



# Teachers' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of a Process Genre Approach on the Writing Skills of Students with Dyslexia

Nur Alia Salim<sup>1</sup>, Zachary M. Walker<sup>1</sup>, Kara Rosenblatt<sup>2</sup>

1 National Institute of Education, Singapore

2 University of Texas of the Permian Basin

---

## Abstract

*This research study provides an overview of five Singaporean teachers' perceptions of the process genre writing approach as a method to improve the writing skills of students diagnosed with dyslexia. The researchers conducted a case study with five teachers from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. Teachers were selected as study participants based on purposeful sampling. Data collection for the participants included a pre-interview questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. All five teachers reported using elements of the process genre writing approach during instruction. Themes representing the teachers' view of the process-genre approach to teaching writing emerged from the research including accessibility to resources, idea generation, structured instruction, familiarity, and ease of use emerged from the study. The results are discussed and suggestions are provided for further research.*

**Keywords:** Teachers' perceptions, process genre approach, learning difficulties, dyslexia, teaching writing, writing difficulties, 6+1 Traits.

---

\* Correspondence to:  
Nur Alia Salim, Email: [nur\\_alia@das.org.sg](mailto:nur_alia@das.org.sg)

### **Teachers' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of a Process Genre Approach on the Writing Skills of Students with Dyslexia**

The ability to communicate through writing is an important skill needed to succeed in school and essential for successful participation at work and in a society (Norman & Spencer, 2005). However, in many schools in Singapore the writing process is usually embedded within literacy curriculum and is seldom taught in isolation. To develop proficient writers, teachers must provide quality literacy instruction that includes a specific focus on writing (Kraayenoord, Miller, Moni & Jobling, 2009). Essentially, teachers must go beyond teaching writing in the context of reading. While there are a variety of instructional strategies to use when teaching writing, teachers' knowledge of writing pedagogies may differ. Norman and Spencer (2005) found that pre-service educators' personal writing practices and biases, along with their exposure to a variety of writing pedagogies, shapes pre-service educators' beliefs and attitudes about writing, writing development and writing instruction. If left unexamined, pre-service educators' beliefs about writing will impact their assimilation of new instructional methods.

A majority of students with learning disabilities (LD) struggle with all aspects of literacy, including writing. When teaching writing to students with LD, Paran (2012) reported that there is no consensus on any one aspect of writing instruction that will lead to improved writing skills for students with LD. In order to determine effective writing

interventions for students with learning disabilities (LD), including dyslexia, it is important to learn what methods teachers are currently using to teach writing and whether they find the approach effective. These methods include the product, process, and genre approaches as these three pedagogical approaches have been the forefront of discussions of the teaching of writing in the last few decades (Paran, 2012). Thus, one way to bridge the gap between research and practice in writing instruction is to determine if these processes are currently being used to teach writing to students with learning disabilities.

### **Review of the Literature**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) defines the term specific learning disability to be, "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes in understanding or in using language, spoken or written..." IDEA (2004) specifically names dyslexia as a disability included in the definition of specific learning disabilities (P.L. 108-466, Sec. 602[30]). For the purpose of this paper, the term Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD) will be used. SpLD was chosen as the focus of this paper is on the need to improve writing skills for students with dyslexia.

When compared to their non-disabled peers, students with SpLD are often seen as underachievers who struggle with low levels of motivation and frequently experience poor academic self-concepts. Poor academic self-concept typically manifests in meager achievement and/or limited learning gains in areas such as

reading and writing (Kraayenoord et al., 2009). Students with reading disabilities often find written tasks laborious and produce written work that will include a "paucity of ideas that prevents them from developing or embellishing their ideas" and "a lack of cohesiveness" (Kraayenoord et.al., 2009, p.27; Ng, 2013).

The International Dyslexia Association's (IDA) definition of dyslexia is a "language-based learning disability" in which the primary symptoms are "difficulties in spelling, writing, pronouncing words and particularly, reading" (IDA, 2012, p.1). Difficulties with written output, "like the inability or poor ability to express ideas clearly or adequately in written form, are considered one of the characteristics of dyslexia" (Chia, 2009, p.8). The impairment in written expression skills for students with dyslexia can also include compositional fluency (Berninger, 2000). Berninger et. al., (2007) highlighted the importance of addressing writing difficulties in students with developmental dyslexia as students with dyslexia require a certain methodology when learning to read, spell, and write.

Writing can be a subjective process; therefore, defining what is considered "good writing" can be a challenge for many teachers. In the context of teaching writing, Nauman, Stirling, and Borthwick (2011) found that without a thorough understanding of good writing, teachers often feel uncertain about deciding what to teach, how to assess students' work, and how to provide feedback on students' writing. To improve the quality of writing instruction, Ulusov and Dedeoglu (2011) suggest that teachers apply reading and writing strategies

throughout learning. Nauman et al. (2011) are advocates for use of the research-based 6+1 Traits model. The 6 + 1 model encompasses the key qualities that define strong writing, including ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation (Nauman et al., 2011).

### **Singapore Education System**

Singapore is known for its high stakes assessment educational system (Law, 2013). The high stakes assessment-based system in Singapore is stressful for both mainstream teachers and students. In order for students to move on to the next grade, they must pass the comprehension and standardised writing section of an English examination. For students with reading disabilities who are unable to understand written language, the comprehension section is difficult.

Mainstream teachers who are unsure of their role in a classroom with students with SpLD tend to focus on teaching to the test or the end product, rather than focusing instruction on the actual writing process (Brimi, 2012). However, teaching the writing process to students with SpLD is critical to ensure student promotion to the next grade.

Fortunately, teachers in a non-mainstream education setting, like the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) who work with students with SpLD, can focus on literacy remediation that includes teaching about the process of writing rather than focusing instruction solely on those methods that are believed to increase test scores.

## **Dyslexia and the Orton-Gillingham approach**

The connection between reading and writing has been described as reciprocal (Anderson & Biggs, 2011). Anderson and Briggs (2011) explained that when a person writes, they also read, and when a person reads, there is a need to compose meaning. The authors further suggested that struggling readers who are not provided with opportunities to write are less likely to improve their literacy skills. With respect to students with dyslexia, the Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles used in the OG approach to teaching reading and spelling may be useful when planning a writing intervention for children with dyslexia.

Chia and Houghton (2011) note that most children with dyslexia have a phonological processing deficit. Phonological processing deficits often include difficulty distinguishing between letter-sound correspondences in order to decode a word (Chia & Houghton, 2011). This deficit leads to the most common symptoms of dyslexia: poor short term memory and difficulty or inaccuracies copying from a board or a book (DAS, 2013a).

The OG approach uses systematic, sequential, multisensory, synthetic and phonics-based approach to teach reading, spelling and writing (Chia & Houghton, 2011). The OG approach is provided systematically and cumulatively, and requires mastery and "overlearning" before students learns a new concept.

The OG approach is based on ongoing diagnostic and prescriptive assessment to

individualise for each student's needs (Ritchey & Goetze, 2006).

## **Writing difficulties in students with dyslexia**

Students with dyslexia can be articulate, well-spoken and able to demonstrate their ability to understand concepts and ideas in verbal conversation. However, writing presents a unique challenge. Individuals with dyslexia frequently write disjointed sentences, lack a clear sequence, and are more restricted in vocabulary. Students with SpLD often face challenges in academic writing assignments, even after reading has become easier for them (Perin & Graham, 2006).

These individuals may find it difficult to get started, struggle to organise and develop their ideas fluently, and struggle to keep track of their thoughts while getting them down on paper (Richards, 1999). These struggles may reflect their lack of automaticity in basic processes underlying literacy (Nicolson & Fawcett, 1990). With the difficulties that students with dyslexia face, it is understandable why they avoid writing tasks.

## **Writing approaches**

Badger and White (2000) developed the process genre approach, which adopts the strengths of the product, process and genre approaches.

Each of these writing approaches is described briefly before the process genre approach is introduced.

### **Product approach**

As the name suggests, teachers use this approach to focus on the quality of the final piece of writing. The product approach introduces text organisation and provides opportunities for students to practice language such as grammar and vocabulary required for the topic (Badger & White, 2000). Students are corrected or graded based on their ability to apply specific language features to a written piece (Belbase, 2012). The limitation of the product approach is that it emphasizes the technical aspects of writing, such as grammar, rather than the actual writing processes and their products such as drafting and re-writing (Belbase, 2012).

### **Process approach**

The process approach takes students through four stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising and editing) before the final writing piece is achieved (Kim, 2006.). These stages help the students understand the nature of the writing process (Ng, 2013). Prewriting involves the teacher brainstorming story ideas with the students. The limitation of the process approach is its lack of emphasis on linguistic knowledge, such as grammar and text structure (Badger & White, 2000).

### **Genre approach**

The term "genre" refers to the different types of texts that are used in a particular culture to achieve specific purposes (Derewianka, 1996). For example, a formal letter is a genre because it is used specifically to communicate to another (Hammond Burns, Joyce, Brosnan, & Gerot, 1992). In the genre approach, the emphasis is on making connections

between the knowledge of the language, like the language features, to the social purpose, like writing a letter (Kim, 2006.). There are three stages of the genre approach, modeling a genre, joint-construction of a text by the teacher and the students, and the independent writing stage. The genre approach does not go through the writing process of drafting, revising, and editing.

### **Process genre approach**

The process genre approach involves knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens, as well as the purpose of the writing. This approach also involves the writing development that draws out the learners' potential. There are six stages in the process genre approach, preparation, modeling, planning, joint-constructing, independent constructing and revising (Badger & White, 2000). The authors proposed that this approach could be an effective methodology for writing. The stages of writing have been summarised by Belbase (2012) as seen in Figure 1.

### **Writing approach suggested at the DAS**

The DAS Writing Framework is similar to Derewianka's (1992) curriculum cycle. The writing stages are pre-writing, deconstruction, joint-construction, and independent writing. In the pre-writing stage, the teacher introduces the topic through brainstorming with the class. Next, deconstruction follows the modeling stage when the teacher introduces the genre of the topic by explicitly highlighting the text structure and language features. Then, together with the students, a plan of the writing topic is

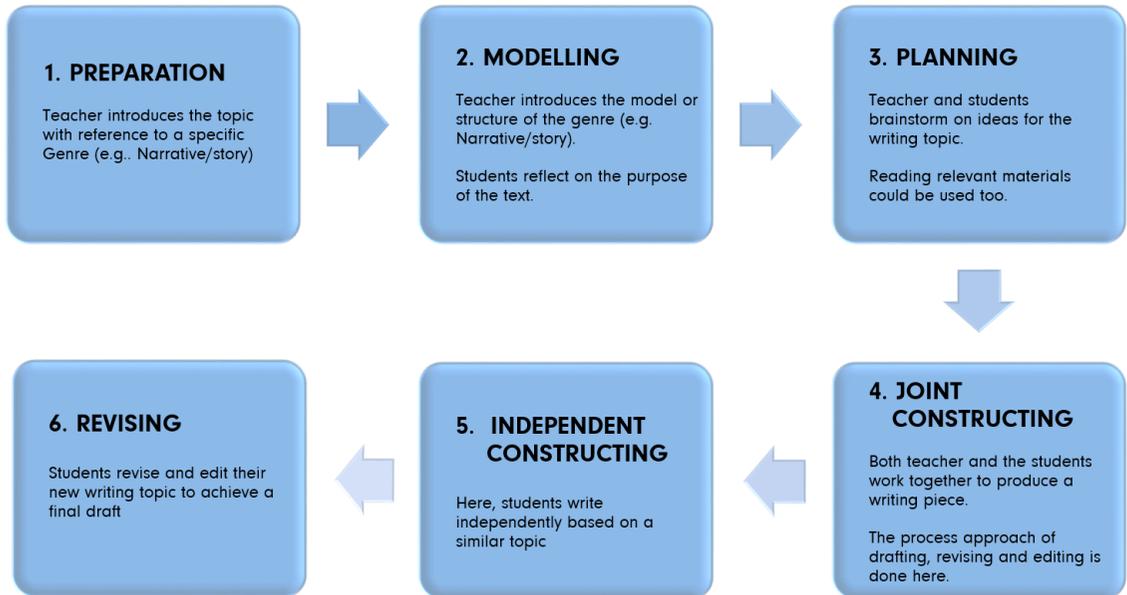


Figure 1. Six stages of the Process Genre Approach.

created based on the points that were brainstormed. Students also go through revisions at this stage. The last stage involves independent writing where the students write out their plan. For more independent learners, the last stage might also include writing out the story based on a similar topic independently. This stage allows the teacher to diagnose whether or not students are applying the concepts introduced. Figure 2 shows the diagram that demonstrates the four stages.

The teaching approach suggested by the DAS is cumulative and systematic, with structured stages, and is aligned with the process genre approach. This approach provides opportunities for students to practise skills and to make connections with related texts and language experiences in a wider context. Students begin learning the writing process collectively, by writing with the teacher. Eventually students will obtain autonomy that will enable them to write independently in school.



Figure 2. Four stages of Writing at Dyslexia Association of Singapore.

## Ideas, Organisation

For the purpose of this research study, the authors will use Coe, Hanita, Nishioka, & Smiley (2011) definitions for the terms ideas and organisation. Ideas and organisation are pertinent concepts to focus on for learners with dyslexia. Some of the writing difficulties faced by learners with dyslexia, according to Richards (1999), are their struggle to organise and develop their ideas fluently.

### Ideas.

Based on the 6+1 Writing Traits Model, ideas are defined as "the main message, the content of the piece, the theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme" (Coe et al., 2011, p. 6). As struggling readers, students with dyslexia may not read as much as their peers. Thus, it is important to build on their content knowledge by reading materials that relate to the writing topic and then brainstorm on the topic after reading.

### Organisation.

Organisation refers to "the internal structure, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas within the writing" (Coe et al., p. 6). With the difficulties faced by students with dyslexia, writing a structured and sequential piece can be difficult. Graphic organisers can assist students to understand abstract concepts and guide students to create an organised, cohesive written product (Dexter & Hughes, 2011). This study explored five teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the process genre approach as a method to improve the ability to generate ideas and

create an organised writing product for students with dyslexia. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does a teacher's current writing instruction include elements of the process genre approach?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of using the process genre approach to improve the writing skills of students with dyslexia?

## Methodology

### Instrument

This study used a pre-interview questionnaire and an eight-question interview that were adapted from the Teacher Survey on Writing Instruction (Coe et al., 2011). The pre-interview questionnaire served to obtain the interviewees' education and training background. Although the Teacher Survey on Writing Instruction was developed to determine the level of implementation of the 6 + 1 Trait Writing, the actual questions used in the interview measured the use of the general methods and activities teachers can use in writing instruction. None of the questions specifically focused on the 6 + 1 Trait Writing model. Therefore, teachers were only required to have a basic awareness of the idea of trait-based writing in order to respond to the interview items. Interview questions for this study were adapted from the first four categories of the Teacher Survey on Writing Instruction, specifically because they overlapped with all stages of the process genre approach to writing. The five categories

that were used to create interview questions for this study were:

- (a) Teaching the language of rubrics for writing assessment,
- (b) Reading and scoring papers and justifying the scores,
- (c) Teaching focused revision strategies,
- (d) Modeling participation in the writing process, and
- (e) Having students read and analyze materials that demonstrate varying writing quality.

The interview questions consisted of seven open-ended questions and one closed-ended question. The first seven questions focused on understanding the individual teacher's method of teaching the language of writing, the context of writing, the purpose of writing and the stages of writing. The last question was included to obtain the overall learners' profiles for writing. The researchers sought information about the learners' profiles as a method to connect the individual teacher's current writing instruction practices with students' needs.

In order to establish validity for the instruments used in this study, two colleagues were consulted. The first was a senior educational therapist and core team member of the DAS Curriculum Team (Writing). The first colleague has been teaching at DAS between three to five years and is well versed with the process genre approach to teach writing. The second colleague was a lecturer for the DAS Academy, a private education institution that runs training courses separate from the DAS. Both colleagues checked, edited and validated the

interview questions. The validity checks were completed to ensure that there were no leading questions and that the questions reflect the true nature of the process genre approach. Both colleagues were also unaware of each other's involvement in this research.

### **Research Design**

This study employed an instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2012). Five participants were chosen based on purposeful sampling. Creswell (2012) stated that in purposeful sampling "researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (p. 206). The participants in this study are teachers, who are more formally known as educational therapists at the DAS, and were chosen because their primary assignment is teaching students with dyslexia. The teachers were chosen at random to include teachers who are experienced as well as the newer teachers at DAS.

### **Participants and Setting**

One of the primary goals of the educational therapists, also known as teachers, at DAS is to provide a total literacy approach to students with dyslexia. The teachers at DAS teach students from preschool level to secondary level (DAS, 2013b). Teachers focus their remediation efforts on improving the literacy skills (reading, spelling, and writing) of students.

All five participants are female and were chosen to participate in this study based on the number of years teaching at DAS.

The number of years teaching was chosen as a participation factor to investigate whether years of service influence teachers' perceptions of teaching writing. Two of the educational therapists were experienced educators and had at least six years of teaching experience. One educational therapist had three to five years teaching experience, and two educational therapists had less than two years teaching experience.

The decision to only include educational therapists with a minimum of one year of teaching experience at DAS is due to the fact that beginning teachers at DAS (those with less than one year of teaching experience) are mentored to focus first on literacy skills of reading and spelling. This focused mentoring is to ensure that beginning teachers have a firm understanding of the OG approach to teaching literacy before embarking on writing and reading comprehension.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

The purpose of the data collection phase was to gather descriptive information from the five participants. The data collection phase was conducted in accordance to Creswell's (2012) steps to conducting interviews. Prior to data collection, formal email invitations were sent to the five participants. The pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix A) was included with the email invitation. During the data collection phase, the researcher collected the pre-interview questionnaire, in-depth descriptive information on the participants' current use of aspects of the process genre writing approach and their perceptions of using the process genre

approach to teach writing. Data were collected through individual interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes each.

Data collection was conducted over a period of twelve days, during which the interviews were conducted. The interview approach used was established by Creswell (2012) based on a one-on-one interview, which involves a data collection process of the researcher asking questions to and records answers from one participant in the study at a time.

After the interview, the data was transcribed and analysed and follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify any missing points. The follow-up interviews were carried out via email for 3 teachers (Teachers B, C, E - refer to Table 1) and in person for 2 teachers (Teachers A and D - refer to Table 1). The profile of the participants in Table 1 below provides information regarding the teachers' background.

Since the semi-structured interview required knowledge on specific terminologies, the participants received an information sheet (Appendix B) with the definition of terms and the interview questions a day before the interview. The objective was to ensure that the teachers were informed of the key terms needed to respond during the interview. To address potential threats to internal validity, participants were also asked not to research the terms or prepare for the interview other than reading the information sheet and interview questions given.

Table 1. Profile of participants in research

Teacher	Centre	Job Title	DAS Experience	Highest Degree Attained
A	1	Senior Educational Therapist	6 + years	Bachelor's Degree
B	2	Senior Educational Therapist	3 - 5 years	Post Graduate Certificate Level
C	3	Senior Educational Therapist	6 + years	Master's Degree
D	4	Educational Therapist	Months - 2 years	Bachelor's Degree
E	3	Trainee Educational Therapist	Months - 2 years	Master's Degree

## Analysis

Qualitative data analysis procedures were used to investigate participants' current use of the process genre writing approach and their perceptions of using the process genre approach to teach writing to students with dyslexia. The teachers' interview responses were transcribed, sorted and then compared and contrasted to derive codes and themes.

Creswell's (2012) method of analysis was used to code and categorize the data from individual transcripts and to summarize the results in meaningful ways. Several thorough examinations of the data were undertaken to distinguish linkages, themes, and patterns that were used to interpret the qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The analysis of the interview data began with an individual case analysis of one of the

educational therapists, followed by a within-group case analysis. This involved inducing categories from the answers of one participant and comparing them to the answers of the other participants with the same answer. As the interview questions were closed-ended followed by elaboration, the answers enabled the classification of categories to be done. The themes were drawn from the categories derived from the participants' responses. As the teachers' responses for each question could be summarized into common categories, like "structured method", themes were hence drawn to describe teachers' perception of the process genre approach.

## Results

Current instructional practices. After reviewing all of the in-depth interview data for all of the educational therapists, the answer to the first research question,

*Does a teacher's current writing instruction include elements of the process genre approach?* became clear. Data indicates that all the teachers use at least elements of the process genre approach.

As stated previously, the process genre approach is a six-step process that involves preparation, modeling, planning, joint-construction, independent construction, and revising. All five teachers, to some extent, reported a varying degree of use of the process genre approach to writing instruction. Additionally, all five participants reported completing pre-writing strategies with their students. Teachers cited the use of reading material relevant to the writing topic and brainstorming on the writing topic together as specific approaches used with their students.

Overall, the interviewees frequently mentioned the use of graphic organisers as a tool to guide their students during the writing process, particularly in the joint-construction phase of writing. All five participants also reported providing their students' with independent writing practice. Most commonly, students created their paragraphs based on the points provided during brainstorming (pre-writing) and planning (joint construction) phase of the writing process. Teacher B summarised how she approaches the writing process with some of her students:

*So the most recent one that I used was the 5-senses (graphic organiser). Then we brainstorm based on the graphic organiser. Then we'll do, as a class together because I think most of*

*them would not know where to start. Then, using the information that we gathered during brainstorming, we actually put it down into writing as a text. Right after that, I actually asked them to do a descriptive paragraph on the reunion dinner itself.*

Consequently, when asked if each of the teachers had heard about the process genre approach to writing prior to the interview, three teachers (A, C, and E) indicated that they learned about the approach during mentoring sessions or during a professional development training. However, the terms used in the process genre approach were not known to everyone in this case study. Teachers A, C and E, shared that they recalled the terminology during training sessions by DAS. Three teachers were familiar with the term, "process genre approach" whereas two teachers, Teachers B and D were not. Teacher B elaborated:

*Actually, I'm not. But when I looked at the example, it actually resembles a lot of what we usually do in the classroom.*

Teacher D noted:

*I have seen the diagram, but was not familiar at all with the terminology until it was explained to me in details.*

Overall, the teachers' responses indicated that regardless of specific knowledge of the process genre writing approach, they were using at least one of the facets of this approach in instruction.

To answer the second research question,

*What are the teachers' perceptions of using the process genre approach to improve the writing skills of students with dyslexia?* the five participants' responses to the interview questions were synthesized and inserted into a table format. Through the initial analysis, the researchers were able to extract the topics of conversation from each person's interview. The following assertions were generated upon comparing the responses of the three participants with a positive perception towards the process genre approach to the responses of the two participants with a less positive/negative perception.

**Assertion 1: Teachers with a positive perception towards the process genre approach to writing instruction used multiple methods to access resources.**

The process genre approach requires obtaining and creating one's own resources. This is especially true for the deconstruction stage, where a model is used to show the text structure that is needed. Materials are also needed to elicit responses and encourage idea creation for the writing topic. Although all five teachers shared that they would provide reading materials as a stimulus for the writing topic, only Teacher A also mentioned meeting the need for access to additional resources. She referred to access to technological resources to help students with the writing process. Her response was,

*Let's say there's a question (writing topic) right, I would actually Google for them first, for all the materials.*

The two teachers with a negative perception noted the importance of

resources, but only mentioned that there were no readily available resources to use an example to show to students. One of Teacher C's perceived limitations of the process genre approach was that she did not have access to any completed models and therefore, she felt that

*...(this approach) also requires skills and preparation because before we even can get students to write, we should have a model answer or all the points ready.*

**Assertion 2: Teachers with a positive perception towards the process genre approach to writing instruction could envision its use to stimulate student-led idea generation.**

As the formation of ideas is one of the writing skills focused in this study, it was encouraging to discover that this theme emerged. All teachers shared that brainstorming stimulates students' idea generation for the writing topic. The three teachers in the positive group (A, B, and E) agreed that this method of writing instruction could improve students' ideas. Teacher B said,

*Because not only it (the approach) would tap on their prior knowledge, but also I think, it builds on or enhances or adds value to what they already know.*

The two teachers from the less positive/negative group disagreed and considered that the writing approach would do nothing to enhance students' ability to create new ideas. Teacher D's response indicated that she believes students would become too

overwhelmed. She said,

*I think some of them (students) actually find it too overwhelming. Because when they had the idea that there was so much to do, they had already set themselves up for not wanting to attempt the task.*

As noted earlier, in the process genre approach, there are several stages involved, and Teacher C's view was that the prewriting stage stimulates idea generation, whereas deconstruction does not. Teacher C commented that,

*It doesn't stimulate discussion or thinking. These ideas would come from brainstorming.*

**Assertion 3. Teachers with a positive perception towards the process genre approach to writing instruction believe it should begin with structured instruction.** All teachers agreed that graphic organisers are beneficial tools that can help students' structure and organise their writing. Teacher A stated,

*My graphic organiser is very simple. I told them, A: introduction, B: body and C: conclusion.*

Three teachers, Teachers A, B and E liked the idea that there is structure in the process genre approach. Teacher E commented,

*I think it is very easy because it is (a) very structured method and it is also easy for students to follow.*

Teacher B said,

*I think the process actually helps them; you know how kids are very put off by writing? I think by having the process where they do together as a class first, breaks the barrier.*

Teacher E commented that the stages of writing of the process genre approach could improve her students' organisational skills,

*Because it gives the students a place to put each of his or her ideas.*

Teachers were asked whether they would use any or all of the process genre approach in their classes to teach writing to their students with dyslexia. Teachers A and E (from the positive group) commented that they would use all of the stages to teach writing to their students with dyslexia. In fact, Teacher E said,

*I would use all the stages. There's no point in using it halfway right? Because I've seen the success rate in it and, ya, I've seen the finished product. I feel it is a very good tool for teaching students to writing.*

Teacher A commented that this process genre approach incorporates scaffolding, an extremely powerful way to help students with dyslexia find success in an area where they have previously struggled. She said,

*All the stages. I think there's a structure there right, it's a scaffolding you know.*

In contrast, Teacher C's response indicated that she believes ideas are generated in isolation from other steps in

the writing process, as indicated by her response,

*I don't think so because deconstruction is basically taking a passage you would try to break it down into components... It doesn't stimulate discussion or thinking. These ideas would come from brainstorming.*

Teacher C also shared her perceptions that the process genre approach is not a model that can support learning and cannot be generalised from one text structure to another. She shared,

*Supposing we want to teach how to write an information report. So deconstructing one information report itself is not enough to get the students to understand the structure of an information report.*

Having a structure could also mean that the approach lacks flexibility. Teacher D explained,

*I think it is important to not get too caught up with any one approach. Constantly see what is out there. Because there is really no one size fits all.*

**Assertion 4: Teachers with a positive perception of the process genre approach to writing instruction viewed it as practical and easy to use.** The final theme emerged based on how the interviewees perceived the practicality of using the writing approach. Teachers A, B, and E thought that the process genre approach could easily be adapted and used in writing instruction. Teacher B (positive group) related ease of use to

increased levels of student confidence with the writing process. She said,

*I think the process actually helps them; you know how kids are very put off by writing? I think by having the process where they do together as a class first, breaks the barrier.*

The ease of using the writing approach was further explored to investigate how much of the approach teachers would actually implement in their classrooms. Three teachers (B, C, and D) stated that they did not agree that the approach was completely adaptable for use in their classrooms, however all three stated that they would only use some of the writing stages in their classrooms. Teacher B (the positive group) explained that,

*Because there are many kids who are still not ready to write independently yet. So having them to produce whatever that has been brainstormed is already an achievement for some.*

Teachers C and D (negative group) found the overall process genre writing approach to be a tedious method. Teacher C explained,

*I don't think it is easy to deconstruct the passage. And I think it is time consuming to deconstruct given our time constraints.*

For Teacher D, students' confidence level was a concern. Teacher D elaborated:

*I think some of them (students) actually find it too overwhelming. Because when they had the idea that there was so much to think and so much to do, they had already set*

*themselves up for not wanting to attempt the task.*

## Discussion

The overall study results indicate that the study participants are using some aspects of the process genre approach to teach writing. The results answer the first research question on whether a teacher's current instruction includes elements of the process genre approach. However, based on the results of the interview data, only two out of five teachers are confident in the process genre approach and are currently using all the stages in their classroom. Participants cited factors like students' confidence levels, accessibility to resources and time as factors that hindered the three teachers from using all of the stages when teaching writing to students with dyslexia.

To answer the second research question, on whether the process genre approach could improve writing skills of students with dyslexia, it is important to refer to the extent teachers would use the process genre approach to measure its effectiveness. In terms of improving ideas in students' writing, three out of five teachers agreed that this approach could contribute to this progress. Four of the participants perceived that the process genre writing approach could be used to improve organisation. These results indicate a mixed response from the teachers as to whether the process genre approach is effective to improve ideas and organisation in students' writing.

A possible explanation for the mixed responses for the second research

question could be derived from Teacher C's response,

*I can't say for others, but I think I still need skills to do the deconstruction part.*

Although the process genre approach is scaffolded as writing stages, as reflected by the Teacher C, the writing approach alone would not be sufficient to enable students to write. The teachers require the skills and knowledge, as they are the ones who facilitate learning, in terms of building ideas and organisation skills in writing. As learners at the DAS come mainly from both the primary and secondary level, teachers need to be equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to teach for the different writing syllabuses. These skills and the knowledge necessary to apply the process genre approach need to come from teacher training.

## Limitations and Further Research

As with any research, there are limitations in this study. Firstly, this research focused on a small number of teachers and the findings may not transfer to other settings. Secondly, all participants were female; therefore, the teachers' perceptions were limited and cannot be generalized to male teachers. Finally, this study was conducted with participants from Singapore and may not generalize to teachers in other areas of the world.

Further research should include a larger sample size and participants that are more heterogeneous. Since the teaching population consists of both males and

females, researching the male teachers' perceptions could value-add the findings of this study. Second, it would be useful to investigate if teaching experience is a factor in improving students' writing skills. The outcomes from this research showed no clear differentiation between negative and positive attitudes based on experience. However, this should be explored further. Third, it may be useful to conduct a writing trial in which participants try out the approach and are observed in the classrooms. This type of activity may give insight into the nuances of applying the process genre approach. Finally, it would be helpful to include students' perceptions of both the process and their own progress.

## Conclusion

This research revealed that although teachers are using the process genre writing approach to a certain extent, there are several barriers that inhibit successful implementation in the classroom. The most common barriers were time, accessibility to resources, ease of use and that the comprehensive writing stages may be confusing to students with dyslexia.

While the process genre approach does show signs of improving idea formulation and organisation, it is also important to further explore multiple strategies for writing instruction, particularly when instructing students with dyslexia. Teachers should have knowledge of a variety of strategies to support struggling writers. Teaching students with dyslexia to write can be difficult, but the process genre approach is one of the strategies that can be impactful.

## References

- Anderson, N. L., & Briggs, C. (2011). Reciprocity between reading and writing: Strategic processing as common ground. *The Reading Teacher*, *64*, 546-549. doi: 10.1598/RT.64.7.11
- Badger, R., & White, G. (2000). A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal*, *54*, 153-160.
- Belbase, M. B. (2012, January 1). *The process-genre approach: Some ideas for teaching writing in Nepal*. Retrieved from <http://neltachoutari.wordpress.com/2012/01/01/the-process-genre-approach-some-ideas-for-teaching-writing-in-nepal>
- Berninger, V. W. (2000). Dyslexia the invisible, treatable disorder: The story of Einstein's Ninja Turtles. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *23*, 175-195.
- Berninger, V. W., Nielson, K. H., Abbott, R. D., Wijsman, E., & Raskind, W. (2007). Writing problems in developmental dyslexia: Under-recognized and under-treated. *Journal of School Psychology*, *46*(1), 1-21. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2006.11.008
- Brimi, H. (2012). Teaching writing in the shadow of standardized writing assessment: *An exploratory study*. *American Secondary Education*, *41*(1), 52-77.
- Chia, N. K. H. (2009). *Dyslexia and reading-related anomalies*. Singapore: Pearson Education South Asia.
- Chia, N. K. H., & Houghton, S. (2011). The effectiveness of Orton-Gillingham-based instruction with Singaporean children with specific reading disability (dyslexia). *British Journal of Special Education*, *38*, 143-149. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00510.x
- Coe, M., Hanita, M., Nishioka, V., & Smiley, R. (2011). *An investigation of the impact of the 6+1 Trait Writing model on grade 5 student writing achievement* (NCEE 2012-4010). Washington, DC:

- National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Derewianka, B. (1992). *Exploring how text works*. Sydney, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Derewianka, B. (1996). *Exploring the writing of genres*. London, UK: United Kingdom Reading Association.
- Dexter, D. D., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). Graphic organizers and students with learning disabilities: A meta-analysis. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 34*, 51-72.
- Dyslexia Association of Singapore (2007). *DAS Secondary Writing Pack*. Singapore: Author.
- Dyslexia Association of Singapore. (2013a). *About dyslexia*. Singapore: Author.
- Dyslexia Association of Singapore. (2013b). *Education therapy*. Singapore: Author.
- Hammond, J., Burns, A., Joyce, H., Brosnan, D., & Gerot, L. (1992). *English for social purposes: A handbook for teachers of adult literacy*. Sydney, NSW: National Centre for English Language Teacher and Research.
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Pub.L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2467 (2004), [Amending 20 U.S.C. § § 1400et seq.].
- International Dyslexia Association. (2012). *Dyslexia Basics* [Fact Sheet]. Retrieved from: <https://app.box.com/s/3f36hzaedlnzq96v2xsz6a4uqxc7fkwt>
- Kim, M. S. (2006). Genre-based approach to teaching writing. *TESOL Working Paper Series, 4*(2), 33-40. Retrieved from [http://www.hpu.edu/CHSS/LangLing/TESOL/ProfessionalDevelopment/200680TWPfall06/07Kim\\_Genre.pdf](http://www.hpu.edu/CHSS/LangLing/TESOL/ProfessionalDevelopment/200680TWPfall06/07Kim_Genre.pdf)
- Kraayenoord, C. E. V., Miller, R., Moni, K. B., & Jobling, A. (2009). Teaching writing to students with learning difficulties in inclusive English classrooms: Lessons from an exemplary teacher. *English Teaching Practice and Critique, 8*(1), 23-51.
- Law, J. S. P. (2013). Establishing the cognitive writing profile of academically lower-achieving students in Singapore: Why is it important? *Journal of Reading and Literacy, 5*, 51-66.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Nauman, A. D., Stirling, T., & Borthwick, A. (2011). What makes writing good? An essential question for teachers. *The Reading Teacher, 64*, 318-328. doi: 10.1598/RT.64.5.2
- New South Wales (2011). *Text types* (different types of writing). Retrieved from <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/eppcontent/glossary/app/resource/factsheet/4108.pdf>
- Ng, C. H. (2013). Helping dyslexic students to write: Process writing approach. *Journal of Reading and Literacy, 5*, 82-89.
- Nicholson, R. I., & Fawcett, A. J. (1990). Automaticity: A new framework for dyslexia research?. *Cognition, 35*(2), 159-182.
- Norman, K. A., & Spencer, B. H. (2005). Our lives as writers: Examining preservice teachers' experiences and beliefs about the nature of writing and writing instruction. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 32*(1), 23-40.
- Paran, A. (2012). Language skills: Questions for teaching and learning. *ELT Journal, 66*, 450-458. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccso45
- Perin, D., & Graham, S. (2006). Teaching writing skills to adolescents: Evidence-based practices. In L. C. Moats, K. E. Dakin, & R. M. Joshi (Eds.), *Expert Perspectives on Interventions for Reading*. Baltimore, MD: The International Dyslexia Association.
- Richards, R. G. (1999, May). *Understanding why students avoid writing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ldonline.org/article/5892/>

- Ritchey, K. D., & Goeke, J. L. (2006). Orton-Gillingham and Orton-Gillingham-Based reading instruction: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Special Education, 40*, 171-183.
- Ulusoy, M., & Dedeoglu, H. (2011). Content area reading and writing: Practices and beliefs. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(4), 1-17.

**Appendix A****PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

(to be completed and returned)

1. What is your current highest educational qualification?  
Please circle the letter before your answer:
  - a. Bachelor's Degree
  - b. Post-Graduate Certificate Level
  - c. Masters' Degree
  - d. Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your current teaching role at Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS)?  
Please circle the letter before your answer:
  - a. Teaching as a Trainee Educational Therapist
  - b. Teaching as an Educational Therapist
  - c. Teaching as a Senior Educational Therapist
  
3. Circle the letter that best represents how long you have been teaching at DAS.
  - a. Months - 2 years
  - b. 3 - 5 years
  - c. 6 years and more
  
4. Do you have an additional role at DAS other than teaching  
(for eg. resource rep, Math team): Yes/No  
  
If yes, state your role/team: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Please list any training you have received in the last two years related to writing instruction:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Please state the age range of your current students: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for completing this pre-interview questionnaire.**

## Appendix B

### INFORMATION SHEET AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INFORMATION SHEET

#### Section A: Definition of terms

For this study, the following are the definitions which are used:

1. **Ideas:** Ideas are the main message, the content of the piece, the theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme (Coe et. al., 2011).
2. **Organisation:** Organisation is the internal structure, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas within a piece of writing (Coe et. al., 2011).
3. **Graphic organisers:** Graphic organisers are visual and spatial displays that make the relationships between related facts and concepts more apparent (Dexter & Hughes, 2011).
4. **Recount:** A recount is the unfolding of a sequence of events over time. The purpose of a personal recount is to retell an activity that the writer has been personally involved in (Derewianka, 1992).
5. **Genre:** The term "genre" refers to the different types of texts which are used in a particular culture to achieve specific purposes (Derewianka, 1996).

#### Section B: Background on Process Genre approach to teaching writing

Badger and White (2000) suggested a writing approach that synthesizes the earlier writing approaches of product, process and genre. The process genre approach simply means that the teacher takes the students through a series of four stages namely; pre-writing, deconstruction (modeling), joint-construction and independent writing. Here's an example of how it is done:

**First lesson (Pre-writing):** The teacher uses a picture of *a family at the beach* to discuss with the class the activities that could be done at the beach with the family. Graphic organisers like bubble map could be used here.

**Second lesson (Deconstruction):** The teacher teaches a genre by firstly using a written piece of writing as a model to highlight the text structure of the genre. For example, introducing the purpose of the personal recount is to retell events. Then, the teacher introduces the personal recount text structure using the 5W1H graphic organiser: who, what, when, where, why, how. The model is a writing topic, *"Shopping with my family."*

**Third lesson (Deconstruction):** The teacher uses the same text to highlight the pertinent grammatical feature of this text type. For example, highlighting that simple past tense is used in writing a personal recount. The teacher could also use additional handouts or activities to reinforce the concept of simple past tense.

**Fourth lesson (Joint-construction):** Here, the teacher uses the same graphic organiser from the first lesson as a reference when planning a story with the class, *"Family time at the beach."* Planning the story is done using the 5W1H graphic organiser. The teacher needs to remind students to use the language feature, such as, the simple past tense. In this stage, the teacher goes through the writing process of planning, drafting and revising and publishing. By the end of this stage, the students would have a story written out based on the plan with their teacher.

**Next lesson (Independent writing):** The teacher asks the students to write out their own story based on a similar topic, in either a series of sentences or paragraphs. For example, "Family time at the movies." Hence, the cycle begins again to reinforce or when introducing another genre.

### Interview Questions

(Based on the 'Teacher Survey on Writing Instruction' from Coe et al., 2011)

1. What are the current approaches you use when giving writing instruction in terms of ideas and organisation? [In another words: In your current classroom, how would you improve your students' writing in terms of ideas and organisation?]
2. Have you heard of the process genre approach before this interview? Yes / No a) If yes, where did you hear it from?
3. From what you have read or already know about the process genre approach, do you think it is easy for teachers to use this writing instruction in the classrooms? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the stages of writing of the process genre approach could improve "ideas"? Why or why not?
5. Do you think the stages of writing of the process genre approach could improve "organisation"? Why or why not?
6. To what extent (all the stages or just one or two or none at all) would you use the process genre approach in your class to teach writing to your students with dyslexia? Why or Why not?
7. What do you think are the limitations/possible difficulties of this writing approach?
8. Could you describe briefly your students' primary difficulties when it comes to writing?

**Thank you. See you soon for the interview.**

### Appendix C—Coded responses from the interview

<b>Q1. What are the current approaches you use when giving writing instruction in terms of ideas and organisation?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Starts with a reading material: All 5 teachers	Teacher D: "It all actually begins from reading. So we read the passage together."  Teacher A: "Let's say there's a question (writing topic) right, I would actually google for them first, for all the materials."	Providing materials as a stimulus	Accessibility to resources
Brainstorming on topic: All 5 teachers	Teacher C: "We brainstorm on the points on the question and the points contributed will be written on the board (whiteboard)."	Brainstorming to stimulate idea generation	Stimulates idea generation
Uses a graphic organiser: All 5 teachers	Teacher B: "So the most recent one that I used was the 5-senses (graphic organiser). Then we brainstorm based on the graphic organiser...."  Teacher A: "My graphic organiser is very simple. I told them, A: introduction, B: body and C: conclusion."	Using a structured and visual resource to organise writing	Structured instruction
Scaffolding the writing for students: All 5 teachers	Teacher E: "I listed under introduction, what you should put and then what tense you should have."	Teacher as a facilitator and leader in guiding and paving the direction for the writing	Structured instruction

<b>Q2. Have you heard of the process genre approach before this interview?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
3 Yes (terminology is familiar): Teachers A,C, E	Teacher C: "During the mentoring sessions." Teacher A: "During Inset (In-house teacher training) a few years ago."	Recognising terminology from training sessions	Familiarity
2 No (terminology is not familiar): Teachers B, D	Teacher B: "Actually I've not. But when I looked at the example, it actually resembles a lot of what we usually do in the classroom."  Teacher D: "I have seen the diagram but I was not familiar at all with the terminology until it was explained to me in details."	Unfamiliar terminology	Familiarity
<b>Q3. From what you have read or already know about the process genre approach, do you think it is easy for teachers to use this writing instruction in the classrooms? Why or why not?</b>			
3 Yes (find the approach easy to use): Teachers A, B, E	Teacher E: "I think it is very easy because it is (a) very structured method and it is also easy for the students to follow."	Structured method	Structured instruction
2 No (does not find the approach easy to use): Teachers C, D	Teacher C: "I don't think it is easy to deconstruct the passage. And I think it is time consuming to deconstruct given our time constraints."	Tedious method	Ease of using approach

<b>Q4. Do you think the stages of writing of the process genre approach could improve "ideas"? Why or why not?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
3 Yes (find it effective in improving ideas): Teachers A, B, E	Teacher B: "Because not only it (the approach) would tap on their prior knowledge but I think it builds on or enhances or add value to what they already know."	Enhancing students' prior knowledge	Stimulates ideas generation
2 No (does not agree to it improving ideas): Teachers C, D	Teacher D: "I think some of them (students) actually find it too overwhelming. Because when they had the idea that there was so much to think and so much to do, they had already set themselves up for not wanting to attempt the task."  Teacher C: "I don't think so because deconstruction is basically taking a passage and you would try to break it down into components. The structure of that answer. It doesn't stimulate discussion or thinking. These ideas would come from brainstorming."	Confidence level of students  Tedious method	Ease of using approach  Stimulates idea generation
<b>Q5. Do you think the stages of writing of the process genre approach could improve "organisation"? Why or why not?</b>			
4 Yes (find it effective in improving organisation): Teachers A, B, D, E	Teacher B: "I think the process actually helps them, you know how kids are very put off by writing? I think by having the process where they do together as a class first, breaks the barrier."  Teacher E: "Because it gives the students a place to put each of his or her ideas."	Confidence level of students  Structured method that helps students	Ease of using approach  Structured instruction

<b>Q5 Continued</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
1 No (finds it ineffective to improve organisation): Teacher C	Teacher C: "Supposing we want to teach how to write an information report. So deconstructing one information report itself is not enough to get the students to understand the structure of an information report."	Does not guarantee transference of skills	Structured instruction
<b>Q6. To what extent (all the stages or just one or two or none at all) would you use the process genre approach in your class to teach writing to your students with dyslexia? Why or Why not?</b>			
2 are for using all the stages: Teachers A, E	Teacher E: "I would use all the stages. There's no point in using it half way right? Because I've seen the success rate in it and, ya, I've seen the finished product. I feel it is a very good tool for teaching students to writing."  Teacher A: "All the stages. I think there's a structure there right, it's a scaffolding you know."	Having confidence in the approach	Ease of using approach
3 are for using only some of the stages: Teachers B, C, D	Teacher D: "If they (students) are receptive, I would go all out. But if I know I need to be more careful with them, because they are worried about writing, then I would really play on a week by week basis. So it really depends class by class."  Teacher B: "Because there are many kids who are still not ready to write independently yet. So having them to produce whatever that has been brainstormed is already an achievement for some."	Concerns regarding practicality of the approach	Ease of using approach

<b>Q7. What do you think are the limitations/possible difficulties of this writing approach?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
3 teachers stated the time factor as the common limitation. It is time consuming. (Teachers A, B, E)	<p>Teacher B: "I would think the time. Because you need to invest in a lot of time to go through from one stage to another."</p> <p>Teacher A: "I think this can be time consuming. Because you have to create your own (model essays) you know."</p> <p>Teacher E: "Mainly the time. It does take a lot of time. And if you're in Sec 3 (Secondary 3) already, and you only have three more terms before you become Sec 4, then, you are going to do only three more pieces of writing right? So I'm not sure if that's enough."</p>	Time-consuming	Accessibility to resources
2 teachers stated difficulties in finding model answers as a difficulty. (Teachers A, C)	<p>Teacher C: "I think (this approach) also requires skills and preparation because before we even can get students to write, we should have a model answer or all the points ready."</p> <p>Teacher A: "Getting the model answers."</p>	Limited resources	Accessibility to resources
1 teacher stated the limitation of using one approach (Teacher D)	Teacher D: "I think it is important to not get too caught up with any one approach. Constantly see what is out there. Because there is really no one size fits all."	Lacks flexibility	Structured instruction

<b>Q8. Could you describe briefly your students' primary difficulties when it comes to writing?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotes</b>	<b>Coded Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Ideas: Teachers A, B, C	Teacher C: "One student, after brainstorming, find it very difficult to get started."  Teacher B: "I would think that idea generation is lacking in my students."	Idea generation	Ideas
Organisation: Teachers A, D, E	Teacher E: "Then for Secondary, is more organisation because they do have the idea, but they just don't know where to put what."	Organising ideas	Organisation of ideas
Others - Grammar: Teachers C, D - Sentence structure: Teachers A, D, E - Vocabulary: Teachers A, B, E - Spelling: Teachers C, E	Teacher D: "I realise that grammar would be one. They're confusing the present tense with past tense. Sentence structure seems to be a primary concern. They have very good use of metaphorical language but when it comes to linking things up and putting it all together nicely, sentence structure would be an issue I think."	Language difficulties	Language difficulties