

Editorial

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The articles in volume 12 (4) of GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies explore issues and challenges which are of concern to educators and researchers in language studies and literature, within the local-national-international contexts. The 11 papers in this volume are situated in the area of teaching and learning English, the use of technology in language learning and teaching, applied linguistics, linguistics and literature.

Papers on teaching and learning English explored topics on listening level and learning styles, and how task complexity can be manipulated to assess EFL learners' performance.

Farinaz Shirani Bidabadi and Hamidah Yamat in *The Relationship between English Listening Proficiency Levels and Learning Styles* investigate Iranian freshmen's levels of English listening proficiency and their learning style preferences, and the relationship between the two variables. A placement test was administered at the beginning of the study to identify the freshmen's listening proficiency levels and their learning style preferences. Based on data gathered from questionnaire analysis, the findings reveal that all the learners preferred high level learning styles and consider themselves as communicative learners. In addition, the Pearson Correlation analysis also indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between the learners' English listening proficiency levels and their learning style preferences. The paper ends with a suggestion that it is essential for educators to be aware of their students' learning style preferences and their English listening proficiency levels in order that teaching styles and students' learning style preferences can be matched.

Masoud Saeedi, Saeed Ketabi and Shirin Rahimi Kazerooni in *The Impacts Of Manipulating Task Complexity On EFL Learners' Performance* examine how the manipulation of the psycholinguistic dimensions of task complexity can affect features of L2 oral output, such as accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Robinson's (2007) Triadic Componential Framework (TCF) was employed to investigate the impact of manipulating the cognitive complexity of tasks on Iranian EFL learners' narrative task performance. The findings show that manipulation of the different dimensions of task complexity exerts differential effects on complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the EFL learners' narrative task performance, which the writers claim conforms to the predictions based on Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis. These findings suggest that task complexity can be used as a robust basis for making grading and sequencing decisions in task-based syllabi.

Using technology to help language teaching and learning is not a new practice. Attempts to bring technology into language classroom can be traced back to the 1960s. Many studies have reported that technology can give learners more control over their learning. Two papers on the use of technology look into the use of computer games in teaching and learning vocabulary, and grammar and online writing.

In their article on *Vocabulary and Grammar Gain through Computer Educational Games*, Sara Jalali and Masoumeh Dousti argue that integration of technology should consider pedagogical values because most studies appear to focus on the appealing aspects of using technology in teaching and learning. Their study illustrates how computer games can affect learners' grammar and vocabulary development. 58 female EFL Iranian students at institute level, participated in the study. This study was based on a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design. The results demonstrate that significant differences exist between the experimental and control groups. Nevertheless, the experimental group showed apparent involvement, enthusiasm to use the new technology in language learning and positive attitudes towards learning. The authors conclude that the presence of such a high motivation among the learners in the experimental group could contribute to their active involvement in the process of learning, which implies that computers have a significant role in motivating learners' involvement in the learning process.

ESL Students' Attitude, Learning Problems and Needs For Online Writing by Noriah Ismail, Supyan Hussin and Saadiyah Darus look into ESL tertiary students' writing attitude and the learning problems that the students encountered in a writing course at a higher learning institution in Malaysia. The respondents were 60 students who were enrolled in a Diploma course and four lecturers who have been teaching the writing course for more than 5 years. Questionnaires were distributed to the students in order to find out what the students perceived to be important elements for a supplementary online writing program, while the lecturers were subjected to interviews. The questionnaire analysis reveal that the students dislike the writing course because they find it difficult to write in English. The lecturers felt that the majority of the students have negative attitude towards writing and the attitude is partly due to the students' learning problems. The lecturers suggest for the introduction of a special online writing program, which can supplement the normal writing course and help enhance the learners' writing ability and interest.

The two papers in Linguistics in this volume discuss phonological features of Malay ESL learners and Malay speakers' pronunciation.

Shahidi A.H, Rahim Aman and Ab.Samad Kechot in *Production and Perception of English Word Final Stops By Malay Speakers* describe a study on the production and perception of the final stops by Malay students, whose second language is English. 23 students, comprising 16 male and 7 female Malay subjects with normal hearing and speech development participated in this study. A short interview was conducted at the beginning of the study to gain background information about each subject, to introduce them to the study, to explain the process of recording, the materials to be used in the

recording session, and how the materials should be managed during recording time. Acoustic measurements of selected segments occurring in word final positions were taken (via spectrographic analysis, syllable rhyme duration and phonation) were taken. Results of the voicing contrast realisation in Malay accented English and Malaysian listeners' perceptual identification/discrimination abilities with final voiced/voiceless stops in Malay and English were presented. The writers conclude that the Malay students' realisation of final stops in L2 is largely identical to their L1. Furthermore, the results also indicate that accurate 'perception' may not always lead to accurate 'production'.

A paper on *Analisis Koda Berdasarkan Kekangan Dalam Dialek Kelantan* by Adi Yasran Aziz illustrates the uniqueness of the Malay Kelantanese dialect. The writer claims that the uniqueness of this dialect has attracted many Optimality phonologists to study the dialect. This study aims to explain the aspect of Kelantan Dialect phonotactics involving the syllabic coda position. Data from studies done on Optimality theory were used in this study. However, the findings show that there are still confusion and conflict of views on the sound segment that are allowed to appear in the syllable coda position and its explanation based on the set of constraint hierarchy. This study, nevertheless, has successfully resolved this problem by adopting the latest grammatical theory, which is the Optimality Theory propounded by Prince, Smolensky and McCarthy (1993). Based on the analysis, only the placeless features are allowed to occupy the position of Kelantan Dialect syllabic coda, which is [/, h, N].

The issues addressed in Applied Linguistics in this volume is on the cognitive process of reading in a foreign language, the role of language in influencing and shaping the identity of individual, the discourse functions of marked themes in research abstracts and students' attitude and competence towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect.

Chan Swee Heng and Seyed Foad Ebrahimi in *Marked Themes as Context Frames in Research Article Abstracts* examine the discourse functions (context frames) of marked themes used in Applied Linguistics and Economics research article abstracts. Sixty research article abstracts from two disciplines published in journals of Applied Linguistics and Oxford Economic Papers in 2010 to 2011 issues were analyzed. The marked theme uses three main context frames: Conjunctive/Modal adjunct and Conjunctions, Prepositional and Adverbial Phrases and Subordinate Clauses and Nonfinite Clause (Gosden, 1992 p. 211), which serves three types of grammatical realization (context frames) serves nine major discourse functions. There is a significant difference in the use of validation context frame across the two disciplines. However, there is more similarities than differences regarding the use of context frames in the abstracts from the two disciplines. Findings of this study also supports the proposition that one micro level feature, in the form of marked theme, as thematic function, has the

potential to signal the development of macro structure and rhetorical organization in abstract writing for scientific article writing.

A paper on language and culture entitled *Petangan Tradition in Javanese Personal Naming Practice: An Ethnolinguistic Study*, by Sahid Teguh Widodo and Kundharu Saddhono depicts how *petangan* (a study of calculation) and a form of tradition which belongs to the Javanese cultural heritage plays an important role in Javanese culture, in relation to personal naming practices. However, this tradition has started to become less prevalent among the Javanese community. This study used a qualitative research method in order to identify various ways in which the Javanese give meaning to, evaluate, and predict the character of the name given to their children using the *petangan* tradition. The findings of the research show that *petangan* has important role in Javanese naming tradition in terms of its form, use, and social function in Javanese society. This study also discovers the development of personal naming practice, ideas, cultural taste, and various other changes that are taking place in the Javanese society.

Khazriyati Salehuddin in *Penilaian Ke Atas Kerumitan Kognitif Dalam Proses Membaca Jawi* argues that it is essential to assess the cognitive complexity of Jawi. The study used reading script in Jawi to examine the cognitive problems. The writer also claims that it is essential to understand the root cause of why Jawi continues to be marginalised by the majority of Malaysians, despite the million-ringgit spend by the Malaysian government to revive the script. This paper discusses the cognitive complexity of the Jawi script from the psycholinguistic perspective. It systematically compares Jawi with Rumi, the Roman alphabet for writing the Malay language in order to explain the continuous resistance, especially among the Malays, to learning and using the script.

Mohammad Fadzeli Jaafar, Norsimah Mat Awal, Idris Aman in their paper entitled *Sikap Dan Kefahaman Pelajar Terhadap Dialek Negeri Sembilan: Kajian Sociolinguistik* analyze students' competence and attitudes towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect, in Rembau and Tampin district. A list of 80 words which comprises original words from Negeri Sembilan dialect from the Rembau district was tested on a group of students in a school in the Tampin district. The study utilized the naming method (on certain aspects) and questionnaire analysis. The results show that that the students have a moderate attitude towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect because they received little encouragement from their parents. Despite this, they display a positive attitude towards competence and perception on the dialect. The findings also indicate that those with lower competence in the dialect come from high social economic background. Generally, the findings demonstrate an observable pattern of language change among adolescents in Negeri Sembilan which is in-line with a rise in social status.

A final paper on literature by Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir in *Apabila Teori Feminis Ternyata Tidak Diperlukan: Satu Kajian Kes*, strongly asserts that Malay critics largely favour Western literary theories as analytical frameworks of choice to deconstruct Malay novels. Feminist theories are often a favourite particularly among Malay women literary

critics. This paper uses as its analytical framework several main ideas of persuratan baru, which makes a distinction between knowledge and story and emphasise discourse as the vehicle to body forth knowledge. The writer examines two working papers by Siti Hajar Che man, which employs the feminist theory in order to determine whether a feminist theory is called for, and whether the findings thus reached are academically sound. This article argues that the use of a feminist theory is decidedly superfluous, while the findings are academically untenable.

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