

Improving Written Language and Exploring Attitudes towards Learning English in Primary Age ESL Learners in Brunei Darussalam.

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This paper discusses findings from research conducted in Brunei Darussalam for a Master of Education thesis published through the University of Waikato, New Zealand in 2013. At the time the author was working at a large government primary school.

The author undertook an inductive mixed-methods study designed in two parts. As there was little research available directly pertaining to Bruneian primary school learners of English, the initial part of the study aimed to explore the complex range of factors which may influence attitudes towards learning English by students in Years 4-6 at one Bruneian primary school. For this reason, a group of 219 students from the school were surveyed about their attitudes towards English and any learning challenges they faced.

The second stage of the research involved a case study which examined the impact of a journal writing intervention programme on a group of ten students in Years 4-6 over a year. A successful local secondary school journal writing programme was adapted for this purpose.

A number of important findings emerged from the study which confirmed that journal writing provides numerous benefits to both teachers and students. Most significantly was the improved deeper writing features exhibited in the journal writing entries. There was also evidence of a high degree of student engagement during writing and the development of strong teacher student relationships. Additional findings of interest related to code switching, gender differences, teacher feedback to students and the explicit teaching of vocabulary. Overall, the research makes an important contribution to understanding how young ESL students' attitudes towards language learning affect task success or failure.