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Usage of Compound Sentences in Essays by Students of Tamil-Type Schools

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Abstract

This research focuses on the usage of compound sentences in essay writing among students of Tamil-type schools, or *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil* (SJKT). This research aims to analyze the frequency of using sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences in essay writing among Tamil school students. The researcher chose 40 Primary 5 students as the sample group. The location of the research is SJKT Saraswathi, Kuala Lumpur. The choosing of the sample is selected according to equivalent level of academic achievement and possesses essay-writing skills. The research subjects are chosen by the purposive sampling method. The researcher linked Goal-Free Evaluation Model by Scriven (1972) to this study. The model emphasizes on the concept of independent goal evaluation – the researcher is within the education programme itself and conducts the study to evaluate all outputs. The researcher uses the research content analysis method, interview method, and the observation method. Instruments such as essay-writing practices, audio interview recordings, and observation notes to collect data. Essay-writing practices are analyzed to identify the frequency of usage of sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences in essays by students of Tamil-type schools. The interview is conducted on the Malay Language teachers to ascertain the level of usage of compound sentences in essays. The analysis of the data is done based on the qualitative method. The results of the research creates awareness to the teaching staff especially the Malay Language teachers of SJKT on the level of mastery and usage of compound sentences in essay-writing among Tamil-type school students. Therefore, this may encourage teachers to improve their teaching methods for learning and facilitation.

Keywords: Sequential Compound Sentences, Opposite Compound Sentences, Frequency of the Use of Compound Sentences, Level of Mastery of Compound Sentences

Introduction

The Constitution of Malaysia Article 152(1) recognises Malay Language as the national language and official language of Malaysia. Malay Language, as the official language, is used for every official matter. Other than being an official language, Malay Language is also widely used as the communication medium to unite the multiracial society. The government has implemented various steps and programmes to uphold Malay Language. Among it, Malay Language was made the medium language at all levels of education from primary school to

university. In line with that, it was made compulsory that all students from Tamil-type schools (SJKT) and Chinese-type schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina, SJKC*) to learn Malay Language as a second language. This is because, although the mother tongue is made to be the medium language in these schools, Malay Language must still be taught as a second language with the hopes that the multicultural students may master and use Malay Language correctly whether in written or speech form. However, students from the national primary schools face difficulties in mastering and using Malay Language especially when writing essays. The usage of non-grammatical sentences in essays is a substantial problem that is detected among SJKT student. Poor mastery of grammar, poor skills in using language, as well as a disinterest in learning Malay Language are among the factors causing Tamil-type school students to face difficulties in producing quality essays.

In general, this study is important to know the similarities and differences of Malay compound sentences and comparisons with Tamil that can avoid confusion, especially in the construction of compound sentences for Tamil vernacular school students. In addition, the findings of this study will also provide the opportunity for Malay language teachers to understand the problems and difficulties faced by Tamil vernacular school students in writing essays, especially in the formation of compound sentences. Indirectly, this will facilitate the teaching and facilitation process (PdPc) of Malay subject to Tamil school students. This research can also give awareness to educators, teaching staff, Tamil vernacular school students, parents and the general public about the importance and need of learning Malay with correct syntax and grammar aspects. So, it is of every Malaysian's responsibility to dignify the Malay language instead of lowering the position or integrity of the Malay language. Therefore, teaching or learning Malay with correct grammar needs to start early from school, especially to the non-native speakers who are from Tamil schools.

Problem Statement

The influence of the mother tongue, which is Tamil, is the main problem faced a number of students in Tamil-type schools in mastering wiring in Malay Language. The Tamil mother tongue influences learning Malay Language as a second language (Ooi, 2017). This makes it harder for the student to produce quality essays and most of the essays produced do not reach the standards required and are still at a low level. The confusion in writing and usage of compound sentences causes Tamil-type school students to make literal translation from Tamil to Malay Language more often when writing Malay Language sentences (Mahendran, 2016).

The weakness in writing grammatical sentences such as correct compound sentences in essays causes the quality of the essay to be compromised and the student may end up with a lower mark, and there might even be those who fail in Malay Language written paper for UPSR. Based on the data of the UPSR examination results, the written Malay Language paper for Tamil-type schools in Pudu Zone, Cheras, from 2017-2019 recorded a failure rate of 14% to 25% (State Education Department, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, 2020). The rate of failure is supposed to be at zero. This shows that the students have still not grasped the skill of essay writing despite learning Malay Language for six years in primary school.

Furthermore, students use simple sentences more often as compared to compound sentences as simple sentences are easier to write when compared to compound sentences. Therefore, the result of the students' essay writing, the usage of the types of compound sentences are

reduced and at times are much less compared to simple sentences. This indicates that students are still weak in using compound sentences when writing sentences. Using various types of compound sentences in an essay gives a higher impact especially in delivering and expanding clear and concise ideas. This will help the student in producing a quality essay. Therefore, this research will discuss the frequency of using sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences in essays written by Tamil-type school students.

Compound Sentences

As per stated by Karim et al (2015), in *Tatabahasa Dewan*, a compound sentence comprises of the amalgamation or the continuation of two or more sentences to be a new sentence by using compound conjunctions (p.497). Using different conjunctions in amalgamating single sentences produces three types of compound sentences, which are sequential compound sentence, opposite compound sentence, and paired compound sentence. However, this study will only focus on sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences.

Sequential Compound Sentence and Opposite Compound Sentence

Sequential compound sentences are compound sentences, which comprises of a sequence arrangement of facts (Asmah Hj Omar, 2009, & Nik Safiah Karim et al. 2015, p.503). Compound conjunctions such as *and, then, as well as, while* are used to produce sequential compound sentences. On the other hand, sentence arrangements in opposite compound sentences give opposite meaning in the sentences compounded with conjunctions such as *but, or, while, except*, and others. Both these compound sentences are analyzed in detail based on the essays produced by Tamil-type school students to observe the frequency of using these sentences.

Literature Review

There are several studies related to compound sentences that have been conducted by local researchers. Among them is Reduzan (2018) in the study Analysis of Using *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* among essay-writing for Form 1 students have found that compound sentences with relative clauses is more frequently used than complementary compound sentences and descriptive compound sentences by students in when writing their essays. A study by Abdul Razak and Ain (2014) was aimed at analyzing Malay Language *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* in poems; they summarized that *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* used in poems undergo transformation processes such as removal, expansion, and rearrangement. At the same time, another study on the analysis of Malay Language compound sentences in Malay poems by Abdul Razak and Ain (2016) was conducted to identify the types of compound sentences and sentence structures used in writing selected Malay poems. The findings of this study indicated that sequential compound sentences involve the conjunctions *and, then, as well as, and while* are frequently used in the poems that were studied. Other than that, the findings also explained the process of termination and rearranging marked the highest position in forming compound sentences. Next, there are also studies conducted to explore the level of mastery for compound sentences in essay writings among pre-university students by Abdul Razak (2014), showing that pre-university students are still weak in mastering Malay Language compound sentences. This is as a majority of the students were less skilled in using or choosing the right conjunctions when writing essays. The choosing of an inaccurate or unsuitable conjunction when building a compound sentence when writing an essay will cause mistakes in forming compound sentences. These mistakes will surely affect the quality of and the

standard of the essay. Therefore, usage of correct and accurate language is crucial presenting an idea with ease and clarity whether in the form of writing or verbally.

Methodology

The researcher used the sampling technique when choosing 40 Primary 5 students from a SJK Tamil as sample. The researcher ensured the research subjects had similar academic achievement levels and were able to write essays. This research was based on the Goal-Free Evaluation Model by Scriven (1972) that evaluated an educational programme by evaluating achievements or outputs that were received through this research. The data was collected through the essays written by the samples. The content analysis method, observation method, and the interview method were used. Instruments such as essay-writing practices, audio recording of interviews, and field observation noted were used to obtain the data required. The essays produced by the samples were analyzed to identify the frequency of the usage of sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences in the essays written by Tamil-type school students. An interview with the Malay Language subject teacher was done to ascertain the level of mastery and usage of compound sentences in the essays written by the students of the Tamil-type school.

Research Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researcher will elaborate in detail on the frequency of the usage of sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences in essays written by students in Tamil-type schools. The data analyzed are shown in table and bar chart forms as evidence and support for the research findings. As the research data was collected through essays written by Primary 5 students, the researcher made a comprehensive conclusion on the number of sentences in the essay script written. Table 1 shows a detailed look with regards to the analysis of the total usage of sentences in the essays written by the respondents.

Table 1

Usage of sentences as a whole in essay writing

	Total	Percentage %
Total of Grammatically Correct Sentences	305	80.9
Total of Grammatically Incorrect Sentences	72	19.1
Total Sentences	377	100
Total Single Sentences	158	51.8
Total Compound Sentences	147	48.2
Total	305	100

Based on the data shown in Table 1, the 40 research respondents produced a total of 377 sentences including grammatically correct and grammatically incorrect sentences. From the total, as many as 305 (80.9%) sentences were grammatically correct and the remaining 72 sentences (19.1%) are grammatically incorrect. At the same time, from the 305 grammatically correct sentences, approximately 158 sentences (51.85%) are simple sentences. On the other hand, the samples produced 147 (48.2%) compound sentences in essay writing. The compound sentences identified covers *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan And Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* only. The differences that can be discerned are the difference between the usage of single sentences and compound sentences are only 11 sentences. Although there wasn't a marked

difference, however when the analysis was made it was found that among the respondents only one did not use compound sentences in their essay writing. Sample 05 only used simple sentences in the entire essay. This may be due to the sample preferring to use simple sentences as compared to compound sentences when writing essays. The probability is that the sample has a tendency to use simple sentences as those sentences are shorter and more concise as well as easier to write when presenting the content. Next, the researcher examined the usage of compound sentences in the essays produced by the respondents. Table 2 below explains the usage of compound sentences identified among the sample group.

Table 2

Usage of compound sentences in essay writing

Types of Compound Sentences	Total	Percentage %
<i>Ayat Majmuk Gabungan</i>	126	85.7
<i>Ayat Majmuk Pancangan</i>	21	14.3
<i>Ayat Majmuk Campuran</i>	0	0
Total of Compound Sentences	147	100

As has been made known, compound sentences are split into three types, which are *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan*, *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*, and *Ayat Majmuk Campuran*. Between the three types of compound sentences, most students at a primary school level will normally use *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* and *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*. At a primary school level, the usage of *Ayat Majmuk Campuran* is rarely used, as there are some among them whom are less skilled at forming this type of sentence. This is as they lack the knowledge to create *Ayat Majmuk Campuran*, which involves an amalgamation between several single sentences of compound sentences. Data collected shows that there are 126 (85.7%) *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* that was used by the samples in essay writing. However approximately 21 (14.3%) *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* were identified in the essays produced. No usage of *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* were found in the samples' essays. This data clearly showed that students are more likely to use *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* when compared to *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan* or even *Ayat Majmuk Campuran* as the difference shown is approximately 105 sentences, which is (71.4%). In other words, based on the research analysis data results, it was found that the usage of *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* in essays written by the sample group were 6 times more than the usage of *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*. This is as students were more comfortable with forming *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* when writing essays. Next, in line with the topic of the researcher's discussion, too presents the data of the entire sample that used *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* in the essays. The data obtained is presented in a table form so that it is more detailed and easier to be further explained.

Table 3

Number of sample that used compound sentences

Compound Sentences	Number of Respondents	Percentage %	Total Sentences	Percentage %
Sequential Compound Sentences	39	97.5	126	100
Opposite Compound Sentences	0	0	0	0
Did not use Compound Sentences	1	2.5	-	-
Total	40	100	126	100

Based on Table 3 above, a total of 39 respondents from 40 samples, which is 97.5%, used compound sentences in their essays. One only sample, accumulating to 2.5%, did not use compound sentences at all in the essay. In addition, the compound sentence group can be divided into sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences. Data shows that almost all samples used sequential compound sentences in their essays except for one sample, number 5. A total of 39 respondents, 97.5%, used sequential compound sentences in their essays. At the same time, a closer look at opposite compound sentences, the data shows that there is nil usage of this type of sentence in the essays. This means that from the 40 respondents, none used opposite compound sentences in their essays. The bar chart below shows the use of clusters of sequential compound sentences as well as the number and percentage of usage in essay writing.

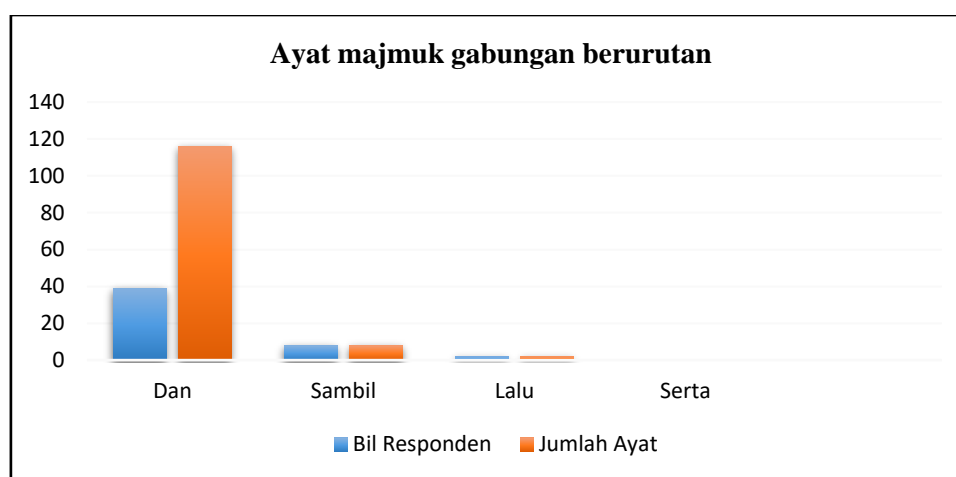


Chart 1: Number of sample that used sequential compound sentences

The results of the data analysis show that sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences are distinguished by the usage of sequential and opposite conjunctions. Conjunctions such as *dan*, *sambil*, *lalu* and *serta* are used to connect single sentences with factual sequential arrangement to be a sequential compound sentence. On the other hand, opposite compound sentences such as *atau*, *tetapi*, *manakala* and *kecuali* are used to connect sentences that carry opposite meanings to create an opposite compound sentence. The research findings showed that an overall of 126 sequential compound sentences were used in the essays written by 39 respondents. Whereas, 0% were recorded in using opposite compound sentences as explained earlier. Table 4 below explains in detail the usage of sequential compound sentences following the usage of conjunctions, total number of sentences, and the percentage of usage in essays by the respondents.

Table 4

Number of respondents using compound respondents in essay writing

Compound sentences	Conjunctive	Number of respondents	Number of sentences	Percentage %
Sequential Compound Sentences	Dan	39	116	92.1
	Sambil	5	8	6.3
	Lalu	2	2	1.6
	Serta	0	0	0
Opposite Compound Sentences	Atau	0	0	0
	Tetapi	0	0	0
	Manakala	0	0	0
	Kecuali	0	0	0
Total			126	100

Table 4 shows detailed explanation on the usage of sequential and opposite compound sentences based on the compound conjunctives. Overall, these findings explain the result of the essays written by 40 respondents; 39 respondents were able to use sequential compound sentences in their essays. However, if looked from the view of the usage of compound conjunctive, *serta* was not used at all in the essays. At the same time, 5 respondents, totaling 8 sentences at 6.3%, only used the conjunctive *sambil*. The conjunctive *lalu* was hardly used in the essays, were only 2 respondents used this conjunctive with a total of 2 sentences at 1.6%. The conjunctive *dan* marked the highest usage, whereby 39 respondents made use of the word in their essays. As many as 116, at 92.1%, of the sentences involved the conjunctive *dan* was used in the essays written by the samples. These findings are in line with the research findings by Mafot and Idris (2017), whereby all 14 samples in their research used the conjunctive 'dan' in building compound sentences.

The usage of opposite compound sentences involve the conjunctives *atau*, *tetapi*, *manakala* and *kecuali* were not sighted at all in the essays by the respondents. Once the researcher analyzed the essays, it was found that there was nil usage of opposite compound sentences by the samples in the essays. Their writing was more focused on single sentences and sequential compound sentences only. Although the samples have been exposed to compound conjunctives during their learning process, however they chose to not use it when they wrote their essays. Next, Table 5 shows several examples of sequential compound sentences in the essays written by the samples.

Table 5

Examples of usage for sequential compound sentences in essay writing

Conjunctive	Examples of sequential compound sentences by samples	Sample (S)
Dan	Saya dan kakak bermain bola di tepi pantai.	S 15 Sentence 6
	Sharvein dan Sashvein membina istana pasir.	S 20 Sentence 5
	Encik Saravanan dan keluarganya berkelah di tepi pantai.	S 32 Sentence 1
	Emak menyediakan nasi lemak ayam dan jus oren.	S 40 Sentence 4
	Saya dan abang membeli belon di tepi pantai.	S 13 Sentence 6
Sambil	Bapa memerhati kami sambil membaca surat khabar.	S 01 Sentence 8
	Ibu menyediakan makanan sambil mendengar radio.	S 19 Sentence 6
	Saya dan adik berjalan di tepi pantai sambil makan aiskrim.	S 24 Sentence 7
	Emak berehat sambil mendengar lagu dalam telefon bimbit.	S 30 Sentence 5
	Abang mandi sambil menyanyi lagu.	S 27 Sentence 6
Lalu	Mereka membentangkan tikar lalu meletakkan barang.	S 02 Sentence 5
	Adik memakai pelampung lalu terjun ke dalam laut	S 22 Sentence 7

From a total of 166 sequential compound sentences used the conjunctive 'dan', 113 of those were sentences that contained a combination of two subjects and one predicate. For example in Table 5, the sentence written by sample 15 sentence 6 (*Saya dan kakak bermain bola di tepi pantai*). This sentence showed usage of two subjects, which are *saya* and *kakak* to explain the predicate that is the act in the sentence (*bermain bola di tepi pantai*). So, too, are the examples of the sentences written by sample 20, sample 32, and sample 13. Whereas, the amalgamation of one subject and two predicates involved the conjunctive 'dan' where there were only 3 sentences created. Among the examples of the sentences written by sample 40, sentence 4 is (*Emak menyediakan nasi lemak ayam dan jus oren*). This sentence was created by combining one subject *emak* and two predicates *nasi lemak* and *jus oren*. The researcher found that a majority of the samples only built sequential compound sentences by using 'dan' by focused on two subjects. Samples was also less knowledgeable in building sequential compound sentences that involves more than one or several subjects and the usage of more than one or several predicates. This showed that samples were still at a low level in building sequential compound sentences that involves the conjunctive 'dan'. The variety of sequential compound sentences produced by students when writing their essays will mirror their efficiency and skill in usage and master of the language. In this matter, based on the analysis of the essays of the samples, the researcher found that the students were still at a low level in building sequential

compound sentences. At the same time, they were also lacking in building opposite compound sentences.

In addition, the results of the interview with several teachers for the Malay Language subject found that the level of mastery for compound sentences among students from Tamil-type schools were still low and weak, in line with the research findings by (Sari et al., 2018; Zurakintan, 2014). The Malay Language teachers interviewed were also of the opinion that SJK Tamil students faced difficulties in forming grammatically correct compound sentences especially when writing essays as they are confused by the structure of Malay Language sentences with their mother tongue. Research by Tay & Wong (2016) also clarified how Chinese students face the same problems in learning and writing Malay Language as the sentence structures for Malay Language differs from the structure of the native language.

In addition, the results of the interview found that the weak mastery of grammar was another substantial problem for a handful of the Tamil-type students as they were still unclear in choosing and using suitable conjunctives to create a compound sentence. In each of their studies, Deviyana (2017); Johari and Ismail (2013); Arpah Abdul Rashid (2010) found that most of the grammatical mistakes made while building a compound sentence happened due to using an incorrect conjunctive.

Other than that, another teacher is of the opinion that SJKT students hardly showed earnest attitudes when learning Malay Language. Feedback from this teacher is supported by research by Saraswathi et al. (2017) who stated that Tamil-type school students were less interested in learning Malay Language. They only assumed the learning of Malay Language as a second language. However research by Nancy anak Ngumbang and Zamri Mahamod (2017) is markedly different from Saraswathi et al (2017), whereby the Melanau students showed great attitude, high interest and motivation in learning Malay Language as a second language.

Most of the students in Tamil-type schools were indifferent to Malay Language as the national language. This disinterest and idle attitude towards learning Malay Language caused them to not be able to master the basic skills of grammar that is codified within the *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum and Pentaksiran (DSKP)*. These students hardly showed effort in learning and mastering the correct grammar rules. In fact, they were of the opinion that the Malay Language subject is difficult and hard to master. For them, learning Malay Language is to simply pass the examinations and to be employed in the government sector, Saraswathi et al, (2017). The willingness and determination as well as the love for the language simply did not exist within them. This situation drives them to easily quit if they fail in their Malay Language examination papers and no longer want to work to achieve better scores. The failure in using various compound sentences in their essays caused the quality of their writing to not be of the desired standards.

Findings from the interviews also showed that the influence of the mother tongue, Tamil, is a constraint for the Tamil-type school students in mastering Malay Language. This finding is supported by Mahendran (2016) and Suthanthiradevi (2004,1999). Research results by Mohd Norazmie Yusof and Saidatul Nomis Mahadi (2019), and Norizan Che Su (2018) also found that there are instances of influence from the mother tongue in building sentence structures in Malay Language. A student's weakness in using compound sentences when writing essays will

inadvertently cause their achievements to slip for the Malay Language written paper while in actuality the Malay Language written paper merely emphasizes on the essay writing skills.

If the student fails their Malay Language paper for UPSR, they will have to attend a transition class for a year before they are allowed to attend Form 1. During the transition class, PdPc activities aimed at increasing their Malay Language skills will be conducted. This has been proven as the research findings by Indumathy Munusamy (2013) in their research for mastery of Malay Language among transition class students are at a medium level and they would require good teaching methods to improve their level of mastery of Malay Language. Therefore, students should be more aware on the importance of using compound sentences in their essay writing to clarify and expand an idea in their essays. Without the usage of compound sentences in an essay, it will be more difficult for them to produce a quality essay and reach the desired level of achievement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the amount of sentences produced by the 40 Standard 5 students who acted as samples were approximately 377 sentences. From this total, approximately 305 sentences were grammatically correct and the remainder were grammatically incorrect. The researcher then categorised the listed grammatically correct sentences into two groups, namely simple sentences and compound sentences. Each recorded 158 simple sentences and 147 compound sentences. For the compound sentences, the 147 sentences were further separated into different types of compound sentences, which are *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan*, *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*, and *Ayat Majmuk Campuran*. The researcher found that as many as 126 *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* and 21 *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*, while there was nil *Ayat Majmuk Campuran* in the essays. Next, the total of 126 *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan* were classified into *sequential compound sentences and opposite compound sentences*. The researcher found that the total number of *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan*, which stands at 126, are sequential compound sentences and found nil opposite compound sentences in the writings. Once the analysis was performed on the frequency of the usage of the sequential compound sentences, the data returned shows that only the conjunctive '*dan*' was more frequently used by the samples in their essay writings when compared to other compound conjunctives such as '*sambil*', '*lalu*' and '*serta*'. Based on the data, as many as 116 sentences (91.2%) from the 126 sequential compound sentences involved the conjunctive '*dan*'. Samples more often used the conjunctive '*dan*' when building sentences.

As a whole, the data analysis showed the usage of sequential compound sentences were higher when compared to the usage of opposite compound sentences which were not used at all in the sample's essay writings. Based on the DSKP of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, the learning of compound sentences begins from Primary 2, in line with the content standard and the learning standard which encompasses the topic of building compound sentences and the usage of conjunctives in sentences. Following that, students have the opportunity to learn building or using compound sentences at a primary school level beginning from Primary 2 to Primary 6. This matter is proven when observing the teacher's teaching activities and the students' learning in the classroom. Starting from Primary 5, students would have learned the skill to build compound sentences for four years. A period of four years is a long time for a student to master the skill of creating compound sentences. They should also possess the skill and the mastery in using compound sentences in building sentences and using different types

of compound sentences such as *Ayat Majmuk Gabungan*, *Ayat Majmuk Pancangan*, and so forth when writing their essays. The Primary 5 students who acted as samples in this research were still weak and less knowledgeable in the usage. The Malay Language subject teacher should create steps to overcome this problem from an early stage in primary school. Teachers should understand the problems of the students especially in mastering Malay Language and should try with all their might to help them to increase their mastery of Malay Language especially in using compound sentences and the mastering the language correctly in writing and speaking. Other than that, problematic students should redouble their efforts and should be aware that they cannot only rely on their teachers. Students should also put in the effort and have a positive attitude towards learning Malay Language. Guidance from teachers and a continued effort by the student would surely help them to overcome the problems of using and building compound sentences in their essay writing, as well as help them to master the basic skills of Malay Language among Tamil-type school students.

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