

TRANSLANGUAGING STRATEGY IN WRITING PRACTICE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

SITI KHAIRANI QALBI BINTI AHAMAD

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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STRATEGI *TRANSLANGUAGING* DALAM PENULISAN DI KALANGAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH RENDAH

Abstrak

Kajian ini mengetengahkan masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar sekolah rendah dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggeris, mengkaji kesan strategi *translanguaging* dalam penulisan dan menyiasat persepsi pelajar terhadap strategi *translanguaging* untuk latihan penulisan mereka. Lima orang pelajar mengambil bahagian dalam kajian kualitatif ini dan tiga jenis data dikumpul melalui esei bertulis pelajar, intervensi bilik darjah dan temu bual bersama pelajar. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar menghadapi kesukaran mempelajari bahasa Inggeris secara ekabahasa di dalam bilik darjah. Selepas pelaksanaan strategi *translanguaging*, pelajar lebih berinteraksi, memahami pelajaran dengan lebih baik, mengambil bahagian secara aktif dalam perbincangan bilik darjah dan berasa lebih selesa untuk bertukar-tukar idea dengan rakan sekelas. Keputusan esei bertulis pelajar juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar bertambah baik secara beransur-ansur kerana mereka kurang melakukan kesalahan ejaan, menghasilkan struktur ayat yang lebih baik dan dapat membentuk kosa kata baharu dan menulis ayat yang betul dari segi tatabahasa. Implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa strategi *translanguaging* boleh menjadi strategi yang berkesan untuk membantu pelajar meningkatkan penulisan mereka dalam bahasa Inggeris.





TRANSLANGUAGING STRATEGY IN WRITING PRACTICE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Abstract

This study highlights the problems faced by primary students in learning English language, studying the effects of the translanguaging strategy in writing and investigating the students' perceptions on the translanguaging strategy for their writing practice. Five students participated in this qualitative study and three types of data were collected through students' written essay, classroom intervention and students' interviews. The results revealed that the students' were having difficulties learning English monolingually in the classroom. After the implementation of translanguaging strategy, the students interacted more, understood the lesson better, participated actively in classroom discussion and felt more comfortable to exchange ideas with classmates. Results of the students' written essay also shows that the students improved gradually as they made less spelling errors, produced better sentence structures and were able form new vocabulary and wrote grammatically correct sentences. This study implies that translanguaging strategy could be an effective strategy to help students improve their writing in English.

Keywords: translanguaging, weak students, writing, English language



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions of this current study, significance of the study and the definition of terminology.

1.2 Background of the Study

The English language plays an important role in the teaching and learning of a second language especially in countries like Malaysia (Baskaran, 1988; Education First, 2019).

Teaching English worldwide can be divided into two categories which are teaching English as Second Language (ESL) and Teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) (Rahim, 2021). In our country Malaysia, it is considered as the lingua franca and our country's second language (TESL). Looking into the primary school students' learning and teaching concept in Malaysia, many reformulations and reformation have been adjusted due to the development of the country and economic growth (Darmi et al., 2017).

Currently, the primary school students are using the KSSR curriculum or Primary School Standard Curriculum which is implemented to improve the KBSR curriculum. In 2017, the KSSR curriculum was revised to include the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as a part of the English curriculum. CEFR is one of the most established language proficiency measurements that have been adopted globally. Malaysian curriculum adopted CEFR standards and CEFR-aligned national curriculum was introduced in 2016. The alignment of CEFR framework in the Malaysian English curriculum has caused significant

changes to many existing aspects of classroom teaching and learning (Norshaidatul et al., 2021; Uri et al., 2018). The Ministry of Education mentioned that the initiative of revising the KSSR curriculum will expose the primary school students to more realistic and proper use of English. According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the implementation of the CEFR with the current English syllabus is to improve the English language standard in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2013) and produce language learners who can engage and communicate with English fluently (Aziz, 2016). The essence of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) is “to bring about substantial improvement in our students’ proficiency in the English language” (MOE, 2015).

This is the reason why the Ministry of Education encourages the use of English as a medium of instruction from preschools to students’ tertiary levels (Ngajib et al., 2018). Looking at the development of English language in the primary levels, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has set certain curriculum specifications, syllabus and skills for the students to be able to acquire and be proficient in the English language (Abdullah & Sidek, 2012).

The Ministry of Education has implemented the Standard Documents for Curriculum and Assessments (DSKP) which contains content standard, performance and learning standard for all the subjects. This is to guide the students’ performance in each level and subject. The Standard Documents for Curriculum and Assessments (2018) states that by the end of the primary school level, the students should be able to communicate confidently in informal and formal setting, comprehend and read a variety of English texts, write a range of English texts with appropriate language and styles, show their understanding in English literary works and use correct grammar rules in speeches and writing. According to the Primary School Standard Curriculum, it is made mandatory that the primary school students, Year 1 to Year 6 have to learn English for 5 hours and 30 minutes per week (Puteh, 2010).

In the English language classrooms, there are many skills to be acquired by the primary school students such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Ministry of Education, 2015). One of the most critical skills in English is the writing skills, which can be



considered the main problem for primary school students despite learning them for more than five hours per week (Farid & Bilal, 2016; Yunus & Chun, 2016). It is a skill where students have to express their ideas and thoughts in words instead of speaking the language.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Large numbers of research focused on strategies to help students improve their writing. For example, online peer review (Erfa, 2021), contextual teaching and learning (Jayanti & Rozimela, 2021), implementing WH questions (Asnawan, 2021), scaffolding (Ikawati, 2020), colour code strategy (Azeez, 2021) and interactive whiteboard activities (Mohamed et. al, 2019). Ideally, as mentioned in the Standard Documents for Curriculum and Assessments (DSKP) (2018), Year 2 students should be able to ask for and provide basic personal information using questions and statements, express simple ability, write short familiar instructions, describe objects using suitable words and phrases, connect words and phrases by using the basic conjunctions, use capital letters and punctuation marks appropriately, spell a narrow range of high frequency words and use them in the writing and plan, draft as well as form simple sentences. Previously, when the learners are in their Year 1, they have already learnt and spell familiar high frequency words, express basic daily expressions, connect words by using conjunctions such as and, plan and write phrases, write sentences by using punctuation and capital letters and provide basic personal information by using fixed phrases.

In reality, one of the main problems students face in writing is that they are unable to provide basic personal information by using questions and statements, express simple ability, write short familiar instructions, unable to describe objects by using suitable words and phrases (Jaclyn & Aziz, 2019), connect words and phrases by using the basic conjunctions, unable to use capital letters and punctuation marks appropriately (Ali, 2016), spell a narrow range of high frequency words and use them in the writing and plan, draft as well as to form simple sentences (Muhammad Fareed et.al., 2016). For example, students tend to produce





inappropriate use of grammar, errors in spelling and inappropriate use of nouns in their writing practice. For struggling and weak learners, their main troubles are mostly in the idea production, difficulty in forming complex sentences by adding adjectives and adverbs, struggle to choose the suitable vocabulary due to limited exposure to new vocabulary in their L2 (Firmansyah, 2015).

Previous researchers such as Ke and Lin (2017) and Portolés and Martí (2017) and Kiramba (2016) support the use of translanguaging strategy in helping students with their writing practice. Translanguaging process uses both languages such as Malay (L1) and English (L2). The role of L1 encourages participation in group projects since translanguaging helps students from language-minoritised backgrounds to express their ideas, validate their linguistic identities and participate comfortably in group projects. This strategy chosen because it is widely used in other countries such as United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Indonesia except Malaysia. It is proven that this strategy helps students to generate ideas, understand the instruction better and aids the weak learners to develop their second language (Lewis, et al., 2012). It's also important that the weak learners are able to produce a quality piece of written work in their second language (Ke & Lin, 2017). According to Coulson (2015) translanguaging strategy was mostly used by the weak learners to help them learn another language better. This strategy called Translanguaging enables students to generate ideas better, ease in understanding instructions, builds rapport among teachers and students (Lasabaster, 2013; Shuchi & Islam, 2016) which will help the students to improve their writing skills. As such, this study intends to investigate the types of common errors made by the primary school students in their writing and to discover how the translanguaging strategy affects their writing performance.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To describe the problems students' face in writing practice.
- 2) To study the effects of the translanguaging strategy in writing.
- 3) To investigate the students' perceptions on the translanguaging strategy for their writing practice.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions that this study intends to answer are:

- 1) What are the problems students face in their writing practice?
- 2) How does the translanguaging strategy affect students' performance in writing?
- 3) How do the students view the translanguaging strategy for their writing practice?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Current study focuses on the translanguaging as a strategy in writing practice among primary school students. This study highlights the problems faced by the weak students to learn the English language, studying the effects of the translanguaging strategy in writing and investigating the students perceptions on the translanguaging strategy for their writing practice.

If the translanguaging strategy is proven effective in this study, it will be beneficial for the second language learning field as it would provide an alternative in the second language learning lessons. This study will be able to suggest an alternative in learning the English language in a Malaysian primary school classroom where the students are able to use their



L1 in the generation of ideas and write using their L2. This would help the students to improve their writing skills and reduce errors in their writing practice. This study might be helpful to the future educators in applying this approach to students who are weak in English language and to students who are having problems in English writing skills. The findings of this study might help in providing insights to the future studies on the benefits of the translanguaging strategy among weak primary school students who are struggling to generate ideas in their writing skills.

1.7 Definition of Terminology

These following terms are defined as they are mostly used in current research.

1.7.1 Translanguaging



In this study, the students will be applying the translanguaging strategy in the Malaysian ESL classroom. In order to efficiently learn the second language, the classroom discussion and essay planning will be conducted in their L1 whereas their writing practice will be written in their L2. The instruction of a task will be explained in both languages so that the students will have a better understanding of the task. As an example, the topic of favourite holiday will be explained in two languages, both Malay and English language. 'You will be writing an essay about your favourite holiday. Kamu akan menulis sebuah karangan tentang percutian kegemaran kamu'. 'Your favourite holiday means percutian kegemaran kamu'. Students will be discussing the ideas in a mind map by using Malay language and will write the keywords in English language. The students will be conducting collaborative learning so that they can engage in meaningful interaction, share their knowledge and skills to achieve the same goal. The materials will be provided by the teacher and the students will have to collaboratively discuss the ideas for the mind map. For example, 'kalau percutian kena ada place kan, teacher?' 'Saya tulis beach boleh, teacher?' The students are allowed to use the online





dictionary to find the keywords suitable for the title. Examples of keywords written in the mind maps are favourite, beach, deserted, island, interesting, exciting, activities, theme park, delicious, tasty, food and beverages, desserts, sports, attires and transportation. The students will then produce an essay about their favourite holiday in the English language. The researcher will access the students' essay based on a marking rubric.

1.7.2 Students performance

In this study, the students will be writing essays for ten weeks and the performance of their writing will be assessed by using a marking rubric (Appendix 2). The students will be writing one essay weekly. Each essay has a total of 25 marks and the marking rubric focuses on generation of ideas as well as fluency and appropriacy of using the English language. As an example, the students will be assessed on the errors made in the essay (spelling and grammar), the complexity of using the language (simple, compound and complex sentences) and the generation of ideas focuses on how the students are able to develop their ideas in an expressive manner by adding adjectives, adverbs and new vocabulary.

1.7.2.1 Generation of Ideas

In this study, the generation of ideas will be monitored by the teacher during the classroom discussion and essay writing process. For example, students will be writing their ideas about their favourite holiday in their mind map by using Malay language (see Appendix 1). During the classroom discussion they are allowed to ask keywords and write it in English. The generation of ideas in producing the essay about their favourite holiday focuses on the use of different and new vocabulary in their sentences, the complexity of their sentences and the grammatical errors in their essay. As an example, in the topic Favourite Holiday, adjectives such as favourite, exciting, adventurous and interesting can be used to describe their holiday



in an expressive manner. The complexity of the sentences focuses on whether the students use more simple sentences, complex sentences or compound sentences in their essay.

1.7.2.2 Fluency and Appropriacy of English Language

Since the learners will be using the second language in their writing practice, it is important to look at the grammar, vocabulary, spelling errors and ways the students use their second language in the writing practice. In this study, the researcher focuses on the types of common errors students make in their writing practice and the complexity of their sentences when they write using the L2. The types of common errors are mainly the grammar errors (present, past and present continuous tense), sentence construction (subject verb agreement) and spelling errors. The vocabulary focuses on word choice used in the essay and idioms whereas the language use focuses on their tenses, spelling errors, word choices, effectively using idioms, complex sentence construction with minor errors, articles, use of pronouns to replace the subject, errors in agreement and prepositions.

1.8 Limitations

There is no research without the limitations of a study. Firstly, this study concentrates on two languages which are English language and Malay language. It mainly focuses on just one language for the idea generation and analysis which is the English language. It covers idea generation, problems and grammatical errors but not looking at other aspects such as morphology and phonology. It is nearly impossible to gather accurate data as it is tested among respondents of a smaller scale in the state of Kuala Lumpur regarding the translanguaging strategy in writing practice among primary school students. The current study data were interviewed and collected among five primary school students. More in-depth studies should be piloted at different places among students from different levels, schools, districts, states and countries in order to come up with a better hypothesis. This study did not



include students' names as the data were collected to protect the students' identity and further research should be conducted with more skills and a longer period of time.

