

AN IDENTIFICATION OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ERRORS IN CLASSIFYING NOUNS, VERBS, AND ADJECTIVES

Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam^{*1}, Pavitira Nagaraju¹, Nik Rafidah Binti Nik Muhamad Affendi¹

¹ Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

vletchumy@upm.edu.my (VijayaletchumySubramaniam)*

pavitiranagaraju@gmail.com (Pavitira Nagaraju)

nrafidah@upm.edu.my (Nik Rafidah Binti Nik Muhamad Affendi)

Abstract

In this study, we aimed to recognize the student's mastery in determining the word classes of nouns, verbs, and adjectives and analyzed the errors made by the students during the process. A total of 117 excellent Year 6 students from 20 different Tamil vernacular schools – SJK(T) in Kuala Selangor district were selected as research samples. We used quantitative approach in this study. Written test was conducted to determine the student's understanding in grouping the word classes for each word. In addition, Corder's Language Error Analysis Theory (1981) comprised of five steps was used to pinpoint the students' mistakes made during the categorization of word classes. Based on the findings, the student's ignorance of the existence of affix is the most common mistake made in the classification of word classes especially for nouns and verbs. A large number of students assumed that nouns with affix is always verb. The lacking of knowledge on the selection of noun affixes is one of the problems faced by the learners in identifying the word classes. Other than that, learners often failed to describe adjective in context or picture, misuse of the affixation concept and their lacking of vocabulary in adjectives also showed the weakness of the students in illustrating the word classes for a word. In conclusion, the overall results showed that the mastery level of students' in determining the word classes is not up to par. Thus, a robust technique is in need for the learners to help them identifying the word classes of the word clearly and precisely.

Key words: adjectives, errors, misclassification, nouns, second language learners, verbs, word classes

1.0 Introduction

In today's global development, the success of any country including Malaysia, the developing country depends on the education, competencies and skills of its people in the nation. In line with that, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia launched a new National Education Blueprint in attempt to improve the quality of education and raised the bar to the international standard. The government is preparing the youth and children to survive in the 21st century and increase the expectation of public mainly parents in education policy. Education plays a key role to the development of any countries including economic growth and also to the development of our

own human race. As Malaysia is one of the multilingual countries where Malay language is the national and official language, so the government expected all people in the nation to know the language. Therefore, the plans have highlighted the importance of teaching and learning Malay language in all schools including vernacular schools. To master the language, the government implies the approaches to second language instruction, focusing on the four macro skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, there is a need to understand that non-native speakers might have difficulty to learn Malay as their second language. Their competencies in the languages may vary.

While performance in examination is very important, students are assessed under Standard Primary School Curriculum in Malaysia. The curriculum outlines the importance of grammar of Malay language in creating high quality writing and improve day-to-day communication. However, the usage of Malay Language among non-native speakers is weak, especially in SJK(T). Choosing the correct word is the main aspect when mastering a language. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are among the word classes found in Malay Language (Nik Safiah Karim et.al, 2015). Without any of these word classes, building a sentence is impossible. The main word classes are able to stand as the core in phrases, namely noun phrases, verb phrases, and adjective phrases. Based on NorlizaJamaludin (2008), the aspect of categorising word classes in Malay Language may be split based on semantics (word meaning), morphology (forming words involving suffixes), and syntax (placement of word within the sentence). Students often failed to differentiate the word classes resulting in wrong choice of words for the context or usage of the term in speaking (Tengku NazatulShima Tengku Paris & Rahmah Lob Yussof, 2012). This proves that the mastery of the word classes may aid in achieving the objective of the curriculum framework for Malay Language. In spite of that, the mastery of main word classes among students especially non-native speakers are still in question. Therefore, this has provided a gap for researchers to delve into the mastery of students in determining word groups and categorizing them into noun, verb, or adjective. This study also gives a detailed analyses of the mistakes made by the students during the process.

2.0 Research Methodology

2.1 Selection of Participants and Location

A number of 117 students, aged 12 years old were chosen from 20 different SJK(T) schools under Kuala Selangor district. The Year 6 participants are high-achieving students who scored grade A in their monthly Malay language examination in schools.

2.2 Test Methods

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods for the data collection and the results were statistically calculated. A written test was used as research tool to test the students where they need to identify the word classes; noun, verb or adjective for the given word and categorized them. This testing method have been reviewed and approved by the experts. All the words in the written exam were based on Year 1 to Year 6 Malay language textbooks. The test

was prepared based on the *JadualSpesifikasiUjian* (JSU) used in all government school in Malaysia. In addition to that, Malay language teachers over five years' experience were examined the written exam prior to the test.

The teachers were evaluated the performance of the students. The performance was measured based on the grades, scores, and percentages obtained by the students in the word classes written test. Then, the scores were ranked into few groups; excellent, good, average, poor and very poor (Nora'zian, 2018)

2.3 Analysis of Linguistics Error

The linguistic error was emphasized by Corder (1981) in five steps including collecting, identifying, describing, clarifying and correcting linguistics errors. During the test, the students were asked to categorize the word classes for each word with and without suffixes. Then, they needed to form nouns and verbs from the word given and also identify adjectives from a picture. From this test, we can understand the students' knowledge and skills on the determination of word classes and analyzed the mistakes occurred during the process of identification of word classes.

3.0 Research Findings and Discussion

The overall test scores of students obtained from the written test and six respective parts were presented in the Figure 1. The findings showed that only 7.7% of students were able to obtain excellent results, namely within the 80-100 marks range, while 12.5% of students were in the above average group, obtaining marks between 65-79, and 16.1% students obtained average results, obtaining between 50-64 marks. However, the number of students who obtained less than 50 marks were found to be more than half of the overall number of students, at approximately 67.9%, or 76 out of 117 students. All primary school leavers are required to excel in mastering the grammar especially word classes. But now, there is a big question on the skills of students and their understanding on the word classes. The children cannot make or convey the meaning of the word in any content of text without a basic understanding of how grammar works. So, this will cause difficulty for the children to learn more intensive grammar in secondary school.

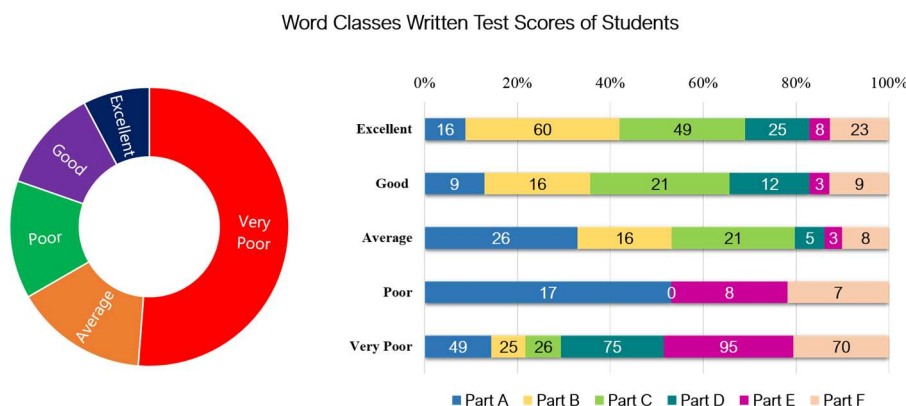


Figure 1: Word classes written test scores of students for each section.

In Section A, the written test was focused on the selection of correct word classes; verb, noun or adjective for all the word provided. The results showed that only 13.7% of students secured an excellent result with scores in the range of 80-100, while 7.7% of students were able to identify the word classes for the given words well, where they obtained scores in the range of 65-79. About 26 students in the class were obtained an average score of 50 to 64 marks. Approximately 64 students were failed to select the correct word classes for the word given. This clearly showed even though the students have achieved high marks in Malay language paper in the final examination, but in fact, they are still plagued with confusion when determining the correct word classes. More over when the words were taken from their textbooks. To get a better understanding, we therefore collected all the type of error made by the students, categorized them based on Corder's Language Error Theory (1981) and analyzed the factors that contributed to them.

Outcomes from each part of the written test

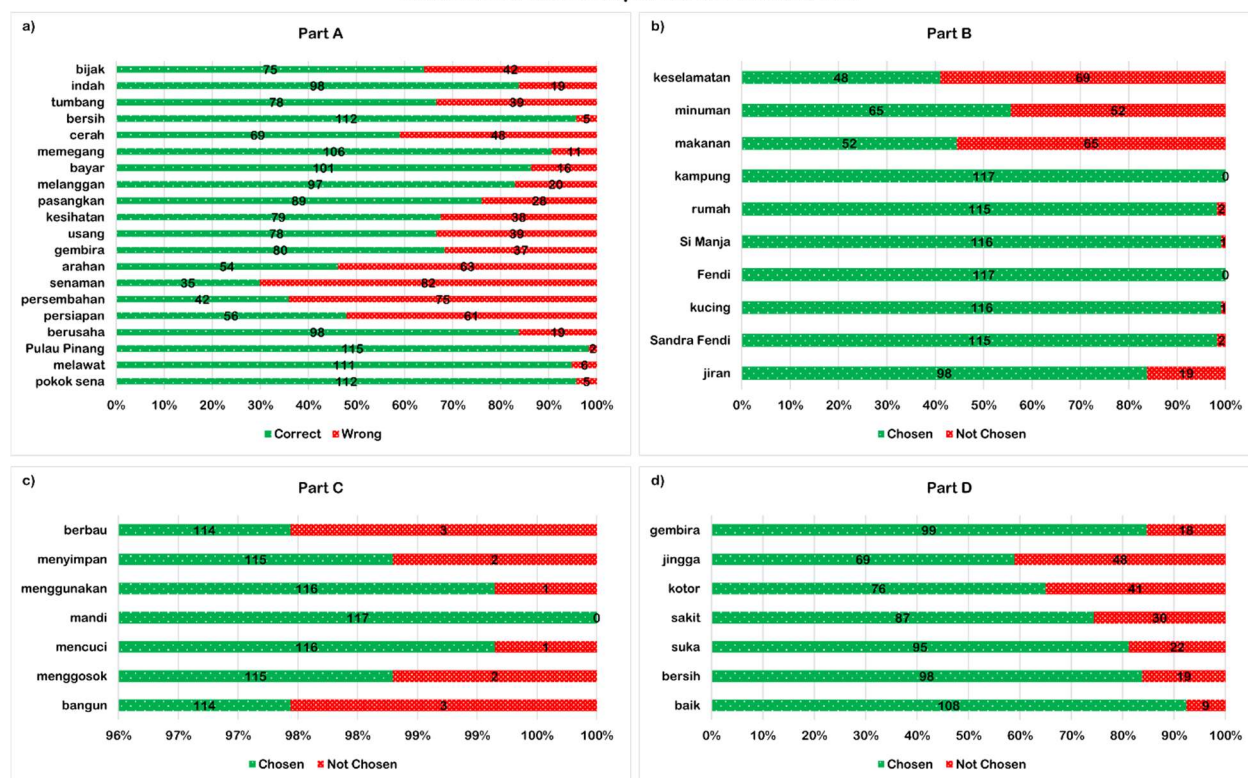


Figure 2: The percentage of chosen and not chosen answers obtained from students for each sections of (a) Part A, (b) Part B, (c) Part C, and (d) Part D in written test.

Figure 2a showed the categorization results of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. A significant error was seen on the selection of certain words such as “*persiapan*”, “*senaman*”, “*persembahan*”, and “*arahan*”, They were wrongly identified as verb. “*Senaman*” was considered as the toughest question in this section as about 82 students (70%) of 117 students answered wrongly. A total of 61 students (52%), 75 students (64%) and 63 students (54%) out of 117

students were misidentified “*persiapan*”, “*persembahan*” and “*arahan*” as verbs respectively. This is because they have been taught in school that any words refer to action are considered as verb. Therefore, they assumed that any words with action refers as verb, but in reality, they are not. Lack of knowledge about the existence of noun affixes and the notion that all affixes will form verbs is the main factor for the issue.

Besides, the mistake of the students on the selection of adjectives as noun or verbs was recorded as well. About 48 students (41%), 42 students (36%), and 39 students (33%) miscategorized adjective words; “*cerah*”, “*bijak*” and “*usung*” respectively as verbs or nouns. The results proved that non-native speakers with lack of basic knowledge in grammar are unable to categorize words into respective word classes. Zaliza (2017) indicated that the learners who are good in analyzing the word and know the meaning of the words are more likely to be successful in the identification of word classes. In addition, a study conducted by Ang and Che Radiah (2012) showed that mother tongue language in day-to-day communication also leads to difficulty in learning second language for the non-native speakers. The findings have been supported by Chew Fong Peng (2016) and Mohd Fuad (2018) through their research which proved that learning Malay Language among Chinese and Indian students are plagued with complexity and confusion. For example, there is a situation where a number of SJK(T) students failed in Malay language due to the loss of opportunity in befriending Malay or Chinese peers (Jeyagobi, 2011).

In Section B, students were required to identify nouns from the text given. Figure 1 showed that about 92 students (78.7%) were able to identify the nouns in the text, whereas 25 students (21.4%) failed to do so. We noticed that most students were able to select the nouns easily, but it was a challenge for them to identify the nouns that come together with the affixes, which is derivatives. Based on Figure 2b, a total of 69 students (59%), 65 students (56%) and 52 students (44%) out of 117 students were not identified “*keselamatan*”, “*makanan*” and “*minuman*” as noun respectively. The students may fail to select those words as noun due to the lack of knowledge on the existence of noun affixes in words.

Next, students were asked to choose verbs from the text given in Section C. Around 111 students (94.8%) out of 117 students were able to identify and make a list of verbs found in the text, be it verbs that are present with the affixes or verbs that stand independently without affixes (Figure 1). The findings showed that students from national-type schools are able to categorize verbs as it is easy to identify the existence of affixes with root word. The percentage of wrong chosen verbs is insignificant in Section C (Figure 2c). Other than that, the learning of verb affixes in National-Type School Malay Language Text Book from Year 1 to Year 6 has been emphasized. Thus, the mastery of verbs can be seen through students’ answers.

Section D in the word classes written test is the part that tests students’ capability to identify adjectives through the text provided. The outcome was unexpected where 75 students (64.1%) among excellent learners were unable to identify adjectives (Figure 1). Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam & Sivanewary Sivaratanam (2019) also found that the mastery of adjectives

among non-native speakers is still weak due to the fact that the exposure to adjectives is less emphasised in Malay Language Text Book even in secondary school. Figure 2d showed that the students have some problems in identifying adjectives. The answers gave by students in sections A and D were similar, where they were unable to decide on the word classes representing the adjectives, thus failed to list out the adjectives that can be found in the text.

Standard Primary School Curriculum serves as the guideline in teaching and learning of Malay Language at school, outlines the importance of grammar aspects, especially morphology that needs to be mastered by every student. Apart from that, a student has to understand and master the group by context, in both oral and writing (Isa *et al.*, 2021). Thus, section E has been developed to test the students' capability in forming nouns and verbs based on the root words provided. The outcome showed that the students' capability in forming nouns and verbs is at an alarming level as 95 students (81%) failed to form nouns and verbs (Figure 1). Meanwhile, 7% of the students have poor results, and 3% of the students managed to obtain above average grade. Surprisingly, the percentage of students achieved the goal was only 7%, or only 8 students.

Figure 3 showed the mistakes for the word "*karang*" is particularly prominent when only 36% of students can form nouns, while 64% of students can form verbs. This proves that the student's ability to form verbs by using affixes is higher compared to the formation of nouns. Then, the percentage of students who can form nouns using the words "*edar*" and "*padam*" is only 45% of students and 47% of students respectively. The findings of the study demonstrated that students can form verbs using affixes correctly, but they choose to use the wrong affixes when forming nouns. Based on the student's feedback, there was some confusion with affixes when they were requested to form nouns and verbs. To add to this, the lack of knowledge on affixes for nouns and the assumption that all affixes will form verbs, appear to be the main reasons behind the issue. Thus, the level of mastery of adjectives is said to be low.

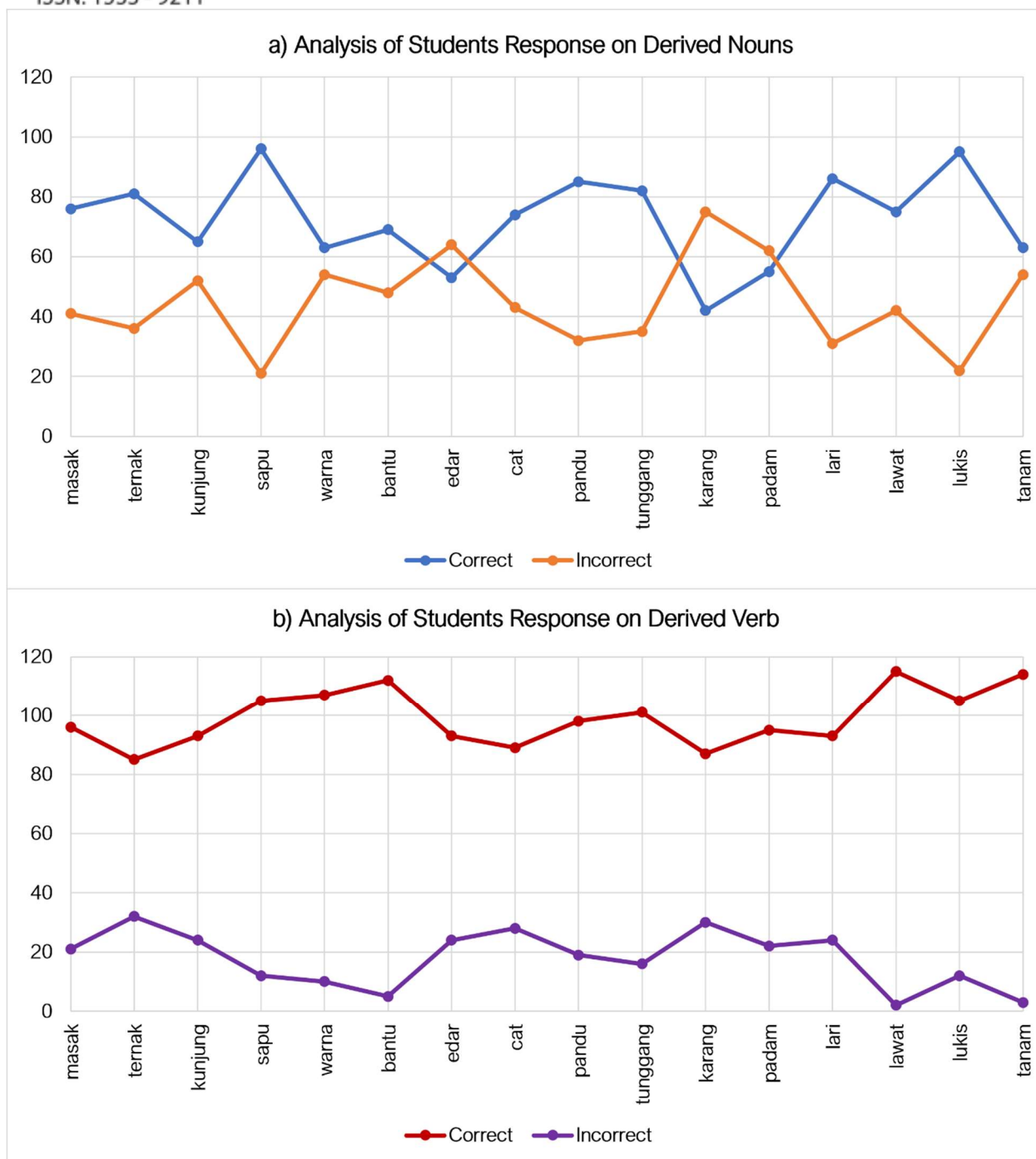


Figure 3a) An analysis of students' response on derived nouns. 3b) An analysis of students' response on derived verbs.

Table 1: Some examples of mistakes made by the students in word formation.

Errors during	pebantu	Correction	pembantu
the	pesapu		penyapu

formation of derived nouns	peedar		pengedar
	pekarang		pengarang
	pecat		pengecat
	pepadam		pemadam
	petanam		penanam
Errors during the formation of derived verbs	mekunjung		mengunjung
	mesapu		menyapu
	meedar	Correction	mengedar
	mekarang		mengarang
	mecat		mengecat
	mernak		menternak
	metanam		menanam

Table 1 showed some examples of mistakes made by the student. Learners have very limited information on the rules of grammar and tend to make mistakes by choosing the wrong affix or miss a step on the substitution process after receiving an affix. It has been supported by Hasmidar Hassan, Mardian Shah Omar & Puteri Roslina Abdul Wahid (2018) who stated that students do not understand the function of each affix in word formation hence they choose the wrong word classes. This proves that the misuse of the concept of affixation can lead to spelling errors in the sentence or convey wrong message. Students should be exposed to the formation of nouns and verbs based on the concept of affixes so that learners can form a solid sentence without grammatical or spelling mistakes. Therefore, the selection of the correct suffix based on the base word is very important in the construction of a sentence that conforms to the rules of grammar correctly.

In the last section of the written test, the students were asked to list down adjectives to describe a picture. Adjectives are used to describe, identify or further define nouns or pronouns. So, this part of the test was intended to expand the knowledge of adjective words and help the children to understand the meaning of these adjectives. Besides that, the children will have a chance to be creative and imaginative when writing. Therefore, it is important for the children to know how to use it in a sentence or statement.

The results showed that only 40 students (34%) out of 117 students were able to describe the picture with nine types of adjectives. Based on the primary school curriculum, a student should know in and out of the adjective vocabulary by Year 6. However, in this study, about 77 students (66%) were unable to make a list of adjectives to describe the picture. Another study conducted by Eve Zyzik & Clara Azevedo (2019) also showed the same observation on second language learners where they have significantly difficulty in discriminating between adjectives

and nouns. With this, it is to be said that the mastery of adjectives is at critical level especially among non-native speakers.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the student's mastery in determining the word classes; noun, verb and adjective among non-native speakers is very poor. Students often determined the word classes of a word based on their own understanding of the meaning. The meaning of the sentence to be conveyed is also influenced by the use of affixes in word formation. Failure to convey meaning well whether in the oral or written context can affect the communication between the presenter and listener. Besides that, lack of knowledge about the affixes variation is one of the factor contributing to the poor level of mastery of Malay language among second language learners. In terms of Malay language pedagogy, this study can help teachers to recognize student weakness in determining the word classes at the early stage. Teachers can analyze more precisely the mistake made by the student when forming words with the use of affixes and the factors that contribute to it. Thus, now allow many researchers or teacher to develop new strategies for improvement.

5.0 Acknowledgment

We would like to express our utmost appreciation and gratitude to all Malay Language teachers for their involvement and other contributions in carrying out this study. This study has been supported by Putra IPS Grant (GP-IPS/2021/9703200), University of Putra Malaysia (UPM).

6.0 References

- Ang Lay Hoon dan Che Radiah Mezah. (2012). Masalah Penguasaan Bahasa Melayu dalam Kalangan Pelajar Etnik Cina di Malaysia. *SOSIOHUMANIKA*. 215-226
- Chew Fong Peng. (2016). Masalah pembelajaran Bahasa Melayu dalam kalangan murid Cina sekolah rendah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*, 6 (2), 10-22.
- "Corder, S. Pit. (1981). Error Analysis and Interlanguage. Oxford: Oxford University Press. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 40(4), 649-650.
- Hasmidar Hassan, Mardian Shah Omar & Puteri Roslina Abdul Wahid. (2018). Kecelaruhan Morfologi dalam Penulisan Bahasa Melayu oleh Penutur Asing. *Linguistic Journal*, 22(2), 020-036.
- Isa, A. K., Hamzah, Z. A. Z., & Sha'ri, S. N. (2021). Tahap Penguasaan Penggunaan Kata Kerja dalam kalangan Pelajar di Tingkatan Empat Sekolah Berasrama Penuh. *PENDETA: Journal of Malay Language, Education and Literature*, 12(1), 90-104. <https://doi.org/10.37134/pendeta.vol12.1.7.2021>
- Jeyagobi Dhamodarem. (2011). Gaya pembelajaran bahasa Melayu dalam kalangan pelajar India. *Tesis Doktor Falsafah*. Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

- Mohd Fuad Abd. Rahman. (2018). Aplikasi, sikap dan masalah guru dan murid di SJK Tamil terhadap pembelajaran dan pemudacaraan Bahasa Melayu berkonsepkan *flipped classroom*. *Kertas Projek Sarjana Pendidikan*. Education Faculty, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Mohamad Nasir, Zaliza. (2017). Kesalahan tata bahasa Melayu dalam penulisan karangan pelajar. *Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) International Journal*, 4(1), 23-35.
- Nik Safiah Karim, Farid M. Onn, Hashim Haji Musa & Abdul Hamid Mahmood. (2015). *Tatabahasa Dewan: Edisi Ketiga*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Nora'Azian & Fadzillah. (2018). Tahap Profisiensi Bahasa Melayu dan Hubungannya dengan Status Sosioekonomi, Motivasi Belajar dan Pencapaian Akademik dalam Kalangan Murid Bukan Penutur Natif. *Language Journal*, 20(2), 287-316.
- Norliza Jamaluddin. (2008). Kriteria penggolongan kata: Bahasa Yunani, Inggeris & Melayu. *MALIM: Jurnal Pengajian Umum Asia Tenggara*, 9, 139-162.
- Tengku Paris, Tengku & Lob Yussof, Rahmah. (2012). Enhancing Grammar Using Board Game. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 68, 213–221.
- Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam dan Sivanewary Sivaratanam. (2019). Penguasaan Golongan Kata dalam Kalangan Murid SJKT. *Rumpun Jurnal Persuratan Melayu*, 7(1), 1-24.
- Zyzik & Clara Azevedo. (2009). WORD CLASS DISTINCTIONS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: An Experimental Study of L2 Spanish. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 31(1), 1-29. doi:10.1017/S0272263109090019
- Senthil, P., Suganya, M., Baidari, I., & Sajjan, S. P. (2022). Enhancement Sushisen algorithms in images analysis technologies to increase computerized tomography images. *International Journal of Information Technology*, 14(1), 375-387.
- Senthil, P., Stanly, M., & Inakshi, S. S. (2020). Improve Multidimensional 5G OFDM Based MIMO Sushisen Algorithms Merge Multi-Cell Transmission. *International Journal of Recent Engineering Science*, 7(2), 17-21.
- Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam, Kavenia Kunasegran, P. Senthil THE MULTISENSORY METHOD IN LITERACY MASTERY OF DYSLERIC STUDENTS . 2023 Mar. 13;94(1): 1250-1272.
- Senthil, P., & Suganya, M. (2018). Exchanged Nonlinear Third Order Differential Equation Ordinary Differential Equation. *Journal for Research* | Volume, 4(05).
- Senthil, P., Stanly, M., & Inakshi, S. S. (2020). Improve Multidimensional 5G OFDM Based MIMO Sushisen Algorithms Merge Multi-Cell Transmission. *International Journal of Recent Engineering Science*, 7(2), 17-21.

- Senthil, P. (2016). Image Mining In ranking Approach under Interval-Valued Hesitant Fuzzy Set Gr Selection. International Journal of Scientific Research in Computer Science, Engineering and Information Technology, 1(2), 105-114.
- Senthil, P. (2016). Image Mining Brain Tumor Detection using Tad Plane Volume Rendering from MRI (IBITA). Journal of computer science, 1(1), 1-13.