

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the composition and selection of the subjects who participated in the study. The instruments used and the procedures adopted as well as the design and data analysis are also specified.

3.1 The Subjects

The ESL subjects who participated in this study were 63 Form Five students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Raja Mahadi, Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. The 63 students chosen for this study were those considered to be of good and poor English Language proficiency.

A common assumption made about ESL students in this study is that although they have the knowledge on the various types of expository prose, formal and informal letters, reports and summaries, they usually fail to write effectively because of lack of planning and organization, sense of the rules and conventions of the target language. Their written products appear to be out of focus because they employ a rhetoric structure which violate the rhetorical conventions of the target language.

The subjects who participated in this study were selected on the basis of the grades obtained from their Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) Examination. They were categorized as good and poor ability writers according to their grades. The grade taken into consideration for the purpose of identifying good ability writers was A, while the grade for poor ability writers was D.

A placement test on free/continuous writing was carried out to confirm the categorization of the students. Those who scored between 30 to 40 marks out of 40 marks in their free/writing were found to be the same students previously identified as good. It was also found that those who scored between 8 to 15 marks in their free writing were the same students previously identified as poor. Table 3.1 presents the scores that were obtained by the subjects.

Table 3.1

Scores of Good and Poor Ability Writers

Number of students	Grades for PMR Examination	Scores for Placement Test
30	A	30-40
33	D	8 - 15

Hence, from 63 students who were selected for this study, thirty were identified as good ability writers and the other thirty-three were identified as poor ability writers.

3.2 Instrumentation

A well organized comparison/contrast graphic organizer was used in this study. The graphic organizer represents the comparison/contrast structure on "The full-time housewife and the career woman in a modern society". This graphic organizer is illustrated in Appendix A. Transitional expressions (Linking Devices) in comparison/contrast structure which stress on oppositions, similarities and differences were also given. The transitional expressions used are illustrated in Appendix B.

The comparison/contrast expository prose was chosen for this study because it has been said by many researchers that most professionals and writers used the comparison and contrast as a basic strategy in writing. According to Axelrod and Cooper (1985), this is a popular format with most instructors in all academic disciplines because it requires critical and analytical thinking in writing. In fact, studies have also shown that the comparison/contrast texts are well structured texts and that both good and poor writers learn information from them equally well, regardless of the pattern used (Henk & Stahl, 1989).

3.3 Procedure

The experiment was carried out over 5 weeks in three sessions. All the three sessions were administered during the regular class period. The students were classified under the experimental and control groups for both good and poor ESL learners.

During the first week, (pre-test), the ESL learners were told to write an expository composition between 350 to 500 words on "Studying in local universities and abroad". They were given sixty minutes to write and were told to use their own words. No help was given to them. The graphic organizer and transitional expressions were not given to them at all. Both the experimental and control groups were given the same essay writing.

In the second week, the experimental group from good and poor ability writers, were presented with a graphic organizer and they were told that the graphic organizer would help them to recognize, identify and understand the organizational patterns of ideas in expository composition as well as assist them and organize ideas for relationships. They were also told that they would be learning only one structure of the many types of expository text structures which is the comparison/contrast structure. However, the control group from good and poor ability writers were not given any form of treatment.

The discussions on the graphic organizer and transitional expressions were made when the students were told to write an expository composition between 350 to 500 words on "The full-time housewife and the career women in a modern society". Students were asked to give ideas, facts and opinions pertaining to the oppositions, similarities and differences required by the composition topic. They were also informed how they could link the ideas in the composition with the use of transitional expressions. The discussions were held for two hours. After that, the subjects were told

to proceed with their writing task for one hour. However, the control groups were not provided with any information.

Then, in the third week, (post-test), the students were again asked to write an expository composition between 350-500 words on “The single-sex school and co-educational school” within sixty minutes. The students were not given any help and instructions on the use of a graphic organizer and transitional expressions were not mentioned either. Later, in the fourth week, no essay writing was given.

Finally, in the fifth week (delayed post-test), the students were ask to write a final essay on “ Working in the private and the public sector” within sixty minutes, too. Again, both groups were not given any help or information. The procedure that was carried out in this study is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Materials Used in The Study

Week	Hour	Test/Instruction	Topic
1	1	<u>Pre-test</u> 1. Free Writing 2. No Instruction	Studying in local universities and abroad.
2	2 1	<u>Treatment</u> 1. Instruction on comparison/contrast structure – the use of graphic organizer and transitional expressions 2. Free writing	The full-time house wife and the career women in a modern society.
3	1	<u>Post-test</u> 1. Free Writing 2. No instruction	The single-sex school and co-educational school.
4	-	No essay writing	-
5	1	<u>Delayed Post-test</u> 1.Free writing 2.No instruction	Working in the private and the public sector.

3.4 Scoring Procedure

In the study, there is a need to have an analytical scoring scheme which involves the separation of the various features of a composition into components for scoring purposes. Thus, the analytical scale of the Composition Profile in "Testing ESL Writing: A Practical Approach" (Jacobs, Zingraf, Wormuth, Hartfield & Hughey, 1981, cited in Reid 1993: 236-237) is used (See Appendix C). There are five elements in this scale: content, organization, vocabulary, language and mechanics. Since this study examines the effects of text structure instruction on the composition of ESL learners, therefore the marks for organization would be studied. Furthermore, a frequency count of the types of transitional expressions used would be undertaken. The residual effects of the teaching text structure instruction between the pre-test and the delayed post-test would be analyzed too.

3.5 Design and Data Analysis

The data was analyzed statistically by means of T-test for the comparisons of means using the SPSS. The scores during pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test were analyzed for good and poor ability writers for both the experimental and control groups. The differences between the scores in the three tests were also noted.