

Teaching the Narrative Essay: Embedding the Elements of Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The narrative essay belongs to chronological order, a way of organizing ideas regarding their occurrence in time. As a result, it requires a different set of writing skills from other types of essays: it is built out of sequential events of the narrative, not main ideas and supporting details. However, it is realized that the two writing coursebooks, *Reason to Write (Intermediate)* by Oxford (2005) and *Great Writing 4* by Heinle Cengage Learning (2014), construct relatively vague guidance for students to build a narrative essay accordingly. This action research is, therefore, to bridge that gap, suggesting a literary approach to teaching that essay: embedding elements of fiction in the process. In this paper, the benefits of the method are discussed in terms of students' language, organizational, and critical thinking skills. The findings from the students' essays and surveys prove positive, from which insights are then taken into consideration. The implications of the method are that there exist opportunities and possibilities for applying literary theories into English teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Literature and language learning, elements of fiction, the narrative essay, teaching writing*

1. THE ROLES OF THE ELEMENTS OF FICTION IN THE NARRATIVE ESSAY – THE GAP IN WRITING COURSEBOOKS

Herman [1] defines narrative as “a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change – a strategy that contrasts with but is in no way inferior to, “scientific” modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws” (p. 2). By this

definition, Herman emphasizes that telling a story is indeed different from explicating an event from the scientific point of view, yet it is no less significant than science in that it interprets “a specific discourse context” and “cues interpreters to draw inferences about a structure time-course of particularized events” (p. 14). Fiction, a type of narrative, is principally structured around such elements as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, irony, symbolism, theme, etc. However, among them,

Wellek and Warren [2] confirm only three critical constituents: plot, characterization, and setting, with the last being considered “atmosphere” or “tone” by some modern theories (p. 224). Mieke Bal [3] names four similar elements with slightly different terms: events, actors, time, and location. In the scope of this research, only two elements are focused on: plot and setting (equivalent to ‘events’ and ‘time and location’ in Bal’s), as they directly contribute to building a narrative essay. Attention is not paid to the element of characterization as a narrative essay usually revolves around the writer’s own tales. The element of the plot decides how the narrative is structured so that it “can produce the effect desired, be this convincing, moving, disgusting, pleasing, or aesthetic” [3, p. 7], meanwhile setting creates the atmosphere and infuses it into the narrative as well as the reader. These two elements play a considerably significant role in a narrative essay because they respectively have to do with organizing the essay and creating the mood, from which certain feelings and emotions from the reader are aesthetically evoked. Telling a story, after all, is to convince the audiences of the experience the writer has gone through, of the message(s) she/he has come up with at the end of the story, whether they are directly or indirectly communicated. It is “a cognitive structure or way of making sense of experience” [1, p. 7]. To that end, the writer should demonstrate sensible arrangement of the events and subtle manipulation of readers’ involvement in the story. Plot and setting, as a result, are almost indispensable in a narrative essay.

Writing a narrative essay may require some additional set of skills besides the commonly known skills in writing academic essays in that it is built not out of main ideas and supporting details but the

events of a narrative, which eventually lead to the message (either implicit or explicit) after the narration. A learner, as a result, ought to be equipped with the techniques to paragraph a narrative essay based on the stages of critical events; in other words, they should understand the stages of plot in fiction to be able to produce reasonable organization of events. They should also be equipped with the skills of building a mood for the narrative so as to evoke emotions and reactions from the reader. It is at this critical point that the gap is realized in the writing coursebooks *Great Writing*, namely *Great Writing 4 (Great Essays)* by Folse *et al.* [4] and *Reason to Write* by Cohen and Miller [5]. Unit 2, Narrative Essays in the book *Great Essays*, mentions the structure of a story. Some important elements of a good story are listed with a brief explanation: setting, theme, mood, characters, and plot.

Nevertheless, the missing link in this part of the lesson can be found: it is loosely connected to the following part about the instructions for writing the narrative essay. Specifically, after the brief introduction of plot and setting, there is no relation of plot or setting to the instructions and guidance on writing the body paragraphs of the narrative essay. The coursebook *Reason to Write* is in no better situation: it does not even mention the elements of a story in Unit 1, *The Pathway to Freedom*, which discusses writing a personal narrative.

With the gap observed in the coursebooks mentioned above, a new method is introduced: utilizing two elements of fiction, plot, and setting, in teaching narrative essays to clarify the lesson, in hopes that it will better assist students in writing a narrative essay.

2. LITERATURE AND ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING – A REVIEW

2.1 The approach of using Literature as materials in the English classroom – Another realized gap

Discussions and debates on Literature and English teaching have been started and continued with vivid enthusiasm in published works since the 1980s in the United Kingdom and the United States (see, for example, [6]; [7]; [8]; [9]). Literature, indeed, has long been considered to provide language learning with rich resources. However, researchers and educators do not generally see eye to eye as to whether the use of British and American Literature in the English classroom offers any beneficial language skills to the language learner or poses potential challenges in terms of literary consciousness and competence. If Literature can be approached by language learners from the aspects of authentic materials and resources, i.e., how the target language was used to produce the literary work, this approach would thwart non-native teachers and learners in comprehending English command because usually “the language and the content of literature is deliberately and creatively modified (even often distorted) for the needs of the writer” [6, p. 25]. This approach thereby overlooks or pays scant attention to the aspects particularly belonging to Literature as a science, such as its theories, history, stylistics, approaches to literary criticism.... An approach like that can also prevent teachers and students from appreciating Literature for its own sake since they may understand the language but fail to perceive, for example, the irony, plot, theme(s).... On the other hand, if Literature is taught for its own right, the chances are that learners must be certainly required language competence with literary experiences and prerequisites to detect literary

devices, poetics, and implications artistically intertwined by the writer.

Consequently, Literature in this approach seems to be the sphere of sheer talents and tastes. Until recently, there have been no definite and unanimous conclusions regarding the contributions and challenges that Literature presents to English teachers and learners. While it is still under investigation, researchers and teachers alike do not deny the fact that the role of Literature in English teaching and learning holds the potentials of thriving and is worth further consideration, especially in the current technological era where literary works are not only made into adaptations to films but also to games and other fields in arts and humanities faculties [1]; [10].

Within the scope of this study, special attention is paid to the significant role of Literature in language output, namely writing skills. Scholars interested in Literature and language teaching have started a plethora of in-depth discussions regarding the impacts of Literature on language output, and several empirical studies have also been conducted to examine them, particularly in the composition class and creative writing class. Kuze [11], utilizing short stories in the EFL classroom to improve students' writing capability successfully proves that this integrated method is effective in enhancing EFL students' composition skills and can also change the students' literary perception. Despite being somewhat predictable, the study results contribute meaningfully to the literature-based approach. Literature is employed as a stimulus for the language output. This study illustrates the significance and influence of Literature as a resource on students' writing skills but does not investigate whether the literary theory

can be of use to English language learners. Bal [3], as well as other narratologists, pays particular attention to the theory of the narrative, emphasizing its important role in interdisciplinary fields, for example, in media studies. Examining the structure of a narrative and studying various types of narration from the perspective of structuralism, they, however, do not mention the discipline of language learning and teaching.

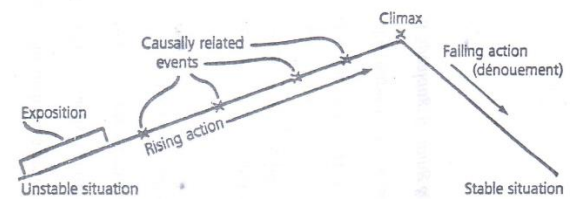
A review of Literature above reveals that a potential area in this discipline still lacks appropriate attention: applying literary theory into teaching English. Chambers and Gregory [12] emphasize the merits of teaching literary theory to students; nevertheless, their focus is not on EFL classes but on Literature-majored ones. The inadequate dedication to this area might very well result in an acute short-sightedness of the Literature-based approach, depriving the student of a possible way to hone their language skills as well as critical thinking skills. This recognized gap alongside the gap in writing coursebooks mentioned above encourages the researcher to suggest a new paradigm in utilizing Literature in English teaching and learning: embedding elements of fiction, plot, and setting in the process.

2.2 The expected benefits of the new paradigm

2.2.1 Neat organization of events

The plot in a fictional work consists of a series of carefully selected events that are organized and arranged in patterns to emphasize what happens in a story [13], [14], [15]. Mieke Bal [3] calls it the *logic of events* in her book *Narratology – Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. In that sense, the plot often implies some twisting incidents and therefore requires resolution, the outcomes of

the plot. The patterns of the plot are various, depending on different writers and researchers; however, the most commonly used is the *Freytag pyramid*, introduced and developed by the German critic Gustav Freytag in 1863 [13]. The diagram is represented by five different stages, shown as below:



[13, p. 46]

Figure 1: The Freytag pyramid

The first stage of the diagram, the exposition, introduces the background of the story: the characters, the setting (where and when the story takes place), historical background (if any), and so on. In doing so, the exposition also describes the unstable situation of the story and the nature of the conflict, which later leads to the rising action, of which the most intense point is the climax. During the rising action stage, one event occurs as the causal consequence of another; in turn, that event goes on to cause yet another event until the conflict gets to the climax. After the climax comes to the falling action, which marks the turning point at which the characters or situations change. When all the conflicts have been resolved, the story reaches its stable situation and comes to an end.

On writing a narrative essay, the student is advised to organize their events in paragraphs based on these five stages of plot similar to that of fiction. The suggested organization of ideas is as follows:

The introduction

(1) The exposition can be included in the introduction, where brief background information of the story is introduced.

The body

(2) The first body paragraph begins with some more detailed background information, then with rising action, when causal events take place and render other events to happen as a result. If complicated, rising action can be described in two or even three body paragraphs.

(3) The next body paragraph could be saved for the climax, where the writer depicts their feeling and dilemma in great detail to emphasize the dire straits in the story. If the climax is simplistic, the resolution can also be included in this paragraph. Otherwise, it is highly recommended that it be described in yet another paragraph.

(4) The last body paragraph is devoted to the resolution describing how the story is resolved and consequently reaches its end.

The conclusion

(5) The writer finally comes to a conclusion with the description of their emotion in the stable situation after the event and genuine message after their narrative.

It is anticipated that without a thorough understanding of the plot, students may find it hard to organize and paragraph their tales. Unguided, they would be groping in the dark. As for the teacher, although they may very well be able to generalize and deduce the structure of the plot from the sample essay provided in the coursebook, it can be strenuous for them to proceed with the lesson. Therefore, understanding plot enables both teachers and

students to organize their events in the most sensible and effective way to highlight what happens in the narrative. Following the pattern of plot in fiction as suggested above, the student is very likely able to produce a narrative essay with a neat organization of events, highlighting the message they would like to communicate with the reader in the end. If the narrative essay does not include a plot structure, it is not a story, a narrative; it is in fact, a descriptive essay where things are delineated for their own sake without dramaticism, an important feature of a narrative. A narrative can entail descriptive factors since they are “a particular textual form, indispensable, indeed, omnipresent in the narrative” [3, p. 26], but a descriptive essay does not have a plot structure as in the narrative. It is the plot structure that differentiates a narrative from a descriptive essay. Herman [1] calls a descriptive essay like that the quasi-story (p. 13).

2.2.2 Shared atmosphere of the narrative essay

The second quality of a good narrative is its ability to create an atmosphere, consequently permeating into the reader’s state of mind and getting them voluntarily and spontaneously involved in it. To this end, the description of the setting can be a potential means. Setting includes the time, the place, the physical environment, the social environment (if any), and the atmosphere of the story [13], [14], [15]. The setting is often mentioned at the beginning of the story, equivalent to the fact that in the narrative essay, the setting can be mentioned as early as in the introductory paragraph.

The setting, by its definition, may sound simple, but the effects it creates on readers can be tremendous. With the description of the time and

place in the story, the setting reflects the physical and sensuous world of the story. Through that reflection, the setting partly reveals the character's state of mind because it is considered 'metaphoric expressions of character' [2, p. 229], which in turn automatically evokes a similar emotion in readers. There is an undeniable truth that human beings' moods can be contagious, which causes their companions to share a tantamount emotional experience. Additionally, the description of the setting can also foreshadow what is going to happen in the story [15], which may make the reader actively engaged in the story by predicting the coming part of it.

In that case, the setting can make a good hook for a narrative essay. These examples in the book *Great Essays* [4] can be a good illustration.

It was freezing on that sad December day.

The gleaming snow lay over the treacherous mountain like a soft white blanket, making the terrain seem safe instead of deadly.

(p. 41)

If a narrative essay begins with such sentences, the effects on readers should be apparently transparent. Those effects work immediately because of both denotation and connotation of words. In the first sentence, it is the three words "freezing," "sad," and "December" that do. These words evoke readers' minds about relatively negative feelings and emotions a person may experience in the month of winter when things usually become gloomy and heavy. Accompanied by coldness and sadness, the first sentence reveals the

writer's wearing spirits, causing the reader to share the same emotion. In the second sentence, the atmosphere is completely different, albeit the setting also describes the winter. The set of words "gleaming," "soft," and "safe" implies a secure and warm feeling despite the snow, which foreshadows the writer's light emotion and consequently permeates through the reader's atmosphere. In both cases, the writer is successful in catching the reader's attention. Thus far, it can be concluded that a wide range of lexicon, word denotation and connotation, and of collocation as well can help novice writers like students achieve the effects of setting in a narrative essay.

The setting, on the other hand, can also act as a motivator for readers' imagination not only at the beginning but also during the narrative [3, p. 183]. Especially with its function of foreshadowing, the setting can get readers actively involved in the story. It can be depicted now and then throughout the story to describe the situation. In any paragraphs of rising action, climax or resolution, setting description can be made use of to reveal the writer's thought and the upcoming event. If employed effectively, readers can immediately share the same atmosphere and predict what is going to happen. Thus far, it is almost undeniable of the charming effects setting has on readers when skillfully it is employed by the writer. The use of setting in the narrative essay is, therefore, of high recommendation.

2.2.3 Critical thinking skills

Some teachers may belittle the narrative essay, treating it as a less advanced and insignificant type of essay than others in that it merely retells a

story of one's own without any defending arguments, and so the level of critical thinking is of minor significance. However, it should be clarified that the narrative essay looks simple only because the material to write the essay is highly personal and so appears always available for the writer to employ. In other aspects, things should be scrutinized more closely. With the approach of utilizing fiction elements in writing a narrative essay, this type of essay is worth a tool to sharpen students' critical thinking skills, which have been asserted by many concerned educators to play an important role in education.

Cottrell [16] confirms that "reflecting on issues in a structured way, bringing logic and insight to bear" is the skill and attitude among others of the complex process of critical thinking (p. 2). Indeed, learning to arrange ideas and events of a narrative essay as guided by plot fosters this skill in students. They may have exciting and meaningful stories in store to write about, but it is apparently true that not all details of the story are equally worthy of being mentioned. Telling a narrative requires them to carefully choose events of value and significance, and then construct them in a logical way to eventually arrive at relevant insights or messages at the end of the story. Without that skill, the student's essay could look like a mess with many petty details, not being reasonably able to lead to the climax of the story. A glimpse at adaptation can illustrate this. In adapting a novel into a play or a movie, original details must be rearranged and restructured. Even some characters and details are absolutely not employed, considering their minor roles in the story. It is principally due to the time restraint of a play or a movie, but more importantly, it is a must for the adaptation to highlight only a few of the matters

abundantly emphasized in the original literary work. This process is not simple and requires critical thinking skills to build a seemingly fresh and new artistic, literary work.

As for the use of setting, it is the fertile soil to develop students' critical thinking skills in terms of the use of language. It has been mentioned earlier in this paper that a good setting description is able to infuse readers with the spirits of the story as well as of the narrator. To that end, words are at work. Allen [17] assumes that in writing critically, the "surface and hidden meanings of words" matter. In other words, the writer should be able to control the meanings of words they are using in their writing according to the context. Cottrell [16] believes that it is the use of emotive language that manipulates readers' emotions. Emotive language has to do with denotations and connotations, which will produce "latent messages" (p. 96). A student's choice of words and collocations reflects that their mind is working laboriously and critically because they well comprehend the weight of words that would contribute to the message(s) they come up with to convince readers at the end of the story. Therefore, comprehension and application of setting will motivate them to think more critically in order to find out the best means to reach their goal: readers' empathy with the insight(s) they provide after the story. The choice of words to create the atmosphere in the narrative essay, therefore, is not a matter of language skills only; it certainly demands more complicated thinking ability.

In another context, with the awareness of the use of setting in a narrative essay and the ability to disperse the atmosphere of the story, a student is, originally, capable of comprehending their own

emotion, an important matter proven to have had a close relationship with critical thinking. Moon [18], on reviewing the works by renowned researchers of critical thinking like Brookfield, Hastie and Davies, De Bono..., argues that emotion and emotional intelligence are undoubtedly central to critical thinking, although they are usually ignored because the relationship between emotion and critical thinking is not simple. In a framework of the relationship that she works out, emotion and emotional intelligence are the premises of critical thinking, having their significant roles in the thinking activity, because as De Bono puts forth, it is human beings' emotions that determine their courses of actions.

In the end, all thinking is emotional... In the end, our decisions, choices, and courses of action are all determined by emotions, feelings, and values. The purpose of thinking is to serve us as human beings, and feelings are the best judge of the effectiveness of that service... There is, however, an important point. Do we use our emotions first and allow these to determine our perception and our thinking? Or do we use our perception first and allow emotions to determine our final decision?

[18, p. 68]

It makes sense, indeed, when emotional intelligence has been constantly emphasized over traditional intelligence (IQ) and treated as one of the most important factors leading to success (see, for example, [19, [20]). With the ability to express their own emotions through the description of the setting and channel their feelings to readers, students are apparently proving their capacity to think critically.

3. METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted to examine how effective this method of applying plot and setting was able to help students organize the narrative essay. Although diverse beneficial dimensions of this method were realized earlier, not all of them were included in the investigation since the researcher's concentration was on the impacts of only plot and setting on students' perception and their abilities to build that essay. Therefore, the three research questions of the study include:

1. How effectively does plot help students organize events in the narrative essay?
2. How effectively does setting description assist students in creating the atmosphere/mood of the narrative essay?
3. What are the students' attitudes toward this integrated method?

3.1 Pedagogical setting and Participants

The study was done during the compulsory course of Essay Writing for second-year students in one university of the National University system in Ho Chi Minh City. The mandatory coursebook was *Reason to Write* by Cohen and Miller [4], and the supplementary material *Great Writing*, namely *Great Writing 4 (Great Essays)* by Folse *et al.* [5]. Prior to this course, the students had completed two prerequisite writing courses on Paragraph and Composition Writing 1 and 2, where they had learned how to write a paragraph and a basic essay on general topics. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the class was conducted virtually on Google Meet platform.

The students were majoring in International Relations in the academic year 2021, of whom

English competence was at intermediate and (some of them) upper-intermediate. Their IELTS scores were between 5.5 – 6.0, with very few of them 6.5 – 7.0. There were two classes participating in the study, with 28 students in each class. They attended 5 periods of the course every week, in 12 weeks. The lesson of the narrative essay was in week 2 of the course syllabus.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

After the students finished learning the lesson (in 10 periods) using the introduced method, they were required to write a narrative essay as guided in the lesson, the topic being one of the most unforgettable events in their life. 60 minutes was allotted to them to complete the writing task, and another 10 minutes was added for them to submit their essays on the web page of the course (in case there be any technical or network problems). The essays were then marked by the lecturer and returned to the students with the comments and scores from her. After that, a survey was carried out to explore the students' perceptions and attitudes toward the method. The survey was also to explicate the results of the essays from the student's perspective. The questionnaires were sent and collected via Google Forms. To ensure the students' privacy and comfort when they were answering the questionnaire, their personal information (email, full name, student ID...) was not collected, which had apparently been made known to them.

In terms of the rubrics to examine the factors in the research questions, there were four guidelines to evaluate: **(1)** The essay is organized and paragraphed neatly based on the Freytag pyramid (ranking from 1 – 5); **(2)** The narrative comes up with relevant insights or messages at the

end of the essay (No = 1 / Yes = 2); **(3)** the story has dramaticism (ranking from 1 – 5); and **(4)** the story describes the setting to create the atmosphere (ranking from 1 – 5). The ranking band was intentionally made similar to the Likert scale because it is able to render the scorer more comfortable in deciding the average qualities, just as helping the participants find ease in choosing the neutral choices [21, p. 263].

4. FINDINGS

4.1 The challenges confronting the students in writing narrative essays

The findings from the students' narrative essays showed high average scores on almost all guidelines evaluating the essays mentioned above.

Table 1: The average scores of the guidelines

Guidelines	Average scores
(1) Paragraphing	4.43
(2) Message(s)	1.89
(3) Dramaticism	3.87
(4) Setting	3.66

The average score on paragraphing, 4.43, pointed out that almost all students were able to organize their stories logically and neatly according to the Freytag pyramid, highlighting the stages of the story chronologically and reasonably. However, there were a few of them confronting problems with the rising action, climax, and resolution of the story. Specifically, six essays (10.7%) feebly featured the rising action and climax or even no rising action and climax at all. Without a plot structure, the essay could be considered a descriptive essay, not a narrative one, as discussed above. A similar problem was found with the resolution as well, though experienced by fewer students (two essays, 3.6%). In

these essays, the resolution, simple as it was, was described in one paragraph, making it the shortest paragraph in the essay with only 2-3 sentences, as compared to the other ones. This organization was considered not logical.

The findings elicited from the survey clarified the problem of the students. Among the plot stages that the students found difficult to understand, the climax took the highest percentage, with 57.1% of them affirming that it was very difficult to write about (ranked 5 on the scale from 1 – 5). Meanwhile, one-third of the students (34.3%) believed that the rising action was somewhat difficult for them to describe (ranked 4 on the scale from 1 – 5). Another question in the survey asked the students the specific problem(s) they experienced when paragraphing this essay, and the results showed that one third of them (34.3%) did not know where and how to describe the climax of the story. Considering the students' perspective, the results from the essays made sense, proving that students had the most problems with the climax and sometimes rising action of the story. It also explained the average score in guideline (3), dramaticism, which was 3.87. Even though the students understood how to paragraph the narrative essay, their stories somewhat lacked the factors that dramatized the events. While it did not affect the students' ability to paragraph their stories, it made the stories less intriguing to the reader.

The lowest average score of all was the atmosphere or mood, 3.66. This statistic revealed that the students' essays sometimes did not devote themselves to describing the setting of the story, be it the place, time, or feeling. Therefore, those essays were to some extent unable to create the atmosphere/mood, limiting the reader's engagement

in the experiences being told. Some essays overlooked the scene where the story took place, despite the fact that it played an important role in the stories. For instance, when some students revisited their unforgettable trips to new and exotic places, Bac Kan, Gia Lai, Beijing, Paris, to name a few, they unconsciously ignored the description of these locations and only focused on the events. Blunt negligence of the setting portraying not only lessened the story's relatability but also proved that the students had not been familiar with it. Some other students did not describe the details of the feeling/emotion thoroughly and adequately. For that reason, the plot of the story was also affected in that the event was not highlighted at every stage. A look into the survey could help answer this problem: 80.2% of the students agreed that describing the atmosphere was (somewhat) hard for them (ranked 3, 4, and 5 on the scale from 1 – 5). In spite of the fact that 71.4% of the students stated they depicted both the scene and their feeling/emotion in their stories, a fact remained that the depiction may not have been adequate and detailed to be able to infuse the atmosphere throughout the story as well as to the reader.

Among the four guidelines, the criterion about relevant messages or insights demonstrated the most positive prospect. Only a few of the essays did not mention any messages at all at the end of the narrative. The survey clarified that it was because the students found no difficulties coming up with a message after having told the story. 37.1% (the highest percentage) of them agreed that it was very easy (ranked 1 on the scale from 1 – 5) and none of them thought it was very difficult (ranked 5 on the scale from 1 – 5).

4.2 The students' attitude to the introduced method

The survey showed that 91.5% of the students had a positive response to the introduced method. Almost all of them agreed this method helped them to write the essay better in several aspects: organizing the story, paragraphing the essay, and thinking critically. Two thirds of them (65.7%) had known about or heard of plot structure before, but applying it to writing an essay like this was novel. Besides, even though many of them had learned the narrative essay before (48.6%), they still found the Freytag pyramid helpful and effective. Generally speaking, almost all of them enjoyed writing the narrative essay with this framework, with 88.6%.

In terms of critical thinking skills, 88.5% of the surveyed students realized the merits this way of paragraphing offered them. The prominent opinion stated that the method helped them to arrange the events in a logical way and link them sensibly. In doing so, they were able to manage their own stories, thus helping readers keep track of their stories more conveniently. They also believed that by working with the Freytag pyramid, they were within a practical framework which enabled them to craft an interesting story. Understanding plot structure kept them from repeating the details of the story. Others found that this method assisted them in the planning stage of the writing process in that they had to consider carefully every detail of the story before filling them in the plot stages according to the introduced framework. In other words, when planning, the students would know which details should be eliminated as they were minor, and mentioning them could only dilute the story. A few students supposed that this method strengthened their debating skills.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the essays and the survey reveal significant insights for teachers and students alike. For the teacher, it can be clearly seen that having students work with a framework offers positive results; however, teachers also need to be highly flexible. The students' essays showed that some of them organized the narrative slightly differently from the introduced method of paragraphing. After understanding the basics of the plot and how to paragraph the essay, a few students freely organized their tales disregarding the suggestion mentioned in part 2.2.1. Still observing the stages of the plot, they creatively developed their tales in the way that helped them best communicate with the reader and highlight their story. As long as their organization makes sense, that should be acceptable. On the one hand, this could facilitate creative writing if there be any students interested in this branch of writing. On the other hand, when the students showed signs of liberty, an ultimate goal in education, it should be encouraged. Therefore, teachers should not rigidly adhere to the framework.

Furthermore, attention should be paid to developing the student's body of descriptive vocabulary. The findings pointed out that students were not able to portray the setting as effectively as had been expected. As many students disregarded the description of the setting, it is possible that they neither have an adequate language of description nor do they have an awareness of doing so. If the first situation is the case, descriptive vocabulary should be taught alongside word denotation and connotation as well as collocation [22] to help them build stronger vocabulary and have more sensible word choices. For the second case, considerations about curriculum design and development need to be

emphasizing. It is important that the descriptive essay precede the narrative essay. As such, students would be able to raise the consciousness of setting delineation. It is hoped to help construct the mood and atmosphere of the narrative, contributing to a successful narrative essay.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The application of fiction elements into teaching the narrative essay thus far has been proven to be considered able to bridge the gap found between the coursebooks and the needs in teaching and learning the narrative essay. By this approach, students' writing skills, as well as critical thinking skills, can be strengthened and developed. The students' organization of ideas is more effective and well-formed, albeit setting describing and atmosphere building are of more humble contribution. The introduced method, as a matter of fact, also raises critical questions and issues related to, for instance, the curriculum design and development, the learning habit of the students, etc.

In terms of teaching practice prospects, this approach significantly implicates that there exist opportunities and possibilities of teaching the English language from the literary point of view. It fundamentally dissents that of the 1980s until recently, when literary material has been utilized and integrated into an English classroom to hone English skills [23, p. 12]. This approach is, in fact, applying literary theories to English teaching and learning. Wherever possible, it proves that the two disciplines, literary theory and English teaching, can be in close interaction and, therefore, would very well assist and accompany each other in the journey of nurturing students' development.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The research has contributed one prospective approach to English teaching and learning from the perspective of literary theory. Specifically, the concepts of two elements in fiction, plot, and setting can be applied in teaching the narrative essay, thus effectively enhancing students' organization of ideas and critical thinking skills.

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