

## **CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0. Background to the study.**

The aim of this study is to examine and categorise the different types of errors made by students in their first year in a secondary school - that is in Remove class and Form One class. The frequency of these errors would be noted and then these errors would be ranked according to their frequency of occurrence. Finally a comparative study would be conducted.

This chapter outlines the background to the teaching of English as a second language in the national and national type primary schools, the background of the selected secondary school, the statement of the problem, the objective of the study and finally the significance of the study. The national school here refers to schools that use Bahasa Melayu as their medium of instruction. The national type Schools refers to schools that use Tamil or Mandarin as their medium of instruction.

This study is similar to the study carried out by Yap, S.H. nee Tan (1983) on Errors in Composition written by Standard Four, Five and Six children in a primary school. Yap concentrates on three different levels at the primary school. Her subjects are from the English and Malay medium classes.

However, this study, differs from the Yap's in the following aspects:

- i. The subjects selected for the study are of Indian origin.
- ii. The subjects are in their first year in a secondary school and the study is carried out during their second week at the secondary level.
- iii. The students had undergone different mediums of instruction at their primary level.
- iv. This is a comparative study of errors made by two different groups of students.

## **1.1 Background of the study.**

The disparity in the performances of Indian students from the Tamil schools and the national schools had been highlighted in the newspapers. In 1995, there were 524 Tamil schools in the country with an enrolment of 110,000 students and 6,000 teachers. This works out to an average of 210 students per school and one teacher per 18 students. However, such a favourable teacher-student ratio has not resulted in high academic achievement.

Between 1990 and 1992, only 13.8 per cent of the Tamil school students passed the Primary School Assessment (UPSR). The percentage of passes increased to 20 percent in 1993.

In terms of formal English lessons, the national schools begin their lessons at a much younger age when compared to their peers in the national type schools. English Language as a second language is introduced in Standard One in the national schools while their peers in the national type are only taught English in Standard Three. However, the Primary

school syllabus content for English is meant to be taught for six years. Therefore, the students in the National schools study English for six years (Standard one to six) while the students in the national type schools study English for four years (from Standard three to Standard six), a syllabus content for meant six years.

Shahrizan Hussein (1988) did a comparison of English language acquisition between national school students and Tamil /Mandarin medium students. In her study, she listed the following:

Table 1: Teaching of English Language in Primary Schools.

Syllabus Content	National School	National Type School
Standard One	Standard One	Standard Three
Standard Two	Standard Two	Standard Four
Standard Three	Standard Three	Standard Five
Standard Four	Standard Four	Standard Six
Standard Five	Standard Five	Remove Class (First half )
Standard Six	Standard Six	Remove Class (Second half )

According to Table 1, the national type school students learn English language in Standard Three. In Standard one and two, these students learn Tamil / Mandarin together with Bahasa Melayu. As such, the students from the national type schools would have completed only two-thirds of the syllabus content for English, by the time they enter the secondary school. Hence arises the necessity for these students to enter Remove classes to complete the syllabus content for English so that they would be on par with their peers from the national schools when they enter Form One the following year.

In their final year at primary level, i.e. in Standard six, all students sit for their Assessment examination. It is a fact that students from the national and national type schools sit for different English papers in this examination. The fact that both these groups of students do not sit for one common English paper seems to indicate that, two different levels of performance are expected - the lower level being from the students from the national type schools.

However in 1996, the Ministry decided on a change of policy - students who obtained a minimum C in Bahasa Melayu could now gain a direct entry to Form One class, thus skipping the Remove class.

Thus this study will look at the answers for the following questions, as far as national type school students are concerned:

- i. Is the learning of English at a later age an advantage or a disadvantage to the student ?
- ii. To what extent is the student from the national type school proficient in the English Language after spending four years on a syllabus designed to be completed in six years.
- iii. Is a strong foundation in Language One, for example Tamil / Mandarin an aid in acquiring language Two or Language Three since Bahasa Melayu is Language Two.
- iv. How do their performance compare with that of their peers from the national schools.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem.

In the primary school, the students are exposed to five lessons of English per week for a maximum of six years in the national schools and four years in the national type schools. Teachers often assume that these students would have overcome many of the difficulties that confront second language learners in the initial stages before they make their entry into the Secondary School in their seventh year of schooling.

However language teachers find themselves facing constant errors in composition writing. This has created a situation which has made teachers spend more time correcting the structural errors rather than spending time on enriching the language and creating an appreciation for the English language.

It is a fact that structural errors exist in composition writing. As such an analysis of the types of errors and frequency of errors would greatly benefit all language teachers who are concerned about the language development of their students.

**This study attempts to answer the following research questions:**

- i. What are the types of errors made by the students in the Remove and Form One classes?**
- ii. Are there any similarities in the types of errors made and if there are, what are the similarities in errors?**
- iii. Are there any significant differences in the types of errors made and if there are, what are the differences?**
- iv. Do the Remove class students make more errors than the Form One students or vice versa? If they do, what are the types of errors made?**



### **1.3 Aims of Study.**

Theoretically, students from the national schools should have lesser errors in composition writing as they have studied English for 6 years compared to their peers in the national type schools. The general aim of this study is to examine how far this statement is true.

This study will also look at the answers for the following questions, as far as national type school students are concerned:

- i. Is the acquisition of the English language at a earlier age an asset to the students in the national schools?
- ii. To what extent is the student from the national type school proficient in the English language, as compared to his peers from the national school.

- iii. Is a strong foundation in Language One, for example, Tamil, Mandarin as aid in acquiring a language two or language three since Bahasa Melayu is language two.
- iv. How much influence has Bahasa Melayu words on the English composition.

This study would attempt to seek the answers for the above questions through the following methods;

- i. the classification of common errors.
- ii. the calculation of the frequencies and percentage of each type of errors.
- iii. a comparative study of errors between the two groups of students.

#### 1.4 Background of the selected school

The selected school for this research is Senawang Secondary school in the Senawang industrial site in Seremban. The Senawang Secondary school was started on December 4, 1989 and temporarily occupied the premises of the Senawang Primary School in the afternoon session. In the first year, the student enrolment was 125 with 4 classes, that is, 3 Form Ones and One Remove class.

The Form One students were from the Senawang primary school while the Remove class students were from SRJK (C) Kampung Baru, SRJK (T) Ladang Senawang and SRJK (T) Ladang Seremban.

On June 11 1990, the school moved to its present location in Taman Marida, to cater to the educational needs of the residents of 15 housing estates.

The enrolment had risen rapidly and at the end of 1996, the student enrolment was 2093 with six Form Five classes comprising 201 students, nine Form Four classes comprising 301 students, eleven Form Three classes comprising

464 students, twelve Form Two classes comprising 484 students, thirteen Form One classes comprising 533 students and three Remove classes comprising 110 students. The racial composition was 1156 Malays (55%), 585 Indians (28 %), 348 Chinese (16.6 %), and other ethnic groups (0.2 %). The present students are mainly from Senawang Primary school, SRJK(T) Ladang Senawang, SRJK (T) Lorong Jawa, and SRJK (C) Kampung Baru.

#### 1.5. Significance of Study.

This study on error analysis in the composition writing of Form One and Remove class will be useful because it is the preparation of the students for the public examination in Form three and Form five.

In Form three, all students sit for one common examination i.e. the Penilaian Menengah Rendah or Lower Secondary Evaluation. The PMR KBSM English paper comprises 3 papers. In terms of writing compositions, students have to write two compositions - one composition based on note expansion or pictorial series and the second composition on a formal letter. Students should write no

less than 100 words for each composition.

In Form five, students sit for their SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or Malaysian Certificate of Education exam). The SPM English paper known as 1322 / 1119 paper has three papers. In terms of writing composition, students have to write two compositions - one is a directed or guided composition and the second composition is a free - composition. Students have to write about 250 words for the first composition and 350 words for the second composition. As such, this study would be valuable to practising teachers at all levels. Teachers greatly concerned with the recurrence of errors would welcome an error analysis study of Form One students, so that appropriate remedial work can be carried out to provide a strong foundation for further development of the language.

To sum up, this study would be significant because:

- i. the analysis of the students' error would provide an insight to both the teachers and parents of the progress and proficiency of the students and give them an indication of how

much the students have learnt at primary school level.

- iii. the error analysis would provide sufficient Information to the teacher, in her preparation of remedial work so that she can minimise the occurrence of such errors in the students' work at the beginning of the academic year.
- iv. The researcher hopes to offer some suggestions for remedial work in the hope that the teaching – learning process would be more effective.

#### 1.6. Limitations of Study.

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- i. As the study was undertaken in Sekolah Menengah Senawang, Seremban, which is basically a semi - rural school, the sample would not be representative and the results cannot be generalized to mean that all Indian students are alike.

- ii. This study is limited to Remove class and Form One classes. These primary schools are located in the outskirts of the town and therefore the students may not be proficient or do not have a positive attitude towards English as their peers in the urban schools.
- iii. In identifying the errors in composition, the researcher based her study solely on the composition written by the subjects at that specific time and place.

## 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the background to the significance of this study. The study outlines the differences in the teaching of the English language in the national and national type schools. The analysis of errors would be made through a classification of common errors, calculation of the frequencies and percentage of each type of error. A comparative study of errors would be carried out. The researcher also stated the limitations of the study.