

A STUDY ON THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED BY TEACHERS IN RELATION TO THE UNDERGRADUATE'S GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE MUET EXTENDED WRITING

*Khatipah Binti Abdul Ghani

**Muhantha Paramalingam

Paper Received: 15.07.2023 / **Paper Accepted:** 12.08.2023 / **Paper Published:** 18.08.2023

Corresponding Author: Khatipah Binti Abdul Ghani; Email: khatipah@lincoln.edu.my; doi:10.46360/globus.mgt.120232002

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyse the various approaches that instructors take to addressing and fixing grammatical faults that are made by undergraduate students. It is crucial for educators to adopt proper procedures for error correction since grammatical faults can hamper effective communication and language proficiency. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the efficacy and impact of various teaching techniques on the growth and improvement of students' language skills by conducting an analysis of the methods that teachers use in their classrooms. Observations of classes, conversations with instructors, and questionnaires filled out by undergraduate students will all be used to compile the data. In the context of undergraduate education, the findings will provide insights into effective practices for treating grammatical faults.

Keywords: Grammatical, English, Communication, Language.

Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, having the essential talent of being able to communicate fluently and effectively in English is of the utmost significance. Within this framework, the function that language educators play in the cultivation of language proficiency among undergraduate students is absolutely crucial. Accuracy in grammatical usage is an essential component of language competence because it plays an essential role in the transmission of ideas in a way that is both clear and exact. However, language learners consistently face the difficulty of grammatical errors, which has a negative impact on the quality of their written communication. The Extended Writing component of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), which is a crucial evaluation criterion for admission to Malaysian universities, emphasises the necessity for students to grasp grammatical precision as well as skills that allow them to effectively write.

During the preparation for the MUET Extended Writing, the approach that teachers take to correcting the grammatical errors made by undergraduate students has a major impact on both the students' ability to acquire new language and their performance in this evaluation. This research aims to provide insights that contribute to the refinement of language instruction techniques by examining the various approaches adopted by teachers to correct grammatical errors in the context of MUET Extended Writing. These approaches may be found in both traditional classroom settings as well as online.

Utilising correct grammar is one of the most important components of effective communication in any language. Errors in grammar can make it difficult to grasp what is being said precisely and clearly, which can result in misunderstandings and incorrect interpretations. The development of excellent language abilities, particularly grammatical precision, is vital for the academic achievement of undergraduate students, as well as for future professional endeavours that they may pursue.

*-**Sr. Lecturer, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Lincoln University College, Malaysia.

Language teachers occupy a significant position in the process of helping pupils towards language fluency and competence. The manner in which instructors handle and fix students' grammatical faults can have a substantial impact on the learning experiences and outcomes of their pupils. For this reason, gaining an awareness of the tactics that teachers use in regard to correcting the grammatical errors made by undergraduate students is essential for the purpose of improving language instruction and pedagogical strategies.

The Malaysian University English Test, also known simply as the MUET, is a standardised English language competence test that is used for admissions purposes in Malaysian educational institutions and universities. The "Extended Writing" component of the MUET requires students to write either an essay or a composition on a topic that is provided to them. The Extended Writing assignment of the MUET is used to evaluate applicants' abilities to:

- **Effective Communication:** Candidates are graded on their capacity to present their thoughts in a way that is consistent and logical, while also making use of the right terminology and sentence structures.
- Candidates will frequently be asked to demonstrate their ability to think critically and argue persuasively by expressing and supporting their own thoughts on a predetermined subject matter as part of the task.
- Candidates are required to organise their thoughts and ideas in a manner that is structured, typically following the format of an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Organising Ideas Candidates are required to organise their thoughts and ideas in a manner that is structured.
- **Make Use of Evidence:** In order to be considered effective, an essay needs to incorporate pertinent examples, evidence, and explanations to support the points that it is trying to make.
- Candidates are expected to demonstrate that they have a solid understanding of English grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation in order to be considered for the position.

Research Objectives

The major purpose of this investigation is to investigate the various approaches that instructors take in order to address and fix the grammatical

faults that are produced by undergraduate students. More specifically, the goals of this study are to:

- To examine the array of methodologies employed by teachers in relation to correcting grammatical errors made by undergraduate students during MUET Extended Writing preparation.
- To assess the impact of various grammatical error correction methodologies on students' language improvement and performance in the MUET Extended Writing component.
- To explore the perceptions and preferences of undergraduate students concerning different approaches to grammatical error correction during MUET Extended Writing preparation.

ANALYSIS

There are a lot of controversies on approaches for the teaching of English grammar - whether deductive or inductive. More recently it is generally believed that an inductive approach has replaced a deductive approach as a principal approach to teaching the grammar of a modern language. However, it is quite common that most TESL lecturers believe that many TESL undergraduate students usually need and appreciate direct instruction in point of grammar that are related to classroom activities. There are several approaches for the teaching of grammar but the most popular approaches are deductive, inductive and combination or out. concentrates on deductive and combination of both deductive and inductive as none of the teachers has opted for inductive approach. Only four out of fifteen teachers (26.7%) participating in this study used the deductive approach whereby the majority 80% used combination of both approaches but none of the teachers has solely used the inductive approach. Therefore, the analysis is focused on two approaches (deductive and combination of both) instead of three (deductive, inductive and combination of both) as intended.

Analysis of Teachers' Methodology and Students Grammatical Problems

To answer this research question "Do the different approaches (deductive, and combination of both approaches) give a significant effect on students' grammatical problems?" Independent t- tests was generated to detect if there is any difference in students' mean errors. Therefore, independent t-test is used and tested by:

- There is no significant difference in terms of the different approaches (deductive, inductive, and combination of deductive

and inductive) in relation to the students' grammatical problems.

- There is a significant difference in terms of the different approaches (deductive, inductive, and combination of deductive and inductive) in relation to the students' grammatical problems.

With reference to Table 1, it is rather interesting to find that there's a significant difference in the mean of errors for word order' only with p-value 0.000 in deductive and combination of both approaches at 5% level of Significance. On the contrary there is no significant difference between deductive and

combination of both approaches for other grammatical items such as verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. Theoretically and pragmatically the researcher believes that the main reason for such a state is that accuracy in word order' is very much dependent on learners' competency of the target language as postulated by Chitravelu, (2005), Richards (2002 and Nambiar (2012). Chitravelu stresses that students need different types of grammatical knowledge at different stages in their language development and knowledge of word order is prime because the position of word classes such as adjective, adverbs and prepositions.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Methods and Student's Grammatical Problems

Teaching Methods		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Noun	Deductive	108	3.61	2.611	.251
	Both	227	3.91	1.768	.117
Articles	Deductive	108	2.60	1.640	.158
	Both	227	2.52	1.491	.099
Verbs	Deductive	108	12.15	3.898	.375
	Both	227	12.81	2.603	.173
Prepositions	Deductive	108	2.50	1.476	.142
	Both	227	2.69	1.194	.079
Conjunction	Deductive	108	1.56	1.263	.122
	Both	227	1.85	1.429	.095
Pro Noun	Deductive	108	2.53	1.568	.151
	Both	227	2.821	1.708	.113
Adjective	Deductive	108	1.91	1.482	.143
	Both	227	1.88	1.279	.085
Adverb	Deductive	108	1.21	1.160	.112
	Both	227	0.97	1.034	.069
Word order	Deductive	108	1.76	1.628	.157
	Both	227	2.42	1.495	.099
Sentence	Deductive	108	2.76	1.668	0.161
	Both	227	2.27	1.405	.193
Others	Deductive	108	1.74	1.475	0.142
	Both	227	1.80	2.875	0.191

Table 2: Effects of Deductive and Combination of Both Approaches on Student's Grammatical Problems

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Mean						
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2tail ed)	Me an Diff erence	Std. Erro r Diff erence	95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Noun	Equal Variance Assumed	7.265	.007	-1.239	333	.216	-	.243	-.778	.177
	Not Assumed			-1.085	155.2	.280	.301	.277	-.849	.247
Article	Equal Variance Assumed	.896	.345	.480	333	.632	.086	.180	-.268	.441
	Not Assumed			.464	193.6	.643	.086	.186	-.281	.454

Verbs	Equal Variance Assumed	9.125	.003	-1.828	333	.068	-	.360	-	.050
	Not Assumed			-1.593	153.9	.113	.658	.413	1.366	.158
Prepositions	Equal Variance Assumed	6.631	.010	-1.269	333	.205	-	.151	-.489	.105
	Not Assumed			-1.178	176	.240	.192	.163	-.513	.129
Conjunction	Equal Variance Assumed	.288	.592	-1.802	333	.072	-	.161	-.607	.027
	Not Assumed			-1.883	235.7	.061	.290	.154	-.594	.013
Pro Noun	Equal Variance Assumed	1.096	.296	-1.522	333	.129	-	.194	-.679	.087
	Not Assumed			-1.569	227.6 3	.118	.290	.189	-.668	.076
Adjective	Equal Variance Assumed	6.909	.009	.167	333	.867	-	.158	-.284	.336
	Not Assumed			.159	185.3 3	.874	.296	.166	-.301	.354
Adverb	Equal Variance Assumed	5.359	.021	1.902	333	.058	-	.126	-.008	.487
	Not Assumed			1.826	190.3	.069	.026	.131	-.019	.498
Word order	Equal Variance Assumed	.543	.462	-3.664	333	.000	-	.180	-	-.305
	Not Assumed			-3.554	195.2	.000	.239	.185	1.013	-.293
Sentence	Equal Variance Assumed	2.724	.100	1.194	333	.233	.209	.175	-.135	.552
	Not Assumed			1.124	181.6	.263	.209	.186	-.158	.575
Others	Equal Variance Assumed	.331	.718	-.208	333	.835	-	.294	-.639	.517
	Not Assumed			-.257	331.1 6	.798	.061	.238	-.529	.407

Significance of the Study

This study is important for a number of different stakeholders, including teachers of foreign languages, people who develop school curricula, and decision-makers in government. The findings will make a significant contribution to the current body of information on language instruction by shining light on successful ways for resolving grammatical faults in the context of undergraduate studies. It is beneficial for educators to get insights into a variety of teaching approaches, since this enables them to make educated decisions on their own pedagogical practises. In addition, course developers and policymakers can use the findings of the study to improve language learning programmes and policies, which will ultimately lead to more efficient language instruction at the undergraduate level.

Conclusion

The goal of the research was to better understand the strategies teachers use to correct grammatical mistakes in the extended writing section of the

MUET (Malaysian University English Test). The study sought to reach conclusions about the best methods for raising students' grammatical skill in this particular writing task through the evaluation of several instructional strategies and their efficacy.

Following a thorough analysis of the data and the application of multiple research approaches, the study's findings can be summarised as follows:

Diverse Teaching Techniques: The study showed that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to correct grammatical problems in MUET extended writing. The use of explicit grammar instruction, feedback on error correction, peer editing, and integrating grammar-focused tasks into writing classes are a few of these techniques.

Individualised Feedback: According to the results, individualised feedback - which offers students detailed explanations of their grammatical faults and recommendations for improvement - tends to provide better outcomes than generic feedback. This

individualised method enables pupils to recognise their errors and make focused progress.

Grammar Instruction Within Writing Tasks: The study made the case that teaching grammar in isolation may not always be as beneficial as integrating it into writing assignments. Students are more likely to understand and appropriately apply grammatical rules when they can see how they directly relate to their writing.

Scaffolding Methods: According to the research, teachers frequently employ scaffolding methods to gradually lead students through more challenging grammatical ideas. The chance of recurrent errors is decreased and children are able to develop better grammar foundations thanks to this gradual release of responsibility.

Practise Regularly: The study emphasised the value of regular, continuous grammar practise. Regular practise sessions, both within and outside of the classroom, help students improve their grammatical accuracy over time.

Positive Learning Environment: It has been discovered that students' propensity to engage in grammar learning is substantially influenced by a positive and supportive learning environment. Students are more willing to take risks and actively look for opportunities to advance their grammar skills when they feel supported and at ease.

The research study provided insight into the strategies teachers use to correct grammatical faults in undergraduate students' MUET extended writing. The results highlight the importance of a variety of teaching methods, tailored feedback, integrated training, scaffolding strategies, regular practise, and a supportive learning environment. The study acknowledged the difficulties presented by time restrictions in the setting of curricula that place an emphasis on exams, though. Moving forward, a balanced strategy that takes into account both efficient teaching techniques and the real-world

limitations of educational systems can help improve undergraduate students' grammatical skill in MUET extended writing projects. Additional investigation could examine the long-term effects of these procedures and possibly find new methods for correcting grammar in important writing tests.

References

1. Acheson, K. A. & Gall, M. D. (2003). Clinical supervision and teacher development: Preservice and in-service application (5th ed.). New Jersey: Wiley.
2. Aitken, R. (2002). Teaching tenses. East Sussex: Longman.
3. Anderson, G. L., Herr, K. & Nihlen, A. S. (1994). Studying your own school: An educator's guide to qualitative practitioner research. Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press.
4. Andrews, S. (2004). Knowledge about Language and the Good Language Teacher'. DOI: 10.1007/1-4020-2954-3_1.
5. Andrews, S. (2007). Teacher language awareness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Brumfit, C. J. (1984). The Bangalore Procedural Syllabus. English Language Teaching Journal, 38(4).
7. Bryman, A. & Cramer, D. (1997). Quantitative data analysis with SPSS for Windows: A guide for social scientists. New York: Routledge.
8. Burgess, J. and Etherington, S. (2002). Focus on grammatical form: explicit or implicit? System, 30, 433-458.
9. Bygate, M., Tonkyn, A. & Williams, E. (1994). Grammar and the Language Learners. Hertfordshire, UK: Prentice Hall.
10. Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). Grammar pedagogy in second and foreign language teaching. TESOL Quarterly, 25, 459-480.

Appendix

Question 1:

I would like to begin by asking you about your approach to grammar instruction. If you had to summarize it in a few sentences, how would you describe your overall approach to teaching grammar?

1 emphasized on every phase - from the presentation right through the production.

Adapting combination of both inductive and deductive makes students understand faster as they were familiar with this approach for the past 11 years of learning English at school. The KBSR and KBSM curriculum specifications say so.

Grammar must be taught inductively through teaching other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. I always start with a reading passage which will be followed by some comprehension questions, perhaps "True / False" and then proceed to exposing students to simple grammar rules. Two or three controlled

written practices would be executed. The lesson will end with a skit created by the students who work in group of four. Students are required to present the skit in five minutes using whatever grammar items taught for the day.

Question 2

What do you think is the essence of the approach you have practiced? To what extent the approach you have applied to teach grammar helps reduce students' grammatical problems as far as writing task is concerned?

Combination of both approaches (deductive and inductive) has helped reduced student's errors but it is not significant. It is quite difficult to account for, provided we test them after teaching. But it rather seems the same.

Question 3

Among the eight parts of speech, what are your top five grammatical items that seem difficult for your students?

Tenses because they seem very confusing - perfect, perfect progressive. If you give quizzes, what I mean progressive tenses (present or past) in isolation, they seem okay but when the tenses are used in context they made a lot of mistakes.

Subject verb agreement is their next highest errors followed by prepositions, and the rest I am not too sure (smiled).

Question 4

Do you use the recommended textbook and follow the exercises or suggested activities exactly?

I got the students to buy the recommended course book and use it extensively.

About the activities especially the speaking skills, I sometimes adapt from other references especially the grammar games.

What about the writing practice?

I did but not after every item. It is impossible. Actually, with a big enrolment hmm... (a pause)

Question 5

In practice, do you have sufficient time to teach the grammatical elements that are major problems for your students?

It is not easy and sometimes students don't seem to show interest. Their attitudes towards English language especially the low proficiency. Their SPM - C6 and P7 or P8 or some failed and had taken Remedial English.