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RETHINKING THE TEACHING
OF THE 'BE' PASSIVE

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Abstract

This Action Research attempts to investigate whether the kind of task called "revealing", which Cazden (1993) defined as any pedagogical activities the teacher uses to lead students towards guided enquiry, is successful in helping a class of Form 4 students develop insight on the be-passive and how.

The 32 students in this study came from a Form 4 Science A class in a semi-government aided National Type Chinese Secondary School I was teaching. Ten lessons were carried out over two and a half weeks to help the students master the simple be-passive. The four sources of data in this study were: the students' written work, audiotaped class and group discussions which were transcribed, students' feedback and interviews.

Five aspects of the construction of the simple be-passive were singled out for special focus in the tasks and the number of errors students made in these five aspects were tabulated and compared to check if they had progressed.

At the end of the study, all the students were found to have progressed, they made less errors in their construction of the be-passive sentences. From the group discussions, it was found that the tasks helped because they problematized aspects of the be-passive to be focused on. The students employed various strategies to resolve the problem and in the process gained insights in the be-passive structure.

This action research gave me insights on how students learn grammar features and these have great implications on my approach towards language teaching.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURE AND CHARTS	ix

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study	1
English Language in the KBSM Curriculum	3
The Form 5 English Language KBSM Exam	4
Grammar in the KBSM Curriculum	5
Description of Processes and Procedures.....	6
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Action Research	8

CHAPTER 2 : REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Grammar	10
Grammar in Major Methodological Approaches to Language Teaching	11
Need for Explicit Grammar Knowledge	12
Revealing	13

Relevance of Focus on Form	15
The Be-Passive	18
Action Research	21

CHAPTER 3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Introduction	23
The Subjects	23
Design and Rationale of Action Plan	24
a. Prioritising and Delimiting Features of the Be-Passive to be Revealed	25
b. Sequencing of Lessons	26
c. Feedback From Students	27
d. Teacher's Feedback	27
e. Individual and Group Work	28
Description of Lessons Carried Out	29
Lessons Carried Out During The Action Research	30
Lesson 1	31
Lesson 2	32
Lesson 3	32
Lesson 4	33
Lesson 5	34
Lesson 6	35
Lesson 7	36
Lesson 8	37

Lesson 9	38
Lesson 10	38
Collection and Analysis of Data	39
a. Students' Written Work	39
b. Transcripts of Group Discussions	41
c. Students' Feedback in Handouts	43
d. Interviews	44

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Research Question 1	45
Students' Overall Performance	46
Students' Performance in the Five Aspects of the Be-Passive	49
a. Past Participle Verb Not Used	50
b. Missing Auxiliary	52
c. Subject-Auxiliary Agreement	55
d. Inappropriate Form	58
e. Inconsistent Tenses	62
Research Question 2	64
How the Tasks Had Helped	65
Instances When the Tasks Had Not Helped and Why	77

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction	80
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Summary of Findings	80
Implications	84
Limitations of Action Research	85
 Bibliography	 87
Appendices:	
Appendix 1A Handout 1	90
Appendix 1B Handout 2	92
Appendix 1C Handout 3	93
Appendix 1D Handout 4	94
Appendix 1E Handout 5	95
Appendix 1F Handout 6	96
Appendix 1G Handout 7	97
Appendix 2 Transcription of Group Discussion - Group 6	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
Table 1	Breakdown of Students by the Number of Errors They Made in Be-Passive Structures in Their Attempt 1a and Attempt 2	46
Table 2	Number of Errors Students Made or Failed to Correct in the Five Aspects of the Be-Passive Sentences to Describe Processes in Attempt 1a, Attempt 1b, Attempt 1c, Handout 6 and Attempt 2	48
Table 3	Progress of Students Who Had Initially Not Used Past Participle Verbs In Terms of the Number of Errors Made In this Aspect	51
Table 4	Number of Missing Auxiliary in Student 5b's Be-Passive Sentences in His Five Pieces of Output	53
Table 5	Progress of Students Who Had Initially Made Errors in Subject-Auxiliary Agreement In Terms of the Number of Errors Made in this Aspect	55
Table 6	Progress of Students Who Had Initially Used Inappropriate Sentences In Terms of the Number of Errors Made in This Aspect	59

LIST OF FIGURE AND CHARTS

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Variables that Determine the Importance of Grammar	18
Charts	
Chart 1: Chart Showing the Organisation of Lessons, Their Objectives and the Handouts Used	30
Chart 2: How Students Gained Insight on the Be-Passive: Tasks Which Led to Problematization and the Strategies Students Took to Resolve Them.	76