

**PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS ON**  
NARRATIVE MODEL ESSAYS IN AN ESL CLASSROOM

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
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IN AN ESL CLASSROOM

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IN AN ESL CLASSROOM.**

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## ABSTRACT

Writing problems faced by Malaysian primary school pupils have led the teachers to find a way to help them in their writing ability. One of the strategies teachers have had is to use model essays in the writing classroom. This study examines the use of narrative model essays in a writing classroom in a school in Selangor. This study aims to identify the aspects of language which second language learners notice in reference to narrative model essays and gather insights regarding pupils' perceptions on the use of narrative model essays in their narrative essay writing. The theoretical framework that underlines this study is 'Output Hypothesis'. A case study was adopted to investigate how model essays have been used by primary school pupils in a writing classroom. A class of 22 pupils were selected and given a narrative writing task. Their first and second essays as well as annotated model essays were collected and analysed to identify the language aspects they noticed. In view of this, 6 pupils were randomly selected among the 22 pupils to be interviewed on their perspectives of using model essays in the writing classroom. Based on the pupils' written essays and annotated model essays, it was found that the pupils noticed vocabulary the most followed by the other language aspects. In addition, pupils liked using model essays to guide them in their writing. The implications of the findings suggest that teachers can provide model essays prior to their written task and can have discussions in pairs or small groups to give pupils some guidance in their writing. Thus, model essays which serve as a feedback in the writing classroom can help the pupils to enhance their writing skills.

## **PERSEPSI MURID SEKOLAH RENDAH DALAM PENGGUNAAN MODEL ESEI NARATIF DI DALAM BILIK DARJAH ESL**

### **ABSTRAK**

Masalah penulisan esei yang dihadapi oleh murid sekolah rendah di Malaysia telah mendorong para guru untuk mencari jalan bagi membantu mereka dalam penulisan esei. Salah satu strategi yang dimiliki oleh guru adalah penggunaan contoh esei di dalam bilik darjah. Kajian ini meneliti penggunaan contoh esei naratif di dalam bilik darjah di salah sebuah sekolah di Selangor. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti aspek bahasa yang dipelajari oleh murid-murid dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dengan merujuk contoh esei naratif dan mengumpul pandangan murid-murid mengenai persepsi mereka tentang penggunaan contoh esei naratif dalam penulisan esei naratif mereka. Kerangka teori yang mendasari kajian ini adalah “hipotesis output”. Kajian kes telah digunakan untuk menyiasat bagaimana contoh esei digunakan di dalam bilik darjah oleh murid-murid sekolah rendah pada waktu pembelajaran penulisan. Sebuah bilik darjah yang terdiri daripada 22 orang murid telah dipilih dan diberi latihan menulis karangan. Esei pertama dan esei kedua yang ditulis oleh murid-murid tersebut serta contoh esei yang diedarkan telah dianalisis untuk mengenal pasti aspek bahasa yang dipelajari oleh mereka. 6 orang murid telah dipilih secara rawak dalam kalangan 22 orang murid tersebut dan mereka telah ditemuduga mengenai pandangan mereka terhadap penggunaan contoh esei di dalam bilik darjah. Daripada analisa esei bertulis murid dan contoh esei yang diedarkan, didapati murid mempelajari perbendaharaan kata diikuti dengan aspek bahasa yang lain. Di samping itu, murid lebih suka menggunakan contoh esei di dalam bilik darjah bagi membantu mereka dalam penulisan esei. Implikasi dari hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa, para guru dapat melaksanakan pengajaran dan pembelajaran

menulis di dalam bilik darjah dengan mengedarkan contoh esei kepada murid-murid di samping mengadakan perbincangan secara berpasangan atau berkumpul untuk memberi bimbingan kepada mereka dalam penulisan esei mereka. Oleh itu, contoh esei yang berfungsi sebagai bimbingan di dalam bilik darjah dapat membantu murid mempertingkatkan kemahiran penulisan mereka.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as Foreign Language
ESL	English as Second Language
IL	Interlanguage
KSSR	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah
KSSM	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah
L2	Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
PF	Problematic Features
PFN	Problematic Features Noticed
PSAT	Primary School Achievement Test
SBELC	Standards-Based English Language Curriculum
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a compulsory subject taught in Malaysian primary and secondary schools. A good command of English is important for students to gain access to knowledge and information written in English. The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE), in its attempt to reform the Malaysian Education Curriculum, proposed the “Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025” (MOE, 2015). As part of the government’s policy to enhance English, the Blueprint recommended the implementation of *KSSR (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah)* or the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum for Primary Level and *KSSM (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah)* or Secondary School Standards-Based Curriculum for Secondary Level (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009). The Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum has put forth four basic skills in learning English which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Lin and Maarof (2013), of the four-language skills, writing is considered as one of the most important skills, notably in an academic context such as in schools, colleges and institutions of higher learning. Writing triggers thinking, urges students to focus and construct idea and trains their abilities to summarise, analyse and criticise. It also gives importance to consistent learning, thinking and making reflections in English language (Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013). Besides its importance, writing also assists in developing other skills such as listening, speaking and reading as they are all related (Saed & Al-Omari, 2014).

However, writing in a second language (L2) is commonly considered challenging for both second and foreign language learners, since it is generally regarded as the toughest area to learn during the process of language acquisition. Rao (1997) stated that, the writing process requires applying many cognitive and linguistics approaches whereby the students find composing in English complex. Even if they try to produce a piece of writing, their ideas are disorganised because of their ambiguity and anxiety. In the Malaysian context, Mariam (2004) has reported that many learners in Malaysia unable to write fairly well even after eleven years of learning English at both the primary and secondary school levels as they are incapable of developing ideas, presenting them clearly and rationally and organising cohesive paragraphs.

Writing is rather complex because it is inseparable from the other language skills and it also demands in-depth knowledge of grammar, appropriate choice of words or phrases, writing methods, organisational skills and writing approaches (Yunus, Rashidah, Ranjeeta, & Abdullah, 2011). A case study conducted by Darus and Subramaniam (2009) in Selangor on seventy-two secondary school students, revealed that the students had relatively weak vocabulary and the sentences they had written were incomprehensible. They also committed errors in applying sentence structure rules in English Language. Another study which highlighted the weakness of students in writing skills was by Ghabool, Mariadass and Kashef (2012) on 30 upper and lower level secondary school students in Malaysia. They stated that the students' writings are not always clear, the sentences are incomplete and they have problems in developing ideas. This situation emphasises the urge for the teachers to provide students with necessary assistance and guidance to help them in improving their writing skills especially in the form of the narrative style. Narrative writing is a



compulsory writing genre that students should master at the end of their primary education.

Therefore, there have been numerous proposed efforts intended at guiding students to enhance their writing skills specifically when learning a new writing genre. Hyland (2004) states that, there is an increase in the focus of genre application in language teaching and learning. He further claimed that genre-based pedagogies propose principled ways of helping the teachers to provide the learners with intended, appropriate and supportive teaching. According to Bawarshi and Reiff (2010), learning a new genre can be difficult for the novice writers as they need to understand the conventions associated with the genre. One of the ways the teachers preferred in assisting students in learning a genre is the use of model texts in the teaching and learning process (Macbeth, 2010). Moreover, Hedge (2000) claims that, model essays can function as an important source in teaching rhetoric. In the Malaysian context, implementation of only one approach in the ESL classroom is not effective as there are students of mixed abilities that vary very extensively. As such, the teachers of primary and secondary schools try to practise many approaches to fulfill the students' various needs. In this case, using model essays is one of the main practises applied in the Malaysian English classroom (Badger & White, 2000). Therefore, in order to enlighten the task of teaching writing and to ease the task of the teachers in introducing essays of many genres, teachers use model essays in the classroom. In short, model essays are used as a strategy to teach students writing skills in the classroom.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The use of model essays in a writing classroom has also been suggested by some researchers. According to them, students are allowed to compare their written output to model essays which are written by native speakers (Hanaoka & Izumi, 2012). Model essays provide students with a broad range of vocabulary, phrases and sentence structures. When students compare these with their own writing, they are able to engage in a more meaningful learning process as opposed to the traditional teacher correction strategies (Qi & Lapkin, 2001). Hyland (1998) further claims that, the quantity of written marks on a task produced by learners are often confusing and make it difficult for them to identify the focus of the target language. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) points out that, exposing students to various types of reading texts or materials is necessary in acquiring writing skills. Hence, reading materials such as model essays which are given prior to their writing tasks will ease the students' fear of writing.

Although model essays seem practical in a classroom of mixed ability that vary so extensively and they help students to overcome their writing anxiety, the students' use of model essays during the writing classroom need to be investigated. The students' engagement with model essays given to them prior to the writing activity in class still remains unclear. Model essays provide significant input to students as they are selected examples of skilful writing (Watson, 1982). However, not many studies have explored how model essays serve the pupils' need and why model essays have been used among primary school pupils. The use of models is a relatively under-explored strategy for providing feedback on learners' second language errors (Canocas Guirao, Roca de Larios & Coyle, 2015). They claim that since model essays are shown before the writing task, they might copy them and they may not have engaged in a process of noticing, which is essential for language learning. Therefore, sufficient

evidence is required to make clearer declarations about the use of model essays among second language learners, especially primary school pupils. Without further investigation on how model essays influence pupils' writing and learning in the classroom, claims on effectiveness of the model essays in the classroom still remain unclear. Furthermore, how pupils utilise and engage themselves with the model essays need to be investigated because if there are any drawbacks on the use of model essays which are not identified, they might influence the pupils' writing skills. Moreover, how learning occurs among the primary school pupils when they are given model essays is an issue that needs to be uncovered because pupils depend on these model essays rather than the teachers in the writing classroom.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Writing is an essential skill because it assists students to understand ideas and concepts better as well as promotes extensive learning (Chow, 2007). Since writing is one of the essential skills to be mastered in all stages of learning, importance should be given to it as early as possible in order to contribute to the future success of pupils. According to Nair (as cited in Len, 2009), studies have shown that writing is less complex for those who expose themselves to a lot of reading materials. Therefore, teachers can use model essays in the classroom to give an opportunity for pupils to read the examples of the writing task they intend to teach. Besides, how pupils engage and perceive model essays in their writing need to be investigated and, in an attempt, to contribute to existing research, this study is conducted. In view of this, the present study that uses narrative modal essays as a tool highlights specific objective as follows:

- i. To identify aspects of language that L2 learners notice from the narrative model essays in an ESL classroom.

- ii. To gather insights regarding pupils' perceptions on the use of narrative model essays in their narrative essay writing tasks in an ESL classroom.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the specific objectives identified, this study sets to explore the following questions:

- i. What aspects of language do L2 learners notice from the narrative model essays in an ESL classroom?
- ii. How do the pupils perceive narrative model essays in an ESL classroom?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study carried out on the use of narrative model essays in a writing classroom is important as the outcome of this study would benefit several groups in the teaching and learning environment. First, this study would disclose how pupils engage and perceive model essays in the classroom. Apart from this, if the findings of the study indicate that providing model essays is beneficial as a strategy to help pupils in their writing process, this method can be recommended to teachers to be implemented in schools for the better development of pupils' writing skills in English. The outcome of this study would also provide the teachers with knowledge on how model essays are being perceived by the pupils in the classrooms. It may encourage other English teachers to use model essays in their classroom. Furthermore, teachers can widen their selection of model essays to other genres as well without limiting it to narrative model essays.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

According to Krashen (1985), the only way a learner can acquire a second language is through the comprehensible input. His Input Hypothesis states that the target language is acquired when the learner understands the language input given to him. In addition, the input given must be just “a little beyond” to the students’ language knowledge at that moment. However, Swain (1985) proposed the Output Hypothesis and states that speaking and writing in a second language is considered as an important part of the acquisition process. She states that, learning happens when a learner confronts a gap in his or her knowledge of second language. Thereafter, the learner becomes mindful and would be able to change or modify his output. This process of changing or modifying the output produced, is referred as to learning. He or she learns something new about the language that lead them to produce what has been acquired. Ellis (1995) affirms that, “no noticing, no acquisition” (p. 89). Figure 1.1 shows the theoretical framework of this study which was developed by Ellis (1997).

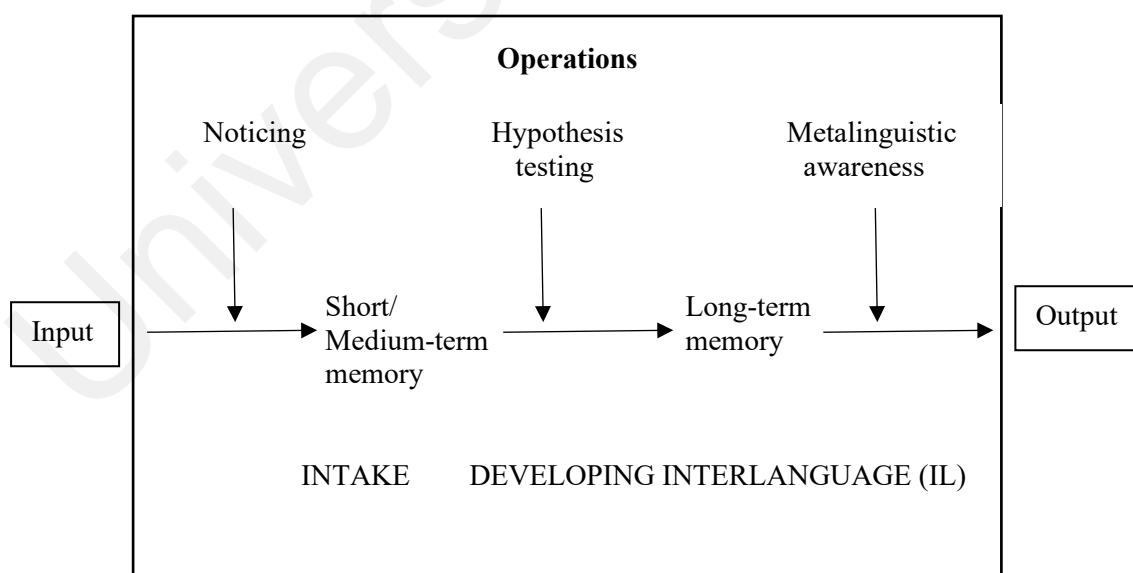
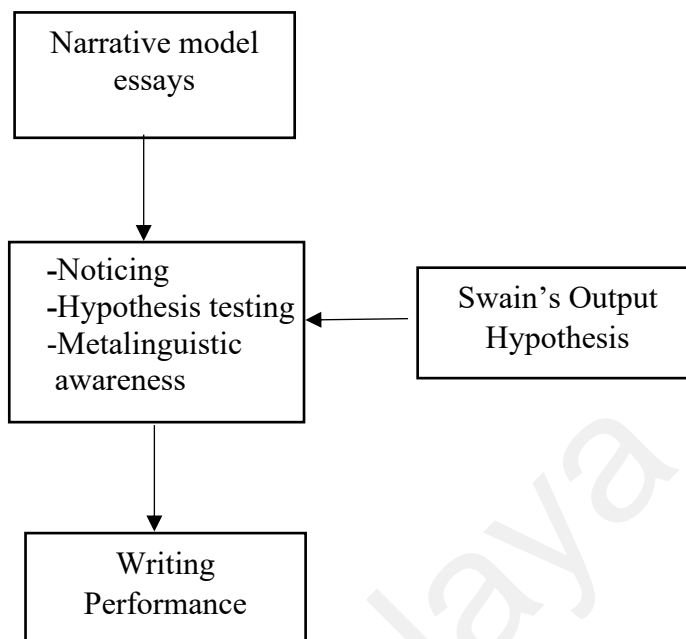


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework of Output Hypothesis (Adapted from Ellis, (1997))

According to Swain (1985), there are three specific functions of output. They are the noticing, the hypothesis-testing and the metalinguistic awareness. The first function which is the noticing function, refers to awareness or 'noticing' that the students gain when they are unable to verbally express or write their intention clearly and specifically. The hypothesis-testing function implies that learners can use the of "trial and error" procedure for testing his/her writing tasks with the intention to receive feedback. Also, by verbally expressing the content, or writing, the learner is actually testing this hypothesis and receives feedback from someone who is superior to him. Superior refers to someone who is excellent in the language that the learner is learning. The third function which is metalinguistic awareness, happens when the learners contemplate on the language they learn and thereby, the output allows them to control and incorporate the language knowledge. Swain (1985) does not challenge that output enables the learners to be competent in the language, but sometimes under certain conditions, output promotes second language learning in a way that the learners tend to enhance the input given to them and this, in turn allows the development of the interlanguage (IL) system. Swain (1985), asserts that, constant practice enables the learner to be conscious of his or her writing production. Hence, feedback is vital because it allows the learner to have a sound connection with the target language. According to Sachs and Polio (2007), model essays which serve as a feedback in the classroom, may assist learners in noticing the differences between their written output and the model essays. It allows the learners to confirm or disconfirm certain rules of language, which promote the learning process. The notion of input hypothesis and output hypothesis will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

## **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study draws upon Swain's three functions of Output Hypothesis. First, the pupils notice the writing problems that they encountered when producing output (a piece of writing). Then, they use the procedure of 'trial and error' to learn through his or her own production and hoping to receive feedback to help him/her in his/her writing skills. Model essays which are given to them, can function as a feedback in the classroom and help pupils to improve their writing skills. Third, they reflect on the writing skills learned and the output enables them to control and internalise the writing skills acquired. These functions of Output Hypothesis are vital in learning a second language. Model essays as a feedback tool in the classroom can serve as a beneficial strategy in helping pupils to learn writing skills in the second language that they need to acquire in primary school. According to Eschholz (as cited in Abe, 2008), what L2 learners write relies on what they read and they can enhance their L2 writing skills by reading. He also states that, exposure to varieties of model essays can eventually allow the learners to acquire and apply rhetorical modes in their writing. As such, this study, is an attempt to investigate how model essays are perceived by primary school pupils in the classroom and how model essays as a strategy influence the pupils' writing skills in the classroom. Figure 1.2 shows the conceptual framework of this study as explained earlier.



*Figure 1.2* Conceptual Framework of this study using the genre approach

### **1.8 Limitation of the Study**

This research investigates the use of model essays in guiding pupils in narrative writing genre which requires pupils to be able to recount their own experiences or past situations. Thus, the findings of the study cannot be seen as the whole performance of pupils in their writing ability since they have to learn other writing approaches as well. Besides that, this study focuses on a target group of pupils which is National-type Tamil medium primary school pupils. As a result, the participants adopted in this study decreases the generalisability of the findings as it does not include National type or private school pupils. Moreover, this study investigates the use of model essays in guiding pupils to produce written work independently. Hence, the results may vary if the strategy used in composing essays is different in the writing classroom. However, findings from this study would provide insight into the learning and teaching of writing in English language especially in composing a narrative essay in the writing classroom.



## 1.9 Definition

Definitions of the terms used in the study are given below.

- i. **First Language or L1.** A person's first language or L1 is the language that they had learned first; it is usually their mother tongue; one's native language (Nordquist, 2017). In most cases, the term *native language* refers to the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives.
- ii. **Interlanguage.** Refers to the systematic knowledge of language which is independent of both the learner's native language and the target language (Selinker, 1972).
- iii. **Model Essays.** Example of specific writing quality provided by professional authors and teachers that are used for pedagogical purposes. Model essays can provide accurate details about the forms and fictions of syntactical and lexical features of a particular task in writing (Nordin & Mohammad, 2006). This will help the students to gain important input to learn writing about a specific task that the teacher intended to teach.
- iv. **Narrative Essay.** Teele (2004) explains that the narrative is a form of speaking or writing that tells a story. Elements of a narrative essay include beginning, characters, setting, conflict, plot and ending (Zhang & Hoosain, 2001).
- v. **Primary Education.** Primary school education is compulsory in Malaysia, where a child enters primary school at age 7 for a period of 6 years. Following education in the communal language of their choice they must

sit for their primary school achievement test in order to qualify for further education.

- vi. **Second Language or L2.** Second language or L2 is a language that is not the native language of the speaker, but it is used in the locale of that person for important purposes (Nordquist, 2017). A second language is learned in addition to one's native language, especially in the context of second language acquisition to fulfill the demand of the current time and society.
- vii. **Target Language.** The target language is a language that a non-native speaker is in the process of learning.
- viii. **Writing Classroom.** A formal situation where children learn to express their ideas in words that can be read and understood.

#### **1.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided the background and the statement of problem of the study followed by the purpose and significance of the study. Moreover, the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study have been presented together with its limitation and definitions. Chapter 2 comprises of literature and past studies relevant to this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses theories and empirical studies related to model essays as teaching techniques in language acquisition. In the first section of this chapter, theories which are relevant to language acquisitions are reviewed. Moreover, discussions are presented on how these theories are related to model essays that teachers use in the writing classroom. The second section of this chapter presents the literature review and empirical studies of model essays in language classroom settings.

#### 2.2 Theoretical Perspectives

##### 2.2.1 Input hypothesis.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis is derived from its initial version, the Monitor Theory. The Monitor Theory consists of five hypotheses, specifically, the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. As far as this research is concerned, Input Hypothesis is much more significant as compared to the other four. Krashen's Input Hypothesis states that second language acquisition (SLA) takes place when the learner understands the input given which is a little advance than his or her current level of acquired competence (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). According to him, Input Hypothesis is fundamental to the whole of acquisition process as second language acquisition relies heavily upon comprehensible input. Comprehensible input is language knowledge that can be understood by listeners or readers. Providing learners with this kind of input, assists them in acquiring the language naturally, rather than grasp it consciously. Thus, there is no doubt that Krashen's Input Hypothesis still has immense value among language teachers as the teachers' primary purpose is to ensure

that learners obtain comprehensible input by giving them listening and reading materials. However, the role of input has been questioned since Swain (1985, 1998) conducted a research and examined a group of students in Canada and found that the students were indicated a serious lack in displaying correct grammatical ability despite having developed adequate fluency to speak in their L2. Thus, she concluded that comprehensible input alone is inadequate for acquiring L2.

### **2.2.2 Output hypothesis.**

The Canadian researcher Merrill Swain developed and put forward the Output Hypothesis. Swain (1993) had conducted a study on Canadian students in an immersion program which proposed that students would be able to achieve native-like levels of competency in L2 only through exposure to “comprehensible input”. In this way, grammar should be taught throughout the L2. Consequently, the students will achieve high levels in content and proficiency in the second language acquisition (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). However, the immersion students performed in a native-like manner in listening and reading but they failed to do so in speaking and writing. Swain and Lapkin (1995) stated that this occurred because the students lacked opportunities in producing the language. Swain proposed the Output Hypothesis which claimed that “through producing language, either spoken or written, language acquisition/learning may happen” (Swain, 1993, p. 159). She stated that language acquisition takes place through producing spoken or written language. Thus, according to Swain, in the process of second language learning there are four ways where output might play a role in L2 acquisition.

Output plays its first role through the production of language in which it provides learners the opportunity to apply their linguistic resources in a useful way. Thus, this allows the automaticity progress in their use. Under these circumstances,

fluency is much more crucial than accuracy. It is because fluency is achieved through the frequent use of language. Therefore, teachers should give more space for the students to speak the language in the classroom. However, Swain stated that speaking just for the sake of speaking is not adequate. Here, Output plays its second role through the production of language in which learners are forced to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing. According to Krashen, 1982 (as cited in Swain, 1993), learners do not apply syntax in understanding. Instead, they try to comprehend the message with a combination of vocabulary, or lexical information with extra-linguistic data. Specifically, producing language enable learners to identify what they do not know or what they partially know. The third way in which output plays a role through production of language is through hypothesis testing, whereby, learners try out means of expression to see if they function. This proposes that learners make use of their linguistics resources to generate new knowledge by the method of “trial and error”. The final method where output plays its role is through feedback. Feedback permits users of the language or interlocutors to create responses which provides learners with defined information of their utterances. The forms of feedback given are confirmation checks, clarification requests as well as implicit or explicit corrections. Swain (1993) asserted that feedback allow learners to change or alter their output. In Swain’s Output Hypothesis, feedback is regarded as vital in language learning process. Therefore, in the present study the model essays which will be given to the pupils, function as feedback. Writing, which requires learners to produce output, allow learners to notice differences between their interlanguage and the target language when they receive feedback. Model essays as a feedback technique which provide input give learners the opportunities to focus their attention on the differences between their written output and native models.

Abe (2008) studied the role of model essays in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) on fourteen Japanese ESL learners aged between twenty-one to thirty-five. They were grouped into more proficient or less proficient learners based on their learning experiences and IELTS scores. The data was collected in three stages and each participant was asked to write two essays. The initial stage was writing the essays for more than an hour followed by the second stage which allows the participants to compare their essays with the model essays. The third stage was the interview session with the participants. The writing test was on two types of writing genres: descriptive and argumentative essays. The essays were analysed based on lexical, form, discourse and content categorisation: lexical - word selection and expression; form - articles, plural, sentence structure, verb form, tense, prepositions, comparative and superlative, punctuation, and spelling; discourse - logical sequencing (cohesion and coherence), organisation of paragraphs, inter-sentential relationship, and cohesive devices; content - own opinions, knowledge, experiences, evidences, counter-evidences and supportive ideas. The results showed that lexical and content were the two top categories which were noticed by the participants. They noticed more context appropriate and academic words and also observed the necessity of using different words and expressions. A few participants were able to pay attention to the sentence and paragraphing cohesion. The result indicated that model essays could be a useful resource for encouraging L2 learners to notice various aspects of language.

Hanaoka (2007) studied the usefulness of model texts in triggering noticing and filling gaps on thirty-seven Japanese EFL students from two different classes and departments in a university. The first class is the most advanced class with seventeen students while the second one is the intermediate level class with twenty students. The data was collected through 4 stages of writing tasks consisting of composition,

comparison and revision. In the first stage (pre-test) which lasted for 15 to 18 minutes, the participants were asked to write a narrative essay while taking notes on the problems they encountered during the composition process. In stage two, which was employed immediately after the first stage, the students were given model essays which they compared with their original text. They were asked to write anything and everything that they noticed, and they were given 10 minutes at this stage to complete the task. They were told to rewrite their original text on a new sheet in stage three and it took about 13 to 15 minutes to end the task. In the stage four, (delayed post-test) which was conducted more than two months later, they received their initial draft and were asked to rewrite the narrative essay. They were given 15 minutes for the test. The study revealed that during the stage 2, the students noticed the lexical items the most and content features accounted for nearly 30% of the participants' noticing. Moreover, through a survey conducted on eagerness in reading the model essays, the students indicated a strong desire to study the model essays. This indicated that model essays which serve as input do help students in promoting noticing of language aspects especially in drawing their attention to the content of their writing tasks.

According to Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), it is impractical for learners to pick up writing skills without being exposed to diverse types of reading texts. Moreover, they pointed out that writing skills are not something to be obtained merely by writing. In order to notice the existing gaps in their IL, L2 learners need to compare their own writing with related models since this cognitive comparison assists them in noticing the gaps in their IL. Nevertheless, Goby (1997) claimed that, model essays hinder L2 learners from developing their creativity, which she trusts is one of the crucial aspects of L2 writing. In addition, the learners tend to focus on form instead of the content. While Goby points out that model essays do not help the learners in improving their

writing skills in terms of creativity, she does indirectly admit that model essays do improve their writing skills as learners will memorise certain sentence forms. Ding (2007) stated that, learners should be encouraged to memorise and learn the words and sentences in the input given as it will help them to improve the quality of their output.

### **2.3 Genre Approach**

Since the mid-1980s, there had been great interest in genre-based approaches to the teaching of language (Henry & Roseberry, 1998). This approach which was derived from a work of Halliday (1985), Swales (1981, 1990), and Bhatia (1991,1993) has a communicative purpose. A genre is a text, either spoken or written, that presents an aim in a society and comprises a series of segments, called moves (Henry & Roseberry, 1998). The moves in a genre are categorised as obligatory, in which they are essential to attain the communicative purpose, while others are optional whereby the users may select if they wish to include those moves to increase the efficacy of the communication without altering the purpose of the text (Hassan, 1989). The moves have its own purpose and support the understanding of the overall communicative objective of the genre.

#### **2.3.1 Genre approaches to writing.**

Tuffs (1993) states two reasons for the specific interest in genre approach to teach writing skills. Firstly, a genre-based approach plays a significant role in providing the learners with ideas on how to reproduce the expected genre. Moreover, instead of relying on the hours of explanation on the genre, a genre-approach is a more useful starting point to identify the elements of the writing within a defined genre. Secondly, learners might intentionally replicate certain written genres such as reports and letters in a business situation as well as essays and projects in an academic setting. Davies (1988) claims that, recognising and reproducing genres may be crucial for the



achievement or failure of a student within an academic setting such as schools or colleges. Genre-based pedagogy has developed as the most favoured alternative to the broadly used process approach ever since the paradigm shift had occurred in approaches to teaching L2 writing over the last fifteen years (Cheng, 2006). According to Tribble (1996), process approach emphasises the teaching of writing which include the creativity of the individual learner and attention given on the progress of proficient writing practices rather than the imitation of model essays. However, when ESL or EFL students enter the classroom with knowledge of writing skills of other languages, writing appears to be a challenging task especially when they have to learn specific structures for academic purposes. Under these circumstances, the learners cannot be expected to be aware of the genres which they are expected to write. Hyland (2003) asserts that without being exposed to various genres in the writing classroom, the teachers cannot expect the learners to be familiar with these genres. It is then the teacher's duty to provide the knowledge of genre through reading materials and structured lessons, which allow the learners to examine the various genres available.

In a genre approach, teaching genres offers both learners and teachers with diverse aspects of writing and it also offers strategies that will eventually bring them progress (Hyland, 2003). He further claims that genre-based teaching reinforces students' knowledge by presenting a "contextual framework for writing which foregrounds the meanings and text-types at stake in a situation" (p. 27). A genre-based framework presents structures that are in place and they enable the writers to enhance their writing skills by giving a deeper understanding of how texts are formed in different writing tasks for different learners. A learner must comprehend the structures and the proposed characteristics of the writing task that the learner is addressing in

order to become successful writers. This awareness can be achieved in a genre-based writing class.

Henry and Roseberry (1998) conducted a study on thirty-four first year university students which was aimed to discover the effectiveness of genre-based instruction in teaching writing. The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of a genre-based approach in the writing of short tourist information texts in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The students were divided into an experimental group where they used genre-based material in learning and a control group where they exploited the more traditional approach modelled on the same genre. They were given a pre-test followed by 6 hours of teaching over a three-week period and they sat for the same test again after the lesson was conducted. The post-test scores of the learners in the genre group were higher than the non-genre group of learners. The results had significantly shown that there is an impact of improvement in using genre-based texts in writing classrooms.

Zurdianto (2016) conducted a study in Indonesia on genre-based approaches in teaching narrative writing for lower secondary students. It was an action research which was carried out in two phases. Each phase comprised modelling, joint planning and independent writing. Observations, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data from the two phases. At the first stage, the narrative model texts were presented and analysed by the teacher with the students using different activities. The second stage required the whole class to contribute and organise ideas into writing. Thereafter, they worked in groups to generate ideas, gather and organise texts and also to analyse each other's views. During the third stage, the students were given time to construct individual texts based on the discussion they had in class and groups. The findings revealed that the three stages of learning writing narrative texts helped the

students to discover essential information needed for writing a narrative text. Moreover, the data collected through the interviews showed that the students felt comfortable, happy and enjoyed learning writing using the genre-based approach. The findings from the writing test showed that there is a significant improvement in the second phase of writing test where all the students scored better compared to the first phase test.

#### **2.4 Second Language Writing**

Second language (SL) writing refers to writing skills lessons executed by non-native speakers or writers of a language as a second language or foreign language (Grabe, 2001). Myles (2002), added that SL writing includes composing, which refers to the skill to state or restate information gathered in the form of narratives or description or to change information into new content, as in expository or argumentative writing. Writing has been considered as the toughest skill to be learned and taught. According to Alsamadani (as cited in Javid & Umar, 2014), “writing is a difficult, challenging and complicated process” (p.53) because it involves many skills such as writing thesis statements, creating evidence, explaining the topic sentences, revising it and editing the work. This complication in the writing process also makes writing the toughest skill to be taught in schools. Moreover, Yunus and Chien (2016) insisted that since writing is interrelated to other language skills, it needs a wide knowledge of grammar, appropriate choice of words or phrases, writing method, strategic skills and writing styles. They also agreed that writing is rather difficult to acquire compared to other language skills in English. This opinion also has been conveyed by Nunan (1999) who claims that producing a rational and fluent extended piece of writing in a writing classroom is the most difficult task to achieve.

#### **2.4.1 Writing problems in Malaysian schools.**

English is taught as a second language in Malaysia. The mastery of English language is crucial for students not only to score in examinations but to obtain knowledge and information written in English. Among the four skills taught in English (listening, speaking, reading and writing), writing has been the most challenging task for pupils to acquire. Nunan (1999) also expressed a similar view by stating that the most challenging task in writing is to deliver a comprehensible and fluent piece of writing. Even if students try to produce a piece of writing, their ideas are disorganised because of their ambiguity and anxiety. According to Firmansyah (2015), the major problems encountered by students in writing are their inability to produce ideas, complication in creating paragraphs aligned with the topic and struggle in picking up the right vocabulary. Yunus and Chien (2016), stated that the difficulties faced by the students could be due to teaching approaches employed by the teachers, the various types of feedback students receive from the teachers and books or limited opportunities to practice writing.

Rosli Talif and Malachi Edwin (1989) from University Putra Malaysia had conducted a study in rural and urban schools in Selangor entitled “Error Analysis of Form Four English Compositions.” Their study aimed to find out the types of errors that students make in written compositions. This study was restricted to grammar items such as verb forms, passive voice, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, pronouns and plurality. They discovered that the use of tenses is a major problem for students when it comes to composing essays. Moreover, the highest percentage of errors in the combined data of rural and urban schools is in the verb forms. The study urges the teachers to focus their attention on students’ writing compositions. Norhayati Haji Mohd Wahi (2002) from the Faculty of Languages, UPSI had carried out a

research on Form 4 Malay students in selected schools in Klang. Her research entitled “A Study of Error Analysis of the Most Common Grammatical Error in Constructing Sentences”, discovered some forms of common grammatical errors from 40 compositions scripts. The sequences of their errors were as follows: verb-tenses (36.6%), subject-verb agreement (26.6%), articles (18.6 %), pronouns (10.4 %), preposition (5.8%) and conjunction (2.0%).

Writing problems can occur at any level of a learner’s learning career (Hidayah, 2013). In the study conducted by him on 53 students who had enrolled in the TESL programme in one of the local universities in Malaysia, many students committed errors involving grammatical items, such as subject-verb agreement, tenses, parts of speech and vocabulary. The errors committed were due to a lack of knowledge and competence in English, influence of the mother tongue, loanwords and a serious lack of exposure of the use of the English Language. Some suggestions were proposed to address these problems and one of them is to give ample exercises and practises to students. These can be made through exposure to good writing materials which can be implemented in the writing classroom. Based on their research entitled “Grammar Errors Made by ESL Tertiary Students in Writing”, Swaran Singh, Jageer Singh, Abdul Razak and Ravinthar (2017), had collected one hundred and forty-four written essays of Diploma students who sat for a university entrance examination. Here, nine types of errors were identified based on the students’ written work. One of the most common errors found was in the students’ construction of complex sentences and they were also not consistent in writing sentences in their essays. The results also revealed that the students displayed a sense of confusion in choosing words and spelling. This research uncovered the fact that despite being exposed to writing in English in their primary and secondary schooling experience, these students have poor

command of the English Language. Finally, Vethamaiccam and Ganapathy (2017), had performed a study on form one Chinese students in a private Chinese school in Penang. In general, this study highlighted that the students faced difficulties in writing. The data gathered from the interview sessions disclosed that lacking interest in the writing component, unfocused attention and interference of the mother tongue are the main causes of their writing disability. Using creative and fun ways to teach writing and encouragement from the tutors are among the suggestions proposed that can help students in their writing. Providing model essays with picture prompts to primary school pupils can evoke interest among them to learn writing. Moreover, the model essays can be a supportive tool where the primary school pupils can refer and learn with besides the teacher's guidance or encouragement.

A wide vocabulary acquisition is essential as vocabulary plays an important part in determining one's ability to comprehend and produce language. Poor performance in English can be associated with vocabulary deficiency especially for primary school pupils. A study entitled "Measuring Lubok Antu's Year Six Primary School Pupils' Vocabulary Use" was conducted by Ma'mor and Yamat (2017) in Sarawak. The study was aimed at investigating the vocabulary usage of primary school pupils. A total of 116 standard six pupils from seven different rural schools were recruited for this study. The pupils' two written essays from their Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Assessment) trial writing paper were used to measure their vocabulary usage. The results showed that the pupils were able to meet the word requirement for the essays, but they had a tendency to recycle the words in their essays. In other words, they simply applied words which are familiar to them. They merely kept repeating the vocabulary just to fulfil the demand of the task and it indicated the pupils' inability to use new or varied words in their essays. Acquisition

of a wide range of vocabulary is essential for the successful use of second language and plays a fundamental role in the development of spoken and written texts (Nation, 2011). Model essays presented to novice writers in primary school can become good reading materials for them to acquire a wide range of vocabulary.

## **2.5 Model Essays**

Charney and Carlson (1995) define a model essay as a text written by native or native-like proficient writers, in each situation, bearing in mind learners' age, proficiency level and complexity which features a genre that can be generalised across writers in the same situation. Commonly, they are good examples of writing provided by teachers, instructors or by textbooks in a writing classroom for learners to read and follow. Through reading model essays, L2 students can become familiar with a particular genre, namely, description, narration, contrast and comparison, exposition and argumentation and to obtain specific information from specified writing works to be able to take actions within the genre (Miller, 1984). As Hillocks (1986) claims, "In order to write an essay of a given type, the writer must be familiar with examples of the type and know the parts of the type and their relationship" (p.154). Model essays provide students with the necessary guidance and ideas to begin their written task (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 2005). According to them, reading the model essays would help the students to understand strategies and identify the important aspects the writer had used in the written composition. Additionally, it broadens students' writing proficiency by triggering their awareness of various options in writing. Throughout the process of referring to the model essays, students will be aware of the writing rhetoric and the organisational framework which will allow the students to acquire the strategies of planning or arranging ideas during writing and the flow of the language that should be applied to present the ideas during the writing process. According to

Paulston (as cited in Len, 2009), model essays make prominent contribution to the teaching of writing to second language learners as some learners' face difficulty in handling writing in English due to cultural differences in academic writing. He further states that familiarisation with various types of writing styles and structures will develop schemata in the students' memory and will allow them to understand and interpret writing styles in the English language.

Since there is a strong relationship between reading and writing, researchers argue that L2 learners should be encouraged to use model essays to improve their writing skills. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) state that, L2 writers must be exposed to diverse types of reading materials since it is not easy to learn L2 writing skills merely by writing without appropriate exposure to them. Eschholz (1980) points out that reading helps learners in their writing skills and what L2 learners write depends on what they read consistently. He also added that, if opportunities are given to the L2 learners to absorb rhetorical modes, they can eventually apply the knowledge of those in their writing. Model essays provide significant input to students as they are selected examples of skilful writing (Watson, 1982). He further argues that model essays are effective in presenting to the learners on how proficient writing is carried out. However, Macbeth (2010) criticise this and states that, even though model essays are the essence or examples of good writing that help students, especially novice writers to start writing, they can lead to merely copying of the content. The results from her study showed that students who followed model essays could not write interesting introduction for their essays. The model essays were misused by some students though they were aimed to provide some guidelines and to help them progress in their independent writing task. Some students copied the content without paying attention to the meaning of it. Despite the flaws in using the model essays in the writing



classroom, there were students who benefited from the model essays. Thus, Macbeth (2010) suggested that, teachers' guidance is important to ensure that the students understand the necessary adaptation or changes needed to be done before beginning the writing activity.

Based on the above-mentioned review, model essays can be viewed as a beneficial feedback tool to teach writing. Since, the students' errors are not highlighted in a straightforward manner, they are encouraged to actively notice their own errors, an action that may lead to deeper processing (Sachs & Polio, 2007). Model essays can be used as a starting point for students to learn how to write. Myles (2002) states that, feedback is the most meaningful part of writing and improvement in the field of writing is impossible without being given any kind of feedback. Thus, providing students with necessary assistance and guidance such as providing model essays will help them improve their writing skills. Hence, model essays can function as a feedback tool to address learners' output problems in writing.

### **2.5.1 Model essays as a feedback tool.**

Hanaoka (2007) conducted a study on thirty-seven Japanese English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners to explore how learners process models of writing. The participants engaged in a multiple stage writing task consisting of composition, comparison and revision. The learners independently noticed their linguistic problems on grammar and content while writing a composition and enthusiastically attempted to solve the problems by using a model text provided to them at the comparison stage and included them in the subsequent revisions as well. Hanaoka's research proves that model essays drive a learner into noticing linguistics problems. Martínez Esteban and Roca de Larios (2010), partially replicated Hanaoka's (2007) research. They examined the role of model essays with 17 Spanish secondary school students in a three-stage

writing task. The results showed that less than half of the participants' output problems had been solved from the model essays and the participants spotted solutions for their problems in less than half the time given.

In another study by Yang and Zhang (2010), two types of feedback, reformulation (native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text while keeping the content of the original intact) and model texts were employed on ten university students' writing performance in an EFL writing class in a Beijing University. Here, three stages of writing activity namely composing (stage 1), comparing (stage 2) and post-test (stage 3) were administered. Students were placed in pairs regardless of their language proficiency. In the first stage, the pairs were requested to write a narrative based on the picture prompt given. During the second stage, they were given their original essay, reformulated version of their essay and model texts. Students were required to compare and discuss the differences between their written texts, the reformulated version of their essay and the model texts. This study integrated pair discussions, reformulations and model essays at the comparison stage. Then, two weeks later, the post-test was conducted where the students were required to write the same essay independently. Then, interviews were carried out to elicit their attitudes towards this approach. This study showed supportive results with regards to both types of feedback. The students demonstrated their appreciation of having opportunities to access a native model text which brought them a broad range of language input. The study documented better written output which was rich in native-like language use and was helpful in contributing with alternative vocabulary and expressions for learners to use that was not found in their initial writing work. However, it must be noted that students' performance on narrative writing might be influenced by pair discussions, reformulated versions of their essays and model essays which were given at stage 2.

The role of the model text is not explored independently. Thus, this study currently aims to investigate the use of model essays on narrative writing.

However, all these studies were concerned with adult learners. Child L2 learners have been given less importance or interest. One of the few studies concerning child L2 learners was carried out by Coyle and Roca de Larios (2014). Their study compared two forms of feedback (teachers' error correction and model texts) on 11- and 12-year-old L2 learners of English as a foreign language in their collaborative writing task. The students were paired according to their proficiency levels and participated in three stages of activities: (a) noticing of linguistic problems while writing essays, (b) comparison of their written output with the feedback provided, (c) rewriting their original output. The results showed that both types of feedback (teachers' error correction and model texts) had a positive influence on their revised written output. However, the linguistic features noticed by the teachers' error correction's group was higher than the model texts group. The difficulty in understanding the language and content of the model texts was one of the flaws which has been stated by the researcher. Model texts which tailored to the competence level of children are important to deepen the understanding of the language through noticing (Qi & Lapkin, 2001). This present study has an important significance as it focuses on primary school children. Adults can be said to have more metalinguistic awareness since they have fully mastered their first language, whereas, children are in the process of improving both their first and second languages at the same time. Model texts which suite the age and language proficiency of the children are the most important criteria to look into when conducting research on model essays. Thus, appropriate model texts which suite the language proficiency of this National type Tamil medium primary school pupils had been employed in this current study.

Canocas Guirao, Roca de Larios and Coyle (2015), conducted a study in Spain to examine the role of model texts as a written corrective feedback technique. The participants were twenty Grade five EFL child learners (aged 10-11). The data was collected through three different stages; composing (stage 1), comparing (stage 2) and rewriting (stage 3). The participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group to isolate the effects of the model texts. Both the groups performed the first and third stage while only the experimental group accomplished the second stage. The results showed that models were useful in attracting children's attention in acquiring unfamiliar words, phrases and sentence structure. The high proficiency pairs noticed more features in the model texts than the average and low proficiency learners. However, the study focuses on the effect of model texts on young learners through collaborative writing style with proficiently matched pairs. The influence of model texts on an independent writing task remains unclear. This present study has taken individual differences into account as perceptions and experiences from different levels of proficiency learners were gathered and analysed.

Khotimah, Bukhari Daud and Burhansyah (2017) administered a study on third grade students to find out whether pictures are helpful in improving the students' narrative writing skills especially on the content. It was an experimental-quantitative research with a pre-test and a post-test writing task. Among the five third grade classes, two classes were chosen as experimental groups and a control group was selected based on random sampling. A pre-test on narrative writing was administered at the beginning of the study for both the groups, followed by the treatments by means of pictures series in teaching and writing. The treatments were given in the experimental class during three meeting sessions with the students and finally a post-test was conducted. The results revealed that there is a difference between the students' scores

in the pre-test and post-test. The researcher stated that there is a considerable improvement in the scores that the students obtained in the experimental class after the treatments were administered. The scores on the content aspects had improved significantly in the experimental class compared to the control class. Nevertheless, the number of picture series given and the form of guidance given to the students to understand these pictures were not clearly stated. Moreover, the students' proficiency level also plays an important role in learning a language and how the different ability learners pondered the pictures is also a crucial aspect. However, these two aspects were not examined.

### **2.5.2 Model essays in Malaysian institutions.**

Mahadi. T. et al., (2018) conducted a study on the use of narrative texts among undergraduates students. The objective of the study was to examine the effects of reading narrative texts on undergraduates students' writings in terms of content development, grammatical accuracy and lexical variety. The participants were 192 first year undergraduates students who enrolled in a Preparatory English Course at a Malaysian University. The participants were categorised as 'limited'(Band 2) and 'extremely limited' (Band 1) users of English Language based on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). It was an exploratory study which had a pre-test, post-test, and group interviews. The pre-test was conducted to evaluate the students' ability in writing at the initial stage, while the post-test was administered to assess the effect of reading narrative essays on the students' writing enhancement. The students were required to write narrative essays of 250 words on "The best memories of my school life" for both the pre-test and post-test to demonstrate their various levels of writing ability. The writings were marked based on the marking scale set by the

university and also the guidelines by the English Expository Writing Rubric (2011) that was adapted and discussed by the teachers for assessment purpose.

The results revealed that the post-test mean scores of the participants were much higher than the pre-test mean scores in all writing aspects in the essays. The most obvious improvement was shown in the content aspect. From the interviews, the participants stated that the reading of narratives that are familiar to the students' background had assisted them to sustain interest because the students had experienced similar occurrences with what they had read. Moreover, they disclosed that the practises which had been carried out in the classrooms, helped them to remember the contextual words and structures that could be used in their writing. Besides that, the study also showed that participants who had anxiety in writing were able to take part in classroom discussions and contribute some output in their writing tasks. However, this study focused on three types of language aspects and grasping of new vocabulary by the students was not taken into considerations when administering the intervention. Appropriate attention to the use of new vocabulary encountered in the narrative texts should be highlighted and given to the students so that they have confidence in using these vocabularies in their writings.

Another study was conducted by Annamalai, Eng and Abdullah (2013) to examine how the use of an online narrative writing platform improves students' narrative writing. The popular social networking site, Facebook, was adopted as an attempt to convert the freely available social space into a strategy for teaching and learning narrative writing. The study was aimed to examine the scores of students' online narrative essays before and after their involvement in the online narrative writing platform and to find out the level of their performances in terms of micro and macro structures. Data was collected through written assignments and interviews from

six secondary school students in the state of Penang. Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure was used by the teacher on the tutor platform to guide students in writing their narrative essays. The participants in the study wrote narrative essays which was known as the initial task. After six weeks of instructions, the students wrote a narrative essay each as the final task. During the instructions period the students were required to write an essay before and after each instruction sessions. A semi-structured interview was administered with the students and the teacher after the participants had engaged in the online narrative writing platform.

The results revealed that in their initial narrative writing, the errors were based on the vocabulary, language and structure. Nevertheless, in the final narrative writing, improvements were observed in the each of these aspects. The use of new words and better sentence structure were observed in the students' final narrative essay writing. There were also improvements in the content written by the students. The study also revealed that the social interaction among the students had helped the students make changes to improve the quality of their essays. However, there was no change in the score for mechanics. This study exposed that the online narrative writing platform had indeed improved the students' writing performance to some extent. The outcome of the students' written assignments stressed that they had a good understanding and knowledge of the six elements of Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure, as the students had applied these elements in all of their narrative writing tasks. The students' content structure was arranged well from the introduction to the conclusion, and the students showed that they did not have any major problems in their written narrative essays when using Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure. Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure, model essays, tips and suggestions that were uploaded on the tutor platform had assisted the students to build concrete organisation for the narrative and

served as an important guide when they began writing their essays. However, the element of attention or noticing performed by the students on the language aspects were influenced by the abundance of guidance given during the interaction. Izumi (2002) stated that, the depth of awareness associated with output related to stronger and longer lasting memory traces of the grammatical forms the learner attends to. Although there was an improvement in students' narrative writing skill, the extent of the attention given to the language aspects found in the model essays was not clearly stated. Some studies claimed that students tend to become dependent writers when the amount of guidance given blindfold the need for attention or noticing which is essential for language learning. Schmidt (1990) also claimed that, learners need to pay equal attention to all aspects of language. Thus, to address this gap in the literature, this current study was conducted.

The aforementioned studies account for how learners of second or foreign language process model texts and the effects of model texts in helping them to improve the accuracy of the second or foreign language learned. By conducting this present study, the possible benefits of model essays can be further understood especially in guiding young learners to fix their language imperfections. Furthermore, the findings can be an advantage to teachers and pupils by filling the gap which exists in the teaching and learning of writing skills in the particular context of ESL or EFL in Malaysian vernacular schools.

## **2.6 Curriculum Content of the English Language**

English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. The command of English is important for pupils to gain access to information written in English. The government's policy advocates strengthening the English language. Thus, the curriculum was designed to cater to students who will eventually be



proficient in the language. The content and learning standards that have been emphasised in the curriculum are catered to help students acquire the language so that they can practically apply it in their lives to further their studies and at the workplace. The English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools focuses to provide pupils with basic language skills that enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of situations which is appropriate to the students' level of development. Hence, five objectives have been outlined to ensure that pupils experience primary education that will be literate and they will be given sound basic knowledge in the language. This will drive them to progress towards language proficiency at the secondary school level. Thus, the present study has aimed to identify the language aspects which Year 5 pupils notice from model essays in a writing lesson. As such, the content standard and the learning standard of writing skills were emphasised and described further.

## **2.7 The Writing Module**

The writing module aims to fine tune the pupils' ability to write and produce a wide variety of texts using suitable language, style and form for various purposes and audience through different forms of media. They are taught to learn to write words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs in neat and clear print as well as in cursive writing. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) should be encouraged. This will enable the students to source out information and communicate via electronic media. Students are also provided guidance in basic writing skills which include planning, drafting, revising and editing. Furthermore, the mechanics and rules to develop writing skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar checks are highlighted. The writing tasks given at this level is mostly guided. However, the control over the writing task given is gradually relaxed. This leads to independent writing amongst students.

The main outcome of the curriculum content for writing skills is to establish that by the end of Year 6, students should be able to write and produce wide range of texts using appropriate language, style and form via different types of media. As such, three content standards and seven learning standards have been identified for the teaching of writing skill. The content standard and learning standard that focus on essay writing skills are: Content Standard 3.2 - By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to write using appropriate language, form and style for a range of purposes; Learning Standard 3.2.2 Able to write with guidance: (a) stories. In order to make learning writing skills more meaningful and purposeful, language input is presented based on themes and topics which are suitable for the students. Here, three broad themes have been classified in the curriculum. They are, 'World of Self, Family and Friends', 'World of Stories' and 'World of Knowledge'. The content topics for lessons are identified from these broad themes for teaching and learning in the English language classroom. All language skills must be taught through these themes which present the context for language learning.

## **2.8 Assessment**

Assessment in learning and teaching gives teachers space to assess whether pupils have acquired the learning standards taught. The feedback received on pupils' progress in learning will provide teachers with knowledge on the best approach to enhance the classroom teaching and learning environment. Appropriate assessment tools are required to assess the language skills taught in schools. Formative and summative assessments are administered to gauge pupils' performance. A formative assessment is usually carried out as a continuous process. The summative assessment is normally conducted at the end of a school term. As far as the English language is concerned, formative as well as summative assessments are widely applicable in a classroom

environment. The four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing can be tested through these two assessment forms. In this case, both forms of the assessments are conducted based on the new curriculum in Malaysian schools. As such, for the purpose of this research which involves writing, formative assessments were conducted. A formative assessment is a part of the school-based assessments. Formative assessments are conducted by the teachers to obtain feedback on their pupils' learning progress and to provide them with necessary information that they needed in order to ensure that a meaningful learning and teaching process takes place in the classroom. As far as writing skills are concerned, teachers need to refer to the Performance Standard to guide them and help them determine the level of their pupils' language acquisition based on the different learning standards. The written assignments which the pupils were assigned to in this research are formative assessments.

This study focuses on narrative writing which is classified under 'World of Stories'. Narrative writing is a form of writing that has a story, character, conflict and other essential parts that create a story. The model essay used in the classroom was a story. According to Eschholz (1980), what L2 learners write depends on what they read, as L2 learners can improve their L2 writing skills by reading. The writing ability of the pupils was assessed in terms of accuracy, sentence structure, organisation of ideas, links of paragraphs, punctuations, vocabulary and spelling.

## **2.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents a summary of main the theories that support the usage of model essays in second language learning and teaching in a classroom. Past studies and the importance of model essays as well as the writing problems faced by students have been presented here. In the next chapter, the research design focusing on the methodology used in this study will be discussed in detail.

Universiti Malaya

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of the study is to explore the aspects of language pupils notice when they are provided with model essays. The study also focused on the students' perspectives towards the model essays given to them. Seale (1999) stated that, qualitative research allows the exploration of valid and reliable qualitative data in order to produce findings with good quality. Thus, this study employed a qualitative research to achieve its aims. This chapter is divided into five sections. The design and site of the study are discussed in section one while the selection of the participants and data collection methods are discussed in section two. The data collection procedures and data analysis procedures are discussed in section three and four respectively. Finally, the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study are discussed in section five.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study is qualitative in design. As such, it employed a case study. According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when the researcher's focus is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, the behaviour of the participants is not manipulable and the researcher intends to examine contextual conditions because he or she believes they are important to the phenomenon under study. Stake (1995) defines case studies into three types; intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case study involves examination of a case for its own sake whereby the assumptions that the results have effects on other studies are not the main concern of the research. In an instrumental case study, the researcher chooses a small sample in order to explore a particular behaviour, issue or concern of a group. The focus of this study is to

understand an issue better and it is designed within an established theory or method. In a collective case or multiple case study, the researcher gather data from multiple case studies to make comparisons.

The aim of this study is to investigate and explain how pupils perceive model essays in a writing classroom. Therefore, this study is an instrumental case study because it gathers opinions and views from primary school pupils on the use of model essays in their writing classroom to further promote model essays. Creswell (2007) suggests that, while there are several kinds of data, all forms of data falls into four basic categories which are observations, interviews, documents and audio-visual materials. If the researcher intends to find out the true motives and feelings of subjects, it is appropriate to use interviews (qualitative data). This goes along with the study whereby it aims to gain insights from Year 5 pupils' personal views and thoughts in using model essays in their writing activities. Document analysis is also important in a case study research, as it can provide evidence on how a phenomenon operates. Therefore, exploration of a qualitative study had allowed the data to come from the pupils' experiences and documents.

### **3.3 Research Site**

This qualitative case study focused on a primary school with the intention to comprehensively understand the use of model essays among primary school pupils. Established in 1962, Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Aden (SJK T Aden) is a government national type Tamil medium primary school located in a city in the state of Selangor. In order to protect the identity of the school, a pseudonym was used. The main language used in this school is the Tamil language and the school community (headmaster, senior assistants, teachers, pupils, gardeners and canteen workers) are Indians whose first language is Tamil. The language used for communication at all

times is Tamil expect during English lessons. Therefore, pupils are encouraged to use English to communicate during English lessons since they have less opportunities to use the language at home.

The pupils' population in this school is 482 including both male and female pupils aged between seven to twelve years. Demographically, these pupils are from different social and economic backgrounds. There are some who even come from orphanages where they face various financial constraints and thus, they are unable to receive any form of adequate guidance in helping them with their education. There are also a number of pupils who come from single parent families where either the mother or father is widowed or divorced and have not remarried. These pupils also face financial problems. Some of them have behavioral issues and are frequently absent from school, have limited concentration and lack interest in studies. In addition, some parents are incapable of guiding their children at home because they lack a proper academic background. Therefore, the learning progress of these pupils in class vary in terms of learning styles and abilities.

There are fourteen classes ranging from standard one to standard six and only four English teachers are available in the school to teach English to all these classes. Each class consists of 25 to 43 pupils of mixed ability. There are advanced, average and slow learners in each classroom. However, all of them learn English as a second language. They learn to write essays once a week and the school is the only source for some pupils to obtain input on writing skills. Therefore, the teachers are encouraged to use various teaching aids during lessons so as to create an interest among the pupils to learn the skill. It must be noted that, the number of pupils in the classrooms are big and most of them need a lot of guidance. All the four English teachers are graduates and they have more than seven years of teaching experience. The English lesson have

six periods for each class which amounts to three hours. The teachers are required to teach the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing in the three hours allocated per week. The syllabus for English language prescribed by the Ministry of Education is different from the national type Malay medium schools. Therefore, the textbooks used in the national type Tamil medium schools are different from the textbooks used by pupils in the national type Malay medium schools. The selection of the unit for the research in qualitative study is based upon purposive sampling rather than random sampling (Merriam, 2002). The researcher had chosen the school because all the four English teachers provide model essays during their writing lessons. In order to investigate and illustrate an existence of a phenomena or issue, it is vital to collect data primarily through close visual examination of a natural setting.

#### **3.4 Selection of Participants**

There were certain factors which contributed to the choice of the class selected. First, Year 6 classes (UPSR examination classes) are not allowed to be included in research by the Ministry of Education. Second, there were two Year 5 classes in the school and to avoid the bias of the researcher as the interviewer, the researcher chose a class which is unfamiliar to her. Therefore, the participants of this study consist of a class of Year 5 pupils. There were twenty-five pupils in the classroom and all of them agreed to participate in the study. However, only twenty-two pupils were able to participate as three pupils were eliminated from the study due to attendance issues. This study aimed to investigate the language aspects pupils tend to notice pertaining to narrative model essays as well as their opinions on model essays. The writing transcripts of the twenty-two pupils were used to address the first research question. Creswell (2007) stated that, semi structured, or in-depth interviews require a minimum sample size of between five



and twenty-five participants. Thus, in order to answer the second research question, six pupils from the twenty-two pupils were chosen for the semi-structured interviews. These samples were adequate to obtain enough data to sufficiently elicit the pupils' opinions on model essays.

Among the six pupils, four were girls and two were boys. The names of the six participants had been changed to protect their privacy. In order to minimise bias in selection from a class of twenty-two pupils who are eligible for this study, the selection was based on random sampling. This technique allowed each member of the population an equal and independent chance of being selected as participants. The pupils in the class were eleven years old at the time of the data collection which was in year 2018. They have been exposed to the four language skills in English since the age of seven. The teachers in Year 5 use model essays in the writing classroom. As such, it was appropriate to choose a Year 5 class to further investigate the issue. Moreover, this study focuses on the way pupils perceive model essays in the classroom and their opinions on model essays. Therefore, it was appropriate to select participants who dealt with these model essays. Prior to data collection, a progress report of each participants' English tests was obtained from the school administration. Based on the grades they had previously achieved on written tests throughout the 2017 academic school year, the participants were then classified as proficient, average and below average learners. Apart from that, the selected participants shared the same school, age group, class and all of them are UPSR candidates for the year 2019. The participant selection criteria are shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1

*Participant Selection Criteria*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Selection Criteria</b>
<b>Pupils</b>	
Maya (female) - average	• Vernacular primary school pupils
Geetha (female)- below average	• Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR)
Anjali (female)- proficient	candidates of the year 2019
Fanny - (female) - average	• Exposed to model essays in classroom
Suresh - (male) - average	
Kumar - (male) - proficient	

The research method and the selection of participants based on the above-mentioned criteria is essential. Since the participants are exposed to model essays in the writing classroom, they were able to provide accurate and truthful views. This eventually allowed the researcher to investigate the issues on the use of model essays to develop their writing skills especially the narrative style from the students' perspectives, which would in turn help to address the research questions proposed.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

A range of qualitative data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews with the pupils and the teacher and document analysis were used to obtain contextual information regarding the usefulness of model essays in the English language essay writing of Year 5 pupils.

#### **3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.**

To elicit an in-depth understanding of the role of model essays in writing among Year 5 pupils and to gather the perceptions and beliefs of the pupils regarding the usefulness of model essays, semi-structured interviews were chosen. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003), semi-structured interviews are an effective way to obtain and gather an extensive amount of data concerning the participants' actual

perceptions and thoughts especially when the issues being explored are greatly personal to the participants. Thus, four interview sessions had been employed during different stages of this study. There were a total number of 24 transcriptions. The interview sessions with the pupils are shown in detail in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

*Interviews with the Pupils at Various Stages*

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>Interview 1</b>	Before writing the first essay
<b>Interview 2</b>	After writing the first essay
<b>Interview 3</b>	Before giving pupils the model essays
<b>Interview 4</b>	After reading the model essays and editing their first essay

The interviews at different stages of the study allowed the researcher to obtain information and perspectives on model essays from the pupils under different circumstances. It allowed the researcher to observe and compare the change of opinions and thoughts of the pupils regarding the use of model essays in the classroom.

The time frame for each semi-structured interview ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. The questions in the semi-structured interviews were constructed based on past literature so as to suit the context of this study. The semi-structured interviews were carried out in English and the pupils' mother tongue at the participants' convenience and in a natural and quiet setting to allow participants' free expression of their views. The participants were allowed to disengage from the interviews at any point or skip any questions that they feel disinterested in. The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded using a digital audio-recorder after obtaining consent from the participants. Although the questions were pre-set, flexibilities were employed

on the order of the questions, words and sentences used in the interview. Interviews with the teacher concerned were carried out for triangulation purposes. On the whole, two interviews were carried with the teacher, before and after giving pupils the model essays. This was to validate the trustworthiness of the data gathered. The interview sessions with the teacher are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

*Interviews with the Teacher.*

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>Interview 1</b>	Before providing the model essays
<b>Interview 2</b>	After providing the model essays

The interviews with the teacher which were conducted before and after providing the model essays allowed the researcher to gain diverse views and ideas pertaining to the usage of model essays in the classroom.

### **3.5.2 Document analysis.**

Document analysis is a systematic process for examining or accessing documents which are printed, written and also in the form of electronic materials. Document analysis demands that data be reviewed and interpreted to discover meaning, obtain understanding and to establish empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The use of documents in a study should not be underestimated because the quality of subjectivity in the documents provides truthful information which cannot be collected through observations and interviews (Chua, 2012). Thus, the essays written by the participants and the model essays used in the classroom were collected and they served as an important source of data as it provided useful insights concerning the phenomenon being investigated. The twenty-two pupils who participated in the study submitted two essays each (first and second essay) and annotated model essays

each. Therefore, a total of 44 essays and 22 annotated model essays were collected for the purpose of the study. All the 66 documents were included in the analysis to address the first research question.

The model essay used as a reading text was written by an English teacher who has twenty-five years of teaching experience in primary schools. She is a district officer for the English Department. The text was written based on the learners' age, proficiency level and the content. Qi and Lapkin (2001) stated that, model texts which matches the learners' level of competence is important to enhance the possibilities of noticing along with understanding. The model essay used in the writing lesson served as an aid which provide rich combinations of L2 vocabularies, sentence structures, ideas and contexts for the pupils. The model essay which consists of three paragraphs was written between 100- 120 words. According to Marzano (2004), one of the strongest factors on how well the students acquire new information relative to the content depend on the students' previously acquired knowledge about the content. When they are exposed to familiar new tasks, the students are encouraged to grasp them especially since they have some prior knowledge of the content. Thus, this model essay was written with these factors taken into consideration.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedures**

A research information letter was submitted to request for approval and to inform the headmaster of the school about the purpose of the study, data collection method, time frame of the study and the expected benefits of participating in the study (Appendix A). Then, the class was selected and six participants from the class were chosen based on random sampling for the semi- structured interviews. A consent form for participants was given to each pupil to indicate their willingness to participate and to be audio-recorded during the interview sessions (Appendix B). Since this study

concerns children, parental consent forms were given to obtain their parents' consent as well (Smith, 2003) (Appendix C). The consent forms were sent through the pupils and only permitted students were included in the study. The pupils were then briefed on the objectives of the study and they were assured that all the data collected will only be used for the completion of this study and its accessibility is limited to the researcher and the researcher's academic supervisor. Once the briefing was done, the researcher proceeded to collect the relevant documents from the participants. The pupils are required to write two essays based on the question given by the teacher (Appendix D). Thereafter, the pupils participated in the semi-structured interview sessions (Appendix E). Subsequently, the interviews with the teacher were conducted (Appendix F). The detailed data collection procedure is as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

*Data Collection Procedures*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Form of Data</b>
Prior to week 1	Chose a class Identified 6 pupils Interview 1 - Interview on pupils' background	Transcripts (6 pupils)
Week 1	Pupils wrote narrative essay 1 Interview 2 - Interview on narrative essay 1	Essay 1 (22 pupils) Transcripts (6 pupils)

Table 3.4, continue

<b>Time</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Form of Data</b>
Week 2	Interview 3	Transcripts (6 pupils)
	- Interview on pupils' experiences with model essays before the teacher uses these model essays.	Annotated model essays (22 pupils)
	Teacher provided the model essays	Transcripts (a teacher)
	1 <sup>st</sup> interview with the teacher	
Week 3	Pupils wrote narrative essay 2	Essay 2 (22 pupils)
	Interview 4	Transcripts (6 pupils)
	- Interview on narrative essay 2	Transcripts (a teacher)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> interview with the teacher	

As stated earlier, there were two Year 5 classes in the school. Therefore, between the two Year 5 classes, Melawati and Samara (pseudonyms), the Melawati class was selected. Then six participants from the Melawati class were selected and interviewed. Data concerning their backgrounds were collected before the first week. During the first week, all the pupils in Year 5 Melawati wrote their first essay (the duration given was 20-25 minutes) and 22 first essays were collected. Then, the interview with the six participants on their first written essays were carried out. In the second week, the pupils were interviewed on their experience dealing with model essays before the teacher uses model essays in the classroom as a learning tool. At the same time, the first interview with the teacher on the model essays was carried out. Then, during the same week, the pupils were provided with model essays in the

classroom. They were given 15-20 minutes to read the model essay and annotate anything they wished. Instructions on what and how to read and annotate were not given to the pupils. After 20 minutes, the 22 annotated model essays were collected from the pupils. During the third week, the pupils wrote their second essay and they were given 20-25 minutes. Then, 22 second essays were collected from them. Thereafter, the six participants were interviewed on their experience writing the second essay and the second interview with the teacher was carried out. A total of 44 essays, 22 annotated model essays, 24 transcriptions of the pupils' interviews and 2 transcriptions of the teacher's interviews were collected to address the research questions proposed for this study.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Procedures**

#### **3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews.**

The audio-recordings gathered from each interview were transcribed once each interview session was completed. Then, these transcripts were printed out and sent to each student for verification. If the students' response was in their mother tongue, they were translated into English language and the translated data was presented in italics. The most common method used to analyse the data from the interview sessions in a qualitative research is the thematic content analysis method. This can be done by developing the matrices manually to code the data, classify and formulate the themes that emerged as well as notice the patterns that appeared from the participants' response (Huberman & Miles, 2002). First, the researcher performed open coding by reducing the chunks of data to the most frequent or important points, based on the meaning that had developed from the data. These important points were temporarily labelled as initial codes and arranged in the matrices created. Each section of the transcripts which had been arranged in the matrices were then re-read and transcribed



into refined codes after the initial open coding process. Before refining the codes, the researcher went through the matrices for initial codes to select codes that are conceptually similar. During this essential coding process, the researcher had continuously translated and analysed the relationship between the codes before establishing the final themes for each participants' views. The labelling of final themes across all types of data for each participant was attended under the guidance of the academic supervisor until all had completed and whole ideas were generated in order to explore this study in detail. The open code and the themes that had emerged are shown in detail in the tables 3.5 and 3.6.

Table 3.5

*Open Codes*

<b>Open code</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Examples of participants' words</b>
(Interview on first essays)	-Feeling good about the essay	It was easy Simple
	-Happy	Understand the picture
-Favourable	-Being positive	Story given was interesting
-Satisfaction		Quite easy Quite difficult
-Contentment		This essay is easy Picture is also easy to understand Great and interesting Very nice The first time it was hard Makes easy to me They're already enjoyable It was interesting Picture also clear

Table 3.5, continue

<b>Open code</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Examples of participants' words</b>
(Interview on model essays)	-Seeking something new -Hoping for help	Gain knowledge Good stories Enjoy reading model essay
-Claims -Beliefs -Thoughts		The model essays will be interesting Easy to understand Can write the model essay story Model essay give more new words I can get new words from that Then can get new ideas Can gain more ideas We can make proper sentence structure By reading model essays, I can also write essays Easy when writing essays Help for my writing Enjoy read model essays Interesting Read sometimes How to write an essay in a good way How to get more marks Model essay also can give more new words

Table 3.5, continue

Open code	Properties	Examples of participants' words
(Interview on model essay after second essay)	-Shows enthusiasm -Confident	Very helpful It helps to improve writing skills Get different ideas Can read a essay. A model essay essays per day They are exercise Can do it like an exam I can get new ideas to put in Can understand easily the model essays It will help us to write the essays New words I can learn They are straightforward Straight to the point Like the sentence structure they are using We can also write it correctly Can make compound sentence It will help use for exams They have different ideas It will be different types of sentences they will use Can get something like new from the model essays
-Interests		
-Concern		
-Attention		

Table 3.5, continue

<b>Open code</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Examples of participants' words</b>
		There are many ideas/different ideas
		That make our interest to gain some ideas
		It has help me to make sentences /write essay
		Because it help me to write easy
		Knowledgeable
		It has new ideas

Table 3.6

*Themes Emerged*

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Category emerged</b>	<b>Final Theme</b>
-Favourable -Satisfaction -Contentment	Opinions / Impressions	Pupils' impressions on writing
-Claims -Beliefs -Thoughts	Learning strategy	Model essay as a learning tool
-Interests -Concern -Attention	Advantages	Advantages of model essays

### **3.7.2 Documents (pupils' essays).**

Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988). Qualitative content analysis is commonly used for analysing qualitative data. The 44 essays and 22 annotated model essays were included in the direct approach of content analysis. This strategy allowed the researcher to begin coding with predetermined codes. The predetermined codes were derived from the language aspects prescribed by the Malaysian Examinations Board. The language aspects which were identified as codes are accuracy, sentence structure, organisation of ideas, links of paragraphs, punctuations, vocabulary and spelling. The essays were marked by the researcher who is an examiner for UPSR examination and the papers were crosschecked by another examiner for UPSR examination to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Moreover, discussions were conducted to ensure the marking was carried out fairly and accurately. As a result, three pupils' gradings were revised. The essays were marked based on the marking scheme determined by the Malaysian Examinations Board, 2017, Ministry of Education. The marking scheme categorises the essays into five bands: Distinguished (22- 25 marks), Excellent (16-21 marks), Good (10-15 marks), Satisfactory (5-9 marks) and Limited (1-4 marks). When the marking of the first essays were completed, 5 essays were placed in excellent band, 13 were placed in good band, 4 were in satisfactory band and none were placed in distinguished or limited bands. In order to pass the writing paper, pupils need to score a minimal mark of 15. The grading of the first essays revealed that 14 pupils were not in the pass category and they needed guidance to improve their writing skills.

However, there was a difference in the grades of essays in each band in the second writings as 3 essays of the second writings were placed in distinguished band, 6 were in excellent band, 10 were in good band and 3 were in the satisfactory band.

However, none were placed in the distinguished band in the first essay writings, but 3 pupils' essays were placed in the distinguished band in the second essay writings. Moreover, from the 14 pupils who were not in the pass category during the first essay writing, 4 pupils were able to reach the pass category in the second writing. The improvement in their marks showed that model essays had played a vital role whereby learners of the second language could be guided to produce phrases and sentences that they had noticed earlier in the narrative model texts. Model texts which functioned as feedback in this present study had allowed learners to notice the differences in their writing and in the model essays given to them. It had given them opportunities to notice certain language aspects that could be used to enhance their writing ability by amending their errors.

In order to investigate the aspects of the language that the pupils had noticed, it was necessary to classify these language aspects. The 44 essays and 22 annotated model essays were analysed based on the language aspects prescribed by the Malaysian Examinations Board for primary schools. The language aspects rubric, which was adapted, was validated by a teacher who is employed for the Malaysian Examinations Board. The language aspects which are emphasised by the Malaysian Examinations Board is shown in detail in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

*Language Aspects*

Language Aspects	Band				
	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Distinguished
Accuracy	Unclear meaning	Meaning is clear	Sufficiently accurate	Generally accurate	Accurate
Sentence Structure	Heavy frequency of errors	Frequent errors	Simple sentences	Varied	Sophisticated

Table 3.7, continue

Language Aspects	Band				
	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Distinguished
Organization of Ideas	No sequence of ideas	Logical sequence of ideas	Sufficiently well planned	Almost well planned	Well planned
Links of Paragraphs	Inappropriate links	Attempt to link	Reasonable links	Appropriate links	Relevant links
Punctuations	Inaccurate	Sometimes accurate	Generally accurate	Always accurate	Entirely accurate
Vocabulary	Ineffective	Attempt to use	Fairly used	Almost Effectively used	Effectively used
Spelling	Inaccurate spelling	Many spelling errors	Generally accurate	Mostly accurate	Accurate

(Adapted from Malaysian Examinations Board, 2017)

The language aspects prescribed in the marking scheme are accuracy, sentence structure, organisation of ideas, links of paragraphs, punctuations, vocabulary and spelling. The interpretation of the seven language aspects are based on the English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools. The interpretations are provided below.

1. Accuracy: A sentence without any grammatical, vocabulary and punctuation errors. The meaning of the sentence is clear.
2. Sentence structure:
  - i. Simple sentence - A simple sentence has only one clause
  - ii. Compound sentence - A compound sentence has two or more clauses
  - iii. Complex sentence - A complex sentence has a main clause and one or more adverbial clauses

3. Organisation of ideas follows the basic outline of essays:
  - i. Introduction
  - ii. Body
  - iii. Conclusion
4. Links of paragraphs: Use linking words or phrases between paragraphs.  
Example of linking words or phrases in a narration: then, next, suddenly, after that, finally and in the end.
5. Punctuations: Capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks and exclamation marks.
6. Vocabulary:
  - i. Basic words
  - ii. High frequency words
  - iii. Low frequency words
7. Spelling: Formation of words with correct letters

Each of the language aspects was classified into five bands. The rubric score for each language aspect ranges from limited, satisfactory, good, excellent to distinguished. Hanaoka (2007), employed the terms Problematic Features Noticed (PFNs) when the learners identified the writing problems and Features Noticed (FNs) when they noticed and tried to correct these problems. These terms were adapted and employed in this study. First, the first essays were marked and the errors made by the pupils were identified as problematic features (PFs) such as accuracy, sentence structure, organisation of ideas, links of paragraphs, punctuations, vocabulary, spelling and relevance of the task. Then, the second essays were marked and the problematic features noticed were identified as (PFNs). The pupils' first essays, second essays and



annotated model essays were compared and analysed based on the language aspects and rubrics given above.

This study focused on the genre of narration. Teele (2004) stated that the narrative is a form of speaking or writing that tells a story. A study conducted by Ali Ghani, Mohamed Abu Bakar, Sarina Salim and Majeedah Mohd (2007) in Malaysia claims that, learners of English are exposed to literary elements such as plots, characters, settings, points of view, values, messages and themes through literature components. The model essay used in this study was a narrative essay. In order to evaluate the relevance of the narrative in the pupils' essay writing, this study drew on the elements of a narrative essay as proposed by Zhang and Hoosain (2001). The relevance of the narration was evaluated based on the inclusion of the six elements as shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8

*Relevance of the Task in Terms of Narration*

Narrative Essays	Band				
	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Distinguished
Relevance of the task in terms of inclusion of the six elements	Largely irrelevant to narrative writing	Partial understanding of narrative writing	Fair understanding of narrative writing	Clear understanding of narrative writing	Highly relevance to narrative writing

In order to investigate the relevance of the pupils' first and second essays in terms of narration, five band classifications were employed. These were categorized as limited, satisfactory, good, excellent and distinguished. Zhang and Hoosain (2001) stated six elements of narrative essays which are the beginning, characters, setting, conflict, plot and ending. Based on his classification, when pupils were not able to include the six common elements of narration, the essays were categorised as limited.

When one to two or three to four elements were included, the essays were categorized as satisfactory and good respectively. Essays which included five elements were classified as excellent while essays which included all the elements were classified as distinguished. For this study the narrative model essay which was given to each pupil was a narration on a school trip. (Appendix G).

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study**

Guba and Lincoln (1985) assert that, trustworthiness of a research study is vital in considering its worth. The qualitative research criteria of trustworthiness are classified into four principles such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### **3.8.1 Researcher's bias.**

Random sampling employed for semi-structured interviews determines that the favouritism element of the subject was excluded from the selection method and all the participants had an equal chance of being selected from the class. Moreover, among the two Year 5 classes which the school has, the researcher had chosen a class which is unfamiliar to her. This was done to avoid bias on the researcher's part as the interviewer whereby the researcher might possibly influence the subjects with her beliefs and ideas on the use of model essays in the writing classroom. As claimed by Denscombe (2003), the researchers' own social backgrounds and beliefs might be factors that can cause the researcher to misinterpret the data and information gathered. Thus, the researcher, as an unknown person to the pupils had avoided making any personal judgements during semi-structured interviews sessions or throughout the data analysis process. Qualitative researchers must be mindful of the possible emotional responses when transforming the information gathered. Discussions with colleagues

about their excitement and experience are invaluable in allowing researchers to be in line with the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2012).

### **3.8.2 Credibility.**

According to O'Donoghue (2007), responses from the participants can be triangulated using various methods and cross examined with past findings to ensure the credibility of the data. In addition, triangulation is also used to ensure that the research findings are comprehensive, rich and well developed. As stated by Creswell (2012), data triangulations are used to improve the reliability of the research especially when the sample size in a qualitative research is small. Therefore, in this present study, the data collected from the pupils' interviews and the teacher's interviews were triangulated to ensure that the interpretations from the interview sessions are of high interlegibility. Moreover, the relevant documents collected from the pupils at the same time ensured that data regarding the pupils' perceptions were triangulated.

### **3.8.3 Dependability.**

Dependability can be described as the consistency of research findings (Merriam, 2003). The research processes, particularly the research design, the completion of the study and the operational details of data collection were thoroughly delivered. It served as an example for future researchers to replicate and at the same time establishing an in depth understanding of the methods employed and their effectiveness (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004). The value of coding and recoding procedures with the help from the academic supervisor and peer debriefings allowed the researcher to guarantee the dependability of the findings of the study.

### **3.8.4 Confirmability.**

Guba and Lincoln (1985), claimed that confirmability refers to the "extent to which the data and interpretation of the study are grounded in events"(p. 324) instead

of the researcher's own beliefs. A detailed explanation of the research flow on the data collection method, themes that were developed and selections methods, are illustrated clearly in the form of matrices so as to minimise the researcher's bias (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In order to reduce researcher's favouritism and ensure consistency of data, the predispositions of the researcher were acknowledged (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure reliability, the interpretation of the data was also certified by the researcher's academic supervisor. A comprehensive list of appendices was also presented as supporting evidence.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

This current study was performed based on the ethical principles and guidelines on human subjects outlined by the University of Malaya, such as, taking informed consent and assuring the confidentiality of the participants' identity.

#### **3.9.1 Informed consent and minimisation of risk.**

A research information sheet and consent form for participants were issued to the headmaster, parents and pupils to obtain their consent before the data collection process was carried out. The participants were advised on the purpose of the study, research methods employed and the advantages of taking part in this study. The role of the researcher was also explained whereby the researcher will not make any judgment on the participating pupils' personal stands and views. This was to avoid issues such as embarrassment, stress and exploitation (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Moreover, considerable attention was given to the questions raised by the researcher. If the participants decided to discontinue their involvement in the research, they can withdraw from the study at any given time if the research process causes them discomfort. The participants who wished to participate in the study were called for

their interviews after school hours. This was to ensure that they still participated in all their lessons in the classroom during school hours.

### **3.9.2 Anonymity and confidentiality.**

Anonymity is important for participants as a guarantee of anonymity would allow participants to feel confident in providing their perspectives or experiences (Curtis, Murphy & Shields, 2014). Thus, pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the research participants. According to the principles of literature, confidentiality is generally considered as the ethics of privacy (Oliver & Gregory, 2003). In other words, individual views matter and individuals have the right for their thoughts, ideas or beliefs to be confidential. Thus, in order to ensure the participants' confidentiality, discussions with the academic supervisor will not be revealed without the participants' permission.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews and document analysis as the main instruments for qualitative data collection. Moreover, the data analysis procedures have also been presented together with the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This study examined the use of model essays among Year 5 pupils and their perceptions on using model essays in a writing classroom. Model essays were used as a strategy by teachers in the classroom to teach writing skills to pupils. Interviews and document analysis were the main source of data collected for this study. The findings from the interviews and documents are presented in this chapter in three sections. The individual case analysis is presented in the first section followed by the cross-case analysis in the second section. In the last section of this chapter, the teacher's perspectives on model essays are presented.

#### 4.2 Individual Case Analysis

The six individual cases are analysed based on the seven language aspects they noticed in their essay writings. Moreover, in the four face-to-face interview sessions, pupils were interviewed on topics related to 1) perspectives on writing essays in the classroom before reading model essays; 2) perspectives on writing essays in the classroom after reading model essays; 3) perspectives on model essays and the use of model essays in the classroom. The main themes recognised from the analysis of data were pupils' impressions on writing, model essay as a learning tool and advantages of model essays used in the classroom.

##### 4.2.1 Maya.

Maya is a prefect and is a very obedient pupil in the classroom. She always respects her teachers and her favourite subject is Mathematics. In her first interview, she revealed that she likes reading materials in English as the language allows her to learn new words. The interview excerpt is as presented below.

Researcher : Do you like English?  
 Maya : Yes.  
 Researcher : Okay. Why do you like English?  
 Maya : Because I can know new words in English.

(Maya, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

She scored 10 marks out of 25 marks in her first essay writing which placed her in the Good Band category (grade C). Although she stated that she learns new words through reading English materials, the PFs identified in her first essay were matters related to spelling, sentence structure and organisation of ideas. She was unable to construct simple sentences using the vocabulary given as guidance and she also made errors when she attempted to use new words in her first essay. The PFs and PFNs from Maya's writings are shown below.

Table 4.1

*The PFs and PFNs of Maya*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	1 unclear sentence	corrected 1 sentence
2	Sentence Structure	4 incorrect sentences	corrected 2 sentences
3	Organisation of Ideas	2 irrelevant ideas	2 relevant ideas
4	Links of Paragraphs	None	None
5	Punctuation	2 incorrect punctuations	None
6	Vocabulary	None	noticed 6 words
7	Spelling	3 words with errors	corrected 2 words

In her first essay, she constructed four sentences which were incorrect. She was unsure of the correct English subject-verb agreement in a sentence. However, she was

able to correct these sentences in her second essay. The following are two examples from the essay.

**First example:**

*They decided went to zoo.* (First essay)

*They went to the zoo by bus.* (Model essay)

*They went to the zoo by bus.* (Second essay)

**Second example:**

*The head of the zoo supervised.* (First essay)

*Besides, they fed the elephants while being **supervised** by the zookeeper.* (Model essay)

*The zookeeper supervised the student's.* (Second essay)

In the first example given, Maya was able to notice the sentence, ‘*They went to the zoo by bus*’ in the model essay and she wrote the exact sentence in her second essay. The annotated model essay revealed that she had underlined the sentence. Additionally, the second example revealed that she wrote, ‘*The head of the zoo supervised*’ which is incorrect. When she was given the model essay, she demonstrated noticing of the word ‘*supervised*’ by writing the meaning of the word ‘*supervised*’ in Malay language and highlighting the word. This action implied that she had noticed the word. In her second essay she used the word ‘*supervised*’ in the sentence, ‘*The zookeeper supervised the student's.*’ The sentences she had written are simple sentences. However, the sentences given in the model essay are complex. She removed the word ‘*head*’ and replaced it with ‘*zookeeper*’ which she had found in the model essay. Subsequently, she was also unsure of the plural form of the word ‘*students*’ and made an error when she used the word in her second essay. Moreover, she spelt some words inaccurately such as ‘*zeraffa*’ and ‘*tooked*’. She noticed the correct spelling of



those words and applied them accurately in her second essay. An example of this is given below.

**First example:**

*They were feed some leafe's to zeraffa.* (First essay)

*Aziz managed to take pictures of the giraffes and pandas.* (Model essay)

*After a while, Aziz fed some leaf's to giraffe's* (Second essay)

Her annotated model essay revealed that she did not underline or highlight the word 'giraffe'. However, she had noticed the spelling of 'giraffe', but she was not sure of the plural form of the word. So, she wrote the word but with an error. Maya's annotated essay disclosed that she was attracted to verbs as she had highlighted five verbs and two nouns. Among the five verbs, she had used two verbs and both the nouns in her second essay. She jotted down 'past tense' above all the verbs which she had underlined and it indicated that she had noticed these words. Her statement that she likes reading materials in English because she is able to learn new words can be observed in her annotated model essay as she had written two words at the bottom of the essay. The words were, 'fascinating' and 'delighted'. She wrote the meaning of these words in her mother tongue. It indicated that she had learned the words and she wanted to remember them by writing them down at the corner of the page. The words which are found in the model essay and also used in her essay are *bus, reached, tickets, counter, zookeeper* and *bought*.

The marking of Maya's first essay also revealed that her organisation of ideas in her second paragraph was irrelevant. Due to the lack of ideas, she repeated some of her ideas twice. The second paragraph is given below.

*Then, the teacher's brought them to saw the animals at the zoo. The student's were saw the animals in the caged. They were feed some leafe's to zeraffa. They were enjoying to fed the animals.*

(First essay, second paragraph)

In this paragraph, she has repeated the ideas of 'saw animals' and 'fed animals'. In her second essay, the two ideas mentioned above were removed and replaced with 'bought the ticket in the counter' and 'the zookeeper supervised the students'. These ideas were in the model essays and one of the ideas was underlined in her annotated model essay. In her second essay, she was able to organise her ideas fairly well and did not repeat them. She has also written a unclear sentence in her first essay and in her second essay, she had changed the sentence structure by removing the word 'traveled' which also had a spelling error. The sentences are given below.

*Last, week, Aziz'z school planned a traveled to school trip.* (First essay, first line)

*Last week Aziz's school planned a school trip. Aziz and his friends joined the trip to the zoo happily.* (Model Essay)

*Last week, Aziz'z school planned a trip to zoo.* (Second essay, first line)

These examples showed that she was able to notice the sentences and their meaning. Thus, in her second essay she changed the first line based on the idea she had acquired from the model essay, but she had simplified it by adding the word 'zoo' although the model essay has presented two sentences for this context. Maya was able to notice this idea and had simplified it to suit her essay.

Furthermore, with regards to the relevance of the essay in terms of narration, Maya was unsure of the plot and ending. The plot signifies a series of related events that make up a story. Due to the lack of ideas and vocabulary, she was incapable of writing the progress of the story. When provided with the model essay, she was able to follow the characteristics of narrative writing, such as the introduction, characters, setting and ending. Moreover, she was also able to absorb the plot and describe the events based on the model essays given to them. The example below shows the development in her narrative writing.

*Then, the teacher's brought them to saw the animals at the zoo. The student's were saw the animals in the caged. They were feed some leafe's to zeraffa. They were enjoying to fed the animals. The head of the zoo supervised. The studen'ts were tooked picture animals.*

(First essay)

*The teacher's bought the ticket in the counter. Then, student's went inside the zoo. The zookeeper supervised the student's. The zoo lookes amazing and fascinating. The student's took picture the animals. The two student's took picture the lion very happily.*

(Second essay)

In her first draft the paragraph was written without a series of events. The events were just repetitions of 'see animals', 'feed animals' and 'take photos'. Meanwhile, in her second essay, the events were 'bought tickets', 'entered the zoo', 'zookeeper supervised', 'descriptions about zoo: amazing, fascinating' and 'take photos'. The series of events in her second essay had increased once she had read and noticed the ideas found in the model essay.

#### 4.2.1.1 Perceptions on writing.

Regardless of the problems Maya faced in her writing she had admitted that learning English is important. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : So, do you think it is important to learn writing in English?

Maya : Yes.

Researcher : Why do you think so?

Maya : Because it will help for exam.

(Maya, 1st interview)

Maya revealed that learning English is important as she needed it to score marks in examinations. She stated that, although the language used in the model essay was a little difficult for her, she was still able to understand the content and it had helped her to create more ideas in the second essays. This implies that she is aware of the importance to learn writing skills in school and she is trying to write better essays through the guidance given to her. The interview excerpts are given below.

Researcher : What do you think about the language used in the model essay?

Maya : Understand...but little bit difficult.

(Maya, 3rd interview)

Researcher : So, what do you think about the model essays?

Maya : Helpful.

(Maya, 4th interview)

Maya found the model essay difficult for her. This may be due to her language proficiency. She is categorised as an average learner and as an average learner she needs guidance in the classroom to improve her writing skills. She claims that the model essay was helpful and it would be more helpful if the language used in the model essays suits her language proficiency.

#### 4.2.2 Geetha.

Geetha is a very talkative girl in the classroom. She revealed in her first interview that her favourite subject is Tamil and the most difficult skill in English is speaking. Most of her answers during the interviews were in Tamil. Geetha has written an essay which exceeded the word limit set by the board of examination. The word limit is strictly between 80 to 100 words and she had written 146 words in her first draft which made her lose 2 marks for the word limit exceeded. She wrote four paragraphs in her first draft and there were some ideas which were irrelevant to the story. Geetha's PFs and PFNs are as indicated below.

Table 4.2

*The PFs and PFNs of Geetha*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	1 unclear sentence	corrected 1 sentence
2	Sentence Structure	None	None
3	Organisation of Ideas	4 irrelevant ideas	4 relevant ideas
4	Links of Paragraphs	3 inappropriate sentences	corrected 3 sentences
5	Punctuation	1 incorrect punctuation	None
6	Vocabulary	None	noticed 2 words
7	Spelling	None	None

Based on the PFs given, she had written four irrelevant ideas. The ideas that she had written were, '*His teacher gave the letter of school trip*', '*Ali took the letter and gave to his mother*', '*His mother gave the money and sign the letter*' and '*After that, he saw the date it was tomorrow*' which were irrelevant to the story. These irrelevant ideas resulted in exceeding the word limit of the essay. She scored 10 marks,

but two marks were deducted because she had exceeded the word limit and she received 8 marks. She was placed in the Satisfactory Band category (grade D). Nevertheless, she had written only 113 words in her second essay which consisted of three paragraphs. She had reduced the number of paragraphs from four to three and it could be linked to the model essay which had only three paragraphs. Furthermore, she did not write any irrelevant ideas and the ideas were sufficiently well planned. She wrote four relevant ideas which were taken from the model essay. They are shown below.

*Aziz and his friends **joined the trip** to the zoo happily.*

*When they **reached** there, it was already 10 a.m.*

*The zoo was **absolutely fascinating** because there were **many different types of animals**.*

(Sentences from the model essay)

*Aziz and his friend **joined to the trip**.*

*They already **reached** to the zoo.*

*The place was **absolute fascinating**.*

*There was **many different type of animals**.*

(Sentences from second essay)

Geetha's annotated model essays showed that she had underlined almost all the ideas given there. She had underlined ideas such as, '*The animals were safely kept inside the cages*' and '*Aziz managed to take pictures of the giraffes and pandas.*' However, she noticed those four particular ideas given above and included them in her second essay although there were some structural errors. Unlike in the first essay, the second essay was written reasonably well with appropriate ideas which suited the story. The paragraphs were also connected with logical links of sentences. There were

three inappropriate sentences written in between the paragraphs in her first essay. They are given below.

*That day was come.*

*Priya was saw a crazy monkey in the cage.*

*They say goodbye to the animals.*

(Sentences from first essay)

She had removed all the inappropriate sentences given above and she wrote the sentence, '*Aziz get into the bus*' and '*They already reached to the zoo*' in her second essay. Although she could not write, '*They went by bus*' which was found in the model essay, she was able to notice the ideas of '*bus*' and used it in her own sentence. She also noticed the word '*reached*' in the model essay and had also used it in her own sentence. The sentence from the model essay was, '*When they reached there, it was already 10 a.m.*' The phrase '*reached there*' was highlighted in her model essay. She was not able to notice the complex sentence but noticed the word '*reached*' and used it in her second essay. There was also one unclear sentence, '*Leena and Reena fascinating the elephant.*' She had used the word '*fascinating*' incorrectly. However, she did not correct or rewrite the sentence in her second essay. Instead, she had used the word in a different context after she had read the model essay. The sentences are given below.

*Leena and Reena **fascinating** the elephant.* (First essay)

*The zoo was **absolutely fascinating** because there were many different types of animals.* (Model Essay)

*The place was **absolute fascinating**.* (Second essay)

Initially, she had assumed that '*fascinating*' was a verb, so she wrote it after the subject indicating that she had followed the English language subject-verb agreement rule. However, when she was exposed to the model essay, she noticed and

realised that it was an adjective and so, she changed her sentence. Although she tried to use the phrase ‘*absolutely fascinating*’ from the model essay, a spelling error was made. Even though, there was an error, she managed to notice the classification of the word with guidance from the model essay. Geetha noticed two words in the model essay and used them correctly in her sentences. They were ‘*joined*’ and ‘*reached*’. Although she noticed the word ‘*absolutely*’, it was not written correctly.

#### 4.2.2.1 Perceptions on writing.

Geetha expressed that she enjoyed the writing activity because she did the activity with her friends. This indicated that, she expected a form of guidance. The excerpt is as outlined below.

Researcher : Okay, I see. Now, did you enjoy your essay writing?

Geetha : Yes.

Researcher : Okay. Why? Can you please explain?

Geetha : Because of uuhhh..do my activity with my friends.

(Geetha, 2nd interview)

She was happy because she could do the writing activity with her friends and her friends shared some ideas with her. This showed that this pupil needed guidance to help her in the writing activity. However, although there was a sharing of ideas, she was not able to write relevant ideas, correct sentences and she had exceeded the word limit. Then again, after reading the model essay in the classroom, Geetha stated that, she enjoyed the second writing activity as it was easier. She said that, model essays helped her to write new sentences. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Okay. Good. My first question, how was the essay writing activity that you had done in the classroom?

Geetha : Easy teacher.

Researcher : easy..Then?



Geetha : enjoyable  
Researcher : So, what do you think about the model essay?  
Geetha : Hmm it has help me aah  
Researcher : Okay. Then?  
Geetha : To make sentence.

(Geetha, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

Geetha explained that she buys model essay books based on the syllabus prescribed in her school. This indicates that Geetha is keen in buying books on model essays in order to get new ideas and acquire knowledge to help in her writing activities. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Do you buy books on model essays?  
Geetha : ahh..yes.  
Researcher : How do you select your books?  
Geetha : by syllabus.

(Geetha, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

Her interview responses indicated that she preferred to use model essays as a form of guidance to help her in learning and acquiring writing skills. Moreover, to ensure that she can write well in her school, Geetha selects model essay books based on her school syllabus and uses them when she does essay writing activities. This can be noted in the interview excerpt given below.

Researcher : Do you prefer to use model essays when composing an essay?  
Geetha : Yes.  
Researcher : Why do you prefer to use them?  
Geetha : If I find it difficult, I see the model essay and write.

(Geetha, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

Geetha stated that when she finds the essays that she has to write difficult, she refers to the model essays to help her in the writing tasks. Model essays guide her when she lacks ideas and when she could not find appropriate words to write sentences.

#### 4.2.3 Anjali.

Anjali is also a prefect and she comes from a family where her parents diligently keep themselves updated with their daughter's progress ever since she was in lower primary. She can speak fairly good English as she uses English at home and she is the only participant who mentioned that she likes all the four skills in English. The interview excerpt is shown below.

Researcher : Among the four skills, which skill do you find the most difficult?

Anjali : (Silence)...Not sure.

Researcher : Not sure? Ohh okay..Why not sure? Difficult skill for you?

Anjali : Because all also I like.

Researcher : What's your opinion on writing in English?

Anjali : It's more easy.

Researcher : Okay. Why do you think it's easier?

Anjali : Just easy. Because, I speak English at home.

(Anjali, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

Anjali stated that writing is easy because she uses the language at home and she was the highest scorer among the participants who had done the first essay. She scored 20 marks, which placed her in the Excellent Band category (grade B). She had used idioms in her first essay which helped her to obtain good marks. However, she made a very profound error in using the word '*supervised*'. The sentence is given below.

*At the afternoon, they went to a nearest restaurant who had supervised them for the awesome trip.*

(Sentence from first essay)

She did not really understand the word ‘*supervised*’ as she made an incorrect sentence using the word. When her annotated model essay was examined, she had bracketed four adjectives which are *fascinating*, *delighted*, *great* and *fierce*. She had only used the adjective ‘*fascinating*’ and did not use the other adjectives. She did not underline, bracket or highlight the word ‘*supervised*’. However, in her second essay, she had used the word correctly. Although she did not annotate the word ‘*supervised*’, she had noticed the usage of the word in the model essay and had used it correctly. The sentence that she had written in her second essay is shown below.

*Besides, they fed the elephants while being supervised by the zookeeper.* (Model essay)

*The zookeeper supervised the pupils in the zoo.* (Second essay).

The PFs and PFNs of Anjali are shown below.

Table 4.3

*The PFs and PFNs of Anjali*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	1 unclear sentence	None
2	Sentence Structure	1 incorrect sentence	None
3	Organisation of Ideas	None	None
4	Links of Paragraphs	None	None
5	Punctuation	None	None
6	Vocabulary	1 word (ineffective)	noticed 1 word
7	Spelling	None	None

Her PFs showed that, in her first essay, she wrote one unclear sentence and one sentence with a structural error. However, she did not notice the language aspects and as such the sentences were not corrected. She used the ideas found in the model essay and constructed different sentences in her second essay. The incorrect sentences were not found in the second essay.

#### **4.2.3.1 Perceptions on writing.**

In Anjali' case, the first essay writing activity was easy and simple. She stated that the pictures were easy to understand. It is because she had written about her personal experience to the zoo which she had revealed during the interview. Thus, she enjoyed the writing activity since she had some experience visiting the zoo which helped her to visualise, apply and verbalise the experience. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Okay, how was the writing activity?

Anjali : It was easy.

Researcher : Easy..hmm

Anjali : uhmm..simple also.

Researcher : Simple, okay..Then?

Anjali : Easy to understand the picture.

(Anjali, 2nd interview)

Anjali stated that the writing activity was easy because the pictures given were helpful. The pictures which were given as a guidance made her essay writing simple. She also stated that she prefers to buy books on model essays and her mother who is also a teacher buys the books for her. In the interview, she also claimed that she shares the ideas that she had read with her friends. The excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Okay. Do you share your ideas with your friends?

Anjali : Yes.

Researcher : Okay. What are the ideas that you share with your friends?

Anjali : About the adjectives I learn, the words, the idioms, the proverbs, About the story..I tell them..

(Anjali, 3rd interview)

She mentioned that she shares the idioms and proverbs, besides the words she has learned. In her first essay she included one of the idioms she had learned. It helped her to produce a much better essay compared to the other pupils.

#### 4.2.4 Fanny.

Fanny is a librarian. She is a fun and bubbly girl with many friends. Although she is a librarian, she did not state that she likes reading skills the best among the four skills in English. She stated in her first interview that she likes listening skills because she likes to listen to songs in English. The interview excerpt is shown below.

Researcher : Which skill do you like the most?

Fanny : Listening and speaking.

Researcher : Good. Why do you like listening?

Fanny : I like listen songs..English songs.

(Fanny 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

When she was asked about the first writing activity, she stated that, she did not find it difficult and she understood everything. She mentioned that she had read the words in storybooks. This contradicts her statement that her favourite skills were listening and speaking. She does read storybooks but perhaps it was not her first preference. In her first essay, she used a rather wide range of new vocabulary, but the sentences were inaccurate. The PFs and PFNs of Fanny are shown below.

Table 4.4  
*The PFs and PFNs of Fanny*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	4 unclear sentences	corrected 3 sentences
2	Sentence Structure	1 incorrect sentence	None
3	Organisation of Ideas	None	None
4	Links of Paragraphs	None	None
5	Punctuation	2 wrong punctuations	None
6	Vocabulary	None	noticed 9 words
7	Spelling	5 words	corrected 1 word

In her first essay, she had used new vocabulary such as *cameras*, *supervisors*, *separated*, *carnivore*, *herbivore* and *omnivore*, but some of the words were spelt incorrectly. She was placed in the Good Band category (grade C) as she had errors in subject-verb agreement and poor accuracy of the sentences. She wrote four sentences which had unclear meanings. In her second essay, three sentences were corrected as she observed some new ideas. The sentences are given below.

**First example:**

*Their supervised the students.* (First essay)

*Besides, they fed the elephants while being supervised by the zookeeper.* (Model essay)

*The zookeeper supervised the pupils.* (Second essay)

**Second example:**

*They learned about the animals which carnivor, omnivor, herbivor and else.* (First essay)

*They learned some information from the zookeeper.* (Second essay)

### **Third example:**

*They were riched to the zoo Taiping.* (First essay)

*When they reached there, it was already 10 a.m.* (Model essay)

*They reached the zoo at 10 a.m.* (Second essay)

In the first example, she wrote a sentence with incorrect subject-verb agreement. She was confused with the pronoun ‘*they*’ and the determiner ‘*their*’. She noticed the use of nouns in the model essay and she replaced it with the determiner ‘*their*’. Whereas in the second example, she improvised her own sentence by removing some ideas and including a noun she had noticed in the model essay. Subsequently, the third example revealed that she had noticed the spelling of ‘*reached*’ and corrected it while being able to write a sentence with the correct subject-verb agreement including the time frame as given in the model essay. When she was given the model essay during the second stage of the study, she did indeed read the model essay thoroughly and she had jotted down important notes at the bottom of the page. Some of the notes are given below.

*Monkeys swinging wildly took photo zookeepers and owner of the zoo fierce lions*

(Annotation from the model essay)

Her annotation revealed that she had concentrated on the phrases rather than the sentences. Moreover, she was not being specific on subject or verbs as she had picked both the subjects and the verbs. Furthermore, she had listed the new vocabulary she had learned from the model essay at the right corner of the page. She had tabulated words and phrases such as *absolutely fascinating*, *delighted*, *swinging wildly* and *experience*. Among the tabulated words, two were adjectives, one was a verb and one was a noun. Her second essay revealed that she did not use all the tabulated words and phrases. Attention was given to an adjective, a verb and a noun. She used the phrase

'*absolutely fascinating*' in her second essay, but it was used in a different context. Moreover, she had learned the word '*supervised*' which she did not initially use in her first essay, but she had used in her second essay. She had noticed the word, understood the usage of it and made a sentence using the word. However, the sentence in the model essay was '*Besides, they fed the elephants while being supervised by the zookeeper*'. She had changed the complex sentence given in the model essay to a simple sentence '*The zookeeper supervised the pupils.*' This could be due to her inability to notice the complex sentence or she was not exposed to complex sentences in her lessons in class. However, she was able to notice phrases as well. The examples from her essays and model essay are given below.

**First example:**

*It was fascinating to them.* (First essay)

*The zoo was **absolutely** fascinating because there were many different types of animals.* (Model essay)

*It was **absolutely** fascinating to them.* (Second essay)

**Second example:**

*They were delighted by the **monkeys swinging wildly** through the trees.* (Model essay)

*There the **monkeys** were **swinging** on the tree **wildly**.* (Second essay)

In the first example, she noticed the word '*absolutely*' and had simply embedded it in her sentence structure. The second example disclosed that she did not pay attention to the sentence type, but to the phrase '*monkeys swinging wildly*'.

**4.2.4.1 Perceptions on writing.**

Fanny stated that, the writing activity done after the exposure to the model essays was interesting because she had learned many new ideas from the model



essay. She mentioned that, she had learned many activities which means that she was able to elaborate the ideas well with the help of the model essay. Fanny's response showed that model essay helped her to gain new ideas for essay writing activities. Although, she confessed that she does not enjoy reading model essays which are not interesting, in her opinion, she also admitted that the new ideas and new words do attract her. The excerpt is shown below.

Researcher : Ohh okay. Do you enjoy reading the model essays?

Fanny : No.

Researcher : Why don't you like reading model essays?

Fanny : Because it's just a model essay. If storybook like that we can enjoy.

Researcher : So, you don't read model essays?

Fanny : I will read sometimes.

Researcher : What is the most interesting part in a model essay that attracts you?

Fanny : Adjectives.

Researcher : Other than adjectives?

Fanny : The sentence.

Researcher : Why does it attract you?

Fanny : hmmm the sentence have new vocabulary.

(Fanny, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

She admitted that by reading model essays she could write better essays because model essays are written excellently by teachers and writers for the benefits of pupils which could help them to improve their writing skills. Fanny's statement that the model essay helped her in her writing task was proven when she said that her

second essay was interesting to write due the ideas she had read about in the model essay. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : How was the writing activity that you had done today?

Fanny : hmm interesting.

Researcher : Why it was interesting?

Fanny : hmm because we read... and we know many interesting ideas and... then activities.

(Fanny, 4<sup>th</sup> interview)

According to Fanny, she shares the words, sentences and ideas that she reads in the model essays with her friends. It implies that she is able to remember the words, sentences and ideas to the extent that she is able to share them with her friends. It shows that she is interested in reading model essays as she finds the model essays to be interesting and realises that model essays can help her to write essays with lesser errors.

#### **4.2.5 Suresh.**

Suresh is a quiet boy. He was very shy answering the questions during the interview sessions and he used fillers such as ‘*uhh*’ and ‘*uhhmm*’. Although he is quiet, he stated in his first interview that he often takes part in Tamil public speaking competitions. He also revealed that, although he likes English, his favourite subject is Tamil. Among the four skills in English, as a public speaker, he likes speaking skill the most and he finds writing the most difficult skill to acquire in English. His statement that the most difficult skill in English is writing could be observed in his first essay. His essay was placed in the Good Band category (grade C). He was given 13 marks, but these marks were downgraded to 10 marks when it was crosschecked by a different examiner. Justifications given was that as his sentences were simple and

many errors were found within those simple sentences. The PFs and PFNs of Suresh are shown below.

Table 4.5

*The PFs and PFNs of Suresh*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	4 unclear sentences	None
2	Sentence Structure	3 incorrect sentences	corrected 1 sentence
3	Organisation of Ideas	3 irrelevant ideas	None
4	Links of Paragraphs	1 inappropriate sentence	None
5	Punctuation	None	None
6	Vocabulary	None	noticed 3 words
7	Spelling	2 words	None

There were four sentences with unclear meanings in Suresh's first essay. The sentences are given below. However, he was not able to correct these sentences.

*They are fascinating the animals.*

*They are many people.*

*There also fishes.*

*Their theacher was teached animals.*

(Sentences from first essay)

When he was given the model essay, he had underlined ten words and a phrase. Among the ten words, three were nouns (*tickets, trees* and *zookeeper*) three were verbs (*kept, swinging* and *supervised*) two were adjectives (*fascinating* and *fierce*) and two were adverbs (*absolutely* and *wildly*). He had also has written 'wonderful' and 'amazing' on top of the word 'fascinating'. He tried to link some other words to the words he has learned. Furthermore, from the words that he had underlined in the model essay given to him, he had only used 'absolutely fascinating' and 'zookeeper' in his

second essay. He had noticed the usage of it, tried to find the meaning and used it in his second essay. However, he made spelling errors in those words. The sentences are given below.

*They **absoluety fascinating** because there have many types of animals.*

*The **zookeper** fed to the animals.*

(Sentences from second essay)

The researcher could conclude that, he had demonstrated little noticing function, because, he was able to notice only one phrase and one word although he underlined ten words. Moreover, he had written similar sentences with what was found in his first essay. For example, the sentence, ‘*The animals are on the cage*’ was written in the first essay and also in the second essay. Although he has underlined the word ‘*kept*’ in the model essay, he did not use it in his second essay. He had noticed it but did not pay attention to it and eventually it was not produced during his second essay. In addition, other examples of sentences found in his first and second essays were, ‘*There also have fishes*’ which he did not change. He made structural errors in three sentences. However, only one sentence was corrected. The example is shown below.

*They planned to went for zoo.* (First essay)

*They went to zoo by bus.* (Second essay)

He had noticed the sentence in the model essay and had written the exact sentence in his second essay. He made two spelling errors, but they were not corrected in his second essay. It was because these words were not given in the model essay.

#### 4.2.5.1 Perceptions on writing.

Suresh is categorised as an average learner. He stated that, learning writing in English is important. His interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : So, do you think it is important to learn writing in English?

Suresh : Yes, because in future or now “uhmm” we need to write because all The exam we are..we need to write like not to talk.

(Suresh, 1st interview)

Being an average learner, he needs guidance in his writing. He stated that, he had needed guidance in completing the first essay. Suresh also stated that, he needs guidance in understanding words and constructing sentences when writing essays. His interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Okay. Did you need any guidance in writing the essay?

Suresh : Yes.

Researcher : What type of guidance did you need?

Suresh : How to use a word in a sentence correctly. The meaning of the words.

(Suresh, 2nd interview)

In addition, Suresh prefers to read model essays as these essays help him to write better essays. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Okay. Do you read model essays?

Suresh : Yes, teacher.

Researcher : Okay good. If yes, why do you read model essays?

Suresh : Because, uhmm..By reading the model essays, I can also write essays.

(Suresh, 3rd interview)

#### 4.2.6 Kumar.

Kumar is a boy who always helps teachers inside and outside the classroom. He has a good sense of humour and he always jokes with his classmates. He stated in his first interview that, his favourite subject is Mathematics and he likes English because he likes the grammar and similes in English. When he was asked about the skill that he likes the most in English, he made a humorous statement that he likes listening because it fills his mind with information. He does not want to waste his energy with writing as writing makes him stresses. The interview excerpt is shown below.

Researcher : So among the four skills which skill do you like the most?

Kumar : Listening.

Researcher : Listening. Okay, why listening?

Kumar : Hmm... it's like to make my mind fill up and don't make..no don't waste my energy with writing and everything.

Researcher : I see. What is the most difficult skill for you?

Kumar : Writing ..I just...what...just making stress every time. To do fast...and every time.

(Kumar, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

Although, he had stated that writing makes him stressed, and it is the most difficult skill to learn, his first essay contradicts the statement he made. His first essay revealed that he has the ability to produce a good piece of writing. His first essay was placed in the Excellent Band category (Grade B). The PFs and PFNs of Kumar are shown below.

Table 4.6

*The PFs and PFNs of Kumar*

No	Language Aspects	PFs	PFNs
1	Accuracy	None	None
2	Sentence Structure	1 incorrect sentence	None
3	Organisation of Ideas	None	4 relevant ideas
4	Links of Paragraphs	None	None
5	Punctuation	None	None
6	Vocabulary	None	noticed 2 words
7	Spelling	None	None

Firstly, Kumar had used a wide range of new vocabulary in his first essay apart from the words given as a guidance in the question. The words were ‘*enter*’, ‘*happily*’, ‘*totally*’, ‘*security guards*’ and ‘*safely*’. His annotated model essay revealed that he had highlighted three phrases and seventeen words. Among these words, five were nouns, five were adverbs, four were verbs and three were adjectives. In his second essay he had used only two verbs from the highlighted words and phrases. However, he had attempted to use a noun which he did not highlight. Since, little noticing was given to that noun, he made a spelling error when he attempted to use it. The example is given below.

*On the whole, it was a great experience for all of them.*

(Model essay)

*Everyone were very happy and they have a experients.*

(Second essay)

Although he did not underline or highlight the word ‘*experience*’, he had noticed the word, sentence and the meaning of the word. Thus, he had included the word in his own sentence, but with a spelling error. Moreover, Kumar also noticed some new ideas and he had changed some of his own ideas that he had written correctly in the first draft to the ideas that he had noticed in the model essay. The modifications are as shown below.

**First example:**

*Once they reached there, all of them were happy to enter the zoo.*

(First essay)

*After their teacher bought the tickets at the counter, they went inside.*

(Model essay)

*Once the teachers bought the tickets, all of them went in.*

(Second essay)

**Second example:**

*They were totally supervised by the security guards.* (First essay)

*Besides, they fed the elephants while being supervised by the zookeeper.* (Model essay)

*The pupils were supervised by the zookeeper.* (Second essay)

**Third example:**

*Some of the classmates took some pictures of the animals.*

(First essay)

*Aziz managed to take pictures of the giraffes and pandas.*

(Model essay)

*At last, Aziz managed to take pictures of the animals.* (Second essay)

In the first example, he included the idea of buying tickets which he did not write in his first essay. He had noticed the ideas and was attracted to it and he blended it into his ideas. He had changed ‘*enter*’ to ‘*went*’ which was found in the model essay. In the second example, he wrote ‘*supervised by the security guards*’. However, upon



reading the model essays, he had changed his initial idea to '*supervised by the zookeeper*'. The modifications took place after he had read and noticed the ideas in the model essay. In his third example, he included the phrase '*managed to take*'. All these examples clearly showed that Kumar had noticed the language aspects such as vocabulary, organisation of ideas and sentence structures. Although, he did not have any problematic features, he had still noticed the ideas and had improvised them to form different sentences.

#### **4.2.6.1 Perceptions on writing.**

Kumar stated that writing is the most difficult skill for him. He had found his first essay writing task to be difficult, although he writes well. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Easy. Okay. Can you please describe about the activity?

Kumar : The first time it was hard teacher.

Researcher : Okay.

Kumar : After that, I try to write.

Researcher : Hmmmm

Kumar : Then, it was easy.

(Kumar, 2nd interview)

He stated that, the writing activity was initially difficult. Then, he attempted to write using the words provided as guidance and subsequently, he was able to write it. He preferred guidance when writing his essay. He revealed this in his second interview session. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Do you need any guidance when writing the essay?

Kumar : Yes.

Researcher : What kind of guidance or help do you need?

Kumar : To make sentences. How to make sentences using the words and to elaborate the ideas properly.

(Kumar, 2nd interview)

Kumar stated that, he needed help in using words correctly when constructing sentences. He prefers help because at times, he does not know the correct vocabulary or phrase to be used in the essays. Moreover, he needs good ideas to write a story. He found that his second essay writing was easier. The model essay given before his second writing activity helped him to write the essay effectively. His interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : How did you find the essay writing activity that you had done in the classroom?

Kumar : Simple.

(Kumar, 3rd interview)

Kumar revealed in his third interview that the second writing activity was simple. Furthermore, in his second interview he did mention that, the first writing activity was initially difficult. With the help of the model essay, he was able to write a better essay for his second writing activity. Besides, he also disclosed that he preferred to use model essays in his classroom because model essays give him guidance in essay writing activities. The interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : What is your opinion or view about the use of model essays in your classroom?

Kumar : .....

Researcher : What is your opinion or view about the use of model essays in your classroom?

Kumar : I gain ideas, learn to write compound sentences.

(Kumar, 4th interview)

Kumar revealed that, he was able to obtain ideas from the model essays and when he has some form of guidance, he is be able to produce a better essay. He also stated in the interview that, model essays help him in acquiring new ideas.

### **4.3 Cross Case Analysis**

Cross case analysis enables the researcher to examine the similarities and differences in the cases based on concepts and opinions analysed. The comparison was made based on pupils' essays and perspectives towards model essays.

#### **4.3.1 Language aspects.**

The findings from the six pupils revealed that, model essays helped pupils in improving their writing skills as pupils had noticed the language aspects which are prescribed by the education ministry which need to be learned in upper primary school education. However, the language aspects which were noticed by the six pupils differ in terms of their interests or abilities. All the six pupils had noticed the vocabulary provided in the model essay. Although Anjali did not notice as many words as the others, she did notice a word from the model essay. Whereas Fanny, noticed the most number of words and she had also used them in her second essay. The next language aspect which the pupils noticed the most is the ideas given and organisation of the ideas. Among the six pupils, Anjali, Fanny and Suresh did not notice the ideas given in the model essays, but the other pupils had noticed them as they had written some of the more prominent ideas such as *'bought tickets at the counter'*, *'monkeys swinging wildly'* and *'managed to take pictures'* in their second essays. Although Suresh noticed some new ideas in the model essay, he was not able to produce them accurately. He had made some structural and spelling errors when attempting to use them. Kumar, already had with various ideas in his first essay, but when he noticed similar ideas in the model essay, he had changed and improvised his ideas. Besides

these two language aspects discussed above, Fanny, Maya and Geetha also noticed the accuracy of sentences which had helped them to write clear sentences. Maya and Suresh noticed sentence structures in their model essays and corrected their sentences based on the sentences in the model essays. Geetha was the only one who noticed the links of paragraphs. Maya and Fanny had noticed the spelling of words, whereas none of the pupils noticed the punctuations. This can be due their focus on learning new words. As such, they had overlooked the spelling of words. However, spelling can only be learned through the continuous exposure to the words and if the words are not provided in the model essays, pupils would not be able to acquire the spelling. Thus, the pupils did not pay attention to the spelling errors as they were unsure of the words' correct form of spelling as they did not find similar words in the model essays. The language aspects which the six pupils had noticed are presented in the table given below.

Table 4.7

*Language Aspects Noticed by the Six Pupils*

Language Aspects	Names					
	Maya	Geetha	Anjali	Fanny	Suresh	Kumar
1 Accuracy	1	1	none	3	none	none
2 Sentence Structure	2	none	none	none	1	none
3 Organisation of Ideas	2	4	none	none	none	4
4 Links of Paragraphs	none	3	none	none	none	none
5 Punctuation	none	none	none	none	none	none
6 Vocabulary	6	2	1	9	3	2
7 Spelling	2	none	none	1	none	none

The table shows that from the seven language aspects, vocabulary was the most noticed. All the pupils had noticed the vocabulary given in the model essay. Accuracy and organisation of ideas were the second top language aspects which were noticed by the pupils. The pupils noticed some relevant ideas that could help with their writing task and had also noticed the organisation of these ideas in a narrative genre. However, only two pupils had noticed sentence structures and spelling in the model essay given. The pupils were not attracted to punctuations as it was not given appropriate attention by all the pupils in this study.

Apart from these six pupils who were selected to be interviewed, the other pupils in the classroom had also shown some improvement in their second writing activity. They had also noticed some of the language aspects and had corrected them in their second essay. Based on this, two examples are given below.

**First example:**

*All animal **ther** is a fascinating.* (First essay)

*The zoo was absolutely fascinating because **there** were many different types of animals.* (Model essay)

*The zoo all animal **there** fascinating* (Second essay)

**Second example:**

*In the cages have some horror animals.* (First essay)

*The fierce lions and tigers were safely kept inside the cages.*  
(Model essay)

*The animals are in the cages.* (Second essay)

In the first example, there were structural errors in the sentences from the first essay and also in the second essay. The pupil was unable to construct correct sentences. However, when he was given the model essay as a form of guidance during the second stage of the study, although he was not able to notice the sentence structure, but he had still noticed the spelling of the word ‘*there*’ and the noun ‘*zoo*’. Thus, in his second

essay, he had corrected the word '*there*' and changed his usage of noun from '*all animal*' to '*zoo*'. The annotated model essay of this pupil revealed that he had underlined the word '*cages*'. The second example revealed that, the pupil had noticed the sentence structures in the model essay given to him. The sentence in his first essay had structural errors, but when he noticed the same type of sentences in the model essay, he was able to correct his sentence. However, attention was not given to the adjective '*fierce*', nouns '*lions*' and '*tigers*', adverb '*safely*' and verb '*kept*'. He had written a simple sentence which was correct, with the guidance of the model essay. The other language aspect the pupils had noticed was accuracy. The example is given below.

*The are many animals.* (First essay)

*The zoo was absolutely fascinating because there were many different types of animals.* (Model essay)

*There were many animals.* (Second essay)

The sentence in the first essay was unclear. When he was given the model essay, he had underlined the whole of the second paragraph which consisted of three sentences. The sentence provided in the model essay was a compound sentence. However, he was not able to notice the compound sentence, but he noticed the phrase '*there were*' in that sentence. Therefore, he had used the phrase and had constructed a correct sentence in his second essay. As the results had revealed, all the six pupils who had been selected for interview noticed vocabulary the most, similarly the pupils who had not been selected for the interview had also noticed vocabulary the most compared to the other language aspects.

#### **4.3.2 Pupils' impressions on writing.**

Based on the responses that the pupils had given, it can be concluded that although writing is the least favoured skill, pupils do realise the importance of writing

in acquiring language based knowledge especially to pass in the examinations. Hence, they are trying their best to acquire writing skills in school. When they were asked about their first writing activity in the classroom, they had had stated different opinions. Although Maya acknowledged that she found the first essay writing activity easy, her essay was given a C grade. She had expected ideas from her friends which she had needed in order to write her essay. This is in contrast with Suresh, who stated that the writing activity was easy because the words given were quite easy for him to grasp. However, Kumar had stated that, the writing activity was quite difficult for him. Kumar also stated that, he preferred to have help to extend ideas and to write correct sentences because he found writing the most difficult skill to acquire. Suresh stated the that, he needs to learn writing skills because he needs to write essays in his examination and it is important for the future too. As for Anjali, she was unsure of which skill is difficult for her. However, she stated that, at times she finds the writing activities carried out in the classroom to be difficult. She also prefers to have some form of guidance in order to write a good essay. Geetha was the only one among the six pupils who had been interviewed who had stated that her favourite English language skill is writing. Although she is categorised as a below average learner, Geetha claimed that, she enjoys the writing activities in the classroom regardless of her writing problems. This is because she has a lot of ideas to be written down but she needs guidance to write correct sentences, choose appropriate words, create good organisation of ideas with clearer meanings. In this case, all the six pupils conveyed that, they needed guidance in their writing skills activities and to produce essays with lesser errors, so that they can pass the school and public examinations.

### **4.3.3 Model essays as a learning tool.**

Based on the interview sessions, all the pupils' perspectives towards writing, after reading the model essays had changed. Kumar and Geetha stated that, the second essay writing was simple, easy and enjoyable. Both of them had responded that they were happy to use model essays in their writing classroom as model essays guided them in their essay writing. Geetha, whose favourite skill is writing, stated that, she was able to produce a better essay in her second writing activity since she had obtained some good ideas from the model essays. Kumar found that the essay writing task had become easier and he was able to write his second essay quickly as compared to his first essay because of the vocabulary and ideas he had gained from the model essays. As for Fanny, she was able to deliver more ideas in her second essay because the model essay given to her served as a guidance. When she was asked if she needed any further explanation on the model essay, she said that, the ideas she read were sufficient to write the essay and she wrote the second essay smoothly compared to her first essay. Anjali stated that, the second essay writing was different for her because she had read the model essay a few days ago and she remembered the ideas which in turn had made her second essay writing easy. When she was asked, what she had meant by 'different', Anjali explained that she felt happy because the same essay question was given to her in the second writing activity, thus, making it easy for her. Suresh also stated that the writing activity was simple because of the model essay he had read few days ago. He said that, he could write better since he knew what to write about. As for Maya, she stated that, she had fun during her second writing activity because the ideas she had read about were very helpful in her essay writing task. Although the pupils have been previously exposed to basic competence in writing an essay, the teaching of writing in itself does not lead to the level of performance portrayed during the writing activity.



The pupils were provided with feedback in the form of model essays which had helped them improve their writing skills during the second writing activity. The teacher involved in the interview stated that, model essays had indeed guided the pupils in familiarising them with the narrative writing genre. Students should be exposed to different types of writing genres and texts, in order to improve their writing skills in second or foreign language learning (Wennerstrom, 2003). Moreover, Hyland (2003) says that, teachers who prefer the teaching of writing in a genre-oriented context, view writing as an attempt to communicate ideas when teaching writing skills. Based on the pupils' perspectives, it can be concluded that model essays had helped them to write the second essay confidently as they had acquired some of the language aspects needed to write good essays. It made the writing activity easy for some of the pupils as they had said that the writing activity was simple.

#### **4.3.4 Advantages of model essays.**

The pupils were interviewed on their perceptions of the use model essays in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. Fanny and Suresh admitted that they read model essay outside the classroom to learn new words and obtain new ideas. Moreover, Anjali and Maya stated that, they buy books on model essay as recommended by their teacher. They said that, model essay books help them, especially during the examinations as they can read sample essays which they think can be questioned in the examination. Maya mentioned that model essays contain adjectives and new words that attract her. She probably refers to the adjectives which describe people, animals, places or things. She also stated that, she could learn new words from model essays. Geetha also stated that, she buys model essay books based on certain criteria such as the author and format of the essays. Geetha, Anjali and

Fanny mentioned that they preferred exchanging ideas and sharing new vocabulary they have studied with their friends.

Geetha stated that, she often shares the new words that she learns while Anjali shares adjectives, proverbs and the plot of story. Fanny, mentioned that, she shares the words, ideas and sentences she learns from model essays. The common language aspect that Geetha, Anjali and Fanny share with their friends is vocabulary. This discovery is similar to the language aspect that the pupils noticed the most in the model essay given to them, which is also vocabulary. Thus, pupils are interested in learning new words compared to learning other language aspects such as spelling, punctuations and accuracy. Moreover, Maya, Geetha and Anjali confessed that they often refer to sample model essays when they have writing exercises which are to be done independently. They stated that, in order to produce a good piece of writing, they need to refer to model essays as a guidance.

Moreover, Suresh also stated that, he can write essays better after the exposure to model essays. Geetha admitted that model essays helped her immensely in narrative writing. These novice learners of narrative writing have difficulty in making sentences and expanding their ideas without any type of guidance. Wingate (2012) discovered that, model essays were helpful in giving necessary information prior to students' writing activities. Similar opinions were presented by the pupils in this study that model essays helped them by providing them ideas to write a narrative essay. Furthermore, motivation is important especially for less proficient novice writers. Therefore, from the pupils' perspectives, model essays serve as a support tool for writing narrative essays as they help them to generate vocabulary, correct sentences and story plots. Learning a new genre with proper guidance had increased their confidence levels and the pupils were motivated to learn the narrative writing style.

#### 4.4 Teacher's Perspectives on Model Essays

The findings from the interviews with the pupils correspond with the teacher's interview that model essays were indeed helpful in doing writing activities in the classroom. The excerpts are outlined below.

Researcher : What are your opinions or views about the usage of model essays in your classroom?

Teacher : Model essays are very helpful in classroom, especially for weaker pupils as it provides a great help. Ahh... They can follow content of the essay and then they can also pick new words from the essays.

Researcher: : Do you prefer to use model essays with your pupils?

Teacher : Yes. It makes my teaching writing easier.

(Teacher, 2nd interview)

The teacher expressed her view that providing model essays in the classroom would ease her work because the pupils would be able to learn new words from the model essays. The findings here also revealed that the language aspects the pupils had noticed the most was vocabulary. In this case, pupils who were involved in this study learn English as a second language and the exposure to language materials are very essential. The teacher highlighted that pupils need to be exposed to more materials so that they will be able to learn and further improve their writing skills. The teacher's feedback on the use of model essays in the classroom revealed, that model essays do help pupils in their writing tasks, especially the weaker pupils. The teacher also stated that, the weaker pupils are able to notice certain language aspects and they usually follow the content of the model essay and use them in their essays. The teacher's second interview excerpt is given below.

Researcher : Did the pupils enjoy the writing activity?

Teacher : Yes...because “aa” they were more guided to write the essay. And they followed some of the ideas. Hmmm.. even the weaker pupils.

(Teacher, 2nd interview)

The teacher’s interview revealed that, the model essay guided the pupils in writing their essays. Her main focus was related to the weaker pupils in the classroom. She mentioned that the weaker pupils were also able to notice the ideas in the model essays and were able to use some of the ideas in their essays. She stated her opinion that, the pupils needed to be exposed to good reading materials as certain words may not be used in their daily conversations as they do not speak the language much. As such, by providing model essays, pupils will be able to read and remember words, phrases and sentence structures which will help them in writing essays. Thus, the teacher preferred to give model essays to the pupils to expose them to good writing skills and styles.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter highlights responses to the two research questions addressed in this research. The findings of this study are presented through the individual case analysis and cross case analysis of six pupils as well as the other pupils in the classroom. In addition, findings from the teacher’s perspectives are also presented. Discussions in relation to past studies, implications of this study and recommendation for future research is presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study investigated the use of model essays in a writing classroom consisting of Year 5 pupils in a national type primary school. This study also discovered the language aspects which the pupils noticed with regards to the model essays given to them and their perceptions on the use of model essays in the writing classroom. The areas that are included in this chapter covers the discussion, summary of the findings, implications and recommendation for future research.

#### 5.2 Discussion

The findings from this study revealed that model essays had helped the pupils to learn writing skills because they noticed certain language aspects which have been specified by the education ministry to be acquired at upper primary level. The six participants and a large number of pupils in the classroom noticed vocabulary the most. They were attracted to the new vocabulary as it was their first time reading them and although, some made spelling errors when using the words, they did try to use them in their second essay. This finding is similar to the findings of Qi and Lapkin (2001). They claimed that, reformulated essays provide students with a broad range of vocabulary, phrases and sentence structures. When students compare these to their own writing output, it can help them to engage in a more meaningful learning process compared to the usual traditional teacher correction strategies. They found that the quality of noticing was different for learners who had different levels of language proficiency and their results demonstrated that proficient learners were able to notice more language aspects compare to other learners. In this present study, the model essays

provided to the pupils were helpful in engaging the pupils in a meaningful learning process. Here, the average and below average learners were able to notice more vocabulary items than the proficient learners. This indicates that although the proficiency level of pupils plays a crucial role in the learning of writing skills, as Kormos (2011) stated, individual differences also play an important role in deciding what learners pay attention to during output production. It may not be that proficient learners are the ones that would notice the most language aspects.

This finding is also similar with the findings of Abe (2008). The result of Abe's study revealed that, lexical and content aspects were the two top categories which university students noticed. This present study dealt with primary school pupils who were eleven years old. Moreover, Abe's study was on descriptive and argumentative essays, whereas, this study concentrated on narrative essays. Although the learners in these two studies were varied in age and the genres were also different, the language aspects that the learners noticed the most were same. It indicates that age and the writing genre were not prominent factors in noticing the language aspects. Besides, model essays are also useful for all genres that the teachers teach in the classroom. Another study which investigated noticing through output was Hanaoka (2007). He studied the usefulness of model texts among Japanese university students. The study revealed that, the most widely noticed language aspects were the lexical items, followed by the content. The interview results of his study also showed that the students had a strong desire to use model essays in helping them to improve their writing skills. On the whole, these results indicated that, 'learners focus, above all things, on words' (Williams, 1999).

However, model texts as a strategy to teach writing was not as effective among eleven- and twelve-year old children in Spain. Here, using a comparison of two strategies (teachers' error correction vs model texts), the study was conducted by Coyle and Roca de Larios (2014). The study reported that, the pupils had noticed more linguistics features in the teachers' error correction strategy than the model texts. This was due to the problems in understanding the language in the model texts. Giving pupils model essays that suit their language proficiency levels are essential as it will enable pupils to notice the language aspects in these model texts. When the language used in the model essay is not appropriate and does not fit the proficiency levels of the pupils, they would not be able to notice the language aspects as they would find it difficult. This present study which examined a mixed ability classroom faced certain challenges as some pupils found the language used in the model essays difficult, but for some other pupils it was relatively easy. This implied that, appropriate model essays which suit the language proficiency of all pupils are necessary in engaging pupils in the meaningful learning process.

There was a difference between the pupils' first and second writing tasks. The pupils' writings scores were classified into bands (Appendix H). The differences in the bands (pre-test and posttest) indicated that the pupils were able to notice errors such as vocabulary, organisation of ideas and accuracy. In their second essay, they were able to correct the errors they had noticed and made fewer errors in the second essays. In this case, three pupils (Pupils 4, 12 and 21) had indicated improvements in their bands from good and excellent to distinguished. Pupil 12 who scored 15 marks and was placed in the good band category, was able to obtain the highest band score in the marking scheme which is 'distinguished'. Meanwhile, pupils 4 and 21 indicated a positive move from the 'excellent' band to 'distinguished' band category. Pupils who

had scored the average band of good (pupils 10, 14 and 17) were able to score higher bands in the second essay. Pupil 11 who scored a 'satisfactory' band was also able to score a 'good' band in the second essay. Although there were thirteen pupils who remained in the same band, they had showed improvement in the marks they had scored. For example, although pupils 5 and 6 remained in the 'good' band but their scores had been increased. Pupils 5 who scored 11 marks in the first essay, was able to score 13 marks in the second essay. The results revealed that, the pupils showed an improvement in their writing activities with the help of model essays, regardless of their language proficiency levels. Examples of pupils' narrative essays and annotated model essays are shown in Appendix I (1-6). Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) claimed that, exposing students to various types of reading texts is absolutely necessary in acquiring good writing skills. The improvement in the pupils' work supported this claim. This meant that, the pupils who showed improvement, had read, compared and noticed certain language aspects and had utilised them in their new piece of writing work. They were able to use the language aspects that they had learned from the model essays in their new writing work. Besides, convincing results were also found in other studies which proved that model essays are useful in improving pupils' writing proficiency. One of these studies is Canocas Guirao, Roca de Larios and Coyle (2015). The results of this study demonstrated that, the learners primarily focused on lexical items and chunks of language aspects. Therefore, they were able to narrate the story's content accurately. However, pupil 2 showed a decrease of one mark, but he was still in the 'satisfactory band'. It appears that he did not apparently benefit from the model essays given to him. This might be due to his inability to comprehend the language used in the model essays. Hence, he needs comprehensive guidance in order to comprehend the language used in the model essays.



The pupils' engagement in learning supported the claim that providing learners model texts, after the writing task has been completed rather than before it, created awareness in the learners. It allowed them to notice the correct use of language in model essays that they had previously found to be problematic when writing their first writing. This way, pupils can immediately notice the aspects that they wish to observe in L2 learning. As such, the pupils who showed improvement had noticed the imperfections in their essay writings, compared their work with the model essays and had tried to improve their writing skills. In other words, they utilised the knowledge they gained from the model essays and applied it to their writings. Sachs and Polio (2007) argued that, model essays did not highlight the learners' errors in a straightforward manner but encouraged the learners to notice their own errors and take appropriate action. The result of this study supports their arguments that the pupils were able to correct their mistakes on their own. Swain and Lapkin (1995) stated that, the output produced by the learners enable them to notice and be aware of the language difficulties they encounter and eventually, they will make attempts to fix these language imperfections. The written essays of pupils which serves as an output in learning writing, made them aware of their imperfections in the writing skills and when they were provided with model essays, they immediately noticed the gap between their essays and the model essays. This noticing led the pupils to make an attempt to fix their errors by editing their work.

However, pupil 20 showed a decrease of one mark which made him drop to the satisfactory band category. He had scored 10 marks in the first essay and this dropped to 9 marks in the second essay. This might be due to his inability to understand the language used in the model essays or he might need a teacher's guidance to complete the task given to him. Hence, model essays do serve as a

feedback tool for pupils who can understand and interpret the language aspects in it, but for pupils who had problems in understanding the language, some guidance and time is required to interpret the language aspects. Table 5.1 below shows the analysis of the pupils' improvement.

Table 5.1

*The Improvement of the Pupils*

<b>Number of Pupils</b>	<b>Identification of Pupils</b>	<b>Band/Grade (First and Second Essay Writing)</b>
1	12	C to A
2	4, 21	B to A
3	10, 14, 17	C to B
2	7, 11	D to C
3	1,8,13	B to B
8	3, 5, 6, 9, 16, 18, 19, 22	C to C
2	2, 15	D to D
1	20	C to D

There is a significant increase in the number of pupils placed in the good (C) to excellent (B) band categories and from the satisfactory (D) to good (C) band categories. This can be linked to the fact that, even if the pupils are excellent or weak in second language writing, they are able to notice that the language aspects used in the model essays differed from their own language usage. They are also able to use these language aspects to improve their original texts. On the other hand, although there were pupils who remained in the same band, throughout this study, there was an increase in the marks awarded for their second essays. According to Canocas Guirao,

Roca de Larios and Coyle (2015), repetition of the writing tasks plays a crucial role in the improvement of the pupils writing skills. Thus, pupils need to be exposed to various types of reading materials frequently so that they can familiarise themselves with the words, content and style.

### **5.3 Summary of the Findings**

This study on the primary schools pupils' perceptions on narrative model essays outlined several findings. First, out of seven language aspects specified, the pupils noticed three language aspects the most, which are vocabulary, organisation of ideas and accuracy. The other language aspects which are sentence structure, links of paragraphs, punctuations and spelling were least noticed by the pupils. Although the pupils were mainly interested in vocabulary and ideas, some of them were not able to present these aspects correctly which eventually resulted in spelling and sentence structure errors. In relation to the relevance of the task, the pupils were able to follow the elements of narrative writing which consists of the beginning, characters, setting, plot and ending. Second, the pupils had expressed their opinions that model essays helped them in improving their essay writing skills especially in terms of acquiring new vocabulary and ideas. On the other hand, one pupil pointed out that she finds the model essay given to her to be difficult. On the other hand, some pupils confessed that they enjoyed the discussions with their friends during the reading stage as they were able to share their ideas. This indicated that, although the pupils were given model essays as a guidance, they preferred peer discussions for better understanding of the texts. Thus, the language used in the model essays must be at the same proficiency level of the pupils so that they are able to notice the language aspects and at the same time discussions can be carried out when they are reading the model essays. On the

whole, the findings had revealed that pupils do notice certain language aspects and they also prefer to use model essays in the writing classroom as a form of guidance.

#### **5.4 Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications. First, the findings of the study can be shared with other language teachers in school. This is because, in this research, though the pupils were able to notice certain language aspects, they preferred to have discussions with their friends. Teachers can conduct writing lessons by reading model essays and then having discussions in pairs or small groups. Furthermore, the proficiency levels of pupils play an important role because pupils with different language proficiency levels notice and correct the errors on varying quantity levels. Thus, providing model essays alone to all pupils are not sufficient for them improve their writing skills especially for the slow learners. This can be seen in the improvement of the band scores whereby some pupils were not able to improve their writing abilities regardless of the existence of the reading stage which had been conducted by the teacher. In order for slow learners to be able to notice the language aspects, more guidance should be provided.

#### **5.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

The perceptions of primary school pupils on narrative model essays is an interesting scenario to be investigated. This study explored the use of model essays among pupils and teachers who deal with model essays in the writing classroom in terms of noticing. However, in future, the use of model essays can be investigated from the perspective of pupils who have not been exposed to model essays in their writing classroom. This type of study will generate an in-depth result on the use of model essays in terms of noticing.

Besides that, a comparison of pupils' first essays and second essays are not enough to make judgments on pupils' noticing abilities. Pupils' noticing abilities and development should be identified during each stage of their writing process. This study comprises two writing tasks and the time spent for the interval (from the first writing activity to the second writing activity), was short, which was for only two weeks. Pupils' performance at each writing activity was analysed after that. Thus, a longitudinal study can be conducted in observing processes involved in noticing and reflections could be gathered to gain a complete description of pupils' development in their writing skills.

Finally, the present study focused on the narrative style of writing. Future studies could examine the use of model essays in other genres which the pupils are required to master in primary school. Moreover, future research should embark on pair writing activities since pupils had revealed that discussions with friends have benefited them in further improving their writing skills.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The study revealed that the model essays provided to pupils are indeed useful in improving their writing skills in the narrative writing. Even though, the advanced pupils were able benefit more than the weaker pupils, these weak pupils did notice certain language aspects which made them score marks in the edited exercise. In conclusion, it is hoped that L2 teachers could use model essays frequently to teach writing in order to enhance the pupils' writing skills.

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