

Teaching Story Prompt Writing through WH-Questions Cube among Year 5 Students

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Abstract

Today's education field in Malaysia has undergone various transformations in line with progressive global educational trends. Henceforth, revolution of teaching and learning styles, methods and approaches are essential to ensure that students' learning, skills and thinking are optimized and concurrently nurture motivated and confident learners starting from primary school level. Numerous studies on teaching and learning writing had highlighted that it is one of the most challenging skills to be mastered in English language. With respect to this, this study aims to explore the necessity of incorporating WH-Foldable Cube to facilitate expansion of ideas in teaching story prompt lessons. WH-Foldable Cube is a writing learning strategy which emphasised on expansion of ideas through the use of question words to facilitate generation of ideas in writing story prompt. Expansion of ideas becomes less strenuous through students' engagement with the question words that are used in the WH-Foldable Cube template to stimulate their thinking about the pictures stimulus given. The data were collected using writing tasks and interview which were administered among five Year 5 students in SK Parish, a sub-urban school in Balingian district. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the use of WH-Foldable Cube had positive impacts towards their story prompt writing to generate and expand their ideas. This research also highlighted the potential use of WH-Foldable Cube to expand students' motivation and confidence in their learning.

Keywords: WH-Foldable Cube, Story Prompt Writing, Expansion of Ideas, Generation of Ideas

Introduction

Writing skill has always regarded as one of the challenging yet essential skills to be taught and learned. This skill is considered as vital in conveying and sharing ideas in a non-verbal way. Ashbaugh, Johnstone & Warfield (2002 in Javed, Nazli & Wu, 2013) emphasized that even native speakers often confronted challenges to acquire this skill. Teacher and students often perceive

that mastering writing skill requires attainment of vocabulary, spelling, grammar and continuous effort in reading. Hence, deficiency in one of these areas is often viewed as a factor that may hinder learners to write. In line with Malaysia's education aspiration under Educational Development Plan 2013-2025, today's education highlights on the need to ensure every student reach their fullest potential in literacy and numeration aspects. This aspiration denotes that students are expected to master these aspects at the end of their schooling which eventually contribute to their survival in their everyday life. As Malaysia's second language, teaching and learning writing skill in English often imposes challenges to teachers and students particularly in expansion of ideas aspect which often determine the quality of writing. Fareed, Ashraf and Bilal (2016) stated that lack of ideas among learners often influences their writing skills which indicated that ability to expand ideas will upgrade their writing quality. Miftah (2015) elaborated that obtaining ideas to write has become their main problem to solve in given writing activity. Miftah (2015) further elaborated in his research that teacher has to supplement students with ample opportunities to acquire strategies to help them generating their ideas. Kartawijaya (2018) on the other hand affirmed that difficulty in organizing and developing ideas are two factors that contribute to difficulty in writing paragraph. With respect to teaching writing, expansion of ideas often hinders learners to produce meaningful writing and successfully conveying their intended messages. Thus, continuous efforts in elevating students' potential in mastering writing skill should be continuously conducted to ensure that the learning process is not influenced by their perspectives towards learning this skill. Teachers should continuously pursuing suitable alternatives that match learners' learning style to uplift their motivation and learning spirit as there are still no particular alternatives used by teachers to teach sub-urban upper primary school pupils in expanding their ideas. Therefore, this article aims to fulfill this gap by determining appropriate teaching and learning strategy to enhance students' writing. This article will present in detailed the relationship between the use of Wh-Questions Cube with story prompt writing.

Literature Review

Definition of Writing

Scholar such as Nunan (1991 as cited in Durga & Rao, 2018) defined writing as a mental activity which has complex nature that demands a writer to master elements of format, vocabulary, sentence structure, contents, letter formation and spelling with respect to sentence construction. Cornford (2002 as cited in Tay, 2013) referred to two crucial processes of elaboration and organization which are involved in cognitive activity as stated by Arnold, Thio, McDaniel, Umanath, Reilly and Mars (2017) in their research on understanding the process of learning to write. With regard to elaboration process, it is pertinent in writing process as gives more value to the writing by demanding writers to make connection of new information with previous knowledge. In relation to writing process as a mental activity, Huy (2015) highlighted on acquisition of strategies, basic skills, skills to coordinate multiples processes and knowledge. On the other hand, ability in writing is also being reflected in writing correct and meaningful sentences as emphasized by Javed, Wu and Nazli (2013). In relation to this opinion, Klimova (2013) stressed on the five procedures which are pertinent to support writing skills mastery which focused on objectives, planning, take into account the layout and structure of writing and finalized by revising the final product.

Approaches of Teaching Writing

The power of suitable approaches in teaching specific skills is undeniable impactful towards the final outcome. Process approach and product approach are the two approaches in teaching writing proposed by Klimova (2015); Pragasam et al., (2018); Pihie, Dahiru, Basri, & Hassan, (2018) in which she underlined that text is merely as a comparison tool meanwhile the writer's ideas are the main essence of the writing. Convincing ideas are strongly related to a writer's ability to be creative; hence allow meaningful messages to be conveyed successfully (Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014). Bayat (2014) stated that process writing is an approach that emphasizes the role of teacher as facilitator and a writer has total control in planning, identifying problems and finding solutions to the problems (Kim & Kim 2005 as cited in Mehr, 2017). In contrary to product approach, this approach concentrates on the mastery of writing processes which are pre-writing, drafting, evaluating and revising (Rusinvoci 2015 as cited in Mehr, 2017). Ghufon (2016) on the other hand elaborated product approach as a method that involves familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing as well as free writing. Palpanadan, Salam & Ismail (2014) further elaborated that this approach is advantageous in solidify learner's linguistic accuracy through grammatical and lexical errors as benchmark's components. Murray (as cited in Pramila, 2017) on the contrary stated that this approach which demands learners to adopt the same structure and format may hinder their creativity in writing. Genre approach is also another approach that is often implemented in teaching writing which highlights the importance of goal-achievement, writing style and readers (Dirgeyasa, 2016). This approach adopts three writing processes which are planning, drafting, publishing and contemplates on other factors which are purposes, audiences, and aspects of social context (Kim, Osman, Ahmad, Thai & Kiumarsi, 2016). In addition to these factors, Dirgeyasa (2016) further emphasized on three phases that writer has to go through in adopting this genre approach which are modeling, deconstruction and language understanding.

Writing Strategies to Improve Learners' Achievement

Determining suitable writing strategies to be implemented considering various factors is an intricate and challenging step for a teacher. Various factors have to be taken into consideration such as verifying learners' level of proficiency in order to establish the most appropriate writing strategy used (Maarof & Murat, 2013). Prior to level of proficiency, scholars such as Zamel (1983 as cited in Maarof & Murat, 2013) pointed out that teacher may realize that skilled learners tend to set time to conduct writing processes in organized steps meanwhile less proficient learners demonstrate less commitment and effort due to indistinct goals setting. With respect to writing strategies, Lili (2015) has highlighted on guided writing strategy which can be adopted by teacher to facilitate learners' learning process and eventually achieve their learning goals. This strategy which emerged from Lev Vygotsky (1978) scaffolding concept will benefit the learners in term of development of learning ability and confidence over time (Scrivener 2002 as cited in Lili, 2015). In relation to this, scholars such as Okasha and Hamdi (2014) further underlined on expansion of ideas as one of the writing strategies to facilitate learning process through use of question words. Hayes and Berninger (2010 as cited in Crossley, Muldner & McNamara, 2016) proposed that expansion of ideas can be an issue for children in writing; thus suggests that the use of questions words is an advantageous alternative to promote flows and connection of ideas.

Methodology

This study involves mixed-method approach which aims to explore the effects of WH-Foldable Cube as an intervention towards story prompt writing among the selected participants. The students are randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. Both groups are given pre-test and post-test; in which the post-test will be administered after treatment is given to the experimental group. The students' marks in pre-test and post-test are recorded and permits the teacher to determine the difference in both groups given the experimental group are taught using the WH-Foldable Cube as intervention. WH-Foldable Cube is used in ten intervention sessions with the experimental group students. The students are taught how to use the Cube to generate more ideas using the questions words of What, How, When, Where, Who and Why in writing their story prompt. The content of the writing will be evaluated based on expansion of ideas and richness of the writing content.

Participants for this study consist of 10 intermediate level Year 5 students from SK Parish, Balingian; a sub-urban school in Mukah district. The participants were selected through purposive sampling as this study requires the samples that are related to the focus of the study. The participants consist of mixed-ability students with intermediate level English proficiency in which they need guidance in comprehending and producing the language. The five participants in the experimental group received ten treatment lessons with duration approximately within one month.

All the ten students were required to sit for the pre-test before the treatment phase and post-test after the treatment. Only the five participants in the experimental group were involved in the treatment sessions. The students' scores in pre-test and post-test were recorded and analyzed. Unstructured interview was administered among the students in the experimental group to gain their feedback on the use of WH-Foldable Cube in story prompt writing tasks. Unstructured interview was chosen as it allows the researcher to have better understanding of the students' responses as well as create more comfortable environment for interview. This type of interview also helps to break communication gap between the researcher and the students in which helps to create a very interactive way of communication.

The result of the interview was recorded and transcribed before being analysed using thematic analysis focusing on seven elements of advantages of using WH-Foldable Cube. Through thematic analysis, researcher was able to analyse the qualitative data by recognising themes that emerged in the collected data.

Findings and Result

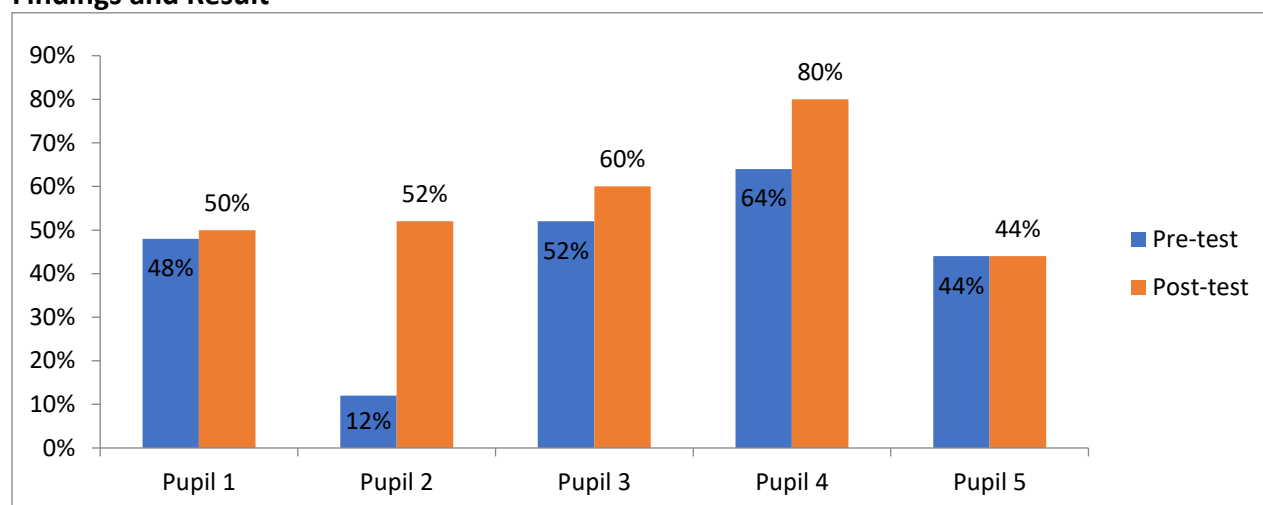


Figure 1. Summary of pre-test and post-test results of control group

Figure 1 above displays summary of pre-test and post-test results of the five pupils in the control group. Pupil 1 had shown 2% of improvement in the post-test in which the marks had increased from 48% to 50%. The 2% improvement proved that Pupil 1 did not show prominent changes of improvement in her writing. Pupil 2 on the other had shown 40% of improvement in which her mark had increased remarkably from 12% in pre-test to 52% in post-test. Based on her pre-test result which was the lowest among the five pupils, her post-test result confirmed that Pupil 2 had shown the highest improvement. Pupil 3 had obtained 52% in the pre-test and 60% in her post-test. Pupil 3 had proved that she was able to improve her writing by 8%. It is worth noted as well that Pupil 4 was among the pupils that had improved in her writing. The increase in her pre-test from 64% to 80% in the post-test proved that Pupil 4 had shown the highest score for post-test among the participants. This result implied that the result was influenced by her motivation in learning. On the other hand, Pupil 5 had retained the same mark for her pre-test and post-test in which she obtained 44% for both test. Hence, it can be assumed that Pupil 5 showed static improvement in her writing.

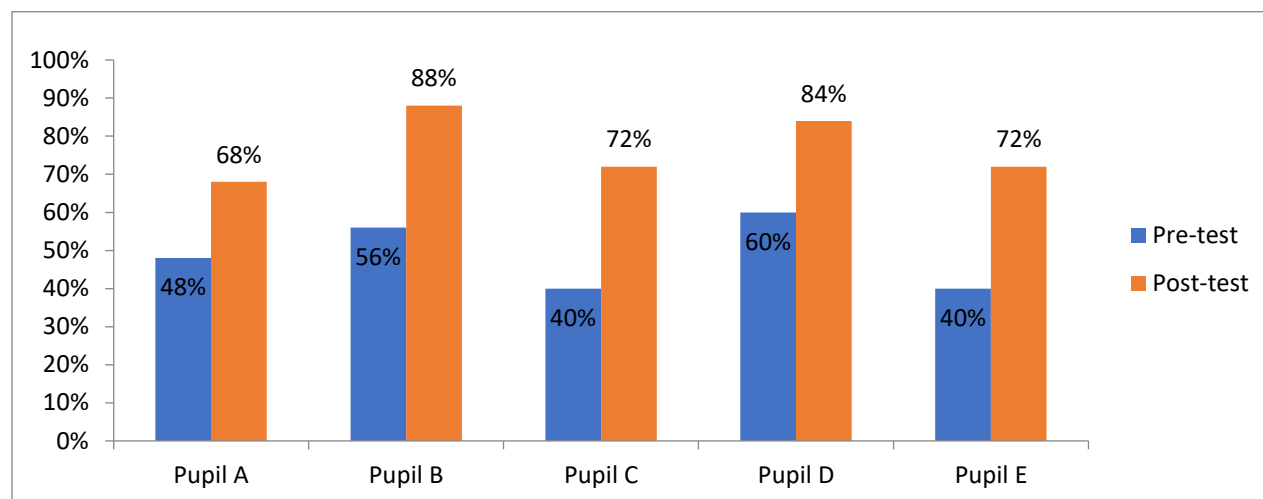


Figure 2. Summary pre-test and post-test results of experimental group

Figure 2 above depicts pre-test and post-test result of the experimental group. Pupil A had obtained 48% in her pre-test and 68% in the post-test. Her 20% of improvement proved that her writing performance had improved throughout the intervention period. Pupil B on the other hand had scored 56% in her pre-test and 88% in the post-test. Pupil B had showed 33% of improvement in her writing performance which indicated that the use of WH-Foldable Cube had showed positive impact towards her writing. Pupil C on the other hand had obtained 40% in his pre-test and improved by 32% in his post-test. His score of 72% in his post-test confirmed that Pupil C was able to use the WH-Foldable Cube effectively to improve his story prompt writing. With respect to Pupil D, she had scored 60% and 84% in her pre-test and post-test respectively. Pupil D had improved by 24% which indicated that she was able to upgrade her writing performance throughout the intervention sessions. It was worth noted as well that Pupil E had scored 40% in her pre-test and 72% in the post-test. Pupil E had improved by 32% which made her among the participants that showed second highest improvement.

Based on Figure 1 and Figure 2, it can be deduced that the participants in the experimental group showed more prominent improvement in story prompt writing compared to the control group. Pupil 2 and Pupil 4 were the two participants with the highest percentage of improvement which were 40% and 16% correspondingly. Pupil 1 and Pupil 3 showed the second highest percentage of improvement which was 2% and 8% respectively. It should be noted as well that Pupil 5 showed zero improvement in both of the tests. Hence, it can be assumed that not all of the participants in the control group showed consistent improvement. In contrast to experimental group, there were three participants in the group who showed highest percentage of improvement which was 32%. These participants were Pupil B, Pupil C and Pupil E. These participants' improvement was 8% lower than the highest scorer of improvement level in the control group but the number of the participants in the experimental group was more. Pupil A and Pupil D who obtained 20% and 24% of improvement were the second highest scorers in this group in which their percentages were higher compared to the second highest scorers of improvement level in the control group. Apart from that, the absence of participant with static

improvement in experimental group was also another point that proved this group had improved better.

Table 1.

Analysis of unstructured interview

Students	Variables						
	Helps to write story prompt effectively	Helps to expand ideas	Helps to increase motivation level	Helps in ideas organization	Helps in enhancing confidence level	Helps to save time	Helps in better understanding
Pupil 1	/	/	/	/	/		/
Pupil 2	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Pupil 3	/	/	/	/		/	/
Pupil 4	/	/		/	/		/
Pupil 5	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total	5	5	4	5	4	3	4

As portrayed above, the responses on the participants on the use of WH-Foldable Cube in story prompt writing had been analysed based on seven thematic analyses. These elements of thematic analysis were based on the advantages that WH-Foldable Cube as a writing lesson intervention offers.

All of the five students agreed that the use of WH-Foldable Cube assisted them to write their story prompt effectively. The use of the WH-Foldable Cube allowed them to draft their story according to pictures given thus portrays clear focus on each picture. They further elaborated that they were able to plan the flow of their story prompt systematically compared to the conventional method of writing. The draft produced on the WH-Foldable Cube enabled the students to see the suitability of their sentences before proceed writing their story.

On the other hand, all of the students agreed that the incorporating WH-Foldable Cube in story prompt writing tasks also helps them to expand their ideas. They stated that they were able to generate more convincing and creative ideas given the WH-words to guide them. According to these students, the presence of the WH-words necessitated them to choose which one suits the picture and answered the question words. According to Rafika (2014 as cited in Namasivayam,

Singh, Mostafa, Janoory & Abdullah, 2017), questioning is one of the excellent approaches to aid the students in generating ideas for writing.

It is also worth noted that four students agreed that using WH-Foldable Cube also helped to boost their motivation level. The students affirmed that they felt more motivated to learn compared to during conventional lesson as they sensed that it was easier to brainstorm new ideas using the question words. Apart from that, their motivation level was automatically intensified as they were able to notice that their ability to generate creative and convincing sentences improved each time of the session. Ullah, Sagheer, Sattar and Khan (2013) highlighted that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are the two types of motivation that play a role in influencing academic achievement of students. In this context, the students' motivation level was intensified intrinsically in which they felt that gradual achievement is personally rewarding when they perceived their learning helped them to learn, discover and objectify their potentials.

Apart from that, all of the students also responded that they were able to organize their ideas when they used the Cube. According to some of the students, they began to develop ability to arrange their ideas according to the pictures given compared to before using this WH-Foldable Cube in story prompt writing. Arranging ideas accordingly to each picture reflects the student's ability to write sentences with specific focus thus making the sentences meaningful and purposeful. According to Rahim, Rustam, Primsuwan, Amat, Yusof and Tahir (2017), learning to organize ideas before writing is a prerequisite to write longer and much detailed writing.

It was found that four students involved agreed that their confidence level in writing story prompt was also gradually enhanced throughout the treatment sessions. They claimed that they had strong self-assurance in using new vocabularies in their writing. In addition, the students also affirmed that they spent lesser time wondering the content of their writing compared to writing without using the Wh-Foldable Cube template. The process of generating ideas were much easier using the WH-words as guidance hence allow them to spend less time rewriting the draft into a proper form.

In addition to this, four out of five students agreed that the use of WH-Foldable Cube had resulted in better understanding of the writing process of story prompt. According to them, they used to write without planning the story prompt content in the conventional classroom lessons. Nevertheless, the use of WH-Foldable Cube had engaged their mind to ask themselves questions about each picture using the question words. Throughout the process, they had realized that writing story prompt demanded them to constantly ask questions based on the given pictures in order to produce convincing and interesting story. Hence, they agreed that understanding the writing process alone had cultivated their interest to learn using this technique.

It is convenient to consider that this study has significant implications towards teachers, students and other researchers. Teachers should think of various and different range of alternatives when teaching writing to allow students to experience constant learning momentum. Through the implementation of WH-Foldable Cube in teaching story prompt, the students could improve their pace of generating ideas about the pictures given in the writing tasks. In addition to that, this alternative is an appropriate supplementary method to complement the conventional teaching story prompt method as well. Thus, it is recommended that teachers should implement this method of WH-Foldable Cube in teaching story prompt starting from the beginning of Level 2. This will provide the students with ample time to learn and familiarize themselves with the habits

of using this method in writing story prompt. Apart from that, this method is right and proper to cultivate students' learning motivation by gradually building their ability to write and witness their own writing progression over time. Teacher should provide various ranges of possible topic to train the students' skills in using the WH-Foldable Cube. This will aid the students to acquire more vocabulary and use the new words in upcoming tasks.

Students are urged to use the WH-Foldable Cube in their story prompt writing as well in order to cultivate systematic writing habit and promote creative ideas flow in their writing. Students will be able to adopt systematic writing habit over time when they constantly use the WH-Foldable Cube to generate ideas and construct sentences. Furthermore, there is also less chance for students to face writer's block when they are fully guided by the questions words which constantly engaged their mind to ask and give answers to the questions. Students have the opportunity to write various forms of creative ideas using adjectives, adverbs, idioms or phrasal verbs that they have learned. This is an advantageous platform to expose their creativity side and nurture their confidence level to write over time. The WH-Foldable Cube is also beneficial to be used by the students during the examination which helps them to spend less time on generating ideas and able to write convincing creative sentences. This will help them to work smart and hence avoid writing anxiety and panic attack during the examination.

On the other hand, researchers may use this study as reference in order to come up with other related teaching and learning aids to supplement writing lessons. The findings of this study can be used as a beginning point for other researchers who are interested to explore in details the issues that arise from writing problems among primary school students as well.

Conclusion

The implementation of this study had proved that incorporating WH-Foldable Cube in story prompt writing is a good alternative to guide the students towards story prompt writing. The result of the students' story prompt tasks using the WH-Foldable Cube showed positive improvement compared to the same tasks given in their daily lessons in term of ideas expansion. They showed explicit improvement in term of learning motivation, confidence as well as organization and focus of ideas. This method of teaching story prompt is an advantageous alternative to be used by teachers to train students to practice generating ideas in systematic manner before writing story prompt. It is a suitable method to be used in examination as well to facilitate students score better grades for story prompt section which carries the highest mark. Teacher may train the students to master the WH-Foldable Cube template in order for them to picture the template during the examination. This will help them to use their self-made template to answer picture stimulus question in Paper 2. Therefore, this study in summation had proven students' ability in story prompt writing can be elevated using this treatment.

This study also showed that the students involved demonstrated positive attitudes towards story prompt writing through the use of WH-Foldable Cube. In comparison to conventional classroom lesson on story prompt tasks, these students displayed high motivation to learn about using the WH-Foldable Cube and to improve their story prompt writing. They continuously used dictionary to search for words meanings before using the questions words to generate ideas about the pictures given. They showed apparent satisfaction when they were able to use the words given to construct sentences successfully using the WH-Cube as well. Apart from that, the students

became more confident to write as they were able to expand their ideas in relation the pictures given. Most of their written sentences showed clear focus. This result indicated that WH-Foldable Cube is a reliable choice to be used by teachers in elevating students' motivation to polish their writing ability concerning story prompt writing section. Teacher may use this intervention as complementary alternative in their lesson to heighten the students' motivation level especially for intermediate level students whose writing ability can be polished to achieve higher result. It is also important to note that this study was helpful in changing the students' mind-set towards the nature of story prompt writing. Story prompt writing is always regarded as challenging and time-consuming tasks for students; not to mention that constructing correct and meaningful sentences in English as a second language. Thus, it is pertinent to assist struggling students to perceive writing tasks are doable through the help of suitable learning aid to facilitate the process. The implementation of the WH-Foldable Cube had successfully changed the students' perspectives towards the writing tasks as their score had noticeably improved compared to their scores in convention lessons in the classroom. They began to show interest to learn and to discover more about the technique to write story prompt. Consequently, teacher may use this WH-Foldable Cube to alter students' perspectives towards writing tasks especially concerning story prompt writing. By altering students' perspectives that writing task is doable with the use of correct technique, teacher will be able to reduce students' anxiety and thus nurturing their motivation to learn.

Other than that, the use of WH-Foldable Cube was also an effective platform to promote ideas flow hence prevent writer's block which referred to a state of which the writer is failed to think of writing ideas and make progress with their existing writing (Namasivayam, Singh, Mostafa, Janoory & Abdullah, 2017). Writer's block is an often occurred phenomenon among students especially those who are lack in vocabulary as inadequate knowledge on words and meanings can be a big issue for students to start or continue writing. Some of the students usually have minor ideas once they see the pictures given and yet they still need a proper guide to steer their direction. The use of WH-Foldable Cube in this study provides opportunities to the students to train their mind to question and gives answers based on the question words given. As a result, ideas insufficiency can be reduced and their burden to think of ideas can be minimized as well. This result proves that the use of WH-Foldable Cube is a possible option to be used as a catalyst to nurture students' attitude to become more systematic writer. In addition to this, teacher's burden to teach and cultivate efficient writing attitude can be reduced.

In a nutshell, this study highlighted the importance of teacher's role as facilitator in a learning process. Zhou and Brown (2014) emphasized that by learning through a facilitator's guidance, learners' will acquire more learning experiences. Through those experiences, the learners will be able to develop capability as an independent learner as their understanding of the knowledge is solidified. In real life learning context, this learning ability is definitely crucial to build their confidence to learn through the experiences they experienced. In order to provide meaningful learning experiences, teacher has to provide ample possibilities for learners to discover and experiment. Apart from that, it is worth noted that this study also contributed to the understanding that learning experiences can only be gained through the real learning process (Surendi & Puwarno, 2018). The implementation of this study indicated that repetition is an advantageous approach to be used in teaching writing through intervention. Intervention offers

learners repetitious stages of learning which reinforce their knowledge gradually through every session. In addition, this study also shone light on the understanding that learning writing requires series of procedures which trained young learners to be systematic and organize throughout the process. Learners began to learn that each stage is fundamental to be mastered in order to produce convincing writing output.

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