

Research and Issues In
**SECOND AND
FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Teaching



Editors:

Haliza Harun
Fariza Puteh Behak
Hazleena Baharun

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USIM Publisher
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
Bandar Baru Nilai
Negeri Sembilan
2014

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 2014

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Published in Malaysia by:

USIM Publisher

UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA

71800 Bandar Baru Nilai

Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus

Tel: +606-798 8226/6081 Faks: +606-798 6083

www.penerbit.usim.edu.my

info.penerbit@usim.edu.my

USIM Publisher is a member of the

MALAYSIAN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING COUNCIL (MAPIM)

Printed in Malaysia by:

UKM CETAK

Aras Bawah

Bangunan Penerbit UKM

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)

43600, Bangi

Tel: +603-8921 3072/5371 | Faks: +603-8925 4575

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing in Publication Data

Research and Issues in Second and Foreign Language Teaching /

Editors Haliza Harun, Fariza Puteh Behak, Hazleena Baharun

ISBN 978-967-440-113-9

1. English language--Study and teaching--Research.

2. Language and languages--Study and teaching--Research.

I. Haliza Harun. II. Fariza Puteh Behak. III. Hazleena Baharun.

428.207

Perpustakaan USIM	
Donation with Best Compliments	
From	BAHAGIAN PENERBITAN, USIM
Date	07 MAC 2015

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PREFACE

The increasing trend of globalization has led to a dramatic growth in the number of second/foreign language learners worldwide. Second or foreign language learning is regarded as a tool that equips an individual with a competitive advantage not only in accessing the many discourse at a global level from the dissemination of information and knowledge, propagation of ideas, to understanding of other cultures but also in providing a greater number of career possibilities.

Accordingly, the language landscape in Malaysia has constantly evolved as the country attempts to keep abreast with the global developments. Realizing the importance of language as an effective tool for global communication, various efforts have been taken by the relevant authorities to promote the learning of second/foreign languages in the country. While the recent change in the language policy, known as “To uphold Bahasa Malaysia & To Strengthen The English language” *Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI)* is introduced as a strategic attempt that acknowledge the important roles of both Bahasa Malaysia and English language, the introduction of Arabic language in Malaysian schools since 2005, indicates the effort to equip Malaysian learners to become successful in an international community.

A crucial implication in light of such view is in relation to the pedagogical practices that are to be effectively implemented in language classrooms. To ensure the effectiveness of such practices, researchers in the language field, as well as classroom practitioners must clearly understand the inextricably nature of language, the learning and acquiring processes of language as well as learners needs. Specifically, learners need to be taught to notice and use appropriately the language learnt by means of written or speech form, in order for them to be able to identify the different choices (i.e. the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the language) that are available to them in the target language.

This book is intended as a reference for language practitioners, researchers or even university students interested in the language teaching field. Apart from bridging the gap that exists in the theoretical issues of language and language learning/teaching field, this book also offers readers with the methodological issues that can be considered in second and foreign language classrooms. Importantly, it is hoped that such knowledge can be used as a basis for informed pedagogical practice in a language classroom. Subsequently, the collection of articles deals with various second and foreign language teaching methods and strategies that can be implemented in any language classrooms.

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PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

This book explores the issues of teaching a second and foreign language. It investigates the challenges faced by language practitioners, accompanied with theoretical foundations in the attempt to suggest practical methods and approaches to language teaching as to overcome language learning problems among second or foreign language learners. A common theme that runs throughout the book centres on how empirical research conducted in various areas of language learning coupled with sound theoretical foundations in the relevant field not only can shed some lights on the difficulties and problems of language learning but also provide practical alternative teaching methods for language classroom practitioners. To assist readers to gain some general ideas of the organisation and content of the chapters found in the book, we present a summary of the content of each chapter in this preliminary chapter. However, we invite the reader to read the chapters individually so as to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth insights of the topics that are addressed by each chapter authors.

The first chapter of the book, 'Considering Culture When Implementing a Western Pedagogy in an Eastern Learning Context' looks into the crucial role of culture in adapting a western learning pedagogy in language learning specifically that of the Malaysian context. The chapter discusses the significant function of culture and how it is perceived when adopting a Western learning pedagogy in an Eastern context. Based on the findings of the current study, this practice could give rise to a serious issue of adaptability of the students in the Eastern learning context towards the conventions of Western pedagogy. Culture is an element that is sometimes taken for granted in Malaysia, where academia prefers to take a learning

pedagogy from Western countries and implement the pedagogy in an Eastern context. This paper is going to address the issue of considering culture in implementing a Western pedagogy in a Malaysian context by delineating classroom realities of implementing a Western pedagogy in an Eastern learning context. The issue is addressed by investigating the implementation of the Multiliteracies pedagogy, a Western teaching approach; in a Malaysian university classroom that taught English as a Second Language (ESL). Two cycles of action research process of planning, action, observation and reflection through qualitative means such as semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, classroom observations, professional discussions and reflective journal were involved followed by critical reflective analysis steps. The investigation reveals that the implementation of a Western-based teaching approach in an Eastern learning context requires deep deliberation and consideration of the students' socio cultural practices and cultures of learning to ensure that optimum result could be achieved from the introduction of the new pedagogy.

The following chapter, 'Exploring the Dynamics of Task-generated Discourse – A Qualitative Analysis', examines the discourse generated by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners using jigsaws and decision-making task types focusing on episodes of negotiated interaction. Episodes of negotiated interaction generated by the learners were generated to identify the social processing aspect. A close examination on the learners interaction reveals that the learners engaged in more intensive negotiations during decision-making task completion than during the jigsaw task completion. Their interaction episodes were exploratory and highly collaborative with many instances of joint-meaning making and complex patterns of interactions. Subsequently, the authors suggest that encouraging learners to engage in decision making task completion promotes intensive negotiations and hence resulted in a production of richer interaction episodes which facilitated learners' language development.

The issue on the right note on socio-psychological motivational orientation (i.e. instrumental or integrative) that can positively shape

learners' mind set towards the effective learning of English, is at the heart of the discussion in the chapter on 'Exploring Motivational Orientation in Islamic -based Learning Context'. The authors argue that the inclination towards the instrumental or integrative orientation may influence learners' outlook towards learning the English language. To this end, two important social psychological variables: attitude and motivation, detailing motivational orientations were investigated by means of AMTB (1985), tailored to the Malaysian socio-linguistic and socio-psychological context, on a group of Islamic-based undergraduate learners. Selection of the specified group of learners is crucial as they have been constantly perceived as lacking in English Language proficiency. As noted by the authors, the English language is acquired for its instrumental role which ultimately demonstrates learners' readiness and positive attitude towards learning the language. Hence, it is then crucial for a more customized English Language materials and teaching approaches to be considered to promote the learning of the language among learners with Islamic based studies background.

On the other hand, the issue of gauging how much da'wah related vocabulary the students possess as future graduates with bachelor degrees in Da'wah is central in the chapter 'Gauging English vocabulary for da'wah purposes: the clarifying phase'. As students may have good knowledge of Islam but yet are unable to communicate effectively in a second language such as English, the issue of lacking in the proper vocabulary in the Islamic subjects has become a challenge faced by many in the process of da'wah. The authors contextualised their argument with data collected pertaining to the amount of da'wah-related words that learners have by means of questionnaires that were distributed to 88 third year students from two faculties offering da'wah related courses. The questionnaire required the students to restate words or phrases from L1 (Bahasa Melayu) into L2 (English). The words and phrases are based on the Pillars of Faith in Islam (Rukun Iman) and the Five Pillars of Islam (Rukun Islam) as they are commonly used in the teaching of the basic Islamic way of life. The authors argue that the findings reveal that the learners' knowledge of da'wah related

vocabulary in English is diverse in terms of correct percentages but demonstrate an overall limited grasp of important da'wah related vocabulary in L2 that may jeopardize communication in their line of work as Da'is.

The subsequent chapter, 'Metacognitive strategy training: an investigation of student lecture listening development', discusses the findings of the effects of metacognitive strategy training on lecture listening comprehension abilities of undergraduate students in Malaysia. Specifically, the chapter investigates how learners who have undergone a metacognitive strategy training, utilize the learning strategies that they have acquired to assist them with their lecture comprehension. Instrumentation for the study involved the use of pre and post listening tests and semi-structured interviews of 34 first-year students from the Faculty of Education in a public university in Malaysia. The authors argue that results of the study indicated that learners who frequently use metacognitive strategies when listening to lectures in English scored higher in the post listening test. The authors also noted that learners benefitted from the instructions in listening and metacognitive strategies as these skills assisted them in their lecture comprehension and academic success.

The chapter on 'Professional-client/outsider interaction: Approaches to analyzing professional spoken language discourse at work' reviews the importance of studying spoken professional-client/outsider interaction in various professional settings, especially when designing English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The central of discussion of this chapter focuses on the literature on the professional-client/outsider spoken discourse and the possible discourse analysis approaches to analyze the particular discourse. Insights on the goals, conventions, discourse strategies and the key discursive features of professional-client/outsider interaction are also looked into followed by the review of several discourse analysis approaches that can be employed in the attempt to analyse a spoken discourse.

There are many tried-and-tested methods and techniques that help extend the language skills of students in ESL and EFL classes. The chapter entitled 'Role play as a speaking and listening tool:

considerations for Malaysian classrooms', describes and evaluates one of the techniques used in communicative language classes, namely 'role play'. The chapter begins with a general definition of role play before moving on to the different sub-types of role play and its related methods. This is followed by reviewing the uses of this technique in developing the speaking skill of students in upper secondary classrooms in Malaysia. Empirical evidence that supports the use of role play is also discussed. To further provide insights of role play as a language learning tool, the strengths and weaknesses of this technique are evaluated with reference to developing the speaking skills of these upper secondary students. This is supported with actual textbook examples of role play activities to consider the strengths and limitations of the technique within this given context. The chapter concludes by looking at the whole picture of role plays and tries to account for, and justify, its usage in the Malaysian secondary English language classroom with reference to developing the language skills of local students.

In chapter, 'Seeing red': Practicalities of correcting written work in the Malaysian (faux) ESL context', the author considers a critical issue that continues to be the bane of teaching writing to ESL (and EFL) students: correcting the writing(s) that these students produce. Whilst teaching the skill of writing is already difficult, correcting writing is even more complicated given the fact that any feedback given on this productive skill must be pedagogically useful and methodologically sound. As such, this chapter begins with a general consideration of the skill of writing and how it figures as part of the overall development of non-native learners of English in the Malaysian context. Then, the chapter considers a pertinent question with reference to the teaching of writing: should teachers provide written feedback all the time for the pieces of writing that their students produce? The idea is that once teachers provide their students with correct forms (for their writing), these students will quickly understand their mistakes and learn from those mistakes. As a result, we could imagine that there will be knock-on effect and their abilities to write will improve dramatically due to those corrections. Some teachers also feel that if they do nothing to correct

their students' written errors, the negative process of language fossilization might occur and it will be very difficult to remedy this in the future. The chapter closes by looking at other forms of feedback as opposed to overt 'red pen corrections' as productive alternatives for both teachers and learners in ESL writing classrooms.

Studies in second language acquisition (SLA) suggest that interaction plays a significant role in promoting and facilitating second language acquisition and it is argued that communication tasks play an important function. The chapter entitled, 'Tasks, Anyone?', attempts to examine the task types that may promote interaction in SLA. The chapter begins by providing the theoretical rationale that supports the use of tasks in language classrooms. This is followed by looking at the various task features. Finally, it discusses the different task types used in language learning in promoting interaction.

'The Anatomy of Projects' reviews the challenges of project-based learning (PBL) implemented in a second language learning/teaching context. Project-based learning (PBL) 'is a model that organizes learning around projects' (Thomas, 2000, p.1). Projects are defined as complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve learners in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give learners the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999). The authors also noted that, within a project-based approach, learners are usually provided with specifications for a desired end product, and the learning process is more oriented to following correct procedures, while teachers most of the time, act as instructors or coaches, providing expert guidance, feedback and suggestions for better ways to achieve the final product. At the heart of this chapter, the authors highlight the importance of having some common features/structures across the various implementations of project-based learning as outlined by Grant (2002): a) An introduction to the activity, b) A task, c) A process, d) Resources, d) Scaffolding and guidance, d) Cooperative/ Collaborative learning, and e)

Reflection. The chapter next reviews the benefits of PBL in second language learning; among them intrinsically motivating learners to learn, fostering problem-solving, and developing independent and cooperative working skills. The chapter ends with the authors highlighting the advantages of PBL reported in past studies, namely in allowing learners to develop critical thinking and decision making skills as well as to engage in in-depth learning of subject matter.

In the chapter, 'The effectiveness of Arabic as a Specific Purpose Course in enhancing Learners Arabic proficiency level: A Study on Arabic Professional and Technology Course', the authors argued that second/foreign language classrooms must also emphasise on teaching learners the relevant linguistic knowledge, registers and styles that are reflected in the context of professional and technology field. To this end, investigation on an Arabic language course, or 'The Arabic Language for Professional and Technology Course', that was offered to non- Arabic speakers was performed, to identify the effectiveness of such instruction in assisting language learners in terms of enriching their vocabulary and knowledge input as preparation to the actual professional setting, specifically that in the Arabic language context. The authors noted that learners' language learning processes were enhanced as learners were given the opportunity to play active roles in exploring the styles and terminologies of the Arabic language whilst they were assign to discuss the content of various authentic texts provided in their language classroom. According to the authors, findings from the questionnaire distributed also reveal that such course can act as a platform for learners to acquire sufficient terminologies as well as acts as a confidence booster in communicating aptly in the target language, as expected by the relevant job sectors. Moreover, this dynamically-designed course will undoubtedly provide credible employees who can give the best service and communicate effectively in the target language as demanded by the prospect employers.

The final chapter, 'Use of first language as a mediational tool in second language learning- A sociocultural perspective' focuses on how a first language (i.e. L1 Malay language) can act as a semiotic mechanism to help learners' learn understand the target language,

or more specifically in learning and acquiring the English tense-aspect system. Taking a Vygotskian view on language learning and teaching, the authors argue that the function plays by L1 in second language learning (L2) is two-fold; the first being the tool for communication, while the second acts as a cognitive tool to support in solving L2 linguistic tasks in the attempt to master the target L2 language. Discussion of the significant role of use of first language was drawn from 8 protocols obtained from 4 individual (self-explain) and 4 dyadic (collaborative) verbalization activities performed during a Concept Based Instruction (CBI) intervention session. The authors noted that the production of L1 that was manifested through learners' metalanguage during the CBI verbalization session, acts as a positive learning tool that assists learners to structure and organise thoughts in promoting a deeper understanding of the target grammatical concept (i.e. English tense-aspect system). Finally, with regard to the role and value of L1, the chapter concludes with the authors proposing the use of L1 in some aspects of second language learning activities in specifically enabling the learners to explore and gain insights of the relationship between form-meaning of the L2.

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This book is a joint effort to put forth ideas, studies, and research relevant to the teaching and learning field. The book covers a wide range of topics that include the learning problems that language learners face, to the various learning and teaching pedagogies that can be implemented in the Malaysian context. The issues discussed are fundamental as they not only can form as basis for understanding the theoretical issues in second and foreign language learning and teaching, but also insights and better understanding for language practitioners in making strategic decisions to develop better language learning tasks and material designs.

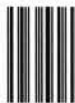
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ISBN 978-967-440-113-9



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