Editorial

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We are pleased to present GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies Volume 13 (1); our first issue for year 2013. This volume brings together 12 interesting papers on research in linguistics, teaching and learning English as a second/ foreign language (ESL/EFL) and foreign language teaching and learning, from Malaysia, Iran, Indonesia and China. A quote by Brown, "the power of human thought grows exponentially with the number of minds that share that thought", clearly espouses the virtue of sharing knowledge as shown in the compilation of articles in this volume.

Two papers in this volume offer insight into the field of pragmatics. Kuang Ching Hei, Maya Khemlani David and Lau Su Kia in their paper on *Politeness of Front Counter Staff of Malaysian Private Hospitals* examine the public domain involving transactions of front counter staff and patients in nine Malaysian private hospitals. Observations of the front counter transactions was analysed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of politeness and the Malaysian concept of good manners such as greeting and thanking. The results indicate that the frequency of politeness from the front counter staff, in the form of respectful openings, was rather small in comparison to impolite openings. However, more polite closings were found at the end of the transactions. Although the study has its limitation, the researchers argue that their study indicate the need for professional communication skills to be taught and implemented in the service industries.

Compliments and Compliment Responses in Philippine English is an attempt to fill the gap in studies on compliments in Philippine English. Zhang Jin-Pei highlights the tendency of the Phillipine English speakers to use explicit compliments, in addition to a bound semantic formula, when they offer and receive compliments. Compliments in Philippine English are also as formulaic at syntactic and lexical levels as other varieties of English. The writer also claims that Filipinos are more likely to accept the compliment, rather than reject it.

Three papers in this volume address the issue of linguistics in Bahasa Melayu. A paper on syntax entitled *Sintaksis Kata Tanya 'Sapa' dalam Dialek Kedah* by Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan and Nurulafiqah Suhaimi attempts to fill the gap in studies on the syntax of dialects. The paper examines the characteristics and syntactic structure of the Kedah dialect, by focusing on the wh-question word *'sapa'*. Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program framework was employed for data analysis. The findings show that this particular wh-question word occupies two positions; the final position or *in-situ* and the initial position or movement.

Rusmadi Baharudin, Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin and Imran Ho-Abdullah in *Sumbangan FrameNet kepada Leksikografi Korpus: Kajian Kes Penyelisikan Makna Kata Kerja Melihat* highlight the importance of corpus analysis as a tool in language research. FrameNet, an on-line lexical resource, which is based on the theory of Frame Semantics was utilized in the study to analyse meanings of words and to improve the

writing of a new entry for a Malay dictionary project. The findings offers a revision of the entry for the word *melihat*; found in the fourth edition of *Kamus Dewan*. The writers conclude that FrameNet database provides immense potential to studies on dictionary compilation and semantic description of dictionary entry.

Haiwan Sebagai Perlambangan Dalam Peribahasa Orang Semai by Saidatul Nornis and Mohd Rasdi Saamah employed Dell Hymes's (1972) ethnographic framework that focuses on situation, application, structure and activity function in their analysis of how the Semai people use elements of animals in their proverbs. The inclusion of animalistic elements in the proverbs implies that the values and norms of the Semai tribes are derived from and based on the environment, which they perceive as the best teacher. The writers argue that this study provides a better understanding of the Semai people and helps bridge the sociocultural gap among ethnic groups in Malaysia.

The next four articles explore topics in teaching and learning English (ESL/EFL) and language teaching in general. Juliana Othman and Abu Bakar Nordin's *MUET As A Predictor Of Academic Achievement In ESL Teacher Education* seek to examine whether MUET is an accurate predictor of academic performance. In seeking to determine the relationship between language proficiency as measured by MUET and the academic performance of the respondents, the findings reveal that there are a number of factors other than language proficiency that could contribute to students' academic achievement. This paper provides insightful findings which has implications that account for students' academic performance and their admission to Malaysian institute of higher education.

A Case Study of Tertiary Learners' Capability in Lexical Knowledge by Naginder Kaur examines nine learners' word mastery level in order to find out if they have sufficient vocabulary knowledge before they enrolled for a degree program. The learners' English proficiency level is categorized as high, average and low. The findings reveal that the learners' word mastery level is only between 1,000 and 3,000 words, which is far below the minimum level required for tertiary education. The findings indicate that urgent measures such as vocabulary learning program in the Malaysian English language curriculum, must be taken in order to redeem the situation. In addition, it would also help improve Malaysian ESL's learners lexical competence, in particular.

In *Effects Of Bilingualism On L3 Vocabulary Learning Among Iranian EFL Learners*, Mostafa Zare and Sajad Davoudi Mobarakeh did a comparative study on language learning between Arabic-Persian bilinguals (APBs) who are learning English as their third language versus Persian monolinguals (PMs), who are learning English as their second language. The writers found that bilinguals take advantage of knowing two languages in learning a third language, while the monolinguals are handicapped because they only have their first language to refer to. The writers claim that the findings are significant to educators who are involved in teaching and assessing bilingual and/ or multilingual students.

Syofia Ulfah, Zamri Mahamod and Jamaludin Badusah in their paper on *Kemahiran Komunikasi Interpersonal Ekspresif: Mencipta Guru Bahasa Indonesia Yang Penyayang* investigate how a group of Indonesian teachers' used Expressive Interpersonal Communication Skills (TEICS) in the teaching-learning process. The findings show that the teachers employed both positive and negative types of TEICS in their lessons, which affect students' attitude and motivation in learning. They suggest that

teachers' should employ positive TEICS to help students improve their learning; cognitively and affectively.

Papers on foreign language teaching and learning investigate language issues in Arabic and French. Nik Hanan Mustapha, Nik Farhan Mustapha, Nadwah Daud and Mahmud Abd Wahab in *Arabic Language Efficacy Questionnaire (ALEQ): Assessing Self-Efficacy and Achievement* attempt to measure self-efficacy in Arabic language learning. The study is driven by the claim that research on self-efficacy in Arabic language learning is lacking. A multi dimensional instrument named Arabic Language Efficacy Questionnaire (ALEQ) was designed to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and Arabic language achievement. The writers assert that the instrument can contribute significantly to establishing students' self-efficacy and achievement, which has practical impact on the teaching and learning of Arabic language.

Analisis Kesilapan Dan Strategi Pembelajaran Gender Gramatikal Bahasa Perancis by Hazlina Abdul Halim analyses the acquisition of French grammatical gender and learning strategies employed by a group of university students in learning French as a foreign language. The study also examines the learners' level of sensitivity in their application of French grammatical gender. The findings reveal three types of errors; misselection, omission and addition of errors which were caused by the learners' insensitivity and misunderstanding of the grammatical gender and its application. In addition, three types of strategies were used by the learners in the process of acquiring the French grammatical gender. The article ends with suggestions for the teaching and learning of French, specifically on the acquisition of grammatical gender.

The final paper in this volume looks into the issue of language among the Japanese. Siti Hamin Stapa, Natsue Hieda, Normalis Amzah and Musaev Talaibek in *Malaysia My Second Home: Isu Bahasa Dalam Kalangan Peserta Jepun* investigate language issues faced by the Japanese participants of Malaysia My Second Home Programme (MM2H). Findings about language use reveal that the participants use more English than Malay, due to the fact that they have more experience learning English rather than Malay. Although they do not interact much with the locals, they could live in Malaysia as they have a strong support system. The writers suggest that if the respondents have more opportunity to interact with the locals, they will have more positive outlook of Malaysia, and hence, potential for this program to succeed is greater.

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