Tamil Language Teachers' Teaching Practices for Factual Type Essays in Tamil National Type Schools in Malaysia

K. Anusia, K. Muniisvaran

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, Perak, Malaysia
Email: anusiakanan@gmail.com
Corresponding Author Email: muniisvaran@fbk.upsi.edu.my

Abstract
The effectiveness of classroom teaching is highly dependent on educators' adept use of efficient teaching strategies and techniques that cater to students' diverse abilities and intellectual capacities. Significantly, there is a research gap in the comprehensive examination of the teaching practices of Tamil language teachers and knowledge regarding strategies and techniques for teaching Tamil essays in Malaysian primary schools. Bridging this gap is important for a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved in Tamil language education, providing valuable insights that can inform and improve teaching practice in primary school classrooms. Therefore, the current study aims to explore and analyze Tamil language teachers' teaching strategies and techniques for factual-type essays in Tamil National Type Schools. The participants were six Tamil school teachers from the state of Negeri Sembilan. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative findings reveal a predominant teacher-centered approach in the instructional strategies that Tamil language teachers employ for essay writing. The study findings also reveal that while all participants commonly utilize discussion and question-and-answer techniques in imparting essay writing skills, there is a concurrent lack of awareness among them regarding the importance of diversifying teaching techniques.
Keywords: Teaching Practice, Teaching Techniques, Teaching Strategies, Tamil Language, Writing

Introduction
The Tamil language is prominent in Malaysia's diverse linguistic landscape, representing the cultural heritage and identity of the Tamil-speaking community. As primary education is the foundation for language development and cognitive growth, the efficacy of language teachers in imparting knowledge and effective teaching techniques assumes paramount importance. One critical aspect of language education is the teaching of factual type essays, which cultivates critical thinking, knowledge retention, and proficient communication.
Tamil schools require Tamil language teachers to have a comprehensive understanding of the adapted pedagogical approach as recommended in the second wave of the Malaysian Education Quality Standard (SKPMg2) to improve the quality of teaching and learning and

implement improvements of the quality of standard 4, which is the aspect of learning and facilitation (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia [KPM], 2017). Factual-type essays demand students to assimilate and present information with precision and coherence, enhancing their analytical abilities and comprehension skills. Therefore, examining teachers' proficiency in imparting these skills is significant in enhancing the quality of Tamil language education and fostering academic excellence among students.

Despite the importance of essay writing skills in the development of language and communication, there is a lack of comprehensive research on Tamil language teachers' teaching practices and knowledge of Tamil essay teaching strategies and techniques in Tamil National Type Schools in Malaysia. While there have been studies on language education and teaching practices, the specific focus on Tamil language teachers and their essay-teaching strategies and techniques remains relatively unexplored. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze Tamil language teachers' teaching strategies and techniques for factual-type essays in Tamil National Type Schools.

This study contributes widely to the Malaysian educational landscape. The outcomes of this study hold far-reaching implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training institutions. By gaining valuable insights into the existing knowledge and practices of Tamil language teachers concerning factual type essays, stakeholders can formulate evidence-based strategies to strengthen language education curricula and provide a more enriching learning experience for students. Ultimately, this research endeavors to enhance Tamil language education in Malaysia, nurturing a generation of confident and adept individuals equipped with essential language skills and critical thinking abilities.

Essay Writing

The process of writing is intricate as it involves the proficient coordination of cognitive and linguistic processes and resources (Hayes, 1996; Kellogg, 1996). Its complexity lies in the need to employ higher-level skills, such as planning and organizing, which involve generating and structuring ideas. Moreover, the required lower-level skills like grammar and syntax, spelling, punctuation, and word choice can be a daunting task (Richards & Renandya, 2002). According to Pavanelli (2018), writing is regarded as a mentally demanding activity that is not acquired instinctively.

According to academic writing experts, the essay continues to be the most popular type of assignment (Bailey, 2014; Meyers, 2014; Van Geyte, 2013). More specifically, an essay is a piece of writing that focuses on a particular topic and is structured into several paragraphs. Each paragraph represents a major point, with the essay typically starting with an introductory paragraph and ending with a concluding paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). The primary elements of an essay are as follows:

1) The introductory paragraph: This serves to capture the reader's attention with compelling statements and set the tone for the essay.
2) The body paragraphs: These paragraphs provide the development of sub-topics related to the main topic, with each paragraph focusing on a specific aspect and supporting it with evidence, examples, or arguments.
3) The conclusion paragraph: This paragraph restates the main points discussed in the essay and may include additional quotations or insights to leave a lasting impression on the reader.

The achievement of a student's essay writing skills, whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory, can be attributed to the teaching and learning process that occurs within the classroom (Emparan, Said, & Baki, 2019). This perspective gains further credence through the insights provided by Rianti, Hardi, Afriyeni, and Rasyidah (2022), highlighting the challenging predicament faced by pupils due to the absence of suitable teaching methods, particularly in the realm of writing tasks. The effectiveness of the instructional process significantly impacts a student's ability to grasp and apply the necessary skills in written expression. Effective teaching strategies, a supportive learning environment, proficient instructors, and thoughtfully crafted instructional materials are crucial elements that significantly enhance a student's ability to excel in mastering Tamil language essay writing.

Rashid and Wang (2021) assert that the use of varying teaching techniques is important for educators, and the cognitive approach, which focuses on how students understand and process information, stands out as particularly effective. In this regard, educators must be proficient in traditional pedagogical approaches and contemporary and up-to-date methods (Almelhi, 2021). The incorporation of various modern pedagogical strategies and techniques into the instruction of Tamil writing skills encourages students to be actively engaged and become more productive in their practical applications. This approach allows students to move beyond mere theoretical understanding and empowers them to directly put their knowledge into practice (Nurharjanto & Widyantoro, 2020). Consequently, the implementation of modern instructional approaches fosters a dynamic and effective learning environment, enhancing students' capacity to apply their acquired knowledge and skills effectively.

The Need for Tamil Writing Competency
Writing skills are one of the components included in the teaching of the Tamil language. Students are taught and guided to write in an advanced form of alphabetic writing, words, and phrases to capable discourse form of writing an essay. Several forms of essays are taught to students in the Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document (DSKP) to convey their ideas and feelings. Among them is the writing of a factual essay. A factual essay is a type of academic or informative writing that presents verifiable and accurate information on a particular topic or subject. Its primary purpose is to convey objective facts, data, and evidence to inform the reader and provide a comprehensive understanding of the chosen subject matter. Unlike opinion-based essays, factual essay relies on credible sources and reputable research to support its claims and arguments. Factual essays help students develop critical thinking skills, enhance their research abilities, and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In the context of Malaysia, specifically Tamil primary schools, it is crucial for educators, particularly Tamil language teachers, to be adept at discerning and implementing effective teaching techniques and strategies during their instructional sessions. These pedagogical methods are purposefully designed to foster critical thinking among students and facilitate the achievement of daily learning objectives based on the DSKP. Tamil language teachers should take on the responsibility of achieving the goals of DSKP to witness improvements in students' writing skills. Hence, Tamil teachers are encouraged to utilize a diverse array of impactful and efficient strategies, techniques, and methods within the classroom setting to proficiently impart knowledge on factual essays.

Objective

1. Identifying teachers' practices in teaching Tamil essay writing.

Literature Review
Project-based learning (PBL)
Among the teaching methods used in teaching essays is project-based learning (PBL). One of the activities that can be categorized under PBL is the use of scrapbooks. Scrapbooks are highly effective in helping students to improve their writing skills. The integration of scrapbooks into writing activities and essays exposes students to a creative approach that can significantly enhance their creativity and development. The "scrapbook technique" in essay writing is a unique and creative approach that involves gathering a diverse range of materials relevant to the essay topics. These materials can include images, quotes, facts, statistics, and anecdotes collected from various sources like books, articles, websites, and newspapers. The collected materials are then compiled into a physical or digital scrapbook, serving as an inspiration and reference during the writing process. This technique aids in generating ideas, organizing thoughts, and outlining the main points of the essay. It triggers creativity and provides visual cues that complement the written ideas, rendering the process more engaging and enjoyable, especially for visual learners. As the essay is drafted, the scrapbook serves as a valuable resource to support arguments and add depth to the writing. Ultimately, the scrapbook technique facilitates a well-structured and well-supported essay, enhancing the overall quality of the final piece.

The findings of this study are congruent with the outcomes of action research by Tonge and Mahamod (2020). The action research aimed to investigate the impact of the PBL approach on the development of writing skills and the level of interest in writing among primary school students. The study deliberately selected four Year Five students who faced challenges in writing. The results revealed a notable improvement in the student's scores on the writing achievement test, indicating a positive effect of the PBL approach on their writing proficiency. Furthermore, the study observed a reduction in writing-related issues and a significant enhancement in the quality of the scrapbook projects produced by the students, meeting the set assignment requirements and evaluation criteria.

Jigsaw
Interestingly, one of the teaching methods commonly used for teaching essays is using the jigsaw method. This method, categorized as a specialized cooperative learning technique, is particularly effective during learning and teaching sessions (Rahman, Said, & Mokhtar, 2021). Initially, the teacher allocates individual students in a team to the task of collecting information on a particular topic. Subsequently, the students will be engaged in discussions with peers from other teams who have also gathered similar information as part of the jigsaw method. This group is referred to as the "expert group." After concluding their discussion, the students will return to their respective teams (home group) and share the insights acquired during the discussion with their team members. Throughout this process, students will be engaged in idea exchange, collaborative brainstorming, and in-depth discussions on the given topic, leveraging the information gathered from the expert teams. The team members collaborate on the teacher-assigned task, aiming to expand and enhance the taught material. The team's primary purpose is to ensure that every member successfully mastered the subject matter, preparing them thoroughly for the upcoming quiz (Slavin, 1995).

Several studies show that the application of the jigsaw method in the teaching of essay writing improves students' writing skills, as demonstrated by Akmal (2020). The research aimed to discover the significant effect of jigsaw on the students' writing procedure text skills. The experimental design was intended to determine the effect of the use of jigsaw on students' skills in writing procedure text in a college. Meanwhile, the researcher in this study used a test method as the instrument. The current study concludes that the jigsaw method significantly influenced students' ability to write the procedure text, as they had low writing skills before the intervention.

Student-Team Achievement Division (STAD)

The student-team achievement division (STAD) technique designed by Slavin (1994) is recognized as one of the foremost cooperative learning methods. Prevailing scholarly investigations within this domain consistently affirm that the implementation of the STAD method has yielded significant improvements in students' writing capabilities. This is attributed to its learner-centric orientation, which fosters collaborative writing endeavors among students. According to Slavin (1994), the STAD method is considered one of the simplest forms of cooperative learning. It is comprised of five key components: class presentations, group work, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition. The STAD technique introduced by Slavin in 1987 involves the creation of small groups comprising four or five individuals with varying levels of achievement, disregarding racial or gender distinctions. This approach aims to foster a contiguous learning experience for the entire class. Slavin (1994) further elaborated that within the STAD methodology, students are organized into groups consisting of four or five members, deliberately mixing different abilities, backgrounds, and genders. Consequently, educators must oversee these group discussions from a distance, ensuring the active cooperation of all team members in pursuit of their collective objectives.

A study by Nair and Sanai (2019) revealed that the use of the STAD method in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms had significantly enhanced Year Six students' performances in descriptive writing. The quantitative data findings indicate that the STAD method had significantly enhanced students' descriptive writing skills. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that students enjoyed writing in groups. They emphasized that they learned a lot from their friends when they were engaged in collaborative writing. Likewise, the teacher's reflection revealed that the STAD method improved students' writing skills through collaborative learning as it provided them with the opportunity to edit their group essays.

Think-Pair-Share (TPS)

Think-pair-share (TPS) is also an incredibly effective method frequently utilized in the teaching of essay writing. TPS is a cooperative learning strategy developed by Lyman in 1985, designed to benefit both educators and students who are new to collaborative learning (Usman, 2015). It serves as a stepping stone for fostering teamwork among learners. The method is particularly effective for inspiring students to tackle and conquer challenges that may initially seem beyond their reach. TPS is rooted in the principle of guided learning, and it empowers students to engage both individually and collectively. The application of TPS renders the learning experience more captivating, enabling students to enhance their understanding at an accelerated pace (Sugiarto & Sumarsono, 2014). The researchers suggest that TPS not only

allows students to receive guidance from their instructors but also encourages them to collaborate with peers, thereby injecting more excitement into the process of writing through joint brainstorming sessions. In the implementation of this pedagogical approach, the instructor presents a query, preferably one that necessitates critical analysis, evaluation, or the synthesis of ideas. Subsequently, students are allocated approximately one minute to contemplate and formulate a fitting response to the posed question (Lyman, 1987). The TPS method effectively promotes individual engagement, proving its adaptability across various grade levels regardless of class dimensions. Within this framework, students are guided to deconstruct inquiries into three captivating components:

Think: Students are allowed to ponder the question on their own and formulate their solutions. Nystrand (2006) highlights that thinking is a separate process from writing and that thinking processes precede writing processes. Therefore, educators should prioritize enhancing thinking skills in the initial phases of pre-writing to enhance writing outcomes.

Pair: Students are paired up to share their thoughts and ideas. This step enables them to communicate their perspectives and also take into account the viewpoints of their peers.

Share: Student pairs share their ideas with the whole class. Presenting thoughts to a group, aided by a partner, often eases the pressure on students. Additionally, this three-step procedure has led to the development of more polished student ideas (Teachervision, 2017). TPS ensures student engagement by encouraging them to join in actively. While their classmates share their essays with the class, they can ask questions, offer corrections, provide feedback, and contribute suggestions to help everyone enhance their writing. Eveline, Santoso, and Dwiastuty (2022) assessed the impact of the TPS method on the writing skill development of grade 10 students in a vocational high school. The purpose of the action research was to enhance students' writing skills in English through the implementation of the TPS learning method. Researchers in the study collected data by conducting interviews, observations, and tests with the students. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the TPS learning technique can effectively enhance students' writing skills in English. Furthermore, implementing the TPS technique in learning can significantly boost student motivation in writing. Moreover, active students can assist their friends by being more confident in sharing their ideas. The TPS learning method not only helps improve students' writing skills but also encourages them to think critically and develop their thoughts. Ultimately, the TPS learning technique allows students not only to be engaged in critical thinking but also enhance their communication skills as they share their ideas. After taking time to reflect and think, they are encouraged to express their thoughts through discussions or presentations in front of the class.

Fun Learning
Fun learning is a teaching and learning approach that aims to make education enjoyable and stress-free. This involves activities like games, singing, storytelling, acting, and poetry, which are carefully planned and carried out. According to KPM (2010), integrating elements like humor, excitement, aesthetics, music, and acting into lessons enhances the overall learning experience, making it more fun. Fun learning permits students to be more at ease and less anxious around their teachers because of the relaxed and enjoyable nature of the approach. This positivity creates a better learning atmosphere. Fun learning is about immersing students in specific subjects, focusing on activities that help them understand and engage with the material. This is called absorption, where students take in various knowledge areas, core

values, and practical skills they learn during teaching and learning. This absorption is a crucial part of the educational journey that enhances the overall experience.

Jamian, Razali, and Othman (2016) conducted a study to gather insights into the enhancement of essay writing through the use of the fun learning approach among Bahasa Malaysia teachers. Their study aimed to identify the employed strategies, techniques, and active elements in teaching essay writing through the application of the fun learning method. The study outcomes conclusively demonstrate that the use of this fun learning technique in Malay language instruction contributes to a significant improvement in students' proficiency in writing skills.

Gallery Walk

A gallery walk is an instructional method in which information or materials are displayed around a room or a specific area, and individuals or small groups move from one display to another, examining and often discussing the content. A gallery walk is an engaging classroom activity where students rotate through several tasks. These tasks often involve answering questions or completing short activities before moving on to the next one (Francek, 2006). This dynamic approach keeps students actively involved and encourages them to explore different topics interactively. Gallery walk is an excellent method for promoting meaningful discussions among learners. As they explore different stations and complete tasks, they not only engage with their peers but also get the chance to showcase their work or interact with learning materials carefully curated by the teacher.

The innovative gallery walk strategy is carefully crafted to empower students by allowing them to actively participate in sharing their thoughts, while also encouraging them to attentively listen and appreciate the viewpoints of their peers (Yusnidar, 2014). Moreover, this approach strives to enrich students' academic growth by sharpening essential skills, such as critical thinking, research proficiency, effective communication, and collaborative teamwork. By participating in this dynamic learning experience, students have the opportunity to broaden their horizons and acquire fresh insights that foster both personal and intellectual development. Through the implementation of this approach, students are empowered to actively participate in the selection, processing, and communication of information. This not only helps them develop a deeper understanding but also enhances their critical thinking skills. Moreover, the question-and-answer activities hone the students' communication abilities. The strategy goes beyond that by promoting active listening and fostering idea generation among students. According to Chew and Sulong (2019), the gallery walk learning strategy shows a positive effect on learning Malay writing among students.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this study, which is considered the most suitable for exploring the teaching practices of Tamil language teachers in the context of teaching factual essays in the Tamil language. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which is effective in delving into the respondents' thought processes, assessing latent knowledge or information, and ascertaining their attitudes and beliefs (Tuckman, 1972). It aligns with the assertion by Gay and Airasian (2003), i.e., the interview method is well-suited because it allows the exploration and investigation of study participants to collect in-depth data regarding their experiences and feelings. This study was conducted according to the Ressett Model (1987), which is a Training Needs Assessment Model. It consists of four

important steps: identifying the context, determining the purpose, choosing data collection techniques, and making plans.

This study utilizes the purposive sampling method, which emphasizes specificity and aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding by continuing sampling until no new substantive information is obtained (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Creswell (2012), the optimal number of participants for qualitative research usually falls within the range of 3 to 10 individuals, depending on the specific research focus. In the context of this study, the researcher chose to include six study participants. This decision was based on data saturation, indicating that no new themes emerged. This study involved six Tamil school teachers from the state of Negeri Sembilan. All of them met the set criteria, i.e., having extensive experience and knowledge in teaching the Tamil language in primary schools for more than ten years. Information regarding the participants' demography is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Descriptions

Participants	Education Level	Experience (Years)
P1	Bachelor in Tamil	13
P2	Bachelor in Tamil	21
P3	Master	28
P4	Bachelor in Tamil	12
P5	Master	28
P6	Bachelor in Tamil	19

The researcher has adapted the interview protocol from Mazlan (2020). In the context of this study, the credibility and reliability of the interview instrument were accomplished via several steps, as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). These steps include expert judgment, conducting a preliminary study, data triangulation, and obtaining the consent of study participants (member checking). Once the data collection stage is completed in the context of this study, the process of data analysis begins. All data collected through interview instruments were transcribed. The process involved re-copying the data from audio recordings of interviews with study participants. Upon completion of the transcription process, the data were organized according to the date they were collected. This step, referred to as data organization, aims to facilitate the referencing of the data (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Finally, the data was analyzed using NVivo 14, specifically employing narrative analysis techniques. Each study participant is labeled as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. The code "P" is an abbreviation for participant.

Results

This section explores the findings of the study on the practice of teaching essay writing among Tamil teachers, specifically focusing on their teaching strategies and techniques in the classroom.

Teaching Strategies

The interview results indicate that teachers continue to exert dominance within the classroom setting. They control both rhetoric and subject knowledge, which, in turn, limits students' active participation in the pre-writing process involving topic exploration, analysis,

and content synthesis. The study reveals that the teaching practices of these educators often involve providing ideas and writing content, potentially impeding their students' ability to engage effectively in these essential pre-writing activities. This study revealed that the vast majority of teachers employ teacher-centered teaching strategies. This assertion is substantiated by the interview responses provided by participants P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, as follows:

> I typically begin by providing an initial explanation of the essay's title. Following that, I present the main content and supporting points in a bulleted format, aligning them with the essay's title. (P1)

> I prepare the main content in the form of a mind map. Following that, I ask questions based on the provided main content. Each student is provided the opportunity to answer the questions. (P2)

> In my current teaching practice, I focus on preparing essay content and ensuring that students have a clear understanding. I provide relevant main points and offer detailed explanations to support their learning. (P3)

> I employ guided techniques, which involve providing students with the essay's content as a writing guide. A notable activity within this approach is having students construct sentences using the words or phrases I've provided. (P4)

> I provide the initial content to the students, allowing them to develop it into a complete essay. I begin by explaining the topic, and then I divide the students into several groups. Each group receives the main content and is tasked with expanding upon it. (P5)

While certain educators opt to supply students with ideas and content directly, an alternative pedagogical approach is adopted by those who actively engage in student-centered teaching. This paradigm shift is substantiated by the assertions articulated by P6.

> I incorporate mind maps as a teaching tool for essay composition. Following an explanation of the essay's title, I divided the students into several groups. Each group is assigned the task of identifying the main content, with my role being that of a facilitator. (P6)

Teacher-centered teaching strategies, like memorizing essays, copying, and filling in the blanks, position the teacher as the central figure in the educational process. Simultaneously, students are merely expected to absorb and commit to memory the information presented. Unfortunately, these approaches fail to foster critical, analytical, or creative thinking among students. Instead, it leans towards the absorption and regurgitation of information. While these pedagogical techniques are relevant in certain contexts, such as memorizing essential facts or refining writing proficiency, they tend to promote passive learning, eclipsing the cultivation of critical reasoning and profound comprehension. The practices observed among Tamil educators, encompassing activities like essay memorization, essay replication, and the completion of predetermined content gaps, serve as tangible exemplars that substantiate the

findings of our study, which highlight the enduring prevalence of teacher-centered teaching strategies. This validation is further reinforced through the insights garnered from interviews with participants denoted as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6.

> I instructed the students to memorize the essay. This particular method proves valuable for cementing essential facts and information, especially in the context of essay composition. I will supply the students with sample essays and allocate sufficient time for them to commit the content to memory. (P1)

> Occasionally, I employ the memorization technique as well. To illustrate, I furnish students with an essay and guide them in committing it to memory. Subsequently, I encourage students to utilize the content of the same essay as a foundation for crafting an essay with a title that closely mirrors the original. Beyond these strategies, I also integrate the approach of re-copying essays into my teaching methodology. By engaging in the act of copying once more, students have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with grammatical nuances, encompassing verb usage and sentence structures. (P2)

While P3 did incorporate essay memorization into the classroom setting, it is noteworthy that he concurred that this approach has not been proven effective in cultivating creative thinking among the students.

> Furthermore, I often encourage the memorization of essential phrases and expressions that can be employed within essays. Although this approach undoubtedly enhances memorization skills, it has become apparent that students occasionally encounter challenges in creatively applying this acquired knowledge to real-world writing endeavors. (P3)

> Sometimes, I ask students to memorize the essay so they can identify important facts. In addition, students are given an activity to fill in the blanks using their own words to complete the paragraph. (P4)

> I practice filling in the blanks and memorization for weak students. I will give an incomplete essay where there are blank spaces to be filled with the appropriate answer. I will also provide the correct answer so that students can fill in the blanks with the appropriate answer. (P5)

> Furthermore, I incorporate memorization into my instructional approach. I encourage students to memorize a variety of essay examples, thereby equipping them with the capability to compose comprehensive essays when presented with a title of similar nature as a practice exercise. (P6)

Teacher's Teaching Techniques

The effectiveness of the teacher's teaching technique in writing Tamil essays can be demonstrated through the results of the interviews. Upon analyzing the conducted interviews, it is evident that all study participants commonly employ discussion and question-and-answer techniques when teaching essay writing skills in the classroom. Participants P1,

P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 actively engage in discussions with their students and encourage student involvement through question-and-answer sessions during the essay writing lessons.

> To facilitate the development of the main content, I will engage in discussions with students and teachers. During these sessions, I will pose open-ended questions to encourage students to think critically and articulate their ideas. These questions will foster productive discussions among the students, allowing them to exchange opinions and viewpoints. (P1)

> I will ask questions based on the main content given by using question words such as Why? What? Who? etc. This technique will help students to generate side ideas and appropriate examples based on the main content. Then, I will have a discussion with the students to provide additional information or explanations to the students. (P2)

> Students from each group discuss with the teacher how to develop the content of their essay using the questions asked by the teacher. (P3)

> Students will be asked questions based on stimulus materials. The answers to the questions will be discussed in class. I will provide additional clarification during this discussion. (P4)

> I will ask the students questions to encourage them to find additional ideas and relevant site content. Once each group has finished developing their content, a representative from the group will present their work to the class. In the presentation session, each main content will be discussed together with the side content that has been obtained. This aims to ensure that the answers given by the students are complete and comprehensive. (P5)

Besides utilizing discussion and question-and-answer techniques, P6 also incorporated another approach in his teaching of essay writing. The interview revealed that he actively employed the brainstorming technique in the classroom. These details were identified through the statements provided by P6 during the interview.

> Each group is assigned the task of identifying the main content, with me acting as the facilitator. I aim to stimulate and assist students in finding the main content by asking key questions. I will compile the content mentioned by the group representatives and filter out any irrelevant information. Subsequently, students will develop the content within their respective groups and present it in class. The content will then be discussed in class to ensure its accuracy. (P6)

Discussion
The qualitative findings reveal a predominant teacher-centered approach in the instructional strategies employed by Tamil language teachers when it comes to essay writing. The interview data strongly suggest that teachers frequently adopt a method where they directly furnish students with ideas and content for their essays. This observed phenomenon emphasizes the pivotal role of teachers as the principal purveyors of knowledge and information, positioning

students primarily in the role of receivers. In essence, the instructional dynamic leans heavily towards the teacher being the central figure in the learning process, guiding and providing information. Concurrently, students assume a more passive role in absorbing and assimilating the given content. The alignment of these findings with a prior study by Palanisamy (2020), which similarly highlighted the predominant use of teacher-centered strategies among Tamil language teachers in teaching essay writing, reinforces the persistence of this instructional approach. Perumal, Husin, and Nachiappan (2022) further endorsed Palanisamy's viewpoint by affirming that teachers still adhere to teacher-centered instructional practices when teaching essay writing.

The data collected from interviews with Tamil language teachers clearly showed that they mostly employ teacher-centered instruction. Teachers openly admit to relying heavily on methods like memorization, filling in the blanks, and copying essays. The study indicates that all six participants regularly use activities focused on memorizing essays in class. Simultaneously, two of the six participants included exercises where students fill in blanks, and one participant involved students in rewriting essays. The prevalent use of memorization techniques, particularly for essay writing, is identified as a pedagogical approach that may hinder the development of critical thinking skills and analytical abilities among students. As highlighted by Alsowat (2016), this approach tends to cast students into passive roles, where the focal point is memorization by rote rather than active engagement with the substantive content. The shift towards passive learning can be detrimental, hindering the development of independent analytical thinking and diminishing the students' ability to critically assess and apply learned concepts. Mamat, Kamaruddin, Al-Fatah, and Manggang (2021) further support Alsowat's perspective by asserting that teaching methods emphasizing the memorization of essays can obstruct students from cultivating open-mindedness and expressing their ideas coherently in written form.

The study findings also reveal that all participants commonly utilize discussion and question-and-answer techniques when imparting essay writing skills in the classroom. However, the study identifies a lack of awareness among participants regarding the importance of diversifying teaching techniques. Teaching techniques such as brainstorming, games, drama or role-playing, problem-solving, and others receive comparatively less attention in the context of writing skills instruction. Furthermore, student-centered teaching strategies, including project-based learning (PBL), fun learning, and cooperative methods such as jigsaw, think-pair-share (TPS), and student-team achievement division (STAD), are also found to be underutilized by Tamil language teachers in the instructional delivery of essay writing within the classroom setting. This finding aligns with the findings by Akram, Siddiqa, Nabi, Shahzad, and Rashid (2020) in Pakistan, involving 265 English language teachers. The results indicated that the most common teaching techniques these educators use are demonstrations, lectures, and question-and-answer sessions to teach essay writing. The reliance on such traditional methods may result in limited exposure to diverse instructional strategies, potentially hindering students' ability to develop a well-rounded set of writing skills.

Implication and Conclusion

The main conclusion of the study is that Tamil language teachers predominantly use a teacher-centered approach in their instructional strategies for teaching essay writing. The findings also show that although all participants commonly use discussion and question-and-answer methods to teach essay writing skills, there is a noticeable lack of awareness among

them about the importance of diversifying teaching techniques. In summary, this study leads to two main implications. Firstly, it highlights the urgent need to shift from a teacher-centered approach to one that actively involves students more in their learning. Secondly, it calls for the introduction of a variety of teaching techniques and methods, acknowledging the drawbacks of over-reliance on rote learning and direct copying. These implications extend beyond the classroom, impacting the development of critical thinking skills crucial for both academic and professional success.

Practically, educators need to consider incorporating innovative and student-centered teaching methods to foster active participation and critical thinking. Looking ahead, the implications of this study transcend the confines of the classroom, emphasizing the necessity for teacher professional development programs that concentrate on innovative and student-centered pedagogies. Educators should undergo continuous exposure and systematic teaching guidance to enhance the quality of essay writing instruction. The school administration can organize specialized courses and training sessions for Tamil teachers, focusing on a diverse range of teaching techniques and a student-centered approach to essay writing. Providing appropriate teaching aids is essential for equipping teachers with effective instructional tools. These aids constitute a diverse array of resources, including modules, visual aids, multimedia presentations, interactive tools, and supplementary materials. Strategically employed, this varied set of instructional tools enhances the overall teaching and learning experience. Teaching aids are pivotal in supporting educators as they endeavor to diversify their essay teaching techniques. By offering a curated selection of materials and resources tailored to the curriculum's needs and the diverse learning styles of students and student-centered teaching, teaching aids become invaluable tools in the instructional process. Furthermore, authorities should actively support research and development efforts aimed at creating teaching materials that align with the specific requirements of essay writing instruction in Tamil language. This comprehensive approach is crucial for fostering a dynamic and student-centric learning environment, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of essay writing pedagogy in the Tamil language context.

Future research endeavors could embark on an extensive exploration, specifically focusing on the effectiveness of a diverse array of teaching techniques and approaches in enhancing students' essay-writing skills in the Tamil language. This inquiry may entail a meticulous examination of various pedagogical strategies, taking into account crucial factors such as student engagement, comprehension, and the cultivation of critical thinking within the writing context. By immersing into these dimensions, future research holds the promise of offering nuanced insights that can significantly inform educational practices and pedagogical approaches. This, in turn, has the potential to sculpt a more effective and tailored educational landscape specifically designed for the advancement of students' writing skills in the Tamil language. Moreover, research endeavors of this nature can breathe new life into the field of Tamil language research in Malaysia, opening avenues for innovative exploration and contributing to the enrichment of language education in the Malaysian context.

Despite certain limitations in this study, its findings contribute valuable insights that can guide educational practices toward a more holistic and effective approach to teaching essay writing in Tamil. Overall, this research invites further exploration in the development and implementation of pedagogical strategies that promote a holistic, student-centered, and diverse approach to essay writing instruction.

References

Akmal. (2020). The effect of jigsaw to students' skill in writing procedure text. *Journal of Linguistics, English Teaching and Education*, *1*(3), 64–71.

Akram, M., Siddiqa, A., Nabi, A. G., Shahzad, W., & Rashid, M. (2020). Essay writing and its problems: A study of ESL students at secondary level. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, *10*(6), 237–244. DOI: 10.5539/ijel.v10n6p237

Almelhi, A. M. (2021). Effectiveness of the ADDIE model within an e-learning environment in developing creative writing in EFL students. *English Language Teaching*, *14*(2), 20–36. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n2p20

Alsowat, H. (2016). An EFL flipped classroom teaching model: Effects on English language higher-order thinking skills, student engagement and satisfaction. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *7*(9), 108–121

Bailey, S. (2014). Academic writing: A handbook for international students (4th ed.). Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research of education: An introductive to theories and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Chew, F. P., & Sulong, M. M. (2019). Kesan strategi *gallery walk* terhadap pencapaian murid-murid dalam pembelajaran penulisan Bahasa Melayu. *Jurnal Penyelidikan Sains Sosial*, *2*(5), 43–62. http://www.jossr.com/PDF/JOSSR-2019-05-12-06.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Emparan, A., Said, R. R., & Baki, R. (2019). Exploring the use of flipped classroom technique in teaching writing skills (Meneroka penggunaan teknik flipped classroom dalam pengajaran kemahiran menulis). *International Journal of Education and Training (InjET)*, *5*(1), 1–8.

Eveline, M. R. F., Santoso, D. A. A., & Dwiastuty, N. (2022). Improving students' writing skill using think pair share strategy. *Journal of English Education*, *2*(1), 77–87. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30998/jedu.v2i1.6420

Francek, M. (2006). Gallery walk – Starting point teaching entry level geoscience. Retrieved from https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/gallerywalk/index.html

Gay, L. R., & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Hayes, J. R. (1996). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In C. M. Levy, & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing: Theories, methods, individual differences and applications* (pp. 1–27). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Jamian, A. R., Razali, N. N., & Othman, S. (2016). Pengaplikasian teknik didik hibur meningkatkan pencapaian penulisan karangan Bahasa Melayu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, *41*(1), 39–45. http://ejournal.ukm.my/jpend/issue/view/800

Kellogg, R. T. (1996). A model of working memory in writing. In C. M. Levy & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing: Theories, methods, individual differences, and applications* (pp. 57–71). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (KPM). (2010). *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan (2006–2010): Edisi Pelancaran PIPP 2006*. Putrajaya, Malaysia: Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (KPM).

Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (KPM). (2017). *Standard kualiti pendidikan Malaysia gelombang 2 (SKPMG2)*. Putrajaya, Malaysia: Jemaah Nazir dan Jaminan Kualiti.

Lyman, F. (1987). Think-Pair-Share: An ending teaching technique. *MAA-CIE Cooperative News*, 1, 1–2.

Mamat, S., Kamaruddin, A. Y., Al-Fatah, S. N. K. M., & Manggang, M. C. F. A. (2021). Permasalahan, cabaran dan amalan pengajaran guru dalam Pengajaran Dan Pemudahcaraan (PdPc) penulisan karangan pelajar sekolah menengah. *International Journal of Education and Training (InjET)*, *7*(Isu Khas), 1–10.

Mazlan, N. H. (2020). *Development of collaborative flipped instruction for form one Malay language writing* (Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia). Retrieved from http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/14672/

Meyers, A. (2014). Longman academic writing series 5: Essays to research papers. London: Pearson Education.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Nair, S. M., & Sanai, M. (2019). Effects of utilizing the STAD method (Cooperative Learning Approach) in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, *6*(4), 239–252. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2018.64.239.252

Nurharjanto, A. A., & Widyantoro, A. (2020). The effect of language learning strategy and technology toward students' writing skills. *Jurnal Kependidikan Penelitian Inovasi Pembelajaran*, *4*(2), 213–225. https://doi.org/10.21831/jk.v4i2.34103

Nystrand, M. (2006). The social and historical context for writing research. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 11–27). New York: Guilford Press.

Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). *Writing academic English* (4th ed.). London: Pearson Longman

Palanisamy, M. B. (2020). *Analisis masalah, cara penyelesaian dan pembinaan model dalam penulisan Bahasa Tamil murid Tahun 5 SJK (Tamil)* (Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia). Retrieved from

https://ir.upsi.edu.my/doc.php?t=p&id=91aea1914769e6963b1a9dbb33056121657c1f5dddff0

Pavanelli, R. (2018). The flipped classroom: A mixed methods study of academic performance and student perception in EAP writing context. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, *5*(2), 16–26. DOI:10.30845/ijll.v5n2a3

Perumal, P., Husin, M. R., & Nachiappan, S. (2022). Analisis Gaya Kognisi dan Afeksi Murid dalam Penulisan Karangan Bahasa Melayu di Sekolah Rendah. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *4*(1), 22–28. DOI: 10.36079/lamintang.jhass-0401.340

Rahman, S. Z. A., Said, R. R., & Mokhtar, M. M. (2021). Pengetahuan bakal guru BPBM terhadap teknik pengajaran karangan jenis berformat menengah atas. *International Journal of Education and Training (InjET)*, *7*(Isu Khas), 1–10.

Rashid, M. H., & Wang, H. (2021). Analyse the issues and challenges in teaching writing among English teachers. *The International Journal of Applied Language Studies and Culture*, *4*(2),19–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.34301/alsc.v4i2.34

Rianti, W., Hardi, V. A., Afriyeni, Y., & Rasyidah, U. (2022). Analysis of teaching writing strategies. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan, 14*(3), 3705–3712. DOI:10.35445/alishlah.v14i3.1866

Richards, J. C., & Renandya, A. W. (2002). Teaching writing. In J. C. Richards & A. W. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 303–305). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rossett, A. (1987). *Training needs assessment.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Slavin, R. E. (1987). Cooperative learning and cooperative school. *Educational Leadership*, *45*, 7–13.

Slavin, R. E. (1994). *A practical guide to cooperative learning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Sugiarto, D., & Sumarsono, P. (2014). The implementation of Think-Pair-Share Model to improve students' ability in reading narrative texts. *International Journal of Education*, *3*(3), 203–207.

Teachervision. (2017). Think, Pair, Share cooperative learning strategy. Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/group-work/think-pair-share-cooperative-learning-strategy

Tonge, M. L., & Mahamod, Z. (2020). Kesan pembelajaran berasaskan projek terhadap kemahiran menulis karangan murid sekolah rendah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, *45*(1), 12–20. http://dx.doi.org/10.17576/JPEN-2020-45.01-02

Tuckman, B. W. (1972). *Conducting educational research*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Usman, A. (2015). Using the Think-Pair-Share strategy to improve students' speaking ability at Stain Ternate. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *6*(10),37–45.

Van Geyte, E. (2013). *Writing: Learn to write better academic essays* (1st ed.). London: Collins.

Yusnidar. (2014). Penerapan metode gallery walk untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks analytical exposition Bahasa Inggris Siswa Kelas XI IPA-1 MAN Model Banda Aceh. *Journal GEEJ (Getsempena English Education Journal*), 1(2), 55–63.