ERROR ANALYSIS AND CORRECTION AND IMPLICATION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING: A CASE STUDY OF BEL100, 200 AND 250 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES AT UITM KEDAH

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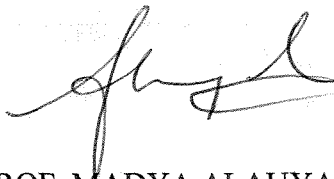University Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

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LAPORAN AKHIR PENYELIDIKAN "ERROR ANALYSIS AND CORRECTION AND IMPLICATION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING: A CASE STUDY OF BEL100, 200 AND 250 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES AT UITM KEDAH"

Merujuk perkara di atas, bersama-sama ini disertakan 3 (tiga) naskah Laporan Akhir Penyelidikan bertajuk ""**ERROR ANALYSIS AND CORRECTION AND IMPLICATION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING: A CASE STUDY OF BEL100, 200 AND 250 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES AT UITM KEDAH"** untuk makluman pihak Yang Berbahagia Profesor.

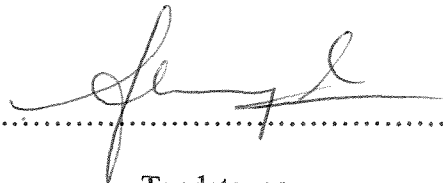Sekian. Terima kasih

Yang benar

PROF. MADYA ALAUYAH JOHARI

Ketua

Projek Penyelidikan

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KUMPULAN PENYELIDIK

PROF. MADYA ALAUYAH JOHARI

KETUA PROJEK

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Tandatangan

Ahli

(Tiada)

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I. *PENGHARGAAN*

Ucapan terima kasih kepada semua pihak yang terlibat secara langsung dan tidak langsung bagi membolehkan penyelidikan ini disiapkan dengan sempurna.

Diantaranya:

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List of Abbreviations

UiTM:	University Technology MARA
BEL 100:	Preparatory English
BEL 200:	Mainstream English I
BEL 250:	Mainstream English II
DIA:	DIPLOMA IN ACCOUNTANCY
DBS:	DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS STUDIES
DIB:	DIPLOMA IN BANKING
DIM:	DIPLOMA IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
DPA:	DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
DIDE:	DIPLOMA IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

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ERROR ANALYSIS AND CORRECTION AND IMPLICATION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING: A CASE STUDY OF BEL100, 200 AND 250 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES AT UITM KEDAH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the errors made by students in answering the essay section in their English Examination questions. The study was conducted on students and lecturers of UiTM Kedah. The English courses include Preparatory English (BEL 100), Mainstream English I (BEL 200) and Mainstream English II (BEL 250). The study revealed that students expected correction from the lecturers and that grammatical errors were the most common errors made and the plural form tops the list of types of grammatical errors made. The study also revealed a negative correlation between students' score in the grammar section and students' score in the writing section. In other words, they may perform well in the grammar section but did badly in the writing section.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

In assessing students' writing, UiTM lecturers are bound to look for the errors made by the students. This is because the marks allocated for language is a significant percentage of the total marks. This study is done to identify the errors made in writing by students and how the teachers correct them and what can be done so that students do not repeat the same errors.

OBJECTIVES

a.   Identify the common errors made by students in answering the writing section in BEL 100, 200 and 250 examination questions.

b.   Classify the errors made in answering the writing section in BEL 100, 200 and 250 examination questions.

c.   Identify the methods used by UiTM Kedah lecturers to correct the errors.

d.   Compare the effectiveness of methods used by UiTM Kedah lecturers against practices elsewhere.

e.   Identify methods preferred by students

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT

a. A corpus of identified errors can be produced.

b. The corpus can be used as a teaching guide.

c. Lecturers can adopt more effective error correction methods.

d. Students can also refer to the corpus as a writing guide.

e. Better grades can be obtained by our students in the writing section

2.0 METHODS

In this study both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used.

Questionnaires

310 questionnaires were distributed to the students. This represented 30% of the population taking English courses on campus for November 2003-March 2004 semester. The students represented all courses and semesters. They were semester 1 to semester 6 students from Diploma in Accountancy (DIA), Banking Studies (DIB), Business Studies (DBS), Information Studies (DIM), Public Administration (DPA), Pre-Degree Law and Industrial Design (DIDE).

They were asked about the problems they face in the writing process, what they feel about the methods employed by lecturers in dealing with errors and how they want the lecturers to deal with these errors throughout their language learning process. The data collected were then analysed using SPSS Version 12.0.1.

Interviews

10 out of 13 lecturers were interviewed. They were asked about their teaching strategies and what they think about students' errors.

53 students representing all semesters and programmes were also interviewed on the problems they faced in writing and why they repeat the errors.

Analysis of Students' Essays

310 essays (representing 30% of the population) were also analysed. This is to identify the types of errors students made in their writing. Once the errors were analysed, a list of

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common errors were then identified. The samples were BEL 100, 200 and 250 examination scripts. The samples represented all courses and lecturers from year 2000 to 2002. A purposive sampling method was used and samples, which were from average to below average scores, were chosen for the purpose of this research. It is to find out the types of errors made. Some good ones were also analysed but for the purpose of this research they do not qualify, as they did not make that many errors.

Limitations of Study

This study is done on BEL 100, 200 and 250 and limited to the population in Kedah campus only. However, for the purpose of this research, the sample collected had been found to be valid to represent the total population.

3.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

Before we can identify the errors, we need to decide what contribute to errors. Palmer suggests that:

> What is correct and what is not correct is ultimately only a matter of is accepted by society, for language is a matter of conventions within society.

> (Palmer, 1990: 15)

However, Brians (1997) suggested that the concept of language errors is a fuzzy one. Here we are concerned only with deviations from standard use of English as judged by sophisticated users.

Some view grammar as something that can or must be learnt from a book. Grammar is a set of normative rules – rules that tell us how we ought to speak and write. These are prescriptive rules. Others treat these rules as descriptive rules- rules that describe the language. These rules state what is said rather that what ought to be said (Palmer, 1990).

The term 'grammar' comes from the Greek word meaning 'to write'. Therefore, grammar is concerned with the written language. The Greek for 'grammar' is grammetikĕ or grammetikĕ technĕ, 'the art of writing' (Palmer, 1990).

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Therefore, the working definition for error is deviation from the standard use of English. As we are dealing with the written genre, our main concern is grammatical errors. Grammar can be learnt. They are set of rules that are prescriptive or descriptive in nature.

The distinction must be made between mistake and error. Brown (1994) suggests that an individual does not repeat a mistake while the same individual repeats an error.

Studies suggest that errors should not always be treated as a bad thing. Studies on inter-language suggest that some errors are part of the language learning process. The errors made are actually at a level the learner has achieved which is somewhere between the native and the target language.

Errors and Correction

Lyster and Ranta (1997) point out that research in second language classroom in the past has continued to pose the questions framed by Hendrickson in his 1978 review of feedback on errors in foreign language classrooms. These questions are:

Should learners' errors be corrected?

When should learners' errors be corrected?

Which errors are corrected?

How should errors be corrected?

Who should do the correcting?

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In correcting own errors, students can do this based on the cues provided by the teacher. Tata-Yoshio (1997) suggest that the more detailed the cues to the errors, the higher the ratio of learner self-correction.

Correction is has an important role not only linguistically and pedagogically, but also in maintaining the quality of the interaction (Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999). However, according to Gainer (1997) many correction techniques seem to frustrate and intimidate rather than enlighten students.

Feedback

Research shows that feedback is expected as well as desired by language learners. However, the way feedback should be given varies among learners. Some prefer more general and open feedback while others prefer private feedback. Sometimes the effectiveness of feedback may be seriously impaired if it is not desired at the time it was given.

Uptake, or Learner Responses to Feedback

Uptake shows what the students try to do with the teacher's feedback. There are two types of uptake - one with repair and uptake still needing repair. In the first type, the student has made the repair in response to the teacher's feedback while in the latter type-the error is still repeated.

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Difference between Language and Grammar

Language can simply be defined as the system of communication in speech and writing while grammar can be defined as the rules in the language or a particular theory that is intended to explain the rules in the language.

Task

Nunan (1989:10) defines task as 'a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focussed on meaning rather than form'. Task provides a purpose for the use and learning language other than simply learning language items for their own sake. Depending on the levels of difficulty and complexity, task based activities makes learning more effective.

Classroom Research

Classroom research is a professional imperative. It enables us to test techniques we have taken for granted and compare them with new methods as well as replicate the findings in different settings. In other words, it can add to our knowledge of language learning and teaching. Thus various areas in language teaching can and will be investigated.

Interlanguage Periods

These are periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning. Errors are normal and developmental. Thus the teacher should provide positive feedback and modelling of correct structures to support learners as they move

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through the steps. If an error persists, learners should be provided with more structured

practice on the point.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 BREAKDOWN OF MARKS FOR BEL PAPERS

4.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS (LECTURERS)

4.3 INTERVIEW RESULTS (STUDENTS)

4.4 QUESTIONNAIRES

4.5 STUDENTS' ESSAYS

4.6 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND WRITING

4.1 BREAKDOWN OF MARKS FOR BEL PAPERS

The following breakdown of marks show the importance placed on grammar and language in the marking scheme.

BEL 100 (final: 60%)

GRAMMAR =25%

READING =15 %

WRITING=20 % (Content and Organization =8%, Language=12 %)

BEL 100 (mid-semester: 40%)

GRAMMAR =15%

READING =10 %

WRITING=5 % (Language =2 %; Content =2%, Organization=1 %)

Therefore: Grammar=25%; Writing =25%

BEL 200/150 (final: 60%)

GRAMMAR =15%

READING AND COMPREHENSION=25 %

WRITING=20 % (Language =5 %; Content =3%, Organization=2 %)

BEL 200 (mid-semester: 40%)

READING =5 %

WRITING=5 % (Language =2 %; Content =2%, Organization=1 %)

SPEAKING =15%

LISTENING=15 %

Therefore: Grammar=15%; Writing=25%

BEL 150 (mid-semester: 40%)

READING =10 %

WRITING=10 % (Language =4 %; Content =4%, Organization=2 %)

SPEAKING =10%

LISTENING=10%

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Therefore: Grammar=15%; Writing=30%

BEL 250 (final: 70%)

READING =45%(GRAMMAR=13.5%)

WRITING=25 %

BEL 250 (mid-semester: 30%)

SPEAKING =15%

LISTENING=15 %

Therefore: Writing= 25%

BEL 310(final: 40%)

CONTENT=32%

LANGUAGE=24%

ORGANIZATION=4%

BEL 315(final: 40%)

CONTENT=33%

LANGUAGE=7%

Therefore: Language= 31%

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BEL 320(final: 60%)

CONTENT=35%

LANGUAGE=23%

ORGANIZATION=2%

BEL 330 (final: 20%)

CONTENT=11%

LANGUAGE=8%

ORGANIZATION=1%

BEL 340 (final: 50%)

CONTENT=38%

LANGUAGE=10%

ORGANIZATION=2%

BEL 360 (final: 40%)

CONTENT=40%

(Grammar = Deduct a maximum of 6% for Gross Grammatical Error)

There seem to be a shift in the usage of the term grammar to language as the level of the language course increases.

Based on the marks given by lecturers in the writing section, there seem to be no difference between language and grammar. In analysing students' essays, it is found that lecturers treat language as equivalent to grammar.

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4.2   INTERVIEW RESULTS (LECTURERS)

Teaching writing

All lecturers use a combination of group and individual work in the essay-writing task. Although some lecturers believe in pair or group work, others fear the existence of sleeping partners if they do this often. For group work to be effective, a small sized group is suggested. The best is a group of 3.

Correction

Correction is done on an individual as well as group basis. However, it should be acknowledged that they could only do personal consultation once a semester because of the class size, which is too big. The class size varies from 25 to 50 students.

Only a small minority of their students self-corrected their essays. They repeated the errors because they did not apply the grammar learnt. According to the lecturers, they treated grammar and writing as two separate entities. Although some encourage peer correction, others do not favour this because some students do not feel comfortable being corrected by their peers.

Correction by lecturers is done both in class and outside class (in lecturers' rooms during consultation hours). Some lecturers said giving motivation to their students helped improve students' performance. One of the most interesting comments by lecturers was that students felt that error correction was the job of their lecturers. Their task was only to

produce the essays and it was up to the lecturers to correct them. Lecturers felt that students just wanted the job (of writing the essays) done as soon as possible or to get it over and done with.

Errors

Errors vary from one BEL course to another. For example, in BEL 100, Subject-Verb-Agreement is a common problem while in BEL 200; other grammatical errors seemed to be the problem. In BEL 250, Vocabulary /Word Choice and Sentence Structure are common problems. Other problems include lack of vocabulary and direct translation from Bahasa Malaysia to English.

Students tend to repeat the errors because they did not pay attention to the errors made or did not take the initiative to correct the errors. This is when the lecturers only identified the errors and expected the students to correct them. In most cases, the correction never happened. Attitude towards English is cited as one of the reasons they made the errors. If they have a positive attitude towards English, they would make the effort to improve their writing.