

Editorial

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Volume 11, Issue 3, September 2011 comprises a combination of research papers organized into four sections. The papers largely fall in the areas of linguistics, applied linguistics, language and Information Communication Technology (ICT) and more specifically, in areas of research relevant to phonology, proverbs, discourse analysis, strategy studies, perception studies, and others discussing the findings of research in testing, educational psychology and writing in the workplace. This issue provides a diversified coverage of disciplines in language studies and its related fields.

The first section presents three interesting papers in linguistics by Zaharani Ahmad et al., Zaitul Azma and Ahmad Fuad, Khazriyati Sallehuddin and Heather Winskel.

Zaharani Ahmad, Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin and Shariffulizan Malek's *Fonologi Rangkap Vokal dan Kepelbagaian Dialek Melayu: Analisis Teori Optimaliti* is a study of data derived from the four major dialects of Malay. The phonological analysis proposed in this study is set within the constraint-based approach of optimality theory (Prince & Smolensky, 2004; McCarthy, 2008). An analysis of the vowel sequences in the Johor dialect, Kedah dialect, Perak dialect and Kelantan dialect reveal that each dialect employs different strategy in resolving the sequences, which consequently gives forth to dialectal variation in the Malay language.

Zaitul Azma and Ahmad Fuad identify the relationship of language and thought in the Malay proverbs using Sapir Whorf hypothesis. Data were collected from varied sources ranging from Kitab Kiliran Budi, Dictionary of Special Malay Proverb, 1001 Malay Proverbs, to SPM Proverbs. The analysis reveals that Malay proverbs have five aspects that encompass the philosophical categories of existence (metaphysics), thinking about knowledge (epistemology), of human morality (ethics), of universal human reasoning (logic), and of beauty (aesthetics). This reflects the creativity and the higher order of thinking that Malays have in the formulation of Malay proverbs, particularly when using the environment and nature as its basis.

Khazriyati Salehuddin and Heather Winskel in their paper *Object Categorisation Using Malay Shape-based Numeral Classifiers* investigate the strategies children utilise in categorising objects into eight Malay shape-based numeral classifier categories using a paired discrimination task. Results show that children categorised objects more readily

when there was a strong (two-perceptual feature distinction) than weak (one-perceptual feature distinction) contrast, and when exemplars were typical rather than atypical.

The following section of the volume presents the contributions of Hiba Qusay et al., Surapa and Channarong, and Anna Antonova.

The data analyzed by Hiba Qusay, Salasiah Che Lah and Raja Rozina came from the speech act of refusals used by Malay university students in Malaysia. The data were analyzed using semantic formulas and categorized according to the refusal taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). Findings show that the preferred formulas used in refusing requests are regret or saying 'sorry', and giving excuses or explanations. These semantic formulas have roots in the Malay culture in the participants' realizations of refusals in English.

Surapa and Channarong's *Strategies for Coping with Face-to-face Oral Communication Problems Employed by Thai University Students Majoring in English* is an exploratory study aimed at investigating how students from three different Rajamangala Universities of Technology in Thailand cope with face-to-face oral communication problems. Findings were reported in the form of two groups of strategies employed in conveying a message to the interlocutor as the message sender and the second, as the message receiver.

In a discourse analysis of pre-election speeches of British political leaders of Great Britain, Anna Antonova looked at manipulation of texts to actualize empathy and compassion in political discourse. The manipulative speeches by the producers were analyzed using intentional analysis. Stylistic means and vocabulary used were examined as well. The analysis illustrates that the most frequently used linguistic means of the realization of the manipulating strategy are nominating lexemes, associative lexemes and stylistic means. The results demonstrate that ethological data are able to assist researchers in understanding the mechanisms of linguistic manipulation in British political discourse.

The third section is drawn from a variety of background and covers a range of issues related to teaching and learning via ICT. Chong Moi Lian, Tan Bee Hoon and Marzipan Hayati Abdullah in *Wiki for Co-writing a Science Dictionary* examine the perceptions of secondary school students using Wiki and its impact on collaborative writing. The finding reflects that the Wiki-science dictionary is a success because the students valued the Wiki project as interesting and their command in English had improved. Thus, collaborative writing using Wiki for knowledge-building and learning is an authentic activity for students of ESL. This is in line with the findings by Kessler (2009) who found that his non-native speaker subjects tended to pay attention to language accuracy in a Wiki-based collaborative writing project.

The conversion of computer games into learning tools has also revolutionized learning as investigated by Muhammad Sabri Sahrir and Nor Aziah Alias in *A Study on Malaysian Language Learners' Perception towards Learning Arabic via Online Games*. The findings contribute towards structuring a design and development framework of an edutainment games prototype in language learning. A majority of the students had a positive perception towards using online educational computer games in enhancing their

attitude and motivation towards learning Arabic. In addition, the study has shown high levels of needs and expectations towards the use of online games as a multimedia application in the classroom.

Antoon De Rycker and Prema Ponnudurai in *The Effect of Online Reading on Argumentative Essay Writing Quality* explore the impact of interactive online reading versus traditional print reading, on the quality of student essay writing. The results indicate that the interactive online reading condition yields superior task performance and that it also produces proportionately more essays with a 'good' thesis statement. According to Punie et al. (2006), there is evidence that ICT has a positive effect on educational achievement in the context of formal education. Thus, this study shows that interactive online engagement with words and images caters to the needs of young students in Malaysia and leads to desirable outcomes.

Zamri Mahamod and Nur Aisyah Mohamad Noor are concerned with the *Teachers' Perception towards the Usage of Multimedia Application in the Malay Language Literature Components*. Their findings indicate that the multimedia application can assist in the process of teaching in the classroom to be more flexible and effective. Furthermore, the multimedia software can be manipulated in order to diversify the teachers' teaching methods in order to attract the students and enhance their motivation towards literature subject.

In the last section, Noor Lide Abu Kassim, is concerned with *Judging Behaviour and Rater Errors: An Application of the Many-facet Rasch Model*. In her article, she explains the different types of rater errors and illustrates how they can be identified using the Many-facet Rasch Model, as implemented by FACETS. It also demonstrates what these errors mean in terms of actual judging or rating behaviour and illustrates how they may affect the accuracy of estimation of performance.

Moving on to using attribution theory by Setsuko Mori, Thang Siew Ming, Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, Vijaya Latshmi Suppiah and Oon Sok Imm in *Attribution Tendency and Its Relationship with Actual and Perceived Proficiency*, the authors examine Malaysian university students' attributions for success and failure in learning English as a second language (ESL). The findings showed that high proficiency learners attributed success to their own effort and ability more than mid- and low-proficiency learners. The findings have implications that may help teachers improve classroom dynamics in Malaysian universities. Since students of higher proficiency are more confident in their own abilities, teachers should allow them greater autonomy and give them more tasks that they can attempt at home. As for less proficient students and those who perceived themselves to be of lower proficiency, they should be given more attention and guidance.

Finally, Nur Ehsan Mohd Said and Saadiyah Darus examine the *Workplace Writing in English: Insights from Malaysian Bank Managers*. In this study, a series of interviews with three local commercial bank managers was conducted to describe workplace writing among Malaysian bank executives as writers of ESL. Across the three banks, workplace writing is quite similar in terms of the genre of documents produced, the way in which writing is performed, and the unavailability of assistance with regard to such writing. In

addition, the findings also suggested the need for a writing software program tailored for ESL writers in Malaysia which is related to the study done by Tg Nor Rizan Tg Mohd Maasum et al. (2007).

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