**CRITICAL REVIEW OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE.**

**By**

**Source**

Fauziah Hassan and Nita Fauzee Selamat 2002, ‘Why aren’t students proficient in ESL : The Teacher’s Perspective, *The English Teacher official journal of the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association JUNE 2002, vol. XXXI*, pp.107-123.

**Introduction**

This review critically analyses the article ‘Why aren’t students proficient in ESL : The Teacher’s Perspective inThe English Teacher official journal of the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association volume XXXI published in June 2002. The review will first summarise the article. Secondly, it will briefly analyse the effectiveness of the article’s structure, investigating how the information is set out and whether the reader can access it efficiently. Thirdly, the review will also analyse the strength and weaknesses of the research and offer suggestions for future research.

**Article summary**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the teacher perceptions of the reasons for KBSM students’s low proficiency in the English. The study focuses on the teachers’ perceptions of their classroom practices, their students, the KBSM syllabus, and the PMR examination. The subjects employed were 58 KBSM teachers from the central region of Malaysia. Data collected through the use of questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that teachers, the KBSM syllabus and the national examinations focus mainly on two language skills – writing and reading. Another major focus was on grammar. Teachers were also found to be teaching mainly for the national examinations. Not much emphasis was given to listening and speaking in both classroom teaching and national examinations.

**Article structure**

The authors organized the article in short paragraphing therefore the information in each paragraph was easy to access. There were six body headings, which meant that there was a lot of quite detailed information contained under each heading.

As the article described a research study that was conducted by the author, the article contained the conventional information normally provided in such a study. For example there are sections related to the background and significance of the research, a review of the literature and the methodology as well as the data collection and analysis techniques used. References were cited in-text and set out clearly in the literature cited section. The article’s structure was logically developed overall, with the use of short paragraphs helping the reader to access the main points more easily.

The article was introduced with an abstract, which provided the stance or thesis developed by the article as well as a brief overview of main points. The rationales for the article and for the research that is to study the contributing variables to the deteriorating standards of English were also included.

In the introduction the authors described the issue of English Language in schools that has been one of the hottest topics in the country at that time. The authors also cited Gaudart (1987) states that the Malaysian society is constantly regaled with opinions about the decreasing standards of English but falling where and in what way, is seldom mentioned. The authors also briefly mentioned their worries in the drastic measure in requiring the students to learn Mathematics and Science in English from 2003 onwards. Later on the authors described the objectives of ESL teaching and whether the classroom practice at that time reflects as what the ministry had outlined in the curriculum.

In this article also the author had combine the literature review under the same heading with the introduction. They described several studies which was carried out relating to the deteriorating standard of ESL in Malaysia. They cited studies by Pillay and North (1997), Ratnawati (1996), Lim (1994), Norrizan (1992) and by Rosli and Malachi (1990). All the studies explore the same issue that is the declining in students’ performance in ESL in Malaysia.

In the next heading *The Study* the authors described their research questions, the subjects of the study, the instrument and the data collection. This study was imposed on 58 ESL lower secondary school teachers in form One, Two and Three. The authors used two instruments : a questionnaire and a semi structured interview. They also mentioned the purpose of the questionnaire that is to gauge teachers’ perceptions towards their classroom practice, the KBSM syllabus, teacher-prepared school assessment, the PMR national examination and challenges faced by ESL learners. The authors also describe how they generate the questionnaire and the interview. The main focus of the semi structured interview is to acquire participants teaching approaches, evaluation of the KBSM syllabus, the focus of the English PMR and the reasons behind the learners’ weakness in English.

There were also two sub headings under this heading *The Study* that is the *Data Collection* and *Data Analysis*. Under *Data Collection*, the authors describe how they collected data for this study. There are 70 questionnaires which were distributed to selected secondary schools in the central region of Peninsular Malaysia. Later on they describes how they had analyse the data using descriptive statistic and SPSX.

The findings of the study were described under the sub heading Results of Questionnaire. There are seven tables to define the findings. It was a very clear description and very easy for the reader to interpret the table. In concluding the interview, the authors used only one table while the other was only descriptions of the findings.

Towards the end of the article the authors discuss the findings of the study under the heading *Discussion*. They found out that from both interviews and questionnaire consistently shown one main finding – that teaching and testing, both in schools and in the national examinations, focused mainly on two language skills ; writing and reading. Listening and speaking are found to be much neglected in the classroom. This is the major concern for the authors as it is through speech that children learn to organise their thinking and focus their ideas (Lyle,1993). In the following paragraph the authors discussed on the various external factors to the classroom can affect learning of second language.

The conclusions were developed towards the end of the article however the conclusion was very short, lacking a comprehensive summary of the main points covered by the article. However the short conclusion did develop future policy and research directions.

**Article critique**

This article ; Why aren’t students proficient in ESL : The Teacher’s Perspective was published in The English Teacher Journal in which is the official journal of the Malaysia Language Teaching Association. It is an annual publication for all those who are professionally involved in the field of teaching English as a second language. Both authors Fauziah Hassan and Nita Fauzee Selamat are lecturers from two local universities in Malaysia. Theirs credibility was established in a number of ways. Therefore it is very reliable and accurate.

Furthermore, the source of the information in the article can be consider as a current research project. It was also backed up and supported by a comprehensive, recent reference list with these sources cited in-text to support both the literature review and the research itself. The strict editorial and refereeing processes also contributed to the article’s accuracy as did the reference to other expert sources as mentioned in their literature review.

The journal was published in June 2002. The research it describes was current and the article cites up-to-date references in the body of the text. Therefore the article is current and still relevant in the current situation.

The information was objectively developed, well supported with a current research base and with all evidence acknowledged and referenced. There was no evidence of bias, a fact that was reinforced by the recognition that the article documents research, which followed the rigorous research processes, and the necessary ethical considerations demanded of such community-funded research. The article acknowledged the complexity of the issues discussed in a number of ways.

As a whole, as the issue is still current up to this date, therefore this journal article is very beneficial in helping other researchers to develop similar research whether to determine the cause of the declining of the standard of English or to figure out ways to overcome it.

**REFERENCE :**

Fauziah Hassan and Nita Fauzee Selamat 2002, ‘Why aren’t students proficient in ESL : The Teacher’s Perspective, The English Teacher official journal of the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association JUNE 2002, vol. XXXI, pp.107-123.