

**USING PROCESS APPROACH TO ENHANCE
WRITING ABILITY OF FORM THREE
STUDENTS OF SMK TROLAK**

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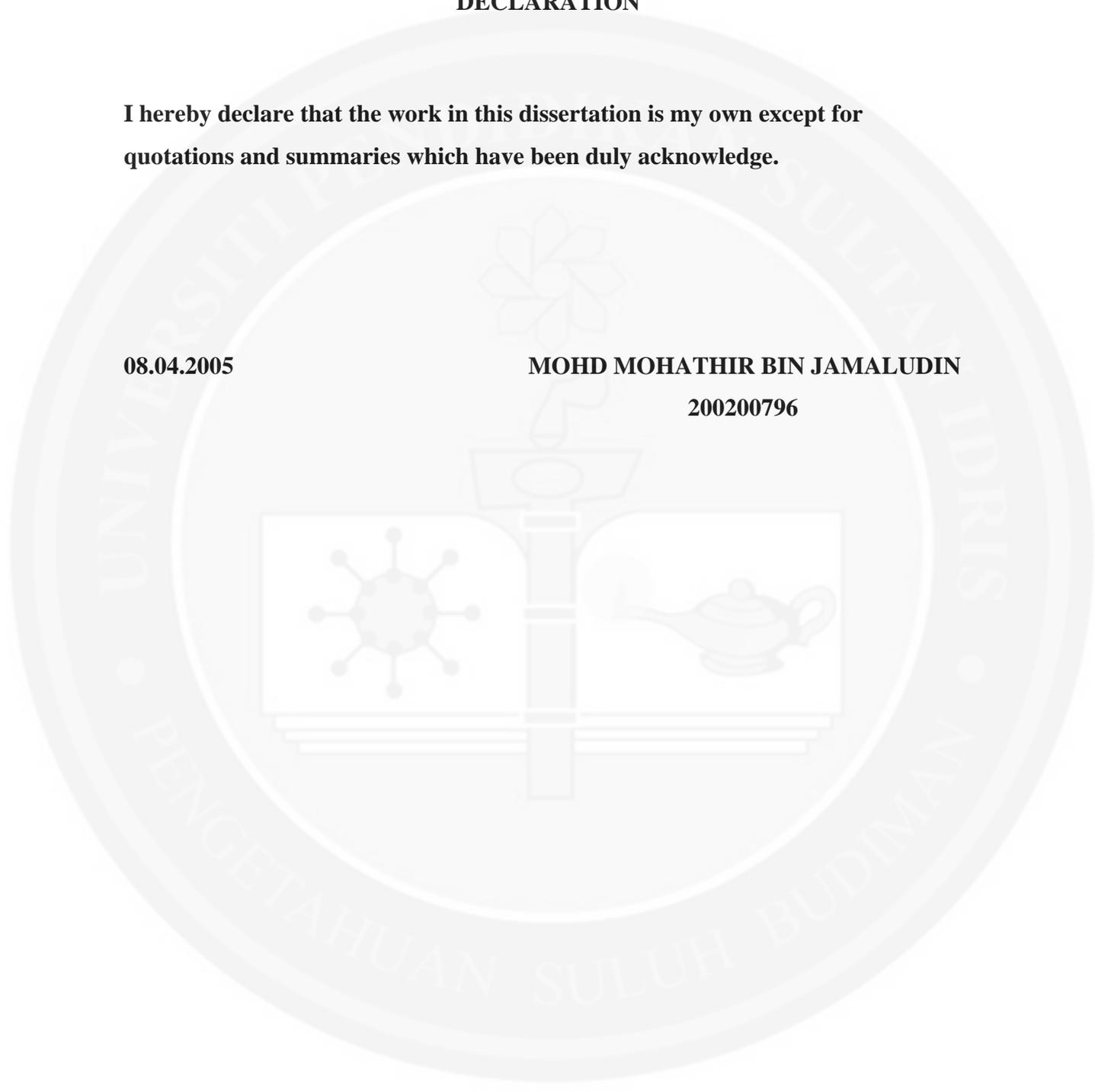
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledge.

08.04.2005

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to find out whether process approach writing can be utilized as an effective approach in enhancing students' writing ability. Furthermore, it was also the interest of this study to determine the students' perceptions on the process approach writing.

Data collected for this study were collected through students' written drafts. The students were assessed using the pre-test and the post-test experimental research method. Results from both tests were analyzed using the t-test formula for the dependent samples.

Twenty Form Three students of Sekolah Menengah kebangsaan Trolak, 35600, Sungkai, Perak were chosen to be the research samples. The samples were chosen at random.

Research findings have shown that process approach writing has significant effects in enhancing writing skills among the students. In addition, the study also shows that process approach is able to attract students' interest in producing better essays. Apart from that, the approach also helped to motivate the students to participate actively in the teaching and learning process.

Findings of this study also reveal that various methods such as journal writing, peer-group editing and responding to different aspects of writing and students' abilities are useful in ensuring smooth implementation of process approach writing.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini dilaksanakan adalah untuk menentukan sama ada pendekatan penulisan secara proses dapat meningkatkan kemahiran menulis di kalangan pelajar. Disamping itu, kajian ini juga berfungsi dalam menentukan persepsi pelajar mengenai pelaksanaan pendekatan penulisan secara proses.

Data mengenai kajian ini dikumpul melalui hasil penulisan para pelajar terbabit. Pelajar terbabit akan dinilai melalui ujian pra dan ujian pos dan hasil kedua-dua ujian dianalisis dengan menggunakan formula untuk ujian t untuk sampel dependen.

Dua puluh orang pelajar Tingkatan Tiga dari Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Trolak, 35600, Sungkai, Perak telah dipilih untuk menjadi responden kajian dan pemilihan pelajar ini telah dilaksanakan secara rambang.

Dapatan kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa kaedah penulisan secara proses mempunyai kaitan yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan kemahiran menulis di kalangan pelajar. Disamping itu, kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa kaedah penulisan secara proses juga dapat menarik minat pelajar untuk menghasilkan esei yang lebih baik, disamping meningkatkan motivasi pelajar dalam mengikuti proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang dijalankan dengan lebih aktif.

Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa penulisan jurnal, pemeriksaan berkumpulan dan pemfokusan kepada aspek-aspek tertentu dalam penulisan dan kebolehan murid dapat memastikan kelancaran pendekatan ini.

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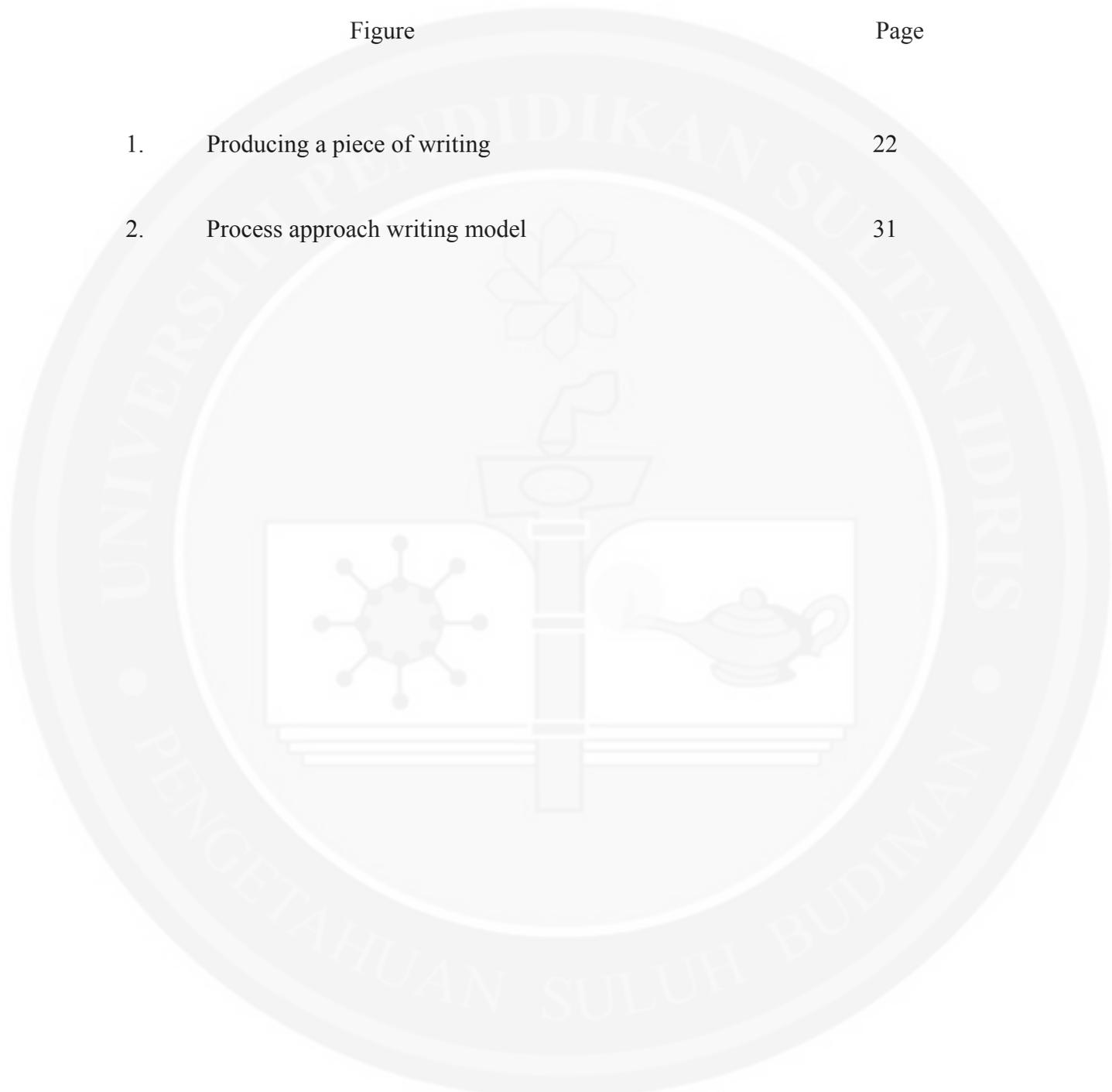


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Language learning in school is very much related to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each of the four skills has a role to play in helping to achieve the objectives of the new integrated school curriculum, now being implemented in Malaysian schools.

The learning of a second language in the school curriculum focused mainly on the communicative process. “These skills are all connected with the main function of language which is communication” (ELT Compendium, 1989: x). In the English language syllabus for second language students, writing aims to help these students to be able to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings creatively and meaningfully.

The teaching of writing is usually a follow up to the other skills: listening, speaking and reading. Its importance in developing student's language proficiency comes in as exercises or activities, which reflect student's responses to listening, speaking and reading. This can be observed in the syllabus, which clearly shows that writing skills were placed after the other three skills.

The teaching of writing should be given greater emphasis because writing merits a place in the language syllabus. Students need to master writing skills because writing remains the commonest way of examining student performance in most examination subjects.

Virtually all public examinations include a composition, while even gap-filling tests require some competence in the written language. Consequently, ability to write remains a key to examination success. Furthermore, in the eyes of both parents and students, ability to write may be associated with evidence of having learned the language.

In addition, writing is also tangible. Parents and students can see what has been done and what has been achieved. So it has high 'face validity'. Therefore, it can be said that the teaching of writing skills should be carefully selected and implemented in schools. Teachers should carefully select the appropriate, suitable, practical and effective approaches in teaching writing skill to their students to ensure the success of the students in the learning process.

1.2 Background of the study

Among all the language skills, writing is the most problematic. Not only students at the secondary school level but also at tertiary level are having problems in producing a good piece of writing. “Learning to write in either the first or subsequent language is a complex process that takes time, effort and practice”. (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia ELT Compendium, 1989: 61). This clearly indicates that writing skill is difficult to be mastered. White (1980: 16) supported this notion by stating that

Writing involves more than just producing sentences.... We must be able to write a connected series of sentences, which are grammatically and logically linked. It is also necessary to be able to write appropriately for the kind of purpose and audience we have in mind. ... In short, we must produce a piece of discourse which embodies correctness of form, appropriateness of style and unity of team and topic.

(White, 1980:16)

Writing is a behaviour, which needs a combination of skills by a writer. The writer needs to integrate these skills physically and internally in order to be able to write coherently. This clearly shows the complexity and difficulty, in producing a piece of good writing.

What makes writing difficult is that it involves not only the psychomotor aspect of the learner but also the cognitive aspect of the learner. This process cannot be determined by teachers and does not have a set of clear-cut procedure. It is what some people call a “lifetime process”. Even Gebhardt and Rodrigues (1989: v)

support this notion when they say “writing is a dynamic process that does not fit easily into course plans and text books”. This shows that the success of teaching writing depends on various factors such as teacher’s pedagogical approach, the students, the materials used, and the environment of the students.

According to Hadley (1993: 290) “ If learning to write in a second language were simply a matter of knowing how to “ write things down” in the new code, then teaching writing would be a relatively easy task”. This clearly proposes that the teaching and learning to write in a second language is an uphill task that requires great efforts from the teachers and students.

Nesamalar et.al, (1995) explains that difficulties in acquiring writing skill because the nature of the skill which requires various competencies in several aspects. A writer needs to have relevant information about the topic or the subject matter of his/her writing. This may be his/her general knowledge, or information he/she can obtain from reference books, journals, and information gathered from his/her observation and experience. Apart from that, a writer must also have a clear purpose for writing. The writer’s intention will determine the way he/she presents the writing.

In addition, a writer also needs to have a sense of audience and interact with the audience so that he/she can take into consideration what the reader already knows, levels of understanding and the appropriate language to be used. Finally, a writer also needs to have a repertoire of language adequate for his needs, possesses thinking

skills, organisational skills, be aware of the writing conventions and the writing process.

From time to time new approaches have been introduced in relation to writing skill development. However, the focus of most new approaches is still the same, which is on the “complexity and individuality of the writing process” (Gebhardt and Rodrigues, *ibid*: 11). To bring about a holistic development of writing, approaches of expected kind of writing should be given to the students.

In recent years, the process approach has been introduced to enhance the writing ability of the students. Cohen (1994: 305) noted that “In recent years, the process approach to writing has begun to replace the more product-oriented approach in numerous second language writing programmes”.

The changes of approaches in teaching writing from the traditional approach or the product approach to the process approach has clearly indicated that changes are inevitable in order to enhance the writing ability of the students. In addition, we are not only encouraging the students to write creatively but also familiarising them to the patterns and styles of the language (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, 1989: 1).

Though the Ministry of Education has proposed the utilisation of this approach (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, 1989: 7) “In writing composition, instructions on how to write a composition must be presented to students step by step. So that they would be able to write the composition after going through the steps”.

Still not many are willing or ready to implement this approach in their classroom. This is probably because not many have understood the potential of process approach in developing writing skills and also due to the complexity of implementing this approach as proposed by (Hugney et. al: 83) “Writing is a tool for relaying messages and ideas, which are ‘recursive and cyclical’ in nature”.

Therefore, this study is to determine the effectiveness of using process approach in enhancing students’ writing ability.

1.3 Statement of the problem

It is generally noted that Malaysian students at the secondary level have not acquired the skills to write creatively and meaningfully in English. Even though the writing component is given the similar weightage as the other components such as listening, speaking and reading in the curriculum specified by the Ministry, students fail to acquire the writing skills effectively.

The purpose of the study is to explore the effectiveness of using process approach to help improve students’ writing ability in English. It is also to prove that process approach can be used as a catalyst in teaching language generally.

It is also noted that students’ weakness in writing is also due to the lack of motivation. Therefore, this study is also to motivate students by showing them some

interesting ways of learning writing. Their motivation can be built up by giving them the appropriate approach in learning writing and also by providing adequate period of time to produce the composition.

This study will answer the following research questions:

1. Can process approach be utilised as an effective medium in enhancing students' performance in essay writing?
2. Is process approach more effective than the traditional approach in enhancing students' essay writing performance?
3. Can process approach be utilised to motivate students to write essay?
4. Can process approach help the students to become active and creative writers?

1.4 Purpose of the study

Process approach in writing is chosen among others because not many teachers are willing to use this approach to enhance the writing ability of the students. Process approach in writing, which is recursive in nature, requires extra allocation of time in order for it to be implemented effectively.

In addition, the ability to write effectively is a vital aspect that needs to be mastered by the students in answering three essay questions found in Paper 2 in the

Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) Examination. The essays, which carry 70 marks of the total 130 marks of Paper 2, play influential role in determining the outcome of students' achievement in English language.

Students need have good writing skills because they are required to produce essays of not less than 100 words in length. Furthermore the students also need to familiarise themselves with the various kinds of essay writing. This is because they were required not only informal type of essays but also the formal type of essays such as letter writing, speeches and others. Therefore, process approach can be used as a catalyst to enhance students' writing ability and indirectly would enhance their achievement in English language.

Various stages that need to be carried out and written drafts of student's products, which need to be analysed and evaluated, will nevertheless test teachers' perseverance in implementing this approach.

Teachers also face problem in drawing a balance between what they feel is important for the development of their students as writers, and the potentially contradictory influence of the teaching materials or approaches that they often have to work with. Tribble (1997: 41) "a focus on the individual creativity of the writer is in many ways opposed the behaviourist model or even the presentation, practice, production model".

Due to the inability to write meaningfully, students fail to do well in their examinations. They also face numerous problems in communicating with the global community when they leave school and join the adult world. If the problem were not addressed seriously, Malaysians would be left behind in global development especially in trade and technology.

Besides this, the implementation of process approach writing will arouse students' interest in writing and will also stimulate them to write creatively and meaningfully. Teachers can also practice student-centred approach in the classroom because students were given adequate guidance and freedom to produce their own piece of writing.

Finally, the researcher has chosen writing over the other skills because eventually, the ability to express oneself through writing would decide how he/she would fare in the examination. Among all other skills, writing is the most problematic area in the language study. White (1980: *ibid*: 2) "All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write". Therefore, the researcher tries to make writing enjoyable and learnable to the students by exposing them to some interesting approaches that contains various aspects of writing such as the process approach.

1.5 Scope of the study

The main aim of the study is to find out whether process approach can be used as an effective medium to enhance the sample of students' writing ability. It is also to prove that process approach is the most effective method or approach in enhancing students' writing ability compared to the traditional approach in teaching writing skills.

Apart from that, the study can also be used as a catalyst to motivate and gauge the students' interest to write by exposing them to some interesting ways of learning writing. This is because the process approach contains some vital ingredients that other approaches failed to provide. For example, adequate time allocation for the students to produce their best effort in writing and also stages of writing that would enable the students to produce written works according to their schedule.

Finally, the new insights derived from the study undertaken by the researcher would hopefully be beneficial for future teachers in conducting a better writing lesson in the future.

Twenty Form Three students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Trolak, 35600, Sungkai, Perak were selected prior to the research undertaken. The samples were selected at random. The samples were grouped in one group and they were asked to write two descriptive essays which will be regarded as the pre-test and the post-test. Topics of the essays were determined by the researcher.

The samples' first essays will be regarded as the pre-test. The research samples will then be exposed to five teaching sessions in which the samples were trained to write essays using the process approach. Each teaching session will last for sixty minutes to enable the samples to have adequate time to produce the required essays.

Upon completing the fifth teaching session, a post-test was administered. The samples of the study were required to write one descriptive essay determined by the researcher. The test data from the pre-test and the post-test were tabulated and analysed using the *t*-test to determine whether the research questions should be retained or rejected.

1.6 Definitions of terms

The definition of terms in this paper is selected carefully so that the readers can see the correlation between them.

1. Process approach

“Process approach is the process of writing, thinking of something to write about, selecting what to include, giving shape to these ideas by organising them into an outline or plan, writing draft, revising and editing the draft and producing a final version”. (Nesamalar et.al, ibid:145)

Cohen (1990: 105) defined process approach as “approach that emphasises the notion that writing is a process whereby the finished product emerges after a series of drafts. The process approach put emphasis on an incubation in which the written piece takes shape”. Hadley (1993: 329) defined process approach “emphasising, the writing process over product, with adequate time provided to develop a piece of writing, a recognition of recursiveness of the process, and the encouragement of exploration of topics through writing”

Thus it can be concluded that process approach is a contemporary approach in writing. It is an approach, which emphasises the writing process rather than the product. This approach can be seen as a user-friendly approach due to the adequate time given to the students to produce essay drafts prior to the production of the final essay.

2. Writing

Writing is a systematic way of conveying information “ ... using visible signs or graphic symbols on a flat surface such as paper...” (Nesamalar et.al, ibid: 136)

This study abides by “writing” as defined according to the Malaysian English language curriculum specification. It is stated that writing is a skill in which students’ are instructed and guided in the ways to write. Writing too is the processes of planning, drafting, editing and producing the final product (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, 1992).

3. Ability

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines ability as “1. Something that you are able to do, especially because you have particular mental or physical skills: 2. Someone’s, especially a student’s, level of intelligence or skill, especially in school or college work”.

Morris (1999: 305) defines ability as “a skill that people actually have and for which they need no additional training”.

1.7 Limitations of the study

In conducting this research, the researcher has encountered some limitations. The limitations of the study were as follow. Firstly, some students had a dislike towards writing however hard the researcher tried to motivate them.

Secondly, teachers too created some obstacles, where they seemed to dislike an outsider to interfere with their existing teaching systems. Furthermore, some of the experienced English teachers were a bit reluctant to accept new ideas proposed by the researcher.

Finally, this is a quasi-experimental study. The results from the group of twenty students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Trolak, Sungkai, Perak who

were chosen for the study did not represent the sample of the whole population. Thus the result of the study can only be concluded for this group of students.

1.8 Outline of the project

In retrospect, process approach is an approach that is used in teaching writing whereby the learners go through several stages of language development before producing the final written draft. This approach emphasises the communicative nature because the learners have a purpose for and an audience for their writing.

Just like in the real world, instant composition is not the normal way to compose. Therefore, in this approach the learners are given time to plan and decide on the way their composition will develop, always keeping the purpose and audience in mind.

The teacher acts as a guide, a scaffolder in that he/she shows the way to generate ideas about the topic, ways to organise the ideas, how to recognise the typical schematic structures of the discourse and build their language to meet these needs.

In light of current innovations in the teaching of English as a second language in Malaysia, it is therefore worthwhile to undertake this study. Present language learning strategies which focused on the maximum use of language by the students,