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GRAMMAR TREATMENT EXERCISES, BRAINSTORMING AND MIND MAPPING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING

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**DISERTASI DIKEMUKAKAN BAGI MEMENUHI
SYARAT UNTUK MEMPEROLEHI
IJAZAH SARJANA PENDIDIKAN**

**FAKULTI BAHASA
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS
2010**



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PENGAKUAN

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the words in this dissertation are my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledge.

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Kanapathy A/L Tuthirapathy

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti keberkesanan 'scaffolding' dalam memperbaiki penulisan esei naratif pelajar tingkatan 5. Scaffolding yang digunakan ialah brainstorming, peta minda dan kerja berkumpulan. Objective kajian ini adalah unruk mengurangkan kesalahan dalam esei para pelear. Selain itu kajian ini juga bertujuan mencari methodologi dimana para pelajar dapat menjana idea-idea untuk penulisan mereka. Akhirnya kajian ini juga bertujuan menyedarkan para pelear akan teknik penulisan dan pada masa yang sama memupukminat terhadap penulisan esei.

Landasan teori yang digunakan oleh penkaji ialah penulisan secara kolaboratif atau koperatif. Teknik penulisan ini sangat relevant denagn landasan toeri saya yang kedua yang dipelepori oleh ahli psikologi Russia yang terkenal iaitu Vygotsky. Zone of Proximal Development atau ZPD yang dipelopori oleh beliau berkait rapat dengan cara pembelajaran berkumpulan. ZPD menegaskan bahawa scaffolding itu datang daripada ahli-ahli dalam kumpulan yang mempunyai pengetahuan yang lebih daripada ahli-ahli yang lain. Menurut Vygotsky pelajaryang lemah dapat belajar dengan lebih cepat daripada rakan jika dibandingkan dengan orang dewasa. Selain itu, teknik brainstorming and peta minda juga digunakan untuk menjana idea di kalangan ahli kumpulan dan membuat peta minda untuk menyusun semula idea-idea tersebut untuk tujuan penulisan.

Peserta-peserta dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada pelajar dalam satu kelas yang sama dimana pengkaji mengajar kelas tersebut dan kelas yang satu lagi diajar oleh guru lain. Peserta terdiri daripada 42 orang berumur 17 tahun lelaki dan perempuan yang terdiri daripada kaum Cina dan India. Peserta juga dating dari keluarga yang berpendapatan pertengahan dan rendah. Tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris mereka juga di tahap pertengahan dan pertengahan rendah.

Kajian ini bukannya menggunakan methodologi eksperimen sepenuhnya tetapi quasi-eksperimen yang menggunakan instrumen seperti pre test, diikuti dengan rawatan untuk tatabahasa, penggunaan brainstorming dan peta minda untuk menjana dan menyusun idea dan akhirnya post test. Pengkaji juga membuat analysis terhadap kesalahan-kesalahan yang dilakukan dalam esei-esei untuk melihat jumlah kesalahan yang dilakukan untuk topik tatabahasa. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini ditunjukkan dalam jadual dalam topik 4. Data yang diperolehi dianalisis secara kualitatif untuk melihat keberkesanan scaffolding yang telah diberikan kepada para peserta. Data-data tersebut ditunjukkan dalam graf untuk memudahkan pemahaman.

Hasil daripada kajian tersebut ternyata penggunaan scaffolding iaitu; brainstorming, peta minda, penulisan berkumpulan dan rawatan tatabahasa telah menunjukkan peningkatan dalam pencapaian dan kualiti penulisan esei peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen. Kesalahan-kesalahan yang dilakukan dalam tatbahasa juga ternyata berkurangan. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa teori ZPD Vygotsky



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benar dan penggunaan teori ini dapat meningkatkan kualiti esei peserta-peserta saya. Kajian ini juga memberi peluang kepada para akademik yang lain untuk mencuba di dalam kelas demi mempertingkatkan kualiti esei para pelajar mereka.



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this investigation was to study the effects of scaffolding in improving students' essay writing especially narrative writing in a Form Five classroom. The scaffoldings utilized for this study are brainstorming, mind mapping and group work. The objectives of this study were to minimize errors in pupils' essays. Next, the study also sought methodologies on how pupils could drive ideas to write an essay that were in line with the given topics. Finally this study was to create an awareness and liking towards essay writing among the pupils.

The theoretical framework for this study encircled around the use of collaborative or cooperative writing. The use of this framework was essential as the participants were of average level and they need all the assistance that the participants could get. This was also closely connected to next theoretical framework founded by Russian Psychologist Vygotsky. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD banks on group work where the better members of the group assist the weaker members. This is because weaker pupils are able to function beyond their ability if they are given the needed assistances. Besides that, brain storming and mind mapping were two other types of assistance that the weaker pupils need in order to extract ideas from the group members and mind mapping before writing out the essay with fewer errors.

The samples of this study were intact groups from two different form five classes where one class was assigned to the researcher to teach English and the other to another teacher. Therefore, no random selection took place. The samples consisted of 42 pupils of 17 years of age. The samples were both male and female of Indian and Chinese race. The samples were from low and middle income family whose level of English was of above average and average. The group that the researcher took was termed as experimental group and the other group was the control group.

As this study was a quasi-experimental study the methodology for this study comprised instruments that were of pre test, followed by treatments for grammar topics, the use of brain storming and mind mapping to get ideas for the essay and finally a post test. The data were collected from the pre test, from two narrative essays and finally from the post test. Then error analyses for all the essays were done and the data were tabulated to indicate the number of errors done for each grammar topic taught. The data were analyzed qualitatively by commenting on the errors. A comparison was also made by looking at the error analyses from the pre and post tests. Besides the essays qualitative analyses were conducted towards the effects of group work, brain storming and mind mapping. The data were graphed to facilitate understanding.

The findings of the study show that the use of scaffolding, brain storming, mind mapping and group work improved the samples' ability in writing. The samples were able to write more efficiently with more relevant points. Besides, the treatments given also benefitted the samples as the number of grammar errors declined. The findings also proved Vygotsky's ZPD theory to be true as scaffolding eventually improve pupils' narrative writing. This study provides an insight on the effectiveness of scaffolding in reducing errors in essays. This insight will also enable educationists and teachers to emulate the scaffoldings mentioned to vary teaching methods in English classes.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction of the Study

After the fall of the Sumateran Hindu empayar; Srivijaya, at the end of the thirteenth century another empayar in the Malay Archipelago emerged. This was Melaka, a

trading port and one of the most supreme empayar in the sixteenth century. Being a place of trading many countries from the East, Far East and West traded here. They in turn brought their native languages, culture and religion. This made Malaysia a unique country with diversity of languages as we see it today.

According to Asmah Haji Omar (1982) the immigrant languages are Chinese, Indian, Arabic, Thai, and some other minor ones. All these languages are spoken in the Southeast Asian countries. After the fall of the Melaka Sultanate to the Portuguese in 1511, then in 1824 to the British, a treaty was signed by both the British and the Dutch, whereby the Malay Archipelago was split into two and English language was the dominant foreign language in Malaya. The use of various immigrant languages has posed a difficulty in communication. Therefore, for the purpose of communication



between the locals and foreigners lingua francae were needed; hence then emerged pidgins and languages of wider communication which were once colonial languages. As a result the Southeast Nations 'being members of the Educational pact known as SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization), which was established in the 1960's have chosen English as their principal foreign language for two main purposes: one, a language for international communication, and two, a language which forms a source for the latest developments in science and technology' (Asmah Haji Omar, 1982, pp.8-9).

Asmah Hj. Omar (1982) further writes that only Malaysia and Philippines chose the English language as their second or foreign language. Malaysia and the Philippines according to her have been very pragmatic towards their colonial masters' language. She noted that Malaysia and Philippines 'have all the time realized that the English language is an asset to keep, since it can provide them with an avenue to international relations as well as a means to their advancement in science and technology.'

Asmah Hj. Omar (1982, p.10) even advocates that today, the 'National Education Policy requires that English is taught in every government-sponsored school, be it fully or partially assisted.' This shows clearly the importance of the English language that our country Malaysia has imposed. Asmah Hj. Omar (1982) further illustrates that in present-day Malaysia the objective of English language teaching is to make the language the most important foreign language for the purpose of knowledge and science. Besides that there are other objectives where the language is used for commercial dealings and diplomacy.

Graddol (2006) (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-elt>), commented about the 'Future of English'. According to Graddol (2006) 372 million people in 1996 use

English as their First language. 28% of the books published in a year would be in English with over 60 countries publishing them making it the largest publishing language in the world. There are a few types of English speakers; notably 375 million are L1 speakers, another 375 million are L2 speakers and 75 million are EFL speakers. This makes English as the number one spoken language by the people in this world in this 21 century. According to Graddol (2006) again, in 1997 Malaysia has 375 thousand people who use English as their first language and 5984 thousand people who use English as L1 and L2. Graddol (2006) estimates that in the year 2050 there will be some 508 million native English speakers making it the third largest spoken language in the world after Chinese and Hindi languages. Knowing the fact that English language is also the L2 in most countries in the world, which makes English the number one spoken language in the world.

Asmah Hj Omar (1982) states that when the language was confined to a smaller geographical area and concentrated on being the medium of education in selected schools, the level of proficiency was high. Now when it is spread over a wider area and is just a language that must be acquired, divested of its role as medium of education, the level of proficiency is very low.

This phenomenon the lack of proficiency among students today seems to be alarming. Students' productive skills; speaking and writing are the two major problem areas which must be tackled before they leave secondary school to pursue tertiary education or find jobs. Nevertheless, the subject; English Language seems to be a phobia not only among language learning students but also among the language users in Malaysia. If a choice is given, language learners would refrain themselves from using English language as a medium of instruction and communication. Fortunately, the importance of the English language has been highlighted not only by educationist,

corporate figures but also by the government through the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English in the year 2003. Before the independence of Malaya, English language was the language used not only in English medium schools but also was a language used in administration. The popularity of the language flourished in urban areas all over Malaya thus, making many towns and city folks speak English fluently. Nevertheless, in the post-independence period, the medium of instruction in school and government administration was changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia. This was because the government then saw the need for establishing a strong sense of nation identity and promoting integration among the races and it was done through Bahasa Malaysia.

As years goes by the geographical boundary of the English language grew and the standard of the language deteriorated in school as Asmah Hj Omar (1982) has indicated. The fear especially towards writing has made many students shy away from learning English thus, failing to obtain a high level of proficiency. This study is to investigate on how to improve students' essay quality through the use of scaffolding: namely group work, brainstorming and mind mapping. This study also tries to look into treatments that would minimize the errors made in writing. The best way to get the participants to express themselves is through writing stories: narration with guidance that will help them in constructing ideas. The written exercise that the researcher has chosen is Question 2- Continuous Writing from the SPM 1119/1 paper.

1.1 Need for the Study

ESL students in schools today are taught four major skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, and of the four skills, writing has a major impact on students' assessment in the SPM examination. Furthermore, the marks allocated for writing; that is Paper 1 in the 1119/1 SPM *Bahasa Inggeris* is 85 marks out of 170 marks or 50% of the allocated marks for the exam paper (refer to table1.1 below).

Table 1.1

The breakdown of marks allocation for the 1119/1/2
Bahasa Inggeris (English Language) paper.

Oral Exam	School Based Oral Assessment	10 Marks
PAPER 1	Question 1 — Directed Writing	35 Marks
	Question 2— Continuous Writing	50 Marks
	TOTAL	85 Marks
PAPER 2	Section A —15 MCQ Questions	15 Marks
	Section B —10 Structure Questions	10 Marks
	Section C —9 Comprehension Questions	10 Marks
	Section C —1 Summary (120 Words)	15 Marks
	Section D —5 Comprehension Questions (Based on Short Stories & Poems)	10 Marks
	Section D — Short essay based on novel	15 Marks
	TOTAL	75 Marks
	GRAND TOTAL	170 Marks

Source: Malaysian Examination Syndicate (*Bahasa Inggeris* 1119)

The overall marks for 1119 English Language Paper 1 is 180 marks after including 10 marks for Oral Exam which is school based. The Malaysian Examination Syndicate has never given a clear indication for 1119 English Language paper grades. Therefore, a guideline was given by the Perak Education Department in the teachers' Record Book. Listed below are the Grades for the marks by pupils in their SPM papers (refer table 1.2 below).

Table 1.2

Marks and Grades for All SPM Papers

Grades	Marks
1A	80 – 100
2A	75 – 79
3B	70 – 74
4B	60 – 64
5C	55 – 59
6C	50 -54
7D	40 – 49
8E	35- 39
9G	0 – 34

Source: Teacher's Record Book, Perak Education Department

ESL candidates are to answer all the questions given. The writing section comprises directed and continuous writing, summary and novel. There are altogether

115 marks or 67.6% out of 170 marks allocated for only writing in both Paper 1 and Paper 2. This shows that if ESL candidates are to score high grades the students have to excel in writing skill. Unfortunately, writing assessment of the English language paper is difficult, especially for students in the average, below average and weak classes.

1.2 Purpose for the Study

Being an English language teacher for the past twenty years, it is very common reading students' essays that are filled with errors in sentence structure and tenses, and the inability to project ideas. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to upgrade students' ability in writing by providing the necessary scaffoldings and treatments. This study was to improve students' narrative writing skills using brainstorming and mind mapping technique.

To provide further assistance group work was included in this study by having student leaders to lead each group during writing sessions. Therefore, one the objective of this study was to see if group work improved students' ability.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

This study is significant as there is a connection between the teaching techniques, better writing and the improved grades of the participants. This study will have an amended effect among the participants. It is through this study that improvements in the participants' writing skills would be observed. Writing has always been a skill that

is very difficult to master as students feel that writing is difficult. This is because writing is a skill that employs all the other skills of language learning. As Durodola, (2007, p. 34) states ‘written language has its own substantial sets of conventions. There are conventions of spelling, of punctuation, of the formation of letters, of the size of handwriting or type, of capitalization, of paragraphing, paper layout, of book binding’. These conventions are different especially in the students’ first language and to the students’ cultures.

Through this study the writing techniques that were exposed to the participants will build the interest in writing and make the students better writes. This study will blend some of the techniques in writing in order to write a better essay. The treatment will be focused on topics like grammar, sentence structure and spelling. The participants will be able to write more confidently, lengthily thus, the grades improved. The participants will also be able to see not only improvement in writing but also self-confidence through interaction. This in turn will make the participants to communicate better in good English, and indirectly improves the school’s performance in the SPM *Bahasa Inggeris* Paper.

1.4 Research Question

The research aimed to answer the questions given below:

1. How do group work, brainstorming and mind mapping improve students’ narrative writing?
2. Do students make less grammatical errors in the essays after completing grammar exercises given as treatments used in narrative writing?



1.5 Limitation for the Study

This study is limited to improving the participants' writing skills based on the continuous writing which is Question 2 in their 1119/1 English Language paper.

Continuous essay topics are of a variety of choices: narrative, talk, speech, informal and formal letter writing, dialogue, argumentative and factual topics. For the purpose of this study narrative topic of unfortunate incidents and accidents are used. It would be easier to write a story as the participants would be able to explore easily story as it is already registered in the mind.

The picture for the story is already in the mind thus, writing with one's own background knowledge is essential for this research. In order to extract participants' background knowledge, guided words are extracted through brainstorming, whereby questioning and answering session takes place to extract ideas from other readers.



1.6 Definition of Key Words

Below is a list of the key words that are utilized in this research paper. The definition is needed to direct readers' attention towards the purpose of the research.

1. Narrative – According to Miranda (2000) as illustrated in the New Oxford Dictionary on page 523 'Narrative' is a noun "the description of events in a story"
2. Continuous Writing – According to Tan and Ainon Zubir (2006) Continuous Writing is given topics that students will have to write with their own understanding of the topics without any notes.
3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998, p.5) describe Vygotsky's ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental



level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

4. Brainstorming – According to Correll (2004) brainstorming is like furniture building, glassblowing or sculpture it requires ideas and raw materials. The raw materials require for brainstorming are words. They may be sentence fragments, synonyms or homophones. Colloquial expressions, poetry, quotes from literature, or newspaper articles.

5. Brainstorming - Sokolik (1996) explains that brainstorming is what it sounds like – creating a storm of ideas in your head. Storms that are not slow, logical events that stop to think and correct themselves.

6. Mind mapping – As Campbell (1998) has noted is a technique for generating ideas to be used in writing and for beginning to organize those ideas.

7. Collaborative Writing – Lee-Ernest (2008) states that, collaborative learning is learning through social dialogue whereby it is the area between what a student knows and what he is capable of knowing with help from teaches or from more competent peers.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has discussed in detail the purpose for carrying out the research. As writing is the main problem in students obtaining low grades in the 1119 English Language paper, there is a need to seek better techniques in order to make students good essay writers. This chapter also indicates the significance of the study



whereby, the lower grades the students obtain is due to their inability to write error free essays (refer to appendix 2, p. 101). This chapter also deals with the purpose for the study that is to make students score better grades in their 1119 English Language paper by scoring higher marks in their 1119/1 paper. This can be done if the students are able to utilize techniques such as brainstorming, mind mapping and cooperative learning. These techniques are discussed in the review of literature in the next chapter.

