Research & development paper

Exploring two teachers' engagement with their students in an online writing environment

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Abstract

Little research in the ESL context has examined the online teaching and learning activities in high schools. One main reason is the lack of appropriate theoretical framework rather than the learners or the environment. Using data from twelve high school students and two teachers from two Malaysian schools, the current study adapted Borup et al.'s framework to identify the teachers' interaction with the students while engaged in the online writing environment. Borup et al. termed the construct as teacher engagement. Findings revealed that the teacher from the urban school was actively engaged in the interactions. However, the interactions of the sub-urban teacher were limited. The implications of this study suggest that teachers who are seen as digital immigrants need to consider the use of technology. Appropriate training and a checklist will be helpful to encourage the adoption of technology by teachers.

Keywords: Online learning, teachers engagement, online community, Web 2.0 tools, social networking.

1. Introduction

Most studies of online writing exclusively focus on higher education, despite initiatives by the government to expand the use of web-based teaching and learning in high schools. A number of researchers provide the reasons behind these difficulties. According to Borup, Graham & Drysale (2014) the limited focus stems from the fact that there is a lack of theoretical framework and theoretical rationale related to high schools.

According to Kimmons (2014), research in high schools is often initiated by the bureaucratic state level or at the hidden local level and restricted by time and space, whereas research at higher education institutions is initiated by professors and has the opportunity for more innovative approaches. Another fundamental challenge is that high school students tend to be less autonomous than students in higher education and thus high school students have more difficulty in succeeding while online (Cavanaugh, Gillan, Kromrey, Hess & Blomeyer, 2004).

Nevertheless, efforts are constantly made to encourage the use of the online environment in the high school through practice and research (Kimmons, 2014) and to identify the critical component of successful online learning programmes (Rice, 2009). The recent focus of high school research was very much of teacher attributes (Information and Communication tools, pedagogical content knowledge, attitudes) and their pedagogical practices to improve the ICT facilitated instructions (Kimmons, 2014).

Teacher's attributes and pedagogical practices in the online learning environment of students in high school is considered critical as students need to fulfil examination requirements and being less autonomous than adult learners (Belair, 2012). According to Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) teachers are as "binding element" (p.96) as students most likely will not succeed without the teachers' close supervision. Therefore understanding the teacher's engagement with the students is essential to provide evidence -based proposals as to how best to promote teachers' engagement in the online environment.

If one agrees that the online environment influences students' learning and the teachers' engagement in turn improves the quality of learning then one would assure that a full understanding of students' learning engagement will require the examining of the teachers engagement which refers to the teachers interactions while guiding students to complete their task.

Thus, this study explores the teachers' engagement on an innovative writing platform designed by the researchers. The platform is to teach narrative writing which is an important component in the Malaysian public examination taken by Year 11 students. Writing has always been an arduous and a laborious task for Malaysian ESL learners. Ong (2013) highlighted that ESL learners frequently worry about what to say or to write, before they can even think of the language to represent their ideas. In other words, generating ideas is the first phase of second language writing, followed by the language used to represent those ideas. The deficiency of ideas coupled with lack of linguistic proficiency are definitely dominant factors contributing to the failure of students in achieving good writing skills of all ages in educational institutions (Ong, 2013). In Malaysia, the setting of this study, ESL learners are able to write but the quality of their writing remains low (Maarof, Yamal & Li 2011). Local researchers (Hiew, 2012; Noreiny et al. 2011) found that students often hand in their first draft as their final draft and fail to produce multiple drafts due to lack of time, space and motivation. As a result students are not able to achieve an acceptable writing proficiency level.

One way to get students to be interested in writing is by providing a virtual "third place" where students have the opportunity to write outside the classroom at their own pace and convenience (Jones, 2012). Students become more tolerant with their imperfect writing with the use of an online writing environment as they are able to revise, edit, delete and paste their writing easily (Minocha & Robert, 2008; Richardson, 2006) before the final essay is submitted. Besides, the importance of the use of online activities and the need for every child to be proficient in English is foregrounded in the Malaysian National Education Blueprint (2013-2025).The blueprint projects the importance of an online environment in schools in order to equip young Malaysians with the skills to face the impact of globalization.

Thus, this study explores the teachers' online interactions while the teachers are engaged in teaching students to complete their online narrative writing tasks. An in-depth understanding of teacher's online interactions is crucial for the successful implementation of pedagogical practices in an online writing environment in the Malaysian context. This study attempts to investigate, interpret and compare the online interactions in an urban and a sub-urban school in the northern region of Malaysia. The theoretical framework for this study has been adapted from Borup et al. (2014) and Garrison et al. (2000).

2. The innovative narrative writing platform

The innovative online platform is motivated by the ideas highlighted by Shulman (2005) that an effective teaching and learning activity is not about the use of technology but rather the pedagogy that can realise the potentials of the technology. This points to the

fact that the pedagogical applications and tools with certain elements of learning are more important than the constant preoccupation with the tools of technology. Educators need to know the potential pitfalls to which students frequently fall victim and need to strategize activities which are more fruitful.

In the current era, Facebook is the most popular social networking site. For this reason, Facebook has been utilised as a writing platform in this study. The teacher's Facebook environment is termed *tutor platform* in which the teacher can upload the instructions, questions, tips suggestions, dateline and model essays. The students' Facebook environment is termed *learner platform*. Students post their individual essays, interact to improve the quality of the essays and finally submit the final essays which are edited and revised essays based on teachers and students' online interactions. Teachers and students can interact in the tutor and learner platforms. The pedagogical practice in this study focused on Labov & Waletzky's (1967) narrative structure. Students are encouraged to interact and collaborate as underpinned by constructivism theory. The uniqueness of this innovative platform lies in the integration of social interactions based on social constructivism theory and Labov & Waltezky's (1967) narrative structure in the Facebook environment.

The researchers argue that, what should be the concern of the educators is how the previous pedagogical practices can be meaningful while meeting the challenges of a newer technology. Such is the evolutionary nature of the tools of technology. Even the present popular social networking tool such as Facebook will become obsolete one day. When the new social networking sites appear, the pedagogical practices and the learning theory that are suggested in this study can be considered in a newer platform.

3. Research Questions

The investigation was guided by three research questions:

1. How do the teachers' online interaction patterns fit Borup et al.'s (2014) framework?

2. What are the differences in teacher engagement by two different teachers?

3. How did the teacher engagement affect students' quality of narrative writing?

4. Theoretical perspectives

This study adapted Garrison et al.'s (2000) teaching presence and Borup et al.'s (2014) teacher engagement frameworks. As noted earlier, the theoretical framework and literature review related to online writing for secondary schools are limited. Murphy and Rodriquez-Manzares (2009) suggested that the Community of Inquiry framework by Garrison et al., which is intended to examine higher education, may be appropriate to be adapted to the secondary school online learning environment. Garrison et al.'s Community of Inquiry Model (CoI) fits ideally with constructivism theory. The model has also been employed to get a better understanding of what is missing when educators and learners are put in an online learning environment (Perry & Edward, 2005). It is an easy yet effective model to illustrate communication (Batruff & Headley, 2009). The CoI model suggests an environment for students to interact, share, receive feedback and learn together. The three important elements of the CoI model are cognitive, teaching and social presences. Cognitive presence "reflects higher order knowledge acquisition and application" (Garrison et al., 2001, p. 11) and is grounded in the critical-thinking literature" and a "focus on higher-order thinking processes" (p. 8). Teaching presence refers to "the design facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes" (Anderson et al., p. 5) and social presence refers to "the salience of the other in interpersonal interactions" (Short, Williams & Christie 1976, p. 65). Social presence

initiates group cohesion, which deepens interactions (Henri, 1992; Garrison et al., 2000).

The three presences are interrelated and Garrison et al. have placed special importance on teaching presence as it is necessary to stabilise the cognitive and social issues in the educational environment (Garrison et al., 2000). Garrison et al.'s initial research work on teaching presence was on the online discussion boards to identify the indicators of teaching presence. They identified three indicators of teaching presence: designing and organizing, facilitating discourse and providing direct instruction. However, an online environment demands more than discussion boards. The work of Shea, Hayes and Vickers (2010) on CoI framework reported that the researchers have been more concerned about the nature and the level of the online discussion and surveys. Also, researchers rarely consider the work of the students and instructors in undergraduate settings (Toth, Amrein-Beardsley & Foulger, 2010). It appears that future research should look at the work of students and instructors instead of looking at the online discussions in the post-graduate settings. Understood this way, there are possibilities to observe the teaching presence in secondary school settings. Borup et al. (2014) constructed a new term called *teacher engagement* which includes a stronger emphasis on teacher presence. Borup et al. acknowledged that the CoI model has partially identified these elements, however, a greater emphasis on these elements are needed in the high school online learning environment. Teacher engagement involves three important elements: nurturing, motivating and monitoring. The reasons behind the chosen term are:

a) to distinguish the new construct from *teaching presence*
b) to use the term *engagement*, which is familiar in the K-12 literature [related to the high school setting]
c) to emphasize caring and committed action that is often required in K-12.The term *presence* is passive (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005)

(Borup et al. 2014, p.795)

In this study, the researchers have also adapted the facilitating discourse element suggested by Garrison et al. (2000). Borup et al.'s facilitating discourse descriptor is not considered as it involves facilitation with parents, between parents and among students which is not applicable in the Malaysian context. Therefore, the current study preferred to adapt facilitating discourse suggested by Garrison et al. (2000) and Borup et al.'s (2014) teacher engagement as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Framework adapted from Borup et al. (2014) and Garrison et al. (2000).

Designing and Organizing	- A mix of individual and group learning activities and establishing a timeline. - Clear instructions, visual, interactive elements and personal examples relevant to students**.**
Facilitating Discourse	- Identify areas of agreement/disagreement - Seek to reach consensus/understanding - Encourage, acknowledge or reinforce student contributions - Establish climate for learning - Involve participants and prompt discussions - Assess the efficacy of the process

Instructing	• Direct instructions
Nurturing	• Maintain a level of care and respect. Prevent online conflict and bullying • Audio communication and topic not directly related to course content
Motivating	• Multi-media praise and incentives to increase student engagement
Monitoring	• Monitor the students management of time and progress towards mastering learning objectives

5. Methodology

In this study, the researchers were keen on discovery and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. Therefore, a qualitative research design was chosen to explore the teachers' engagement. The research utilised the qualitative interpretative case study within a bounded time frame with two groups of students (six students in each group) and the respective two teachers.

6. Participants

Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants made up of two English teachers and their respective classes. One class came from an urban secondary school while the other class came from a sub-urban secondary school. Both teachers were comparable in their ages, length of teaching experience, and educational backgrounds. While both possessed good ICT skills, they had no prior experience teaching the students in an online writing environment. The two teachers were required to form a group of six students to complete their online narrative writing tasks. Mixed abilities of students from the advanced and intermediate level for English language were considered in this study in order for them to contribute ideas and be involved in the online interactions with the teacher. The low ability students were not included in this study as they may not be able to participate fully in the study. Three students were selected from each of the levels (advanced and intermediate) using their Year 9 public examination English results. According to Vygotsky (1978) a student is able to learn better if he or she is able to interact with others who are more knowledgeable and competent.

7. Materials

The narrative writing skills that were taught to the students in this study is a component of the Year 10 writing skills. The narrative writing task was based on the Year 11 standardized public examination which is used to gauge the students' potential to express their ideas accurately and creatively in written English (Curriculum Specifications, 2003). The instructional materials for the narrative writing were based on the SPM (public examination) syllabus. Materials were supplied by the researcher and posted by the teacher in Weeks 1, 3 and 5. The selection of the materials was based on current topics that were related to students' experiences and interesting events that had the potential to generate discussion. The sample essays were adapted from *Mode Compositions and Summaries for SPM* (Sebastian & Roy, 2005) and *SPM Total Revision Books* (Koh, 2005).

8. Online writing lesson design

Teachers created a closed group in the Facebook environment and allowed the two groups of six students to join. Teacher A's group was called 'Narrative Writing' and Teacher B group was called 'Narrative Writing 1'. The research was conducted for six weeks. The teachers in their Facebook environment uploaded the title, tips, suggestions and the format of the narrative writing. The titles of the narrative writing tasks were:

Task 1: Describe the most embarrassing experience you have had.

Task 2: Write a story beginning with "the students were excitedly unloading their luggage".

Task 3: Write a story ending with "tears welled up in his eyes".

Students were also guided to write the narrative essays based on Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative structure.

Abstract: What is the story about?
Orientation: Who, when, where, what?
Complicating Action: Then what happened?
Evaluation: So what, how is this interesting?
Result of resolution: What finally happened?
Coda: That's it. I've finished and am "bridging" back to our present situation.

The teachers uploaded the sample lessons for the Task 1 and Task 2. For Task 3, teachers only put up the title of the essays without any sample lessons. A sample of a lesson plan for Task 1 is illustrated in the following section.

8.1. Sample of a lesson plan

Task 1

The title of this week's essay is**: Describe the most embarrassing experience you have had.** To write this essay you need to read the following steps: Be clear about the question and think of possible situations you could write on.

1. It is good to incorporate real experiences in your story as you will be able to put in interesting and vivid details about them. Your story should be logical and consistent.

2. Use dialogue at certain point of your story to create a dramatic impact.

3. Use appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures.

4. The possible situations for the above title:

    1. Torn trousers.

    2. Slipped on a banana skin.

    3. Being fooled on April Fool's Day.

    4. Late for school

5. Write the essay according to Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure.

8.2. Instructor's Sample Essay

> **Abstract**
>
> The morning the sun shone persistently on my still-shut eyelids. Annoyed, I rolled on to the right side of the mattress. Wondering about the time, I stretched out my arm to grasp the alarm clock

on my bedside table. I forced open my eyes, focused them on the numbers… and screeched! Leaping out of my bed, I swung open the wardrobe door. Throwing my uniform on the bed. I dashed to the bathroom. Halfway I spun around and grabbed my school bag, deciding not to brush my teeth. Soon, I had shoved my feet into my shoes and pounced onto my bicycle. My parents stood motionless, staring at me as I whizzed past.

Orientation

As my bicycle raced on, I noticed that a group of schoolgirls looking my way with great interest. Well, well! Obviously, I was still attractive even with uncombed hair. My heart was pounding furiously in my chest as I whirred past a few cars on the road. The drivers seemed to stare with disbelief that one could pedal so swiftly. In no time, I reached the school gate, which was just about to be closed. Without bothering to explain myself to the priggish duo on guard duty, I hopped off my bike and dashed off. After locking my precious iron steed at the shed, I sprinted to the school hall. As I burst into the hall, I broke to change direction and made a beeline for the back of my class. Screeching to a halt, I took my place behind my classmates.

Complicating Action

In the whole gathering of students, I seemed to be the centre of attraction. It did not matter much to me at the moment for I was used to being looked at. However, to say the least, I was surprised when everyone stopped staring blankly at me and started to giggle. Suddenly, the whole hall was filled with roars and bellows of laughter. Smiling at my audience, I decided to take a bow. Then I noticed that the bottom half of my trousers were the wrong colour. My line of vision moved upwards, revealing that the rest of my pants were wrong colour and so was my shirt. At first, even my powerful brain could not figure it out. "Daniel! Why on earth are you in pyjamas" my friend blurted out amidst the hollers of laughter.

Evaluation

The feeling of sheer horror swept through my entire frame. My mouth was stuck open in an '0' shape for seconds. My mind was filled only with shock as darkness mercifully started to engulf me. Once again, awoke with lights playing on my eyelids. At first I had little memory of what had happened, but one look at the group of people peering down at me brought the whole incident back to mind.

Result of Resolution

The young boys were all clad in white uniforms and grinning quite lunatically at me. In the high corner of the room, I saw a red crescent. Then the horrible little squirts started to call out for their seniors. Outside, I heard fresh gales of laughter. The brats were chortling.

> **Coda**
>
> I was still clad in pyjamas. Not knowing what else to do, I feigned unconscious again.
>
> Source: Wee (2004)

9. Data collection and analysis

9.1. Data analysis

The study examined the online messages from the teachers' interaction on an online narrative writing platform. The online messages were categorized according to Borup et al.'s (2014) and Garrison et al.'s (2000) frameworks. Two coders and the researchers were involved in coding the interactions. The coders were instructed to code individually. The inter-rater reliability was checked by using raw percentage suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The discrepancies were resolved through a discussion with the coders. This study used content analysis in coding the interactions. There was 90% agreement for teaching presence for Teacher A and 85 % agreement for Teacher B. The agreement percentage obtained here was consistent with Miles and Huberman's suggestion of a minimum percentage of 70%. Additionally, inter-rater reliability was obtained by using Cohen kappa procedures. The value for Teacher A's engagement was 0.80 and for Teacher B it was 0.85. Both the values are considered almost perfect agreement. Findings were organised according to the six descriptors of teacher engagement following Borup et al.'s framework.

9.2. Interactions based on Borup et al.'s framework

In Table 2, the online interaction archives of Teacher A and B were analysed in terms of occurrence based on Borup et al.'s framework.

Table2. Numerical Distribution of Teacher Engagement for Teacher A and Teacher B.

Descriptors	Teacher A	Teacher B
Designing and Organizing	8	3
Facilitating Discourse	53	1
Instructing	20	1
Nurturing	3	-
Motivating	25	-
Monitoring	18	14

Based on Table 2 most of the interactions are from Teacher A. Teacher B has limited interactions. The total number of Teacher A's interactions was 127 while that of Teacher B's was 18. The most frequent descriptor in Teacher A's interactions was facilitating discourse, followed by motivating, instructing, monitoring and designing and organizing.

Most of Teacher B's interactions were related to monitoring, followed by designing and organizing and instructing. There were no interactions related to motivating and nurturing. We shall look at these differences in greater detail.

9.3. Designing and organizing

The teachers have placed the students in a closed group and instructed all the students to register and respond to their messages. The teacher as the subject matter expert posted title as well as gave tips and suggestions for students to write their essays. For example, *"The title of this week's essay is...".* Teacher A guided the students to write narrative essays based on the Labov and Waletzky's narrative structure. The teacher set the time for the students to complete the task. Teacher A stated *"please review your essays respectively and upload your final draft essay by Saturday".* Teacher B similarly uploaded the title and the Labov and Waletzky's narrative writing structure. However, she has to keep asking the participants to respond a number of times before they can start the narrative writing task. She states *"A job well done by all except Yee Juin as she has not joined the group or posted an essay. Please contact her and tell her to do so... please read your friends essay and feel free to comment on the work so that they can improve it".*

9.4. Facilitating discourse

Analysis found that Teacher A worked to facilitate discourse with students. Teacher A encouraged and acknowledged and reinforced contributions" *"I like this sentence description… it creates the image of a beach in mind while I read it.* To set the climate for learning she asked the students to *"Please share your ideas and comments. If you have any good websites that offer ideas in narrative writing, please do suggest".* Teacher A also prompted discussion by questioning other participants in her post, *"What do you think about Valentino's essay".* Teacher B encouraged the participants to discuss. She commented that *"The chosen one please help out your friends".* However, Teacher B was not active in facilitating discourse as compared to Teacher A.

9.5. Direct instruction

Teachers A and B guided the students to correct their errors. Teacher dominated the interactions and stepped in to solve language problems particularly on the grammatical aspect. For example, *"here are some errors done by you. I have listed them and students I want you to discuss and correct them...".* Teacher A also focused her discussion on specific issues and encouraged them to work on these aspects to write better. She encouraged students to use creative idiomatic expressions in essay writing. The teacher said *"students if you think you are not good at using creative idiomatic expressions in your essay? Try to practice on this simple exercise by finding meaning of the idiomatic expressions"* and for students who were unsure of the tenses, she encouraged them to *"use the link to check your sentences as the site can check your errors by itself and explain the kind or errors you have made".* Teacher B only instructed the students to make the appropriate changes to the essay to produce a good quality essay. She said *"please pay attention to the highlighted words. There are some corrections there. A good example of an embarrassing moment however it would have been better if it was revealed at the end only, improve the essay and post it".*

9.6. Nurturing

Teacher A gave a few suggestions for students to improve their narrative writing which were not directly related to the task. She wrote *"Direct translation from Mandarin or Bahasa Melayu into English will cause errors in grammar, sentence structure and meaning. A good narrator must have good vocabulary knowledge. To improve on that you must do a lot of reading".* Teacher A also shared her experience and showed a level

of respect for their ideas by stating *"Teacher too has similar experience ... walking to the wrong car n tried to open the door... was embarrassing yet funny. Laughed to myself at that moment".* Also Teacher A guided the students when they had technical problems while using their computers to look for certain websites *"You try to surf through online dictionary which can suit your computer security setting".* Teacher A also encouraged *students to search for useful information to improve their essays.* For example, *"Here are some sites for all of you to get to know creative expressions, proverb colloquial expressions and etc."* There was no interaction related to nurturing from Teacher B.

9.7. Motivation

Teacher A was able to motivate students by regularly reading their postings and attending to their doubts. The teacher acknowledged the students' contribution and assured the students that *"you all can write better than the sample," "your narration is indeed written well and creatively"* and *"We are here to help each other and improve to be better... We are here".* Teacher B had only one post which showed her motivating her students. She encouraged them to continue working on their writing task by commenting *"Well done, keep it up".*

9.8. Monitoring

Teacher A monitored the students' writing task. This was expressed in the following post:

> *That's good. It shows that you are aware of the important elements in an essay. However, a good essay not only should have good expression words and phrases, variety of sentence structures and grammatically correct. It should be well structured.*

Teacher A made concerted efforts to continue to give confidence and encouragement. Some of her comments were:

> *Good narration but lack of creativity touch. Try to think of the story flow that can arouse the reader's interest and sustain it throughout the reading process.*

and

> *Good attempt but you have the potential to write better.*

Teacher B also made attempts to monitor the students' essay writing. Teacher B questioned the students when the essays were not submitted. She asked:

> *Where are the rest of the essays.*

and

> *Please submit as soon as your tests are over.*

She also acknowledged the students' contribution and commented that

> *Mmm... quite well written with some minor errors but the story does not seem very embarrassing. Will give more tips later. Anyway not bad for a start.*

Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the descriptors related to teacher engagement.

Table 3. Descriptors related to teacher engagement (Teacher A).

Designing and organizing	THIRD TASK The title of this week's essay is: Write a story ending with "tears welled up in his eyes". To write this essay you need to take the following steps. ... See More Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · July 23 at 11:02am
Facilitating discourse	Iinteresting essay about a student. Well done Edited · Like
Instructing	HERE ARE SOME ERRORS DONE BY YOU. I HAVE LISTED THEM AND STUDENTS I WANT YOU TO DISCUSS AND CORRECT THEM. YOU CAN ALSO SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND SUGGESTION TO IMPROVISE IT. But it all happens in a blink of eye............ the students remained excitedly in the bus............... Everyone on the bus was shocked and the students who were excited before that turned silent............ onto the boundaries of t road.................... the police immediately.............. Luckily there w no more students nor teachers who was injured in the accident............ to have a unforgettable.................... a new bus c to drove the students and teachers back to their school.............. indeed a unpleasant trip for them.......... Peony Moon, Joyce Che Valentini Belbo, Catelite Nina and Deer Tommy...PLEASE LOOK EACH ERRORS AND FIND THE RIGHT WAY TO WRITE THEM. July 14 at 3:24pm · Edited · Like
Nurturing	**Nanthini Maniam** Students, do you think you are not good at using creative idiomatic expression in your essay ? Try to practice on this simple exercise by finding meaning of the idiomatic expressions. (Joyce Chee, Monster KBlue, Deer Tommy, Catelite Nina, Valentini Belbo and Peony Moon) Below are the most common idiomatic expression according to user ratings. Please be sure to rate how often you hear or read the idiomatic expression so we all can get a better idea how often the expressions are used. For reference, your can use this link http://idiomaticexpressions.org/most-common-idiomatic-expressions
Motivating	A NARRATIVE WRITING STRUCTURE Hi students.....How are you all today? Well, you all have shared and explained a lot on how a good essay should be. That's good. It shows that you all are aware of the important elements in an essay. However, a good essay not only should have good expression words and phrases, variety of sentence structures and grammatically correct. It also should be well-structured (the organisation of your ideas).

Monitoring	___ Catelite Nina...You narration is indeed writt___ well and creatively. There are some grammatical errors which y___ friends had tracked down. To make an essay sustain the reade___ nterest to read you can include some suspense at the part whe___ he crab bit your nose. You can make the reader to wonder wh___ would it be. Using SUSPENSE in essay will make the storyline t___ nteresting June 30 at 12:28am · Like · 👍 2

The following table illustrates the descriptor related to Teacher B.

Table 4. Descriptors related to Teacher B engagement.

Designing and organizing	All members , if you have read your assignment please re___ you got it. Please pass this message to Lee Yee Juin as s___ responded to the invitation to join. Dear Shu Suet, Please pay attention to the highlighted words. there are some corrections there. A good example of an embarrassing moment however it would have been better if it was revealed at the end only. improve the essay and repost it.
Facilitating discourse	The Chosen Ones please help out your friend Like
Instructing	Dear Shu Suet, Please pay attention to the highlighted words. there are s___ there. A good example of an embarrassing moment howe___ have been better if it was revealed at the end only. impro___ repost it.
Nurturing	-
Motivating	-
Monitoring	Where are the rest of the essays? Please submit as soon ___ are over Mmmm quite well written. Some minor err___ the story does not seem very embarassing . Will give more tips later ___ not bad for a start. 2 August 2014 at 16:19 · Like

9.8. Scores of the writing task

When the essay scores were analysed it was found that students who interacted with Teacher A improved the quality of writing. The scores for their essays improved after their online interactions. However, students in Teacher B's group were not motivated to

complete their essays after the interaction. There were no comments from Teacher B to get students to improve their narrative writing. This probably caused them to not make any attempt to improve their essays after the interactions**.** Table 5 illustrates the scores of the narrative writing task for Teacher A and B before interactions (BInt) and after interactions (AInt). Students who belong to the Narrating Writing A group were coded A1 to A6 and from Narrative writing B, were given B1 to B6.

Table 5. Narrative writing scores.

Students	Task 1		Task 2		Task 3	
	BInt	AInt	BInt	AInt	BInt	AInt
A1	66	68	67	70	73	73
A2	65	68	64	65	69	71
A3	74	76	67	69	68	71
A4	65	69	69	71	69	69
A5	64	65	71	73	65	65
A6	80	82	83	84	81	81
B1	75					
B2	65	65	63	-	62	-
B3	63	-	63	-	60	-
B4	62	-	61	-	62	-
B5	58	-	55	-	59	-
B6	56	-	56	-	58	-

10. Discussion

The application of Borup et al.'s (2014) framework in the Malaysian context helps to explain the many activities that the teachers do while they are engaged in an online writing environment. All five dimensions of designing and organizing, facilitating discourse, instructing, nurturing, motivating and monitoring were useful in the Malaysian context.

Although both teachers gave the same teaching and learning activities the findings were different. This is probably due to the differences in teacher engagement. The engagement of Teacher A was more active. Teacher A was constantly monitoring the students on grammatical and language structures. Previous research has suggested that language students must be frequently instructed to check on their sentence structures and grammar (Legenhausen 2011). Such guidance eventually helped the students to improve their sentence structures. Teacher A acted as an adoptive facilitator to complete their online narrative writing task. There were interactions related to designing and organizing and facilitating discourse. Consistent with this, Harms et al. (2006) claim that teachers must organize and design learning materials to encourage students to be engaged in the teaching and learning activities. Teacher A has pointed out misconceptions, listened to students' ideas, clarified ideas and suggestions. As a result, the students responded and made the necessary changes to their essays. Evidently, the scores were better for their narrative essays. Previous literature supports the view that introducing sources of information, giving directions for useful discussion and encouraging students' knowledge to a higher level (Ice et al., 2007; Richardson & Swan, 2003) is beneficial.

Teacher B only provided general assistance for students to complete their essays. Although Teacher A and Teacher B initiated the task by giving the title and narrative writing task, Teacher B was not actively involved in the online interactions. As a result students were not able to improve the quality of their essays. In fact some of the students did not submit their assignments. According to Di Pietro, Ferdig, Black and Preston (2008) teachers need to proactively facilitate content for students to perform well in the task given. Also Rojas-Drummonda & Merce (2003) highlighted that successful teaching activities need teachers that are not only focused in completing a task but to also guide the students to reach the goal and solve the problems with appropriate procedures There were no interactions related to motivating and nurturing in Teacher B's interactions.

The role of Teacher A and Teacher B in this study was more on instructing and monitoring rather than facilitating them to write According to Annamalai and Tan (2015) the role of the teacher is rather authoritative and distancing as the teachers in the Malaysian schools are in the state of transition from traditional classroom writing to the online writing environment. It is also worth noting that interactions between students and instructors are rather low if interactions are not initiated or promoted by instructors (Hawkins et al., 2011). Continuous interaction is necessary to ensure that students are able to complete the task given. The set back is probably due to the attitude of the teacher who is a digital immigrant (Prensky, 2001) and not so keen to introduce technology in their writing classes. Teacher B was probably not keen in nurturing and helping students to discover other areas of writing. The teacher might be comfortable with the tradition classroom writing. Future research can deal with surveys and interviews to investigate the reasons for such findings.

11. Implications

The study carries several pedagogical implications as follows:

Borup et al.'s (2014) framework is applicable in the Malaysian setting. However, the researchers had difficulties in categorizing the interactions related to, motivating and monitoring as certain interactions can be categorised in both descriptors. In other words, the definitions are rather fuzzy. Therefore clear definitions are needed for the descriptors.

As mentioned earlier parents are not involved in the online teaching and learning activities. Perhaps, interactions with parents, teacher and students will be a great factor

to encourage students to be actively engaged in online writing environment particularly in sub-urban schools.

As this is an exploratory study, the findings only reported what happened in the natural settings. Future research should consider interviews and reflections to gain in-depth understanding of such findings and be able to shed light on how best to implement the online writing environment. The limitations in this study should be addressed in future studies. Firstly, conducting a case study is important to understand the in-depth situation of a study although the nature of such a study limits possible generalization to other studies.

Research conducted in several other settings in Malaysia will yield more generalizable results. Quantitative studies such as surveys and experimental research should also be added. Workshops and checklist of Borup et al.'s framework should be given to teachers so that teachers are able to interact effectively with students to maximize learning. This will cultivate positive attitudes and confidence.

12. Conclusion

The study affirms that teacher's active engagement is necessary to motivate and facilitate students' interactions which eventually help them to improve their quality of writing. Without teachers engagement students' involvement is limited. The study offers an insightful implication that Borup et al.'s framework will be applicable in the Malaysian context if the teachers' are willing to accept technologies and show commitment in facilitating their students. Although the use of ICT in schools is encouraged in Malaysian schools, teachers do not seem to see the great potential of technology in language learning.

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