

Using the process approach to teach writing in 6 Hong Kong primary classrooms

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Background: In most primary schools in Hong Kong, a product-oriented approach is used in teaching writing. The process approach to writing has been seen as an improvement over the traditional methods of writing instruction in recent years. However, the effectiveness of using the process approach to teach writing is still inconclusive. It is necessary to confirm its effectiveness through further research studies.

Aims: This study investigates how effective process writing is in helping about 200 students in the upper primary school level and the lower primary school level improve their writing skills and their attitude towards writing.

Sample and method: Six primary school teachers, 3 in the lower primary school level and 3 in the upper primary school level, each implemented an innovative two-month process writing programme in her school. The effectiveness of the programme was investigated through post-interviews and the comparison of a pre- and post-questionnaire, a pre-test and a post-test, and pre- and post- observations of the strategies used by the students in doing their pre-tests and post-tests.

Results: It is found that the programme brought about positive results across all classes and in both the upper and lower level in general though the results in each classroom slightly differed.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The process approach seems to be an effective approach even at as low a level as P.3 in the primary school. Process writing seems to be a feasible solution to heightening the writing abilities and confidence of students, especially those who have higher English proficiency and those at the upper primary level.

Keywords: Process approach, product oriented approach, writing

在六所小學使用歷程取向的模式教導寫作

背景: 香港大多數小學都採用成果取向的方法去教導寫作，近年視採用歷程取向的方法去教導寫作是傳統教導寫作的改良，但是否有效卻未有定論，需要作進一步的研究。

目的: 這研究探討歷程取向的寫作方法對改進二百位小學生的改進技巧及態度是否有效。

取樣及方法: 六位小學教師，三位任教初小、三位任教高小，在其學校試教一個為期兩個月有關歷程取向寫作方法的新課程，研究者採用測試後面談、比較試前和試後問卷調查、測驗成績、及觀察學生在測試前後的學習策略等多元方法，去尋找歷程取向寫作方法的有效性。

結果: 發現各測驗觀察都稍微偏向支持歷程取向寫作方法。

討論和建議: 歷程取向寫作方法似乎是一個較有效的教學法去提昇學生的寫作能力及信心，不但在英語能力較佳的高小，甚至可以在初小推行。

關鍵詞: 歷程取向、成果取向、寫作

1. Introduction

In most primary schools in Hong Kong in which teaching is mostly teacher-centered and examination-oriented (Pennington 1995:707) and the educational system is product oriented (Pennington 1996), a product-oriented approach is used in teaching writing. Traditional approaches to the teaching of writing focus on the product or in other words the production of neat, grammatically correct pieces of writing (Mahon 1992). According to this approach, the teaching of writing focuses on “one-shot correct writing for the purpose of language practice” (Cheung 1999) and a “one-shot effort by the teacher to evaluate the students’ attempts” (Pennington and Cheung 1995:20). The emphasis is on grammatical correctness and adherence to given models or guidelines. (White, 1988). Imitating models inhibits writers rather than liberating them. There is little or no opportunity for the students to add any thoughts or ideas of their own. (Raimes 1983). The inevitable consequence is that little attention is paid to the ideas and meaning of their writing, what it communicates to the reader, the purpose and the audience (Raimes 1983:75). Over-emphasis on accuracy and form will lead to serious “writing blocks” (Halsted 1975:82) and “sterile” and “unimaginative” pieces of work (Mahon 1992:75). Thus, most students do not know how to do free writing and they do not possess the strategies for composing texts independently. Most of them do not enjoy writing and lack confidence in writing on their own.

The process approach to writing, an innovation in a product-oriented culture (Cheung 1999), has been seen as an improvement over the traditional methods of writing instruction in recent years. Leki (1991) states that the process approach is an approach to teach writing that places more emphasis on the stages of the writing process than on the final product. It is “interpretational, learner-centered and not specifically related to examinations” (Pennington 1995:707). According

to Zamel (1983), writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts, constructing meaning and assessing it at the same time. Attention is paid first to the content and meaning and then to the form. Writing in process approaches is seen as predominantly to do more with skills, such as planning and drafting skills, than linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge about grammar and text structure. (Badger and White 2000:154). In the approach, students are taught planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing strategies at each stage of the writing process to help them to write freely and arrive at a product of good quality.

Many educators are positive towards the process approach and think that the students will benefit greatly from this approach (Raimes 1983, Stewart and Cheung 1989, White and Arndt 1991). Research findings from most research studies on the effectiveness of the process approach show that it is in general an effective approach in helping students improve their writing skills and attitudes towards writing at the tertiary, secondary and primary school levels (Stewart 1986, Zamel 1982, Tyson 1999, Lo 1994, Stewart and Cheung 1989, Lee and Yau 1992, Goldstein and Carr 1996, Jacob and Talshir 1998, Mahon and Yau 1992, Cheung and Chan 1994, Cheung 1999, Cheung et al. 1992, Pennington and Cheung 1993,1995), though some studies generate results that are partly positive and partly negative or positive results with reservations (Tsang and Wong 1992, Tsang and Wong 1993, Tsang and Wong 1994, Keh 1989, Casanave’s 1994, Pennington, Brock and Yue 1996, Urzua 1987, English Section and Institute of Language in Education 1994). Thus, the effectiveness of using the process approach to teach writing is still inconclusive. It is necessary to confirm its effectiveness through further research studies. There is a pressing need for examining the effectiveness of implementing the process approach especially in the primary school sector because the primary school stage is an important stage during which

students build their basic foundations in writing and establish their basic attitudes towards writing. If an approach which is proven to be effective is used to teach these students while they are young, they will develop along the right direction when they proceed to secondary and tertiary levels.

The purposes of this study are: (1) to implement six writing programmes on process writing in six primary classrooms, three in the upper primary levels (P.4-P.6) and three in the lower primary levels (P.2-P.3), and (2) to examine the effectiveness of these programmes on the students' writing skills and their change in attitude towards writing, and to compare the effectiveness across the six classrooms and across the upper and the lower levels in general. The pedagogical implications will also be discussed.

2. Literature review

A number of research studies related to the implementation of the process approach in teaching writing have been conducted in different primary school classrooms in different parts of the world. Some studies show positive results. Goldstein and Carr (1996) examined the 1992 NAEP writing assessment administered to a representative national sample of approximately 7,000 4th grade students, 11,000 8th grade students and 11,500 12th grade students across the USA. Results indicate that process-related activities are strongly related to writing proficiency. Jacob and Talshir (1998) adopted process writing in the 4th and 6th grade classrooms at the Pishgat Ze'ev Bet School in Israel to make English writing real for the students. Results show that the students developed into active independent writers. Mahon and Yau (1992) when launching a process-oriented writing programme for a primary two class with thirty-five students, found that students' writing ability improved by adopting the process approach to writing. Cheung and Chan (1994) carried out a writing programme in a primary school in Hong Kong. They found that

the process writing approach successfully helped the students develop their writing skills.

However, there are some studies which generate positive results with reservations. Urzua's (1987) study, for example, exhibited positive results. She indicated that the teaching of process writing with L2 writers had brought them some benefits. She observed the progress of two fourth grade and two sixth grade students and found that they acquired significant composing skills. However, this study involved only a small number of subjects and the results could not be generalized. Another writing programme which applied a process approach was implemented in a P.2 class in Hong Kong for over a period of two months. (English section & Institute of Language in Education, 1994). The process approach proved to be workable and effective in improving and developing students' writing skills. However, peer reading and giving response seemed to be missing in the whole writing process. An experiment done by a Hong Kong teacher was conducted in a P.4 class (English Section and Institute of Language in Education, 1994:37-43). The teacher was also convinced that teaching writing as a process was possible in primary schools. She found in her experiment that pre-writing activities could help her students with ideas and that a checklist for reviewing and editing could help her students detect most of their mistakes and correct them on their own. However, since the experiment time was short (5 lessons), students could not fully grasp these writing strategies or techniques in order to use them on their own and thus the positive result shown in this experiment became questionable. In short, it seems that the effectiveness of the process approach to writing in primary schools is in general positive though there are some reservations about some research findings.

Most of the above-mentioned studies were carried out in an individual classroom or with a small number of subjects. It would thus be worthwhile to examine the effectiveness of the approach simultaneously across several classrooms

both at the lower primary levels and at the upper primary levels. By doing so, a clearer, broader and more complete picture about the effectiveness of using the process approach to teach writing in the primary school can be portrayed.

3. Research questions

This study aims to investigate the following research questions:

- (1) How effective are process writing programmes in helping the students in the upper primary school level and the lower primary school level improve
 - (a) their attitudes towards writing
 - (b) their writing habits
 - (c) their writing performance, and
 - (d) their use of writing strategies?
- (2) How effective are the process writing programmes according to the opinions of the students?

4. Research method

4.1 Procedure

- (1) Six primary school teachers, 3 in the lower primary school level and 3 in the upper primary school level each implemented a two-month process writing programme designed by the researcher with the help of the teachers. In this programme, the students were taught the strategies needed at each stage of the writing process. Each teacher adapted the programme when necessary to the particular level of the students in their particular school.
- (2) The effectiveness of the programme was arrived at by means of a comparison of pre- and post-questionnaires, pre- and post-interviews, a pre-test and a post-test and pre- and post- observations of the

strategies used by the students in doing their pre-tests and post-tests using an observation checklist.

4.2 Background information about the six classes

The background information provided by each teacher about each school, class and teacher is shown in Table 1 below.

The classes in School A, B and C were at the lower primary level (P.1-3).

School A was a whole day school in which students stayed in the school from the morning till mid afternoon. The class consisted of 29 Primary 3 students aged from 8 to 9 years. There were 14 boys and 15 girls. It was a mixed-ability class in which some students had limited proficiency in English. They had low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning English. They usually did guided writing in class. The teacher had 28 years' teaching experience.

School B was a whole-day school. There were 37 students in this Primary 3 class aged from 7 to 9 years. There were 21 boys and 16 girls in the class. They were mostly weak in English. They were motivated to learn English. They usually did guided writing in class. The teacher had 6 years' teaching experience.

School C was a whole-day school. This Primary 3 class was involved in the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP). There were only 8 students including 6 boys and 1 girl aged from 8 to 9 years. The students were slow in learning. All of them were poor in English and consequently had low self-confidence. Their English standard was probably at a primary one level or even lower. The kind of writing they were doing in school was guided writing. The teacher had 6 years' teaching experience.

The classes in School D, E and F were at the upper Primary level (P.4-P.6).

Table 1 Background information of each school, class and teacher

Items	Class in School A	Class in School B	Class in School C	Class in School D	Class in School E	Class in School F
School time	WholeDay	WholeDay	WholeDay	P.M.	A.M.	WholeDay
Level	P.3	P.3	P.3	P.4	P.4	P.5
No. of students	29 (14 boys & 15 girls)	37 (21 boys & 16 girls)	7 (6 boys & 1 girl)	32 (14 boys & 18 girls)	38 (20 boys & 18 girls)	32 (All boys)
Age range of students	8-9 years	7-9 years	8-9 years	9-10 years	9-10 years	10-11 years
English standard of students	Mixed ability	Most are weak in English	Very weak in English	Fair	Fair	Fair
Motivation of students	Not motivated	Motivated	Not motivated	Easily motivated	Motivated	Not motivated
Kinds of writing they are doing	Guided writing	Guided writing	Guided writing	Guided writing	Guided writing	Guided writing
Teaching experience of the teacher	28 years	6 years	6 years	17 years	28 years	6 years

School D was a P.M. school in which classes were held in the afternoon only. There were 32 students in this Primary 4 class with 14 boys and 18 girls aged from 9 to 10 years. The English standard of the students was fair. They usually were easily motivated if they were involved in activities. They usually did guided writing in class. The teacher had 17 years' teaching experience.

School E was an A.M. school in which classes were held in the morning only. There were 38 students in this Primary 4 class with 20 boys and 18 girls aged from 9 to 10 years. They were fair in their English proficiency and eager to learn. They often did guided writing in class. The teacher had 28 years' teaching experience.

School F was a whole-day school. There were 32 students in this Primary 5 class. All of them were boys aged from 10 to 11 years. The English standard of the students was fair. They lacked motivation to

learn English. They did guided writing in class. The teacher had 6 years' teaching experience.

4.3 The programme

4.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the programme were to help the students develop writing strategies at each stage of the process of writing so that each of them could write a story individually and independently at the end of the programme.

4.3.2 Choice of type of writing

A story was chosen as the type of writing to be taught in the programme because children were interested in reading and listening to stories which helped stimulate their creativity and motivation to write

stories themselves. Since they had been exposed to many stories, it was easy for them to master the structure, genre and language related to such text type.

4.3.3 Teaching method, topics and instruments
The programme lasted for 7 weeks during which the students were led through the 5 stages of writing: brainstorming, organizing ideas, drafting, revising and editing. They were given 7 writing tasks to do in seven double lessons in this programme.

The theme chosen at the lower primary level was “What happened in a place in their daily life”. They had to perform 7 writing tasks on the following topics: “What happened in the playground?”, “What happened in the classroom?”, “What happened in the library?”, “What happened in the toy shop?”, “What happened in McDonalds?”, “What happened in the park?” and “What happened in the street?”. At the upper primary level, the theme was “An adventure in a place in their daily life”. The 7 topics were: “An adventure in a park”, “An adventure in a library”, “An adventure in a restaurant”, “An adventure in a fast food shop”, “An adventure in McDonalds”, “An adventure in a market” and “An adventure in a shopping centre”. In each writing task, the first sentence was given to the students who had to continue the story using their own ideas.

In each of the first 6 lessons, the strategy needed for that stage of the process of writing was taught. One instrument was used at each stage to facilitate the mastery of the strategy taught at that stage:

- Brainstorming : A spider web was used to help students brainstorm or generate ideas
- Organizing ideas: A story planner was designed to help students organize ideas and put them into different parts of the structure of a story.
- Revising: A revising checklist was used to help students revise the content and organization of their drafts.
- Editing: An editing checklist was used to help students edit the language of their stories.

The students had to go through 6 cycles of the same learning process from modeling to collaborative practice and individual practice to ensure that the students had clear input and enough consolidation to help them master the strategies. At each stage, teacher help was given first and then replaced by peer help, these being gradually withdrawn to allow the students to work independently. In the 7th lesson, students were asked to go through all the stages independently using all the strategies taught in the programme.

4.4 Data collection

To collect data to investigate the effectiveness of the writing programme, a pre-questionnaire and a pre-test were administered in class before the programme started. While the pre-test was being held, observation of the strategies used by the students during writing was carried out by the teacher. After the programme, a post-questionnaire and a post-test were given to the students. Observation was also carried out during the post-test. Follow-up interviews were conducted to collect additional information about the students’ opinions on the writing programme.

4.4.1 Pre-questionnaire

The pre-questionnaire was designed to find out the students’ attitude towards English writing and their writing habits. The questionnaire was written in English and explained in Cantonese so that students had the same understanding about each question on the questionnaire. Students spent about twenty minutes to complete the questionnaire. The return rate of the questionnaire was 100%.

4.4.2 Pre-test

The pre-test was designed to assess the students' writing ability. A task sheet with the topic of "What happened in the supermarket" was provided for the lower primary classes and "An adventure in a supermarket" for the upper primary classes. The students were asked to write a story on the topic with the first sentence given. The pre-test was conducted during one class period. No guidance or help were given during the test.

A marking scheme, through which certain selected aspects related to the content, organization and language of the piece of writing were assessed, was designed to evaluate the results of the pre-test and the post-test. The total score and the students' performance in content, organization and language were examined. The pre-test and post-test of each student were marked independently by two teachers to ensure inter-rater reliability. The scores were recorded on separate record sheets and the two teachers were not allowed to write anything on the scripts so as not to affect the marks given by their partners. The two scores were averaged.

4.4.3 Pre-observation

An observation check list was designed to check the students' use of writing strategies. It was set in the form of a seating plan. Each student's name together with five letters indicating the five strategies of brainstorming ideas using a spider web (B), organizing ideas using a story planner (O), writing drafts (D), revising the draft using a revision checklist (R) and editing the draft using an editing checklist (E) were put on the side of each seat on the seating plan. The teacher made records against each item on the checklist for each student while the students were taking the pre-test. Then the number of students who used the various strategies was recorded on the observation record form.

4.4.4 Post-test

A post-test was conducted after the programme in the same way as the pre-test to find

out if the students had made any improvements in their writing. The topic of the post-test for the lower primary students was "What happened in the shopping mall?" and that for the upper primary students was "An adventure in a shopping centre". The students were only given the task sheet. All other instruments such as the spider web, the story planner, the paper for writing drafts, the revision checklist and the editing checklist were put on the teachers' desks for the students to collect if they needed them. They were not reminded what strategies or instruments they should use. They were free to collect any instrument they wanted if they chose to do so.

The marking scheme and the marking procedure were the same as those in the post-test.

4.4.5 Post-observation

Observation was carried out in the same way as in the pre-test and the same observation instruments were used.

4.4.6 Post-questionnaire

The students had to complete a post-questionnaire after the programme. The first two parts of the post-questionnaire were the same as those on the pre-questionnaire. Another part was added to the questionnaire to evaluate the students' opinions of the programme. The post-questionnaire was administered in the same way as the pre-questionnaire.

4.4.7 Interviews

Follow-up interviews were conducted to collect additional information about the students' opinions on the writing programme. Three students with high English results, three with mid results and three with low results were selected to be the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese to ensure that the students could understand the questions and express their opinions freely. The interviews were tape-recorded.

4.5 Data analysis

Percentages of agreement and disagreement were calculated for all questionnaire items. Data were reduced to three categories for clearer presentation. i.e. strongly agree/agree and disagree/strongly disagree were combined. All interview data were summarized and tabulated. The pre-questionnaire, the post-questionnaire, and the post-interview results were examined together to provide a more complete picture about the students' opinions on writing and the programme.

The marks given by the two markers to the pre-test and post-test in each school were compared and the inter-rater reliability calculated was above 80% in each school. Results of the pre-test and post-test were compared to investigate whether improvement was made by the students in their writing in general and in terms of the content, organization and language of the pieces of writing after they had completed the writing programme. Frequency counts were made on the observation data and a comparison was made on the observation results of the strategies that the students used in writing the pre-test and the post-test.

5. Results

5.1 Answers to research questions (1) (a) and (b)

To answer research questions (1) (a) and (b), the results of Part A and Part B of the pre-questionnaires and the post-questionnaires in the six classrooms were compared and the increase or decrease in percentage of students who strongly agree or agree with the statements in the post-questionnaire in comparison with that in the pre-questionnaire was shown in Appendix 1.

As regards the students' attitudes towards writing, students in classrooms A and F were very positive in their attitudes towards writing after the programme as there was an increase in percentage

of students who strongly agree or agree to all the statements in the post-questionnaire in comparison with that in the pre-questionnaire. In classrooms A, D and E, the attitudes of the students were generally positive though in the post-questionnaire, there was a decrease in percentage of students who liked the writing lessons in school in classrooms A and D (-27.6% and -6% respectively) when compared with the pre-questionnaire. In classroom E, there was also a 4% decrease in the percentage of students who thought that writing was interesting in the post-questionnaire. In classroom B, the students' attitudes towards reading were less positive. Fewer students liked writing (-13.6%), liked the writing lessons in school (-19%) and had confidence in writing in English (-10.8%) after the writing programme.

As regards their writing habits, the students in all classes except Classroom B had an increase in all the percentages of students who strongly agreed or agreed with all the statements in the post-questionnaire when compared with the pre-questionnaire. This shows that more students in Classrooms A, C, D, E and F found it easy to get ideas for writing and to organize ideas after the writing programme. More students often planned before writing, wrote, revised and edited the drafts. More students knew how to get ideas, plan before writing, organize ideas, draft, revise and edit the draft. More of them knew how to write stories in English, do free writing and knew the strategies required to write a complete piece of writing by themselves. There was a great improvement in their writing habits. In Classroom B, however, more students only did three things: they often wrote drafts, knew how to write drafts and write stories in English after the writing programme.

Though students in Classroom B seemed to be less positive in their attitudes towards writing and showed less improvement in their writing habits than the other classes, the findings in their post-questionnaire were still positive. All the percentages of students who strongly agreed or

agreed to the statements in the post-questionnaire were above 50%. According to the teacher of this class, the reason why the students in Classroom B were less positive after the programme might be that the kind of writing that they had experienced before the programme was heavily guided. All of the writing could be done by substituting words. The students did this kind of writing well and were full of confidence. However, in the programme, they had to work very hard when brainstorming ideas, organizing ideas, revising and editing ideas. The students were weak in English and thus needed more time to adapt to this new writing approach. Nevertheless, the students in the interview said that they had learnt a lot of strategies in the programme which were essential in writing a story and their reactions to the programme were very positive.

5.2 Answers to research question (1) (c)

To answer research question (1) (c), the students' performance in the pre-test and post-test was analysed and the results are shown in Appendix 2. In the post-test, it is obvious that students in all classrooms improved over the total average as well as in content, organization, and language as seen by an increase in marks in all the above areas.

5.3 Answers to research question (1) (d)

In response to research question (1) (d), the observation data was analysed and the comparison of pre- and post-observation results can be seen in Appendix 3. While almost all students did not use any writing strategies during the pre-test, all the students in Classrooms A, D and F and almost all students in Classrooms B, C and E used the strategies and the instruments taught in the writing programme in the post-test. This seems to indicate that almost all students had learned to use the strategies taught in every stage of the writing process. Using the story planner to organize ideas seemed to be a more difficult strategy for the weaker

students to master as comparatively fewer students in Classrooms B, C and D used this strategy in the post-test.

5.4 Answers to research question (2)

To answer research question (2), the data in Part C of the post-questionnaire and the interview data were analysed.

5.4.1 Post-questionnaire (Part C) results

As regards the students' opinions on the effectiveness of the programme, most students in Classroom A liked the writing programme (51.7%), found the programme useful (62.1%) and found the programme somewhat easy (41.4%). Most of them found all the strategies useful (brainstorming 79.3%, story planning 89%, drafting 82.8%, revising 72.4% and editing 69%). Most of them found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 41.4%, story planning 58.6%, drafting 79.3%, revising 79.3% and editing 75.9%). Most of them liked the spider web (58.6%) and found it useful (62.1%) and easy to use (75.9%). Most of them liked (62.1%) the story planner, and found it useful (75.9%) and easy to use (62.1%). Most of them liked (58.6%) using the revising checklist and found it useful (69%) and easy to use (65.5%). Most of them liked (58.6%) the editing checklist and found it useful (79.3%) and easy to use (72.4%). In short, most students in Classroom A were positive towards almost every aspect of the programme except that they found the programme and the brainstorming strategy somewhat easy.

In Classroom B, most students liked the writing programme (62.1%), found the programme useful (81.1%) and easy (45.9%). Most of them found all the strategies useful (brainstorming 78.4%, story planning 75.6%, drafting 86.5%, revising 78.4% and editing 70.2%). Most of them found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 64.8%, story planning 54.0%, drafting 64.8%, revising 56.7% and editing 62.1%). Most of them

liked the spider web (67.5%) and found it useful (78.4%) and easy to use (62.1%). Most of them liked (67.5%) the story planner and found it useful (64.8%) and easy to use (62.1%). Most of them liked (54.0%) using the revising checklist and found it useful (78.3%) and easy to use (62.1%). Most of them liked (59.4%) the editing checklist and found it useful (64.8%) and easy to use (64.8%). In short, most students in Classroom B were positive towards every aspect of the programme.

In Classroom C, most students liked the writing programme (57.1%), found the programme useful (57.1%) and somewhat easy (71.4%). However, most of them found the brainstorming strategy not useful (42.9%). While 42.9% of them found the story planning strategy useful, 49.2% found it not useful. Most of them found the drafting strategy useful (42.9%). While 42.9% of them found the revising strategy useful, 49.2% found it somewhat useful. There were 42.9% of the students who found the editing strategy somewhat useful. Most of them found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 42.9%, story planning 42.9%, drafting 42.9%, revising 42.9% and editing 42.9%). Most of them liked the spider web (57.1%) and found it useful (57.1%) and easy to use (57.1%). Most of them liked (57.1%) the story planner and found it somewhat useful (57.1%). While 42.9% found the story planner somewhat easy to use, 42.9% found it not easy to use. Most of them liked (71.4%) using the revising checklist and found it useful (57.1%) and easy to use (57.1%). Most of them liked (71.4%) the editing checklist and found it somewhat useful (57.1%) and easy to use (71.4%). In short, most students in Classroom A were generally positive towards the programme but had reservations over the easiness of the programme and the story planner; and the usefulness of the brainstorming strategy, story planning strategy, editing strategy, the story planner and the editing checklist.

In Classroom D, most students liked the writing programme (47%), found the programme

useful (69%) and found the programme not easy (44%). Most of them found almost all the strategies useful (brainstorming 69%, story planning 63%, revising 69% and editing 78%) except the drafting strategy. 47.7% of the students found the drafting strategy not useful. Most of the students found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 59%, story planning 66%, drafting 50%, revising 63% and editing 63%). Most of them liked the spider web (53%) and found it useful (69%) and easy to use (72%). Most of them liked (53%) the story planner and found it useful (47%) and easy to use (69%). Most of them liked (63%) using the revising checklist, found it useful (59%) and easy to use (56%). Most of them liked (56%) the editing checklist and found it useful (53%) and easy to use (66%). In short, most students in Classroom D were positive towards almost every aspect of the programme except the easiness of the programme and the usefulness of drafting.

In Classroom E, most students liked the writing programme (57%) and found the programme useful (54%) and easy (54%). Most of them found all the strategies useful (brainstorming 52%, story planning 51%, drafting 62%, revising 65% and editing 68%). Most of them found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 65%, story planning 73%, drafting 68%, revising 84% and editing 81%). Most of them liked the spider web (54%) and found it useful (57%) and easy to use (57%). Most of them did not like (43%) the story planner, but found it useful (44%) and easy to use (68%). Most of them liked (65%) using the revising checklist and found it useful (68%) and easy to use (84%). Most of them liked (70%) the editing checklist and found it useful (76%) and easy to use (92%). In short, most students in Classroom E were positive towards every aspect of the programme, except that they did not like the story planner.

In Classroom F, a majority of the students liked the writing programme (87%) and found the programme useful (78%) and easy (97%). Most of

them found all the strategies useful (brainstorming 81%, story planning 56%, drafting 91%, revising 87% and editing 85%). A majority of them found it easy to manage all the strategies (brainstorming 97%, story planning 97%, drafting 94%, revising 84% and editing 97%). A majority of them liked the spider web (88%) and found it useful (81%) and easy to use (94%). Most of them liked (41%) the story planner and found it useful (47%) and easy to use (94%). A majority of them liked (82%) using the revising checklist and found it useful (78%) and easy to use (91%). A majority of them liked (75%) the editing checklist and found it useful (85%) and easy to use (94%). In short, most students in Classroom F were very positive towards every aspect of the programme.

In short, most students in Classrooms B and F were positive towards all aspects of the programme. Most students in Classrooms A, D and E were positive towards almost all aspects of the programme except that those in Classrooms A and D only found the program and the brainstorming strategy somewhat easy; those in Classroom D also found the programme not easy and the drafting strategy not useful; those in Classroom E did not like the story planner. Most students in classroom C were less positive towards more items than the students in other classrooms. Most students in Classroom C had reservations about the easiness of the programme and the usefulness of the brainstorming, story planning and editing strategies, the usefulness and easiness of the story planner and the usefulness of the editing checklist.

5.4.2 Interview results

The students selected for the interviews explained why they were positive towards the programme and why they had reservations over certain aspects of the programme. They reported that instead of using the traditional method to put given words and ideas together to form a standardized composition, they now had greater satisfaction in being real writers who could write imaginatively

and freely on their own. They benefited from the programme because they had learned how to use concrete instruments to employ different strategies at different stages of the process of writing. The teaching method was helpful because the students practised more than one strategy at a time. This necessitated practising all the skills they had learned previously before the teacher's demonstration of another new strategy. Sufficient time for practice was allowed so that the students did not have much difficulty in using all the writing strategies and instruments in the programme.

Some students found the programme not so easy because they had to write seven pieces of free writing in a short period of time with very little control or guidance with the result that they felt pressurized. Brainstorming was not so easy for them because they were not used to thinking about the content when they did guided writing before the programme. Brainstorming was new to them and quite challenging especially when their vocabulary was limited. Some students liked the story planner because it helped them organize their ideas well. This was because they had already used the spider web to put their ideas together logically and in good order. In their opinion, it was a waste of time to rewrite the information in a story planner and then transfer it to their drafts. They thought it was better to put the information directly from the spider web onto their drafts. That was also the reason why some students did not like drafting. There were also those who found it difficult to use the editing checklist. The reason they gave was that although it was easy to give ticks on the draft, they did not know how to amend the mistakes after completing the checklist. Thus, they found it difficult to use the editing checklist to help them correct their mistakes completely.

5.5. Summary of the results

To conclude, most students in all classrooms except Classroom B had a more positive attitude

towards writing after the writing programme and most of them had made positive changes to their writing habits. Overall, most students in all classrooms were positive about almost all aspects of the programme. While the students in classrooms B and F were positive towards every aspect of the programme, the students in the other classrooms had some reservations about certain aspects of the programme. Most students in Classroom F were the most positive towards every aspect of the programme and most students in Classroom C had more reservations about more aspects of the programme.

6. Discussion

Results of the study show that the writing programme was successful on the whole as it helped to bring about positive changes in most students' attitudes towards writing and their writing habits. The programme also helped the students to improve in their writing performance and to learn how to use the strategies at each stage of the process of writing. Most students in all the classrooms at both the upper primary level and the lower primary level were receptive to such a writing programme. They liked the programme and found it useful. They also liked most instruments and found them useful and easy to use. It seems that this programme was workable from the Primary three to Primary 5 level. From this study, it can be seen that the programme could be successfully implemented within a tight schedule (a double lesson each week for seven weeks) and a tight syllabus in all the schools though it would be more desirable if the duration of the programme could be longer. This might be a signal to indicate that it is not impossible to incorporate such a programme in the writing curriculum in most primary levels in Hong Kong.

The students who benefited most from the programme were those in classroom F, which was the only primary 5 class at the upper primary level in this study, whereas the students in the IRTP class

at the lower primary level had the most reservations over the programme. This result seemed to suggest that this writing programme worked better with students at the upper primary level or those with better English proficiency. Students with lower English proficiency might not benefit as much from the programme unless more help was given to the students especially in the use of strategies and instruments over which they had difficulties. Since the teachers' years of teaching experience and the students' motivation were the same in Classrooms F and C, these did not seem to be important factors affecting how successful the programme was in these two classrooms.

Concerning the design of the writing programme, it seemed that the choice of story as the type of writing and adventure as the topic was correct as the students liked them and found them workable. The cyclical teaching method employed, which included modeled teaching, cooperative practice and individual practice, and the order in which the strategies were taught were helpful to the students because the students were led through the writing process step by step with clear input and enough practice within a short period of time. Curriculum developers might consider using this teaching method and text type as a starting point in their writing programmes. The instruments could be improved to help the students master the strategies more easily. For example, the students could be advised to put key words instead of sentences on the story planner so that they would not find it repetitive to write the ideas on the draft again. As regards the editing checklist, examples might be added to the checklist to give the students some ideas about how to correct their mistakes.

7. Conclusions

To conclude, the process approach seems to be an effective approach even at as low a level as P.3 in the primary school. Process writing seems to be a feasible solution to heightening the writing

abilities and confidence of students, especially those who have higher English proficiency and those at the upper primary level. Examples of and suggestions concerning how the writing programme could be run were given in this study and could become the sources of reference for teachers who would like to implement process writing in their schools. This study has initiated the carrying out of research on process writing in a context beyond that of an individual classroom and this has opened up a new direction for research. This direction of research, as exemplified by this study, has proved to be workable and worth pursuing. As the sample size of this study was still small and the subjects were not randomly chosen, the results cannot be generalized to all primary students at all levels in Hong Kong. However, the findings may help to throw light on the methods of and effectiveness of implementing process writing at different levels in Hong Kong primary schools. It is hoped that more similar types of research on process writing will be carried out in more primary classrooms at more levels in more schools so that the effectiveness of the process approach can be empirically generalized. It is also hoped that with the help of the empirical evidence, process writing will soon become part of the school curriculum in local primary schools so that students' interest and success in writing will be enhanced more speedily and effectively than at present.

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Appendix 1

Comparison of the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire results on students' attitude towards writing in the 6 schools

1.1 Attitude towards writing

Statements	Increase (+) or decrease (-) in percentage of students who strongly agree or agree to the statements in the post-questionnaire in comparison with that in the pre-questionnaire					
	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1. I like writing.	+13.8%	- 13.6%	+ 28.6%	+ 3%	+ 17%	+ 43%
2. I like the writing lessons in school	- 27.6%	- 19%	+ 28.6%	- 6%	+ 22%	+ 66%
3. I think writing is interesting.	+10.3%	Same	+ 14.3%	+ 9%	- 4%	+ 56%
4. I have confidence in writing in English	+51.8%	- 10.8%	+ 57.1%	+19%	+ 35%	+ 47%

Comparison of the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire results on students' writing habits in the 6 schools

1.2 Writing habits

Statements	Increase (+) or decrease (-) in percentage of students who strongly agree or agree to the statements in the post-questionnaire in comparison with that in the pre-questionnaire					
	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1. It is easy for me to get ideas for writing	+ 13.8%	- 21.6%	+ 28.6%	+ 4%	+ 25%	+ 60%
2. It is easy for me to organize ideas	+ 48.3%	- 12.5%	+ 14.3%	+ 29%	+ 38%	+ 50%
3. I often plan before writing..	+ 58.6%	- 13.5%	+ 42.9%	+ 22%	+ 9%	+ 40%
4. I often write drafts.	+ 82.7%	+ 8.1%	+ 28.6%	+ 25%	+ 39%	+ 88%
5. I often revise the drafts.	+ 61.9%	- 10.8%	+ 57.1%	+ 26%	+ 38%	+ 88%
6. I often edit the drafts.	+ 72.5%	- 5.5%	+ 57.1%	+ 50%	+ 44%	+ 94%
7. I know how to get ideas.	+ 27.6%	- 8.1%	+ 57.1%	+ 27%	+ 38%	+ 60%
8. I know how to plan before writing.	+ 31.1%	- 19%	+ 42.9%	+ 28%	+ 22%	+ 59%
9. I know how to organize ideas.	+ 62.1%	- 8.1%	+ 28.6%	+ 41%	+ 46%	+ 66%
10. I know how to draft.	+ 55.2%	+ 13.5%	+ 28.6%	+ 63%	+ 34%	+ 82%
11. I know how to revise the draft.	+ 48.3%	- 2.7%	+ 14.3%	+ 22%	+ 44%	+ 69%
12. I know how to edit the draft.	+ 48.3%	- 13.5%	+ 28.6%	+ 43%	+ 35%	+ 94%
13. I know how to write stories in English.	+ 48.3%	+ 13.5%	+ 42.9%	+ 45%	+ 30%	+ 51%
14. I know how to do free writing.	+ 13.8%	- 21.6%	Same	+ 50%	+ 41%	+ 66%
15. I know the strategies to write a complete piece of writing by myself.	+ 6.9%	- 6%	+ 57.1%	+ 34%	+ 57%	+ 59%

Appendix 2

Table 2.1 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch A

	Content(20 marks)	Organization (10 marks)	Language(20 marks)	Total marks)	Average(50 marks)
Pre-test	2.4	0.7	1.2		4.3
Post-test	10.4	4.4	9.5		24.3
Increase	8	3.7	8.3		20

Table 2.2 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch B

	Content(20 marks)	Organization (10 marks)	Language(20 marks)	Total marks)	Average(50 marks)
Pre-test	3.1	0.9	2.5		6.5
Post-test	7.8	2.7	7.4		17.9
Increase	4.7	1.8	4.9		11.4

Table 2.3 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch C

	Content (20 marks)	Organization (10 marks)	Language (20 marks)	Total Average (50 marks)
Pre-test	0	0	0	0
Post-test	1.6	0.4	2.4	4.4
Increase	1.6	0.4	2.4	4.4

Table 2.4 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch D

	Content (20 marks)	Organization (10 marks)	Language (20 marks)	Total marks)	Average(50 marks)
Pre-test	5.15	2.06	2.34		9.78
Post-test	6.43	3.47	3.69		13.88
Increase	1.28	1.41	1.35		4.1

Table 2.5 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch E

	Content (20 marks)	Organization(10 marks)	Language(20 marks)	Total Average(50 marks)
Pre-test	4.34	1.3	1.68	7.24
Post-test	6.31	3.14	3.15	12.83
Increase	1.97	1.84	1.47	5.59

Table 2.6 Comparison of the class average marks in pre and post tests of Sch F

	Content (20 marks)	Organization (10 marks)	Language (20 marks)	Total marks	Average (50 marks)
Pre-test	5.44	2	3.75		11.38
Post-test	7.95	4	4.78		16.72
Increase	2.51	2	1.03		5.34

Appendix 3**Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School A**

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=29)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing * using spider web	0	29
- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	29
- Write drafts	0	29
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	29
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	29

Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School B

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=37)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing using spider web	0	37
- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	35
- Write drafts	0	37
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	33
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	34

Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School C

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=7)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing *using spider web	0	6

- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	3
- Write drafts	0	7
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	4
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	5

Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School D

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=32)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing *using spider web	0	32
- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	32
- Write drafts	0	32
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	32
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	32

Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School E

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=38)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing *using spider web	0	38
- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	19
- Write drafts	0	38
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	38
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	38

Comparison of the observation record in pre and post tests of School F

	No. of pupils who used the strategy (N=29)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
- Brainstorm ideas before writing *using spider web	0	32
- Organise ideas *using story planner	0	32
- Write drafts	0	32
- Revise the draft *using revision checklist	0	32
- Editing the draft *using editing checklist	0	32

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