore, Sharifah has indicated in her composition she is willing to take risk to develop new ideas or perspectives. For instance, the line from the extract, “She has really bad taste in men, her husband is such an asshole. Pardon my French!” shows she is learning in a spontaneous way and not something that is predetermined by the teacher. This shows that she is willing to voice her views broadly and freely.

The analysis of the findings is further supported with students’ remarks from the interviews and comments from the two teachers on the compositions. The responses are shown in excerpt 71.

Excerpt 71- Student’s responses - compositions

In writing this compositions, the freedom of choice of features is something that I liked a lot. I love music and love to analyse songs during my leisure hours. So, in comparing this advertisement since we were given the freedom I decided to look at the aspect of the tone of the music used in the three advertisements. I could really relate my ideas with the tone used in the advertisements.

INL3/Magdalene/33

Writing a compare and contrast essay is not something new as I had told earlier. We have done in class before but with given features that is to be compared. In this task we choose the categories. I compared the mood of the characters in the advertisements. Besides, I incorporated the ‘haibun’ that we learnt in lesson 2 to write this essay. I really liked the concept of ‘haibun’ with combines poem and text so I thought of writing in a different way for this composition.

INL3/Sharifah/36

The students' remark in the excerpt 71 indicate freedom that is given in intellectual playfulness has allowed to show their true potentials as writers. Magdalene has described that the category that she writes is related to her passion in music. It is something she could relate and uses the concept to compare the advertisements. On the other hand, Sharifah has acknowledged that the compare and contrast essay is not something new to her. Nonetheless, looking at the category of characters mood and using concept of 'haibun' learnt in lesson 2 is something new that she has tried in her writing. In short, in this lesson, these students are more than willing to be different in writing their compositions. They are most likely moving out of the typical writing that they have done in the classroom and prepares to try new concepts to reach greater heights as a writer.

This is further supported by the feedback given by the two teachers who examined their compositions. The first teacher has commented that the students' composition show their true ability as writers. The student is expressing her views more boldly and using her experiences beyond school in writing the categories. The second teacher remarks student's creativity in combining something she has learnt previously to a new situation. She states with the given opportunities the student has shown that she can create a good piece of writing using her knowledge and experiences.

In conclusion, the extract of the two students' composition, complemented by the replies from the interview and teachers' comments specify that intellectual playfulness has impact in taking their potentials as writers to new greater heights. To further demonstrate how intellectual playfulness influences students' writing, the next section looks at two students compositions in lesson 4.

4.6.6 Young Ambassadors – The Power of Speech

In lesson 4, students are given the role as an ambassador of the United Nations. They are required to write a speech on environment. In addition, they are encouraged to record their video presentation, email or sent it through WhatsApp to the researcher. This activity is done as an enrichment of the writing task. However, this section focuses only on the speech that is done by the students and not analysing the video presentation since writing is the emphasis of this research. Excerpt 72 illustrates extracts from the speech written by Magdalene and Sharifah in Lesson 4.

Excerpt 72– *Purpose & Meaning (L4/VC)*

The issue I am presenting is nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, the topic is so common that we as listeners are sick of it. But do hear me out as I present to you my speech entitled ‘Climate Change’ - The Beginning of the End. W/Magdalene/L4/VC(a)

Seeing that this is a widely acclaimed and acknowledged fact, isn’t it ironical that Malaysia was victim to months – long haze since the year 1997. This problem started before we entered the new millennium and it still is a long-standing problem close to almost two decades later. Sometimes, I wonder why the problem is never resolved. Is it because people do not care? I should hope not! In Malaysia alone the haze affected close to 2 million students last year. More than that, the haze not only covered Malaysia, but also at least five other Southeast Malaysia countries and three Pacific nations. W/Magdalene/L4/VC(b)

When I was 7 years old, I used to ride my bike with my neighbours, Nitisa and Ervan every evening. No one warned us that the air around us was polluted and that we should stay inside, where it was safe. But now, If I were to set foot outside, I am immediately told off for not putting on sunblock for being under the sun for more than 5 minutes, for trying to leave the house in general. Note, I was 7 years old only 10years ago. W/Sharifah/L4/VC(a)

Another 10 to 20 years from now, all of us will be wearing oxygen masks and suits, only feeling secure at home. Flora and fauna became extinct, the ozone layer so thin that you can practically touch the sun. The future generation will never get to see greenery, their only jungle is made of concrete. W/Sharifah/L4/VC(b)

In May 21, the channel 4 news posted a video on face book to reveal that Pakistan is digging graves for heatwave victims because they have even died. The heat killed 1300 people in the summer of 2015 when temperature hit 43C. A city in Rajasthan state has broken all temperature records heightening 51C. Hundreds of people died as crops withered in the fields. Temperature has been rising in the every year for 15years. W/Sharifah/L4/VC(c)

In excerpt 72, Magdalene in her speech states the given topic is something common and being heard most of the time. Yet, she insists the audience to hear her out and starts by giving intricate meaning, 'Climate Change' - The Beginning of the End. She goes on by giving facts and statistics of the situation that is happening in our country with the purpose of examining/evaluating information. For instance, Magdalene has evaluated information, "In Malaysia alone the haze affected close to 2 million students last year. More than that, the haze not only covered Malaysia, but also at least five other Southeast Malaysia countries and three Pacific nations." Similarly Sharifah, has talked about the heatwave in Pakistan with a broad understanding of the subject matter and examining the information. Sharifah also creates an analogy by evaluating how things are in the past and will be in future, "When I was 7 years old, I use to ride my bike with my neighbours, Nitisya and Ervan every evening. No one warns us that the air around us is polluted, we should stay inside where it is safe" and "Another 10 to 20 years from now, all of us will be wearing oxygen masks and suits, only feeling secure at home." This shows that Sharifah is creating complex concept with higher level of details of what the future entails for the future generation. Finally, Magdalene's speech illustrates that she has the freedom in giving her views, "Sometimes, I wonder why the problem is never resolved. Is it because people do not care? I should hope not!"

The following excerpt 73 shows some extracts on the category of Background

Knowledge Demands.

Excerpt 73 – *Background Knowledge Demands (L4/VC)*

I believe, the main problem lies in the lackadaisical attitude of the leader. They play the blame-game just as we do. We point fingers at our neighbour, Indonesia, blaming them for the problem, accusing them for the peat fires and slash-and-burn practices. They in turn can blame the companies that are responsible for those plantations, which includes companies owned by different nationalities. And the game goes on and on. Politicians give promises after promises. Yes, we all know what should be done. Enough with the high positioned people. Let's talk about us, you and me. We cannot be condemning the 'gods' of our country when you and I are only talking and no action.

W/Magdalene/L4/VC(c)

When I was in kindergarten, they teach us to save us the Earth, be kinder to mother nature through campaigns and propaganda. And so, I listen because that's what I was also taught, to listen and follow the elders because they were wise. But as I grew up, I notice some hypocrisy going on. While the 'wiser' ones are telling me to be good to the environment, they are the ones contributing to the phenomenon called climate change. As I grew older, they tell me, whether be directly or indirectly that the economy is more important than mankind. In their heads, a piece of paper is more vital than life.

W/Magdalene/L4/VC(d)

Furthermore, the animals are becoming extinct because of our actions disrupting their food chains by cutting down the trees. Since I am just a 16 years old girl, I will have the right to say that please do not ever steal our chances to see their uniqueness and enable us to be friends and connect with them.

W/Sharifah/L4/VC(d)

We should always give considerations for the people around the world as well as for the future generations to come and mostly for our children. I believe that we can recreate a new world and we can still go back to a turning point where all of us are working together. So, it is up to us to take care of the planet and it is up to us to protect mother nature from those who refuse to see her beauty. It is our only home.

W/Sharifah/L4/VC(e)

Since they are at a young age on the importance of preserving and conserving nature, they will grow up being someone that would contribute to the world and preserve our precious Earth to be returned to the upcoming generations. We must be aware that this Earth is only borrowed by us from the upcoming generations.

W/Sharifah/L4/VC(f)

When we finally realized our mistake, we did what we did best we pushed the blame onto someone else. The citizens blamed the government, the government blamed the citizens and a country blamed its neighbouring country. But in truth, all of us are to be blamed. Everyone including you and me. We might not have been involved directly but our ignorance too is part to blame. W/Sharifah/L4/VC(g)

Except 73 demonstrates both students show broad understanding of the topic and willing to take risks in developing new perspectives or ideas. For instance, Magdalene clearly has indicated in her speech those who can be considered as responsible for the situation that is happening in our environment. She has included elaboration on the references made and relating it politically. Besides, she wrote figuratively with sarcasms in conveying her meaning in the speech as shown here,

Politicians give promises after promises. Yes, we all know what should be done. Enough with the high positioned people. Let's talk about us, you and me. We cannot be condemning the 'gods' of our country when you and I are only talking and no actions. (Magdalene/L4/VC(c))

Similarly, Sharifah showed broad understanding of the topic and included analysis of the connection made,

The citizens blamed the government, the government blamed the citizens and the country blamed its neighbouring country. But in truth, all of us are to be blamed. Everyone including you and me. We might not have been involved directly but our ignorance too is part to blame. (Sharifah/L4/VC(g))

Magdalene and Sharifah also provide recognizable ideas in the speech which indicates concepts of challenging and taking risks such as, "But as I grew up, I noticed some hypocrisy going on. While the 'wiser' ones are telling me to be good to the environment, they are the ones contributing to the phenomenon called climate change" and "Since I am just 16 years, I will have the right to say please do not ever steal our chances to see their uniqueness and enable us to be friends and connect with them." Besides, Sharifah is willing to take risk in developing new perspectives when she declares that the earth is just given as loan to us and we should not be individualistic

and harm the environment as we like. In other words, she is taking risk in making unique connections between ideas and words.

This analysis of the findings is strengthened by using students reply from the interview on how they feel about the speech they have done. This is further followed by the teachers' comments on the speech. Excerpt 74 displays Magdalene and Sharifah's responses.

Excerpt 74 - *Student's responses - Speech*

My first thought when given this task was that normally all kind of big interests as big decision for climate change, it's always more about people who make a major decision and not the youth. So, when we were trusted and given the power to share our ideas and we could talk on any issues that we want, it's not like... usually in class we are told to just write on the cause or the effects. In this speech we can use any references from pictures, text and videos as well as use different ways of expressing things. So, I wrote something worthy for the nation. I always question myself; We are a democratic country, but are we really democratic. Even, in school what we do is just follow a guided way of learning for exam and we just follow. That is my thinking and as the little ones, people like us, we just... we have no voice, we have no power over anyone or anything. I am saying this because there are many times when we say that we are independent, but it does not really show that we really have that freedom. So, writing this speech gave me an opportunity to voice my own opinions and I felt happy to be a small contributor of ideas to help our environment without worrying if my ideas would be accepted or not by others.

INL4/Magdalene/38

For me, writing the speech was like taking a big risk because I know I have to be responsible for what I say in the speech. So, let's say if I am criticising someone in my speech, so I am responsible for anything that comes after that. But I was not too concerned about it. At least I am being myself in giving my views and what I feel about the whole issue. I am happy to have that freedom shown in my speech. Besides, writing of this speech has an aspect of showing our maturity. So, when we have to give a speech to the audience of very high level, matured people like, maybe ministers or high level government officers, I felt that I should be keeping my speech mature and not childish because I really wanted the audience to understand what I am conveying and to know I am serious about it.

INL4/Sharifah/40

Excerpt 74 displays the students' comments on the speech they have written. By looking at the responses given by both the students, they have acknowledged that intellectual playfulness provides them with freedom and opportunities to be risk-takers in writing the speech. Magdalene talks about the autonomy given in writing her views freely and her ideas being appreciated though she is just a teenager. She has put efforts in making sure it is a worthy speech to be heard by the audience. However, she has stated that as youths, they are always voiceless or powerless. This is because they have not really been given freedom of speech including in school.

Meanwhile, Sharifah has associated writing the speech with taking risks because one has to take responsibility of their views that is given in the speech. Besides, she explains that writing the speech provides a space to present her maturity in writing in the sense of infusing her views with profound reflections. In other words, Sharifah wants to make sure of writing a speech that indicates higher level of intelligence and her ideas were taken into consideration. Both the students speech has complex and varied views in ensuring worthy ideas are presented. They have included detailed layers to their speech which seem to show their maturities in writing. This opportunities are presented to them through intellectual playfulness which has open-ended task. Thus, the task has provided freedom for the students in giving their views and taking responsibilities of their views.

The two teachers have provided some comments on the speech written by Magdalene and Sharifah. The first teacher writes that both students speech as very complex because they have analysed the situation well and made connections to the happenings around the world with good references. This has provided a good development in their writings. In addition, she has commented there is evidence in the composition indicating the students' background knowledge on the issues is immense.

Thus, providing this kind of opportunities, can create a path for students to become good writers.

On the other hand, the second teacher comments the speech that is written by both students show that they have the calibre in analysing and evaluating problems as well as suggesting worthy solutions. They have looked at many different aspects of the given issues and refer to different types of texts. This is something rarely seen in students' composition in school or examination. In short, this is a strong indication that if students are to be given freedom and allowed to be risk-takers they could be excellent writers in and out of school.

To conclude, the findings exemplify that through the qualities of intellectual playfulness, students are venturing further in exploring new ideas and willing to express their views without the fear of not being accepted. They are showing their true potentials in writing as the control that teacher always has in the classroom seem to be gradually diminishing. Besides, students want their speeches to be acknowledged and considered worthy to be heard by everyone in the world. This has made them to have autonomy in their writing.

4.7 Conclusion

The qualitative analysis from Lesson 1 to 4 indicate that students compositions have depicted their writings are results of the freedom given in the task to explore new ideas through the open-ended task and opportunities to be risk-takers. The findings also implied students are able to be expressive and bold in giving their views which indirectly has facilitated in showing their true abilities in writing. This designates intellectual playfulness has enabled students to take their potential as writers to a new greater heights. Furthermore, students' composition have demonstrated that they have autonomy in their writing. In short, the analysis has shown intellectual playfulness that

the students have acquired in the writing classroom facilitated them in their writing by providing opportunities to show their true abilities in writing.

4.8 Summary

This chapter shows the findings of the two research questions in this study. The findings for the first research question, ‘How do high ability students acquire intellectual playfulness in ESL writing class where it is promoted?’ which focuses at the process of writing can be summarised as follows. First, an overview of students’ previous experiences in writing is given. This is followed by an overview on the four writing lessons that is designed with the concept of intellectual playfulness. The lessons are planned using the popular culture as an input in the writing task and the objectives of the lessons are formulated by superimposing Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Revised Bloom Taxonomy 2005) and Webb’s Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK) to produce cognitive complexity which could results in cognitive rigor. The task is embedded with a feature of a higher order phrase, ‘What if...’and characteristics of playfulness such as flexibility, imagination and being creative.

Next, it is trailed by analysis of the four lessons with a description of the vignettes, incorporation of intellectual playfulness that is looking at the role of the phrase ‘What if...’. This analysis is based on classroom interactions and students interviews. Then, the lessons are analysed by looking at the qualities of the intellectual playfulness i.e open-endedness, risk-taking and absorbing using the data from interviews, student journals and researcher’s journal. The subsequent section in the chapter compares the four lessons by scrutinizing the facilitation of intellectual playfulness. The acquisition of the intellectual playfulness using the phrase ‘What if...’ in the lessons has assigned students with a role to play. The phrase appears to

support students in making sound decisions on their own as well as to apply to new situation or life outside of school.

Two main themes have emerged - playfulness in learning and cognitive rigor. The theme playfulness in learning has created an environment which has relevance to students and also manifest joy in the writing, thus creates an ideal space for students to be challenged. On the other hand, theme of cognitive rigor indicates acquisitions of intellectual playfulness has enhanced higher order cognitive functions such as analysing, inferencing and creativity. This indirectly is helpful in facilitating personal discovery and growth which is the aim of learning, rather than mastery of a particular content. In short, the acquisition of intellectual playfulness in the writing tasks and instruction has engaged students in the activities with high intellectual challenges, provide opportunities and connects the writing materials to students' personal and cultural experiences.

Most of the students in this research confirms that they prefer to have choices and autonomy in their writing as well as to develop imaginative and creative products. These themes have addressed the changing landscape in the ESL writing classroom which indicates the importance of reaching the needs of students and making learning engaging as well as relevant (Playfulness in learning). These themes when clustered together most probably could promise cognitive rigor and engagement for students in the writing classroom. On the other hand, another aspect which is analysed to answer the research question one is looking at the students' development using the qualities of intellectual playfulness. The findings indicate that in all the four lessons students are willing to undertake the open-ended task because it has provided them with freedom and flexibility. This means open-endedness of the task has given opportunities for students to work at their own levels, own interest areas and own preferences.

Moving to the second quality of intellectual playfulness that is risk-taking, in the beginning there is some drawbacks but gradually students are willing to be risk-takers. This has facilitated them to move beyond their comfort zones of writing in classroom and to explore their true potentials in writing. In other words, findings indicate that risk-taking creates a path in learning that has made students to feel safe to take risks and eventually making them to be different and successful in their writing efforts. Finally, the findings reveal that being absorbed or having complete engagement has made students to be more attentive, focused and has more concentration in the task. The findings illustrates students being more absorbed when thinking of demands that became rigorous with regards to the writing tasks.

In answering research question two, ‘How does the intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class help them with writing?’ which highlights the product of writing. Firstly, all the compositions from the four lessons are examined by the researcher and two independent teachers using Hess (2013) Gradients in Complexity. This is followed by checking the inter-rater reliability for identifying the degree of consensus between the two teachers and the researcher using the Cohen’s Kappa (Cohen, 1960) or k . The results of the Kappa values indicate that the reliability of the identification for the categories in the compositions among the two teachers and the researcher are adequate. This is followed by discussions and findings that has emerged from the quantitative phase (bar chart and scatter plot) to show the frequent levels of the complexities in percentage among the students as well as to identify each student’s level of complexities. The quantitative phase displays the patterns of complexity and some outliers that are present in the analysed compositions. The outliers are from the students’ composition in the category of very complex.

The findings from the qualitative data are further used to support and discuss this category. The qualitative data from the students' extract in the compositions, students' interview responses and teacher's feedback which supports the quantitative data reveals that intellectual playfulness does play a hand in influencing students writing. This indirectly has given students to have autonomy and taking ownership of their writing.

Universiti Malaya

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the research. It begins by looking at the brief summary of the research. This is followed by revisiting the rationale and research questions guiding this investigation set out in Chapter 1. Next, it summarizes the findings for both research questions 1 and 2 followed by summary and synthesis of key findings. Then, it discusses the significance of this research and presents the contributions of this research to theory, methodology, policy and practice. Lastly, the limitations of this research are recognized and recommendations for future research is offered before the concluding remarks.

5.2 Brief Summary of the Study

This research is developed based on the realization that just like low proficiency students who need support to master writing skills, high ability students too deserve support in producing compositions that could bring out their true potentials in writing and enable them towards the dispositions of learning. This is possible by giving these high ability students challenging and engaging tasks to develop and transform their writing into a meaningful one and eventually making them writers of the 21st century. Normally, students tend to write what they think their teachers would approve in order to obtain good grades, thus depriving themselves from voicing out their own opinions and views. This research uses Fine's (2014) suggestion of a term/concept known as intellectual playfulness which is adapted to probe these students based on the four writing tasks to produce compositions on different genres. For the purpose of this research, intellectual playfulness refers to a type of cognitive quality that centrally involves students in being risk-takers, undertaking willingly the open-ended tasks and

being absorbed (complete engagement) in the task. This involves adding playfulness to the cognitive quality towards learning to create a rigorous classroom in which students are expected to learn at high levels and have high engagement for learning as well as showing growth and experience success (Blackburn, 2008). The three qualities of intellectual playfulness incorporated in this research aims to identify if a promising platform could be provided for high ability adolescents in conceptualizing a pedagogy that links engagement and cognitive rigor in writing (Fine, 2014).

A generic qualitative research approach is conducted to explore this concept by using data from the classroom interactions, students' interview, student journals, researcher's journal and students' composition. First, the writing lessons are designed by following the English Form Four Syllabus, objectives of the lessons are formulated by superposing Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Revised Bloom Taxonomy 2005) and Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK), popular culture is used as input in the writing task and the activities are incorporated with elements of playfulness. In addition, a phrase 'What if...' is embedded as instruction in the writing tasks that has provided students with opportunities to have freedom, to take risks and engage themselves. The research scrutinised how intellectual playfulness creates a distinctive writing classroom for the high ability students using the qualities of intellectual playfulness.

Next, the research has analysed students' composition on how intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class actually influenced them in writing compositions. This is discussed based on two phases – quantitative and qualitative. The findings indicate that students feel they have freedom in writing and flexibility to play with the content of the given tasks in all the four lessons. The aspect of fluid method to play with content appears to have made students to be able to

express freely on writing any ideas and enjoy the fact that the unstructured nature of the task seem to have allowed them to pursue their own thoughts as well as to have complexity in their writing. Both the findings appear to indicate how intellectual playfulness is supporting rigor in cognition, helps in discovering students' true potentials and have better engagement in learning.

5.3 Rationale and Research Questions Revisited

This research is grounded based on few convictions: One, high ability students appear to be strikingly under-researched and under-represented group of critical stake holders (Pei-Ling Tan, 2009). Secondly, “unchallenging curriculum” has had a negative effect on high ability students because they tend to work well below their true potential and complacent with their safe performance learning environment (Siegle & McCoach, 2001; Winebrenner, 2001). In Malaysian context, Malaysian high ability students practice ‘submissive literacy’ (tends not to question information received or its sources) than ‘assertive literacy’ (exercises some responsibility for the origin of ideas in the source of text and comments upon it) in writing as they respond in set ways to examination questions to secure good grades (Koo, 2004). These findings show dominated discussions of students focusing on acceptable writing for school and examination purposes but not developing writing skills beyond these requirements. This has created a disposition within the students and what matters is achieving ‘performance goals’ than ‘learning goals’. To help students in achieving this learning goals, intellectual playfulness can create a platform that links engagement and cognitive rigor that aligns with their needs and capabilities in writing (Fine, 2014).

The research has attempted to address this gap by looking at the area of playfulness to give students a starting point for new learning in both the cognitive and affective domains. This is because some past researchers have indicated positive connection between literacy, learning and play, at elementary, adolescents and adult levels which can result in individual and organizational learning (Lieberman, 1977; Miller, 1973) and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). However, there seems to be a gap in the literature when it comes to examining play as a contributor to development of L2 writing in adolescents. To investigate this central issue, Fine's (2014) concept of intellectual playfulness is adapted in exploring the potential benefits of intellectual playfulness for high ability adolescents in the writing classroom.

Specifically, this research has adapted Fine's concept of intellectual playfulness in providing platform for cognitive rigor and engagement in high ability students' learning process. Two research questions are used to guide this research, namely; i) How do high ability students acquire intellectual playfulness in the ESL writing class where it is promoted?; ii) How does the intellectual playfulness that students have acquired in the writing class help them with writing? In other words, to address these two research questions, process of writing and product of writing are analysed.

The first research question in the qualitative phrase is outlined in Chapter 4, in which classroom interactions, in-depth interviews, students' and researcher's reflections from the journals are used. The textual data is analysed and themes are formed. The second research question is evidenced through combination of complementary quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data is analysed using bar graph and scatter plot. Both the methods has facilitated to explore and inspect students' writings through the concept of intellectual playfulness. Taken together, the

quantitative and qualitative phrase has provided rich insights into the ways of complexity of students' composition in presenting their cognitive rigor. The key findings of both the research questions are highlighted in the following section.

5.3.1 Research Question 1 - Process of Writing

The first research question inspects the process of writing which utilises vignette from the lessons, classroom interactions, students' interview, student journals and researcher's journals. This is used to indicate the reasoning views underpinning students' evaluations on acquisitions of intellectual playfulness and manifestations of intellectual playfulness. The acquisitions of intellectual playfulness is explored through the lessons and instruction 'What if...' whereas manifestation of intellectual playfulness among students is derived by looking into the three qualities stated in Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness i.e. open-endedness, risk-taking and being absorbed i.e flow. The objective of this question is to provide an in-depth description of how students has described and accounted for acceptance behaviour of intellectual playfulness in light of conventional writing classroom and its concerns as well as prospects for their writing experiences. Textual data from the interview transcripts, classroom interactions and journals are analysed to the revelation of underlying 'common-sense logic' that the students share, draw on and use in their talk to reflect on intellectual playfulness.

The qualitative findings for the acquisitions of intellectual playfulness shows that all the writing lessons with the phrase 'What if...' has promoted learning and self-discovery among high ability students in the writing classroom. The findings disclose two core ways that intellectual playfulness has promoted playfulness in learning among the high ability students in writing classrooms; a) intellectual playfulness creates positive affect that has made students desire to spend more time in writing

classrooms that indicates writing lesson was enjoyable; b) students taking autonomy of their writing, and c) intellectual playfulness appears to have made students to think at high levels which has created cognitive rigor in them.

A well-established element of play which has positive affect is often characterised as fun (Huizinga, 1950), manifest joy (Lieberman's 1977), or pleasure (Guitard, Ferland, & Dutil, 2005). The findings show that conceptualizations of play/playfulness as fun or enjoyable are evident as students recognise the enjoyment and fun they have experienced in the writing classrooms. Nonetheless, this positive affect succeeds much more than merely producing an enjoyable writing classroom experiences; it develops their learning. Students want to learn and continue to engage in writing because they are absorbed and have complete engagement in the lessons. The concept of this educational benefit of play/playfulness is not new: it is also substantiated in the early childhood education literature (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005). While this conclusion is not novel in terms of early childhood education, the findings in this research suggests that educational benefit of play/playfulness also extends to adolescents.

Hess (2009) states that learning is optimized when students are involved in activities that require complex thinking and application of knowledge. This could be seen from the findings in this research that indicates to think at higher levels and engage in a cognitively rigorous thinking. However, the extent to which students develop higher order thinking ability depends upon how content and context interplay with students' thinking skills, dispositions, and abilities (Paige, Sizemore & Neace, 2013). This means successful higher order thinking depends upon an individual's ability to apply, reorganize and embellish knowledge in the context of the thinking situation (Carnine, 1993) which provides an opportunity for significant meaning

making. Hence, the theme of playfulness in learning and cognitive rigor from the findings suggest that both could be mutually supportive in providing students with opportunities to have control over their writing and express their true potentials or abilities as writers during the process of the writing.

Another aspect of the qualitative findings in research question one looks at the manifestation of intellectual playfulness through the three qualities that is stated in Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness i.e. open-endedness, risk-taking and being absorbed. The findings has revealed that open-endedness has given students freedom and flexibility to move and engage in higher order skills as well as the empowerment to explore their thoughts without restrictions. This means open-endedness of the tasks and students willingness to take on the open-ended tasks has provided them with opportunities to work at their own levels, in their own interests' areas and preferences. In short, open-endedness seem to have established its capability in allowing students to explore creativity and having autonomy in writing compositions.

Next, in analysing the quality of risk-taking to define students' development in their writing, it is visible from lesson one to lesson four a gradual change appears to be happening within the students. They are moving from the continuum of being risk-averse to becoming risk-takers. This means students are moving from their 'secured or comfort zone' and creating a self-identity as writers. They are redesigning their knowledge i.e writing beyond examination needs in various modes for the different genres given in the writing tasks. From the findings, it is construed that students are willing to take risks in sharing their thoughts, asking questions and exploring ideas that might not be completely accepted by everyone. Student's fear of "right or wrong" is lessened perhaps because they know grades are not given for the compositions. Therefore, the consequences of being "right or wrong" are reduced because within the

boundaries of intellectual playfulness, there is no 'right' or 'wrong'. In short, being risk-takers have created a development in student's writing whereby they are bold in being different and successful in their writing efforts.

The findings of the final quality of intellectual playfulness, being absorbed or having complete engagement in the lessons has shown students have active engagement in their writing tasks. Being absorbed or completely engaged in the task has made students to lose track of time because they are attentive and focused in the writing lessons. Students losing track of time is seen as an indication of being absorbed completely in the writing physically and cognitively. Besides, the findings disclose the choice of inputs and challenges provided in the tasks are in flow with students need and capabilities. This has motivated them to attempt and complete the task at their best level. In short, students are more absorbed when thinking demands become rigorous with regards to the planned writing tasks.

5.3.2 Research Question 2 - Product of Writing

In addressing the second research question, the researcher and two independent teachers have examined and analysed all the compositions from the four lessons using Hess (2013) Gradients in Complexity. The Gradient in Complexity is designed by Dr. Karin Hess to examine the complexity of a text. Complexity is associated with cognitive rigor. Thus, Gradient in Complexity is adapted to suit this current research. The adapted version is validated by Dr. Karin Hess. Besides, the inter-rater reliability among two teachers and the researcher in analysing the compositions are assessed using the Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) or k . The Kappa values which ranges from 0.7 to 0.9 has indicated that the reliability of the teachers and researcher in the identification of the categories in the compositions are adequate to show the credibility of the findings. Based on the analysis of the compositions, a bar graph and scatter plot

is done. In addition, findings from the interviews and classroom interactions are triangulated to support the analysis of the compositions.

The quantitative phase utilise students' composition to plot a bar graph to measure the percentage of the complexities found in compositions for both the categories of Purpose and Meaning and Background Demand Knowledge. Scatter graph is plotted to indicate individual student's composition level in complexity for the categories of i) purpose and meaning, ii) background knowledge demand in the four lessons. This bar graph and scatter plot are used to identify, examine, and discuss samples of students' composition from the category of very complex. The findings of this quantitative data are further supported using the qualitative analysis of the compositions and students' interview.

The findings show two students compositions consistently accounts across all the four lessons in being categorised as 'very complex'. In particular, this students have pointed that the quality in intellectual playfulness has created flexibility and freedom in their writing, extending their horizons beyond the text book knowledge to real-world experiences as well as promoting creativity in their writing. At the same time, two independent teachers who has analysed the compositions comment that 'the composition is unique, original and stood out as an exceptional piece', '...display different ideas in the sense of presenting being critical and show maturity in writing' as well as 'being creative in combining something they have learnt previously to a new situation'. These comments support that in some ways intellectual playfulness has facilitated students to have complexity in their writing which has made their compositions to be categorised as an excellent piece of writing.

The summarization of findings for research question one which covers the process of the writing lesson that focuses on the acquisition of intellectual playfulness in the writing classroom and manifestation of intellectual playfulness through the three qualities while the summarization of findings for research question two looks at the product of the writing i.e students' composition have been discussed in the above section. The key findings of the both questions in the study are highlighted and synthesised in the following section.

5.4 Summary and Synthesis of Key Findings

Intellectual playfulness has an ability to familiarize and navigate a group of high ability students in order to engage with opportunities for writing. The concept of intellectual playfulness consists of three distinct qualities: i) open-endedness, ii) risk-taking and iii) absorbing. From the findings of the study, these qualities can be perceived as disposition that has construct of cognitive flexibility, learning orientated and play. Open-endedness in the intellectual playfulness could be categorized as disposition of cognitive flexibility that permits students to have "freedom of choice" (Maker, 1982) and encourages divergent thinking (Guilford, 1967) as well as creativity (Torrence, 1966; Pollack, 1988). This provides opportunities for students to construct new knowledge and new meaning (Bruner, 1966).

On the other hand, the quality of being a risk-taker which is apparent in the findings is a robust to learning goal dispositions. This refers to a healthy directions to learning than being purely performance focused where students are motivated to master new skills and expand their range of capabilities than to 'hold on to what I know the best' and embrace new learning opportunities (Dweck, 2000). It means students' predisposition to take risks and engage in new ideas, discoveries and practices. This

involves the need to perceive significant evidences of benefits before engaging with any new discovery or practice.

Finally, the quality of absorbing/flow is categorized as disposition of play which illustrates complete engagement. This could be seen through a deep, effortless involvement in an activity in which the person loses sense of self and time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) which is noticeable in all the tasks in this study. Such individuals are intellectually inquisitive, imaginative, motivated by complexity and predisposed to find pleasure in the challenge of making different associations across seemingly oppositional ideas (Tan & McWilliam, 2008). A visual summary of this new knowledge object and its key dimensions are presented in Figure 5.1

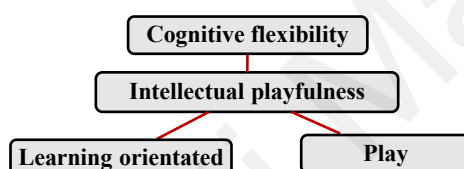


Figure 5.1 Key Dimension of Disposition in Intellectual Playfulness

Table 5.1

Dimension of Disposition in Intellectual Playfulness

Open-endedness	Disposition of cognitive flexibility	Demonstrated cognitive flexibility, where: A student is motivated to construct new knowledge and new meaning through the freedom of choice.	Cognitive rigor & Engagement
Risk-taking	Disposition of learning orientated	Demonstrated learning goal orientations, where: A student is motivated to master new skills and expand their range of capabilities, to be a risk-taker and engage and write new ideas, inventions and practices despite lack of conventional acceptance.	
Absorbing	Disposition of play	Demonstrated complete engagement, where: A student is motivated to engage with complexity and use curiosity and imagination in finding pleasure in the challenge of making different associations across seemingly conventional ideas.	

From table 5.1, these individual qualities – cognitive flexibility, learning goal orientations and complete engagement constitute a new learning disposition in the context of writing in school, enabling students to discuss more effectively the affordances of engaging with intellectual playfulness. This is despite the traditional culture of ESL writing classroom that privileges compliant-student and measures success primarily in terms of academic performance.

The cognitive flexibility dispositions which is based on open-endedness is closely related to creativity (Torrance, 1966) and divergent thinking (Guilford, 1967). This is substantiated by Bruner's (1966) learning theory that students should be provided with opportunities to construct their own meanings rather than simply memorizing which permits the individual to "go beyond" the given information and discover their own learning. Thus, as highlighted in the findings of this study, it is evident students taking ownership of their writing with regards to freedom, flexibility and being a creative writer since they have opportunities to work at their own level, in their own interest areas and preferences.

The disposition to be a risk-taker is measured by an individual's personal development from being a risk-averse to a risk-taker. This appears to have been established in this study from the findings that exhibit students are gradually moving from their so called typical 'comfort zone' in writing to challenge the academic norms, standards, and sometimes themselves (Wintrol & Jerenic, 2013). Furthermore, as conceptualized by Dweck (2000), these learning goals-oriented individuals tend to exhibit more adaptive responses to complexities and challenges, characterised by a desire to develop "new skills, master new tasks or understand new things" which is a characteristic of 21st century learner.

The next disposition of being absorbed in serious play is measured by one's complete engagement in the instruction and tasks that involve towards inclination of finding pleasure in the challenge of making different associations. This disposition has previously shown to engage individual in an activity that provides a level of challenge that matches their abilities, rather than overwhelms it; meaning a state when they are doing their best work and most productive (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). The findings display with intellectual playfulness, students who are reported of being engaged or absorbed are characterised of having cognitive flexibility, learning goal orientations and engagement. Together these three qualities lend to a disposition that has enabled them to engage in an adept directions and prolific discussions that lead to cognitive rigor and engagement across the debate of playfulness learning and the conventions of typical writing learning.

In this study, Bruner's learning theory emphasizes on the importance of instruction and spiral curriculum design in learning while Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness looks at secondary instruction around tasks that are open-ended, risk-taking and absorbing. As such Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness is subsumed into Bruner's notion of instruction since it is also related to instruction. Furthermore, Bruner (1973) described instruction is not to tell the students what they ought to learn but to create an interesting and stimulating environment that allows the learner to develop meaningful knowledge of the subject matter as it is seen in the qualities of Fine's Intellectual Playfulness Theory. This research has adapted four characteristics of Bruner's theory in this study. Firstly, the instruction is personalized in the form of a phrase, 'What if...' to make sure it relates to learners' predisposition, and facilitate interest towards learning. The findings on the use of the phrase, 'What if...' is related to Bruner's (1966) purpose of instruction to create an environment in which a person

can discover and construct new knowledge for themselves. Over here, the quality of risk-taking from Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness appears to have similar aspect in providing opportunities for students to discover their own potentials in writing. Besides, the findings indicate the instruction through appropriate tasks for learners, results in the construction and rationalization of newly formed understanding of concepts and knowledge (Bruner, 1986).

Subsequent, in order to have an advanced learning, the content is planned with openness and this relates to the quality of open-endedness in Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness that allows students to grasp easily and materials that are utilised in the tasks are relevant as well as of students' interest. Materials that are related to popular cultures and real-life issues are used for the writing task in order to provide opportunities for students to relate, acquire, transform and transfer learning. This is established through the findings in the study which has invoked students' creativity, recognizing significance of the writing in their lives and having pleasure in their learning. Finally, Bruner states that learners must "experience success and failure not as reward and punishment, but as information" (Bruner 1961, p. 26) which means grades and competition are not helpful in learning process. In other words, what is important is to be able to engage students in curiosity and being absorbed in the task that makes the learning to be intrinsically motivating with complete engagement. This is noticeable when students show interest and enthusiasm in the writing lessons without being anxious of grades.

Another feature in the theory that could be seen in the findings is the spiral curriculum. In this notion, students re-visit ideas and concepts that they have learnt but at an increasingly complex level. This is evident from the findings of the students' composition in Lesson 3 and 4. They have revisited the concept of 'haibun' that they

learnt in Lesson 2 and applied into their writings during the compare and contrast as well as speech compositions. Students spiral back and reintroduce previous taught content in a different mode of representation and with more complexity. Though, only four lessons are conducted, the above example does verify Bruner's (1960) notion of spiral curriculum that indicate students "spirals upwards" to enable them to emphasize what is already learned.

In sum, both theories of Fine's Intellectual Playfulness and Bruner's learning theory have a hand in creating a motivating and stimulating environment that has provided a platform to have convergence of cognitive rigor and engagement in meeting the needs of high ability students in their writing.

5.5 Contributions of the Research

At the most broad-spectrum, this study leads the attention of high ability students beyond the familiar landscape of deficiency in teaching and learning of writing and providing opportunities towards the dispositions of learning than performance. It provides a first-hand base for the development of theoretical implications, that is, an alternative way of theorising pedagogical revolution in contrast to the custom of teaching and learning of writing in school, one which is well-versed by students in a typical ESL writing classroom. Thus, it is more significant to the students lived culture within and beyond the school. This is afforded not only by the qualitative method that is used in this study but more prominently, by the productive utilisation of intellectual playfulness theory and research evidences on the nature of play/playfulness, practices of academic rigor, affective engagement and conventional ESL writing literature. In this regard, this research hopes to contribute to a growing body of knowledge about the issues of current ESL writing and prospects towards 21st century learning, and suggestions for theory and practice in the field of writing especially for high ability

students in postmillennial times. Significant outcomes drawn from this study are explained below.

5.5.1 Learning Goals vs Performance Goals

While much has been written about low ability students and research to help them to master in their writings, not much known research has been done in writing for high ability group that is considered as the ‘deprived group’ in school. On one hand, literature on high ability students which comprises of many categories such as gifted students, talented students and potential students indicate learning needs of these students have not been met since they barely experience academic challenges in typical classroom (Archambault et al., 1993; Gross, 2004) which has encouraged them to seek the easy path and work well below their true potentials (Siegle & McCoach, 2001; Winebrenner, 2001). Thus, researchers have suggested these students should receive instruction that included advanced educational opportunities, freedom to try out new format than to be restricted to specific structures (Callahan, 2005; De Olivera & Pereira, 2015; Olthouse, 2012b).

On the other hand, in writing, research shows that occurrence of student’s conflicts on writing according to the required format in school and what they wanted to write for themselves (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Winebrenner, 2001). These has created a situation where they can be intellectually lazy and created an awareness of merely following examiners’ expectations and marking schemes (Winebrenner, 2001; Kok & Miller, 2007). When examination performance is threatened, students seem to feel it is more sensible for them to remain exam-orientated students. This is because tests and examinations are normal fare throughout the school life of a typical student (Kok & Miller, 2007). Students are aware that they can be intellectually lazy as they stirred out school writing according to the required format; on their own, their writing

led them to probe below the surface (Winebrenner, 2001) and respond in predictable ways than to write and think critically.

This is further made difficult by many teachers who change their literacy curricula in order to train students to take the test (Harman, 2000). Therefore, rather than focusing on meaningful learning experiences, many schools spend a lot of time preparing students to take assessment by engaging them in test-like activities (Higgins, Miller & Wegmann, 2006). It is this contrast that the title of this thesis attempts to capture. This study bridges this knowledge gap in several ways through the concept based on playfulness. The findings of incorporation intellectual playfulness deduced from this research not only supports Barnett's (2007) empirical evidence that young-adult playfulness as a predisposition to transform situations in novel, flexible, creative, and humorous ways but share some similar conceptual of playfulness such as creativity, curiosity and spontaneity that correspond to Lieberman's (1977) cognitive and physical spontaneity.

In addition, the findings from this research supports the study done by Taylor and Rogers (2001) that suggest that playfulness and creativity may co-occur. Another quantitative study done by Pei-Ling Tan and Mc William (2008) with adolescents that defines playfulness in terms of intellectual curiosity and intellectual creativity further supported the findings in this research. This is because findings from Pei-Ling Tan and Mc William (2008) study show playfulness is cognitively important as learning disposition and promotes creative capacity in terms of students' willingness to experiment with new ideas and engage with advances. Thus, similar significance is found in the findings of this research that indicate students are willing to test their ideas and connect it beyond the knowledge in school.

Findings from this research also concur with Bransford et al., (2000) on significance of learning through play which has provided students with numerous possibilities for developing strategies such as conceptualizing, evaluating, solving problems and reasoning as well as adopting the role of experts. The qualities of intellectual playfulness and incorporation of the phrase ‘What if...’ as instruction in the given tasks provide a platform of creating numerous possibilities as shown in the findings of research question one.

The findings from the three qualities of intellectual playfulness and the phrase ‘What if...’ disclose students are moving away from their so called ‘comfort zone’ of merely writing what is needed to obtain good grades in examination. It is parallel to claims by De Olivera and Pereira (2015) that high ability students when given specifically personalised instruction and opportunity would be able to explore subjects in greater depth and complexity. For instance, intellectual playfulness and the phrase ‘What if...’ has engaged students in allowing them to associate their prior knowledge with new learning, leading in probing more questions and discovering more information that makes them to practice assertive literacy. In addition, findings indicate students are gradually taking the role of being risk-takers and being accountable of their writing. This also indicates that they are progressively practising assertive literacy which surpasses the claim by Koo (2004) that many Malaysian students have been practising ‘submissive literacy’ rather than ‘assertive literacy’.

Besides, Hess (2006b) describes that cognitive rigor encompasses the scope of the planned learning activities, complexity of content and cognitive engagement with that content. This is identified in the qualitative findings for research question two, which shows that students engage with intellectual playfulness seem to share common characteristics which robust learning goal dispositions and high levels of cognitive

rigor in terms of complexity. They have demonstrated their thinking at a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy, communicate strategic and extended thinking in the compositions.

As such, the ability of the students to productively negotiate with intellectual playfulness is a combination of rigor in tasks that students are asked to do (expectation), rigor of standards for students responses and rigor of support (support) and accountability for top-quality work (demonstrate) (Blackburn, 2008). Hence, findings from this research displays that cognitive rigor and engagement are mutual priorities in writing as process and product. The bottom line, this study appears to signpost where learning goals is forceful in relation to performance goals, then it is likely that the disposition of 'being creative', cognitive rigor and engagement are the probable outcome.

Beyond the insights given, this research goes on to show what suits the students are more than a simple matter of personal choices between performance goals and learning goals. The findings of current research indicate when students are given opportunities to stretch beyond their current understanding, a shift in thinking does happen. They show preferences in presenting their real abilities in writing than being conformed to what is expected in the examination. However, the students have pointed out when learning opportunities are perceived to be in conflict with academic performance indicators in school, then learning opportunities through intellectual playfulness are likely to be side-lined; meaning performance goals overcome learning goals. The reasons being, they know of having the ability to comply skilfully through the performative demands in conventionally-accepted examinations and staying on the side of teachers' requirements are critical aspect in surviving the accomplishment of academic achievements endeavour. The argument here is not that it is possible to

extrapolate from this one example to an entire populations of high ability student in Malaysia.

However, this study contributes in understanding the complexity of the intellectual playfulness nexus. Students' awareness of engagement and existing writing norms in school is a complex matter, involving school's main concern, students' expectation and the affordance of the playfulness itself, as well as the point to which it is standardised and/or assigned in the pedagogy of writing classrooms. In this regard, students are influential subjects in school that can have extensive interest and best use of playfulness. This may be so, regardless of their desired modes of writing beyond examination. The findings of this research supports the need for educational theorising of the writing nexus to move beyond school performative demands to consider views and experiences of students as a key group of stakeholders.

5.5.2 Policy and Practice

The findings of this research also contains insights for policymakers and educators with regards to the optimal exploitation of intellectual playfulness in ESL writing classroom. Normally, teachers cover the content, but not the level of thinking that is demanded for that content and students get the same learning experiences as they getting in the past (Jackson, 2012). To support extensive incorporation of intellectual playfulness, there need to be an alignment between the use of intellectual playfulness, preferred academic performance by school and complete engagement of the students in writing. This study embraces Fine's (2014) suggestion that high schools should strive to engage students in cognitively rigorous tasks to create a rigorous academic environment which supports cognitive rigor and engagement.

True communities of learning is represented through rigorous academic environment that encourages both students and teachers to be risk-takers, being involved in open-ended learning processes and exploiting effectively their present knowledge while being determine to create new knowledge (Hess, Jones, Carlock & Walkup, 2009). This study has tried to create a rigorous academic environment through incorporation of intellectual playfulness that provides multiple opportunities for students to be involved in open-ended learning process and to take the role of being risk-takers in their writing.

Similarly, rigor without relevance can results in students doing well academically yet dysfunctional in the real world (Daggert, 2007). What is needed is a scope of planned learning activities which concerns more for quality and conceptual thinking than quantity and memorization (Daggert, 2007). Thus, intellectual playfulness indirectly provides teachers with opportunities to take risk in planning learning activities that provides rigor with relevance in students writing.

The evidence from the findings of this research depicts students learn to use full range of their talents and intellectual abilities to address authentic and complex academic tasks in professional and real-life events when they are challenged (Sayler, 2009b). In other words, the study wishes to have this common ground established so students could have evolution in their learning and their writing is heightened. Every task has provided students with opportunities to develop various strategies. This indirectly is a solution to teachers issues in epistemologies of play often being understood that, play and learning as dichotomous concepts and difficult to integrate, either in thinking or in practice (Pui-Wah & Stimpson, 2004).

In addition, within any given population of schools and students, adolescents are likely to have some blend of dispositions. As such, examples of students that can accommodate the complexities in writing, even delight opportunities that come with intellectual playfulness are likely to be spotted. The fact that intellectual playfulness could make students to flourish in individual school may make it easy to point to these autonomous manifestations as evidences of progress and transformation. However, effective playfulness in one school does not shift conventional writing culture; indeed it can keep it exactly in place and as a partial acceptance, it can be added to an ordinary pedagogy. Intellectual playfulness can be allowed to be remain as ‘playful alternatives’ which is different, exciting and absorbing.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The research has sought to extend existing theory of Fine’s Intellectual Playfulness by scrutinising a combination of individual learning dispositions that has not been reflected previously. In particular, as highlighted in the summary and synthesis of key findings, it is evident students appear to have embraced openly to the possibilities of incorporating intellectual playfulness in writing. This disposition that has been deduced from the findings of the study articulates across the typical and intellectual playfulness in writing is conceptualised of having three dispositional qualities: cognitive flexibility, learning orientated and play (see Figure 5.1).

The cognitive flexibility dispositions is based on one’s willingness to attempt open-endedness task. In this study, the findings indicate students are motivated to construct new knowledge and own meaning in their writing. This indicates a great cognitive flexibility that allows them to work at their own levels, in their own interest areas and preferences. Next, the disposition of learning orientated is deduced by adolescent’s personal development from being a risk-averse to a risk-taker. The

learning orientated disposition is based on Dweck's (2000) conceptualization that learning goals-oriented individuals tend to exhibit more adaptive responses to complexities and challenges, have desire to develop "new skills, master new tasks or understand new things". This concurs with the findings in this research that indicate students are motivated to be risk-takers, engage and write new ideas, inventions and practices in writing despite the lack of conventional acceptance.

Finally, the disposition of being absorbed in serious play is measured by one's complete engagement in an activity that provides a level of challenge that matches their abilities, rather than overwhelms it; meaning a state when they are doing their best work and most productive (Csikszentmihályi, 1990). The findings in this research appear to suggest students are motivated to engage with complexity and finding pleasure in the challenge of making different associations across seemingly conventional ideas. In sum, high ability students have learned habits of mind that are ineffective but with these dispositions that could be extended from Fine's intellectual playfulness theory, they could reset their writing attitudes from what is sufficient to get an 'A' to what helps them to have copious learning and make associations at ever-higher levels.

Bruner's learning theory highlights on the significance of instruction and spiral curriculum in learning. Fine's Theory of Intellectual Playfulness is subsumed into Bruner's Theory of instruction. This research has adapted four characteristics of Bruner's theory in this study: a) instruction is personalized in the form of a phrase, 'What if...' to make sure it relates to learners' predisposition and facilitate interest towards learning, b) the content is designed with openness to allow students grasp easily and materials utilised in the tasks are relevant and related with students' interest, c) learners must "experience success and failure not as reward and punishment, but as

information” (Bruner 1961, p. 26) and d) spiral curriculum - re-visit ideas and concepts that they have learnt but at an increasingly complex level. The findings in the study has indicated that these four characteristics in Bruner’s theory has facilitated students to have autonomy in their writing.

Together Bruner’s theory and the key dimension of dispositions in intellectual playfulness theory (Figure 5.2) has made some theoretical implications that enabled students to move beyond school performative demand that allow them to have cognitive rigor and engagement as mutual priorities in writing.

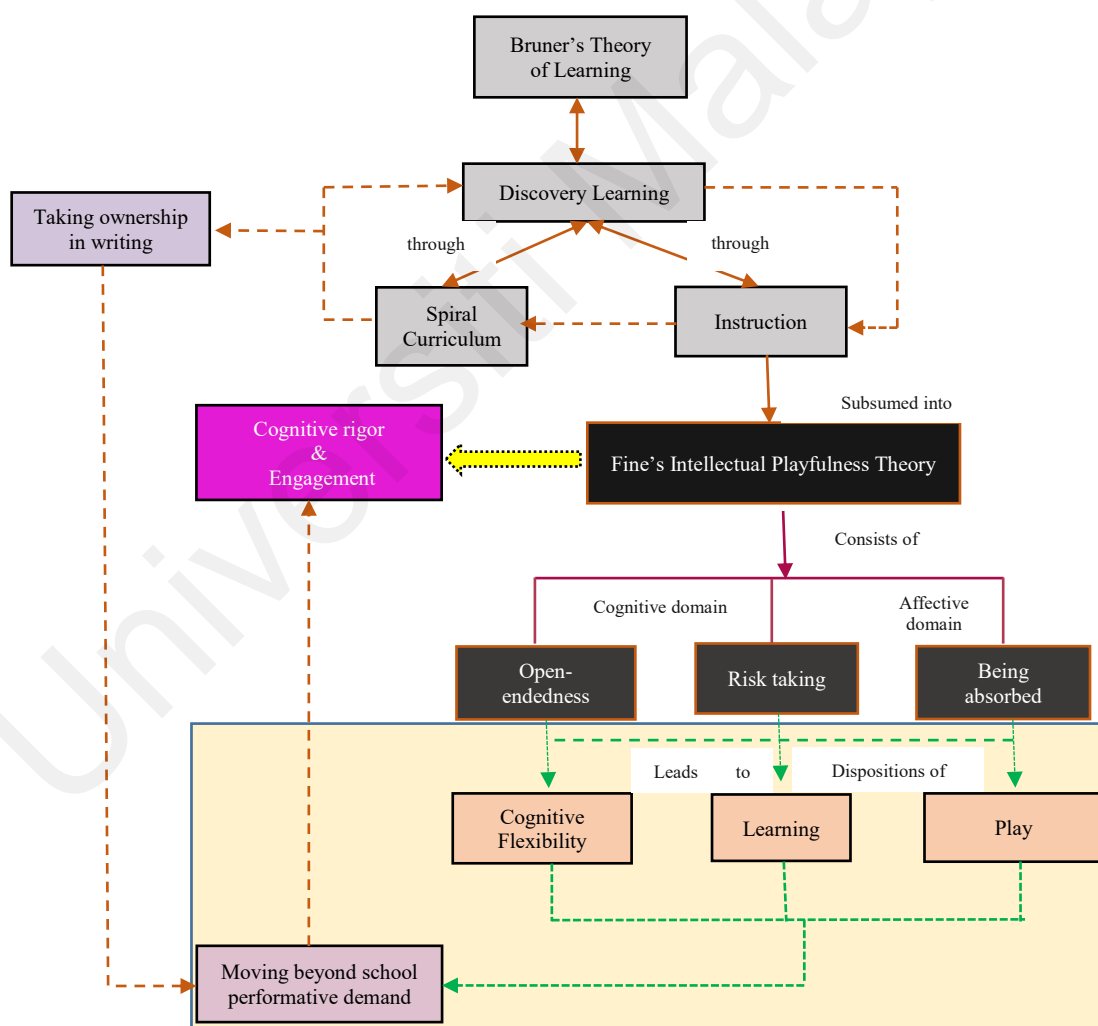


Figure 5.2 Theoretical Implications

5.6 Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations related to this study. Firstly, some methodological limitations with the design of the study. Although the research site is purposively selected for the reasons discussed in Chapter 3, it is nonetheless bounded. This study employs a qualitative research, is conducted in a selected school and consists of a small group of form four students. In other words, the sample is small and purposeful, which has explored only the experiences of particular students on intellectual playfulness in a specific context. The Form Four students are chosen as the research corpus because they are the reflections of the wider population of adolescents in our school system. Therefore, care is needed to be taken in generalising the findings and implications in other settings. For future research, feasibility of extending this study to more secondary schools and students are recommended to determine if similar findings emerge.

In execution of the study, four lessons are planned for this study and conducted over a period of a semester. This is due to the constraint of time to complete the data collection in the duration given because school authorities have their own school programs that involve this high ability students. In this regard, for future research the lessons and duration could be extended to optimise the existence of ‘spiral curriculum’ concept. Though the presence of ‘spiral curriculum’ is visible in this study, more examples would have better amplified this concept of Bruner’s theory. For future research, possibility to extend to more lessons and over a duration of two semesters is recommended hence the spiral curriculum is more noticeable.

There is a lack of study in play/playfulness especially in adolescents learning. This study just begin to scratch the surface. Intellectual playfulness is a concept that has association to playfulness. In literature review of playfulness, Lieberman defines playfulness as spontaneity and manifest joy (1977, p. 23). As seen in Chapter 4,

findings related to intellectual playfulness is related to Lieberman's elements of playfulness. In other words, Lieberman's category of spontaneity and manifest joy appear to correlate with the elements conceptualised in intellectual playfulness. Similarly, Lieberman indicates that cognitive spontaneity is marked by curiosity, inventiveness, imagination, and thinking outside the box which is parallel to the findings of the intellectual playfulness reported in Chapter 4 of this study. One explanation for the similarities between Lieberman's (1977) playfulness and Fine's intellectual playfulness (2014) is both have explored playfulness in the context of educational classrooms.

Lieberman has developed and applied playfulness through observations with kindergarteners, high school students and undergraduate college students. Other play/playfulness presented in the literature review, are not developed in an education context. It is explicable that Lieberman's playfulness is associated to the findings that has emerged from the students in this study because of the similar context. Hence, perhaps for better understanding of intellectual playfulness, more research could be done in adolescent's classroom context as future research in showing relationship of Lieberman's playfulness and Fine's intellectual playfulness. The findings of this study could serve as a foundation for the development of playfulness among adolescents.

To this end, the research has argued the value of intellectual playfulness as a new knowledge concept in terms of its potential contributions to accomplish cognitive rigor and engagement in conventional writing in ESL classroom. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is still much work to be done in transforming this concept into the conventional curriculum modification and assessment. Larger scale studies in a wide diversity of locations is important in constructing on this minor platform on a group of students in one high performing Malaysian school. On the other hand, this research

does emphasize that, intellectual playfulness in conventional writing classroom cannot be demoted to the sideline as either extension programs for high ability students.

6.0 Concluding Remarks

This study has taken its starting point with the paradox of low proficiency students becoming more important and high ability students less relevant in teaching of writing. It concludes by reconsidering this proposals. The findings of this study restate the school and teachers could play a significant role in making a difference in this high ability students' lives and eventually making them to be a writer of the 21st century. At the same time, this study provides particular insights into the ways that intellectual playfulness making sense of cognitive rigor and engagement as mutual supportive priorities in the students learning of writing.

Contrary to a well-known critique, this study shows that high ability students are neither passive nor practise submissive literacy. If given an opportunity, though they are concerned of being in the process of performance goals, on-going change to prevailing intellectual playfulness pedagogical 'farsightedness' qualities has opened up students towards the learning goals principals with their own practices and identities. ESL writing classrooms are not exempted from the challenges of transitions, and it may well be argued in Malaysian writing classroom that high ability students are 'side-lined' as a group of students targeted to produce only 'A' for the schools.

Schools, as a place for education, should not function as an internal 'storage' but have commitments and accountabilities to an extensive range of students that have specific potentials and demands especially as potential writers. Put simply, introducing the concept of intellectual playfulness in ESL writing classroom is an upfront move, but it is one that is necessary in terms of the 'performance goals learning' hitting the road of writing pedagogical practice in schools. The challenge is to introduce the

practice and disposition that are able to be sustained and being relevant to the culture of students than merely making the students to be achievers of 'A' grade in their examination.

This research hopes by doing this, high schools are revitalised to boost the rigor of traditional academic of knowledge in writing and providing opportunities for high ability students to navigate writing with rigor and pleasure in ESL writing classroom. For the policy makers and teachers in education venture, this challenge is essentially difficult and certainly painful, but also convincing and exciting. The farsightedness that we need to seek is to produce high ability students as writers of future and not writers of examinations. Though, in reality some of these high ability students have learned habits of mind that are counterproductive, but it is time to help high ability students to reset their learning attitude towards writing from *this is enough to get an A to I want to learn and make connections at ever-higher levels*.

Finally, a lot of clandestine is still associated with play and writing in general, but in the course of this study it has been exciting to shed some light on the abstract qualities of intellectual playfulness as it interacts with the high ability students in ESL writing classroom which can results in cognitive rigor and engagement in writing. In short, this has led students to move towards achieving learning goals more than performance goals which help them to show their true potentials as talented writers in and out of school.

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