

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE EFFECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS-
RAISING TASKS ON THE USE OF
SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: A
CASE STUDY**

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of the requirements for the degree of
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

Subject-verb agreement (SVA) is one of the fundamental elements of English language structures. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of consciousness-raising tasks on the use of SVA through two types of consciousness-raising (CR) tasks: Sentence Production (SP) and Grammaticality Judgment (GJ). The study involved an intact class of 28 Form 2 ESL students from a secondary school in Sabah, Malaysia. The subjects were divided into two groups. Group 1 was assigned with Sentence Production (SP) tasks and Group 2 received Grammaticality Judgment (GJ) tasks. Data was collected using a four-pronged approach which involved a pre and post-tests, interviews, questionnaire and response sheets. Learners were given a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment to investigate their use of SVA. After an eight week treatment, the students were asked to answer questionnaires and 10 of them were interviewed. Responses sheets were also administered to the students after every CR task. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while the qualitative data was deductively and inductively analyzed to answer the research questions posed in the study. The findings showed the SP and GJ tasks promoted SVA learning among students. The findings also revealed three challenges in learning SVA through CR tasks: inadequate hypothesis formation, emphasis of meaning over structures, and complexity of SVA. It is also discovered that CR tasks helped learners to learn SVA through cognitive domain of learning, operational skills, explicit instruction, task factors, peer collaboration and prominence of SVA. The findings indicate the importance of applying CR in ESL grammar lessons. Therefore, it can be deduced that CR tasks are effective in promoting learners' accurate use of SVA. Henceforth teachers should look into the use of CR tasks to enhance their acquisition of SVA in the ESL classroom.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

English language today is considered as an important international language. It is also a language for knowledge acquisition, trade and commerce. Realizing the importance of English, many countries have begun to adopt English as a second or a foreign language into their school curriculum (Zuraidah et al., 2008). In Malaysia, English is taught as a compulsory second language in all public schools. English is gaining more significance and relevance in Malaysia and it has become the second most important language in the country (Muniandy, Nair, Krishnan, Ima & Norshikin, 2010). In fact, an educational policy known as MBMMBI (To Uphold Bahasa Malaysia, To Strengthen the English Language) was launched in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2010). It emphasizes the teaching of grammar in English learning and teaching.

English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Malaysia have difficulty learning basic grammar which they need to acquire in order to communicate fluently and effectively in English whether in written or spoken form (Tan, 2005; Zuraidah et al., 2008). Despite 11 to 13 continuous years of learning English in schools, many Malaysian ESL learners have not yet mastered basic grammatical rules (Wee et al., 2010). In fact, many university graduates still have poor mastery of grammar regardless of the English lessons they received during their primary and secondary education (Mahanita, Ting & Chang, 2010; Sharifah Zakiah et al., 2009). The failure of Malaysian students to master English grammar with regard to various rules and forms are apparent among Malaysian school students (Subramanian & Khan, 2013; Mahanita et al., 2010; Siti Hamin & Mohd Mustafa, 2010; Wee & Kamaruzaman, 2010; Surina & Kamaruzaman, 2009; Saadiyah & Subramaniam., 2009b; Nor Hashimah, Norsimah & Kesumawati, 2008; Maros Tan & Salehuddin, 2007; Eng & Heng, 2005; Sahirah & Zaidah, 2004). This raises concern that the English classes that students have undergone in school have been inadequate in developing their grammar.