

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this case study. It describes in detail the procedures used to conduct my study, the approach I adopted, the data collection procedures, data analysis and interpretation. The purpose of this case study is to examine genre in its interrelated purposes as purported by Chapman (1999): *learning genres* - widening students' genre repertoires; *learning about genres* - fostering genre awareness; and *learning through genres* - using genres as tools for critical thinking and learning in particular situations.

3.2 Case-Study Approach

Seliger and Shohamy (1989) say that the case study approach is used where the investigator is interested in describing some aspect of the second language performance or development of one or more subjects as individuals, because it is believed that individual performance will be more revealing than studying large group of subjects.

Merriam (1988) says that qualitative research is heuristic. She explains "heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. They can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known (p. 24)."

In using the case study approach to answer my research questions, I have drawn on the above definitions as a framework. The case study approach allows for detailed probing and in-depth study of my genre study. I have collected data from various sources through different methods for triangulation and validation of the findings.

By employing case-study methods, I hope to investigate, identify and articulate the transitions that occur as my four learners become more competent readers and writers. I also attempt to gain insights regarding the use of genres as tools for critical thinking and learning.

3.3 Participants

Erik, 11 : studies in a national school but spent his early primary school days in a Chinese school. Thus he can converse well in Chinese and write reasonably well in that language. Upon his sister completing her UPSR exam and entering secondary school, Erik too had to uproot himself and was soon planted in a national school just in front of his home. He was in standard four (aged 10) then. He has had a year experience in this new school with its new culture and new experience. His spoken English is better than his written and has not much of a reading habit except for comics. His father, an alcoholic, isn't much around the house. Even if he were, there tends to be lots of 'disruptive moments' with quarrels and fights. Erik has had no model to pick reading habits from as his mom is busy handling two jobs trying to make ends meet.

Erik has problems writing essays. *'I hate question 21(b) and 22'*, he says. These are the two questions that require primary school students to make their own sentences as

they compose their essay. Because he has not much of a reading habit, he finds it difficult to get ideas to *kembangkan isi-isi* (expand the ideas). He knows the importance of reading but limits himself to reading comics because of his interest and because comics '*it has not much words and lots of pictures also ...er... very fast can finish reading*. He would rather spend his free time playing play-station, cycling or playing football. He is an average student in school with a problem in writing English essays. Thus his mother felt he would benefit from this intervention plan that aims to make learners better readers and writers. Moreover, Erik too was quite worried because he would be sitting for his UPSR examination the following year. This 'fear' made him a willing partner because he knows where his weakness was.

Jenitaa, 11 : studies in a Chinese school with her mother, coaching her with her homework as her father, an Indian, is unable to speak, read nor write in Chinese language. Jenitaa's mother is a Chinese who can read and write well in the Chinese Language. So her mother plays an important role in the literacy events that surrounds Jenitaa. Her mother, a homemaker, makes sure she does all her school and tuition homework on time. Jenitaa is an above average student in school. Her spoken English is good and she writes reasonably well in English. She is an average reader who, unlike Erik, reads beyond comics. She likes to read Enid Blyton's mystery books. She is confident and not at all worried about English as a subject because in her Chinese school, she excels. The Chinese Language is what worries her. She kept telling the *Chinese karangan* [essay] *is the hardest, English is easy*. This is probably because she only converses in Chinese in

school and with her mother. The rest of the conversation is carried out in English with her siblings, father, cousins and friends. Her mother agreed that she should participate in this study because *everything is a learning experience and some more next year she'll sit for the UPSR examination*. She was also worried because there was not much of an emphasis in English in school and it was of a lower level because the teachers cater for the majority. *'The school homework is very simple English', she says. 'A lot of Jenitaa's friends cannot talk English so well.'*

Jenitaa shows eagerness for learning which is contagious. She has a fairly good command of English. She has an acute sense of alertness. She was the first one to point out that fables and parables are not so different after all, both have a lesson to be learnt at the end. She likes to read and it shows in her writing.

Elena, 10 : studies in a Chinese school. School and tuition play important roles in her academic life. Elena's parents are able to converse well in Chinese but are unable to read and write in Chinese language as they went to an English medium school. Elena relies on the teachers in school and tuition teachers to get her homework done. She does not attend tuition for English because, like Jenitaa, she too excels in English in her school. Her parents use both the Chinese and English language at home. They make her read more Bahasa Malaysia story books because they *find her karangan* (Bahasa Malaysia essays) *bad. The Malay standard is so high Elena cannot cope'* they said. She is average in her English proficiency which is above average in her class. She has not done much of essay writing in schools. They do not have to write a story. They just have to

joins the words below each picture and not worry if there is a flow or even a sense of story. Like Jenitaa's school, Elena's teachers too pitch their tasks to cater for the majority. As such she is not nudged towards higher levels. Her parents too felt that Elena would benefit from this study as it would enrich her composing process.

Elena is very serious with her work and puts in a lot of effort. She was the one who pointed out during the sessions that in her English or Bahasa Malaysia lesson in school, there was not much of a 'talk'. In fact it was so rare, confined only to reading the comprehension text aloud and most of the time by the teacher. She liked the many discussions we had 'around text' as it was new to her and was of a different experience. In school, she says, we write most of the time. She even quoted her teacher, "*You write with your fingers. So the mouth should not move. The only thing that should move are your fingers.*" Those who disobey would get rapped on his/her knuckles.

Katrena, 9 : is the youngest in the group. She studies in a national school. She has not done much writing in school as she had just finished lower primary. For the three years in lower primary, the pupils are taught to handle simple comprehension passages, filling in the blanks, identifying, labeling, ticking the correct answer and matching exercises. They are hardly taught to write short essays nor are they tested on their writing skill with its emphasis on making simple sentences, connecting ideas or forming stories. Thus, Katrena was quite anxious because she was told that in standard four (age 10) she has to write '*long essay in three paragraphs*' (Katrena). It seemed almost impossible for her because she simply has not done any essay in school so far. Katrena converses well in

English. She was quite unsure if she would like or hate writing. Thus, it was exciting for me as she was going to experience essay writing and the genre approach to writing for the first time. I wanted it to be a pleasant experience. I believe she would benefit from this scaffolded writing activity as she is being newly initiated to the composing journey.

Note: The name of all persons and places in the study are pseudonyms.

3.4 Instructional Setting

The English language syllabus for primary schools aims to equip pupils with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate, both orally and in writing, in and out of school. According to the Malaysian primary school English Language Syllabus, by the end of primary school, pupils should be able to achieve the following: to read and understand different kinds of texts for enjoyment and information as well as to write for different purposes and in different forms using simple language (*Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris SK Tahun 5&6*, 1998).

But in reality the ascribed writing component in the KBSR syllabus, sections 7.0 Creative Writing and 7.5 Writing: (i) an announcement, (ii) a message, (iii) a story, (iv) a letter and (v) an article for a newsletter are conveniently overlooked. The learners are neither encouraged to read widely and independently (skill 3.13) nor are they asked to write for different purposes and for different audiences using correct conventions (skills 4.10) or produce something new, original and of value, a component of CCTS skill (Critical and Creative Thinking Skills), supposedly to be incorporated into the teaching-

learning activities. This was observed by Ananda (2000) who states that the curriculum may be designed to achieve the ideals and visions of the country but it is the examination that determines what teachers emphasise and promote in the classroom. For example, although syllabus specifications 1.5.1 Listen to fables/stories are part of the skills to be taught and learnt, my learners are only nudged to read a fable/story and answer comprehension questions (skill 3.7) which is then followed by vocabulary exercises. Surely "read and respond to texts (skill 3.11)" goes beyond just answering comprehension questions. Neither skill 3.6 (adjust reading strategies for different purposes) nor skill 3.7 (read, understand and extract information from a variety of texts for various purposes) are taught because they are not tested. Furthermore, reading and writing have been often separated in classroom work. The reading done in school does not scaffold the writing experience nor does it facilitate writing. This separation makes little sense.

Contrary to the requirement of the UPSR examination (Figure 1, p.10), I realise that it is insufficient for a young learner preparing for the demands of the secondary school and 'real writing' to solely master note expansion. It is clear that the over-riding concern of the primary school syllabi should be the students' eventual target-situation (secondary school and 'real world') requirements which goes beyond 'notes expansion'. The learners need to be aware of the different writing tasks, writing demands and writing features. With only reading comprehension and notes expansion on the agenda, the students' potential and opportunity are neither tapped nor recognised, only sadly curbed.

3.5 Data Collection

Data for the study was collected from three sources; students writing, audio-taped discussion during instruction and researchers' field post during post-instruction. Below is a design of the instructional framework that provided the data for answering both my research questions.

3.6 Instructional Framework

This fable study is situated within the context of the animal unit in the KBSR English Language syllabus. I was interested in looking at *learning the fable genre*, *learning about the fable genre* and *learning through the fable genre*. I wanted to see how a genre approach to reading and writing would play out if learning genre, in my case the learning of the fable genre, were to be situated in a Malaysian context amidst a prescribed national curriculum. I wanted to discover the potential of genre approach among our KBSR learners. I wanted to see for myself the success or lack of success of a genre based pedagogy. I began this fable study during the long school holidays in December 2002 at my home. The study was carried out in three phases stretching over six lessons as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The Instructional Framework

Lesson	Rationale	Procedures	Sources of Data
PHASE 1			
LEARNING THE FABLE GENRE			
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate my learners' ability to write fables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students write an in-class fable without any assistance from teacher. ➤ The learners are then immersed in fables that the teacher reads aloud. 	Initial Writing Sample (draft 1)
PHASE 2			
LEARNING ABOUT THE FABLE GENRE			
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To highlight the generic features or attributes of fables • To apply knowledge of fables to critically review a book. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The learners are immersed in more fables teacher reads to them. The learners list out the attributes and elements of the fable ➤ Learners pick a book from the bookshelf and using the fable chart, they review the book to see if it fits into the genre of fables. 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use the knowledge of fable (the generic features/attributes) to write a fable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher introduces six proverbs and explains the meaning ➤ Students choose one proverb and write their own fable. 	Writing sample (draft 2)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use knowledge of fables to critically view peers' essays • To apply the reading-writing connection and insights on fables to write a fable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher goes through the fable chart to reinforce the generic features that make a fable a fable. ➤ Copies of the learners' fables are made for the rest of the learners for the peer review session. ➤ Learners read the essays and offer 'informed' feedback based on the fable chart. ➤ Students read models of fables and make a comparison with their own product. They discuss the similarities and differences. 	Written & Oral Feedback Discussion Writing sample (draft 3)

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- The learners write another fable based on the feedback and discussion.
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PHASE 3

LEARNING THROUGH THE FABLE GENRE

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use <i>The Hare and the Tortoise</i> as a spring board for creating gender awareness. 	<p>Gender Issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners mark the pronouns 'he, she, his and her'. They identify the gender of the animals in <i>The Hare and the Tortoise</i>. Discussion ➤ Teacher gets them to voice out their opinion when they read it the second time with gender being 'marked'. Discussion ➤ Learners read another version of <i>The Hare and the Tortoise</i> titled <i>How to Ace the Race</i> (StarMag, pg.23, 12 January 2003) They give their opinion on this extended version. 	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use <i>The Crow That Wanted to Be White</i> and <i>The Crow and the Peacocks</i> as a tool for highlighting consumerism and media awareness. 	<p>Consumerism & Media Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learners read fables titled <i>The Crow That Wanted To Be White</i> and <i>The Crow and The Peacocks</i>. Discussion ➤ Teacher passes them a tube of facial skin whitening cream. They read the labels. Teacher asks them if they had seen similar advertisement elsewhere. Discussion ➤ Students go through local and foreign magazines and comment on the advertisements pertaining to facial cream. Discussion ➤ Teacher gets them to link the fables with the product and advertisements. Discussion 	

3.7 Data Analysis

In phase 1, the initial writing task, carried out as in-class writing task was based on the learners previous knowledge of fables (draft 1, see Appendices C1 - C4) to investigate my learners' ability to write fables. These drafts also serves as a useful point of comparison for my study

In phase two, data was obtained to find out if immersion in suitable and relevant reading texts could help students improve their writing skill. The learners 'heard', read and reviewed fables. The teacher familiarised the participants with the features, attributes and organisation of fables. They then wrote drafts 2 (see Appendices D1 - D4). Thus, comparing the fables (drafts 1 and drafts 2) would enable me to compare the 'progress' of my learners after the 'immersion' in fables. I also used the transcripts from the discussions and my field notes to corroborate and triangulate my findings as means of ensuring validity.

In this second phase also, data was also obtained to find out if 'revealing' (Cazden, 1995) and 'modelling' could help students improve their writing skills. During this stage, the students read the models carefully and analysed the fables in terms of a sense of story, organisation and use of dialogue with their experience of writing draft 2 as the basis. They then wrote draft 3 (see Appendices E1 - E4). Hence, comparing the fables (drafts 1,2 and 3) would enable me to compare the 'progress' of my learners after the 'revealing' and 'modeling' stage. Again I used the transcripts of the talk that surrounds the task as well as my observations in the form of field notes as a means of corroborating information and ensuring triangulation within my findings.

In the third phase, data, in the form of written sample (draft 4) and transcriptions of discussion, as well as my participant observation was analysed to find out the extent to which students could use the fable as resources for supporting and extending thinking. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 in the next pages summarises the data sources and data analysis procedures.

Table 3.1: Data Source and Data Analysis for the First Research Question

Research Question	Data Source	Data Analysis
One		Coding was done according to:
How did learning about the fable genre help students in writing their own fables?	i. Students' Writing Drafts 1,2 & 3	i. generic features of fables: - ends with a moral value - the moral value must fit the story - begins with 'once upon a time...' - have mostly animal characters - fables are make-believe, not real - fables are short - fables get resolved fast - characters are one dimensional
	ii. Audio Taped Discussions	ii. evidence of generic features of the fable in their own essays
	iii. Teacher's Field Notes	iii. questions learners asked and comments made in relation to generic features of fables
		iv. feedback and review given on drafts 2 based on the generic features of fable.

Table 3.2: Data Source and Data Analysis for Second Research Question

Research Question	Data Source	Data Analysis
<p style="text-align: center;">Two</p> <p>How did learning through the fable genre help support and extend students' creative and critical thinking?</p>	<p>i. Audio Taped Discussions</p> <p>ii. Teacher's Field Notes</p>	<p>Coding was done according to critical thinking skills, reflected in:</p> <p>i. linguistic awareness</p> <p>ii. Explicit vs Implicit Message</p> <p>iii. Reading the word and the world</p>

3.8 Summary

To summarise, this chapter describes the key procedures used in the course of the study conducted. This study was primarily driven by the key research questions presented in Chapter One. The findings will be discussed in the following chapter.