

Malaysian ESL Writing Process: A Comparison with England's

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Abstract : Research in comparative and international education often provides value-laden views of an education system within and in between other countries. These views are frequently used by policy makers or educators to explore similarities and differences for, among others, benchmarking purposes. In this study, a comparison is made between Malaysia and England, focusing on the process of writing children went through to create a text, using a multimodal theoretical framework to analyse this comparison. The main purpose is political in nature as it served as an answer to Malaysia's call for benchmarking of best practices for language learning. Furthermore, the focus on writing in this study adds into more empirical findings about early writers' writing development and writing improvement, especially for children at the ages of 5-9. In research, comparative studies in English as a Second Language (ESL) writing pedagogy - particularly in Malaysia since the introduction of the Standard-based English Language Curriculum (KSSR) in 2011 as a draft and its full implementation in 2017; reviewed 2018 KSSR-CEFR aligned - has not been done comparatively. In theory, a multimodal theoretical framework somehow allows a logical comparison between first language and ESL which would provide useful insights to illuminate the writing process between Malaysia and England. The comparisons are not representative because of the different school systems in both countries. So far, the literature informs us that the curriculum for language learning is very much emphasised on children's linguistic abilities, which include their proficiency and mastery of the language, its conventions, and technicalities. However, recent empirical findings suggested that literacy in its concepts and characters need change. In view of this suggestion, the comparison will look at how the process of writing is implemented through the five modes of communication: linguistic, visual, aural, spatial, and gestural. This project draws on data from Malaysia and England, involving 10 teachers, 26 classroom observations, 20 lesson plans, 20 interviews, and 20 brief conversations with teachers. The research focused upon 20 primary children of different genders aged 5-9, and in addition to primary data descriptions, 40 children's works, 40 brief classroom conversations, 30 classroom photographs, and 30 school compound photographs were undertaken to investigate teachers and children's use of modes and semiotic resources to design a text. The data were analysed by means of within-case analysis, cross-case analysis, and constant comparative analysis, with an initial stage of data categorisation, followed by general and specific coding, which clustered the data into thematic groups. The study highlights the importance of teachers' and children's engagement and interaction with various modes of communication, an adaptation from the English approaches to teaching writing within the KSSR framework and providing 'voice' to ESL writers to ensure that both have access to the knowledge and skills required to make decisions in developing multimodal texts and artefacts.

Keywords : comparative education, early writers, KSSR, multimodal theoretical framework, writing development

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