

**EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR  
TEACHING ON STANDARD SIX LEARNERS'  
PERFORMANCE IN GRAMMATICALITY  
JUDGEMENT AND USE OF SIMPLE PRESENT  
TENSE, SIMPLE PAST TENSE, PRONOUNS AND  
ARTICLES**

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**SEKOLAH PENDIDIKAN DAN PEMBANGUNAN  
SOSIAL  
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2006**



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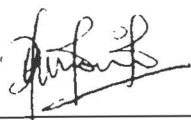
BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL : EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL  
GRAMMAR TEACHING ON STANDARD SIX  
LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN  
GRAMMATICALITY JUDGEMENT AND USE OF  
SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE, SIMPLE PAST TENSE,  
PRONOUNS AND ARTICLES  
IJAZAH : SARJANA PENDIDIKAN (TESL)  
SESI PENGAJIAN : 2002 – 2006

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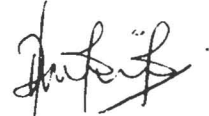
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## DECLARATION

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have to say the first thanks with an utmost deepest appreciation to the **GOD**, who had given me all the strength to accomplish this research with all the odds against me in various forms that kept me apart from completing it very much earlier.

I express sincere appreciation to Dr Agus Rianto for his time, patience, guidance, valuable suggestions and comments and insight throughout the research.

Thanks go to Mrs. M.Parameswari who assisted in carrying out the treatment and the students who participated in the research. Here, not forgetting Mrs Iffi, who helped me with the statistical analysis and data interpretation.

I express my thanks and appreciation to my beloved husband, my daughter (who had tried all the possible means to delay my project which in turn gave me the strength), my parents, sister and brother in-law for their understanding, motivation and patience.

Lastly, but in no sense the least, I am thankful to all colleagues and friends who have involved directly or indirectly in giving me encouragement for the completion of the research and who made my stay at the university a memorable and valuable experience.





## ABSTRAK

### ***EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR TEACHING ON STANDARD SIX LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN GRAMMATICALITY JUDGEMENT AND USE OF SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE, SIMPLE PAST TENSE, PRONOUNS AND ARTICLES***

Tesis ini mengkaji sama ada pengajaran tatabahasa secara tradisional memberi sebarang kesan terhadap pencapaian pelajar tahun enam dalam menjustifikasi tatabahasa dan penggunaan 'simple present tense', 'simple past tense', 'pronouns' dan 'articles' dalam penulisan karangan. Seramai 40 pelajar tahun enam SK Tansau, Putatan, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah telah dipilih secara rawak untuk menjalankan kajian ini. Mereka dibahagikan secara sama rata dari segi bilangan kepada dua kumpulan iaitu kumpulan 'treatment' dan kumpulan 'control'. Latihan pemahaman dan penulisan menggunakan 'simple present tense', 'simple past tense', 'pronouns', 'articles' telah digunakan sebagai instrumen dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpul daripada dua Ujian yang telah diberikan sebelum dan selepas pengajaran tatabahasa yang juga dikenali sebagai 'pre-test' dan 'post-test'. SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) versi 11.5 telah digunakan untuk menganalisa data yang dikumpul. Ujian T telah digunakan untuk melihat purata perbezaan skor dan tahap signifikasi ujian itu. 'Pearson Correlation Significance (2 tailed)' telah digunakan untuk melihat kekuatan perhubungan di antara penjustifikasian tatabahasa yang dipilih tadi dalam penulisan karangan. Kajian mendapati ada perbezaan yang ketara diantara kumpulan 'treatment' dan 'control' dari segi penjustifikasian tatabahasa yang dipilih tadi dalam penulisan karangan. Kajian mendapati tidak ada sebarang korelasi diantara penjustifikasian tatabahasa yang dipilih tadi dengan penulisan karangan dalam kumpulan 'treatment'. Kajian –kajian lepas memang ada menunjukkan bahawa pengajaran tatabahasa merupakan faktor yang mendatangkan kesan positif terhadap penulisan karangan. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pengajaran tatabahasa secara tradisi mempengaruhi penulisan pelajar.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR TEACHING ON STANDARD SIX LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN GRAMMATICALITY JUDGEMENT AND USE OF SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE, SIMPLE PAST TENSE, PRONOUNS AND ARTICLES**

*This study sought to investigate whether there is any effect of the traditional grammar teaching on Standard Six learners' performance in grammaticality judgement and use of simple present tense, simple past tense, pronouns and articles in writing. The sample for the study consisted of 40 Standard Six students of SK Tansau, Putatan, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah who was divided equally into two groups which were the treatment group and the control groups. Tests of grammar and using the simple present tense, simple past tense, pronouns and articles in writing were used as the instruments of the study. The data was collected through the administration of the pre-test and post-test. To analyze the collected data, the SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) version 11.5 was used. T-test was used to see if there was a significant difference in the mean post-test. The Pearson Correlation was used on both tests between treatment group and control group to establish the relationship between scores on grammaticality judgement and scores on use of the grammatical features investigated. The study found that there is a significant difference in the mean post-test in simple present tense, simple past tense and pronouns and articles of the grammar test as well as writing test between the treatment and control groups. The results indicated that there was no correlation between scores on test of grammar and test of the use of simple present tense, simple past tense, pronouns and articles on writing in the treatment group. There have been research studies in the past that lend clear cut support to the teaching of grammar as a mean of improving writing and the results of this research also clearly show that the implementation of Traditional Grammar Teaching has positive effect on the students' writing.*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CPE	College Placement Exam
df.	Degree of Freedom
ES	Editorial Skills
ESL	English as Second Language
FFI	Form-Focused Instruction
GT	Grammar Test
IT	Information Technology
KBSR	Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah
L2	Second Language
n.d.	no date
Sig.	Significance
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
T	T-test
UK	United Kingdom
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah
USA	United States of America
WT	Writing Test

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

English as a second language is a compulsory subject taught at all levels in every Malaysian school. The syllabus structured by the Ministry of Education is functional in its content and communicative in its instructional approach, the philosophy being to train Malaysians from young to develop the relevant English language skills deemed vital for personal and professional development and advancement in a global economy (StudyMalaysia.Com, 1998-2005).

Besides that, the aim of English language instruction in Malaysian schools is also to enable the learners to use English for different purposes. For example, ask for information, understand instructions, read textbooks or manual and write reports. This means they need to learn to listen and understand, read and understand, speak and write accurately, fluently and appropriately. To achieve this, they need to learn pronunciation, grammar, appropriacy and the language skills (Nesamalar, Saratha, Teh, 1997).

There is no doubt that a person needs to know basic knowledge of grammar in order to write or speak accurately. Therefore grammar is one of the basic skills that a person needs to learn in order to have the understanding of the English language. Grammar refers to the rules, which govern the way the words of a language can be arranged in order to convey an idea or message. Chomsky (1965) suggests that native



speakers have, somewhere in their brains, a set of grammar rules which they can use to make sentences. He states that there are a finite number of rules with which one can create an infinite number of sentences (Chomsky 1965 cited in Nesamalar, Saratha, Teh, 1997).

Knowledge of grammar enables language users to put words together in the correct order to communicate ideas and intentions efficiently. It is possible that someone who can produce perfectly correct sentences and communicate efficiently may not be able to explain the rules of grammar. This is true of many speakers of English, including some native speakers. Such people have implicit knowledge of grammar whereby they know grammar at the level of use. One needs to have explicit knowledge of grammar to be able to describe and explain the rules (Nesamalar, Saratha, Teh, 1997).

The knowledge of grammar plays an important role in writing composition where accuracy in forming sentences is taken into consideration. Grammar was considered the foundation of all knowledge in the past and it was believed to discipline the mind and the soul at the same time. Today, English composition teachers are questioning whether grammar instruction is helpful or not. A lot of studies have not found significant difference in writing ability between students who have studied grammar and students who have not. Much other research contradicts that result (Kyoung, 2003). Besides that there were arguments as well, on which grammar approach would be the best to teach the students in order for them to produce coherent writing. There were different opinions by different researchers and there is no exact approach that would be classified as the best way to teach grammar to the students. The goal of grammar instruction is to facilitate language acquisition through changing learner attitude towards the target language and target language speakers (Kyoung, 2003). Therefore whichever approach is taken into consideration, it is important to look at the goal of grammar.



This research focuses on the effect of traditional grammar teaching on writing composition among Standard Six students of SK Tansau, Kota Kinabalu. This study will continue with the background of the study in the following paragraph.

## **1.2 Background of the study**

English is a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary school curriculum in line with its status as a second language in Malaysia (KBSM English Syllabus, 2000). Therefore Malaysia recognizes English language as one of the very important subjects for all levels of education. Its importance is patent as students are required to have good grades in English in order to apply for higher education in Malaysia and abroad. The main problem, however is that despite years of learning or exposure to English language in schools, students still do not perform well in English language and they are still grappling with the issue of English proficiency. This is validated in a survey done by the Malaysian government which revealed that nearly 60 000 Malaysian graduates are unemployed, many of who cannot get jobs because of their lack of experience, poor English and communication skills (Borneo Bulletin, 2005).

Students in Malaysia have difficulties in expressing their ideas or opinions in English. These difficulties are apparent when English language teachers check their students' written work especially their composition that require students to apply their grammatical knowledge consciously or subconsciously to write sentences that are error free. Most students in general are unable to write grammatically well-formed and coherent sentences.

The English language teachers in schools and even in higher institution often express concerns at students' lack of performance in English language. Therefore this study highlights the need to develop grammar knowledge in order to improve their composition skills. In terms of developing grammar knowledge, this study believes that





the traditional grammar teaching can improve students' grammar knowledge as well as good writing skills development. This issue will be further discussed in the statement of problem below.

### **1.3 Statement of problem**

In Malaysia, the teaching of English is constrained by examinations and it is also taught according to the syllabus implemented by the Ministry of Education through the Curriculum Department. The English language syllabus for primary schools aims to equip learners with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate, both orally and in writing, in and out of school. The English curriculum for primary schools is designed to provide learners with a strong foundation in the English language. Learners will then be able to build upon this foundation and use the language for various purposes. (Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah, 2001). As English language is taught to students from Standard or Primary 1 onwards, it is assumed that at Standard 6 students are capable of forming basic English structures referring to at least two different time references. For example, students are assumed to have practiced or learnt for five years at primary level, the simple present tense, the present continuous tense and the simple past tense, so it is taken for granted that Standard Six students can convey ideas in both present and past tense. In other words basic grammar structures that the students learn from Standard One to Five are expected to function as 'springboard' for learning new grammar structures at Standard Six. It is also assumed that at this level students are capable of expressing their ideas in writing because the presupposition is that grammatical knowledge cumulates as students' progress from early stage of Primary education, from standard One to Six. However only few students know grammar in the language as examination scores



reported the inadequacies of primary and secondary students to write good compositions.

It can be said that one of the reason students have problems with writing good composition is due to the reason of lack of accuracy in grammar knowledge. Such students' inability to write good compositions continues into higher education. According to Widdowson (1998), language learning is essentially grammar learning and it is a mistake to think otherwise. Thus, it can be inferred from Widdowson's statement that grammar is essential to help one to convey their ideas or meanings clearly and precisely.

One of many issues relating to the teaching and learning of English in Primary schools in Malaysia is students' unsatisfactory mastery of English grammar in conveying their ideas either in their spoken or written output. However what concerns the Ministry of Education most is the written output in students composition writing, a major problem faced by learners' of English in Malaysia and even elsewhere is writing grammatically well-formed sentences in various writing tasks such as essays, letters, reports and so on. Writing composition is not an easy task, as it requires students to structure their ideas into correct and meaningful sentences.

Vocabulary is also important in writing compositions but neither vocabulary nor set phrases are sufficient. Grauberg, (1997) seems to support the importance of grammar. He states that learners will have to make choices between words, according to word class, decide which verb form, which pronoun to use, how to signal the distinction between singular and plural, statement and question and so on. In other words, they need to learn the rules of grammar that will guide them in choosing the form and position of words. The necessity of choice implies the necessity of understanding and applying the rules. Therefore the traditional grammar teaching comes into picture whereby this approach helps to explain the rules of the grammar, which will be helpful for students to form proper sentences while writing composition. According to Cathlin Ayoob (1999),





traditional grammar teaching teaches the rules of grammar, how to effectively employ these rules and where these rules come from, empowers the students to create influential composition.

This statement clearly indicates that traditional grammar teaching is essential in forming meaningful sentences. In Malaysia, at the Primary level, students have to sit for UPSR (Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah) examinations in which students' ability to write good composition contributes to total score of the examination. Students' unsatisfactory control of English can be serious impediment to conveying ideas in writing. One cannot have good writing without knowledge of the rules of grammar and grammar would not exist if we did not communicate with written word (Cathlin Ayoob, 1999).

In spite of years of learning formal grammar from Standard One onwards, students have not internalized the various English grammar systems, such as tense/aspects, articles and determiners, modal verbs, passive voice, sentence structure, co-ordination and sub co-ordination and so on. It is possible that some secondary students do not know grammar in any sense of that word. Therefore, it is pointless asking these students to edit their compositions. Students cannot edit and monitor their output without knowing adequate grammatical knowledge. On the other hand, some students may have learnt certain grammar rules but these rules may have little if any transfer value, in the sense that students may not be able to use grammar to make meaning. Furthermore, majority of students who know grammar rules may not know how to apply them in specific context of use. These are the most common problems faced by students in Malaysia. This problem is in a way due to the approach used to teach grammar. The Communicational Syllabus has since been replaced by our present syllabus, the KBSR English Language Primary School Syllabus. Unlike grammar-based syllabus, which arranges syllabus content according to grammatical items, the KBSR English language Syllabus is arranged according to themes which are drawn from



familiar contexts; for example, the context of the home and school, the community and so on. These themes provide the context through which the language skills and language content are to be taught in an integrated manner. The KBSR syllabus specifies that Grammar should be taught but preferably in context. Hence, grammar is not the main focus of the teaching activity but rather a tool for the language use (Ratnawati, 1996).

According to Kyoung (2003), the purpose of grammar instruction should be well performed by teacher to build students' transportable knowledge into writing successfully because there is a close relationship between grammar and writing. Furthermore grammar instruction allows students to put their thoughts down on paper. Many students however have difficulties with organization, coherence and revision and the root reason is the method of teaching grammar.

#### **1.4 Purposes of the study**

This study seeks to investigate whether:

- 1) Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of tenses (simple present tense and simple past tense) than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction.
- 2) Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of pronouns than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction.
- 3) Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of articles than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction.



- 4) Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in the use of the four grammatical forms in writing composition than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction.
- 5) There is no correlation between Standard Six students' performance in grammaticality judgement in the four grammatical forms and in the use of them in writing.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- 1) Do Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of tenses (simple present tense and simple past tense) than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction?
- 2) Do Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of pronouns than those presented with Form Focused Instruction?
- 3) Do Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in grammaticality judgement of articles than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction?
- 4) Do Standard Six students presented with Traditional Grammar Teaching have better performance in the use of the four grammatical forms in writing composition than those presented with Form-Focused Instruction?
- 5) Is there any correlation between Standard Six students' performance in grammaticality judgement in the four grammatical forms and in the use of them in writing?

## 1.6 Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the mean post-test between treatment group and control group in grammaticality judgement of tenses (simple present tense and simple past tense).
- 2) There is no significant difference in the mean of post-test between treatment group and control group in grammaticality judgement of pronouns.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the mean of post-test between treatment group and control group in grammaticality judgement of articles.
- 4) There is no significant difference in the mean of post-test between treatment group and control group in the use of the four grammatical forms in writing.
- 5) There is no correlation in the mean of post-test between the grammar test and the writing test for the treatment group.

## 1.7 Significance of the study

The study is significant for the following reasons:

- 1) The findings may be useful for all language teachers who have taught grammar and their students have failed to learn and apply to written output.
- 2) The findings may be useful for the Curriculum Department who design the syllabus in Malaysia to design and develop teaching strategies to help students learn grammar. For example Traditional Grammar Teaching can be used to teach grammar in the new English Syllabus. The department may also re-evaluate the role of grammar in the English curriculum and possibly adopt more specific and effective strategies. The problem may not be grammar per se, but the manner in which it is taught.





- 3) The findings may also be beneficial for the English Language Public Examination setters to re-examine their grammar assessment scorings for writing composition.
- 4) It is hoped that these findings can serve as a basis for further research in traditional grammar teaching and essay writing.
- 5) No previous study on the influence of Traditional Grammar Teaching on composition or essay writing has been carried out in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Therefore this research can be helpful for the teachers to identify the effectiveness of this proposed method to be used in their teaching and learning grammar in the schools.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation of the research**

The sample in this study consists of two groups of Standard Six students of SK Tansau, Putatan, Sabah. Each group consists of 20 students. The selected students in this study were the medium ability group in their English proficiency. The two groups are named as the treatment group and control group. The researcher decided to study only these students of this school due to time constraints. It was not possible to conduct a study of all the Standard Six classes from the selected school or state as this research project had to be completed by the middle of the year 2006.

Another limitation is that the findings in this study may not be generalisable to all Standard Six students in Putatan, Sabah because this study is restricted to only one school. However the researcher hopes to discover useful information from students' written work and grammar tests. It would be useful, for instance if pedagogical mechanism could be found to link grammar teaching and essay writing in a more coherent way so that grammar instruction could act as a pivot point to essay writing and



vice versa. The present method of presenting and practicing grammar topics at Primary level is less satisfactory.

## **1.9 The Definition of Terms**

### **1) Traditional Grammar and Traditional Grammar Teaching**

In linguistics, traditional grammar is a cover name for the collection of concepts and ideas about the structure of language that Western societies have received from ancient Greek and Roman sources (Wikipedia, 2006). Traditional grammar describes the language through sentences, clauses and phrases and it defines the 9 parts of speech, which are the nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, articles, conjunctions and interjections (Julie Dunstan, 2003). Thus, Traditional Grammar Teaching is the activities focusing on the explanation of rules of the parts of speech. In this research Traditional Grammar Teaching is explained as the teaching of the proper rules of how to form a grammatically correct sentence. Therefore it involves explanation or teaching of the rules, followed by lots of exercises on the four grammatical items chosen in order to give learners basic understanding to form grammatically correct sentences which hypothesized to help learners in improving their writing skills. This Traditional Grammar Teaching is presented to the treatment group in this research.

### **2) Form-Focused Instruction (FFI)**

R.Ellis (2002) defines FFI as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form”. Although the majority of FFI studies have focused on the domain of grammar, the term form in form focused instruction actually refers to all formal aspects of language; to grammar, but also to pronunciation, spelling, intonation, etc. It should also be pointed out that incidental in this definition is not the opposite of planned. Incidental FFI is equally planned, in that it is



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