

Mnemonic Learning Technique in Review Writing Skills

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Abstract

Students' ability in writing reviews is one of the writing skills objectives as stated in the Standard-Based Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP) of the Malay language subject. The skills of writing reviews involve the process of transferring information that is heard, watched, or read in a form of a review. For some students, mastering the skills of writing a review is difficult because they lack of vocabulary, ideas, information transfer skills and paragraph arrangement skills. As a result, the reviews produced by students are too short, do not fulfil the requirements of the title and are unclear in terms of the descriptions of their main and supporting ideas. However, the failure of students in mastering it can be overcome by selecting effective learning methods to stimulate students' thinking skills. To overcome this, the learning method using the mnemonic technique, a process of remembering information more easily, can be implemented. The mnemonic technique implemented in this study is an acronym technique that can help students to quickly produce an outline and write a good review. In addition, the acronym technique used can also improve the skills of finding main ideas and processing supporting ideas of reviews among students.

Keywords: Mnemonics, Acronym Technique, Writing Skills, Reviews

Introduction

In the Standard-Based Curriculum for Primary Standard (KSSR), writing skills refer to the ability of students to write words and express ideas through various types of writing related to knowledge and personal experiences using grammatically correct sentences, punctuations, and correct spellings, as well as clear and neat writing. Additionally, essay writing skills are important requirements for students, particularly at the primary school level. However, different potentials among students in essay writing skills demand teachers to plan and implement various teaching methods suitable to students' abilities. The teaching methods planned by teachers should be based on the six pillars of the Standard-Based Malay Language Curriculum (DSKP) to produce balanced, knowledgeable, and skilful human capital in using the language. Moreover, students who follow the teaching and learning of this standard curriculum eventually will acquire the language skills abilities that are listening, speaking,

reading, and writing. Writing skills that are emphasized in the DSKP objective is writing reviews based on information obtained from various sources (BPK, 2021).

Selecting appropriate and effective learning methods can improve students' achievements in writing. Teachers need to change the current learning scenario from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness to meet the current educational needs. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has implemented the 21st Century Learning (PAK21) that inculcates the elements of communication, collaborative, critical thinking, creativity and application of pure values and ethics. Therefore, teachers need to be wise in selecting pedagogical strategies suitable to the learning and facilitation objectives need be achieved (PdPc) through activities that provide opportunities to all students and attract them to stay focused in the PdPc process. As teachers, they are not only identifying the level of students' ability but also improve students' writing achievements. Selecting appropriate and effective learning methods can improve students' achievements in writing.

Literature Review

The system of education in Malaysia that still focuses on the examination system is important to assess the students' level of achievements. Apart from this, it also requires students to be able to provide the answers required in examinations. According to Jaafar & Mahamod (2020), writing skills are very important because students with the help of the teacher need to strengthen the basic skills of essay writing so that they master the right skills to draft an essay, the format of writing an essay, and describe important ideas and content with more interesting processing. Students need to understand the importance of having good academic writing skills compared to informal writing that is heavily influenced by the social media. In addition, students need to be good at writing in order to elaborate and organize ideas in producing complete and neat piece of writings. In other words, students should have their own learning strategies to make it easier for them to understand the correct concepts of writing, thus enabling them to answer the examination questions well.

Jamil & Halim (2018) in a study entitled 'Mnemonic Methods of Acronyms in the Design and Technology (RBT) Subject at Mersing Integrated Religious Elementary School' explained that students showed a keen interest in the use of mnemonic method in remembering difficult facts in RBT subjects. Furthermore, the acronym technique encourages students to answer questions quickly. This is also supported by a study of Dalina (2021) that used the acronym technique and keyword technique in the Chemistry subject for the redox equations topic. The findings revealed that students were able to balance and write redox equations better and easier and were able to provide information in a short time.

Muhammad (2017) conducted an action research to improve the memory ability of Form Six students using the mnemonic technique that is the loci method, acronym keywords, connectors, and acrostics. The Form Six students were exposed to various courses that required them to remember many facts and one of the way was the mnemonic technique. This mnemonic technique makes the process of remembering information easier, especially in the mastery of language, mathematics, and history subjects.

Khoirunnisa (2015) in a study on the mastery of Arabic vocabulary revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship and influence on the ability to remember vocabulary using the mnemonic technique. This study used the pre and post test data using the existing classes. The experimental group and the control group were assigned 30 participants respectively. The experimental group was then given an intervention, namely using the mnemonic technique, while the control group was not given any intervention. Another study

by Haron et al (2015) stated that there was a difference in the achievement of essay writing using the SALAK DIDIK elements. The learning outcomes indicated that the achievement of experimental group was more significant than the control group in the post-test. The SALAK acronym can help generate ideas in writing sentences based on graphics easily and effectively.

Problem Statement

In the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR), essay writing is evaluated in the Malay Language Writing Paper examination. Thus, the achievement in writing essays is so important because it contributes to passing marks in UPSR. Based on the data analysis in the 2018 Primary School Assessment Report, the performance of the Malay language subject for Writing Paper showed that 5.36% of students did not reach the minimum level compared to the year 2017 in which only 4.7% did not reach the minimum level of proficiency. The weaknesses of students who have not reached the minimum level are their very limited words and vocabulary. They also do not use grammatically correct sentences and deliver and present their ideas interestingly and accurately.

Apart from this, the factor related to the difficulty to understand what is taught also affects students' performances in writing. This is evident in a study conducted by Mohamed (2016) with 28 Form 5 students in guided essay writing question. It revealed almost 60% of the respondents scored low marks and acknowledged that they did not know where and how to include interesting expressions and used them inaccurately. In addition, the results of the interview stated that the technique used by the teachers in teaching essay writing skills make a great contribution in helping them to improve their performances in essay writing.

There are several studies prove that selecting appropriate teaching techniques can improve students' achievements in writing. One of the studies was by Logambigai & Saiful (2022) indicated that the students' showed some progress in using words to elaborate ideas and build grammatically correct sentences in essay writing skills by using interactive multimedia. This teaching technique not only helps students in their writing skills but also improves their reading skills and broadens their knowledge. This is opposite than the conventional teaching process that makes students easily get bored because it is very teacher centered. Therefore, to maintain students' interests and motivation, language teaching through language play activities is very effective in learning a language.

Teacher-centered teaching is not relevant anymore in the 21st Century Learning (PAK 21). Teachers need to be wise in selecting teaching strategies that can improve the culture of thinking, thus improve students' writing skills successfully in producing essays consisting of introduction, presentation of ideas and conclusion relevant to the title of essays. This is evident in a study conducted by Anthony & Yahya (2017) with Form Six students who used i-think map in writing unformatted essays and achieved higher scores than the conventional method. This is also supported by Fadzil & Zamri (2020) study that used the flipped classroom method to improve the presentations of ideas among Year 6 students. The learning method using videos and articles before a lesson begins provides students with the opportunities and time to study the materials before the actual process of PdPc begins.

The 21st Century Learning (PAK 21) not only focuses on the use of software or technological hardware in the teaching and learning process but also a student-centered method and has elements of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (Rahmah et al., 2017). Although the use of ICT is widely used, the process of teaching and learning without using any multimedia materials can also improve students' academic performances. Furthermore, teachers' workloads nowadays also cause limited hours for teachers in preparing teaching

aids. Teachers need to be smart about modifying existing resources as opposed to preparing complex materials with new technologies (Rahman et al., 2015). Other than overcoming problems with teachers who are not well-versed with the technology, this mnemonic method is student-centered focusing on various levels of students' abilities. This learning method can help students to better understand and increase students' interests to focus on the learning process.

Definition of the Mnemonic Method

Mnemonics (mnemonic) is a word derived from the Greek that is Mnemosyne. The Greeks adored memory so much that they had a god called Mnemosyne who meant think carefully. Mnemonics is a technique to improve recalling of things (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2012) that was used over a thousand years ago by Greeks and Romans. Moreover, they also devised various memory strategies to help remember information that was intended to attract the attention of listeners during speeches or debates in the Senate. Modern mnemonic words refer to the technique of deriving memory to remember facts by associating them with existing information and data that is simple and easy. In addition, mnemonics is a formula to improve memory, then extract it and build that information in a more effective way. Hence, the mnemonic learning technique is a strategy to remember learning in an easy, fast, and effective way. This technique uses a formula of specific word or picture to make it easy for students and improve their ability to remember information.

Different types of mnemonics can be used in learning, depending on students who have different abilities from each other. Among the commonly used mnemonic techniques are loci technique, keyword technique, conjunction technique, acronym technique and acrostic technique. These mnemonic techniques not only facilitate students' memories but also as a strategy for teachers to deliver their teaching quickly and easily compared to teaching methods that require preparations of complex teaching aids and take a lot of time and higher cost. Furthermore, not only mnemonic techniques in learning can be adapted to the 21st Century learning, but they can also improve the elements of HOTS in PdPC.

Acronym Technique

An acronym is a word that is produced using the first alphabet of each word in the list to make it easier to remember a new word. Among the well-known acronyms is USB, a standard connecting technology for cables, connectors to power supplies between computers or other devices. This information transfer technology stands for *Universal Serial Bus*. The name of the organization is often shortened in acronyms, e.g., UPM acronym from Universiti Putra Malaysia and RTM acronym for Radio Television Malaysia. The acronym is also often used in social media, for example ASAP stands for *as soon as possible*, DM for *direct message* that are very popular among social media users nowadays. In addition, acronyms at times use a second letter (usually a vowel) so the abbreviations are easier to read, however, acronyms do not always form words. In learning writing, the acronym PASDAK is a catalyst for students to generate ideas in finding explicit and implied contents, arranging sentences to form paragraphs, and writing coherent and cohesive reviews.

PASDAK Acronym

In creating the PASDAK acronym, the researcher applied the theory of language acquisition as the basis for the success of creating the PASDAK acronym. One of the language acquisition

theory is the behaviorism theory referring to learning a language is a process of repetition involving stimulus and responses. The basic principles according to the Behaviorism Theory by well-known figures such as B.F. Skinner, Pavlov, and Thorndike are as follows:

- Language is mastered through a process of mechanical repetitions.
- It is based on the process of acquiring a child's first language.
- Children acquire their first language through repeated imitations.
- Language teaching should emphasize on practices and repetitions.
- It is through forming habits.
- It is not related to problem solving.

In the context of language teaching and learning, this theory affirms practices and drill patterns. The basis of behaviorism theory that is the key elements of the PASDAK technique is trainings, repetitions, imitations, and habits. Based on these 4 elements, the PASDAK technique adheres to the principles of 'something that is imitated, if trained repeatedly will form a habit'. In other words, imitation is not a wrong because through imitation one will form a habit in him. Imitation in PASDAK refers to the technique of imitating the same contents from stimulation materials with different titles. Due to the fact that this technique concerns a great importance on repetitions and practices, thus a high commitment is needed from all parties including teachers, parents and students.

The PASDAK acronym helps students to generate ideas to find the contents of essays, organize words, form sentences, arrange sentences to form paragraphs and subsequently write a review with coherence and cohesion. Additionally, the PASDAK acronym becomes a marker and makes it easy for students to transfer information from stimulation materials to write reviews.

PASDAK refers to the following acronyms:

- P** : *Pendahuluan (Introduction)*
- A** : *Antaranya (Among)*
- S** : *Seterusnya (Next)*
- D** : *Di samping itu (Additionally)*
- A** : *Akhirnya (Finally)*
- K** : *Kesimpulannya (Conclusion)*

Formula of PASDAK

The success of using the PASDAK technique depends on the following formula:

- Su** : *Isi tersurat (explicit content)*
- K** : *Kata hubung (conjunction)*
- Si** : *Isi tersirat (implied content)*

The **SuKSi** acronym is a medium to help students who are at a moderate level to express implied contents. '**Su**' is forming of explicit contents presented in the stimulus materials, '**K**' is a suitable conjunction to connect implied contents and '**Si**' is implied contents such as examples or effects related to the explicit contents. Students will write the explicit contents identified based on the given stimulation materials such as pictures, diagrams, or tables. Forming better explicit contents is to be followed by implied contents that include relevant examples. Next, a review is arranged using the PASDAK acronym to encourage students to write a review according to the introductory and content paragraphs that use correct discourse markers and ends with the concluding paragraph of the review.

Writing Reviews

A review, according to the Student Dictionary of the Second Edition, is an elaboration or interpretation of a book, an ongoing event or incident. Reviews in this study means all the sentences in the essay of Year 4 primary school students. They are originally a unity of ideas or thoughts that are conveyed by students through writing in an essay. The reviews are written based on the stimulation materials given in a question whether it is in a form of quotes, tables, graphs, single pictures, or serial pictures. Reviews should be written by the students in a form of a paragraph with 50 to 80 words.

The Purpose of PASDAK Acronym

The PASDAK acronym is created with the aim of helping weak students to improve their essay writing skills, especially in writing reviews. Normally teachers will use the same method of teaching essays without taking into consideration students individual differences in a class. In a study by Khairiah (1980), it stated that the teaching usually starts with a teacher giving the title, then the teacher and students discuss the contents a little bit and then students are asked to write essays with a certain number of words. This kind of teaching method can be related to a conventional method in which the teaching of the Malay language is often teacher-centered and does not apply the 21st Century learning strategies suggested by the Ministry of Education Malaysia.

Some of the purposes of PASDAK acronym are:

- Enable students to write good introductory, contents and concluding paragraphs.
- Enable students to use proper discourse markers.
- Enable students to identify explicit contents based on stimulation materials.
- Enable students to elaborate implied contents and appropriate examples.
- Enable students to choose correct conjunctions.
- Enable students to write long reviews.
- Enable students to form complete sentences for certain review essays.

Benefits of PASDAK acronym

The PASDAK acronym has good features including

- The explanation time for teachers in classrooms is shorter. Students who know how to use the PASDAK acronym can write reviews in a short time because they don't take a longer time for thinking.
- Does not cost a lot of money to prepare teaching aids.
- Non-optionist Malay language teachers can use this technique to teach reviews because this technique is simple and does not require in-depth knowledge in the language aspect, thus being able to implement the Protecting Instructional Time (MMI) program.
- This technique does not burden teachers to use various teaching aids.
- This technique can be applied without limitation on class size.
- Ongoing practices will enable students to write their own reviews without any guidance from teachers.
- This technique is suitable for all levels of students' abilities.
- Teachers are only facilitators.

The implementation of the teaching of writing reviews using PASDAK acronyms

Teachers choose stimulation materials based on textbooks titles in conducting their teaching in classrooms. The implementation of the teaching of writing reviews can use teacher-centered, student-centered, and activity-centered teaching strategies. At the beginning of the teaching, teachers explain how to write reviews using the PASDAK acronym by explaining the formulas used in the PASDAK acronym. Then, student-centered teaching sessions continue by providing opportunities to each student to identify main contents and are stated individually. Then, through the activity-centered teaching, students conduct group activities through a discussion technique. Next, ongoing guidance is given so that students can produce complete reviews.

Conclusion

The mnemonic technique implemented in the learning and teaching process of writing reviews enable primary school students to master their writing skills. A paragraph-based writing review format developed through the acronym technique helps students to remember the discourse markers that need to be matched to specific sentences. Moreover, main contents and implied contents are arranged more systematically, and no repetition of contents occurs. In conclusion, this mnemonic technique becomes an alternative for teachers to diversify their current teaching methods even though the era of ICT is around students. This proves that the use of the acronym mnemonic method in the teaching and learning of the Malay language is still relevant and is a suitable learning method to be applied in classroom nowadays.

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