

Engaging Children in Story-writing Activities through Kidblog and WhatsApp

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ABSTRACT

Narrative writing is any kind of writing that recounts a story. While the love of stories among children is innate, getting them to put the stories down in writing can be perceived as a daunting task, especially when the task is associated with a high-stake test. The use of story prompts through the integration of technology and writing pedagogy can make this task less daunting for children. This paper aims to present findings based on a project involving 31 Year 6 students in one suburban primary school. The strategy was to engage digital-native children in story-creating process through the use of blog and mobile apps like WhatsApp and editing software for images, videos and sounds. Students used mobile devices to create a story prompt (an image, a video or a sound clip) for writing a story. The students used the story prompt to stimulate ideas about the setting, the characters, the mood and the plot of a story. The stories and the story prompts were shared on the class blog and the class WhatsApp group. The students' personal reflections in their reflective journals demonstrate the positive effects story prompts have on reluctant writers' attitudes towards narrative writing. The students' scores in pre-test, progress test and post-test also suggest that story prompts have a role to play in improving the students' performance in narrative writing tests.

Keywords: story writing, blogging, mobile learning, reluctant writers

INTRODUCTION

Creating stories should be something that children find joy in. The joy may be killed, however, if the act of creating stories is turned into a test. Understandably, there are various different reasons why test builders would want to choose writing a story as one the ways to assess children's ability to write. A language learner who is able to write a good story would be able to display the ability to use words and phrases creatively, construct a variety of different sentence structures, use the language to provide descriptions, relate an event and express ideas. Stories are flexible because they can be used for different levels of learners, ranging from beginners up to more advanced language users. Despite that, it is also important to retain the joy of creating stories among children.

The love for stories among children is innate. Substantial bodies of researches have shown how stories can be beneficial for children's language development, creativity, literacy and character building. In an education system where testing and evaluation are put on a high pedestal, it is sometimes difficult to separate the act of creating stories from the associations with any form of assessment. Having stated that, assessing students' ability to create stories need not be perceived as something negative. There are perhaps ways for language teachers and educators to bridge the gap between testing and evaluations with creativity and meaningful language learning.

The main aim of this research is to explore the ways of making story-writing fun and interesting, even if learners are aware that it is tested in a national examination. It is an attempt at exploring how the fear of failing the writing test can be eliminated by building up the confidence level of the students through various story-making activities which include the use of technology, collaborative activities and experimenting with different platforms and media. The final target is for the students to derive satisfaction from the act of creating stories while scoring well in the examinations at the same time.

BACKGROUND

Literature Review

Resources have the potential to create a learning environment that supports students' language learning. However, in order for this potential to be fully realised, students need to be involved in making, using and managing the resources (Moon, 2005). A story prompt is a learning resource, and in this project students were expected to make the story prompts, to use the story prompts to create stories and to manage the story prompts by sharing them with others through Whatsapp and blog posts.

Narrative writing falls under the creative writing genre. May and Tabachnick (1966) experimented with several different types of stimuli to examine the effects on children's ability to write creatively. Their research findings show that the greatest degree of creativity can be achieved when a mixture of stimuli is offered to the students (May & Tabachnick, 1966). When students are engaged in the story prompts project, they would be presented with a variety of stimuli that would capture their imaginations and enhance their levels of creativity to write stories.

According to Wright (2010), it is much easier to invent a totally imaginary story with limited language than it is to describe real experiences. In the story prompts project, students were encouraged again and again to tap into the power of their imaginations to produce imaginary stories based on story prompts. Creating story prompts allow the students to learn language by attaching meanings to images and other digital stimuli. The experience of meeting new language can be heightened if it is accompanied by memorable and engaging images (Keddie, 2009).

Keddie (2009) also states that because we are living in the age of the mediated image, many learners claim to be visual thinkers and this in turn may affect their learning approaches. Advances in technology have also consolidated the role of image as a highly effective medium of communication (Keddie, 2009). Through the story prompts project, these advances in technology were utilised to the fullest. Smart phones and computers were used to share images through platforms like WhatsApp and blog. This approach provides a more engaging learning experience for my students who are mostly digital natives and visual thinkers.

Engaging in storytelling activities is a way to motivate even the most reluctant reader or writer. This pedagogical strategy capitalizes on students' desire to talk and interact with others. Some researchers have found that the weakest readers and writers are often most adept at storytelling. Citing Alex (1988); Craig, Hull, Haggart and Crowder (2001); and Phillips (1999), Miller and Pennycuff (2008) states that storytelling as a pedagogical strategy can strengthen reading comprehension by helping students develop of (sic) a sense of story. According to Mart (2012), stories are motivating for young learners, and stories can create a happy and enjoyable learning environment. Stories are the most ideal sources for young learners in effective language learning. Children like stories, and they find stories easy to access and understand. Stories provide an outstanding opportunity for young learners to master the foreign language. This view is supported by Martinez (2007) in affirming that children enjoy listening to stories in their first language and are more likely to transfer that desire when listening to books read in a second language. Therefore, motivation and interest increase. Furthermore, stories are a great way of introducing, practising, revising, and improving pronunciation skills and teaching culture using the target language.

Reluctant writers often have difficulty expressing their thoughts coherently because they spend too much time rummaging through the dictionary, or get trapped in the endless act of writing a line and then scratching it out again and again (Sledd, 1993). Also, according to Sledd, a reluctant writer who is asked to revise his or her writing would normally "conduct an uncertain error patrol and resubmit essentially the same piece" (p. 29). Sledd also identifies reluctant writers as those who have difficulty working collaboratively. According to Graves (1995: 36), reluctant writers "begin to associate the act of writing with their struggles with mechanical skills such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation."

How do reluctant writers compensate for their writing problems? They do so by avoiding the task. Rather than risk failure, reluctant writers simply give up (Mather & Lachowicz, 1992). According to Carignan-Belleville (1989), the motivation to write comes from successful first experiences. But what happens when previous school experiences bring only failure? Students then often continue to experience failure in writing because of a lack of self-confidence (p. 57).

According to Yancey (2004), helping writers develop fluency and competence in a variety of technologies is a key part of teaching writing in this century. According to a study by the National Literacy Trust, children who write on blogs, use text messages or engage in social networking websites are more confident about their writing skills compared to children who have limited access to these technology platforms (Clark & Dugdale, 2009). This research combined the potential of technology with the use of writing prompts to help the students to be more creative in creating stories. A writing prompt in this research refers to any stimulus that can assist students in writing stories. It can be in the form of an image, a sound clip or a video. Another important way technology can help in making writing more engaging is through its ability to provide platforms for students to give and receive feedback on their writing, both synchronously as well as asynchronously (Scott, 2009). In this research, synchronous feedback was given and received through the class WhatsApp group while asynchronous feedback was given and received through the class blog.

METHODOLOGY

Research Context

The students who were involved in this research would be sitting for a national examination called UPSR (Primary School Achievement Test). It is a compulsory test to be taken by all Malaysian students by the end of their sixth year of primary schooling. The UPSR examination consists of five subjects, and English language is one them. The English language test for UPSR has two papers. Paper 1 is a multiple-choice test where students would be assessed on vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation and reading comprehension. Paper 2 is a writing test.

Based on the analysis of the students' previous test results, most scored lower in Paper 2 compared to Paper 1. Most students find that the most challenging item in Paper 2 is Section C, where students are required to write a short story (around 100 words). Although they do have the basic proficiency required to score reasonably well on the item, most of the students have very little confidence in their ability to answer the question. The maximum mark is 15, yet the students' average score is only around 2 to 3.

The students have so much potential to write better stories, but most of them would limit their writing to the minimum, focusing only on completing the task rather than doing it well. The stories that the students write have no interesting beginning, no climax and are not ended properly. The characters are often not introduced and developed. Most of the stories read more like a description of sequences rather than a proper narrative. The setting is not explained clearly and the plot is blurry. The attempt to include feelings and emotions in the story is also very minimal. Through the researcher's observations, it was obvious that most of the students have very little or no interest in writing. They find no joy in it. Writing is perceived as dull, boring and burdensome.

Also noticeable was the fact that a large number of the students spend most of their time on their smart phones. They use their smart phones to take pictures, record videos and sounds, chat with their friends, surf the Internet and play games. They would prefer playing with their smart phones to enjoying a good story book and engaging in storytelling or story-writing activities.

In spite of it all, the researcher can also see a lot of opportunities in this obsession with smart phones and gadgets among the students. Technology can be used to ignite the students' creativity, nurture their imaginations and fill their minds with amazement and wonder.

Through this research, the researcher hopes to be able to explore the ways smart phones can be utilised to nurture the love of writing stories among the students. By integrating classroom writing activities with the use of technology, the researcher hopes to be able to improve the students' engagement in learning how to write and help them become better story writers.

THE STUDY

Project Description

A story prompt refers to any stimulus (digital or non-digital) that can assist students in writing stories. A good story prompt or stimulus for story-writing should be able to ignite students' creativity in producing stories by prompting them to be more imaginative. The stimulus for story-writing can be presented in the form of images, videos or audio files. For the purpose of this research, the researcher would be focusing on story prompts that are created digitally and provide students with multisensory learning experiences. The rationale of focusing on digital stimuli is to attract the students' interest. As explained in earlier sections, the students targeted in this research are mostly obsessed with smart phones and electronic gadgets. This research aims at utilising this obsession to the fullest by experimenting with the many different ways smart phones and electronic gadgets can be used to create digital stimuli for story writing.

Before getting the students to create the story prompts, they would be introduced to what a story prompt is and how it can be used to brainstorm ideas for a good story. They would learn that a story should have a beginning, a build-up, a climax, a resolution and an ending. After the students were familiar with what a story prompt is and how a good story should be constructed, they would proceed to the second stage of the project. Creating story prompts would require the students to look for a stimulus (an image, a sound, a video clip, etc.) that can trigger the feelings of suspense, excitement or conflict, which are keys to the climax of a story. Through this project, the students would be geared towards thinking about the setting, i.e. the time and the place where the story takes place.

It also trains the students to think about the mood, i.e. the feelings and emotions involved in the story. These help them to think beyond merely describing sequences of events with stiff characters.

In the third stage, the students would share their story prompts with one another. They would use the story prompts to outline their stories. It should help them think about the setting (time and place), the characters and the mood (feelings and emotions). It should also guide them to think about the beginning, the build-up, the problem/dilemma/conflict (climax), the resolution and the ending of the story. It should be noted that a story prompt is not a complete story by itself. It only serves as a prompt, or a stimulus for writing. The main focus of this research is to get the students to put the story into writing, either on paper or on a word processor in a computer. The digital media should not take the place of the student as the storyteller. After outlining the stories and determining all the elements, the students would proceed to writing the story down. The stories and story prompts would be shared with everyone in the class. Students who wrote based on the same story prompt would have the opportunity to compare stories with one another. There would also be opportunities to discuss each other's stories and story prompts, to provide and receive feedbacks, and to work on improving one's work based on the feedback received. Figure 1 shows the three stages involved in this project, the procedures and platform as well as the method of data collection.

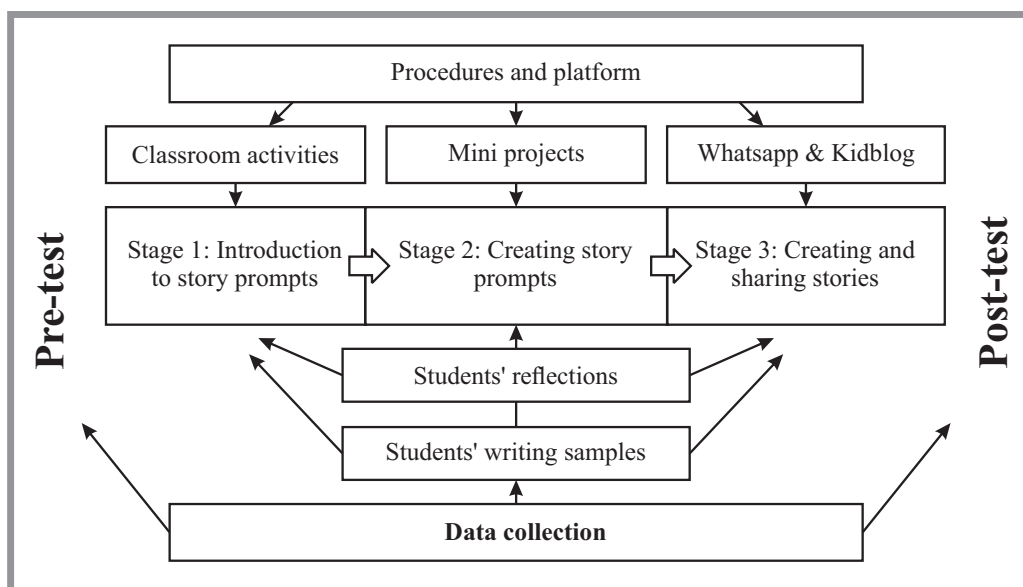


Figure 1 The stages involved in the 'The Story Makers' project

Sample Activity: The Pandographer (Mental Picture Dictation)

The teacher told the students that she had a very interesting image in her smart phone, and that she was going to show it to them. The students were eager to see the image, but the teacher told them that she would show it to them later. Before they could see it, they would have to listen to a description of the picture. They would have to use their power of imaginations and try to picture the image in their heads.

Next, the teacher read out a brief description of the picture. The students listened to the description. The teacher then divided the students into small groups of four or five. The students had to write a few sentences about the picture, based on the description that they had just heard.

The next step required the students to compare the descriptions that they had written with other groups. The teacher would then reveal the picture and elicited feedback from the students. The students wrote their reflections on the activity in their reflective journals. (Adapted from 'Mental Picture Dictation' in 'Images' by Jamie Keddie, 2009, pp. 15 – 16).



Figure 2 The Pandographer' by Bert Hardy (<http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/berthardy>)

The students clearly enjoyed the activity. The researcher could observe positive attitudes and more interests towards writing after the activity was conducted. The image, which served as a story prompt in this activity, had managed to attract the students' interests and captured their imaginations. Before they knew that the photographer in the picture is actually a panda, the students were able to come up with various interesting descriptions about the photographer. This activity had been able to train the students to use the power of their imaginations to create interesting descriptions for a character and a setting.

The researcher purposefully kept the story prompts till the end of the lesson and did not reveal it during the first stage. This was done because the researcher wanted the children to train themselves to tap into their power of imaginations. By doing this, the students would be able to practise not only to use the images and describe them as they are, but also to look beyond the images and create imaginative stories in their heads.

Stage 2: Creating Story Prompts

The second stage started when students were already familiar with the use of a variety of interesting stimuli as prompts for writing stories. The students would create images, videos and sound clips like the ones that they had been using to help them write stories for the past few weeks. For the purpose of this research, the word 'create' would be used rather loosely. The story prompts did not have to be original; the students were allowed to use available images, videos and sounds that they could find either online or offline. The main aim was to train the students to look for a stimulus that can help spark their imaginations and prompt the creation of stories.

Mini Project 1: The Scream

The first mini project in this stage was done together as a class. The students wanted to create a set of story prompts that they could present to their juniors in Year 5. To do this, the students used their smart phones to download a short video and then to use a mobile application to extract the sounds from the video and created an audio file out of it.

In this mini project, students used their smart phones to find a video on YouTube (app used: YouTube for Android). They downloaded the video using their smart phones (app used: AVD Download Video Downloader). The students then extracted the sound from the video by converting it into mp3 format (app used: MP3 Video converter for Android).

After all the steps were done, the students conducted a mini lesson with their juniors in the Year 5 class. The students played the audio and asked their Year 5 juniors to imagine what was happening. The Year 5 juniors worked in pairs and created a story

based on what they heard and shared their stories with everyone in the class. Then, they played the video and asked for their juniors' feedback. The students wrote their reflections on the mini project in their reflective journals.

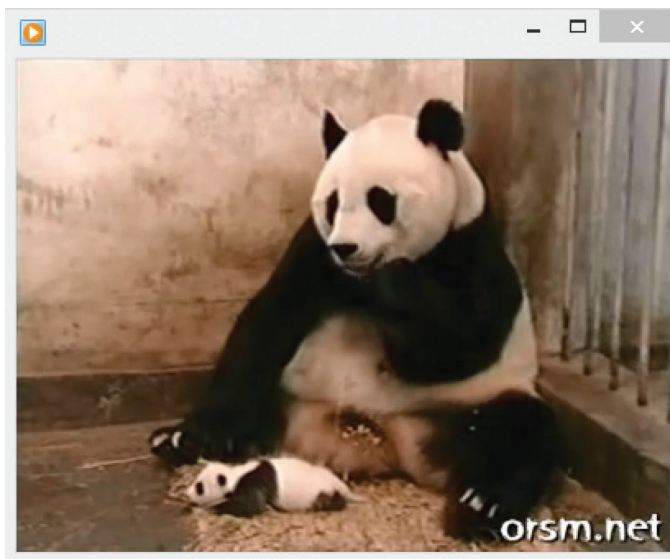


Figure 3 A screenshot of the video that the students used in Mini Project 1

The students enjoyed the process of creating the story prompts very much, but it was obvious that they enjoyed the mini lesson with their juniors even more. Through this mini project, the students were able to see how the story prompts that they created had managed to help their juniors create interesting and imaginative stories.

**Note:* This project was inspired by an activity shared by Jamie Keddie in his talk 'Taking Video Apart' (British Council's ELTDP Symposium, 4 – 6 March 2015 at Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia).

Mini Project 2: A Tour Around the School

Prior to conducting this mini project, letters to the students' parents were sent out asking them for permission to allow their children to bring smart phones to school for one day, for their English language lesson. The parents were very cooperative and almost all the students who owned smart phones were able to bring them to school on that day. For this mini project, the class was divided into small groups of four or five. The students went on a tour around the school. The students were expected to use their smart phones to capture images, take videos or record sounds that they think could tell an interesting

story. Students walked in their groups for a short tour around the school. They used their smart phones to capture images, take videos or record sounds that they think could tell an interesting story.

Then, the students went back to the classroom and worked with their groups. They shared with each other what they had captured on their smart phones. Each group selected an image, a video or an audio file and created a story out of it. Representatives from each group shared their stories with the rest of the class. The students wrote their reflections on this mini project in their reflective journals. Figure 4 below is an image that was selected by one of the groups:



Figure 4 An image captured by one of the students

Here is the story that they had created based on the image:

There were three friends. They were sitting together on one bench. They had long hair. They wore red dress. They were beautiful, but plain. They wanted more colours. They were bored because they were green. They wanted to sit on grasses. Yes, they were sitting on grasses now but the grasses were not real! They wanted to run away but they had no legs. They had no arms, too. They had nothing.

It was amazing to see how creative the students were. The researcher expected images of events and activities around the school, and perhaps straight-forward descriptions or explanations on them. The students were able to exceed the expectations. The group that had selected the image as shown in Figure 4 had decided to emulate the way their teacher presented story prompts in the previous lessons – they revealed it at the end. They read their stories to the class and asked their classmates to guess what image

Here is an extract from the conversation:

Teacher: (Uploading an audio file) While waiting for the video, listen to this sound again

Student 1: Okay

Teacher: And let me know what you think happened. What's the story?

Student 2: I don't know teacher it so suspicious

Teacher: It is, isn't it Ann? Where did it happen?

Student 1: Sorry teacher my internet is a bit slow

Teacher: It's alright, take your time.

Student 2: I think it happen in the forest isn't it teacher

Student 1: Ok

Teacher: Maybe Ann. What's that noise? Who's making it?

Student 3: Human...Noise like walking

Student 4: Camping

Teacher: Interesting. Continue please. What do you think happen?

Student 4: Then she saw a something

Student 3: I think someone walking at the forest

Student 5: Yup, sound like human walking at the jungle...

Student 2: Ya i agree

Student 3: Ya i agree with u shuhada

Student 5: And sound of something crashing...but...I don't know

Teacher: Like a car braking or something

Student 4: Yes

Student 6: I guess it's an ultraman..Haha. Hmmm

Student 4: I guess it is a Bigfoot. Teacher...

Student 6: Isn't it haha

Student 4: No... Something badly

Student 2: But it's not sound like people screaming

Teacher: Sounds more like a screech

Student 2: Ya

Student 4: Not eating ok. Crashing

The Whatsapp group was mainly used as a platform for sharing story prompts and for brainstorming ideas about stories. The researcher also used it to revise what the students had learnt about the elements of a story, i.e. the characters, the setting, the mood etc.

Platform 2: Class Blog

Kid blog (<http://kidblog.org/>) was used as the platform for the classroom blog. It was also called ‘The Story Makers’ (<https://kidblog.org/class/TheStoryMakers/>). The students used the blog to share their stories and story prompts. The students were encouraged to read and comment on each other’s blog posts. Through this platform, students were able to not only share their stories with one another, but also to give and receive feedback on their work.

The students were given the freedom to post any stories they liked. Once in a while, the blog would also be used to conduct follow-up activities based on the lessons that had been done in the classroom. For instance, the students would be asked to post a story based on a story prompt that they had used in the classroom earlier.

Story Today



By muhammad yusry on Jun 20, 2015

Cinderella

Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl, her name is Cinderella. She lived with her step mother and her two stepsister. They were very bossy. Her mother was dead, so her father had married the woman who she called as stepmother.

All the things about Cinderella was a mistakes in her stepmother’ eyes. Not only bossy woman, her stepmother was cruel and bad. She only gave all the nice things to her own daughters. No love at all which Cinderella got.

Cinderella like a civil servant in her own house. No cheer up at all. No nice rests and comfort place at all. It was like a hell. Cinderella only has a beautiful cat. It was a funny and kind animals. It like a friend for Cinderella.

“Cinderella, come here ugly!” Said her stepmother. “Yes mom!” answered Cinderella. “Clean my room, and Bathroom, don’t forget cook for lunch, now!” “But mom, I’m sick!” said Cinderella. “I don’t care!” answered her stepmother.

There was an invitation to all the girls in that village to come to the palace. And the lucky girl would marry with prince. Neither her stepsister was so happy nor her stepmother. They try to buy a beautiful new dresses, shoes, and all the beautiful and expensive stuffs.

Cinderella even dare ask to her stepmother, “What about me mom!” And the answer would be “Hey, you dumb Cinderella, you just staying at home to clean all the room, wash all the plate, scrub the floor! You know that Cinderella, you are ugly, and prince never look at you even a bite!”

Figure 6 Another screenshot of a student’s blog post

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the research, students were engaged in a variety of story-creating activities, both inside and outside the classroom, which gave them the opportunities to explore, to experiment, to share and to give and receive feedback. The main activity was writing and the main tools used were digital resources and technology devices. The overall aim was to reduce reluctance to write among the students by making writing activities more personal, interactive and meaningful. The impacts of these intervention strategies were examined through the students' attitudes towards writing and the students' performance in pre and post-tests.

Students' Attitudes towards Writing

The students' attitudes towards writing were examined through their written reflections. To guide the students in writing down their reflections, a sheet containing one or two questions to consider was provided, normally right after they completed an activity or a mini project. The questions were in English, but the Malay translations were provided. The students had the choice of whether to respond in English or in Malay.

Figure 7 summarises the students' responses towards the question: *How do you feel about writing?* Categorised based on common themes derived from the responses. The students were asked to reflect on this question at the beginning of the project, before conducting any the intervention strategies.

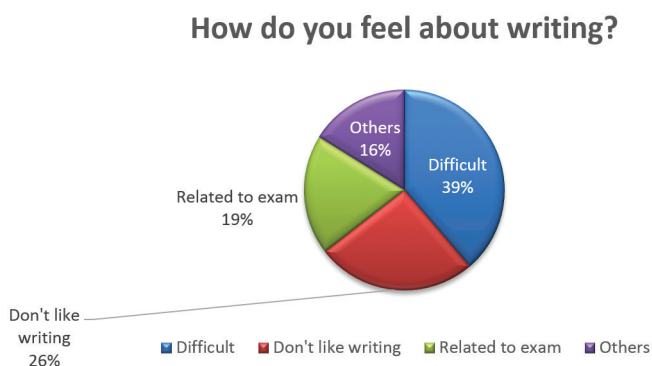


Figure 7 How the students felt about writing before the project

Most of the students' reflections contained words and phrases like 'difficult', 'hard' and 'don't like writing'. They also associated writing with Section C and the UPSR test. Here are some excerpts from the students' reflections:

I don't like Section C because it too hard for me. I don't know how to write stories. Very difficult.

I like play games COC on my phone but I don't like writing. But writing is important for learning so I have to do for UPSR.

Figure 8 summarises the students' responses towards these questions: *How do you feel about today's writing activity? Did you enjoy it?* These questions were asked right after the students completed the mini project outside the classroom.

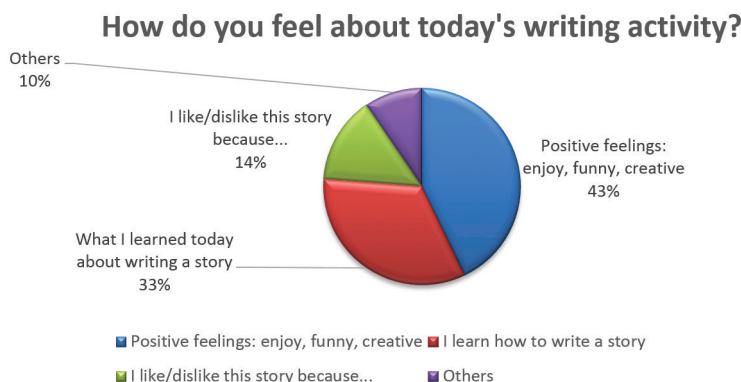


Figure 8 Students' reflections while interventions were going on

There were more positive words like 'enjoy', 'interesting', 'funny', and 'creative.' The students were also displaying better understanding about stories and the elements that make the stories pleasurable. For instance, a few students could explain that a story must have a beginning, a climax and an ending, and that in order for a story to be interesting it must have 'elements of surprise', 'suspense', etc. The reflections also showed that some students were beginning to acquire the ability to analyse and evaluate a story. They could state why they like a particular story. For example, a student explained that a story is good when it 'affects her emotions' and that a story is bad when it has 'no moral value'. Here are some excerpts from the students' reflections:

What I learn today, I know a story must have intro, build up, climax, resolution and ending. When I listen to the sound teacher play, I make a story in my head with intro, build up, climax. But I don't write the resolution yet and the ending yet because I am still thinking.

My favourite story is from Natasha's group. I think they are very creative. The story has elements of surprise. The story is not yet finished, but I really like it. Maybe I can write my own ending for the story. I can make it like a fairy tale.

Figure 9 shows the students' responses towards these questions: *How do you feel about your experience with 'The Story Makers' project? How do you feel about your writing ability now?* These questions were asked towards the end of the research, when the students were about to complete their final project on the class blog.

How do you feel about your experience with the project?

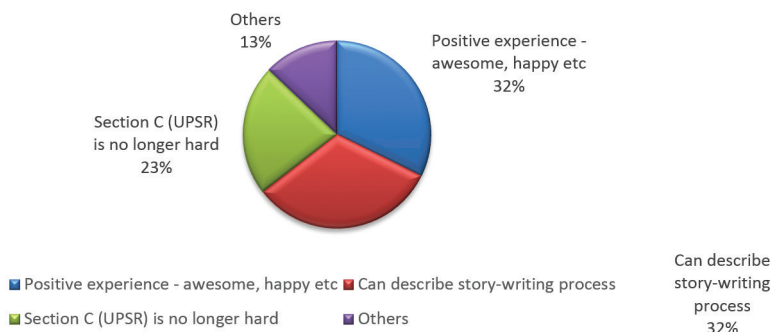


Figure 9 Students' reflections after interventions were carried out

The students could describe, in their own words, the process of writing a story. They understood the steps that they had to take. They could also explain why they chose to include certain things in their story. The reflections also indicated that the students no longer perceived Section C as being 'difficult' and 'hard.' There are also indications that the students were starting to enjoy writing and creating stories. Here are some excerpts from the students' reflections:

Today we do practise UPSR and teacher give Section C to us. I'm so surprise because it was so easy for me, not hard like before this. I write introduction for my story and one paragraph for one picture. My story has three pictures so I write three paragraph. And of course the closure. I end my story with describing the character emotions.

The part about the stranger want to kidnap Anna was not in the question paper, but I still write it in my answer because it will make the story more interesting.

I'm surprise when teacher say we can write in section C, we can use our imagination like when we do our story prompts. When I use my imagination my story become longer. It make me so happy.

Pre-test and Post-test

Table 1 Students' Scores in pre-test, progress test and post-test

Student	Pre-test (max. 15)	Post-test (max. 15)
1	2	8
2	2	7
3	3	6
4	3	7
5	3	6
6	2	7
7	1	5
8	2	6
9	3	5
10	2	7
11	5	10
12	4	5
13	3	6
14	4	6
15	3	6
16	4	6
17	2	5
18	1	4
19	3	5
20	5	5
21	3	6
22	2	6
23	1	7
24	3	7
25	4	8
26	3	8
27	3	8
28	3	8
29	3	7
30	6	11
31	2	8
Average	2.90	6.65

The marking for the tests (Section C writing exercises) was based on the official UPSR marking scheme provided by the Malaysia Examination Board. In order to enhance the

validity of the scores, the researcher sought the assistance of two other teachers who are also experienced UPSR examiners for the English language paper. The markings were done in three stages. The researcher did the first round of marking while the other two examiners did the second and third rounds. The final scores were the average of the scores from the three rounds. Table 1 shows the final average scores in pre-test and post-test for the 31 students involved in this research. The pre-test was conducted before any of the intervention strategies were conducted. The post-test was conducted at the end of the research, after all the intervention strategies had been carried out.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	2.90	31	1.165	.209
	Posttest	6.65	31	1.518	.273

Paired Samples Test									
Paired Differences									
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	n	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-3.742	1.483	.266	-4.286	-3.198	-14.053	30	.000

Statistical test (Dependent T-test) conducted shows a significant difference between the pre- and post-test means ($t = 14.053$, $df = 30$, $p < .05$) indicating the difference in the mean scores is statistically significant. In other words, the intervention strategies helped to enhance the pupils story writing.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the research, the students had very little interest in writing. Due to past failures in previous practice tests, most had become reluctant writers. They associated writing activity with difficult and impersonal examination tasks with little sense of communication. The students' reflections before the interventions were carried out indicated that they had low motivation to write in English. The students seemed to be lacking the confidence to answer the writing task in the UPSR English paper. Story-writing was seen as something difficult and hard.

As the research progressed, some shifts in the students' attitudes towards writing could be seen. The evidence for this can be clearly observed in the students' reflections. The students were beginning to understand the process of creating stories, and they were starting to be more open about learning how to do it well. Towards the end of the research, the students' reflections displayed deeper engagement in story-writing activities. The way the students wrote their reflections clearly suggests that they were starting to enjoy it more. There is enough evidence in the students' reflective journals to conclude that the use of digital resources and the Internet to engage students in story-creating activities had positively impacted the students' attitudes towards writing. After participating in all the intervention activities, the students had become less reluctant and were more willing to take on the task of writing stories.

Analysis of the students' test scores shows that the students' performance had improved throughout the project. The maximum score for UPSR Paper 2 Section C is 15. In the pre-test, the average score was only 2.90. In the post-test, the students were able to achieve an average score of 6.65. The difference in mean was statistically tested and the dependent T-test conducted showed that there was a significant difference in the scores, implying the use of technology coupled with the use of stories in writing pedagogy had to a large extent improved students writing performance on the whole.

The students' scores in the actual UPSR test also showed significant improvements compared to the scores in the January test. It was the school's best result in the UPSR English paper in three years.

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of stories in writing pedagogy can help reluctant writers to be more enthusiastic writers. The love of stories among children is innate, and this research succeeded in utilising this to a certain extent. Stories give a lot of opportunities for the students to be imaginative, creative and innovative. This research had used stories as tools for motivating reluctant writers to write by creating a happy and enjoyable learning environment.

Through the use of technology tools like WhatsApp and Kidblog, this research had helped the students develop fluency and competence in technology. According to Yancey (2004), this should be a key part of teaching writing in this century. The findings from this research suggest that the competence in technology had positive impacts on the students' writing skills. The students had become more motivated writers. Their performance in writing tests had also improved. When the students were given the opportunities to write on blogs and use WhatsApp to interact with each other both synchronously and asynchronously, their confidence in writing improved.

Suggestions for future research include exploring the many different ways mobile technology like smart phone apps can be utilised to help boost students' potentials in creative writing and other genres of writing.

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