



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE EFFECTS OF NOTICING TRAINING ON MALAY ESL LEARNERS'
USE OF PAST TIME FORMS IN WRITING**

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By

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This study investigates the role of noticing in improving written accuracy. The noticing hypothesis focuses on the need to enhance learners' awareness of target language forms in order to convert input into intake and to subsequently internalise input as part of interlanguage. This study also takes into account the comprehensible output hypothesis that proposes that output can promote noticing as it encourages learners to become aware of the gap between their interlanguage and the target language usage. These concepts together with elements from the process approach to writing have been translated into three types of feedback techniques for ESL learners' written output. The techniques are Enhancement, Reformulation, and the Sequential technique. All three techniques function as a means of enhancing learners'



awareness of past time forms and are, therefore, form-focused in nature but do not involve explicit explanations of those target forms.

The study has adopted a mixed approach design that is both confirmatory and interpretative. A quasi-experiment that tested the effects of the instructional techniques involved 81 matriculation (post-secondary) students from three groups. Qualitative procedures included the collection of think aloud protocols which were administered to investigate learners' cognitive responses to the instructional techniques. A content analysis of written output identified the learners' patterns of past time form acquisition. An attitude survey gauged the learners' affective perceptions of instruction.

Respondents in the Enhancement group tended to produce non-metalingual responses during the think aloud procedure. On the other hand, the respondents from the Reformulation group produced more metalingual responses. Results suggest that noticing is influenced by the types of learner responses to the techniques. The analysis of the think aloud protocols and the essays of the Enhancement group indicate that the respondents may have corrected errors while responding to the treatment, but failed to do so in the subsequent essays. Similarly in the Reformulation group, awareness of why a form is corrected may not result in corrected forms in the second essay. In other words, correct responses to treatments do not necessarily ensure subsequent correct usage of the forms.

There is also evidence that the structural features of a target form influence the success of the form being noticed. The simple past form was easily noticed than the more complex present perfect form with its auxiliaries and past participles. Statistical results obtained through the applications of paired-samples *t* tests and ANCOVA suggest that all three instructional techniques were successful in enhancing noticing and in increasing learners' written accuracy. The learners who participated in the study perceived the instructional interventions favourably.

The study indicates that form-focused techniques should be incorporated as part of ESL course syllabuses and that the techniques should be included in writing courses. Instruction should also include output-based input that can authentically point out to ESL instructors individualised accuracy-related problems in their students' written work. The complex tense-aspect temporal references to the past is an area of the English language system that would need more focus at the post-secondary level.

This study has managed to further refine the concept of noticing in SLA. It shows that the types and effectiveness of noticing are influenced by the nature of input, stimuli, selection of target forms and learner backgrounds. Noticing is, indeed, an important process in an ESL learner's journey to acquire linguistic items. Instructional interventions that try to enhance

noticing in relation to written accuracy should effectively help students as they continue to develop their interlanguage.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN LATIHAN PEMERHATIAN KE ATAS PENGGUNAAN BERTULIS
RUJUKAN KE MASA LEPAS PELAJAR-PELAJAR MELAYU YANG
MEMPELAJARI BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA**

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Kajian ini ialah suatu penyelidikan ke atas peranan pemerhatian dalam meningkatkan ketepatan nahu dalam penulisan. Hipotesis pemerhatian bertumpu kepada keperluan untuk meningkatkan perhatian pelajar ke atas sesuatu nahu terpilih dalam menukarkan input kepada output dan seterusnya menyerapkan input sebagai sebahagian dari bahasa yang sedang di pelajari. Kajian ini juga mengengahkan hipotesis output yang difahami yang mencadangkan bahawa hasil penulisan dapat meningkatkan pemerhatian kerana ia menggalakkan pelajar supaya sedar akan perbezaan di antara penggunaan bahasa mereka sebagai pelajar sesuatu bahasa dengan penggunaan bahasa tersebut yang sebenar. Konsep-konsep dan beberapa

elemen dari pendekatan penulisan cara proses telah di terjemahkan kepada tiga jenis teknik pembetulan hasil penulisan pelajar-pelajar yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Teknik-teknik tersebut ialah Peningkatan Visual, Penulisan Semula dan Rangkaian. Ketiga-tiga teknik berfungsi untuk meningkatkan pemerhatian pelajar-pelajar kepada cara merujuk ke masa lepas. Teknik-teknik tersebut menumpu kepada sesuatu bentuk nahu tetapi tidak menjelaskannya secara eksplisit.

Rekabentuk kajian ini bersifat campuran. Suatu eksperimen kuasi menguji keberkesanan teknik-teknik pembelajaran yang dilalui oleh 81 pelajar pusat matrikulasi dari tiga kumpulan. Kaedah kualitatif yang digunakan termasuk pengumpulan laporan secara lisan yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui respon pelajar-pelajar terhadap teknik-teknik pembelajaran. Analisis hasil penulisan dilakukan untuk menentukan struktur-struktur nahu yang dipelajari oleh pelajar. Satu kajiselidik dibuat untuk mengetahui sikap pelajar terhadap teknik-teknik pembelajaran.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pemerhatian ke atas nahu dipengaruhi oleh jenis-jenis respon pelajar terhadap teknik-teknik pembelajaran. Analisa protokol prosedur berfikir secara kuat dan esei kumpulan Visual menunjukkan bahawa responden mungkin membetulkan kesalahan nahu semasa melalui teknik tersebut tetapi mungkin gagal membetulkannya di dalam esei. Ini juga terjadi dalam kumpulan Penulisan Semula di mana pemerhatian ke atas sebab

sesuatu kesalahan dibetulkan tidak bermaksud penggunaan yang betul di dalam esei. Dalam lain kata, respon yang tepat kepada teknik tidak semestinya membuahkan kegunaan nahu yang betul di penggunaan seterusnya.

Terdapat bukti yang menunjukkan bahawa struktur komponen-komponen nahu yang dipelajari mempengaruhi kejayaan pelajar mempelajarinya. Keputusan ujian statistik yang didapati dari ujian t bersandar dan ujian ANCOVA memberi kesimpulan bahawa ketiga-tiga teknik pembelajaran berkesan dalam meningkatkan pemerhatian dan menambahkan ketepatan penggunaan nahu dalam penulisan. Pelajar-pelajar yang terlibat juga berpandangan positif terhadap teknik-teknik tersebut.

Kajian ini menunjukkan kaedah penumpuan terhadap nahu yang menitik-beratkan pemerhatian patut di gabungkan dalam sukatan pelajaran dan teknik-teknik yang sudah diuji perlu diterapkan dalam program pembelajaran penulisan. Langkah-langkah perlu juga diambil untuk memanfaatkan hasil penulisan yang boleh dijadikan input pembelajaran. Input ini dapat menunjukkan kepada tenaga pengajar Bahasa Inggeris kelemahan tersendiri seseorang pelajar terutamanya dalam penulisan. Cara merujuk kepada masa lepas adalah satu bahagian kompleks nahu bahasa Inggeris yang memerlukan tumpuan di peringkat pembelajaran lepasan sekolah menengah.

Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa konsep pemerhatian boleh diperjelaskan lagi. Jenis dan keberkesanan pemerhatian bergantung kepada input, stimuli, struktur nahu yang terpilih dan latarbelakang pelajar. Pemerhatian sememangnya proses yang penting dalam usaha pelajar-pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua mempelajari nahu bahasa tersebut. Kaedah pembelajaran yang cuba meningkatkan proses penumpuan dalam penulisan dapat menolong pelajar-pelajar memantapkan penguasaan bahasa mereka.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

MASKANAH MOHAMMAD LOTFIE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
CELPAD	Centre for Languages and Pre-university Academic Development
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EPT	English Placement Test
ESL	English as a Second Language
GJT	Grammaticality Judgment Test
IIUM	International Islamic University, Malaysia
KUSZA	Kolej Ugama Sultan Zainal Abidin
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
UiTM	Universiti Teknologi MARA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Academic writing is a productive skill that is especially crucial at the tertiary level. At Malaysian institutions where English is the medium of instruction, not only does a student need to write convincingly but he also has to do so effectively. This would mean writing with some sound knowledge of the content area, as well as ensuring the coherence of ideas and accuracy of grammatical structures. That the latter is of great importance is succinctly pointed out by Muncie (2002, p. 183) who mentions that "grammar is just as important an instrument of communication as content, and a text cannot be written cohesively without attention being paid to how meaning is being expressed through the grammar." Similarly, Ferris (2002) asserts that students' morphological and syntactic accuracy is important because inaccuracy may interfere with the comprehensibility of their written message. Ensuring grammatical accuracy is therefore an exceptionally important element of academic writing as it facilitates successful communication.

Contemporary second language writing theorists such as Grabe and Kaplan (1996), Krapels (1990), Kroll (2001), and Matsuda (2003) point out that a substantial number of studies on English as a second language (ESL) writing

