

Ways to Minimize the Influence of L1 (Bahasa Melayu) Into L2 (English) Tenses Writing among Form 2 Secondary School Students in Ipoh

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Abstract: Writing in English language is one of the most challenging skills faced by English language learners in Malaysia especially if they do not have a good proficiency in the language. This study seeks to identify ways to minimize the influence of L1 (Bahasa Melayu) into L2 (English) tenses writing. The data collection instrument was interview. To execute the study 8 students were interviewed from a public school in Ipoh. This study also discovered that the majority of the methods recommended by the students were cognitive in nature such as listening to songs, and using PowerPoint slides were the most popularly mentioned in the interview session. In this study, it was found that educators, students, curriculum coordinators, and decision-makers must create the most engaging curriculum using effective teaching methods, especially for English language beginners.

Keywords: tenses, interlanguage, transfer and interference.

INTRODUCTION

The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) recently revealed that a close approximation of 60,000 graduates are jobless, because of their lack of experience and poor English communication skills (Hassan, 2018). The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) recently revealed that a close approximation of 60,000 graduates are jobless, because of their lack of experience and poor English communication skills (Hassan, 2018). Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) stated that one of the common complaints among writing teachers is the number of errors students make when they write in English. In addition, Kashinathan and Aziz (2021) stated that some people consider English to be unimportant because it is not a required subject for passing.

According to Musa et al. (2012), numerous attempts have been made both nationally and individually in the effort to enhance the mastery and proficiency level of English language among Malaysian students. One of the suggestions was to provide a more conducive learning environment to make the learning process more meaningful. As posited by Musa et al. (2018), with the change of the economic status of Malaysia in the last two decades, the demand for bilingual students especially from the tertiary level has increased. Thus, there is a genuine need to boost the mastery and proficiency level of the English language to cope with these developments and new challenges (Musa et al.). Hoque (2017) stated that a child who speaks Hindi as the mother tongue starts learning English when he starts going to school. English is learned by the process of second language acquisition. However according to Al-Saggaf et al (2022) the use of tenses is considered as less

important and limited in Malay, making it difficult for students to distinguish between the present and past tenses in Malay because the phrases used can be vague. Hoque (2017) added that this is mainly a subconscious process which happens while we focus on communication. It can be compared with second language learning, which describes how formal language education helps us learn language through more conscious processes (Hoque, 2017). In the context of these arguments, this research aims to identify ways to minimize the influence of L1 (Bahasa Melayu) into L2 (English) tenses writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study also discovered that the majority of the methods recommended by the students were cognitive in nature. According to Montaña-González (2017), cognitive strategies include manipulation mental and physical of the material to be learned. This is supported by Sweller et al. (1998) that when knowledge systems are repeatedly applied to comparable cognitive learning tasks, they can become automated. Similarly, Farzin Niishin, Fatemeh Behjat, and Muhammad Rostampour (2014) that learners learn a second language in a variety of settings and ways. Such strategies are known as resources in the hands, which can be applied for learning a second language through resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, elaboration, transfer, keyword method, inferencing, note-taking, and summarizing. Metacognitive strategies involve tactics that enable L2 students to have control of their own learning.

According to Rao (2018) who supported that the current attitude toward errors is one of tolerance and expectation, the teacher should anticipate errors in his students' use of the second or foreign language, plan his lessons, and employ classroom techniques to help them overcome the problem of errors, according to Rao. Most of them do not use the language in their daily life and often encounter the use of target language only in school and within the classroom of the target language. According to Romero and Manjarres (2017), the learner may have exhibited U shape learning, which implies that he had previously acquired some of the structures that he needed to utilise in the writing task, but had unlearned them when writing since some other aspects of the L2 had been added. This will help students to realise that they are directly relying on the translation method and they should know that their first language (Bahasa Melayu) has a different set of contrastive analysis which should be taught.

Due to the interference of the first language when learning a foreign language, it is common to make mistakes in pronunciation or grammar; this is where Contrastive Analysis comes in handy because it allows both the teacher and the learner to be aware of the differences between the two languages in order to learn how to use the foreign one correctly (Romero and Manjarres, 2017). Students should be aware of the differences between the Bahasa Melayu and English sentence patterns. Overgeneralization happens when the learners apply the rules of L2 without taking into consideration the exceptions to the general rules (Nor Ashikin Ab Manan, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that has been used in this research is the qualitative method. Interview was conducted with 8 students from a secondary school. To explain, qualitative data provide an open-ended result to our research (Moran, 2018). A semi-structured interview was used because we provided some follow up questions to the participants. The interview session was carried face to face with each participant. In addition, we also asked for their consent so that we can record the interview

session. All of them agree to let us record the session. To explain, it is crucial for us to record the session so that we can revise their answer and achieve the second objective in this research which is to identify ways to minimize the influence of L1 (Bahasa Melayu) into L2 (English) tenses writing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Below are some data tabulated based on the students' suggestions on the two most effective ways to improve English language.

1.0 Using Songs to Improve Writing in English Language (L2)

Student A

“Interviewer What is the best way for you to learn English language tenses?
 The best way.
Student Ahaa..aha I will read a novel in English.
Interviewer Okay.
Student Songs, listen to songs, movie”

Student B

“Interviewer How would you like tenses to be taught to you? What is the best way?
Student I like ...teacher teach me using songs, and song lyrics.
Interviewer Alright, okay. Do you think in Bahasa Malaysia before you write in English?
Student Yes.”

Student C

“Interviewer How do you want your teacher to teach you the past continuous? How? So, it will be easy
 for you to understand.
Student Teach tenses using songs.
Interviewer You like songs.
Student Ya.”

According to the interview transcript, students said that if the teacher uses songs to effectively explain the tenses, they can do it without much difficulty.

1.1 Using PowerPoint Slides to Improve Writing in English Language (L2)

Student D

“Interviewer How would you like tenses to be taught to you? What is the best way?
Student I like it if my teacher teaches me using PowerPoint slides.”

Students indicated that teachers who use PowerPoint slides could improve their writing skills.

With reference to students, the interview above suggested that listening to songs and using PowerPoint slides are the two most effective ways which will be able to improve students' writing skills.

The interview data shows that the students will think in Bahasa Melayu subconsciously every time they are asked to write in English language. The majority of students used their first language (Bahasa Melayu) to instantly translate their writings into English. This supports Romero and Manjarres (2017) posits that another negative implication could be that students make up words in order to express themselves in the other language. This backs up Liu (2011), who claims that language transfer refers to a learner's attempt to transfer rules and forms from one language to another. Filipovi (2018) supports this view that the language we speak has an impact on our thinking while we are engaged in language-based tasks.

This study also discovered that the majority of the methods recommended by the students were cognitive in nature. Listening to songs, song lyrics, PowerPoint slides, doing exercises, making notes, conducting more lessons, conducting more tests, reading novels, reading a book, using Bahasa Melayu to list down the words and translating it into English language, and thinking in English language rather than Bahasa Melayu are among the eleven ways students suggested for learning English language tenses. According to Montaña-González (2017), cognitive strategies include manipulation mental and physical of the material to be learned. This is supported by Sweller et al. (1998) that when knowledge systems are repeatedly applied to comparable cognitive learning tasks, they can become automated. Similarly, Farzin Niishin, Fatemeh Behjat, and Muhammad Rostampour (2014) that learners learn a second language in a variety of settings and ways. Such strategies are known as resources in the hands, which can be applied for learning a second language through resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, elaboration, transfer, keyword method, inferencing, note-taking, and summarizing.

Metacognitive strategies involve tactics that enable L2 students to have control of their own learning. According to Rao (2018) who supported that the current attitude toward errors is one of tolerance and expectation, the teacher should anticipate errors in his students' use of the second or foreign language, plan his lessons, and employ classroom techniques to help them overcome the problem of errors. According to Romero and Manjarres (2017), the learner may have exhibited U shape learning, which implies that he had previously acquired some of the structures that he needed to utilise in the writing task, but had unlearned them when writing since some other aspects of the L2 had been added. This will help students to realise that they are directly relying on the translation method and they should know that their first language (Bahasa Melayu) has a different set of contrastive analysis which should be taught. Due to the interference of the first language when learning a foreign language, it is common to make mistakes in pronunciation or grammar; this is where Contrastive Analysis comes in handy because it allows both the teacher and the learner to be aware of the differences

between the two languages in order to learn how to use the foreign one correctly (Romero and Manjarres, 2017). Students should be aware of the differences between the Bahasa Melayu and English sentence patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the students are completely dependent on their first language in their writing essays in English language. Teachers need to do more than teaching grammar in the class. Proper method of teaching and appropriate instructional materials should be adopted to gain students' interest and motivate them to understand the difference between Bahasa Melayu and English language. Lekova (2010) also concluded that teachers should know the system of both languages (first and second language) very well to minimize the occurrence of language interference among students learning second language. This finding strongly suggests that ESL teachers focus more of their lesson time in the classroom on the error-prone areas. In Malaysia, English language teachers should work hard to highlight the differences between Bahasa Melayu and English in terms of the frequent errors that students make, both consciously and unconsciously. Besides, this can be done by emphasizing English language syntax in detail rather than in a few lessons. One of the important strategies is a teacher's role to motivate their students to work harder and guide them to improve English language by advising them the effects of using direct translation from their first language.

Future researchers may integrate observations in the classroom and conduct interviews with the English language teachers who are teaching the beginner level of secondary school students to identify the successful or unsuccessful strategies and methods which are applied by them.

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