Malay Language Learning Innovation in Enhancing Essay Writing Performance

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Abstract

This study aimed to get information about essay writing using the Frog Virtual Learning Environment (VLE Frog). A total of 60 samples of Form Four students in Kuala Lumpur Technical School were selected and divided into experimental group and control group. Quasi-experimental study was conducted to see the performance in essay writing, grasping the main idea and amplifying the contents. Results of t-test analysis in the post-test indicated that the ratio of the total marks for the experimental group and the control group showed significant differences in the t (58) = 3.219, p <0.05. Meanwhile, finding analysis in grasping the main idea in post-test did not show a significant different which is t (58) = 1.287, p<0.05. Results of t-test analysis essay content amplification between the two groups have shown that there was a significant difference in treatment between the two groups of contents at t (58) = 4.264, p <0.05 In conclusion, the use of VLE Frog in teaching essay writing has proven to be more effective than teaching by using traditional teaching methods even though grasping the essay content has less impact on the students' achievement. Hence, the findings of this study may encourage the teachers to adapt teaching VLE Frog in essay writing and student will be more interested in writing essays.

Keywords: Performance enhancement, essay writing, Frog VLE (Frog Virtual Learning Environment), traditional teaching method, essay content

Introduction

The *use* of *computers* in teaching and learning (TnL) *has been widely accessed and* accelerated in the classroom. This is confirming to the goal of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) which aims for Malaysia world-class education. Internet technology has changed the lives of community and society around the world in various fields such as education, economy, politics, social and so on. The Internet usage has been growing from time to time (Noraini, 2010). One of the fields that is growing in the internet era is virtual learning.

The virtual learning environment is an internet-based that builds to connect the community members and enable them to talk and collaborate in a task or project. All community members that have been involved in the virtual learning environment need to have a computer and can access online from anywhere. Community members can actively engage by exchanging views on future developments, sharing views on the implementation of certain policies or discussing the progress of their tasks.

Frog's Virtual Learning Environment (Frog VLE) is a web-based learning system that mimics the real learning by integrating the conventional education concepts with virtual methods. For example, teachers can give assignment and test, and check the assignments virtually, meanwhile, students can submit the assignments and check their marks through Frog VLE. Besides, parents can communicate with the school board. While, school administrators can manage school calendars and post the school notice via the internet.

Through Frog VLE, education is no longer limited to the traditional classrooms. Learning can be done anywhere and anytime. This easy-to-use Frog VLE system allows students and teachers to find almost everything in the internet (videos, photos, educational materials) and develops it into an attractive site without a need for any technical expertise. Frog VLE is also a gateway to abundant teaching resources and quality apps across the web, in which all of it can be access in a safe and filtered environment.

Consistent with the Malaysian Education Development Plan (MEDP) 2013 to 2025, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) introduced the Frog Virtual Learning Environment or Frog VLE and has expanded the technology to increase the level of education and prepare the students with some necessary skills. Besides that, all teachers receive 4GB of Internet access together with highly effective gadgets. It is a world-class learning platform and accessing to the resources and technology is in line with the growth and development of electronic media and mass communication.

Problem Statement
Essay writing is a difficult part for students to get high score in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination especially for poor students. According to Awang, (2004) write-up work is rather complex and it is a professional work. While, according to Mahzan, (2008) writing activity is considered to be a difficult and challenging activity for a student's ability. Student's lack of interest in writing essay is due to their inability to highlight the content and elaborate the contents.

Writing activity is also a complex high-level thinking activity that reflects the feeling imagination, perception, mind level and cognitive level of the author and is regarded as one of the most difficult language skills. Weakness in writing may as result of students do not have thinking skills, lack of existing knowledge and less effective learning management. According to Mohd. Khir & Marzukhi (2009), majority of the students cannot write the essays well and accurate, and meet the requirements of the questions within the prescribed time frame. In addition, most of the students are not able to display meaningful content, do not have a broad knowledge on the essay topic and not able describe the content clearly and accurately. They are also not able to provide accurate or clear evidence and examples for each content.

Perhaps, this phenomenon happens due to lack of reading high-quality materials among students and they get less exposure to methods of writing paragraphs for a quality essay. The situation shows that if the students are weak to master the writing skills, they will not able to write a good essay and present the ideas effectively. Therefore, by using Frog VLE, teachers can upload the materials or issues that to be written in a writing essay. Besides that, students also will have the knowledge before writing an essay. The outcome will absolutely coincide with the requirements of the requested questions and themes. The use of computers especially Frog VLE in TnL writing essay can help the students producing essays that meet the requirements of SPM exam.

The recommended teaching strategies should be emphasized, so that students able to interact and master the learning skills through their own experiences. The reality is that senior teachers often ignore the use of teaching aids as compared to the teachers who have just been completed teaching practice (Mahzan, 2008). Consequently, this creativity can help the teachers to make the TnL process more fun, cheerful and effective (Abdul Rasid, Martini, & Azhar, 2017).

Research Objectives
Generally, this study is aimed to examine the effectiveness of learning using Frog VLE to improve the writing performance. While, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1) Identify the difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test score of essay writing performance between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG).
2) Determine that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test of grasping the main idea in essay writing as a whole between EG students and CG students.
3) Determine that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test of essay content amplification level between EG students and CG students.

Research Hypothesis
Alternative hypotheses were selected for this study to analysing students' performance in essay writing by using Frog VLE. The study was conducted based on six alternative hypotheses as follows:

Ha1: There is a significant difference between the mean of the EG pre-test score and the mean of the CG's pre-test score.
Ha2: There is a significant difference between the mean score of EG post-test and the mean of CG post-test score.
Ha3: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in grasping the main idea.
Ha4: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG post-test and CG post-test in grasping the main idea.
Ha5: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in amplifying the essay content
Ha6: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG post-test and CG post-test in amplifying the essay content

Research Methodology

This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of Frog VLE on students' essay writing. The study utilizes a quasi-experimental design in order to determine the effect of dependent variables on independent variables. Quasi-experimental design does not involve random distribution (Noraini, 2010). According to Chua (2016), quasi-experimental design is used in a condition of the experimental design is conducted when the respondent group are not randomly assigned, whereby, these two groups of respondents are unbalanced and have no identical characteristics. Therefore, this study uses the quasi-experimental design because the research samples are based on the existing class without random assignments (Zamri & Abdull Sukor, 2009). This situation occurs as the researcher takes the respondent from the existing class in facilitating the TnL.

The application of pre-test and post-test are to determine the effectiveness of Frog VLE's usage in students' essay writing. Experimental method identifies as the most suitable method to obtain information of independent variable impact on dependent variables. The pre-test is piloted before conducting the study while the post-test is held after several TnL sessions by using Frog VLE and traditional methods. The study sample was chosen by the researcher because the quasi-experimental design is about a non-random group(Chua, 2016).

The study was conducted on form four students at a secondary school in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. Respondents are among male and female students. It involves 60 students who are among good and average achievers based on the preliminary examination who got B, C and D in Malay language subjects. The respondents were divided into two groups; 30 EG and 30 CG.

The researchers have developed a research instrument to be used known as the pre-test and post-test question as well as essay test questions. The selected test title corresponds to the Malay language syllabus. The essay topics for each teaching session are equal for EG and CG. The researchers have conducted four times teaching sessions for each group. Each teaching session took place within 2 periods of Malay language lesson. The data obtained in the pre-test and post-test were analysing by using SPSS version 21.0.

Research Findings
Respondent Demographics

The researchers have gathered some information regarding respondent's background as references to make a finding justification. As such, the researchers have concluded the findings based on the tables below. The experimental group (EG) consists of 14 (47%) male students and 16 (53%) female students. The control group (CG) consists of 17 (57%) male students and 13 (43%) female students.

The achievement of Malay subjects during the first year examination was B, C, D and E. The respondents from KE; 4 persons (13.3%) received grade B, while 11 (36.7%) got grade C, 10 (33.3%) got grade D and only 5 persons (16.7%) got grade E. For KK, a total of 8 persons (26.7%) received grade B, 18 (60%) got grade C, 3 (10%) got grade D and only 1 person (3.3%) got grade E. It can be concluded that the respondents of EG and CG more or less are having similar grade which is between grade C and D of 70% for both groups.

H_a1: **There is a significant difference between the mean of the EG pre-test score and the mean of the CG's pre-test score.**

Table 1:
The difference mean score of EG pre-test and CG's pre-test

Group	mean	diff	SD	t value	P
Experiment	53.90		9.33		
Control	57.23	3.33	6.30	1.621	.111

P<0.05

Table 1, shows the difference mean score for overall writing essay of EG and CG pre-test. The mean score for EG is 53.90 and SD = 9.33 (N = 30). While KK mean score is 57.23 and SD = 6.30 (N = 30). The comparison of mean between EG and CG shows no significant difference with t value (58) = 1.621, p <0.05. Result shows that a significant value of .111 is greater than the significant level .05. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the mean of the EG pre-test score and the mean of the CG's pre-test score. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

H_a2: There is a significant difference between the mean score of EG post-test and the mean of CG post-test score.

Table 2:
The difference mean score of KE post-test and KK post-test

Group	mean	diff	SD	t value	P
Experiment	64.33	6.08			
Control	59.13	5.20	6.42	3.219	.002

P<0.05

Table 2 shows the mean score for the overall writing essay of EG and CG in post-test level. Based on the table, the finding shows that mean score of EG is 64.33 and SD = 6.08 (N = 30). While CG mean score is 59.13 and SD = 6.42 (N = 30). The comparison of two mean between EG and CG shows a significant difference with t value (58) = 3.219, p <0.05. Result shows a significant value of .002 is smaller than the significant level .05. Thus, there was a significant difference between the mean score of the EG and CG post-test. As such, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The finding clearly showed that the use of traditional methods did not help to increase student scores. Therefore, teachers need to use more appropriate teaching approach besides the traditional teaching to ensure that essay writing skill is improving. It is evident that the teaching using Frog VLE is an effective and suitable method for students.

H_a3: **There is a significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in grasping the main idea.**

Table 3:
The difference mean of EG main idea pre-test and CG main idea pre-test

Group	mean	diff	SP	t value	P
Experiment	2.167		.379		
Control	2.133	.034	.346	.356	.723

$P<0.05$

Table 3 above shows the comparing of mean for EG and CG main ideas at the pre-test level. Mean for grasping the main idea for EG is 2.167, meanwhile, the mean of grasping the main idea for CG is 2.133. There is only a small difference in grasping the main ideas for both groups. Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in grasping of main idea aspects for EG and CG at pre-test level when t (58) = .356, p <0.05. As a result, there was no significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in grasping the main idea. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

H$_a$4: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG post-test and CG post-test in grasping the main idea.

Table 4:
The difference mean of EG main idea post-test and CG main idea post-test

Group	mean	diff	SD	t value	P
Experiment	2.267		.450		
Control	2.133	.134	.346	1.287	.203

$P<0.05$

Based on Table 4 above, it shows the comparing of mean for EG and CG main ideas at the post-test level. Mean for grasping the main idea for EG is 2.267, meanwhile, the mean of grasping the main idea for CG is 2.133. There is only a small difference in grasping the main ideas for both groups. Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in grasping the main idea aspects for EG and CG at post-test level when t (58) = 1.287, p <0.05. So, there was no significant difference between the mean of EG post-test and CG post-test in the main idea. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

The conclusion suggested that the traditional teaching or the use of Frog VLE is just the same as because of using both methods enable the students to grasp the main idea aspects. The sample of this study was good and average students, therefore, the sample did not have the problem of expressing the main idea in Malay language essay writing.

H$_a$5: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in amplifying the essay content

Table 5:
The difference mean of amplifying essay content pre-test EG and CG

Group	mean	diff	SD	t value	P
Experiment	2.667		.758		
Control	3.000	-.333	. 525	-1.980	053

$P<0.05$

Table 5 above shows the comparison mean analysis of EG and CG in amplifying the content at pre-test level. The analysis has shown that EG respondents obtained mean 2.667, while CG respondents obtained mean 3.000 and mean difference was -3333. The t-test analysis indicates significant levels p = <0.05, t (58) = -1.980, p <0.05. The finding has shown that the significant value of mastery aspect of content amplification is .053 greater than the significant level of 0.05. So it is clear that there was no significant difference between the mean of EG pre-test and CG pre-test in amplifying the essay content. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

H$_a$6: There is a significant difference between the mean of EG post-test and CG post-test in amplifying the essay content

Table 6:
The difference mean of amplifying essay content post-test EG and CG

Group	mean	diff	SD	t value	P
Experiment	3.500			.509	
Control	2.933	.567		.521	4.264 .000

P<0.05

Table 6 above shows the comparison mean analysis of EG and CG in amplifying the content at post-test level. The analysis has shown that EG respondents obtained mean of 3,500, while CG respondents obtained mean of 2.933 and a mean difference of .567. The t-test analysis result showed significant level p = <0.05, t value (58) = 4.264, p <0.05. This finding shows that the significant value of amplification profiency aspects of .000 is smaller than the significant level of 0.05. So it is clear that there was a significant difference in content amplification profiency between EG and CG in post-test. As such, an alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The finding showed that the respondents of the experimental group were able to make interesting amplification when using Frog VLE as because the students be able to search various materials from google. The material obtained can stimulate the mind of the students to remember the material with the existing knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusion
Discussion
Based on the finding of the study, the use of Frog VLE in teaching essay writing part B has a positive effect on the students specifically to the writing performance as a whole. After students were given teaching treatment using Frog VLE in four TnL sessions, there was a significant difference in overall writing performance for post-test. It is evident that TnL by Frog VLE enables students to produce better essay after practicing some exercises. The finding showed that the use of Frog VLE does not really help students in mastering the main idea. It was showing that that there is no significant difference in both pre-test and post-test for both groups. Students are still weak to grasp the main idea. It is hard for student to point out the main idea that coincides with the question's need. Whereas, the finding related to interesting amplification requires the students to have the knowledge and available experiences in essay writing. Not all students are able to produce interesting essays (Gagne, Wager, Golas, Keller, & Russell, 2005). The finding of this study showed that the use of Frog VLE can help students in producing interesting essay amplification. Even though the pre-test did not show any

significant different, but post-test has shown that there is a significant different. The students who were using Frog VLE are able to amplify the essay content properly.

This matter has been explained in the study of Abdul Rasid, Shamsudin, & Norzila, (2011) after the teaching of KOMSAS text that carried out over the experimental group, students able to generate ideas for producing good essays, whereas, previously the students not able to amplify the content by expanding and developing the content accordingly.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, essay writing is a very important part in TnL of Malay Language at school. Writing skills can be improved by mastering the essay writing. The use of Frog VLE that has been launched on March 2012 and allowed to access by stages can help the teachers to improve students' proficiency in TnL at school. Teachers need to be creative in adapting the use of Frog VLE in TnL essay writing. It's used has helped the students be competent in amplifying essay content and finding the main idea of essay writing. Indirectly, it can motivate students to produce a quality essay.

Overall, the use of Frog VLE is able to upgrade the performance of students' Malay language essay writing. However, the use of Frog VLE is still not fully utilized due to time constraints and technical problems in their respective schools. The school administrators also seem to give less emphasis to Frog VLE usage among teachers. It is recommended that the use of Frog VLE should be fully implemented by teachers to ensure students' achievement in the future with the strong support from the Ministry of Education Malaysia.

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