

**THE EFFECT OF A GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH ON REPORT WRITING BASED  
ON GRAPHICAL DATA: A CASE STUDY IN  
SMK BANDARAYA, KOTA KINABALU.**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
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MASTER OF EDUCATION (TESL)**

**SEKOLAH PENDIDIKAN DAN  
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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH  
2009**

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The materials in this dissertation are original except for quotations, excerpts, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.



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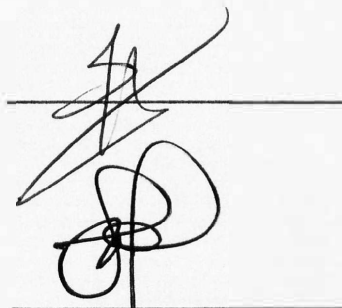
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PROF MADYA DR. MOHD YUSOF ABDULLAH  
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## ABSTRAK

### **Kesan 'Genre-Based Approach' Dalam Meningkatkan Penulisan Laporan berdasarkan Data Berbentuk Grafik: Satu Kajian Kes Di SMK Bandaraya, Kota Kinabalu.**

Tujuan utama kajian ini untuk mengenalpasti keberkesanan 'genre-based approach' dalam pengajaran penulisan laporan berdasarkan data-data grafik yang merupakan salah satu daripada format soalan Esei 1 dalam Kertas Penulisan MUET. Lokasi kajian ialah kelas-kelas Tingkatan Enam di SMK Bandaraya, Kota Kinabalu. Kajian ini merupakan kajian quasi-experimental yang menggunakan kaedah 'non-equivalent pretest/posttest design'. Kumpulan experimental terdiri daripada 30 orang pelajar menerima 'genre-based approach' manakala kumpulan kawalan terdiri daripada 32 orang pelajar dan diajar dengan kaedah pengajaran 'non-genre-based approach'. Skrip-skrip penulisan pelajar dalam pretest dan posttest merupakan sampel dalam kajian ini. Skrip-skrip ini dinilai berpandukan satu skema pemarkahan berbentuk analitik yang diubahsuai dari Siti Katijah (2004). Keberkesanan pengajaran diukur dengan membandingkan skor posttest antara kumpulan experimental dan kumpulan kawalan dalam aspek organisasi, isi kandungan dan perbendaharaan kata. Selain itu, selepas sahaja selesai posttest, pendapat pelajar terhadap penulisan esei 1 (penulisan laporan berdasarkan data-data grafik) juga dikaji dengan menggunakan tiga soalan terbuka yang dijawab oleh 9 orang pelajar dari setiap kumpulan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan kumpulan experimental mendapat skor min yang lebih tinggi dalam posttest bagi semua aspek yang dikaji berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Besar kemungkinan ia menunjukkan bahawa 'genre-based approach' lebih efektif dalam meningkatkan pencapaian pelajar dalam penulisan laporan untuk data-data berbentuk grafik. Jawapan bertulis pelajar untuk soalan terbuka juga menunjukkan pelajar dalam kumpulan experimental mempunyai pendapat yang lebih positif terhadap penulisan laporan berdasarkan data-data grafik. Ini mungkin disebabkan 'genre-based approach' dapat menimbulkan perasaan positif terhadap penulisan laporan daripada data berbentuk grafik. Walaupun terdapat lebih kurang 80% daripada responden mengatakan mereka masih menghadapi masalah perbendaharaan kata, ini menunjukkan sekurang-kurangnya 'genre-based approach' telah menimbulkan kesedaran tentang perlunya penggunaan istilah dan 'register' yang sesuai dalam menerangkan tentang data-data berbentuk grafik. Oleh itu, pengkaji telah mencadangkan penggunaan 'genre-based approach' dalam pengajaran penulisan laporan bagi data-data berbentuk grafik. Selain itu adalah dicadangkan guru-guru MUET menyediakan teks-teks contoh yang banyak agar pelajar mempunyai cukup sumber yang baik untuk membuat eksplorasi teks. Salah satu limitasi kajian ini ialah skel kajian yang terlalu kecil. Di samping terdapat masalah kehadiran pelajar semasa kajian dijalankan disebabkan aktiviti sekolah yang lain. Kajian masa depan boleh dijalankan dengan lebih lama, melibatkan saiz sampel yang lebih besar dari kalangan pelajar tingkatan enam yang mempunyai peringkat profisiensi yang pelbagai dan juga dari sekolah-sekolah lain di Kota Kinabalu.

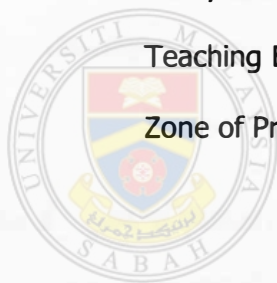
## **ABSTRACT**

### ***The Effect of a Genre-Based Approach on Report Writing Based on Graphical Data: A Case Study In SMK Bandaraya, Kota Kinabalu***

*The purpose of the current study was to investigate the effectiveness of the genre-based approach to teaching report-writing based on graphical data which is pertinent to Essay 1 in the MUET writing paper. The location of the study was the Form Six classes in SMK Bandaraya, Kota Kinabalu. The research employed a quasi-experimental approach which adopted the non-equivalent pretest/posttest design. The experimental group of 30 students received genre-based approach instruction while the control group of 32 students received non-genre-based approach instruction. The students' pretest and posttest scripts were scored by using an analytical marking rubric adapted from Siti Katijah (2004). The effects of instruction were measured by analyzing and comparing the posttest scores between the experimental group and the control group in terms of their organisation, development of ideas, and vocabulary. Additionally, the opinions of students on writing of essay 1 (report-writing from graphical data) was examined using 3 open-ended written questions answered by 9 students from each group. Results of the posttest showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group in all of the aspects being studied. It seems to suggest that genre-based instruction is effective in enhancing students' report writing. The responses from the open-ended questions showed that the experimental group has a more positive opinion towards report writing based on graphical data. It is likely that genre-based approach is effective in instilling a positive attitude towards this type of report writing. Even though there were about 80% of the respondents who disclosed that they still face difficulty in 'vocabulary', at least genre-based approach has raised their awareness of the importance of accuracy and appropriacy of vocabulary and register in writing a specific task. Therefore it is recommended that genre-based approach be used to teach Form Six students report writing in the MUET paper. In addition, it is also suggested that teachers prepare ample good sample texts as resources for students to do text exploration. Limitations include the scale of the study that is too small, besides attendance problem of some of the subjects during intervention due to other school activities. Future research could extend the duration of the study and increase sample size to include Form Six students of all proficiency levels from different schools in Kota Kinabalu.*

# LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND SYMBOLS

EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GBA	Genre-Based Approach
L1	English as the First Language
L2	English as a Second Language
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
MEC	Malaysia Examination Council
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, English is taught as a compulsory subject in all preschools, government assisted primary and secondary schools in keeping with its status as a second language (L2). In the Primary school, the English curriculum is designed to provide learners with a strong foundation in the English language. It is hoped that learners will be able to build upon this foundation further and use the language for various purposes. In the secondary school, the syllabus aims to extend learners' English language proficiency in order to meet their needs to use English in certain situations in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs.

The development of learners' linguistic ability is in keeping with the goals of the National Education Philosophy and the Education Act of 1996 which seek to optimise the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical potential of all students (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001).

Students who have completed their secondary school education can pursue to further their education in university. They will undergo one to two years pre university study before enrolling into University. There are two routes to enter public universities- Form Six and Matriculation Programme. Form 6 Studies take up to two years. In the pre-university level, they need to sit for Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Students who have taken MUET are eligible to be enrolled into degree courses offered at local public universities besides other entry requirements.

MUET, first launched in 1999, is a test of English language proficiency. The test is set and run by the Malaysian Examinations Council. The Malaysia Examination Council test centres are largely in national secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan) that offer Form 6, matriculation colleges, certain universities, as well as certain private and semi-private colleges. The test is run twice annually, usually in late May or early June as well as late October or early November.

There are four components in MUET: Listening (800/1), Speaking (800/2), Reading Comprehension (800/3) and Writing (800/4). From 1999 to May 2008, the maximum scores for each component are 45 for Listening and Speaking, 135 for Reading Comprehension and 75 for Writing, with an aggregate score of 300. The scores are then graded in 6 bands, with Band 6 the highest and Band 1 the lowest

In 2007, Malaysian Examination Council (MPM) has revised the MUET paper for the first time since its inception to maintain its relevancy in testing candidates' English language proficiency. One of the major changes was the introduction of the report-writing question which require candidates to write a report based on graphical data given. Besides, the total marks for writing paper have also been increased from 75 to 90. An increase of 15 marks means greater emphasis has been placed on the writing paper for the MUET. The new format was administered for the first time in October/November 2008 MUET test. In school, the new test specifications have been introduced since July 2007 to the Lower Sixes.

Given the low to average proficiency level of most form six students and the vast number of skills to be covered in a short period of one and a half

years of teaching time, there is a need for teachers to find the most efficient way to teach students how to write reports which are based on graphical data.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Writing and the activities involved in composing are highly conventional. Convention and need dictate the occasions for writing and the functions of discourse appropriate to those occasions (Purves, 1992). These conventions are usually learned through writers' exposure to English reading materials like stories, novels, newspapers, magazines or for some through formal instructional settings. For Malaysian learners, due to the limited exposure to the convention of these writing discourse, they simply lack the knowledge of the conventions of the different types of writing discourse, especially factual writing.

However, a lot of times, in our local classrooms, the learners are expected to discover the language and patterns of writing they need in the process of writing themselves, as it is expected in L1 situation. Students were usually thrown into the deep end and let to struggle their way out even though most of them were not able to write well but were instead producing work that was not only full of mistakes but also difficult for the teacher to assess (Siti katijah, 2004). Indeed, compared to students writing in their L1, L2 writers often have an incomplete control of English and rely on teachers to help them develop their ideas and language necessary for them to express themselves effectively.

Genre-based approaches, where teaching and learning focuses on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts, have been identified by Rodgers (2001) as a major trend in English language teaching

(ELT) in the new millennium. Such approaches are, of course, not new. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are early examples of the pioneering work in genre analysis (Swales, 1990). To date, teaching and learning around text genres has become increasingly influential in mainstream ELT in a number of situations, including primary, secondary, tertiary, professional and community teaching contexts involving native speakers of English as well as ESL and EFL learners, and in countries as diverse as Singapore, South Africa, USA, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, UK, China, Canada, Sweden and Thailand (Derewianka, 2003). In Malaysia, an online search found genre-based research conducted by Habijah (2004) to explore the use of genre-based instruction (GBI) to teaching writing for specific purposes for Diploma communication courses; Chow (2007) on expository essays and Ting and Tee (2008) on teaching of procedural, legal, information report and explanation text-types and communication courses. Most of these research genre approach enhanced different aspects of writing skill. However, no research was found on adopting Genre approach in reporting of graphical data. Therefore the researcher would like to find out if genre-based approach is effective in teaching report writing based on graphical data which is pertinent to MUET Essay 1.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In general, the achievement of students in the MUET writing paper has not been satisfactory. The MUET exam, according to Kaur and Rohaya (2006) is viewed a big challenge by many students due to lack of language ability. This implies weaknesses such as limited vocabulary, grammar and language sub-skills, causing a major block to gain a good band score. In addition, according

to Former Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed (The Star, Jan 23, 2007), one-third of students who graduated from public universities in 2006 have very low English Language proficiency. In fact, 29.2% of the 120,000 graduates scored Bands One and Two in the MUET, which identifies them as "Extremely Limited User" and "Limited User" respectively. This shows that our students are generally weak in English.

In SMK Bandaraya, the results of a series of exercises and tests conducted in 2007 for Form Six classes had found that students scored quite poorly in the writing paper. Apart from their language proficiency problem, students lack the skills in developing and organizing this essay. Most students revealed that they do not know how to develop their ideas.

Students also disclosed that report-writing question is the most difficult part in the MUET writing paper. During the exam, they were lost and did not know what to be included in the essays as they need to understand the requirement of the question, analyze the graphical data or stimulus given, as well as determine which data to be extracted and to be included in the report. And that's not all; they also have to organize this information into the logical order besides using the appropriate tone of voice or register pertaining to the task. The process is too taxing as only about 40 minutes is allocated for this question.

From the MUET teachers' perspective, writing skill is indeed a very difficult skill to teach especially among average and low proficiency students. Another constraint the teachers are facing is the time factor, as they have only about one and a half years to teach all the specifications for the four skills. Thus to compensate for the lack of time and students' lack of proficiency in the language which is not possible to be rectified overnight, the

few relatively achievable and manageable aspects to be tackled are the textual pattern, development and organization of their ideas.

**1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The conceptual framework for this study whereby genre-based approach was employed to teach report-writing is adapted from Derewianka (1990) and Butt et al (2001). The study adopts a four-stage training cycle, namely the *context exploration*, *text exploration*, *joint construction*, and the *individual application* stages, which aimed at assisting learners to gain control of the report-writing genre. It is hoped that by using this model the learners would be able to produce well organized and well developed reports from the graphical data provided. Figure 1.1 shows the conceptual framework of the genre-based training employed by the researcher in this research.

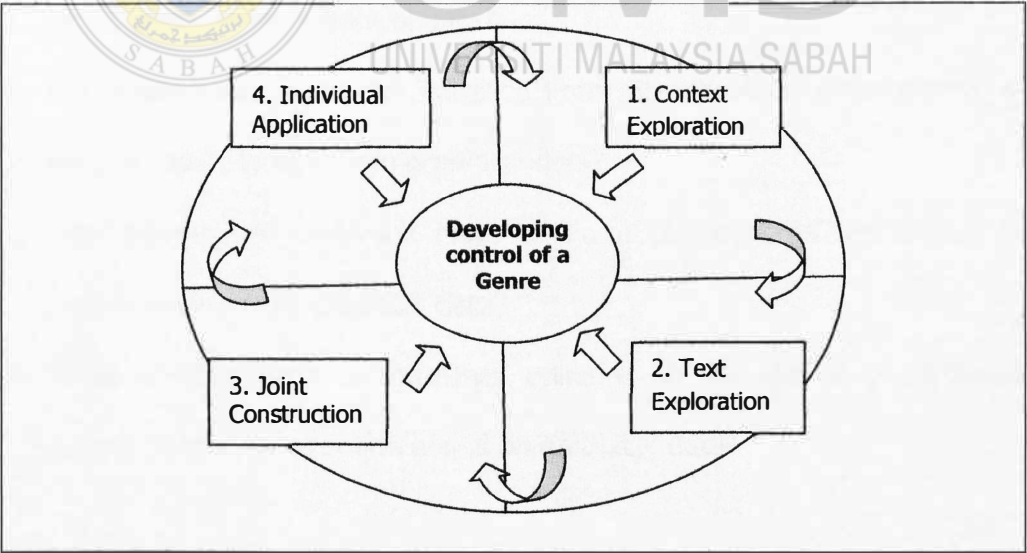


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the study

**1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The primary aim of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of genre-based approach in enhancing report-writing from various types of

graphical data like graph, bar chart, pie chart, tables and etc to form six students. At the same time the researcher would also like to know the students' perception or opinion on the use of genre approach in writing reports. Especially to find out whether or not students perceive genre-based approach as a useful method in learning report writing. In short, the objectives of this research are

- a. to find out the effect of genre based approach in teaching form six students' report-writing from graphical data;
- b. to find out the students' opinions on the use of genre-based approach in writing reports from graphical data.

### 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions addressed are as follows:

- a. Will genre-based approach enhance Form Six students' *organization* in report-writing from graphical data?
- b. Will genre-based approach enhance Form Six students' *development of ideas* in report-writing from graphical data?
- c. Will genre-based approach enhance Form Six students' vocabulary in report-writing from graphical data?
- d. What are the Form Six students' opinions on the use of genre-based approach in writing reports based on graphical data?

### 1.6 Research Hypotheses

Ha1 There will be a significant difference in the scores of *organization skill* of students who are instructed using GBA and those who receive non-GBA instruction.

- Ha2 There will be a significant difference in the scores of *development of ideas* of students who are instructed using GBA and those who receive non-GBA instruction.
- Ha3 There will be a significant difference in the scores of *Vocabulary* of students who are instructed using GBA and those who receive non-GBA instruction.

## **1.7 Operational Definitions**

### **1.7.1 Genre-Based Approach to Writing**

The genre-based approach to writing of report in this study refers to the learning-teaching cycle adapted from Derewianka (1990) and Butt et. al. (2001) which consists 4 stages:

- a. *context exploration* which involves exploring the possible contexts of situation in which the reporting of graphical data may be used in real life;
- b. *text exploration* which aims to familiarize the learners with the target text-type or genre, and to draw attention to organizational and linguistic features commonly found in reporting graphical data;
- c. *joint construction* phase, by making use of the knowledge and awareness gained from the exploration of the text, the students work with peers and the teacher to construct their own texts.
- d. *individual application*, which requires learners to work individually and independently to produce individual essays.

### **1.7.2 Report-Writing from Graphical Data**

Report-writing from graphical data in form six syllabus refers to essay 1 in the MUET paper (Refer Appendices 5 and 6 for examples of the essay questions). It is a question where students need to write a short report between 150 to 200 words based on the given graphical data like tables, pie-charts, graphs, bar-charts and etc (Malaysian Examination Council, 2006).

### **1.7.3 Organisation of a Report**

Good organization in this study refers to a report which has indications of opening and closing. It has also clear and appropriate overall structure, with body arranged in a way which shows plan, besides clear and complete paragraphing, where relevant.

### **1.7.4 Development of Ideas (Content)**

This criterion assesses how appropriately, accurately and relevantly the response fulfils the requirements set out in the task, whether ideas are concretely and thoroughly developed and reflects thoughts of the writer using between 150 to 200 words.

### **1.7.5 Vocabulary**

This criterion refers to the precision and range of vocabulary the candidate uses and the accuracy and appropriacy of the register or style pertaining to report writing from graphical data.