

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

I embarked on this study with the hope of finding an effective approach that will help me develop my struggling students' capability and capacity in writing.

Most of my students hate to write. Often they leave their primary school, with its emphasis solely on notes expansion, and start their composing journey in their secondary school without any confidence at composing in English. They have virtually no ideas, a slender vocabulary, skewed grammar and probably the vaguest notion of organisation. What they need is to be taken aside and to be given the keys and to reveal to them 'the how' to unlock the mysteries of reading and writing. So, my case study, which is basically an intervention plan, a pedagogical 'detour', serves as a 'safe house' (Cazden 2000), for my learners, in which to gather strength and skill for the more challenging compositions they need to write in the secondary school and for the more diverse world outside.

Besides that, I also wanted to bridge the word and the world for my students because they perceive education to be decontextualised rather than socially situated. Therefore, I wanted to teach my young learners to 'think proactively and compelling about their books and use books to think proactively and compelling about the world' (Santman, 2001).

I have come to realise that within the context of the school, literacy can limit students to solely engage in reading and writing for exam purposes. But when students are given the opportunity to make links between what is new and what is familiar, learning becomes more meaningful and school knowledge is transformed into active knowledge. Therefore critical literacy, within the context of the classroom, offers a critical approach to texts and a language of critique or critical discourse which is missing in our classrooms.

This led me to the purpose of this study, that is, to investigate the extent to which the genre approach to reading and writing could help my learners improve in their writing and at the same time help support and extend their critical thinking.

This concluding chapter will begin with a brief summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the pedagogical implications. Limitations to the study are also identified and finally recommendations for future research are presented.

## **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The data collected clearly shows that the genre approach to reading and writing has facilitated the overall performance of my four learners.

'Talk' during the learning about the genre fable helped my learners to discover the generic features of fables. Throughout the implementation of this genre approach, conferencing was an important feature. Meaningful interaction about and around the fable enabled my learners to discover for themselves the generic features of fables. My learners learnt those things that make a fable a fable and not just any story through the talk they

had over and around the fables they read, wrote, reviewed and revised. Therefore to deny talk in classroom in order to maintain a 'quiet disciplined' class is to deny students the opportunity to learn meaningfully.

Throughout the study, Jenitaa's active participation moved the discussions to greater heights. Jenitaa, as the more knowledgeable peer, provided valuable support that enabled the other three learners to understand the 'how' to unlock the mystery of reading and writing. Jenitaa who was within the other three learners' learning zones scaffolded their learning experience until they could function independently, thus enabling them to move to a higher level in cognitive functioning. Jenitaa's action is in accordance with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory. Only after Jenitaa 'revealed' (Cazden 1993) to them how she solved the problem of fitting the proverb to the story, could the learners come up with a coherent text as seen in their third drafts. Thus, if there are no 'Jenitaas' around in our classrooms, teachers need to consciously play the role of the more knowledgeable person and provide the timely support the learners need for 'cognitive and linguistic development and growth' Heath (1983).

In helping my learners transform into better readers and writers, this concept of scaffolding is important. Throughout this study, scaffolding was done through the written texts, through the talk, through the 'revelation' by Jenitaa and through building up the fable resources the learners could draw upon.

Besides that, deferring 'teacherly' judgement is also an important decision especially on emergent writers. Thus, making space for learners to comment gets them

more involved in the teaching-learning process. It also brings about the creation of a discourse community. Discourse community scaffolds the process of 'making sense'.

Within the context of the classroom, critical literacy offers a critical approach to text and a language of critique or a critical discourse. Critical literacy provides the opportunity to link the reading and writing in schools and the reading and writing out of schools. Critical literacy also refers to efforts to go beyond surface meaning of a text by questioning the who, what, why and how of its creation and eventually to make interpretations.

The greatest potential for situating genres within the school subjects is to enable students to use them as cultural tools, as resources for supporting and extending thinking (Hanks, 1991 cited in Freedman, 1997). Thus, in this study, learning through the fable genre helped to shift learners from an emphasis of finding one right answer to eliciting ranges of interpretations that are supported by sound reasoning and thoughtful examination. Hence it stimulated thoughtful thinking. Apart from that, learning through the fable genre allowed me to take pedagogical detours as I attempted to bridge the word and the world.

### **5.3 Pedagogical Implications**

The most obvious pedagogical implication of this study is that teachers who are interested in teaching writing, ought to use the genre approach to reading and writing. Findings from this study concur with Smith's (1983) claim that better readers make better writers. The reading the learners do scaffolds their writing experience. Therefore,

teachers who have problem writers or emergent writers, genre approach to reading and writing can be a potentially powerful tool. Thus, teachers should encourage students to explore their reading texts. This positive findings implies that the use of genre approach to reading and writing provides us with an understanding of why a discourse is the way it is. It enables learners to discover the rules before transcending them.

This approach also acts as a vital scaffold. My learners were not so daunted with the writing tasks because they felt that there was something to fall back on. The models provided proved useful as reference materials and enabled one to make informed decisions regarding their writing tasks. Besides that, genre studies will influence our learners ability to score well in test. While the purpose of genre studies was to 'read more powerfully' (Santman, 2001) across a range of texts, it would influence test scores. This is because most reading test draw material from a variety of genres. Thus, exploring genres in the classroom, I feel, will make learners more comfortable when encountering them on the test.

In addition to that, genre approach to reading and writing can also be seen as an empowering and enabling tool because it allows students to make sense of the world around them. They also can become more aware of writing as a tool that can be used and manipulated

#### **5.4 Limitations**

This study is limited by the small sample size - four learners. Thus, conclusions drawn from this study could only be viewed as tentative. Further research on a larger

group of ESL learners at similar proficiency levels has to be carried out before conclusions can be generalized

The time frame of the study posed another form of limitation. One may wonder if similar findings could have been obtained if the study was done during school days and in a large classroom with the heavy load of teaching and non-teaching job. In addition to that, my learners and I were not controlled by timetable. We did not have to rush or stop an activity when we were engrossed in the middle of the activity. Such luxury is not afforded to us by the school system.

Sheltered and comfortable environment of my home offered false reassurance to the students. They were not restricted by the usual rules of the classroom. Besides that, they were not burdened with other subjects to learn and homework to worry about as it was the end of the year school holidays.

Only the genre of fable was used in this study. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to other genres.

## **5.5 Suggestion for Future Research**

It must be emphasised that my research findings only apply to the reading and writing of one genre, that is the reading and writing of fables. While the findings pertain only to reading and writing fables, insights obtained could be useful for teaching students the reading and writing of other forms of narratives and other forms of genres.

This study has been limited to an investigation of just 4 ESL students. A larger sample size might render more conclusive results and give greater validity to the findings.