

Editorial

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We are pleased to present GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies's volume 14(1), 2014, in which 12 academic papers on theories and issues situated in the area of English language teaching and learning, teaching and learning in foreign languages, applied linguistics and linguistics have been put together in this volume.

The papers on teaching and learning in English language explored topics on writing, application of technology in learning English and vocabulary acquisition.

Writing is known as a straight forward act of saying what the writer means, the mental struggles the writer goes through, and the interpretations readers make (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Although the importance of writing is highly emphasized by ESL scholars, educators and instructors, most ESL tertiary students and young graduates find the process of creating a coherent and extended piece of writing difficult and challenging. Shokoufeh Ansarimoghaddam and Tan Bee Hoon in their study, *Undergraduates' Experiences and Attitudes of Writing in L1 and English* discover that there is a need to be aware of the students' experiences and attitudes to writing in their first language and English language. The quasi-experimental study employed a mixed-method approach, in which 30 tertiary ESL students who were enrolled in an obligatory course in the first year of Bachelor of Arts (English) programme participated. The study compares students' writing experiences and attitudes. Results suggest that students mostly prefer using English language for various writing activities. The analysis of the interviews revealed that most students like to write in general. Those who do not like to write gave various reasons for such attitude. However, findings obtained from the questionnaire analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the students' writing attitudes in their first language and English language. The writers conclude that findings obtained from the study can be used to help improve the students' attitude towards writing skills in English.

Web 2.0 popular platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Wikis offer an emerging social networking practice, collective intelligence and a natural context to promote learner independence language learning. In fact, there is a growing body of research evidence showing the importance of educators adopting Web 2.0 tools in teaching and learning process. Che Wan Ida Rahimah Che Wan Ibrahim, Vaughan Prain and Penelope Collet presents a study which investigates *Perceived Learning Strategies of Malaysian University Students in Web 2.0-based English as a Second Language Informal Learning*. The study considers how ESL learners account for the strategies of Web 2.0-based ESL learning when they engage with these tools in informal learning settings. An online self-reported survey involving 400 students was employed for data collection. The findings suggest that majority of ESL learners who are Malaysian university students, use learning strategies with Web 2.0 tools for their English language informal learning. Apparently, these tools also provide

valuable lifelong learning experiences. The students reported that they also seek help from their peers and their own independent research, using web 2.0 tools which enabled them to practice in communicative language learning environments outside of the classroom in a more relaxed atmosphere. The writers opine that the Web 2.0-based learning environment provides students with more opportunity and flexibility to work with peers and thus promotes students' personal learning. The writers conclude that there is potential for Web 2.0 tools to be employed as tools in informal learning contexts whereby students can benefit from individual and social learning strategies. The paper ends with suggestion for curriculum designers and educational technology systems developers to design web-based learning system that is most suitable for 21st century language learners.

Studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition research has verified the assumption that exposure to reading texts can contribute to second language (L2) and also first language (L1) vocabulary growth. An exploratory study on *The Effect of Exposure Frequency on Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition* by Mohammad Ali Heidari-Shahreza, Ahmad Moinzadeh and Hossein Barati reported that incidental exposure to L2 words through reading passages might be conducive to vocabulary acquisition and retention. The results showed that as the number of encounters to L2 target words increased, the learners were more successful in acquiring different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. The writers concluded that the effect of exposure frequency was significant in both the immediate and delayed post-test for all aspects of vocabulary knowledge, particularly when the amount of vocabulary exposure increased from one to seven. Nevertheless, the scores obtained from the seven subtests suggest that the effect of exposure frequency may vary for different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the scores on the semantic subtests revealed that increasing the number of exposure frequency could mostly affect the receptive knowledge of meaning and form as well as productive knowledge of associations. The writers recommend that English language teachers apply knowledge of incidental vocabulary acquisition within the perspective of a longitudinal, intensive and systematic vocabulary recycling because it will have effect on reinforcing learners' vocabulary knowledge.

It is undeniable that the content of a course must be pertinent to the current learning environment of the students. Therefore, needs analysis is used as a device to explore the learners' necessities, needs and lacks in order to develop courses and textbooks that are in accordance with students' requirements. However, Iranian students' real needs and wants in learning English have mostly been ignored at different levels of education (Pourshahian et al., 2012). Therefore, Marjan Moivaziri in *Students' Voice: A Needs Analysis of University General English Course in Iran* investigates the perceived English language needs of students in University General English course in Iran. Although the three-credit compulsory course is offered to all non-English majors, there is no specific syllabus proposed by the Ministry of Education. As a result, different teachers select dissimilar syllabuses, methods and textbooks based on their own beliefs and experiences without much consideration to the students' real needs and wants. In order to identify students' views toward what they need to learn, their preferred learning styles, and their attitudes, motivation and interest toward learning English, a needs analysis study was conducted. The findings show that the students consider vocabulary as the most important component of the language, while grammar is the least preferred. In addition, they also perceive reading as the most important skill. Listening and speaking skill, on the other hand, are considered as their most problematic skills. The writer concludes that although students have the necessary attitude and motivation to learn English as a foreign language, their needs and wants, unfortunately, have not been considered properly by the authorities, curriculum designers and even their teachers. It is hoped that studies of this kind can help provide input for implementing worthwhile changes in the system of education in Iran in order to help students reach a higher level of enjoyment and

benefit more from the time that they spend in their English classes which would eventually lead to an effective teaching and learning environment.

Mi Soon Kim and Hyun Jung Kim in *Investigating Chinese Language Learners' Reading Comprehension for Different Meaning Types* conducted a study to examine reading test performance of Chinese learners with various reading ability levels. The writers define reading ability based on a meaning-based model that included three layers of reading comprehension: literal, intended, and implied meanings of a reading text. A total of 248 Korean university students were divided into three levels, and their test performances were analyzed and compared for the three meaning types using structural equation modeling and regression analysis. The reading texts were taken from texts found in the Chinese Language Proficiency Test Syllabus. The test performance structure represented the theoretical model, and the items in the test measured literal, intended and implied meaning. Data analysis based on group comparisons revealed different performance patterns across beginner, intermediate and advanced examinee groups. Lower-level examinees' reading performance largely depended on literal meaning items, while higher-level examinees exhibited a more balanced understanding of literal, intended, and implied meaning from the text. Therefore, it is evident that the three groups were not equivalent with respect to their ability to comprehend literal, intended, and implied meaning. The writers conclude that more studies need to be conducted in countries where Chinese is taught as a second or foreign language for there is lack of data on this, particularly on Chinese students' reading ability tests.

Although teacher personality can affect student learning outcomes via the psychological environment of the classroom (Tonelson, 1981), the effects of teacher characteristics on student communication proficiency in the context of English as foreign language (EFL) learning have not received adequate attention among scholars. The paper by Nik Mohd Hazrul Nik Hashim, Syed Shah Alam and Norazlina Mohd Yusoff on *Relationship between Teacher's Personality, Monitoring, Learning Environment, and Students' EFL Performance* explores whether teacher's characteristics and environmental learning factors influence students' overall communication proficiency. Drawing on socio cultural theory, the writers assume that EFL learning is bi-directional in nature. In addition to conceptualizing the direct impact of domain-specific determinants of communication proficiency, internal classroom conditions and external college facilities were also assessed for possible moderating effects. 400 college students from 12 Institut Kemahiran Mara (IKM) campuses in Malaysia participated in the study. A regression analysis was carried out to empirically test the proposed research hypotheses. The findings reveal that all constructs in the questionnaire demonstrated low levels of multicollinearity and measurement scales indicated sufficient reliability and validity. This suggests that teacher's personality is an important determinant of student proficiency in English. Monitoring efforts, however, did not have a direct influence on English proficiency. Nevertheless when monitoring efforts is combined with teacher's personality and college facilities, the coefficient interaction effects became significant. The results also reveal that although classroom conditions do not interact with teacher's personality in improving student learning outcomes, nonetheless, it predominantly acts as a predictor that directly enhances students' learning. This study has established that teachers play a significant role in students' learning and intellectual development.

The next two papers present studies in the teaching of foreign languages to ESL learners at tertiary level, namely Arabic and Japanese language. In *Permasalahan Pertuturan dalam Bahasa Arab sebagai Bahasa Kedua* by Nadwah Daud and Nadhilah Abdul Pital report on the communication skill of students who are enrolled in Arabic Language speaking skill course at the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). The course is offered to students who major in Islamic Studies and Arabic Language only. Results based on the students' participation in three speaking tasks: acting out situations, retelling and

sharing of experiences showed that the students were unable to perform well. Their language difficulty is the main factor which hindered the students' ability in the oral communication activities. In addition, the students had more problems when they had to perform individual tasks because they need to be independent. Furthermore, lack of vocabulary may also disrupt the fluency of speech during presentation. The writers suggest that teachers should incorporate learning activities in groups, which focuses on vocabulary usage as well as expanding the usage of vocabularies. At the same time, communication in Arabic within each group should be promoted while performing such activities because assistance from their peers help students to overcome their language problems.

Natsue Hieda and Maserah Shabudin in their paper entitled *Sikap Mahasiswa Malaysia Terhadap Bahasa Jepun: Satu Kajian Kes* investigate the attitude of students who are learning Japanese at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Data was collected using a set of questionnaire, in which seven types of attitudes and their relations based on the socio-educational model presented by Gardner (2001) were examined. The findings show positive attitudes towards Japanese language because of the closer social distance as well as the positive ethno cultural stereotypes. Positive attitudes towards international society and good perceptions towards Japanese community made integrative orientation more positive than instrumental orientation. Both integrative and instrumental orientations are closely connected with attitudes towards learning Japanese. When comparisons are made between integrative and instrumental orientations, significant differences are found based on gender and race. However, there was no significant difference with regard to which faculties the students are enrolled in. Furthermore, female students show more positive integrative orientation because they are willing to communicate in Japanese and they also have deep interest in Japanese traditional culture. Where race is concerned, Chinese students have more positive attitudes towards the characteristics of Japanese language due to the similarities in the Japanese language with their mother tongue. Malay students show more positive attitude in both integrative and instrumental orientations because they tend to explore the new world and believe in the benefit of Japanese language proficiency. The writers believe that the students in this study show positive attitudes towards Japanese language and are motivated to learn Japanese.

The issues addressed in the field of Applied Linguistics in this volume concern discourse analysis. Studies have established that the creative use of language in advertising makes it a particularly rich site for language and discourse analysis (Cook, 2008). Paramaswari Jaganathan, Siti Waltraud Mayr and Florence Kannu Nagaratnam examine how advertising language plays a powerful role in the branding of automobiles and sustaining its customer's loyalty. Their study on *Rhetorical Syllogism in the English and the German Language of Automobile Advertising* aims to identify the arguments used in advertisements; particularly on its claims, warrants and data which influence the automobile buyers in a diverse international market. The rhetorical devices and language equivalence used in the English and German print advertisements were analysed. A contrastive analysis of three cars' print advertisements, namely Mercedes Benz, BMW and Volkswagen from the German and Malaysian English dailies was carried out using Toulmin's model to identify the arguments and the rhetorical devices employed in the advertisements. The study reveals two main similarities, particularly in the arguments put forth as well as the stylistic approach of the advertisements. BMW and Mercedes Benz focus on their technological superiority and advancements, while Volkswagen focuses on its affordability. The German adverts were more persuasive and directed the buyers for action. The English adverts, on the other hand, provided more data and warrants. BMW adverts also utilised a closed form compound adjectives such as "ConnectedDrive" to sustain the "hybrid concept" stylistic in line with the contemporary automobile advancement that focuses on hybrid cars. Where the use of

figurative language is concerned, it was more prevalent in the English adverts compared to the German adverts in order to portray its internationalisation status of the car. These elements contribute to the pedagogical implications of teaching and learning foreign language; particularly for diverse writing purposes as well as planning business language for the different genres.

Discursive Legitimation of Human Values: Local-global Power Relations in Global Media Discourse by Abduljalil Nasr Hazaea, Noraini Ibrahim and Nor Fariza Mohd Nor investigates the power relations between local identities and global identities over the discursive legitimation of human values in global media discourse. Data was collected from the Yemen Times (YT), which is the most circulated English-language newspaper in Yemen. The Yemen Times is considered as the voice of Yemen to the world through the use of the English language. With the notion of English and globalization, the newspaper published discourses for maxims in the context of *Improve Your English* series produced by a non-local journalist. A maxim is extended in the form of an argumentative paragraph that contextualizes a single value. 152 maxims were collected and analysed, based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. The analysis focused on the concept of globalization, discourse, power and ideology. The study adopts these concepts to show how the processes of globalization are ideological choices that serve the interest of global agency. The discourse analysis reveals that local identities were suppressed or backgrounded in the texts, while global identities dominated the texts. These global identities were manifested in the form of global literary discourse, global political discourse, global religious discourse, global philosophical discourse and global anonymous discourse. The writers conclude that the exclusion of local identities shows that human values were employed in intercultural communication to serve the interest of global hegemony.

The final paper on discourse analysis by Idris Aman, Norsimah Mat Awal and Mohammad Fadzeli Jaafar entitled *Strategi Wacana Teks Akademik Sains dan Teknologi* analyses the discourse strategy of science and technology (S&T) academic texts, which is written in Malay language. These academic texts were published in high impact and indexed journal. This study analysed the Introduction section only because the Introduction section is considered a very important section of the text where the writers place the track and direction of their writing. The S&T academic discourse was analysed based on two dimensions; namely the discursive properties and textual features. Discursive analysis interprets the property of the text by means of intertextuality and content. Meanwhile, textual analysis describes the features of the text, namely type of process employed in sentences, pre-sentence adverbial type, type of sentences, and Theme type. The analysis reveal that the strategy adopted included issue and objective of the study, intertextuality of stagnant paraphrase technique and situational, and point of view of pre-sentence adverbials phrase, prioritizing action process, and simple and marked theme sentences. The writers opine that the identification and explanation of the strategy provides an insight into the academic genre of S&T texts. This findings can also contribute to understand how the number of academic text published in high impact journal in the medium of the national language can be increased.

The final paper on linguistic issue by Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, Mariati Mokhtar and Zaharani Ahmad, entitled *Imej Wanita dalam Undang-Undang Melaka: Pembuktian Linguistik* examines the text on Melaka's law or Undang-Undang Melaka (UUM). This text is widely referred to by other Malay states in constructing their traditional rule of laws. It discusses criminal, commerce and family laws, including the position of women. This study attempts to explore the positioning of women in traditional law established in UUM (2003). The study managed to identify two typologies of women, which is derived from the Quran and Hadith. The two typologies are: 'women are from the ribs of man', and 'women's witness is half of a man's witness'. The marriage relationship – divorce or sustenance of

marriage due to illnesses as well as the witness status for men and women are also analyzed. The analysis of the text shows that the status of men in becoming a witness is more dominant as compared to women. The findings also show that the position of women is best described with cognitive mechanism, namely the image schema and conceptual metaphor. The image schema produced for these two typologies is the image schema PART-WHOLE. The analysis also proves the intellectual of Malays in outlining the laws. The writers suggest that the linguistic analysis on women has further uncovered the superiority of UUM and simultaneously enhances the corpus as a research data.

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