Malay essay writing module based on thematic approach for non-native speaker: a need analysis in primary schools

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

The challenges faced by non-native speaking pupils in primary schools, characterized by diverse backgrounds, highlight the difficulty in teaching and learning essay writing. This study was conducted to identify the needs for the development of a Malay language essay writing module based on a thematic approach through the needs analysis phase. This qualitative study was conducted among Malay language teachers in Sarawak. Eight teachers were purposively sampled, and thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. The findings found that there are six themes that have been identified, namely: i) relevant form of teaching and learning in essay writing; ii) relevant teaching and learning resources; iii) relevant teaching and learning activities; iv) relevant teaching and learning strategies; and v) the needs of the thematic approach in essay writing; vi) the needs for the development of thematic-based essay writing module. The findings underscore the imperative development of a Malay essay writing module based on a thematic approach to enhance the essay writing proficiency of non-native-speaking pupils. Furthermore, the study's insights offer valuable guidance for researchers in designing and developing modules during the subsequent phases, contributing to the refinement of essay writing pedagogy in primary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century, it is essential for students to attain proficiency in a second language, whether it be either written or spoken. Writing, reading, speaking, and listening are the four skills available in Malay language, writing are the most important skills as a foundation that every student needs to master. Among these four skills, writing is considered very challenging among non-native speaker students in primary school. This is because the skill of writing is the highest and the most complex language skill that students need to master in the Malay language subject. Writing skills are closely related to students' ability to write words and express their ideas through various types of writing based on personal experiences and existing knowledge [1]. However, the mastery of writing skills is also influenced by a systematic and effective teaching system, not solely relying on the students' talent alone. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in creating new mechanisms in teaching and learning to produce students who can possess language proficiency and having a confidence to face language challenges [2], [3].

The process of writing essays in Malay language requires a student's ability to generate ideas, craft sentences, and construct grammatically sound sentence structures to produce a high-quality composition [4], [5]. Furthermore, essay writing can enhance students' skills in conveying ideas by engaging in language and maintaining a high level of aesthetic value. Therefore, effective essay writing instruction is essential to improve students' mastery of essay writing, not solely relying on the students' existing talent [4], [6].

In Malaysia, essay writing instruction poses a challenge for non-native speakers, requiring them to write in various languages, particularly Malay [7], [8]. This explains that the skill of essay writing among non-native speakers is different from speaking skills and cannot be developed only through specific environments or by observing others [9]. Therefore, an effective effort should be considered to assist teachers in addressing the challenges faced by non-native speakers in mastering language skills, especially in Malay essay writing. Hence, the development of a thematic approach-based Malay essay writing module is proposed to help non-native speakers to write essays proficiently in primary schools.

Essay writing is one of the components of writing skills encompassed in the Malay Language curriculum in primary schools. Therefore, writing skills are essential for every student to master and ensure that they can produce good writing. However, the teaching and learning aspects of essay writing need to be given sufficient emphasis to cultivate students with the ability to convey critical ideas and thoughts [10]. As a result, the teaching and learning of essay writing in schools requires an instructional approach that can assist students in improving their essay writing skills [10]–[12].

The teaching and learning process in the development of modern education requires more creative and dynamic teaching methods through the provision of more relevant and enjoyable learning content. The thematic approach is a method used to integrate knowledge in the teaching and learning process [13]. Additionally, this approach is an instructional method that considers topics or themes that are relevant to time, place, and interests to drive the teaching and learning process [1]. This approach also encourages active student engagement in the teaching and learning process to create effective and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, the use of the thematic approach is highly encouraged so that an effective teaching and learning process can be delivered to students, allowing them the opportunity to understand the subject matter, gain experiences, and form new knowledge through the themes [14], [15].

The challenges in essay writing persist among non-native speakers due to several factors influencing their mastery levels. According to the Malaysian Examinations Board Report [16], students still exhibit weaknesses in aspects such as vocabulary mastery, non-grammatical sentence construction, and uninteresting idea development. These deficiencies in writing skills contribute to a decline in academic achievement, especially at the primary school level. This is evidenced by the findings of the Primary School Malay Proficiency Test, which show that as many as 65.2% of respondents still do not possess proficiency in writing skills in the Malay language [6]. Furthermore, the absence of the Primary School Achievement Test also known as *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR) in 2020 also has led to a less satisfactory performance in Malay language proficiency, particularly among non-native speakers, as there was less emphasis through continuous assessment. The writing proficiency of non-native speakers in Malay is both satisfactory and lowest [6], [17], [18]. Therefore, Malay language teachers play a crucial role in designing a mechanism to help alleviate the problems that exist in the learning process for non-native speakers.

Furthermore, a challenging issue in the teaching and learning process of Malay essay writing is that students still struggle with the limited use of vocabulary in their writing. This explains that the weakness of students in utilizing Malay vocabulary is one of the contributing factors to their decline in essay writing achievement. This deficiency also leads to various other problems, such as an inability to write grammatical sentences, incorrect sentence structures, and other language-related issues in essay writing [12], [19], [20]. Similarly, students' weakness in essay writing stems from their inability to master vocabulary effectively [16]. Therefore, non-native speakers need to be emphasized in terms of using a broader vocabulary in Malay to enhance their proficiency in essay writing.

Non-native speaker students are also observed to be weak in terms of generating and processing ideas effectively in essay writing. Findings from previous study [21] revealed that non-native speaker students, specifically those from the minority ethnic students in Sarawak, Malaysia, still lack the ability to generate substantial ideas to produce a well-written essay. Similarly, another study [12] found that non-native speaker students, particularly those from the *Lun Bawang* ethnic group, are weak in generating good ideas in essay writing. The weakness of non-native speaker students in the preparation and processing of good ideas results in essays that are too short, lack essential content, repeat information, and sometimes become irrelevant, making the produced essays not in line with the question requirements and unclear.

The weak proficiency level in Malay essay writing is also attributed to the influence of the mother tongue among non-native speakers. The strong influence of the mother tongue among non-native speaker students contributes to their inability to master Malay, especially in essay writing [6], [8]. This situation explains that non-native speaker students tend to use their mother tongue in writing, resulting in essays that

are difficult to understand clearly and do not adhere to the characteristics of good writing [8], [12], [22], [23]. Additionally, the tendency of non-native speaker students to use their mother tongue in their writing also contributes to other grammar errors while composing essays. Therefore, Malay language teachers must play a role in exposing non-native speaker students to linguistic environments that can help them master Malay better within the classroom. The objective is to identify the needs of Malay essay writing modules for non-native speakers in primary school students based on the thematic approach to enhance essay writing skills.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research design

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on the design and developmental research (DDR) approach [24]. The qualitative method, specifically semi-structured interviews, is utilized to gather information for this needs analysis. This design is appropriate for the context of the study, aiming to gather information within the environment to be studied before developing a module [25]–[27]. The interviews are conducted to identify the needs for module development in terms of pedagogical aspects and learning materials. This method aligns with the study's objective to obtain the perspectives of participants in identifying the needs for module development [28]. Additionally, this technique aids in obtaining responses to specific issues based on the participants' views and thoughts on the studied matter [29].

2.2. Research instrument

The research instrument used in this qualitative study is an interview protocol. This semi-structured interview protocol is designed for interviews with eight Malay language teachers. The interview protocol is divided into two parts. The first part is related to the demographic information of the study participants; and the second part pertains to the needs for module development in terms of pedagogical aspects and learning materials. For validity and reliability, the interview questions have been reviewed and validated by three experts with expertise and experience in qualitative research.

2.3. Study participants

Purposive sampling was employed in this study by selecting participants involved in the teaching and learning of Malay essay writing. Purposive sampling is deemed the most suitable method as participants can provide comprehensive information until saturation is reached [30], [31]. For this needs analysis, a total of eight Malay language teachers in the Kapit district were selected as study participants. The selection was based on predetermined criteria, requiring a minimum of five years of experience teaching Malay language, and currently teaching second-grade classes. The study participants are referred to as participant (P) to maintain confidentiality and protect the true identities of the teachers involved in this needs analysis.

2.4. Data analysis

Based on the findings obtained from the conducted semi-structured interviews, regarding the needs for module development in terms of pedagogical aspects and learning materials based on the thematic approach were thematical [32]. The data were also analyzed using NVivo 12 software. The data analysis process commenced with coding the text and assigning labels to the text, followed by coding the text into identified themes. To ensure the reliability of the findings, peer review was conducted to obtain agreement on the interview data and subsequently the generated themes. Furthermore, Cohen's Kappa analysis involving three experts was carried out to determine the agreement values on the generated themes for data reliability.

3. RESULTS

The interview findings obtained from eight teachers involved in achieving the research objective, which is to identify the needs for the development of essay writing modules in terms of pedagogical aspects and learning materials based on the thematic approach for non-native speaker students in primary schools, revealed several key themes through the data analysis.

3.1. Theme one: relevant form of teaching and learning in essay writing

The research findings have identified several forms of essay writing instructional methods used to assist non-native speaker students in writing essays more effectively as shown in Table 1. These methods aim to enhance their proficiency in essay writing and make the instruction more engaging. Key approaches include guided essay writing, where students are provided with structured prompts and outlines to support their thought process. Additionally, constructing essay frameworks and implementing writing exercises tailored to students' progressive abilities further aid in developing their skills over time.

Table 1. Relevant form of teaching and learning in essay writing

Relevant form of teaching and learning in essay writing	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
Guided essay writing	×	×	×	×	/	×	/	/	3
Constructing essay framework	×	/	×	×	×	/	/	×	3
Essay writing exercises according to students' progressive abilities	/	/	/	/	×	×	×	×	4

3.1.1. Guided essay writing

Based on Table 1, the research findings indicate that the study participants have suggested several forms of essay writing instructional methods that are suitable for the proficiency levels of non-native speaker students, such as guided essay writing, constructing essay frameworks, and gradually progressing essay writing exercises based on students' abilities. The following is an overview of the teachers' comments on the guided essay writing process:

P5: "*I guide them to write guided by the examples I provide.*"
P7: "*We need something that can be used as a guide for them.*"
P8: "*I use guided presentation slides or videos on how to create a certain type of composition.*"

3.1.2. Constructing essay framework

In addition, the interview findings reveal that the study participants recommend incorporating learning emphasizing the construction of essay frameworks in essay writing instruction. According to P2, P6, and P7, constructing essay frameworks is aimed at facilitating students in presenting and developing the content of their essays effectively. This finding is elucidated through the interview transcripts of the study:

P2: "*Expose them to essay frameworks the steps for writing the introduction, body, and conclusion.*"
P6: "*You need to provide them with examples and frameworks first.*"
P7: "*We need to teach from the basics, which is creating an essay outline, so that no important content is overlooked.*"

3.1.3. Essay writing exercises according to students' progressive abilities

P1, P2, P3, and P4 also suggest providing exercises that align with students' progressive abilities, moving from easy to more challenging levels. Emphasizing exercises in the essay writing module, such as progressing from constructing simple sentences to more complex ones, is intended to assist students in producing higher-quality essays. This finding is explained through the interview transcripts of the study:

P1: "*Start by creating simple sentences and use numbers, 1, 2, 3, up to 10 to form sentences. Once their sentences are okay, then we can teach them to write in paragraphs.*"
P2: "*Construct simple sentences first.*"
P3: "*Provide exercises such as constructing simple sentences until they can produce a composition.*"
P4: "*If possible, progressively advance the exercises and compositions taught.*"

3.2. Theme two: relevant of teaching and learning resources

The interview findings based on Table 2 indicate that the teachers have suggested the use of relevant teaching and learning resources for essay writing instruction. The use of suitable teaching and learning resources can capture the interest of non-native speaker students, encouraging them to actively engage and promoting more effective essay writing learning. ICT-infused resources and materials, as highlighted by five participants, were found to be particularly beneficial in making learning more interactive. Furthermore, the utilization of engaging graphics, noted by four participants, helped simplify complex ideas and made essay writing more accessible to students.

Table 2. Relevant of teaching and learning resources

Relevant of teaching and learning resources	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
ICT-infused resources and materials	/	/	/	×	×	/	/	×	5
Utilization of engaging graphics	×	×	×	/	/	×	/	/	4

3.2.1. ICT-infused resources and material

The findings indicate that study participants such as P1, P2, P3, P6, and P7 suggest the use of teaching and learning resources infused with information and communication technologies (ICT) elements and engaging graphics in the essay writing module to capture the interest and enthusiasm of students in essay

writing. This approach, they believe, enhances student interaction with the material, making the learning process more dynamic and accessible. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

P1: "*I think ICT is the reason because they are more interested in graphic elements.*"
P2: "*I believe learning materials that incorporate ICT elements can attract students' interest in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.*"
P3: "*In terms of materials, I think materials such as the use of videos.*"
P6: "*Materials like ICT tools such as LCD and laptops are very much needed because we want to display something.*"
P7: "*Materials involving ICT so that they are more interested in learning.*"

3.2.2. Utilization of engaging graphics

There are also study participants such as P4, P5, P7, and P8 who recommend the use of teaching and learning resources such as diagrams, *i-Think* maps, and printed materials in essay writing instruction. The use of *i-Think* maps and printed materials can assist non-native speaker students in generating ideas more effectively during essay writing instruction. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

P4: "*Another interesting component that is needed is an attractive graphic presentation.*"
P5: "*Mind maps (i-Think) are also necessary, and printed materials too.*"
P7: "*In terms of the use of graphics, it also needs to be diversified.*"
P8: "*Students need to be exposed to graphic materials.*"

3.3. Theme three: relevant of teaching and learning activities

The interview findings in Table 3 indicate that teachers recommend several essay writing instructional activities that are suitable for capturing students' interest and promoting more effective essay writing learning. Four participants suggested group activities because they help students work together, share ideas, and improve their writing skills. Discussion and presentation activities, also recommended by four participants, give students a chance to express their thoughts and get feedback, which helps them think critically and organize their essays better. Three participants also mentioned individual practice and quiz activities as useful for helping students assess themselves and remember key writing concepts.

Table 3. Relevant of teaching and learning activities

Relevant of teaching and learning activities	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
Group activities	/	/	/	×	×	/	×	×	4
Discussion and presentation activities	/	×	/	/	/	×	×	×	4
Individual practice activities	×	×	×	×	×	/	/	/	3
Quiz activities	/	/	/	×	×	×	×	×	3

3.3.1. Group activities

The interview findings from P1, P2, P3, and P6 indicate that students can master essay writing more effectively through teaching and learning activities such as group activities, discussion activities, and presentation activities. This approach promotes collaboration and allows students to learn from each other. This finding is explained in the interview transcripts with study participants.

P1: "*The activity that I often engage in is more towards group activities.*"
P2: "*I always conduct group activities where I combine students with higher levels of mastery or proficiency with students who have intermediate and lower levels of mastery.*"
P3: "*I conduct group activities for students such as discussions and presentations.*"
P6: "*I always divide them into groups.*"

3.3.2. Discussion and presentation activities

Several participants (P1, P3, P4, and P5) suggest incorporating discussion activities and presentation activities into the essay writing module to facilitate easier mastery of essay writing. These activities encourage students to express their ideas and receive feedback, enhancing their understanding.

P1: "*Presentation activity using technological materials.*"
P3: "*Group learning activities such as discussions, and after the group discussion session, they will present their work or ideas.*"
P4: "*I feel that discussion activities can attract their interest and help improve their mastery level.*"

P5: "*Work in groups, and they will discuss within the group to exchange their opinions and ideas. After they finish in their groups, I will ask them to present the results of their discussion in front of the class.*"

3.3.3. Individual practice activities

In addition, other study participants (P7 and P8) also recommend emphasizing continuous individual practice activities and fill-in-the-blank activities for students to master essay writing more effectively. These methods allow students to practice independently and reinforce their learning.

P7: "*For essay writing, I prefer continuous individual practice activities.*"
P8: "*Exercises that are suitable for the students' level, such as filling in the blanks.*"

3.3.4. Quiz activities

Quiz activities are interactive exercises designed to assess and reinforce students' knowledge in a fun and engaging way. The interview findings indicate that P1, P2, and P3 suggest teaching and learning activities such as quiz activities to enhance the vocabulary of non-native speaker students, thereby helping them master essay writing more effectively. This finding is explained by participants as:

P1: "*We can do quiz activities to enhance vocabulary.*"
P2: "*Activities involving quizzes can be included.*"
P3: "*Conduct quizzes that focus on vocabulary.*"

3.4. Theme four: relevant of teaching and learning strategies

The interview findings in Table 4 indicate that teachers recommend relevant teaching and learning strategies to assist non-native speaker students in essay writing instruction, such as student-centered strategies and material-centered strategies, as well as activities. All eight participants endorsed student-centered strategies, highlighting their importance in fostering engagement and personalized learning. In contrast, two participants suggested material-centered strategies, indicating that while they are useful, they may play a less dominant role in the essay writing instruction process.

Table 4. Relevant of teaching and learning strategies

Relevant of teaching and learning strategies	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
Student-centered strategies	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8
Material-activities centered strategies	×	×	×	/	/	×	×	×	2

3.4.1. Student-centered strategies

Based on the interview transcripts, it is evident that all teachers recommend the use of student-centered teaching and learning strategies for essay writing instruction. According to the study participants, essay writing instruction that employs student-centered strategies can prevent student boredom and, consequently, enhance the understanding of non-native speaker students in learning.

P1: "*We can use student-centered strategies and activities to help them better understand.*"
P2: "*I prefer student-centered strategies and activities because if it's just 'chalk and talk,' students will quickly get bored and lose focus.*"
P3: "*Student-centered strategies, because if it's only teacher-centered, students will quickly get bored and lose focus.*"
P4: "*I feel that student-centered strategies are very suitable to be used because students will be more active when involving them in the teaching and learning session.*"
P5: "*That strategy is better, which is student-centered.*"
P6: "*Students like it the most when we involve them, especially in student-centered activities.*"
P7: "*I prefer student-centered strategies so that students can better master and understand what is explained by the teacher.*"
P8: "*If involving the teacher, such as 'chalk and talk' as before, is indeed less effective, and the most suitable method is to involve the students.*"

3.4.2. Material-activities centered strategies

Study participants like P4 and P5 also suggest material-activities centered strategies in essay writing learning. They believe that the limited use of materials can lead to student boredom in the classroom.

Therefore, material-centered instruction can generate excitement and interest among students when various materials are incorporated. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

PKG 4: "*Material and activity-centered strategies are also okay.*"
PKG 5: "*Material-centered strategies as well because if it's the same material, they will get bored quickly, and they will be more excited if there is interesting material.*"

3.5. Theme five: the needs of the thematic approach in essay writing learning

The interview findings in Table 5 indicate the necessity of using a thematic approach in essay writing learning. This approach aligns with curriculum requirements and engages student interests, making the learning process more relevant and engaging. Two participants highlighted the importance of adhering to the Curriculum and Assessment Standard Documents, ensuring that the thematic content meets educational standards. Meanwhile, four participants emphasized the role of student interests in selecting themes, suggesting that when essay topics resonate with students' experiences and preferences, their motivation and participation in learning improve significantly.

Table 5. The need of the thematic approach in essay writing learning

The need of the thematic approach in essay writing learning	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
The requirements of the curriculum and assessment standard documents	×	×	×	×	/	/	×	×	2
Student interests	/	×	/	×	×	×	/	/	4

3.5.1. The requirements of the curriculum and assessment standard documents

The interview findings indicate that study participants such as P5 and P8 agree with the use of a thematic approach in essay writing instruction. This is stated based on the requirements outlined in the curriculum and assessment standard documents or *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran* (DSKP) and taking into consideration the relevance of the theme to the interests and experiences of the students. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

P5: "*If we follow the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools and Twenty-First Century Skills, using elements of this approach is encouraged, and it is indeed good if we follow them.*"
P8: "*If we follow the DSKP, we will indeed teach thematically. Because we cannot deviate too much from the DSKP, we look at the suitability of the theme we want to teach the students.*"

3.5.2. Student's interests

In addition, other study participants (P1, P3, P7, and P8) suggest that the chosen theme for inclusion in the module should consider the genuine interests and experiences of the students. The suitability of the theme with the students' interests should be considered to enhance their understanding and mastery in essay writing. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

P1: "*Modules with a thematic approach provide them with guidance and help them understand a particular topic or theme more clearly.*"
P3: "*Modules based on the thematic approach provide students with a framework, making it easy for them to present the content or ideas in their writing.*"
P7: "*Modules that use themes that align with their interests and are relevant to their environment.*"
P8: "*When selecting themes, it's important to include themes that students are interested in, themes that are close to the students. Meaning, their own experiences.*"

3.6. Theme six: the need for the development of thematic-based essay writing modules

The interview findings in Table 6 indicate the need for the development of thematic-based essay writing modules. All participants emphasized that such modules would provide valuable reference and guidance for students, making the essay writing process clearer and more structured. This indicates a strong consensus among the teachers on the importance of developing materials that align with themes relevant to both the curriculum and students' interests, ensuring that students have accessible and practical resources to improve their writing skills.

Table 6. The need for the development of thematic-based essay writing modules

The need for the development of thematic-based essay writing modules	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Frequency
Students' reference and guidance	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8

3.6.1. Students' reference and guidance

Essay writing modules are essential for non-native speaker students in primary schools to assist them in mastering essay writing more effectively according to their ability levels. The following is the feedback from the study participants of teachers regarding the necessity to develop Malay essay writing modules. This finding is explained through interview transcripts:

P1: "*Provides guidance and helps them understand a particular topic or theme for an essay more clearly.*"

P2: "*The PdP (teaching and learning) approach using this module can serve as a guide for them to write essays better and encourages students to think.*"

P3: "*If there are materials such as modules... it might stimulate them to think.*"

P4: "*With this module, I hope to assist them in mastering the skills of writing and enable them to write essays even better.*"

P5: "*I agree that with this module... it helps teachers, especially in terms of time, and makes it easier for teachers to guide students with the available materials.*"

P6: "*The approach of using the module is more enjoyable... there is guidance, and then there are exercises that we can give them.*"

P7: "*Modules that use themes that they are interested in and familiar with will certainly be themes that are suitable for their environment.*"

P8: "*It is indeed very helpful if we have modules.*"

The results of the interviews with all the study participants indicate the need to develop a learning module for Malay essay writing. This module should take the form of a structured module to aid non-native speaker students in primary schools.

4.　DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the needs analysis phase, Malay language teachers have provided clear suggestions and justifications to assist researchers in designing and developing an essay writing module that meets the needs of non-native speaker students in the essay writing learning process. The results indicate that Malay language teachers recommend various forms of essay writing pedagogy, such as guided essay writing, essay structure construction, and progressive essay writing exercises tailored to students' abilities. This planning of essay writing pedagogy is a crucial requirement, as each non-native speaker student requires a suitable pedagogical approach to master essay writing effectively [21], [33]. The suggested forms of essay writing pedagogy are considered effective, providing guidance, and enhancing students' ability to progress in essay writing. Structured and progressive essay writing pedagogy can lead to success in essay writing [10].

Besides, Malay language teachers have provided clear suggestions and justifications to assist researchers in designing and developing an essay writing module that meets the needs of non-native speaker students in the essay writing learning process. The results indicate that Malay language teachers recommend various forms of essay writing pedagogy, such as guided essay writing, essay structure construction, and progressive essay writing exercises tailored to students' abilities to ensure effective implementation of essay writing pedagogy. Planning the forms of essay writing pedagogy is a crucial requirement because each non-native speaker student requires a suitable pedagogical approach to master essay writing effectively [21]. The suggested forms of essay writing pedagogy are also considered effective in providing guidance and enhancing students' ability to progress in essay writing. These findings align with assertions that structurally and progressively designed essay writing pedagogy can lead to students' success in essay writing [10].

Furthermore, the study findings also indicate that teachers suggest the need for resources and teaching materials that are tailored to the needs of non-native speaker students in essay writing pedagogy. The recommended teaching resources and materials include the use of ICT, graphic materials, and diagrams that can capture the interest and enhance the motivation of non-native speaker students in essay writing. These findings align with the assertions of effective pedagogy should utilize good and effective teaching resources and materials to capture the interest and enhance the mastery level of students in their learning [34], [35]. Therefore, the use of engaging teaching resources and materials can create an enjoyable learning environment in the classroom, especially for non-native speaker students.

The implementation of essay writing pedagogy also requires planning pedagogical activities that are suitable for non-native speaker students. This indicates that the designed pedagogical activities should consider the interests and proficiency levels, considering that writing skills are the most challenging to master for students who use Malay as a second language. These findings align with several studies [6], [36] suggesting that teachers need to plan and align activities to be suitable for the interests and proficiency levels

of non-native speaker students in essay writing pedagogy. Additionally, planned pedagogical activities such as group activities and activities involving presentations and learning through ICT can capture the interest of students in language learning and, consequently, assist non-native speaker students in mastering essay writing better. This aligns with the previous statements [35], [37] that the ability to write essays in non-native speaker students can be enhanced through group activities and the use of ICT in their learning.

The study findings also indicate that teachers need to use suitable pedagogical strategies to help non-native speaker students write essays more effectively. Therefore, student-centered strategies encourage students to be more actively involved, with teachers acting as facilitators to ensure students receive information relevant to their assignments. Active student engagement in the pedagogical process is also a way to help students build new knowledge and collaboratively complete assignments [38], [39]. Additionally, this student-centered strategy encourages students to think more critically when generating ideas, especially during group discussions [40]. Student-centered pedagogical strategies such as flipped classroom has a positive impact on students producing better quality of the assignment requirements and develop competence especially in writing [41], [42]. Therefore, the developed module should emphasize student-centered pedagogical strategies to enhance non-native speaker students' proficiency in essay writing.

The need for a thematic approach in developing essay writing modules is one of the approaches that can help non-native students master writing skills and subsequently produce well-written essays. As stated by teachers, the necessity of a thematic approach in the teaching and learning of essay writing can have a positive impact on assisting non-native students to find more enjoyment in the learning process and master essay writing. In this context, the produced writing module needs to integrate a thematic approach that considers the selection of themes relevant to the genuine interests and experiences of non-native students. A thematic approach in teaching and learning process will encourages students to continue learning actively and, consequently, master a particular skill in teaching and learning more rapidly and effectively through the selection of themes that align with their interests [14], [43]. Therefore, the produced module needs to incorporate a thematic approach to enable students to master essay writing more effectively.

Finally, based on the findings from the interviews, it is evident that there is a need for a learning module on essay writing to assist non-native students in primary schools in mastering the skill of essay writing more effectively. Therefore, various aspects related to the learning needs of non-native students have been considered to develop a high-quality and well-organized essay writing module. This aligns with previous study [44], that a module is a systematic unit to assist individuals in achieving their desired goals. With this module, students will find it easier to comprehend the learning process in essay writing and consequently master the skill.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of the essay writing module is meticulously tailored to address the specific needs of non-native students, ensuring a mastery of writing skills and subsequent improvement in essay writing proficiency. The systematic analysis of these needs has been instrumental in identifying pivotal aspects essential for module development. The essay writing module is developed based on the findings of the needs analysis, focusing on pedagogical aspects and learning materials using a thematic approach for non-native students, namely: i) relevant form of teaching and learning in essay writing; ii) relevant teaching and learning resources; iii) relevant teaching and learning activities; iv) relevant teaching and learning strategies; v) the needs of the thematic approach in essay writing; and vi) the needs for the development of thematic-based essay writing module. This module stands as a valuable resource poised to significantly enhance students' writing skills. It not only addresses the identified needs but also provides comprehensive guidance, equipping students with the essential tools and strategies required for substantial improvement in essay composition. As an outcome of this thorough development process, the essay writing module is positioned to play a crucial role in empowering non-native students, fostering their confidence and competence in the realm of essay writing. On top of that, the module serves as a testament to the commitment to inclusivity and effectiveness in language education, contributing to the overall academic success of non-native students.

There are a few limitations of this study. The study on the Malay essay writing module based on a thematic approach for non-native speakers in primary schools is the potential for generalizability issues. While the needs analysis will provide valuable insights into the specific preferences of non-native speakers in one context, the findings may not be fully applicable to other educational settings with different student demographics, cultural backgrounds, or language learning environments. Additionally, the applicability to older age groups or higher education levels is uncertain. Future research could explore the long-term effectiveness of the thematic approach through longitudinal studies and investigate the integration of innovative technologies like gamification or adaptive learning systems to enhance engagement and personalize learning experiences for non-native speakers.in primary schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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