L1 MEDIATION IN L2 WRITING WITHIN GROUPS OF LOW-PROFICIENT STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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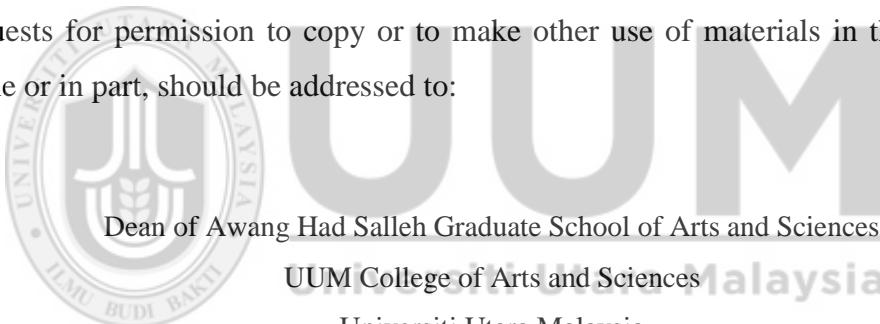
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Abstrak

Penggunaan Bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa pertama (L1) semasa mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (L2) dalam kalangan pelajar berpencapaian rendah dalam Bahasa Inggeris di tahap pendidikan tinggi sentiasa diperdebatkan sekian tahun. Kajian lepas yang kebanyakannya menggunakan strategi kuantitatif, secara amnya menunjukkan kecenderungan positif dalam kalangan pelajar semasa menyiapkan kerja secara individu. Namun, terdapat keperluan untuk mengkaji secara kualitatif bagaimana bahasa pertama dapat membantu pembelajaran bahasa kedua sebagai satu pendekatan alternatif kepada pembelajaran bahasa dalam kalangan pelajar tersebut. Kajian kes kualitatif ini menggunakan teori Sosiobudaya (SCT) sebagai kerangka teori utama, di mana interaksi dilihat sebagai input yang mencetuskan proses pengantaraan terhadap fungsi pemikiran manusia. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor penggunaan Bahasa Melayu (L1) dalam kalangan pelajar Melayu berpencapaian rendah dari segi penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris sewaktu perbincangan dalam kumpulan semasa mengikuti kelas Bahasa Inggeris (L2). Kajian ini juga mengkaji proses yang terlibat apabila Bahasa Melayu berperanan sebagai pengantaraan bagi membantu pelajar tersebut menyelesaikan sesuatu tugasan secara berkumpulan. Data utama diperoleh melalui rakaman audio, pemerhatian melalui rakaman video dan temu bual secara ingatan teransang yang dijalankan ke atas enam pelajar berpencapaian rendah dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris di sebuah institut pengajian tinggi di Malaysia. Analisis tema telah digunakan sebagai kaedah menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pengantaraan Bahasa Melayu (L1) digunakan bagi mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris dalam situasi perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris yang terhad, kesukaran bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris, dan bagi memastikan pertuturan dapat difahami secara bersama. Proses pengantaraan berlaku apabila ingatan semula, pembetulan dan bantuan oleh rakan sebaya digunakan dalam kedua-dua bahasa bagi memahami arahan dalam Bahasa Inggeris, menjana idea dalam perbincangan berkumpulan, dan menyampaikan idea melalui penulisan Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada kaedah alternatif bagi pengajaran di dalam kelas, terutamanya terhadap pelajar yang berpencapaian rendah dalam penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di tahap pendidikan tinggi, di mana mereka dibenarkan menggunakan pengantaraan bahasa pertama dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Kajian ini juga memberikan sudut pandangan berbeza dalam isu kontroversi bahasa pertama dan kedua, iaitu polisi akademik dan peraturan pendidik perlu dikaji semula terutama jika bahasa pertama boleh membantu pembelajaran bahasa kedua.

Kata Kunci: Pengantaraan bahasa pertama, Pembelajaran bahasa kedua, Pencapaian rendah, Tahap pendidikan tinggi

Abstract

The use of Malay as the first language (L1) in learning English as a second language (L2) among low-proficient students at tertiary level has been a constant debate over the years. Previous studies, mainly using quantitative strategies, have generally shown positive preference among these learners while working individually. However there is a need to investigate by using qualitative perspective on how L1 may assist in L2 learning especially in groups, as an alternative approach to language learning among these students. This qualitative case study uses Sociocultural Theory (SCT) as its main theoretical framework, whereby interaction is perceived as an input to trigger the mediated process of human mental functioning. This study aims to investigate the factors for low-proficient Malay students' use of Malay (L1) during group discussion in English (L2) lesson. This study also investigates the process in which L1 mediation helps them to complete an L2 task conducted in groups. The main data is obtained via audio recording, video recorded observations and stimulated recall interviews on six low-proficient students in an L2 class in one higher education institution in Malaysia. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis approach. The findings show that L1 mediation is applied due to limited vocabulary in L2, difficulty in speech production, and to ensure mutual understanding of speech with one another. The mediation is achieved by employing memory recall, peer corrections, and peer assistance in both L1 and L2 in order to understand instructions in L2 task, to generate ideas in group discussion, and to present ideas into written form in L2. This study contributes to alternative teaching method in the classroom, especially towards tertiary level students with low-proficiency in English, whereby they are allowed to use L1 to mediate their L2 learning. This study also implies a different perspective in the L1 and L2 controversial issue, in which the academic policy and educators' rules need to be revisited especially if L1 can assist L2 learning.

Keywords: L1 mediation, L2 learning, Low-proficiency, Tertiary education

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Glossary of Terms

GPMP – *Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran* (Subject Average Grade)

L1 – First language in this study (Malay)

L2 – Second language in this study (English)

MOE – Ministry of Education

MUET – Malaysian University English Test

PPSMI – *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (Teaching of Science and Math in English)

SCT – Sociocultural Theory

ZPD – The Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Second language (henceforth will be referred to as L2) can either be acquired or learned, but both terms are controversial as it is difficult to determine whether one's proficiency in a second language is as equal as the first language (henceforth will be referred to as L1) (Denham & Lobeck, 2013). However, some previous works have used the terms alternately without any emphasis on the differences (Malone, 2012; Nazary, 2008). For easier discussion, this study will only use the term L2 learning as reference to the process of obtaining the ability in using L2. Furthermore, this study is conducted in a classroom setting, making the term "learning" a more appropriate word than "acquisition".
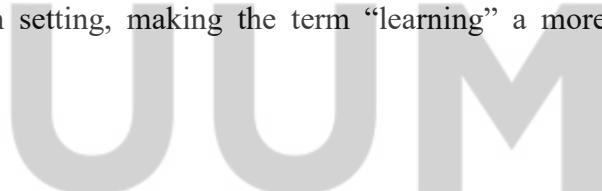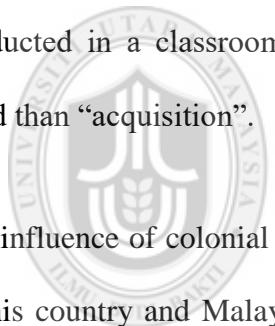
The influence of colonial era has led to English language being recognized as the L2 in this country and Malay language being the official and national language, or L1. Nonetheless, as years pass by, the standard of English has deteriorated in the urban and especially so in the rural areas where English is hardly spoken. In fact, English use is still minimal and mostly for school purposes (Hazita, 2006). Due to the limited practice of English within some communities in Malaysia, many students struggle to learn the language. Thus, there is a need to understand how students who lack the mastery of L2 learn the language.

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