# USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN THE TEACHING OF PAST TENSE FOR DIPLOMA STUDENTS AT KOLEJ PROFESIONAL MARA BANDAR PENAWAR

**JUHARI SHAM BIN JUSOH**

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**Faculty of Education**
**Universiti Teknologi Malaysia**

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*I dedicate this piece of work to my loving and supporting wife, Maizatul Akmal binti Ab Manan, my beloved children, Nur Maisarah Aqila and Nur Aisyah Zinnirah and my family members and my friends...*
*for their love, motivation and support.*

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# ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the effectiveness of using authentic materials in the teaching of past tense for diploma students at Kolej Profesional MARA Bandar Penawar Kota Tinggi Johor. The one group quasi-experimental method was used in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether authentic materials help the students to improve their grammar acquisition especially past tense as well as, to find out their perceptions on using authentic materials approach. The samples consisted of 30 diploma students from Kolej Profesional MARA at Bandar Penawar who were majoring in Integrated Logistics Management of studies. The authentic materials namely songs, newspaper, magazine, television and radio news report were used in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to the students in order to find out what their perception of using authentic materials in the teaching of past tense. There was a statistically significant difference in the results among the students who were taught using authentic materials to learn past tense. The results also indicated the extreme importance of perceiving the role of authentic materials as a tool for improving grammar acquisition specifically in past tense among the students. In summary, the findings indicated that authentic materials were effective in helping the students to learn grammar specifically the past tense.

# ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menganalisa keberkesanan penggunaan bahan-bahan autentik dalam pengajaran kata kerja kala lampau (*past tense*) untuk pelajar-pelajar diploma di Kolej Profesional MARA Bandar Penawar Kota Tinggi Johor. Kaedah kumpulan tunggal *quasi-exsperimental* telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk melihat sama ada penggunaan bahan-bahan autentik boleh membantu pelajar meningkatkan pemahaman mereka dalam tatabahasa khususnya kata kerja kala lampau (*past tense*). Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk melihat persepsi pelajar terhadap pendekatan penggunaan bahan-bahan autentik dalam pengajaran. Sampel kajian adalah terdiri dalam kalangan 30 orang pelajar diploma Kolej Profesional MARA Bandar Penawar yang mengambil jurusan Pengurusan Logistik Integrasi. Bahan-bahan autentik yang digunakan adalah lagu, suratkhabar, majalah dan laporan berita melalui televisyen dan radio. Soalan kajiselidik juga diedarkan kepada para pelajar untuk melihat persepsi mereka terhadap penggunaan bahan-bahan autentik dalam pengajaran kata kerja lampau (*past tense*). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dari segi pencapaian para pelajar yang menggunakan bahan pengajaran autentik . Keputusan kajian juga menunjukan pentingnya peranan yang dimainkan oleh bahan pengajaran autentik sebagai alat untuk memperbaiki pencapaian tatabahasa dalam kalangan pelajar. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan penggunaan bahan autentik dalam pengajaran adalah efektif bagi membantu para pelajar mempelajari tatabahasa khususnya kata kerja kala lampau (*past tense*).

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**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background, statement of the problem, conceptual framework of the study, objectives of the study and the research questions. The operational definition of terms, the scope of the study and significance of the study are also presented in this chapter.

**1.1    Background of the Study**

Most linguists  (see Lighbown and Spada,1990; Sharwood Smith 1981) belief that grammar is an important element in language competency and acquisition. However, many of the linguists have raised arguments for and against formal instruction of grammar.  Scholars and researchers such as Krashen (1972), Rutherford (1985), Ellis (1990), and Celce-Murcia (1996) are of the view that formal instruction which can be

defined as the teaching of language focusing the learner's attention on forms, can be helpful so that the learners become conscious of the rules of the grammar forms and eventually acquire the language. For the purpose of formal instruction, many formal educational institutions use English modules and grammar books, which list and explain all grammatical rules of English one by one which aims to practice the language structures. These materials are appreciated and used by many teachers, because as Ur (1986) mentions, they provide a clear framework of the subject with its learning outcomes of the syllabus or course outline.

However, Doughty (1991) has criticized the use of the term grammar 'instruction' due to the lack of clear details of what the term means. Prabhu (1987) is also against formal instruction in grammar as he believes that the development of competence requires the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication, not 'systematization' of planned grammatical input. Other scholars who see little use of grammar teaching are Newmark (1966), Terrel (1977), and Corder (1981) as they argue that grammar teaching could have deleterious effects on learners and it is not effective.

This criticism has led to the view that the use of formal modules and textbooks are found insufficient in many ways in presenting the language. The introduction of authentic materials concept which is, the use of examples of language produced by native speakers or standard local English for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced designed solely for the classroom. Nunan (1998) argues that the outside world should be reflected through the materials, activities and tasks. He exemplifies them as video clips, radio and newspaper, signs, maps and charts, photographs and pictures, timetable and schedule.

Widdowson (1979) also argues that textbooks can only present the situation of language produced which has been collected and placed for demonstration purposes and to emphasize the 'usage' rather than its 'use'. He also focuses on the necessity of language data whereas the experience of language and communicative competence

should form the grounds for English learning specifically grammar component. This will proceed to allow the learners to produce and process actual language use.

Wohl and Klein-Wohl (1999) claimed in their article that establishing 'natural learning setting' is really important in effective language learning, which will make it more authentic and more efficient. Real-life and functional material should be involved in language teaching so that students' curiousity and natural desires to learn the language will be encourged. In other words, students will be more interested in a class with authentic materials and more motivated and eager to learn.

Therefore, this study intends to inevestigate whether authentic materials can contribute better learning outcomes in grammar acqusition especially past tense as compared to the conventional materials such as textbooks and modules. This study also will look at whether authentic materials can be related to the students's motivation and eagerness while dealing with authentic materials.

## 1.2    Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's experience when teaching English subject for semester one diploma students in Kolej Profesional MARA Bandar Penawar (KPMBP), the students of the college seem bored and uninterested to learn English especially the grammar part from their textbooks and modules. This is because in the English classes at Kolej Profesional MARA Bandar Penawar, only textbooks and modules are used as a medium for teaching grammar. The researcher sees that, to attract and help students to learn English is, by using authentic material concept or any other media that could support the teaching of grammar becomes more interesting to learn.

Furthermore, through the informal interview with other English teachers in the college (KPMBP), the students also encountered difficulties in learning the grammatical rules of the English language that for them are complicated and full of exceptions. For example the rules of tenses in English which do not occur in Bahasa Melayu. It can be seen that to have a good understanding of past tense in English, students must be aware of the temporal references and distinctions associated with each of them. This will cause a problem to attract student's motivation to be active and enjoy learning grammar. In this case, it is a challenge for the teachers to consider a technique, media, and atmosphere in teaching grammar in which the students feel comfortable, curious, and motivated to learn the language enthusiastically.

In addition students need to understand the various morphological features, particularly in terms of inflection for past tense form of English verbs. To express a temporal reference in Bahasa Melayu analogous to past simple in English it would be necessary to use a time adverbial such as yesterday, last week, before etc. The only way to distinguish between a past time reference and a present time reference would be through context. Such rules may confuse the students and kill their interest to use the grammar appropriately and properly. The example of tenses rules which do not occur in Bahasa Melayu such as; In Bahasa Melayu, past tense verbs do not exist: E.g.: I drink = I drank = *Saya minum*. Basically in Bahasa Melayu actions are explained using time as indicator of present, past or future. The word *'sudah/telah'* or 'time' is used to indicate a past action. *'sudah/telah'* is used with verbs only. E.g.: I eat everyday = *Saya makan setiap hari*. E.g.: I ate just now = *Saya makan tadi*.

Hacer (2004) has explained in his research about the materials used in classrooms that, relying too much on textbooks or materials prepared specifically for English classrooms may lead to difficulties to learners and also teachers. He adds that students will see only one perspective on a concept or issue, furthermore information shared is not current or relevant. This will lead students to make the assumption that learning is simply a collection of facts and figures. Berardo (2006) stated that, by relying too much on non-authentic material, teacher does not tailor lessons to the specific attributes and interests of

students. At the same time most of the materials do not take into account of background knowledge of students and they are designed as the sole source of information. Berardo (2006:3) says that

> *"The use of authentic materials in the classroom is discussed, with the student benefiting from the exposure to real language being used in a real context."*

Students very often find it is very boring when dealing with only one subject area, as can be the case when dealing with English (Berardo, 2006). Realizing the problem faced by the students, it seems that it is very important to make creative and interesting media, or even techniques to teach grammar for students. Teaching the grammar component can be made more interesting if a variety of authentic materials are used. Thus, authentic materials might be a solution as a medium of grammar teaching. This can prevent some problems that might be faced by the students when learning grammar using only textbooks or modules.

**1.3    Conceptual Framework of the Study**
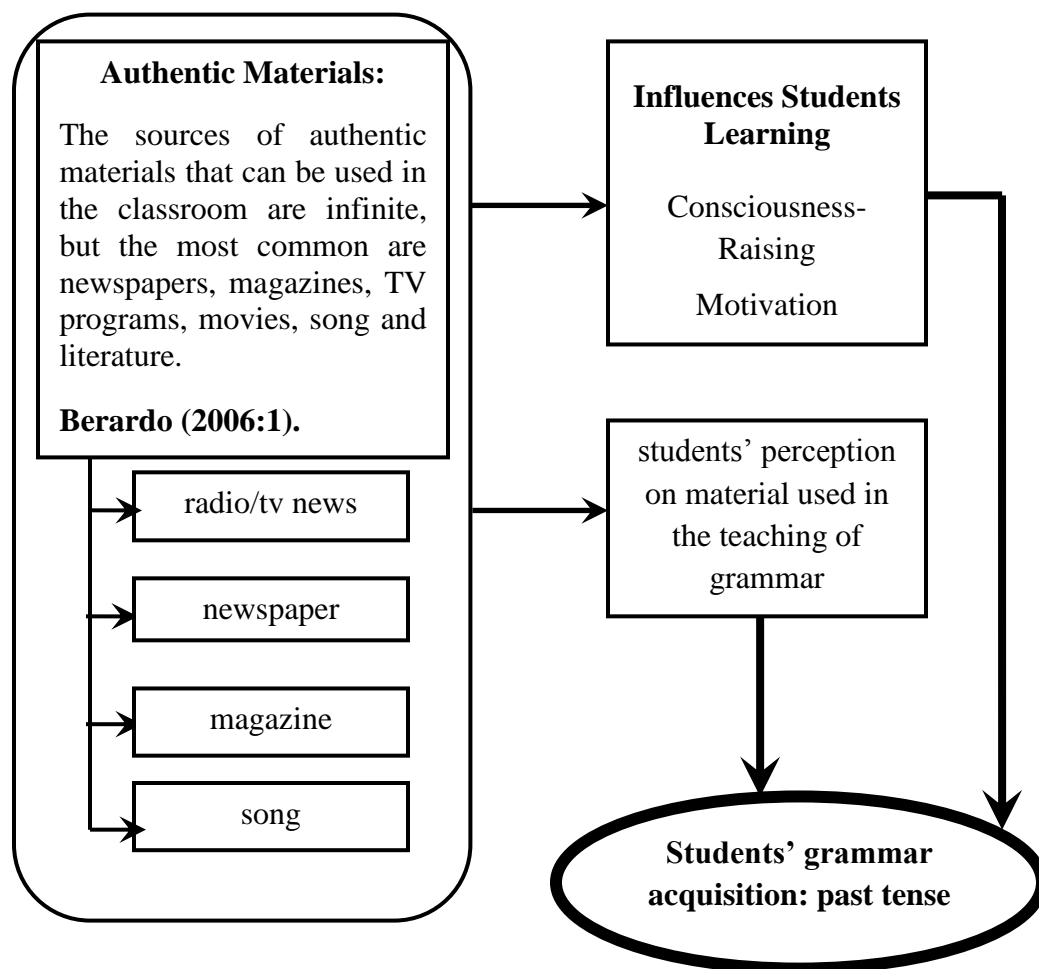


**Figure 1.3:  Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The figure shows the conceptual framework of the study which the concept is based on what are the authentic materials suggest by Berardo (2006:1).

> *"The use of authentic materials in the classroom is discussed, with the student benefiting from the exposure to real language being used in a real context. Other aspects which prove positive when using authentic materials are that they are highly motivating, giving a sense of achievement when understood and encourage further reading. The sources of authentic materials that can be used in the classroom are infinite, but the most common are newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, song and literature".*

The researcher is interested to study the effectiveness of selected authentic materials, namely radio and television news, newspapers, magazines and songs. These authentic materials can motivate students towards grammar teaching and learning process. Meanwhile Ellis (2001:2) has described that consciousness-raising in grammar teaching as follows:

> *"... We don't actually directly try to influence the construction of the complex network ..., because really learners can only do it themselves. We cannot implant rules into that network.*
>
> *Learners extract from the available information around them the regularities that go into their knowledge system. If that is the case, all that we can do is make them aware of some of these patterns and bits and pieces of language and how they work under the assumption that if you have an awareness of them, then ultimately your pattern detector might function a bit more efficiently."*

So that, using of selected authentic materials in the grammar teaching enable learners aware of the grammar functions and usage. At the same time, student's perceptions on the use of authentic materials also can be discovered. This conceptual framework also explains, the students' consciousness-raising and the motivation contribute to students' grammar acquisition particularly past tenses. On the other hand, the selected authentic materials impact students' perceptions towards the grammar teaching that eventually also lead to students' grammar acquisition particularly in the past tense.

**1.4     Objective of the Study**

This study is an attempt:

i.      to investigate the influence of utilising authentic materials in the teaching of past tense

ii.     to investigate students' perception on the influence of authentic materials in learning past tense

Most specifically, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

**1.5     Research Questions**

In relation to the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

i.      What is the influence of authentic materials in students' past tense acquisition?

ii.     What are students' perceptions on the use of authentic materials in the teaching of past tense?

**1.6    Operational Definition of Terms**

**Authentic materials:**

Peacock (1997) defines authentic materials as materials that have been produced to fulfil some social purpose in the language community. While Bacon & Finnemann (1990) states that "authentic materials are texts produced by native speakers for a non-pedagogical purpose." Thus, for the purpose of this study, any materials which have not been produced purposely for language teaching and learning material are deemed as authentic materials.

**Grammar:**

Stevick (1982) defines Grammar as a way of telling how a particular language arranges its smaller forms. Its word stems, prefixes, suffixes, intonation and the like-within its larger constructions such a words, clauses and sentences. A grammatical statement also gives information about the meaning of the construction, which it describes. However, a limitation for this study is only focuses on past tense as definitions and terms of past tense adopted below.

**The Teaching of Grammar:**

The grammar teaching is the teaching of rules and structures or syntaxes of English language. Besides that, the authentic materials used are formal focused more and taken into account for the purpose of this study.

**Past Tense:**

Hartmann and Stork (1972) define past tense as an absolute tense that refers to a time before the moment of utterance. An irregular verb of past tense is a verb in which the past tense is not formed by adding the usual *-ed* ending. While a regular verb that follows standard patterns in its inflection. The past tense of a regular verb is formed by

adding an *-ed* ending. It is a verb tense that expresses actions or states in the past time. The forms and the uses of past tense are also included in this definition. Therefore this definition is adopted in this study.

**Motivation:**

Gardner & Lambert (1959) defines motivation as a combination of attitudes toward the target group, interest in foreign language, and integrative orientation, as a key component of the socio-educational model. This definition is also therefore adopted for this study.

## 1.7    Scope of the Study

The study is limited to semester one of Diploma in Integrated Logistics Management (DLM) students at Kolej Profesional MARA (KPM) in Bandar Penawar only. They are students with average English proficiencies whereby their score in SPM English paper were either B or C grades only. It therefore cannot utilise the effectiveness of authentic material in teaching grammar (past tense) among the below average or above average students.

The grammar teaching is the teaching of rules and structures or syntax of English language. The approaches that are used to teach grammar in formal session are not taken into account as the main focus in the study is the materials used. In addition, this study is only limited to the teaching of past tense. As explained in many dictionaries and defined in operational definitions, Past Tense can be explained as a grammatical category of verbs used to express distinctions of time which occur in the past. This study focuses on past tense verbs regardless regular or irregular verbs.

Authentic materials can be considered as any materials which have not been produced purposely for language teaching and learning material. However, for the purpose of this study, television and radio news, songs, magazines, and newspapers are the only authentic materials that are used in the teaching of past tense verbs.

## 1.8    Significance of the Study

The research is expected to grant a glimpse into the actual teaching - learning situation of past tense by using authentic materials.  This study also aims the contribution on the development of materials and design in English language lessons and classes. The teaching of grammar using variety of authentic materials and its effectiveness and influences on learners' grammar achievement and acquisition are the major parts of study research.

It is hoped that the findings of this study would benefit and be of relevance to producers of English teaching materials, curriculum planners, English educators and teachers. It might help them also to develop their course outline which can embed with authentic materials.

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