

CHAPTER SIX

SIMULATED TEACHING

This chapter examines how the five teacher trainees, Depat, Chee Leng, Amreet, Siti and Laura attempted to implement ideas from the teaching of writing course during simulated teaching. There was a time lapse of about eight months between the teaching of writing course and simulated teaching. The teaching of writing course, discussed in the previous chapter, was conducted for seven weeks, beginning on 5 January, 1998 and ending on 21 February, 1998. Simulated teaching was conducted for 14 weeks, beginning on 5 November 1998 and ending on 18 February 1999 (one-week semester break in between). Practical teaching lasted for six weeks, beginning on 22 March 1999 and ending on 30 April 1999. The time lapse of about eight months between the ending of the teaching of writing course and the beginning of simulated teaching may account for the difficulty the five teacher trainees had in implementing ideas discussed during the teaching of writing course or in transferring knowledge acquired during the course. During this time lapse, the five teacher trainees sat for examinations and then went on vacation. This chapter answers the first part of research question three (focussed on simulated teaching) which is given below. Teaching practice is dealt with in the following chapter.

3. Did the five teacher trainees appropriate ideas from the teaching of writing course into their own teaching strategies during simulated teaching and teaching practice? If so, how? And if not, why not?

The Role of the Mentor and the Nature of Simulated Teaching

The teacher trainees were divided into groups of about 12 for simulated teaching and each group was supervised by a different mentor (see p. 41) for structure of the programme). Four of the five teacher trainees, Depat, Chee Leng, Laura and Siti fell into one group. Amreet was in a different group under a different mentor. As the simulated teaching sessions of the different groups were carried out simultaneously, I was only able to follow the sessions carried out by the mentor of Depat, Chee Leng, Laura and Siti. I only observed Amreet's group when Amreet was presenting her lesson on writing. When I refer to "the mentor", I mean the mentor who supervised Depat, Chee Leng, Laura and Siti. Amreet's mentor will be referred to as "Amreet's mentor".

The mentor started simulated teaching by giving guidelines on classroom management, on the proper use of teaching aids and on the procedure for conducting the mini lessons. The teacher trainees were free to select materials and design their own lessons. The teacher trainees could choose from any of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) or they could integrate the language learning skills in the design of their lesson plans. However, they had always to keep one skill as the main skill to be taught. The five teacher trainees chose writing as the main skill to be taught (a criterion for selection as subjects, see p. 44). The mentor followed a fixed procedure for presentation of lessons. First lessons were to be prepared and presented in pairs (two teacher trainees took turns to present the lesson) and later each teacher trainee presented a lesson individually. The teacher trainees were given 20 minutes each for presentation of the lesson during pair teaching and 40 minutes for individual teaching. While the "teacher" was conducting a lesson, the other teacher trainees acted

as students. For each lesson, the mentor appointed one teacher trainee to act as peer observer. The peer observer was given evaluation guidelines in a form (given in Appendix 0) to help evaluate and comment on the performance of the teacher. After each lesson, the mentor first encouraged the teacher to make comments on the lesson and discuss whatever problems or weaknesses the teacher felt was in the lesson. Then, the peer observer gave his comments on the teaching, pointing out strengths and weaknesses and providing suggestions on how the teaching could be improved. After this, the discussion was open to anyone to make comments and give suggestions. The mentor either concurred or pointed out flaws and other misconceptions in the comments made by the peer observer and the other teacher trainees. Finally, the mentor provided her own observations and suggested ways for improvement. With comments coming from the teacher, the peer observer, the mentor and anyone else who had something to say, a rich and enlightening discussion was usually held after every lesson presented. Table 4 shows the main features of the lessons presented by the five teacher trainees during simulated teaching.

The following section looks at the individual lessons of each of the five teacher trainees presented during Simulated Teaching and the subsequent discussion of the lessons to examine how ideas from the writing course were implemented. The lessons of the teacher trainees who had no experience teaching in secondary schools (Depat, Chee Leng and Laura) are first examined. This is followed by the lessons of Amreet and Siti who had previous experience in secondary schools.

Table 4
Main Features of Lessons Presented During Simulated Teaching

Teacher Trainee	Topic	Ideas from Mr. Lopez's course which were implemented
Depat	Writing a newspaper report	Genre-based, model, jumbled up sentences, skeleton text.
Chee Leng	Writing an invitation	Genre-based, model, key words and phrases, pair work, peer error correction, fill-in-blanks.
Laura	Describing a process	Genre-based, model, mind map, skeleton text, peer correction.
Amreet	Writing short notes and instructions	Genre-based, guessing game, group work, short notes.
Siti	Writing letters to newspapers	Genre-based, models.

Depat's Lesson

Depat's lesson aimed to help intermediate level students write a newspaper report. He attempted the genre-based approach suggested by Mr. Lopez. Depat made use of models in an inductive manner, provided key content words and stressed the features of the format of a newspaper report in a step by step manner as instructed by Mr. Lopez. He started by displaying on transparency, the headline, "Masked Man Robs Rent Collector". The vignette below shows what then transpired between Depat, "the teacher" and his peers who acted as students.

Vignette No. 1

Depat: Class, where do you think this sentence was taken from?

Student A: Newspaper.

Depat: Why do you say newspaper?

Student B: It is a headline.

Depat: Good, yes it is a headline from a newspaper. Today we are going to learn about writing newspaper reports. Now, how is a headline different from a normal sentence? Anyone?

Student C: Headlines are short and to the point.

Depat: Good, you are all very clever students.

(class responds by laughing)

Depat: Now, a newspaper report differs from other kinds of writing. Can anyone tell me how a newspaper report is different?

Student D: Format

Depat: Yes, What features do you find in the format?

Student D: Has the name of a town and date.

Depat: Good.

Student E: It has the name of the writer.

Depat: Yes, good. And it also has details of an event right? Now I am going to give you task sheet one (shown on Figure 13). I want you to tick the features you see, features normally found in a newspaper article.

This vignette shows that Depat did most of the talking while his “students” only blurted out one-word or one-sentence answers to his questions. Although Depat did ask open-ended questions, these questions were restrictive.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Look at the list given below and tick those features that are found in the newspaper report below.

Headline	<input type="checkbox"/>	Details of crimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appeal for witnesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Description of criminal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of writer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of criminal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about the kind of crime committed	<input type="checkbox"/>		

MASKED MAN ROBS RENT COLLECTOR

Serian: A COUNCIL RENT collector was attacked and robbed in Balai Ringin on Monday.

The official from Serian District Council was collecting cash in Melor Road just before 9. a.m. when he was robbed.

Police said the robber, brandishing a club hammer, forced the victim to hand over his cashbag and a portable telephone so that he could not raise the alarm.

The bag contained \$3,920.00 in cash.

The robber is described as 18-25 years old, slim build and about six feet tall. He was wearing a dark jacket, blue jeans and dark-coloured work boots.

His face was masked by a hood and a scarf pulled across the mouth.

Detectives hunting the robber have released a photograph of the type of cash bag and telephone stolen in the attack. A police spokesman said, " We are hoping that either someone will remember seeing the offender running off carrying those items or know where they were dumped.

The Serian police spokesman added, " We are very anxious to trace any witnesses to the attack or hear from anyone who thinks they can help us to identify the offender."

Anyone with information is being asked to contact the CID team on Serian 082-874962.

Extract:
Sarawak Tribune,
17 December 1998

Figure 13. Depat's First Handout

What appeared to be lacking is an encouragement or an opportunity for students to expand and develop on what they were saying. Depat appeared to be satisfied with the one-word or one-sentence responses and quickly moved on to other questions.

Depat's focus was on the surface features of a newspaper report. His lesson did not focus on aspects like attracting the attention of the reader, communicating content through effective language use and development of the story, aspects which were emphasised by Mr. Lopez (see p. 102).

Depat's rationale for asking the students to tick the features in task sheet one (Figure 13), as explained in his lesson plan, was to enable students to identify the different features found in a newspaper article. Students were then given another exercise in a handout on which were listed the major features of the newspaper report. The features were jumbled up. Depat asked the students to arrange the features in their correct order. This exercise is shown on Figure 14. Depat explained in his lesson plan that by highlighting the sequence of the features of a newspaper report, students will learn the format (genre) of a newspaper report. He then elicited from the students the purpose of the headlines and discussed the content of the first paragraph, second paragraph and so on. He told the students that the first paragraph should provide a summary while the second should give details.

Instructions:

Look at the newspaper report again. Then, put these features in the sequence they appear in the text. Write 1-6 in the boxes provided.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) Description of robber | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Headline | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Appeal of witness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) General information about the crime | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) What actually happened | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) What the police did | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Figure 14. Depat's Second Handout

Depat then displayed a transparency showing what he described as the correct format of a newspaper report. This transparency display is shown on the Figure 15.

There was actually no necessity to highlight this format because, while it may have been suitable for this particular story, it surely cannot be used for all stories. Depat, however, gave students the impression that there was a standard format for organising content. He told the students to use this format for a number of writing tasks (tasksheet four) to be given later in the lesson. I felt that it was not necessary to provide a format for organising content of a newspaper report because creativity would be restricted.

On another transparency, Depat displayed examples of headlines with their first paragraphs and pointed out that the first paragraph summed up the story. Again it is questionable whether all first paragraphs should sum up the story.

FORMAT OF A NEWSPAPER REPORT

HEADLINES

General information
about the crime.



Details of what
actually happened



Description of
criminal



What the police have
done



Appeal of witnesses

Figure 15. Depat's Transparency Display

He then distributed task sheet two (Figure 16) on which were two headlines and a number of words (skeleton text as recommended by the Mr. Lopez) to help students write first paragraphs for the headlines. After ten minutes, He asked two students to read out their paragraphs. Depat then displayed the first newspaper article again and pointed out the way people were described. He then asked students to describe the robbers in the story orally. Students were then given an exercise in describing people (bottom of task sheet two, Fig. 16). Certain key words were given to help them. He asked two students to read their descriptions before reading out his own version. The model was given after students completed their work as suggested by Mr. Lopez for good students (inductive manner, see p. 104).

Depat then gave out task sheet three (Figure 17) and asked students to write headlines after reading the three first paragraphs given. However, because time was running out, this activity had to be stopped and without waiting for students' headlines, Depat showed the students examples of interesting and catchy headlines (models).

Finally, because time was up, the mentor interrupted and asked Depat to report how he intended to carry out the rest of the lesson. Depat explained that he intended to get students to write a newspaper report based on information given in tasksheet four (skeleton text). He then hoped to get students to exchange texts and make comments on them (peer correction) and finally he would read out a model. For closure, Depat said he wanted to give students some homework. They were to look for any reports on crimes in any newspaper and rewrite it according to the format they learnt in the lesson. Task sheet two, three and four are shown in the following pages.

Instructions:

Using the information given below, write two short introductory paragraphs for the following headlines. The first paragraph should provide a summary while the second should give some details.

SNAKE FOUND ON PLANE

snake / plane / Heathrow / air port / yesterday. Place / Thailand / about 6 feet long / not dangerous / found by cleaner

WOMAN FINDS \$5,000.

woman / bag / \$5,000 / outside house / yesterday. / The bag / black / leather / on her doorstep / 9 o'clock in the morning.

Instructions:

Finish the sentences with information given about a woman in the box below.

The woman was _____
She was wearing _____

- ❖ about 25 - 30
- ❖ tall, blonde long hair, overweight
- ❖ jeans, black leather jacket, white scarf

Figure 16. Depat's Third handout

Instructions:

Look at these first paragraphs of articles. Work with your partner and try to come up with type b) headlines, i.e. headlines full of alliteration.

A

ROMEO Colin Williams fell head over heels for his sweetheart - and ended up in hospitals.

He plunged 20 feet from a lovers' bridge into a ragging river

Today, 17/12/87

B

The future looks black for Britain's smokers. Three out of four bosses are ready to ban the babits at work and already 62% have imposed a partial block.

Mirror, 29/12/87

C

SCHOOLGIRL Sarah Wright clung to life in an air bubble - trapped upside down in a car which had plunged into a ditch filled with water.

Sunday Mirror, 24/1/88

Figure 17. Depat's Fourth Handout

These task sheets are shown here to point out that Depat had prepared too many activities for a single period and was not even able to go through half of what he had prepared.

Analysis of the Lesson

In the discussion that followed the lesson, the peer observer pointed out that the lesson had too many objectives, and that the last three exercises given in the lesson plan could not be carried out. The mentor added that a double period would be needed to carry out the lesson plan as designed. The mentor also said that Depat should have pointed out the use of past tense and passive voice found in the text he displayed. Although Mr. Lopez had pointed out the need to focus on language when appropriate, Depat ignored this aspect of his text. Doughty and Williams (1998) stress, "...the primary concern of the teacher should always be the question of how to integrate attention to form and meaning" (p. 261). Furthermore, the mentor pointed out that Depat, when asking students what made a headline different from normal sentences (Vignette No. 1), did not point out that certain verbs and articles like "is" and "a" are usually left out in headlines. The mentor suggested that the lesson could have been more interesting if actual newspapers were brought into the classroom as set induction. The mentor also pointed out that Depat should not have used the word "alliteration" during his discussion and in task sheet three (Fig. 17, p. 153) but should have used instead a simpler phrase like "words with similar sounds". The mentor felt that Depat's questions needed to be more specific. For example a question, he asked, "What is the difference between this passage and other passages?" was vague. The mentor also

pointed out that questions could be used to help students develop on what they were saying (also suggested by Mr. Lopez, see p. 129 and Weissberg (1994), see p. 217 in the following chapter). Depat did not give students this opportunity.

For easy reference, the mentor suggested numbering the paragraphs. The mentor felt that there were too many paragraphs given in the text discussed and that certain paragraphs could have been collapsed. The mentor said that after the discussion of the format, Depat should have given students scope for creativity. She suggested giving headlines and making students write the story. This is important as writing was supposed to be the focus of the lesson. As designed by Depat, the lesson had too many controlled items, leaving little room for student creativity. The mentor felt that task sheet three (requiring the writing of headlines) should have been given before task sheet two (requiring the writing of first paragraphs based on given headlines). Task sheet four (requiring the writing of a newspaper report based on key words given) should have been given as homework, according to the mentor. This was not stated in Depat's lesson plan although Depat did say after the lesson that he planned it for homework. The mentor felt Depat should have, at times allowed for creativity. For example, the exercise in task sheet four (Fig. 18, p. 154) was too controlled and there was no room for students to express their own ideas. The mentor also suggested that as a post writing activity, the teacher could get students to mime an incident while other students write a headline on the incident. This would allow for more student participation and enjoyment.

I felt that whatever writing instruction given in the lesson remained at surface level because Depat had prepared too many activities for a 40-minute lesson. Although

Depat used some activities suggested by Mr. Lopez (models, jumbled up sentences, skeleton text), other more important activities suggested by Mr. Lopez, like peer interaction, actual writing practice and error correction, which Depat had actually planned for this lesson, could not be carried out because of poor time management and planning. The lesson remained teacher-centred with Depat doing most of the talking.

Chee Leng's Lesson

Chee Leng attempted the genre-based approach suggested by Mr. Lopez. According to her lesson plan, the main skill to be taught was the writing skill and this was integrated with speaking and reading skills. The main objective, according to the lesson plan, was to teach pupils to write an informal letter to invite a friend for a birthday party. The pupils were to be taught to use the appropriate language and be able to list important information when inviting a friend for a birthday party. Chee Leng told her peers (who were to act as students) and the mentor that the lesson was meant for a Form One class of intermediate proficiency level students.

For set induction, Chee Leng first informed the class that she had a letter for a student. She gave the letter to the student and asked him to come out to the front of the class and read the letter, thus providing a model in the deductive manner as suggested by Mr. Lopez for weak students (see p. 104). The model is shown in the following page.

49, Pandan Indah,
Pandan Indah 14,
55100 Kuala Lumpur,

7 December 1998.

Dear Azlan,

How are you? I hope you're in the best of health.

I would like to invite you for my 13th birthday party. It will be held on Saturday, 14th of December 1998, at my house from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

I would be happy if you could make it as I am also inviting a few of our friends. I hope you will be able to come to my birthday party as I have not seen you for sometime.

Please inform me if you can attend my birthday party.

That's all for now. I hope to hear from you soon.

Bye-bye

Yours sincerely,
Eustace

Chee Leng then asked the other teacher trainees who were acting as students the following questions.

What do you think the letter was about?

What kind of a letter is it? Is it an informal or formal letter?

To whom do you write an informal letter?

After getting responses from the class, Chee Leng displayed the letter on transparency.

She then asked the following question.

Are there any words you don't understand?

Before students had time to respond (no waiting time), Chee Leng asked the next question.

Do you know the meaning of sincerely?

Again before students had time to answer, Chee Leng started writing words on the blackboard. The following words were written.

Invitation
Sincerely
Inform
Informal

Chee Leng quickly tried to explain the meaning of these words and then told the class that these words were clues that this was an invitation letter. She then put up strips of paper on which were written the following phrases.

I'd like you to come to...
Please come to...
You are invited to...
I would be glad if you can...
Please inform if you can...

Chee Leng read out the phrases and told the class that these phrases could be used for inviting. Then, she drew the attention of the class to the format of the letter displayed on the transparency. She pointed out the address, the date and the content of the letter. She explained some phrases used in the letter. For example, she said the phrase "I would be happy if you could make it" expressed hope of seeing the friend and the phrase "That's all for now" signalled that the writer was ending the letter. Next, she displayed a format for writing an invitation letter. The following is the format.

Sender's address

Date

Address the person to whom
you are writing the letter.

Standard opening line in an informal letter.

Extend an invitation to him/her.

State the date, day place and time.

Express your hope of seeing him/her.

Ask him /her for a reply

(This is how you signal to your friend that you are
ending your letter.)

Ending an informal
letter before signing
off

Chee Leng told the class that an informal letter of invitation should be written in the above format. Like Depat had done in his lesson, Chee Leng seemed to imply that there is a standard format for organising the content.

A task sheet was then distributed to each student. The following is the task sheet.

Write an informal letter to your friend in another town, inviting him/her to your birthday party by filling in the blanks below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Dear.....

.....

.....

.....for my birthday party. It will be held on.....

.....if you can make it as I have not seen you for a long time.

.....attend my birthday party.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Figure 19. Chee Leng’s Handout

Chee Leng told the students that in order to fill in the blanks in the worksheet they had to use the language and vocabulary taught earlier. Chee Leng told students to first work in pairs to discuss the task given and then work individually to fill in the blanks and complete the letter.

Students were then told to exchange their letters with their partners for peer correction. Next, Chee Leng called some students to read out their letters to the class.

She told the other students to listen for mistakes. Two letters were read out. Neither Chee Leng nor the students corrected the mistakes in the letters. For example, one letter ended with “Yours friendly” but no one commented on this.

For closure, Chee Leng went through what she covered in the lesson by asking the question, “What important information is needed for writing a letter of invitation?” In this way, she highlighted the date, time, venue and purpose of the letter. Chee Leng concluded by advising students to take all these points into consideration before posting an invitation letter.

Analysis of the Lesson

The following points were raised about the lesson in the discussion that followed the lesson. Using the evaluation guidelines (Appendix O), the peer observer first pointed out strengths of the lesson and then identified areas to be improved. The peer observer said that there was a good flow of activities, which kept the lesson interesting. The set induction was well planned and successful in attracting the attention of the class and there was a sense of suspense and surprise at the introduction to the lesson. The mentor added that there was sufficient input and the format, vocabulary and grammar were well explained. The mentor was also pleased with the use of the model letter as a point of reference and she also felt that the transparency displays and the task sheets were useful.

The peer observer commented that there was too much teacher talk and that there needed to be more student contribution to the lesson. The peer observer suggested that the sentences in the model letter could have been jumbled up. Students could then

be asked to reconstruct the letter as an exercise. The peer observer also commented that the whiteboard should have been better organised. However, the mentor disagreed with this comment. The mentor felt the whiteboard was properly used. The mentor stated that the lesson was too teacher orientated and Chee Leng agreed, saying, "Yes I talked too much". The mentor said that the teacher should have had a better rapport with the students. The interaction part was missing and this, according to the mentor, gave the impression that the teacher was afraid to engage in discourse with the students.

The mentor also commented that the teacher did not have to give all the examples of phrases that could be used. This could have been elicited from the students. The exercise given need not be an invitation to a birthday party since a birthday party was used in the model. The mentor felt that the teacher did not cater for the better students. The lesson should have been prepared to cater for mixed ability. The mentor felt that the teacher did not pay sufficient attention to the tone of an informal letter. The model informal letter was actually very formal and Chee Leng should not have given the impression that there is a fixed format for organising content in an informal letter.

Instead of the "filling in the blanks" exercise, the teacher could have got students to contribute sentences and the teacher could have commented on these sentences. This would have allowed students to be creative and receive feedback on their ideas. I noted that Chee Leng asked the students many questions but never gave students sufficient time to answer. There was no waiting time. Tsui (1996b) reports, "The teachers...have the misconception that an effective teacher should be able to solicit immediate responses from students and that a responsible teacher should be

talking all the time.” (p.153). Since Chee Leng’s lesson was meant for students of intermediate proficiency level, it was too simple and too controlled. Mr. Lopez had stressed the importance of choosing material suitable for the ability of the class (see p. 81). However, Chee Leng had designed too simple a lesson for students of intermediate proficiency level. Moreover, although Chee Leng put students in pairs and asked students to do peer error correction as suggested by Mr. Lopez, she did not spend time discussing the outcome or providing feedback on paired work or peer correction. Richards and Lockhart (1994) reported a teacher’s comment, “...students respond better if given the opportunity to first review their answers with a partner” (p. 31). Similarly, Tsui (1996b) says, “Allowing students to check their answers with their peers before offering them to the whole class also encourages students to speak up” (p. 162). However, Chee Leng made no comment on the two letters that were read out after paired work. Like Depat, Chee Leng hurried through the lesson.

Laura’s Lesson

Laura informed the class that the lesson was prepared for Form Two students of average to high language proficiency. The main skill to be taught was the writing skill with listening, speaking and reading skills as sub skills. For her set induction, Laura showed the class a pineapple and asked the students the following questions.

Is this a local fruit?
Can this fruit be manufactured?
Where can you find this fruit?

Laura’s peers, acting as students, were quick to respond to her questions. Laura told the students to suggest the various ways this particular fruit can be used. Having anticipated their answers, Laura had prepared cards on which were written the various

uses of the pineapple. As students gave suggestions, Laura put up the cards to display the following mind map.

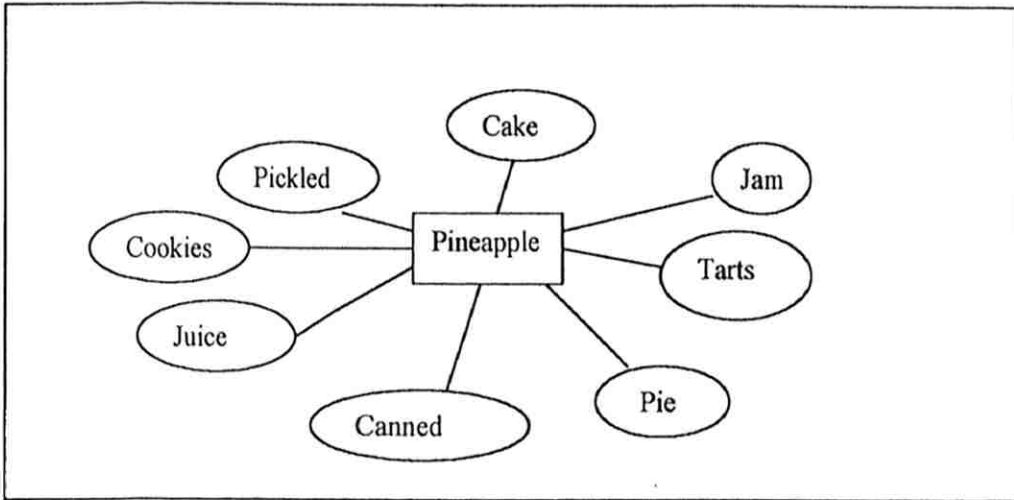


Figure 20. Mind Map Created by Laura

Laura then asked students whether anyone knew how pineapples were canned. When there was no response to the question, Laura told the class that it would be interesting to find out how pineapples were canned. Laura then displayed on transparency the stages of processing and canning pineapples. The following is the transparency display.

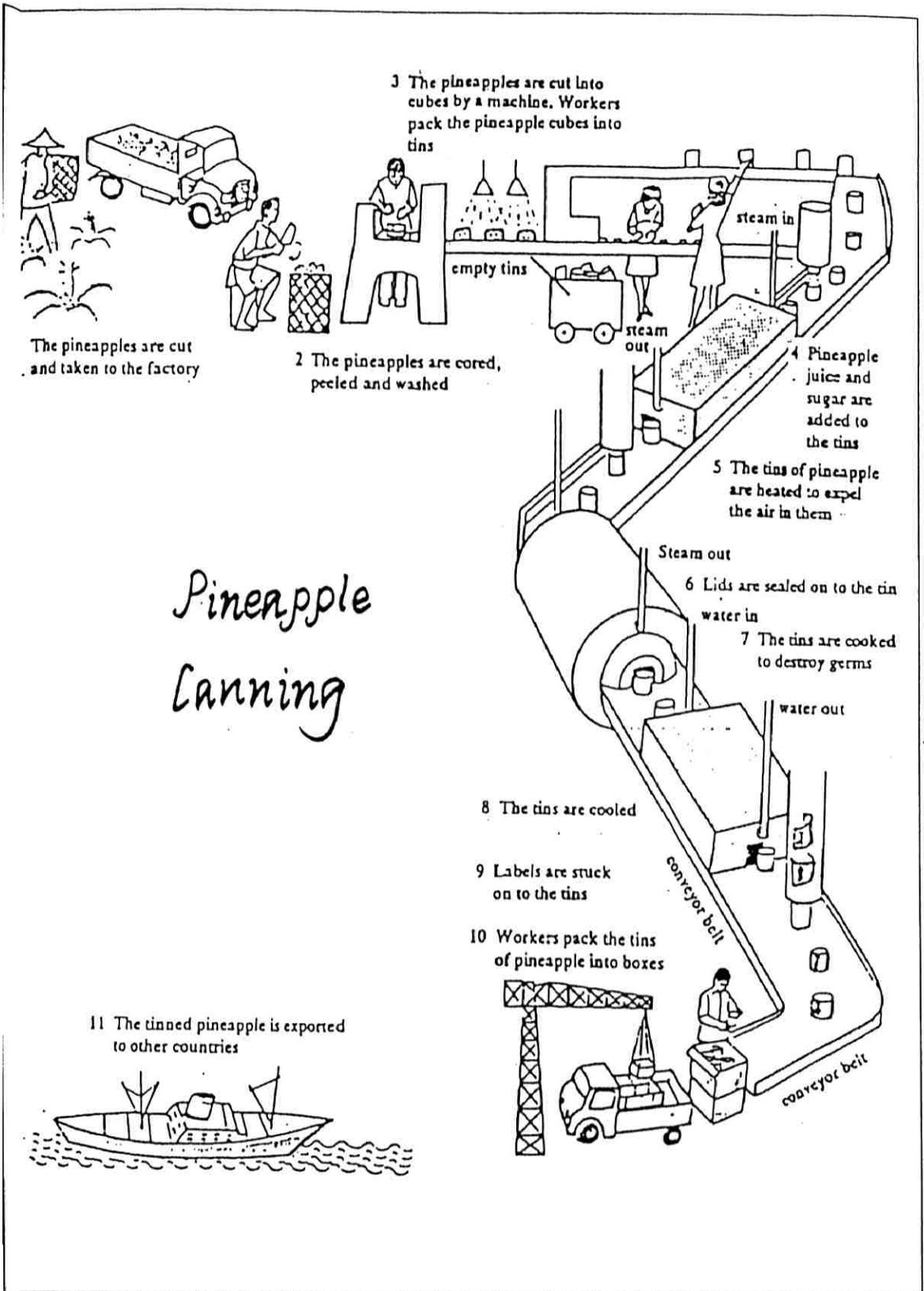


Figure 21. Laura's Transparency Display

The transparency, as displayed, was not clear and Laura was struggling with it as she attempted to display section by section. She became nervous and her voice began to falter as she hurried through the different stages of the process. After Laura had gone through the various stages, she highlighted the following words that are used to describe a process.

Firstly
Then
After that
Next
Finally

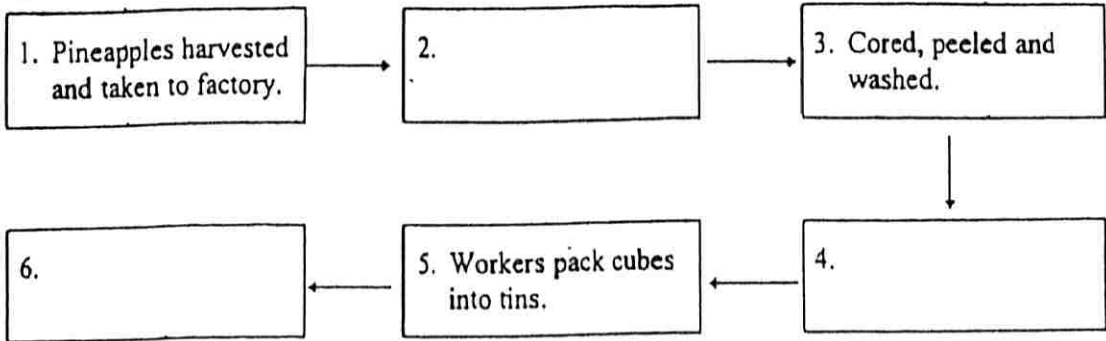
Next, Laura distributed task sheet one (Figure 22). This task sheet is shown on the following page. There were no instructions given on the task sheet. So Laura had to explain that the students had to fill in the flow chart and she told them to work in pairs for this task. Students were told that they could refer to the transparency, still on display, for guidance. After ten minutes, Laura called on students to read out their answers and made some improvements on their answers.

Next, Laura distributed task sheet two (Figure 23). Once again no instructions were given on the task sheet. So Laura explained that the students had to write two paragraphs on the topic "Making pineapple juice." As students began writing, Laura constantly interrupted with further instructions. Students were told to use the previous task sheet for guidance and that the written piece must be exchanged among themselves for peer correction. Laura ended the lesson by distributing small packets of pineapple tarts to the students. A recipe for making tarts was also distributed and Laura encouraged students to try out the recipe.

Name : _____ Date : _____

PINEAPPLE CANNING

[1st Paragraph]



[2nd Paragraph]

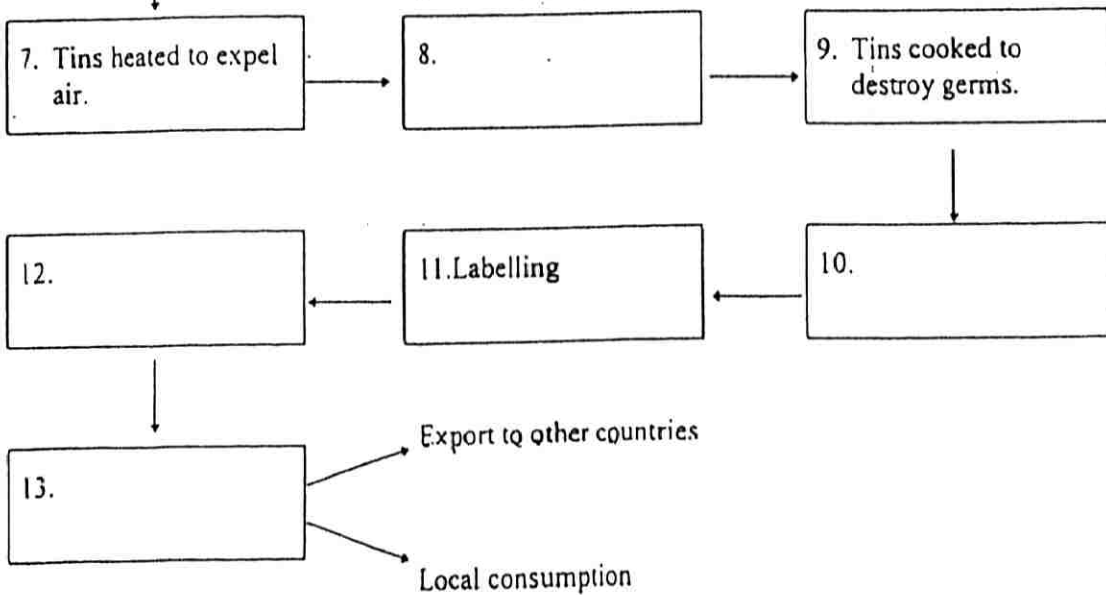
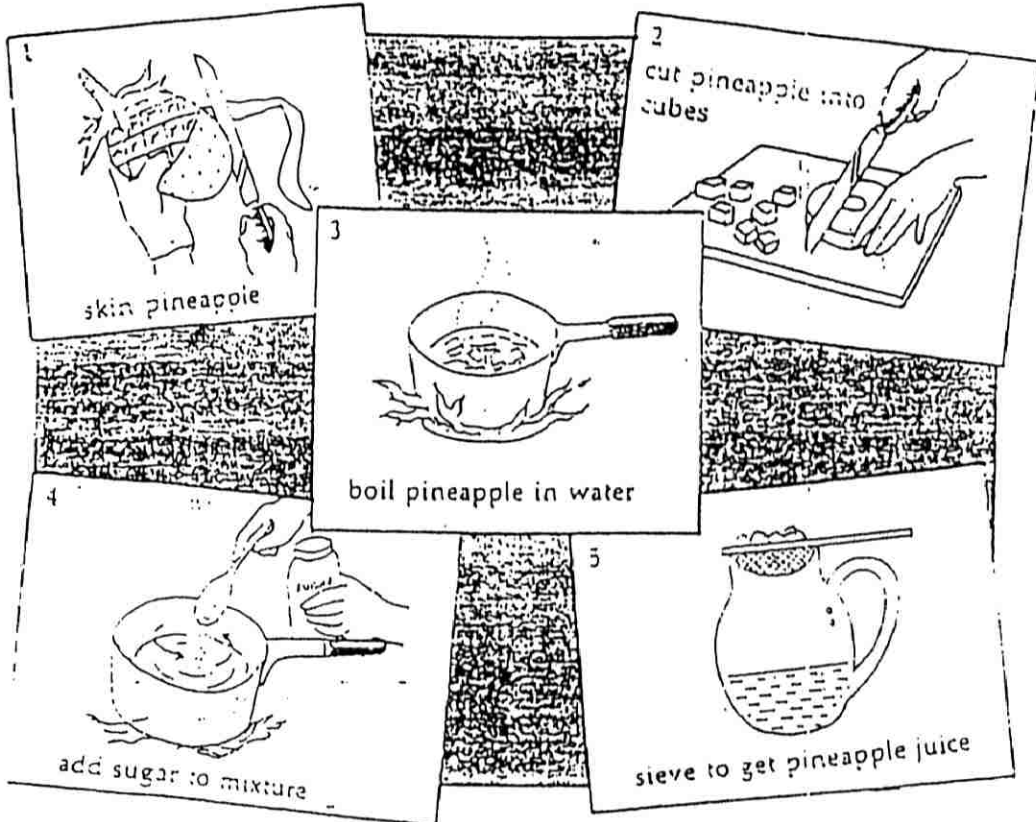


Figure 22. Laura's First Handout

FORM _____

MAKING PINEAPPLE JUICEFigure 23. Laura's Second Handout

Analysis of the Lesson

In the discussion that followed the lesson, the peer observer for the lesson commented that the set induction was interesting and it focussed the attention of the students on the topic of the lesson. The mentor said that it was good that Laura had anticipated the answers of the students and the creation of the mind map was interesting and attractive. However, I felt that the mind map was not developed in the manner explained by Mr. Lopez (see p. 106 and p. 112). Mr. Lopez had shown the teacher trainees how to develop a mind map to include the sentence order, the order within sentences, linking words and the type of verbs needed. Laura's mind map merely reflected the first stage.

Laura provided students with a model in keeping with the instruction on the genre-based approach and she also provided and explained key words (skeleton text) needed for their writing task. There was much interaction and discussion among the students during peer corrections. She created a good rapport with students by constantly encouraging responses.

The display on transparency created many problems for Laura and the class. It was not clear, the writing too small and Laura's lack of experience in handling the transparency made the situation tense. Laura had covered sections of the transparency with black tape and then had difficulty removing the tapes. This caused her to become nervous and her voice began to falter as she hurried through the different stages of the process of canning pineapples.

The two task sheets had no instructions and this resulted in Laura interrupting students constantly as they were trying to write. The mentor pointed out that

instructions needed to be given clearly before the students start writing. The mentor also commented that the instructions, when Laura did give them, were not clear and that the numbering in task sheet one was confusing. The mentor felt that the lesson had no focus on language and stressed that there was a need to draw attention to the use of the passive voice in this particular lesson but Laura, like Depat (see p. 155 and also p. 26, for a discussion on the focus on form movement) had completely ignored this. The peer observer added that the lesson was too teacher-centred. The mentor agreed, saying that Laura appeared to be doing all the talking. Like Depat and Chee Leng, Laura did attempt ideas from Mr. Lopez's writing course (genre-based, mind map, skeleton text and peer correction) but fumbled in salient features of implementation.

Amreet's Lesson

Amreet prepared a lesson for a class of Form Two students of average proficiency level. The objective of the lesson as given in the lesson plan was to get students to listen and understand instructions on how to make a puppet and to write down these instructions.

Amreet's set induction was bringing in a shopping bag and asking her peers, who were acting as students, to guess what was in it. She wanted students to ask "Yes/No" questions to guess what was in the bag. When students were hesitant and appeared confused about what was meant by "Yes/No" questions, Amreet decided to give them a clue of what was in the shopping bag. She read out the following sentence.

Like you I have a pair of eyes and a nose. Unlike you I cannot move.

Someone immediately guessed “puppet” correctly. Amreet then revealed the hidden puppet. She then asked students whether they had ever made a puppet and whether they knew what puppets were used for. Students mumbled some answers that were inaudible to me at the back. Amreet then announced that she was going to explain to them how she made a puppet. She distributed task sheet one on which were eight pictures of the various stages of the making of a puppet. This task sheet is shown on the following page.

Under the first picture was written “paste – pair of glasses”. Students were to follow this example and make short notes under each picture as Amreet explained the procedure. Amreet started by saying “First, paste a pair of glasses on a shopping bag. Next, paste a mouth.” As she continued speaking, she highlighted the following sentence linkers by writing them out on the white board.

First
Next
After that
Then
Lastly

Amreet then asked two students to read out their short notes. Next, she put up a complete set of instructions on how to make the puppet and asked students to read the instructions silently. Then, Amreet focussed students’ attention on the given set of instructions pointing out that imperatives were used to give instructions, sentences should be short, linkers were used to show the different steps and the present tense was used.

Listen to your teacher giving instructions on how to make a paper-bag puppet. Make short notes by writing words or phrases under each picture. The first one has been done for you.

How to make a paper-bag puppet

Materials Needed :

1 paper-bag
coloured pens
ribbon
scissors

glue
a round button
cardboard
string

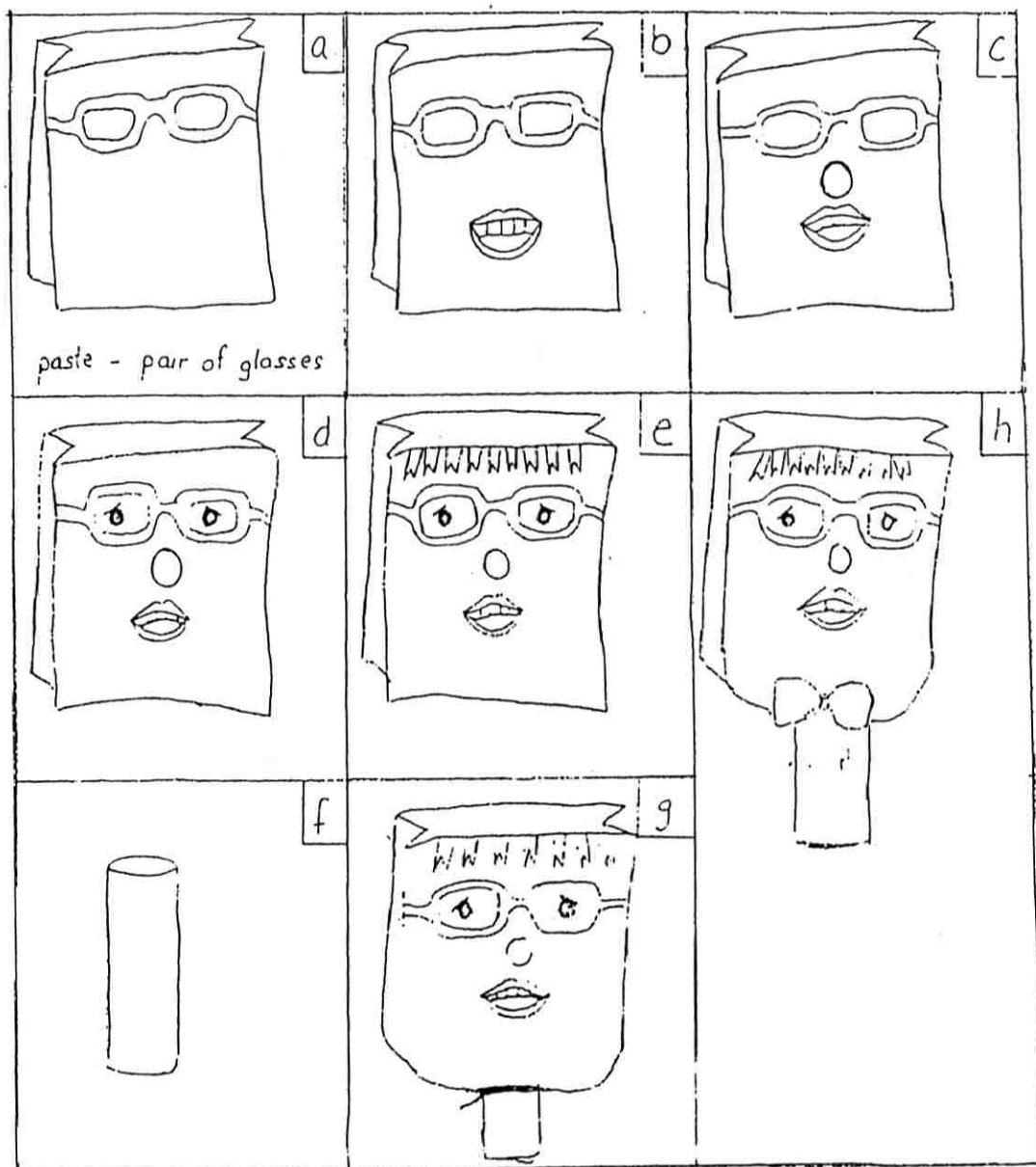


Figure 24. Amreet's First Handout

She also pointed out that it was redundant to use numbers for the various stages if they used linkers like “firstly,” “secondly” and so on. She told students that if they wanted to number the various stages then they should not use the sentence linkers.

Amreet then announced that she was going to demonstrate another way of making a puppet. This time, a paper-plate puppet. She distributed task sheet two on which students were first required to list the materials needed to make the puppet and then write short notes below six pictures showing the various stages of making the puppet. This task sheet is shown on the following page.

She then showed, named and explained that the following items are needed to make the puppet.

paper plate
coloured pens
scissors
cellophane tape
round piece of polystyrene
red paper circles
glue

Students wrote these words in task sheet two. Then, Amreet started demonstrating and explaining the way to make the paper-plate puppet while students made short notes on their task sheet. There was a problem at this time when Amreet realised that she had earlier used a permanent marker pen and so had difficulty erasing the writings on the whiteboard. She then told students to get into groups of five or six and write down the instructions on a large piece of mahjong paper that she handed out to each group. Students were told that they had ten minutes to finish and a prize would be given to the group whose work was the best. After ten minutes, she called for the mahjong paper to be pinned up and asked students to look for errors. She then attempted to correct all errors. Finally, she gave a packet of groundnuts to the group whose work she considered the best.

1. Listen carefully as your teacher shows you the materials needed to make a paper-plate puppet. Then fill in the blanks.
2. Observe carefully as she shows you how to make the puppet. Make short notes under each picture.

How to make a paper-plate puppet

Materials Needed :

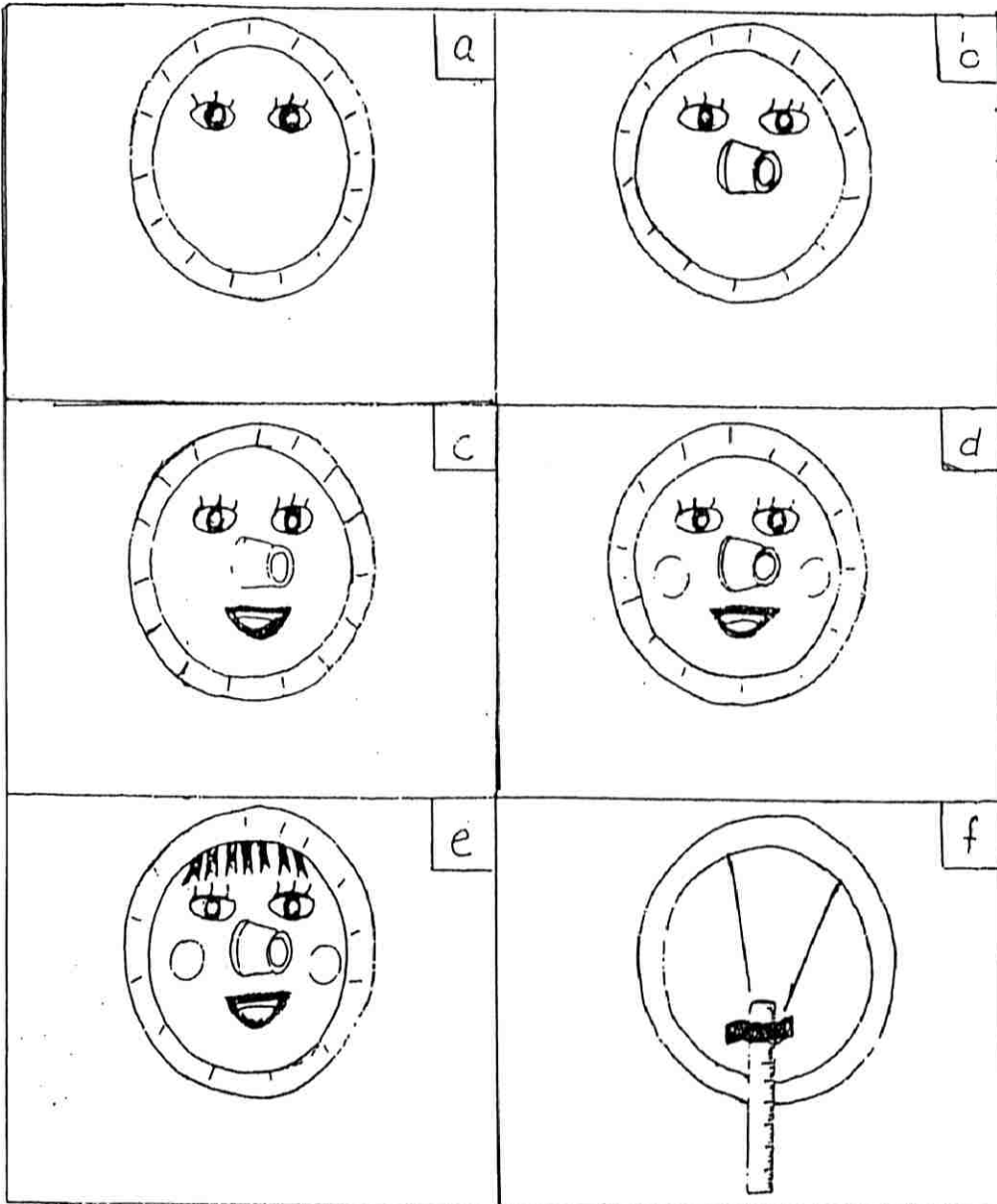


Figure 25. Amreet's Second Handout

Analysis of the Lesson

Amreet, like Depat, Chee Leng and Laura, used the genre-based approach to teach students to write instructions on making a puppet. Amreet also used group work, short notes, skeleton text and attempted to create a game-like atmosphere (guessing game) as suggested by Mr. Lopez.

According to the peer observer, activities were neatly sequenced and adequate attention was paid to language, tense and vocabulary. The peer observer also commented that the set induction was interesting and that explanations were clear. Key words were clearly explained and alternative words were provided during explanations. Amreet's mentor commented that prompts and cues were properly used and that the teacher had anticipated problems students might face. Amreet's mentor felt that task two reinforced the teachings of task one. She stated that the lesson was very well planned and thought out. The prize offered by Amreet for the group that finished first motivated students to work fast.

On the areas that could be improved, Amreet's mentor said that Amreet went a little too fast when explaining the meaning and use of imperatives. More emphasis should have been made to make the meaning of imperatives clearer. Moreover, she felt that Amreet should have given students a chance to use their own imperatives. At one time, when a student asked a question about an error, Amreet responded by saying "I will talk to you later about it". Amreet's mentor felt that the correction should have been done immediately in front of the whole class (see suggestions by Mr. Lopez on error correction, p. 127 and theory concerning error correction p. 34). She also pointed

out that Amreet had failed to point out that a comma was needed after the sequence connectors.

Amreet's mistake of using the permanent marker and her attempts to erase her writing during the lesson caused distraction. I felt that she could have adapted to the problem by ignoring the writings on the board because she actually did not need the white board for the rest of the lesson. Moreover, the words written on the white board were still needed as students wrote out their work for the second task.

Unlike, Depat, Chee Leng and Laura, Amreet had a calm, confident manner and a good rapport with students which made her lessons exciting. Her 13 years of teaching experience was clearly reflected in her confident style of classroom management.

Siti's Lesson

Like the other four teacher trainees, Siti used the genre-based approach to teach writing. She informed the class that the lesson was prepared for a class of Form Four students of intermediate to high language proficiency. The topic was on writing letters of enquiry and complaints. Siti first put up a chart containing headlines. The following vignette shows how Siti started the lesson

Vignette No. 2

Here, Siti was carrying out her set induction during her presentation in the simulated teaching course.

Teacher: Where are these words found?

Student A: Newspaper.

Teacher: What are they called?

Students B: Headlines.

Teacher: Name some newspaper you have seen or read.

Student C: The Star.

Student D: New Straits Times.

Teacher: Name some sections in the newspaper.

Student E: Advertisements

Teacher: Good, any other sections?

Student F: Sports news.

Student G: Cartoons.

Student H: Letters to the editor.

Teacher: Good, Why do people write to the newspapers?

Student I: To complain.

Students J: To enquire or to suggest.

Teacher: Very Good.

Students eagerly and quickly offered answers to the questions. However, as in the case of Depat, students were not given an opportunity to develop their answers because Siti quickly moved on to other questions. Siti then distributed task sheet one and asked students to work in pairs to complete the task. The task sheet is shown on the Figure 26. Siti helped the students with the first headline, telling them that the function was to suggest or to complain. Students were given five minutes to complete the task. She then asked students for their answers and provided alternative words.

Using the headlines given, one can predict what the texts/articles are about. State the (language) functions these texts utilize.

	Headlines	Functions
1.	Need to have more govt docs
2.	UKM Hospital and staff deserve praise
3.	Tape of march past, anyone?
4.	Not Alam Flora's duty to trim trees
5.	We don't need those who are not loyal
6.	SPM open paper a good move

Figure 26. Siti's First Handout

She suggested “to show appreciation” when a student gave the answer as “to praise” and suggested “to criticise” when a student responded with “to complain”.

Next, Siti distributed a handout containing three letters to the editor of a newspaper. Students were told to read the three articles and complete task sheet two which required students to fill in the main point of the article, the function, supporting facts and suggestions made by the writer. Students struggled through this task because the letters were quite long and the print very small.

Siti went around helping students with the task and after ten minutes asked students to read out their answers while she improved and expanded on students’ answers. Finally, students were given task sheet three on which they had to write a letter. On the task sheet was a picture of a rubbish dump and the statement, “People have been dumping rubbish near your house even though there is a large signboard stating not to do so.” The instructions given in the task sheet were as follows. “Write a short letter of complaint to the editor concerning this illegal dumping. Include any suggestions you have to solve this problem.” Siti told students to write this letter as homework and hand it in the next day.

Analysis of the Lesson

In the discussion that followed the lesson, it was pointed out that the lesson was successful in providing the genre for writing letters to newspapers and that the activities were well-planned and well-executed. The use of attractive headlines for the set induction was effective in focusing the attention of students and creating interest in the lesson. Siti, like Amreet, spoke confidently and clearly and had no problems with

classroom management. She tried hard to help students with vocabulary and language. (Both Siti and Amreet had more than ten years experience teaching in secondary schools.) Students responded quickly and enthusiastically to questions and Siti was quick to praise students for their responses.

The mentor felt that more preparation of students was needed for the final writing task. The mentor said that students needed to be taught the tone and language for a letter of complaint and that students should have been told to write just three main points instead of the whole letter of complaint. The three main points could have been written as group work and the teacher could have given immediate feedback instead of leaving the final task as homework.

The mentor also felt that the second task with the three letters was too tedious for the students. She felt that two letters would have been enough or the letters could have been edited to make it clearer and shorter. The mentor stressed the need to go into details of a letter of complaint and the focus should have been just on letters of complaint instead of letters in general.

Concluding Discussion of Chapter

During simulated teaching, the five teacher trainees used a better variety of activities to teach writing compared to what they were doing in writing classes prior to enrolling in the B.Ed. (TESL) programme (a detailed comparison is made in chapter eight).

Although all five teacher trainees used ideas from Mr. Lopez's writing course (summarised in Table 4, p. 145), problems often arose in the salient features of

implementation and these salient features were brought out in the post teaching discussions by the mentor and peers. However, Amreet's and Siti's years of teaching experience were clearly reflected in their confident style of classroom management. The concerns that arose during simulated teaching were once again significant during teaching practice, which was conducted in schools for six weeks. Recurrent themes are analysed through triangulation in the following chapter on teaching practice.