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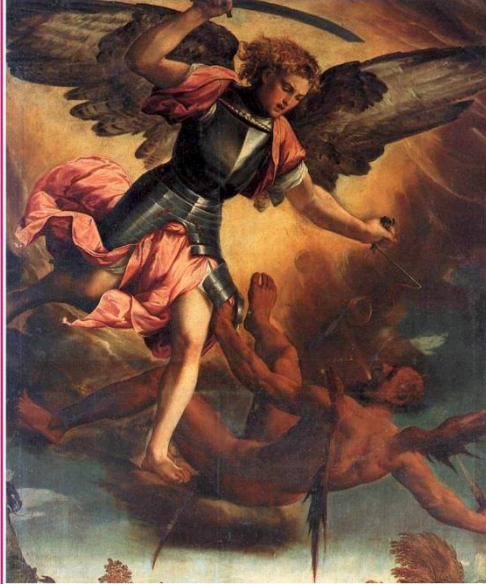
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# The Effects of Collaborative Text Reconstruction on Form 4 Pupils' Narrative Writing

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## Abstract

This case study aimed to explore the effects of collaborative text reconstruction on rural secondary pupils' narrative writing. The research instruments were document analysis, focus group interview, and field notes. The participants were six low English proficiency Form 4 pupils in a rural school located in Sarawak. The data were analysed by applying thematic analysis. The results showed that collaborative text reconstruction enhances the participants' grammar, vocabulary, and content in narrative writing. Participants found that collaborative text reconstruction as one of the most interesting activity to learn narrative writing.

**Keywords:** Collaborative, Text Reconstruction, Narrative Writing, Rural Secondary School Pupils, English Language

## *Los efectos de la reconstrucción de texto colaborativo en la forma 4 pupils '*

### **Resumen**

Este estudio de caso tuvo como objetivo explorar los efectos de la reconstrucción de textos de colaboración en la escritura narrativa de los alumnos de secundaria rural. Los instrumentos de investigación fueron análisis de documentos, entrevistas a grupos focales y notas de campo. Los participantes eran seis alumnos de Form 4 con bajo nivel de inglés en una escuela rural ubicada en Sarawak. Los datos fueron analizados aplicando análisis temático. Los resultados mostraron que la reconstrucción colaborativa de textos mejora la gramática, el vocabulario y el contenido de los participantes en la escritura narrativa. Los participantes encontraron que la reconstrucción de textos de colaboración es una de las actividades más interesantes para aprender la escritura narrativa.

**Palabras clave:** colaboración, reconstrucción del texto, escritura narrativa, alumnos de escuelas secundarias rurales, idioma inglés

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Pupils' writing are reflected through the pupils' achievements in each occasional test and semester examination. Form 4 pupils from a rural school in Song, Sarawak are found to have challenges in achieving good grades in their writing. Pupils are found to be weak in narrative writing. In this study, the researcher employed 21st-century classroom approach to promote collaborative learning in which

collaborative text reconstruction will be used with the objective - to help the pupils' narrative writing. Therefore, the innovation of this study was embarked to obtain in-depth information on the effects of collaborative text construction on Form 4 Sarawak Rural Pupils' Narrative Writing.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

By completing the narrative writing using text reconstruction as an intervention, the pupils are actively involved in their own learning process. This corresponds with constructivist advocators' view, Tobias & Duffy (2009). They believe that when pupils take charge and monitor their own learning process is active learning. Jordan et al. (2008), who is also a constructivist proponent, is convinced that better learning performance is a result of active learning. Constructivists also support that knowledge can be built by the learner instead of entirely passed on from teacher to pupil (Vygotsky, 1978; Heydarian, 2018).

Collaborative text reconstruction was used as the intervention in teaching narrative writing because it allows learners to construct their own cognitive and social understanding through the discussion about narrative writing with their partner. This allows immediate feedback response received from the teacher and peers (Grudtsina et al., 2017; Mwaniki & Ondiek, 2018).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a qualitative research approach particularly a case study. As Babbie (2013) explained that a researcher needs to adopt a qualitative research approach as to enable researchers to observe social life in its natural habitat in order to produce a richer understanding of many social phenomena that can be achieved through other observational methods. For this reason, the qualitative inquiry was chosen rather than a quantitative. Through a case study, the researcher is able to seek the effects of using collaborative text reconstruction on rural low-proficiency pupils in a more in-depth insight.

This case study was conducted in a secondary school located in Song, a rural town of Sarawak, Malaysia which is only accessible by express boats along a river. Six Form Four students (16 years old) from a rural secondary school in Song, Sarawak were selected to participate in this study through purposive sampling due to their averagely low English language proficiency level. The six Form Four students obtained 50 to 55 marks, Grade D in their Form Three Assessment (PT3) written examination. These pupils experienced difficulty in producing grammatically correct simple sentences. Table 1 shows the profile of the six participants of this study.

Participant/ Pseudonyms	Age	Race	Socioeconomic Status	English Proficiency	Language Spoken at
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Given						Home
1/P1	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	
2/P2	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	
3/P3	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	
4/P4	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	
5/P5	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	
6/P6	16	Iban	Low	Low	Iban	

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Profile

Research instruments used for research question one are pre-test and post-test, document analysis and semi-structured focus group interview (FGI). Pre-test and post-test were carried out before and after intervention respectively for comparison of marks. The writing scripts of the participants in both pre-test and post-test were collected for document analysis. The interview was carried out after post-test to get the pupils' thought on the effects of collaborative text reconstruction.

Research question two employed field notes and semi-structured focus group interview. The interview was used to explore the perceptions of the participants in using collaborative text reconstruction in learning narrative writing. Observation was carried out to observe the facial expressions, reactions and participation of the participants during the use of collaborative text reconstruction. The observation was recorded as field notes as Babbie (2013) stated recording observation is regarded as the greatest advantage in the qualitative field research.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings are shown based on the two research questions (RQ) of the study, which are:

1. What are the effects of collaborative text reconstruction on the content, vocabulary and grammar of the rural Form 4 pupils' narrative writing?

2. How does collaborative text reconstruction help to enhance rural Form 4 pupils' narrative writing skills?

Data from pre-test and post-test, document analysis and focus groups semi-structured interview were analysed for RQ1. The result from the pre-test and post-test were shown in Figure 1.

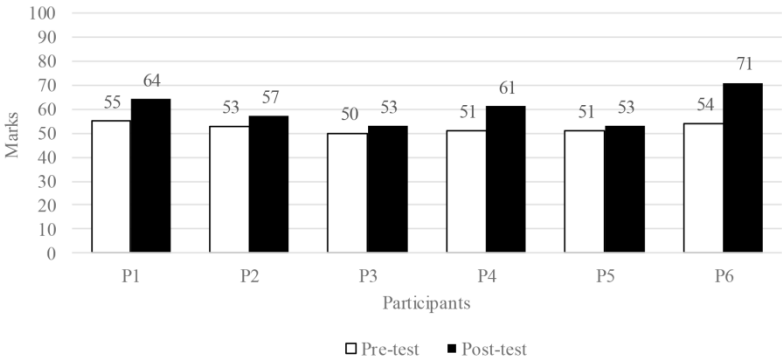


Figure 1: Result of Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and post-test were carried out to investigate the effects of collaborative text reconstruction on Form 4 pupils' narrative writing. All participants showed an overall improvement in the post-test. From



the results, P6 had the most significant increase in marks, which is 17 marks followed by an increase of P4 and P1 who had an increase of 10 marks (51 to 61) and 9 marks (55 to 64) respectively. The rest had slight improvement of a few marks which are 4 marks for P2, 3 marks for P3 and 2 marks for P5. Table 2 showed the difference in marks obtained by the participants (Indriastuti, 2019).

Participant	Pre-Test (100%)	Post-Test (100%)	Difference in Marks
P1	55	64	+9
P2	53	57	+4
P3	50	53	+3
P4	51	61	+10
P5	51	53	+2
P6	54	71	+17

Table 2: Difference in Marks Obtained by Participants

The difference in marks showed an overall improvement of participants in the test. The data had revealed that collaborative text reconstruction had a positive effect on the rural Form 4 pupils' narrative writing. Thematic analysis of the data obtained from document analysis and focus groups semi-structured interview were categorised into three main themes (a) improvement in writing proficiency; (b) improvement in contents in writing; and (c) improve usage of word choice.

Based on the interview responses, interview responses showed that during writing, participants were particularly focused on English language structure, especially in producing grammatically correct simple sentences. Most significant responses were using the correct tense when writing their narrative essay.

“My friends check my grammar and I check my friend’s grammar. I remember to write ‘-ing’ and when to put ‘-s!’.” (P1, FGI)

“I listen to ‘-ed’, past tense and present tense in the recording. I will be careful when I write my essay. We correct each other grammar.” (P4, FGI)

“I can teach my friend about past tense.” (P6, FGI)

Participants’ responses indicated their awareness on the English grammar were increased after the text reconstruction task. This is in accordance with Storch (1998) who claimed that text reconstruction successfully pushed learners in the production of accurate text or passage because text reconstruction is a consciousness-raising (C-R) task that effectively promotes improvements in grammar. The participants were forced to pay close attention to their grammar and sentences while reconstructing the text with only the notes that they had written down. This was due to the participants who wanted to reconstruct the text as similar to the original text. Document analysis showed a decrease in a simple past tense mistake when comparing pre-test with post-test.

“I learn new ideas from my friends and I can discuss with him.” (P2, FGI)

“I got the idea from the task we did that day.” (P4, FGI)

“We have more ideas to write because we exchange ideas together.” (P5, FGI)

“We got some different and some extra ideas to write after discussing.” (P6, FGI)

Participants claimed that by completing the text reconstruction tasks, they were able to discuss ideas in writing with their friends. This showed that participants were actively involved in their own learning process. This is in line with Tobias & Duffy (2009) who believed that active learning means pupils take charge and monitor their own learning process. Response from participant 6 is parallel to Vygotsky (1978) who claimed that knowledge is not solely transmitted from a teacher to a pupil but constructed by the learner himself. As participants were required to brainstorm in pairs for ideas in the tasks, they were actively involved in their own learning process and knowledge was transmitted between participants.

Data showed that Participant 4 utilised idea from the previous task to complete a new task. Document analysis also showed similar ideas that were used on the previous task, appeared in the new text reconstruction task. As every new text reconstruction task was related to previous tasks pupils were able to recall and use ideas that they had learned previously. Pupils work together in pairs as the teacher give guidance and control steps of learning scaffolds. This is parallel to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Krashen's  $i+1$ .

“I can improve my vocabulary. I can learn some vocabulary from my friend that I don't know.” (P1, FGI)

“My friend helps me to get my spelling correctly changed to - I think got, because of I very bad in spelling, my friend helps me to get my spelling correctly. If not usually I don't know.” (P2, FGI)

“I think very well when can work together. I always forgot to use the word. Participant 1 tell me to use this word.” (P5, FGI)

“I always forgot to use the word. Participant 4 tell me to use this word.” (P6, FGI)

Participants’ responses showed that they were actively involved in their own learning process. They were able to understand the task given and discuss with their partner in order to use the correct vocabulary. Collaboration can be seen when participants helped each other in using the correct words for their tasks. Document analysis showed better usage of vocabulary in their narrative writing.

RQ 2 employed thematic analysis of the data obtained from the field notes and focus groups semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis of the data obtained from field note and focus groups semi-structured interview were categorised into three main themes (a) collaborative learning; (b) increase in motivation; and (c) socioeconomic status.

Data from the field note indicated that participants mostly rely on their partners to complete the tasks given. Interview data suggested that cooperation and teamwork played an important role during their tasks. This is parallel to constructivist learning theory that learners to construct their own cognitive and social understanding through the discussion about narrative writing with their partner. As shown by P1, the collaborative text reconstruction allowed immediate feedback response from the partner.

“During the pre-test, I still struggle when want to write words that fit the story essay, I always forgot to use the word until teacher conduct the activity then P2 told me to use this word.” (P1, FGI)

“It was challenging to listen and remember, but it is the teamwork that made everything easier. (P2, FGI)

“Yes, because I can learn to cooperate with my friends when doing this task. If we cooperate, we can get things done faster. (P4, FGI)

“Yes because I learn to work with people not working alone. If I work with people I can get more things, can know more things.” (P6, FGI)

Field note indicated that in this study, participants' affective filter was prompted by motivation. The interview showed that participants were mostly motivated by their peers. The findings showed that collaborative text reconstruction provided a positive learning environment, allowing broad discussion with other participants, and provide an opportunity for unrestricted imaginations on the narrative plot. Data indicated that participants in this study, especially P2, did not experience any uncomfortable feeling towards their partners during the discussion, as they were friends of the same class since the beginning of their secondary school life.

“Uh... I feel that I get more ideas because of my experience during the activity. I get some ideas from my friends during the activity. So, it was easier for me to write.” (P3, FGI)

“I can focus and remember some written words or experiences that can be used in writing a narrative essay. It is because the activity made me and my friend discuss and joke about many things, so I can remember.” (P4, FGI)

“Maybe. If got more activities like this then I will write more, even in SPM I will choose narrative essay. Because this activity helps me see that narrative essay is easy to write. Just need imagination and experience.” (P4, FGI)

“Yes. It’s so fun and easy to catch. Usually the teacher talk only I don’t understand. Now I can understand more and know more words I can use them to write my future narrative essays with fewer problems. (P6, FGI)

Considerations on the suitability of pair work are necessary. This study showed that collaborative text reconstruction works on narrative writing. Other researches had studied on its effect upon other genre essay writing and other grammar consciousness-raising tasks. Educators should refer to more to existing studies to determine which tasks are feasible for collaborative text reconstruction. Educators could also refer to their past lessons and their current pupils’ level to determine the best practice for collaborative text reconstruction.

Text reconstruction task could serve in understanding grammar usage but not language acquisition. It could be used by educators in teaching writing to enable students to understand the importance of the grammar component in writing. The teacher could also use this task to demonstrate the use of certain grammatical items intended to address in students’ writing in class. If the focus is on grammar itself, teachers could also use this task to show the forms of the language in a written context like a holiday plan for future tense. Schools could use it as a remedial task in grammar lessons to help students to understand the

usage. Advanced students would benefit further in understanding grammar usage from text reconstruction.

This study focuses on rural low-proficiency Form 4 pupils. More studies with a longer period are needed on this set of pupils to determine their suitability for collaborative text reconstruction in improving writing. Most of the available studies on collaborative writing and text reconstruction had been conducted on overseas adult learners, undergraduates of ESL or EFL background and higher secondary students. The lack of diversity of local educational levels has to be addressed. More samples are needed to be included in this study as well. Future researches should have more numbers of a similar set of pupils to prove or disprove the result of this study.

More similar studies could also be conducted quantitatively and conducted in another various type of school such as rural primary schools. More writing genres like argumentative and descriptive writing should be researched on. This study deals only with narrative writing. Existing researches have dealt with academic writing and expository writing, particularly in the tertiary level for undergraduates and adult learners. It is recommended that researches on collaborative writing tasks should be carried out onto other genres to investigate the tasks' benefits. This study hopes to contribute to the findings of the effectiveness of collaborative text reconstruction in improving pupils' writing into existing literature.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study has revealed that collaborative text reconstruction has positive effects on low English proficiency students' narrative writing. Participants showed positive emotion, increased in motivation, more focus on grammar items and increase in ideas to write a narrative essay. It is thus important to consider the use of collaborative text reconstruction among low English proficiency students, especially in rural school.

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