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Isi Kandungan

COMPARISON OF STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY MARA (UiTM) ENGLISH EXAMINATIONS AND MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEST (MUET)

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ABSTRACT

This study compares students' achievements in UiTM English examinations as opposed to the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The study was conducted on students at UiTM Kedah. The Language Centre (Pusat Bahasa) of UiTM should be congratulated for responding fast to the introduction of MUET by taking the initiative to introduce the BEL courses namely BEL 100, BEL 200 and BEL 250 to prepare the students for MUET. The study revealed that students' performance in UiTM English examinations corresponds to their MUET scores. However, the survey also revealed that students do not make preparation for MUET or UiTM English examinations. This contributes to the poor performance in both examinations.

INTRODUCTION

MUET stands for Malaysian University English Test. It is a competency test administered by the Malaysian University Council to measure the level of English proficiency amongst students who intend to pursue degree courses at any public or private institute of higher learning (IHL) in Malaysia. In response to MUET, the Language Centre (Pusat Bahasa) of University Technology MARA (UiTM) has come up with a new language programme comprising three English Courses:

BEL 100: Preparatory English compulsory for all Semester I students
BEL 200: Mainstream English I compulsory for all Semester II students
BEL 250: Mainstream English II compulsory for all Semester III students
The syllabuses of these English Courses are parallel to that of MUET. They were designed by Language Centre (Pusat Bahasa) lecturers some of whom were in the MUET team. As our students are mainly diploma students (UiTM being a University that produces 70% Diploma graduates), this step seemed an appropriate step at that time. So, November 1999 semester saw the historic change in the language programme offered to all its diploma students.

Although the UiTM English syllabuses are parallel to MUET, our students did not perform that well in MUET compared to UiTM BEL courses. This became the motivation to embark on the research.

The aim of this research is to:
1. Compare UiTM students' examination results and their MUET results
2. Study whether students who did not complete their BEL courses can perform in MUET
3. Study the effectiveness of the BEL courses to prepare students for MUET
4. Study the factors which contribute to students' success or failure in learning English

The study then takes these findings to propose ways to improve our courses so that students can be more successful language learners.

Before discussing further, let us look at the components of MUET, which is equivalent to BEL 250 of UiTM. The MUET test consists of four papers:

Paper 1 Code 800/1: Listening
The Listening Paper consists of three parts and each comprises a recording and 5 multiple-choice questions. There are 15 multiple-choice questions.

Paper 2 Code 800/2: Speaking
The Speaking component comprises of two parts – individual presentation and group discussion. A student will be given two minutes to prepare and two minutes to carry out the individual presentation. In the group discussion, each student will be given two minutes to prepare and ten minutes to participate in the group discussion. The group comprises of four students. This component is carried out a few weeks before the written Papers: 1, 3 and 4.

Paper 3 Code 800/3: Reading Comprehension
This Paper comprises of 5 passages. There are altogether 50 multiple-choice questions.

Paper 4 Code 800/4: Writing
There are two writing tasks in this Paper – summary writing and extended writing.

Table 1:The breakdown of marks and time for each paper

TEST COMPONENT	TIME	MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE	WEIGHTING (%)
LISTENING	½ HOUR	45	15
SPEAKING	½ HOUR	45	15
READING COMPREHENSION	2 HOURS	135	45
WRITING	1 ½ HOURS	75	25
TOTAL	4 ½ HOURS	300	100

Table 2: A description of the Aggregated Scale and the Six Bands of achievemt based on students' score

Aggregated Score	Band	User	Communicative Ability	Understanding	Task Performance
260-300	6	Very good user	Very fluent, accurate and appropriate; hardly any inaccuracies	High level of understanding of the language	Functions extremely well in the language
220-259	5	Good user	Fluent, appropriate but with occasional inaccuracies	Good level of understanding of the language	Functions well in the language
180-219	4	Competent user	Generally fluent, appropriate but with occasional inaccuracies	Satisfactory level of understanding of the language	Functions reasonably well in the language
140-179	3	Modest user	Fairly fluent, usually appropriate but with noticeable	Able to understand but with some misinterpretation	Able to function but with some effort

			inaccuracies		
100-139	2	Limited user	Lacks fluency and appropriacy; inaccurate use of the language resulting in frequent breakdowns in communication	Limited understanding of the language	Limited ability to function in the language
0-99	1	Extremely limited user	Inappropriate and inaccurate use of the language resulting in very frequent breakdowns in communication	Poor understanding of the language	Hardly able to function in the language

Table 3: Comparing MUET with UiTM grading system

MUET			UITM		
MARKS	%	BAND	MARKS	%	GRADES
260-300	87-100	6	90-100	90-100	A+
220-259	73-86	5	75-89	75-89	A- to A
180-219	60-72	4	60-74	60-74	B- to B+
140-179	47-59	3	45-59	45-59	C- to C+
100-139	33-46	2	30-44	30-44	E to D+
0-99	0-32	1	0-29	0-29	F
NONE *ABSENT		NO GRADE	NONE		NO GRADE *ABSENT

METHODOLOGY
- **Questionnaires**
- **Sampling**
- **Instrument**
- **Data Analysis**

Distribution of Questionnaires
99%of the population comprising of 201 of the total 203 students taking MUET in June 2001 answered the given questionnaires. They represented all the programmes at UiTM Kedah at that time which were:

Table 4: Population Taking MUET in June 2001

PROGRAMME	STUDENTS	(%)
DIPLOMA IN ACCOUNTANCY (DIA)	67	33.3
DIPLOMA IN BANKING STUDIES (DIB)	59	29.3
DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS STUDIES (DBS)	60	29.9
DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (DPA)	15	7.5
TOTAL	201	100

Sampling
As mentioned, 99.0% of the population taking MUET in June 2001 answered the questionnaires. The MUET and UiTM results analysed were form June 2000 to December

The class observations revealed that there was too much teacher talk in class. There should be more effort to make sure students participate in class so that they have more confidence in using the language. They should also be reminded time and again of the various ways to learn the language are not only through the traditional methods but also the usage of the information technology widely available to them.

The development in the written genres should not be ignored. One of the latest developments is the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English. Instead of teaching students individual vocabulary in unrelated situation or out of context, the usage of this dictionary gives students chunks of the language, which is meaningful. This linguistic tool can be used in their own situation. This is also a faster way to teach the language from the traditional one word at a time in teaching vocabulary.

A study needs to be done into what is the best MUET score. Is band 3 or 4 the best band for a particular degree programme? What is the implication of imposing such score on the candidates – will the faculty have students for the programme or what can be done if students do not get a particular score? There should be more consistent practice among universities for MUET to gain the respect as a university entry requirement set by the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, this may be used as a standard set by universities as practised by universities in the United States (GRE results) and the United Kingdom (IELTS).

The various faculties in UiTM must offer other English courses to its students so that those who want to pursue their education at degree or higher levels can do so and those who want to work are also equipped linguistically to join the job market. The Language Centre (Pusat Bahasa) has many language courses to offer and it is up to the various programmes to profit from the expertise of Language Centre (Pusat Bahasa) lecturers.

One of the problems faced in conducting the research was the difficulty in getting the MUET score from the Malaysian Examination Council. Even though some useful figures were obtained during seminars conducted by the Council, they were to be kept confidential. Consequently, some aspects of MUET cannot be discussed. However, the researcher is satisfied with what has been unveiled so far. It is hoped for the sake of improving the standard of English in UiTM, MUET may be used as the external result to compare our products with that of other universities as it has always been our belief that we are on the right track.

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