

**THE EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED PROCESS
WRITING APPROACH ON THE ACADEMIC
WRITING SKILLS AMONG SECOND
LANGUAGE TERTIARY LEARNERS:
A CASE STUDY**

PERPUSTAKAAN
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH



SITI KATIJAH JOHARI

UMMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
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UMS

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
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BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL: **THE EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED PROCESS WRITING
APPROACH ON THE ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS AMONG
SECOND LANGUAGE TERTIARY LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY**

IJAZAH: **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (TESL)**

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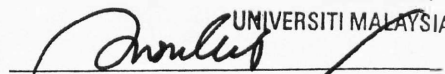
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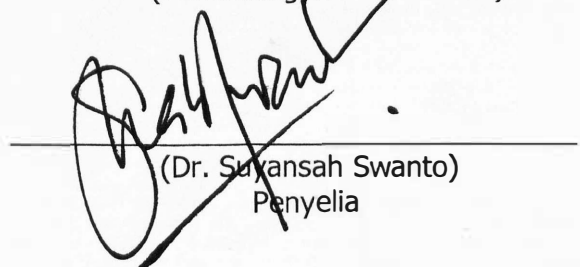
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents: Johari Abdullah and Feah Sati who believed in me that I could go far. Your love, devotion, nurture, and mostly your prayers would keep paving the way through my life even without you physically being beside me.

To my dearly loved husband, Mohd Yusoff Awang: Without your blessings, patience, encouragement, companionship, assistance and most importantly without your unconditional love, this study would never have been successful!

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Suyansah Swanto'. There is a small black dot to the right of the signature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. Alhamdulillah, all praises to Allah for the strengths and His blessings in completing this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing occupies a very important place in the English language syllabus at tertiary level. However it is a skill that learners find most difficult to acquire and only a number of them manage to master the skill. This in-depth study of a pedagogical intervention attempts to investigate the effects of amalgamating a task-based approach and a process writing approach on the development of learners' academic writing skill. The participants were 138 undergraduate learners registered in the English for Academic Reading and Writing course at University Malaysia Sabah Labuan International Campus. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group with 69 learners in each group. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. A pre-test, post-test and written assignments were given to the participants for assessing their improvement in their academic writing skills. The tests and the assignment were scored by three experienced ESL raters with a standardized writing assessment rubric. To determine the effects of the task-based process writing approach on the significant improvement of the experimental group's academic writing skills, their drafts and final essays were scored with the same standardized writing assessment rubric. This would verify if there are significant differences between each criteria of the writing composition. Statistical analysis, that is, the independent-samples t-tests and paired-samples t-tests via SPSS computer program were used to determine the results from the quantitative data. These quantitative results were further triangulated by analyzing the five-point Likert scale questionnaire of both groups and the students' reflection of the participants in the experimental group. Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data revealed significant effects of the task-based process writing approach on the development of learners' academic writing skills. The findings of this study have confirmed that the task-based process writing have had significant effects to the development of the undergraduate second language learners whereby they have showed improvements in their tests results and they have also given constructive responses from the questionnaire and student reflection. Hence, this study has demonstrated that teaching novice writers how to write effective academic assignments through a constructive instructional method should in fact constitute an important component in structuring and implementing English for Academic Reading and Writing course intended to promote academic literacy.

**KEBERKESANAN 'TASK-BASED PROCESS WRITING APPROACH' KE ATAS
KEMAHIRAN PENULISAN AKADEMIK DI KALANGAN PELAJAR
INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI: SATU KAJIAN KES**

Penulisan akademik menduduki tempat yang sangat penting dalam sukatan pelajaran bahasa Inggeris di peringkat tertiar. Walau bagaimanapun, kebanyakan pelajar mendapati kemahiran tersebut amat sukar di perolehi dan hanya sebilangan kecil yang benar-benar mampu menguasainya. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat kesan gabungan kaedah pengajaran berasaskan teknik tugas dan teknik proses dalam penulisan pada kemajuan kemahiran penulisan akademik pelajar. Sampel kajian terdiri dari 138 pelajar prasiswazah yang telah mendaftar di dalam kursus English for Academic Reading and Writing di Universiti Malaysia Sabah Kampus Antarabangsa Labuan. Pelajar-pelajar ini dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan: kumpulan eksperimen dan kumpulan kawalan dengan bilangan 69 pelajar dalam setiap kumpulan. Ujian pra, ujian pasca dan tugas bertulis diberikan kepada pelajar untuk menilai peningkatan mereka dalam kemahiran penulisan akademik. Ujian dan tugas mereka telah dinilai oleh tiga orang tenaga pengajar bahasa Inggeris yang berpengalaman di dalam bidang ini dengan menggunakan satu rubric penilaian penulisan yang seragam. Pada masa yang sama, untuk menentukan keberkesanan kaedah pengajaran inovatif ini ke atas kemahiran penulisan akademik pelajar, draf dan esei akhir yang dihasilkan oleh pelajar dalam kumpulan eksperimen telah dinilai, dengan setiap kriteria dalam komposisi penulisan ditanda. Ini akan mengesahkan jika terdapat perbezaan yang ketara diantara kriteria ini. Keputusan kuantitatif ini ditriangulasikan dengan analisis soal selidik skala Likert yang diberikan kepada kedua-dua kumpulan serta analisis nota reflektif pelajar dalam kumpulan eksperimen. Analisis data kuantitatif dan kualitatif telah menunjukkan kesan yang ketara kaedah inovatif ini terhadap peningkatan penguasaan pelajar dalam penulisan akademik. Dapatan kajian ini juga telah menunjukkan bahawa dalam usaha mengembangkan dan meningkatkan penulisan akademik pelajar, kaedah pengajaran yang kreatif dan konstruktif merupakan satu komponen yang penting dalam penstrukturan dan pelaksanaan kursus English for Academic Reading and Writing yang bertujuan untuk memperbaiki dan meningkatkan literasi akademik dikalangan pelajar di pusat pengajian tinggi.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

A never-ending story that we continuously hear is the issue of the unsatisfactory performance in English among Malaysian learners especially the ones studying in public universities. It was in fact stated by Abraham (cited in Gaudart, 1992) that the most acute criticism levelled at instructors of English in Malaysia is not so much that learners have passed the standard examinations at the SRP or SPM levels, but that those who have obtained passes and have managed to obtain entrance to colleges and universities or to secure employment in government departments and private firms are unable to speak or write English with fluency and confidence. Even at the globalised era or as it can be called the era of technology, the words of Abraham is a mirror of the concern mentioned earlier. We still observe and read about excellent percentage of passing grades in the English language papers in the public examinations, however, many of them are neither fluent nor confident to speak, read and write in English (Vinodini Murugesan, 2003).

A statement made by Mustapa Mohamad (cited in Chapman, 2007) has further emphasized the level of proficiency in English as it was found that one third of learners who graduated from public universities have very low English proficiency. Even more when the concerns of the declining of learners' English skills have risen in recent years with employers citing this as a major weakness among graduates (Gooch, 2009). Awang Had Salleh (2003) has earlier expressed great concern over Malaysian learners' needs to become proficient English users in order to access knowledge and information available in English as well as to be able to communicate successfully, thus suggesting the important position the learners may hold in the future. Gurmeet Kaur, Top Glove Corporation assistant human resource manager (cited in Aruna, 2011) further emphasized that the level of English is still poor, although we have noticed a slight improvement compared with previous

years. The poor level of English and lack of self-confidence are the main reasons for concern, said employers at the Malaysia Career and Training Fair (cited in Aruna, 2011). Today these words are being repeated as Mahadevan (2013), State Private Sectors Affairs, Human Resources and NGOs committee chairman said, "Many multinational companies are finding it difficult to hire graduates who possess a fair command of the English language and besides this they also have to bear with graduate jobseekers who can only write in SMS jargon".

Why does this phenomenon exist even after more than ten years of learning English? The decline is largely due to a backwash effect from a change implemented in the early 1960s and 1970s when Bahasa Malaysia replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools and as the language used for official matters. This statement can be supported by a comment made by Suhaimi Ibrahim (cited in Azman Ujang, 2010), who has also blamed the system for the declining of Malaysian students' English proficiency. Suhaimi Ibrahim affirms that Malaysia need not start a debate on the importance of English but should mobilize all efforts to correct the weaknesses in the present education system which does not teach the language properly. He further stresses that the root to this problem is that those teaching English do not communicate in English where it is made a subject in class but is not practiced. In fact a statement made by Vigneswaran Kannan (2011) has further emphasized Suhaimi Ibrahim's statement in which Vigneswaran Kannan emphasizes that one of the major reasons for the continuous deterioration of Malaysian higher education quality is the high number of instructors or lecturers without lecturing or teaching skills.

Perhaps, both the statements given by Suhaimi Ibrahim and Vigneswaran Kannan are implying that one of the reasons affecting learners' English performance is the teaching of the language. This situation has yet to achieve far-reaching changes even now when Ranjit Singh Malhi (2012) stresses that the Malaysian educational system generally promotes surface and passive learning instead of deep and active learning which is crucial for creating a quality learning environment. Consequently, if the technique of teaching is to be one of the significant reasons for the unsatisfactory performance among learners, hence,