

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE USE OF WRITING FRAMEWORK AMONG INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM LEARNERS IN PENKALAN IPOH

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ABSTRACT - English is a medium of language that connects everyone to every part of the world. There should be a standard operating system to standardize the proficiency of people. Therefore, IELTS which is known as International English Language Testing System is being used widely for academic purposes and the general paper is catered for migration and work. However, it is apparent that students these days have low literacy in writing and do not follow a proper framework. Thus, this research is to find the impacts of the use of writing framework among IELTS learners and determine the significant factors affecting IELTS learners' writing performance. With this a non-probability method with a mix mode of 30 participant from a single class are the sample research. The researcher uses triangulation for collection of data with three instruments which is a survey method through questionnaire, interview with three teachers who are teaching the same level and observation. The data for the questionnaire is being tabulated through statistical package of social science (SPSS) system. The finding seems to be reliable and the validity is acceptable as student seems to have a positive mindset in writing. This intervention overwrites the research gap.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to be on par and being competitive with the rest of the students in the world, there should be a certain standard operating procedure as a benchmark to determine students' proficiency in the English language. There are many acceptable exams in the world likewise TOEFL, IGCSE, MUET and SAT but a common one which is recognized all throughout the country is the IELTS that is referred as International English Language Testing System. Many students are pursuing their studies with the requirement of IELTS by most of the countries however sadly the scholars are unable to fulfil the requirement of the universities. Hence, there is a framework for students to follow in order to receive a good band in IELTS according to the course that they apply. The highest band for IELTS is band 9. Most of the postgraduate students' requirement by universities are band 6 for writing. As for courses that are quite challenging like medical, pharmaceutical, and law; the requirement for writing will be a band 7 which will be a struggle for most of the students. Briefly, examining this situation closely, having a proper framework in school will ease their tertiary studies in the future. Thus, this article will basically elaborate the consequences with the introduction of a framework and the issues addressing their writing performances.

The research objectives are to investigate the effects of the use of writing framework among IELTS learners and to determine the significant factors affecting IELTS learners' writing performance. The research questions are 'How does the use of writing framework affect IELTS learners' writing performance?' and 'What are the significant factors affecting IELTS learners' writing performance?'

It can be an increasing concern when students have zero knowledge in writing. It would be time consuming for the teacher to introduce the framework and for students to master writing whereby it is definitely going to be a very heart-aching experience. Another factor would be teacher preparing students with a framework for IELTS which is more too exam oriented however in universities they are being taught on real life situation which contradicts. Moreover, if the students are lucky enough for the essay to be written before in classroom and so it happens to be that on the real exam day the same question is being tested coincidentally, evidently student will score in their exam. In real life situation, they are unable to write effectively. It is cited that this is an unfair option for those students who can really write but they were quite nervous on the exam day (Fayziev H., Nematov B. S., Yakubov. F. J., Hakberdieva. G.T & Nasrullaeva. M. S., Novateur Publication, JournalNX- A Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal, 2020)

The students' expectations on academic writing and the teachers' perception varies greatly. This contributes distinguish ideas as teachers need to fill in the gap with a proper framework. Thus, this study will be able to examine the effects of the use of writing framework among IELTS learners and to determine the significant factors affecting IELTS learners' writing performance. IELTS references in the market also do not specify clear framework for students to do their writing. It only provides sample essay without clear explanation in writing.

2.0 MATERIAL OR RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a mixed mode design with a quantitative and qualitative approach to get a clear holistic comprehension of the entire study. The research design uses triangulation with three types of instruments being used which is a survey, an interview, and a class observation during the answering of questionnaire and the interview.

2.0 Participant

This study integrates convenience sampling. It consists of 40 students from Form 6 of a school in Pengkalan Ipoh. A sample of thirty participants are collected for the questionnaire. Another 4 students are interviewed and an observation of the interview takes place.

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

This study uses a questionnaire with 30 items adopted from Marquette.edu with a title Self-Assessment of English Writing Skills and Use of Writing Strategies for a survey (Marquette, n.d.). It is known as SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) with 5 options given to students to choose as per below. Questions are derived from basic questions to have a general idea of the students understanding and concept of writing.

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Usually not true of me.
3. Somewhat true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me.

Since it is triangulation another two instruments are interview with the students by a teacher who is teaching the same level and also an observation while the questionnaire is being conducted online but in a physical environment in the multimedia lab in school.

2.3 Writing Procedures and Framework

IELTS writing comprises two tasks. Task one a summary where students will be tested on a given diagram such as a pie chart, table, linear, map, pictograph, line graph or a flowchart. At times students can be tested with two types of graphs in a single task. The word limit for this is 150 where students have the extension of doing up till 180 in 20 minutes. As the task 2, only a factual essay will be tested. Students are required to narrate at about 250 with a credit of 280 the maximum as the allocated time frame would be only 40 minutes. If students were to exceed this word limit for any of the task, time given will not permit. The weightage for task 2 is higher than task 1. Therefore, spending too much time on any of the task may pay a consequence on failing to attempt or complete the other. The general training paper, consists of task one and task two. Task one test the candidates on emails, formal or informal letter with a word count of 150 where candidates can write to the maximum of 180 words with some guided points. General Training papers requirement is a way higher than academic writing. Qualified and professional IELTS examiner are accountable to give the scores based on a marking descriptor. Both tasks are marked separately and added to give the scorers. This marking system will be private and confidential, and it determines the band scores.

In order for the students to excel in their writing they should have a proper guide to follow and narrate especially for task 2. First of all, they should have at least four 4-5 paragraphs for an essay of 250-280 words within 40 minutes. An introductory paragraph, 2-3 body paragraph and 1 concluding paragraph. An introductory should consist of a lead which can be a statistic, definition, amazing, anecdote, proverb, quote, question or general. Then followed by a general statement referring to what is happening around the world. Moving on to bridging sentence where it can be referring to your country, community, family or about oneself. If the essay requires an agreeable or disagreeable stand, then this ought to be stated immediately after the bridging sentence. Lastly, the thesis, where the student has to list two to three specific points.

The next is the body paragraph 1 which the point is taken from the main idea listed in the thesis statement which is known as topic sentence. Following to that is the explanation for the topic sentence and then with the examples given. The last sentence will be the wrap up for this specific paragraph. Good linking words will assist in distinguishing the points from explanation, examples and conclusion statements. This method follows for the rest of the paragraphs.

The concluding paragraph can be short by restating the thesis and paraphrasing the words from the thesis statement. The next sentence is the clincher where it is similar to the content of the lead but definitely there is no repetition of vocabulary unless it is the main word from the title.

As for task one for academic writing, the candidate has to write only 4 paragraphs with the maximum of 180 words due to time constraint which is in 20 minutes. This essay can be a bar chart, pictograph, flowchart, table, linear or dotted lines. This task consists of an introductory paragraph stating what is the diagram about and if there is a title given, it should be paraphrased and restates in the introduction. Introduction can be 2-3 lines.

The next which is the body paragraph 1 can demonstrate the differences on the first chart by using passive word and also by writing indirect statement. Do not lift direct numbers from the chart. It can be stated in an approximate manner. This should be done for the second diagram in the second body paragraph.

The concluding paragraph should be an overview of what both diagrams depicts. It can be an overall version of the relation of both the chart. The motive of this task is for the examiner to draw a chart of his own with the information provided from the piece of essay and to compare the similarity and differences between the original paper and the student's paper. If the similarity drawn based from the essay and the real chart is apparent, the student will get a high score for task 1. Task 1 for general training will be on formal, informal letter or email. This is tested is usually for migration or studying purposes. Therefore, it is not emphasized much in class.

2.4 Test Scores

The IELTS consists of four sections which is speaking, listening, reading and writing. The overall band is obtained from the average of each component. It is being marked with a scale from zero till 9. If the overall band is 6, probably it is being rounded up from 5.75. The following table shows the calculations of scores.

Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Average	Score
5.5	6.0	6.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
7.0	5.5	7.0	6.0	6.375	6.5

Figure 1. Test score calculations

The IELTS score has a specific descriptor as a code of reference for analyzing writing. Examiners mark based on marking requirements such as holistic which is answering the questions exactly, coherence or unity, the choices of lexicon and correct use of grammar. Every single score from the requirement will be calculated and taken the average. Marks for both tasks are added together and taken the average as the actual band for writing (Smurthwaite J; Hotcourses Abroad; IDP Company, 2021).

2.5 Observation

Observation was carried on by having an observation checklist with 5 items listed that can be seen from table 5 adapted from Hussein El-Ghamry Mohammad (Mohammad H.E, n.d.). A teacher from a different level is asked to observe the students who are answering the survey in multimedia lab. Reports obtained stating the student needed guidance in certain questions and could not understand certain terms. As for the interview, which was conducted by the same teacher concluded students need some guidance with explanation for them to choose the best answer. This observation took two days. The survey was conducted a day and the interview was conducted on another day as the survey was time consuming and the time allocated was not enough so students have to do in two periods.

3.0 RESEARCH FINDING

Table 1. Descriptive statistic

**Adapted from Marquette.edu*

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can write a good academic paragraph.	34	2	4	2.82	.834
I can write a clear topic sentence that identifies the topic and controlling idea of a paragraph.	34	1	5	3.00	.921
I can logically organize my ideas when I write a paragraph.	34	1	5	3.35	.950
I can logically support and develop my main point when I write a paragraph.	34	1	5	3.09	.965
I can write using an academic style and tone.	34	1	5	2.79	1.038
I can use appropriate vocabulary and word forms to effectively communicate with the reader.	34	1	5	2.82	1.167
I can use a variety of sentence structures.	34	1	5	2.94	.983
I can use appropriate spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.	34	1	5	3.38	1.045
I can write an accurate summary of information that I have read in English.	34	1	5	3.15	1.048
I can write an accurate paraphrase of information that I have read in English.	34	1	5	3.00	1.128
I can write accurate quotations in English.	34	1	5	3.00	1.128
I can write a good academic research paper.	34	1	4	2.65	.812
I can write a good introduction for an English essay	34	1	5	3.00	.888
I can choose an appropriate academic research topic.	34	1	5	2.82	.936
I can choose an appropriate research question to help guide my research process.	34	1	4	3.00	.778

Table 1. (cont.)

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can write a clear thesis statement that identifies the topic and controlling idea of an essay.	34	1	4	2.94	.814
I can write using various patterns of organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect).	34	1	5	3.15	.925
I can use a logical arrangement of paragraphs to support and develop my thesis statement.	34	2	5	3.03	.870
I can logically support and develop my thesis with my own experiences and reasoning.	34	1	5	2.97	.937
I can logically support and develop my thesis with paraphrases, summaries, and quotations.	34	2	5	2.88	.844
I can use accurate in-text citations using APA.	34	1	5	2.59	1.019
I can write an accurate Works Cited sheet for sources using APA.	34	1	5	2.59	1.076
I can successfully conduct library research to locate information to support my ideas.	34	1	5	2.76	1.156
I can successfully use internet search engines to locate information to support my ideas.	34	2	5	3.71	.970
I can write a good conclusion for an English essay.	34	1	5	3.09	.830
I can use a word processing program to type and format my essays in English.	34	1	5	3.09	1.111
I can effectively brainstorm to gather ideas before writing.	34	2	5	3.24	.741
I can take good notes on readings and then use them to help support my ideas in my writing.	34	1	5	3.26	1.053
I can write an outline to logically organize my ideas before writing.	34	2	5	3.06	.814
I can revise my own writing to improve the development and organization.	34	1	5	3.15	.958
Valid N (listwise)	34				

Table 2. Reliability statistic
Scale: All variables

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	34	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	34	100.0

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Items
.972	30

Table 3. Validity analysis descriptive statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall mean	34	1.60	4.30	3.0108	.71955
Valid N (listwise)	34				

According to table 2, after using the SPSS calculation, Cronbach's alpha was recorded as 0.972, which reflects an extreme internal consistency for the scale with this specific sample. It is known that a reliability which is a way higher than 0.9 is considered as excellent. A good scale should at least have a range of 15-30 items listed for reliability studies using Cronbach's Alpha. This method of calculation merely gives a general reliability coefficient for fix variables (e.g., questions). If the questions reflect different implicit personal qualities (or other dimensions), for instance, student motivation and student commitment, Cronbach's alpha is unable to differentiate all of these. In relation, a test is needed to be generated likewise a principal component analysis (PCA). You can learn how to carry out principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS Statistics, as well as analyzing and jotting your results, in enhanced content.

Table 4 are the interview questions for the students using Likert scales adopted from Kevin M Wongs. Interview were conducted with 4 students during lessons where the rest were given other task to perform in class. It is a structured interview where all the students are interrogated with the same questions and with the same sequence. It is apparent 2 students agree that using framework, they are writing more than before. 3 out of 4 strongly agree their writing performance increased than before. 2 students claimed writing to be fun after exploring the framework. All of them have the same opinion to brainstorm before writing. Some have the opinion of doing a mind map which is essential for every writing. 2 students state that they are happy to show the rest of the students their work as they can teach their friends as well.

Table 4: Interview with learners on writing adapted from Kevin M Wongs

Item	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
1. I write more than before	3	4	3	4
2. I write better than before	5	5	5	3
3. Writing is fun	4	3	4	3
4. I find brainstorm useful in helping me write	5	5	5	5
5. It's good to make a mind map before I write	5	5	5	5
6. Talking with teacher helps me write better	5	5	5	5
7. I like to show my work to my classmates	2	4	4	3

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

The third instrument is the observation done by a teacher when the interview and online survey is in progress in multimedia lab. Some students have difficulty in understanding the questions. Therefore, the teacher is there to guide and explain the questions to the respective students.

4.0 DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in a Chinese Independent School in Pengkalan, Ipoh. The number of participants involved were only 34 students out of 40. Students were in Form 6. There were 30 items listed for the survey. Finding using SPSS (Statistic Package for Science Social) 2.7 tabulates that mostly students are able to write without punctuation errors, have an idea on paraphrasing, locate for references for their essay writing, summarize the points and do library research for more information. As for the interview, students are helpful in giving the answer scripts for their classmates for a better understanding. Students opine learning this framework in high school is extremely important for their tertiary studies.

The number of students involved is very small number and the research is only based in one school. Therefore, this study will be effective with a bigger number and few schools involved for an accurate and reliable answer. A fraction of students is weak thus the framework requires a lot of explanation and a number of periods to do part by part at a slower pace until every student familiarizes with the framework and able to start the essay with minimal attention by the teachers. The other limitation is the interference of the mother tongue which will be a hindrance to write effectively. Besides, survey which was being conducted in school took sometimes as the internet access was slow. Hence, it took some time to complete the entire survey and due to that the interview was held back on another day. According to Palanisamy S. & Aziz A. A claimed students' limitation was grammar structure, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and also lacking in ideas (Palanisamy S & Aziz A. A, 2021).

Table 5. Teacher observation checklist in writing class

Class:	Date:
Teacher:	Observer:
Item	Students
1. Students have prior knowledge about writing	10
2. Student works in pairs	17
3. Proper strategies are applied in generating ideas	20
4. Have awareness of discourse organization	19
5. Models how the parts of a text are linked through cohesive devices	15

Adapted from Hussein El-Ghamry Mohammad

5.0 CONCLUSION

The results seem to be overwhelming where the students are motivated with the use of framework for writing. Students' view is positive, and it is reflected from their performance. The introduction of this framework eases their writing and expose them to a better format where it will be helpful when they sit for the IELTS exam. Additionally, the findings also clearly define that the students have a proper guideline to follow instead of writing anything that comes in their mind. Students are more focused and has a list of ideas to generate using the IELTS framework. Hence, teaching a proper framework from high school will be a better choice for the students in their future to take up IELTS which will out stand them in the courses that they would like to pursue.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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7.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest encountered during the research.

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