



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Teachers’ Behalf on Language Test Construction</b> .....  | 78  |
| <i>Nyak Mutia Ismail and Marisa Yoestara</i>   |     |
| <b>Empowering English Writing Students: Reflecting on Aspects of The Process That Helped Me Most?</b> .....                        | 85  |
| <i>Deron Walker</i>  |     |
| <b>Scope Ambiguity in <i>The Jakarta Post</i> Headline Articles Published in May 2015</b> .....                                    | 94  |
| <i>Hernita Ratna Aulia</i>   |     |
| <b>Syntactic Complexity in The Reading Materials of English for Academic Purposes Levels 1 – 3</b> .....                           | 102 |
| <i>Widdy Wijanti</i>   |     |
| <b>The Role of Students’ Motivational Self-Regulation in Structure III</b> .....   | 116 |
| <i>Thomas Wahyu Prabowo Mukti</i>  |     |
| <b>Teachers’ Understanding of Learner Autonomy in Indonesian Contexts: Findings from High Schools and Their Implications</b> ..... | 127 |
| <i>Dwi Agustina</i>  |     |
| <b>Vocabulary Enhancement of Female ESL Learners through Short Stories: A Rural/ Urban Perspective</b> .....                       | 133 |
| <i>Naseer Ahmed</i>  |     |
| <b>Teachers’ and Students’ Perception on The Frequent test: Vocabulary Course</b> .....  | 139 |
| <i>Elizabeth Wulan Wahyuningtyas and Fransiska Selvy Wulandari</i>   |     |
| <b>Reading Habits in Digital Era: A Research on The Students in Borneo University</b> .....  | 147 |
| <i>Firima Zona Tanjung, Ridwan, and Uli Agustina Gultom</i>  |     |
| <b>Errors and Corrective Feedback in Writing: Implications to Our Classroom Practices</b> .....                                    | 158 |
| <i>Maria Corazon Saturnina A. Castro</i>   |     |

|             |            |          |                    |                            |  |
|-------------|------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|
| LLT Journal | Vol.<br>20 | No.<br>2 | Pages:<br>78 - 158 | Yogyakarta<br>October 2017 | e-ISSN: 2579-9533<br>p-ISSN: 1410-7201 |
|-------------|------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|

Published by  
English Language Education Study Program  
Sanata Dharma University



Published by  
English Language Education Study Program  
Sanata Dharma University

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Teachers' Behalf on Language Test Construction</b> .....  | 78  |
| <i>Nyak Mutia Ismail and Marisa Yoestara</i>   |     |
| <b>Empowering English Writing Students: Reflecting on Aspects of The Process That Helped Me Most?</b> .....                        | 85  |
| <i>Deron Walker</i>  |     |
| <b>Scope Ambiguity in <i>The Jakarta Post</i> Headline Articles Published in May 2015</b> .....                                    | 94  |
| <i>Hernita Ratna Aulia</i>   |     |
| <b>Syntactic Complexity in The Reading Materials of English for Academic Purposes Levels 1 – 3</b> .....                           | 102 |
| <i>Widdy Wijanti</i>   |     |
| <b>The Role of Students' Motivational Self-Regulation in Structure III</b> .....   | 116 |
| <i>Thomas Wahyu Prabowo Mukti</i>  |     |
| <b>Teachers' Understanding of Learner Autonomy in Indonesian Contexts: Findings from High Schools and Their Implications</b> ..... | 127 |
| <i>Dwi Agustina</i>  |     |
| <b>Vocabulary Enhancement of Female ESL Learners through Short Stories: A Rural/ Urban Perspective</b> .....                       | 133 |
| <i>Naseer Ahmed</i>  |     |
| <b>Teachers' and Students' Perception on The Frequent test: Vocabulary Course</b> .....  | 139 |
| <i>Elizabeth Wulan Wahyuningtyas and Fransiska Selvy Wulandari</i>   |     |
| <b>Reading Habits in Digital Era: A Research on The Students in Borneo University</b> .....  | 147 |
| <i>Firima Zona Tanjung, Ridwan, and Uli Agustina Gultom</i>  |     |
| <b>Errors and Corrective Feedback in Writing: Implications to Our Classroom Practices</b> .....                                    | 158 |
| <i>Maria Corazon Saturnina A. Castro</i>   |     |



**LLT Journal**

A Journal on Language and Language Teaching

- Chairman : Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo  
Vice Chairman : J. Bismoko  
Editor-in-Chief : Barli Bram  
Editors : Patricia Angelina Lasut, Priyatno Ardi, Joseph Sorell and  
Concilianus Laos Mbato  
Reviewers : Ashadi Ashadi, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Novita Dewi, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia  
Willy A Renandya, National Institute of Education, Singapore, Singapore  
Nik Aloesnita Nik Moh Alwi, Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Malaysia  
Maria Corazon S. A Castro, University of the Philippines, Philippines  
Deron Walker, California Baptist University, United States  
Christine Anita Xavier, National Institute of Education, Singapore  
Ignatius Harjanto, Widya Mandala Catholic University, Surabaya, Indonesia  
Paulus Kuswandono, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Yohana Veniranda, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Website Staff : Ricadonna Alvita  
ISSN : p-ISSN 1410-7201; e-ISSN 2579-9533  
Address : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan,  
Universitas Sanata Dharma  
Mrican, Tromol Pos 29  
Yogyakarta – 55002  
Phones : (0274) 513301, 515352, ext. 1220  
Fax : (0274) 562383

**Notes on article contribution:**

*Language and Language Teaching Journal (LLT Journal)*, to appear twice a year (in April and October) for teachers and students, is published by the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University. This journal welcomes articles on language and language teaching written in English.

**Indexed in:**



## TEACHERS' BEHALF ON LANGUAGE TEST CONSTRUCTION

**Nyak Mutia Ismail and Marisa Yoestara**

Syiah Kuala University and Serambi Mekkah University, Aceh, Indonesia

[nyakmutiaismail2010@gmail.com](mailto:nyakmutiaismail2010@gmail.com)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200201](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200201)

received 12 May 2017; revised 15 July 2017; accepted 10 August 2017

### **Abstract**

There are four steps necessarily to be conducted when designing multiple-choice test items, namely setting the objective, building both concise stems and options, determining one correct answer, employing item indices to accept or discarding items (Brown, 2004). As a matter of fact, most teachers in Aceh are not very well-informed about the fourth step and they accept all items as they are. This study focuses on high school teachers who undergo all of the steps offered in the framework when constructing multiple-choice items for English summative test(s). The qualitative method using framework analysis was used in obtaining the data. A questionnaire was distributed to 15 teachers. The analysis process was carried out through three-step analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The results depict that the teachers hardly conduct the index determining step or try-outs when constructing a test. This implies that there is no empirical warrant that all items are worth tested and can be the fundamentals for decision-making when assessing and evaluating students' test results.

**Keywords:** test construction, language testing, multiple-choice items, summative test, and assessment and evaluation.

### **Introduction**

Tests have long been used in any scholastic disciplines to measure learners' ability in their cognitive achievement, including in language teaching. Tests inform language teachers and instructors how far their students have mastered the materials taught prior to the test(s). Then the test result is used as an assessment parameter in setting their students level of ability—whether they are high- or low-performance students. Further, these assessments are used as hallmarks for wider domain in teaching and learning process which is evaluation. Evaluation could affect not only impersonal teaching policy such as technique and methodology applications, classroom managements, and teaching-material selections; but also imprint on the refinement of curriculum—the holistically massive setting of pedagogical policy. Thereunto, teachers and instructors are demanded to construct qualified test to administer to their students.

Particularly in language testing, English teachers nowadays design more multiple choice items in school summative test. Some considerations are worth to be take into account. First, these items are the ones consuming much time in designing and even can promote guessing and cheating during the administration process (Hughes, 2003). Second, from a survey done by the authors through

several schools in Banda Aceh with the English teachers, scarcely do teachers at school carry out a test try-out for a summative test, none of them were known to revise/opt out the unqualified items. Some schools even reuse the items for more than three years without knowing whether the items are indeed qualified for the students.

From some previous studies done in Aceh about multiple choice test item construction, below are presented three of them. The first one is a study by Setiyana (2016) at MAN Boarding School, Meulaboh. Her study focused on finding the validity, reliability, and item analysis of the test items. She employed checklists and document analysis during her data collection. The result showed that the test validity was poor but the reliability was high. Meanwhile the index difficulty was mostly easy; the discriminative index was also good; and more than 50% of the distractors were effective. The second one is a study by Khairunnisak (2016) which was investigating the validity and reliability of summative test in SMAN 1 Gandapura, Bireuen, Aceh, Indonesia. She employed a content analysis which worked fully on examining the multiple choice test item designed by the teachers at the school. The findings suggest that the items which tested reading comprehension were valid, but the items testing writing skills were not valid. Besides, the item indices from the items were also scrutinized. In item difficulty, she found that most items are at the easy level, but the discriminative index and distractors' efficiency were sufficient. Lastly, a study conducted by Syahputri & Ismail (2017) about construct validity of summative test items in a high school in Nagan Raya, Aceh, Indonesia. This study aimed at finding out whether the summative test items were compatible with the curriculum and syllabus offered by the Indonesia ministry of education. A qualitative design was employed; and in data collection process, the authors collected data through both analyzing the summative test content and interviewing the English teachers who designed the test at the school. From the findings, it was figured out that the summative test items in a Nagan Rayan high school were compatible with the national curriculum. From the interview, it was informed that the teachers also do process evaluation, instead of test evaluation alone, as suggested in the Indonesian curriculum 2013.

In further attempt to provide empirical data on this case, the authors are earnestly shedding light to the following question: In constructing multiple choice items, what steps are frequently skipped by high school English teachers in Banda Aceh?

### ***Good Test Criteria***

The characteristics of good items should inquire validity, reliability, as well as test piloting and revising where item analysis is satisfied (Qu & Zhang, 2013). Undeniably, the guide-setting process in a test construction is definitely critical since the test validity and reliability are intended as the core qualification for a test to be feasible (Haladyna, 2004; Cunnigham, et.al, 2013). Test validity is basic to any kinds of test-items as it really measures what the test is designed to measure, not any issues out of it (Cyril, 2005). In general, there are two points that most Acehnese teachers have seen as test validity, which are face validity and construct validity. The initial is a certainty that students do have knowledge on the test

items. And the latter is that the items are on the curricular syllabus—but Nunally (1972) refers to this as a case of reliability. Indeed, this is only the beginning steps of determining the test validity as the per-item validity has to be determined again. This is what most Acehnese teachers are lacking information about.

Next, it is test reliability which shows that the students' score remain particularly in a certain score-spectrum without drastic score-loss or gain. For example, a student scores 77 in a test, and two weeks later she/he scores 80. This score increase is still considered reliable unless there is an extreme increase. The test reliability is an index on where the final decision is based and this is a prerequisite to validity. A teacher cannot base his/her decision on a test which is not both valid and reliable. Hughes (2003) urges two conditions that can collapse test reliability, they are 1). The interaction between the examinees and the test since human beings are not machines and there is a minimum possibility a person can score in the same score-range after several time span; and 2). It is the scoring system—especially for essay items—which solely involves human beings, too, in the process. Regardless of these conditions, an unreliable test is hardly worth anything (Chiedu & Omenogor, 2014).

### ***Steps in Test Construction***

Cohen & Wollack (2015) suggest three general steps in a test construction. The initial step is *preparing the blueprints*—the process in which the purposes and objectives of the test are determined. This step is crucial since lack of blueprint preparation may lead to opaque test objectives. Next, it is *Item Development*. In this step, several test items are designed corresponding to each test objective(s). The latest to this is defining *Item Format* in where the test items will be intensified in multiple-choice, essay, cloze-test, or other formats. In addition, balance of all test objectives should be really deliberated in the last process.

In regard of particularly detailed steps in constructing multiple-choice items, Brown (2004) offers four steps. The foremost step to deal with designing the specific objective of the test items. For instance, when the specified topic is about grammar, the test designers should narrow the subtopic whether to test the *yes/no or wh-questions, word orders, direct/indirect speech, passive voice*, and so forth. Secondly, it is essential to design both stems and distractors in the simplest and most direct way. In a multiple choice question, a stem is the first introductory part where the examinees look for the intended answer, and distractors are wrong options excluding one and only single correct answer. The stem is not necessarily to be so long and intricate that the examinees might improvise—or even lose—their concentration on understanding the stem rather on deciding the correct answer while doing the item(s). The third move is to ascertain that there is only one exclusively correct answer, without any other possible correct answer instead. The last step is to try-out the test items to see their item indices. From the indices, test designers can decide whether to approve, revise, or override the item(s). There are three elements in item indexing, *i.e.*: item facility—to inspect the items' difficulty, item discrimination—to examine the items' ability in discriminating higher-group and lower-group students, and distractor efficiency—which shows effectual distractors that tempt the test-takers, especially from the lower group.

For a distractor to be claimed efficient, it has to be chosen by at least 2% of the whole test-takers (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007).

### Method

The research methodology employed was basically qualitative design where the authors searched for the data quality instead of quantity. To be more specific, the framework analysis was used during the data collection. Based on the framework for multiple choice designed by Brown (2004), Table 1 provides some questions distributed to high school teachers during the data gathering. The premises were in Bahasa Indonesia and the respondents should answer *yes* or *no*.

Table 1. Questionnaire premises (developed based on Brown (2004))

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>1st principle</b> | I determined the test purpose (remedial, formative, summative, etc)                                    |
|                      | I determined the test objective (speaking, writing, grammar, etc)                                      |
| <b>2nd principle</b> | I wrote the stems by directly citing from textbooks.   |
|                      | I wrote the stems in direct and simple sentences.  |
|                      | I wrote the distractors by directly citing from textbooks.   |
|                      | I wrote the distractors in direct and simple sentences.  |
|                      | I wrote the distractors in approximately similar length.   |
| <b>3rd principle</b> | I wrote the distractors in homogeneous part of speech.   |
|                      | I only designed one single correct answer without any possibilities for ambiguity.                     |
| <b>4th principle</b> | I tried out the test items I have designed.  |
|                      | I applied item analysis (index of difficulty, index of discrimination, and distractor's effectiveness) |
|                      | I revised or discard the items with poor index.  |
|                      | I decide type of scoring I would implement.  |
|                      | I give feedback to students after the test.  |

The questionnaires were distributed to 15 high school teachers in Banda Aceh. Nine of them were senior high school teachers and the rest was junior high school teachers. They were chosen as the respondents of this study because they had been teaching high school for more than three years and they had designed various tests as well, including formative, summative, or remedial tests in the form of multiple-choice, essays, cloze-test, and so on. The data collection process was carried out within March-May, 2017.

### Findings and Discussion

This section narrates the findings on this study followed by some theoretical grounding in the discussions. Figure 1 shows the findings of the steps that are done and not done by the teachers when constructing English test. Q stands for question, referring the ones to the questionnaire, blue bar represents the answer *yes*, and the red bar represents the answer *no*.

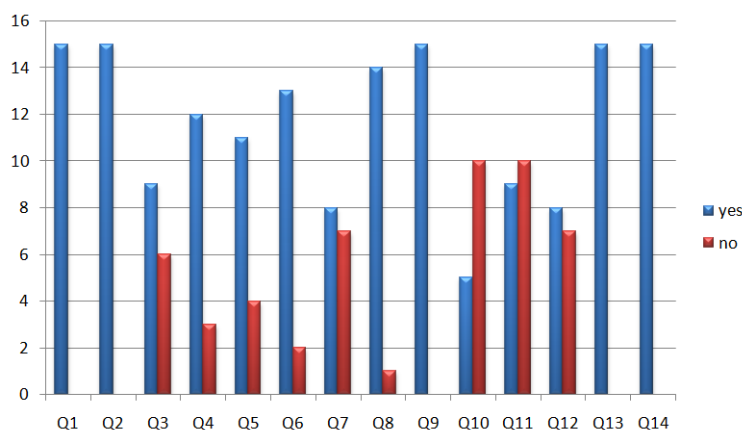


Figure 1. Steps done by teachers in constructing English tests

Figure 1 shows the total number of participants who determined the purpose and objective of test before they design it. Determining the purpose and objective of a test is a part of the first principle. It can be seen that all teachers perform step one and two, namely identifying the purpose and objective of the test. As mentioned by Jabbarifar (2009), setting purposes and objectives before designing a test is important because it lines out the rationale why a test is constructed, how a test is going to be administered, and what activities are going to be carried out in a test.

Next, the bars showing the responses or question three to eight reveals that there are some teachers who do not follow the rules offered in the second principle in language test construction. In response to Q3 and Q5, six teachers cited directly the sentences from textbooks and four of them also cited the distractors directly. According to Brown (2004), it is not suggested to quote both stems and distractors directly from textbooks without modifying them. Then, in Q4, three teachers do not design stems in direct and simple sentences. The response is similar to Q6 where two teachers do not make the sentences clear and simple in the distractors. Answering Q7, seven teachers informed that they do not write the distractors in similar length. In Q8, only one of them who does not write the distractors in a homogenous part of speech. Burton et al. (1991) urge that the sentences used in the stems and distractors of multiple choice items should be clear and concise. The sentences do not have to be complete. The following is an example taken from Burton et al. (1991, p.10).

*A market clearing price is a price at which:*

- a. Demand exceeds supply.*
- b. \*Supply equals demand.*
- c. Supply exceeds demand.*

The example shows that the stem is not in a complete sentence, and neither are the distractors. The sentences are also in similar length and have the same part of speech – a simple sentence pattern of Subject-Verb-Object is employed in the example. This is considered as the directness and precision of the multiple choice

test items. In an objective test like multiple choice, the stems should be clear and concise (Zimmaro, 2010). Later, the response to Q9 shows that all teachers only design one and only best answer in the test. This is a framework offered in the third principle. Brown (2004) and Zimmaro (2010) also add that in multiple-choice, there should only be one correct answer while other options only act as the distractors.

Finally, in the fourth principle, Figure 1 shows the most striking red bars in Q10 and Q11. There are 10 teachers who do not undergo these steps, namely trying-out the test items and determining the item analysis. In Q12, we can see 7 teachers do not revise their test items. Since there were three teachers (from 15 respondents) who work at a private school, the authors were informed that in their school they have trainings and advisory boards for testing development. Therefore, they have to do the try-outs, determine the item analysis indices, and revise the test items before administrating the tests. On the contrary, there is no such information from the other teachers who work at public schools. Apparently, more ventures should be done to increase teachers' competence in Indonesia—including test development competence. As it is surmised by Rahman et al. (2015), based on teachers' competence test result in 2014, Indonesian teachers still face serious challenges in content knowledge. When they are still struggling with the content knowledge, it is very unlikely for them to succeed in developing test items, especially in trying-outs and revising. However, the teachers informed that they do decide the types of scoring systems they use beforehand and give feedback to students after the tests which can be seen in response to Q13 and Q14.

### **Conclusion**

Since this study investigates which principle(s) Acehese teachers mostly ignore during the test construction, there are two conclusions that can be drawn from the results. First, most teachers in Aceh are not accustomed to performing the fourth principle given by Brown (2004) in designing multiple choice test items, namely examining the item analysis. Second, the teachers do not try-out the test items because they are not well-informed about doing the try-outs with the test items and examining the validity, reliability, and other indices of the test items.

These results imply that most teachers only copy and reuse the test items from year to year without knowing whether the items still fit the current students' ability. A mild suggestion might be addressed to high school stakeholders to organize trainings on language testing and evaluation for their teachers.

Finally, future studies can ponder on steps that teachers use when designing other types of test items, such as essays, cloze-tests, matching, true-false, and so on. Besides, the verification on how the teachers conducted the subjective scoring with such tests may also be interesting to study.

### **References**

- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

- Burton, S. J., Sudweeks, R. R., Merrill, P. F. & Wood, B. (1991). *How to prepare better multiple-choice test items: Guidelines for university faculty*. Utah, Brigham Young University Testing Service.
- Chiedu, R. E. & Omenogor, H. D. (2014). The concept of reliability in language testing: issues and solutions. *Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction*, 8 (1).
- Cohen, A. S. & Wollack, J. A. (2015). *Handbook on test development: Helpful tips for creating reliable and valid classroom tests*. Retrieved from: <https://testing.wisc.edu>
- Cuningham, S. A., Callahan, S. M. & Feld, J. K. (2013). *Item development and test construction guidelines*. Tucson, AZ: Assessment Technology, Inc.
- Cyril, W. J. (2005). *Language testings and validations*. Hampshire, UK: McMillan Publishers.
- Fulcher, G. & F. Davidson. (2007). *Language testing and assessment*. Boston: Routledge.
- Haladyna, T. M. (2004). *Developing and validating multiple-choice items*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jabbarifar, T. (2009). The importance of classroom assessment and Evaluation in educational system. In *The Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of Teaching and Learning, INTI University College, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia*.
- Khairunnisak. (2016). *The item analysis of English summative tests* (Unpublished master thesis). Syiah Kuala University.
- Nunally, J. C. (1982). Reliability of measurement. *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 4, 15-16.
- Qu, W. & C. Zhang. (2013). The analysis of summative assessment and formative assessment and their roles in college English assessment systems. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(2), 78-92.
- Rahman, B., Abdurrahman, A., Kadaryanto, B. & Rusminto, N. E. (2015). Teacher-based scaffolding as a teacher professional development program in Indonesia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40 (11).
- Setiyana, R. (2016). Analysis of summative tests for English. *English Education Journal*, 7(4), 433-447.
- Syahputri, V. N. & Ismail, N. M. (2017). English summative test and national curriculum: The compatibility. In *The Proceeding of the 6th Aceh Development International Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*.
- Zimmaro, D. M. (2010). *Writing good multiple-choice exams*. Retrieved from: <https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Writing-Good-Multiple-Choice-Exams-04-28-10.pdf>

## **EMPOWERING ENGLISH WRITING STUDENTS: REFLECTING ON ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS THAT HELPED ME MOST?**

**Deron Walker**

California Baptist University, California, USA

[dwalker@calbaptist.edu](mailto:dwalker@calbaptist.edu)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200202](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200202)

received 2 June 2017; revised 5 July 2017; accepted 30 September 2017

### **Abstract**

Process-oriented writing instruction has been advocated for both L1 and L2 writing classrooms since the 1960s. Empowering learner autonomy may best occur through non-direct instruction (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), engaging students in social learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and creating workshop-like classrooms (Murray, 2004). Any number of techniques can be used, preferably in-sync with each other, to accomplish such an approach. This study will examine the results of some recent action research in the classroom to attempt to ascertain among various process-techniques, designed to accomplish the aforementioned aspects of process-oriented instruction, which techniques (CODA paradigm / rubrics, journals, peer reviews, teacher conferences, etc.) were most useful to developmental students, especially from their own points of view. Student voices were collected through oral presentations, instructor evaluations, and classroom observations in an American classroom where native English speaking and non-native English speaking writers wrestled with freshman level developmental writing side-by-side.

Keywords: journals, peer review, teacher conference

### **Introduction**

Process writing instruction has been en vogue since the 1960s. Donald Murray (2004), the “writer who taught writing,” advocated turning writing classes into workshops and teaching by sitting down and listening to students and by modeling instead of just relying on standup lecture. This is the vision I have adopted and used in my own writing classes, both L1 and L2, for over 20 years. It has served me well. My writing classes have been well evaluated (93-95% approval at the university level for the past 12 years), and several university presidential writing award winners have emerged from those classes (12 placing in the top 3, 5 winning the award) in the same amount of time. Many students have indeed benefited from this type of instruction as both research and my own experience confirm.

Essentially, there are many techniques which can effectively be used to turn writing classrooms into workshop-style atmospheres. Along with Murray’s workshop-orientation, other useful theories include capitalizing on engaging

students in social learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and implementing instruction in a non-direct style whenever possible to increase learner autonomy and empower student writers to take control and gain voice over their own writing and writing processes. Some useful techniques in writing pedagogy for executing such a theoretical approach, then, include engaging students in prewriting activities such as journaling; training students in peer review and holding peer review sessions with them for each formal paper prior to grading it as a teacher, and conferencing with students about their work as much as possible (Walker, 2006, 2001, 2016). These are all techniques that I personally use in addition to others with the writing classes I teach at California Baptist University, English 103 (remedial freshmen), English 113 (entry level composition), and English 350 (research writing for English majors). The first two classes will be the subject of this paper. The latter research writing class is a bit advanced for examination of what works with the developmental writers who I will address in this presentation.

As mentioned, any worthwhile, theoretically-sound composition course these days, would strive to get into the students' writing processes and empower them by upgrading those processes from prewriting to revision in every phase along the way. Briefly, we will overview some techniques which can be used with either L1 or L2 writing students in a writing course to facilitate the upgrading of their writing processes in a college writing course. First of all, any planning techniques geared toward either invention (generating) of ideas or organizing those ideas may be helpful to the multitude of students who often report staring at a blank computer screen or sheet of paper and complain they have difficulty getting started. Activities such as outlining, brainstorming, webbing / clustering, developing concept charts, journaling and freewriting can all be helpful to enable the student to avoid procrastination and plan and organize more efficiently in order to form the blueprint of his or her essay assignment (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014).

This paper will employ a naturalistic inquiry into representative classes selected that I teach from the basic freshman writing ENG 103 (remedial) and ENG 113 (entry level) series of courses offered at California Baptist University. Although I offer students a handout and explanations regarding all of the aforementioned prewriting activities, I typically focus on having students write reflective journals and free writes as mandatory parts of the course that are integrated into units where students will read model essays and explore various genres of writing, culminating with them writing formal essays representing each genre (ENG 103: narration, process, definition, cause and effect; ENG 113 autobiography, observation, evaluation, and position paper). Many of the previously listed prewriting activities hold value for helping students to plan essays by generating and organizing their ideas (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014). Likewise, I encourage students to incorporate such activities into their "toolbox" of prewriting activities according to their own interests and skills as well as considering the challenges of each writing situation. Nevertheless, I do favor journal writing in general and free writing in particular as a focus for building students' writing processes and supporting other class activities as well.

Many scholars have noted a wide variety of benefits that journal writing in general and free writing in particular have for L1 and L2 writers. For L1 writers, journals in general and free writes in particular have helped native English speakers move from writer-based to develop reader-based prose (Flowers, 1979), gain practice and confidence over the conventions of the university (Bartholomae, 1985) and more fully develop their ideas and writing skills by being allowed to take risks in a low anxiety environment (Elbow, 1973, 1981, 2000; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Murray, 2004). For L2 writers many of these benefits apply and more. Second language writers, in addition to the aforementioned, also are aided in negotiating between the rhetorical writing cultures of the L1 and L2 while also increasing their writing fluency and building an enhanced cultural identity as a second language learner (Walker, 2016; Walker & Guan Lau, 2011; Xing, Wang and Spencer, 2008). Both L1 and L2 writers can use journals as speaking notes that can facilitate Vygotskian (1978) social learning. Moreover, both L1 and L2 writers may benefit if the journals are also used to support the non-direct instruction of teacher conferencing, peer review, and ethnography (Walker, 2016).

After getting students started with prewrites, reflective journals and free writes, much more needs to be done to aid the other parts of the writing process, namely, drafting and revision. One way that I keep the students clear on expectations of the formal writing assignment is to construct a rubric based on a well explained handout (CODA)---laying down the expectations of the essay in clear and concise terms that are then built into the rubric that the student will see when they receive their writing prompt. The acronym CODA that I use in rubrics to assess writing stands for Controlling Idea, Organization, Development, and Audience (CODA). I have used this rubric successfully to rate student writing in my own research (Walker, 2004, 2006) and in many years of teaching.

On the revision side of the process, students are taught techniques to break down their papers with CODA and the assistance of peer reviews from classmates and teacher conferences using non-direct instruction (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994; Walker, 2006, 2011). All of these techniques are well established in research as being effective if set up carefully and implemented properly, often in tandem with each other. My many years of teaching experience also bears this out as evidenced in high teacher evaluations, and numerous successes among students, including competing well for and often winning presidential writing awards. Nevertheless, what is not often discussed is how the combination of such techniques is received by students, their voices, and what they personally value most. This paper, then seeks to do just that. Conducting a naturalistic inquiry with some action research, two distinct levels of freshman writing will be examined using student evaluations and end of semester presentations to find out what pedagogical techniques students thought helped them the most to build their processes and become better writers in these classes.

## **Method**

The method for this qualitative examination of action research was to teach ENG 103 and 113 classes in the usual way by integrating the aforementioned elements of process approach: instruction in prewriting, focus on journals, model

readings, practice with formal essay with open revision, peer review, teacher conferencing, and explicit instruction in revision and editing strategies. At the end of the semester, students delivered an oral presentation discussing their growth and struggles as writers and where they planned to go from here in terms of development. It is important to note, the prompt for this assignment did not explicitly ask them to discuss what elements in the course were most useful to help their improvement. They were only asked such questions during the question and answer portions of their presentations and only to clarify statements they had already made. Nevertheless, students often did, in an unsolicited manner, discuss what helped them improve the most. This is why the question mark exists in the title of this paper. Students were instructed to reflect on their own writing processes and growth but not necessarily the quality of the course. However, many of them did just that. They reflected on all of it together. Therefore, most of the data on what helped students most came from those oral presentations.

Two recent English freshman writing courses were randomly selected for data analysis in this way: one ENG 103 Writing for University Success (remedial) and one ENG 113 English Composition (standard entry course). In the ENG 103, 20 students began the semester while 14 students completed it successfully with a “Pass” (P) grade as it is a Pass / Fail course. Out of those 20 students, 7 came from Spanish speaking homes, 1 Arabic, 1 Portuguese, and 1 Chinese. Meanwhile, 12 of the ENG 103 students were female while 8 were male, overall. The materials collected from the ENG 103 course included 12 presentations (7 from females 5 from males) that yielded useful data, meaning they mentioned elements of the course in addition to their own growth as writers.

In the English 113 course, 22 students started the course while 18 completed it successfully with a grade C- or higher and made presentations. In terms of gender, 13 were females while 9 were males. Out of the original 22 students, 10 came from homes where Spanish was spoken, 2 Arabic, 2 Tagalog, and 1 Chinese. Thus, there were a large number of what we may classify L2 writers in both of these freshmen writing courses. The ENG 113 course produced 14 total presentations (8 from females and 6 from males) with data useful for analysis in the same manner. Notes were taken on the presentations by the instructor who used a key word corpus search by hand to find terms or synonyms to the key terms for the purpose on analyzing student growth, struggles, and parts of their processes that student felt were improved by which techniques with results tabulated and discussed.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The oral presentation assignment that concluded my ENG 103 and ENG 113 courses was the same identical assignment. The assignment called for students to make a 5-10-minute oral presentation of their work for the entire semester highlighting the growths and struggles of their writing and writing process while reflecting on their areas of improvement and continued struggle. The purpose was to provide students with oral communication experience while also cultivating reflective and higher order critical thinking skills. Table 1 below illustrates areas where ENG 103 students indicated growth and struggle in their

writing and writing processes. Table 2 delineates student responses for what they believed helped them the most with their writing process and writing improvement.

Table 1. ENG 103 Students Professed Areas of Growth and Continued Struggle

| <b>Area</b>                   | <b>Growth</b>          | <b>Struggles</b>                 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Outlining / Organization      | 6                      | 2 (1 choppy paragraphs)          |
| Detail / Argument             | 5(t-chart, brainstorm) | 4 (1 lack examples)              |
| Confidence                    | 5                      |                                  |
| Prewriting Activities         | 4                      | 0                                |
| Transitions                   | 3                      | 0                                |
| Grammar: Syntax / Punctuation | 3                      | 10 (5 punctuation, 1 "spelling") |
| Vocabulary                    | 2                      | 0                                |
| Thesis                        | 2                      | 1                                |
| Intro                         | 2                      | 1                                |
| Openness "embracing critique" | 2                      | 0                                |
| Revision                      | 2                      | 0                                |
| Conclusion                    | 2                      | 2                                |
| MLA / APA style               | 1                      | 2                                |
| Time Management               | 1                      | 1                                |
| Creativity                    | 1                      | 0                                |
| Timed Essay                   | 1                      | 0                                |
| Less emotion                  | 1                      | 0                                |

Table 2. Techniques ENG 103 Students Reported as Helpful to Their Writing or Their Processes

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Peer Review                 | 8 |
| Free write                  | 6 |
| Written Instructor Feedback | 3 |
| Journals                    | 2 |
| Looping                     | 2 |
| Timed Essay                 | 1 |

Taken together, Tables 1 and 2 tell a story about how students felt concerning their progress, struggles and what helped them in ENG 103. For the most part, the two tables represent a consistency in the findings. The ENG 103 students reported the most growth in organization, detailed argument, prewriting and confidence. From journal writing to CODA to peer review and teacher conferencing, all working in tandem, this is what the writing course was designed

to do while using a research-based process approach. According to the students (10 of 12 respondents) who took the class, emphasis on prewriting invention activities such as free write (6), journals (2), and looping (2) was instrumental in helping them to organize more effectively and produce more detailed arguments, as it should. In respect to journals and free writes, one of the most memorable student comments was, “Journals were great because I could write about a topic I knew about or wanted to learn about. Journals really helped me organize what I was going to write about” (JO). Another student remarked on the fluency and reflective nature of free writes and journals, “Free writes caused me to write about topics or issues that I had an opinion on helped me to get used to typing short papers in a limited amount of time...great practice for analyzing others papers as well as my own “(AK).

On the revision side, ENG 103 students valued feedback greatly in many forms (11-12 respondents), especially peer review (8) and instructor written feedback (3). Successful peer review sessions often build confidence in developing writers as they gain confidence in hearing both encouragement as well as criticism from peers and internalize writing standards by evaluating them in their peers’ writing as well as their own. One student greatly appreciated the revision tips received, “The strategies that I have learned to help improve my run-on sentences is re-reading the paper a couple of hours after writing it or waiting a couple of days and reading it OUT LOUD...that’s the best advice ever” (AE).

Table 3 below illustrates areas where ENG 113 students indicated growth and struggle in their writing and writing processes. Table 4 delineates student responses for what they believe helped them the most with their writing process and writing improvement.

Table 3. ENG 113 Students Professed Areas of Growth and Struggle

| Area                          | Growth | Struggles             |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Thesis                        | 6      | 0                     |
| Outlining / organization      | 5      | 2                     |
| Detail / Argument             | 4      | 6 (1 counterargument) |
| MLA / APA Style               | 4      | 4 (APA 2)             |
| Grammar: Syntax / Punctuation | 3      | 10 (Punctuation 6)    |
| Motivation                    | 3      | 0                     |
| Time Management               | 3      | 3                     |
| Writing Skills                | 3      | 0                     |
| Confidence                    | 2      | 0                     |
| Prewriting Activities         | 2      | 0                     |
| Seeking Help (tutor)          | 2      | 0                     |
| Spelling                      | 2      | 0                     |
| Reading Analysis              | 1      | 0                     |
| Sources                       | 1      | 0                     |
| Transitions                   | 1      | 1                     |

|                     |   |              |
|---------------------|---|--------------|
| Vocabulary          | 1 | 1            |
| Revision / Audience | 1 | 1 (Audience) |

Table 4. Techniques ENG 113 Students Reported as Helpful to Their Writing or Their Processes

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Instructor Writing Conferences | 10 |
| Peer Review                    | 8  |
| CODA                           | 6  |
| Free writing                   | 4  |
| Readings (Models)              | 4  |
| Workshop Sentences on Board    | 2  |
| Writing Feedback               | 1  |
| Journals                       | 1  |
| Prewriting                     | 1  |
| Tutor                          | 1  |
| Office Hours                   | 1  |

Taken together, Tables 3 and 4 tell a story about how students felt concerning their progress, struggles and what helped them in ENG 113. For the most part, the two tables represent a consistency in the findings. In Table 3, ENG 113 students most commonly reported that their greatest improvement occurred in thesis (6), organization (5), detail (4), and MLA / APA style (and source citation). These same ENG 113 students elaborated overwhelmingly that feedback in the form of instructor conferences (10-14) and peer review (8-14) were most helpful to them. Close behind in importance to students ranked CODA (6), free writing (4), and the use of model essays (4). In ENG 113 students' own words concerning free writing and journaling, "Journal Discussions helped because not everyone had the same opinions. We could get ideas from others" (MB). However, in ENG 113, most of the memorable quotes revolved around feedback received. Some of it praised peer review, "After reviewing myself I have my roommates or my best friend peer review" (AM). Most of it credited the effectiveness of writing conferences with the course instructor, especially in combination with other techniques such as use of model essays, "Office hours and conferences helped me...readings were fun to read and provided models" (CT)...or CODA, "CODA Helped me to control idea and organize...talking with Professor W. let you know what is wrong" (MA). As one student put it, the combination of all these techniques together in a writing course, properly sequenced and executed, can be powerful, "Conferences 1-1 actually explains to you why...free writing helped with speed...reading analysis teaches what is important in essays" (JR).

How do the two classes compare? The results appear to be very similar. In ENG 103, the remedial course, students reported the most improvement in organization, detail and confidence. Similarly, in ENG 113, students reported the greatest gain in thesis, organization, detail and MLA / APA. Thus, organization and detail were obviously prioritized in both classes and prized by students as a

valuable gain in their skills in both situations. It is very likely, then that the greater emphasis on thesis and MLA and APA in ENG 113 may represent more of a difference in the scope and nature of the class than any other factors. After all, the same instructor taught both classes largely in the same manner in terms of techniques and emphasis. However, ENG 113 ends with a small research paper and greater emphasis on MLA / APA source citation. ENG 103 has no such research paper. ENG 113 also has more skilled writers who may be starting to get a feel for proper thesis writing, which is emphasized in both courses. Likewise, both classes valued both prewriting free writes and other prewriting activities. Nevertheless, while students in both courses valued feedback, in ENG 113 instructor writing conferences received much greater credit as did CODA (establishing clear expectations for feedback and grading) for helping students to improve. This is probably due to the greater complexity of the ENG 113 course. In ENG 103 students write “mini-essays (1-3 paragraphs) on skill sets such as narration, process, definition, etc. Meanwhile, in ENG 113 students write more challenging full essays on autobiography, observation, evaluation and position paper.

### **Conclusion**

Process approaches to writing instruction are student-centered by nature. Half a century of process-oriented research has delivered us a set of techniques that carry out writing instruction effectively when used appropriately, as designed, especially in tandem, with clear theoretical understanding of how they work. Few studies, however, capture student voices regarding their own reflection on improvement and struggle in writing course and what they feel works best for them. Given that process-based instruction is a student-centered approach, this seems odd. Student voices may add greatly to our understanding of how and why and in what measure these techniques are effective with different students at various levels. Soliciting student voices in this way adds to our understanding plus it benefits students by having them to reflect on and articulate their growth, struggles, and means of improving. This study is somewhat limited in terms of generalizability as it is simply one naturalistic inquiry of action research, yet it represents a good start for incorporating more student voice into our discussions of process theory and techniques used in writing classes both for L1 and L2 writers. More and larger studies, perhaps of mixed-methods design would be useful as a future direction in the fields of L1 and L2 pedagogy along these lines.

### **References**

- Bartholomae, D. (1985). Inventing the university. In M. Rose (Ed.), *When a writer can't write: Studies in writer's block and other composing process problems* (pp.134-165). New York: Guilford Press.
- Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone can write*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Flower, L. (1979). Writer-based prose: A cognitive basis for problems in writing. *College English*, 41(1), 19-37.

- Glenn, C., & Goldthwaite, M. A. (2014). *St. Martin's guide to teaching writing* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Bedford.
- Murray, D. (2004). *A writer teaches writing*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Rogers, C., & Freiberg, J. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Walker, D. (2004). *Contrastive rhetoric teaching methods for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale).
- Walker, D. (2006). Improving Korean university student EFL academic writing with contrastive rhetoric: Teacher conferencing and peer response can help. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 3(4), 71-111.
- Walker, D. (2011). How to teach contrastive (intercultural) rhetoric: Some ideas for pedagogical application. *New Horizons in Education*, 59(3), 71-81.
- Walker, D., & Guan, L. J. (2011). *Journaling and journeying toward academic excellence*. Paper presented at the 9th Hawaii International Conference on Education, Honolulu, Hawaii.
- Walker, D. (2016). *The Journal and the Journey from Contrastive to Intercultural Rhetoric*. doi: 10.5176/2251-3566\_L316.51
- Xing, M., Wang, J., & Spencer, K. (2008). Raising students' awareness of cross-cultural contrastive rhetoric in English writing via an e-learning course. *Language Learning and Technology*, 12(2), 71-93.

## SCOPE AMBIGUITY IN *THE JAKARTA POST* HEADLINE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN MAY 2015

**Hernita Ratna Aulia**

Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[hernita.ratna@gmail.com](mailto:hernita.ratna@gmail.com)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200203](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200203)

received 12 December 2016; revised 30 June 2017; accepted 20 September 2017

### **Abstract**

As an international language, English has an important role in many aspects of human life. The language has been practically utilized in mass media to provide current information for the people. Printed mass media, as one of the examples, is the topic of this study, newspaper in particular. This study has two purposes, i.e. to find out the scope ambiguity which appears in the articles of the headlines and to analyze the cause of the scope ambiguity. The data of this study are 65 articles taken from the online headlines of *The Jakarta Post* published in May 2015. The result shows that there are 6 scope ambiguities caused by quantification, 4 scope ambiguities caused by coordination, and 7 scope ambiguities caused by quantification and coordination. Overall, there are 17 scope ambiguities found in *The Jakarta Post*'s headline articles.

Keywords: headlines, ambiguity, scope ambiguity

### **Introduction**

English has played a very important role “as the international language of non-English language speaking people and of people who speak English only as a foreign language” (Sasaki *et. al*, 2006, p.381). It helps people all over the world communicate, and according to Widyanti & Yulia (2013), people are able to express their opinion, intention, and thought through language. This is supported by Sharifian (2009) who says that “...English has ‘traveled’ to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes (p.1). In addition, “English can be used effectively in the mass media of communications to galvanize the populace into participating in national development, through the adoption of a level of language intelligible to the majority of the people who are consumers of mass media products through reading information as news published in the mass media” (Owolabi & Nnaji, 2013, p.4). Mass media can take many forms, such as audio, visual, or printed. This study concerns with discussing the printed mass media, particularly newspapers.

Recently, English newspapers have been commonly found in the countries where English is not the native language. In Indonesia, for instance, *The Jakarta Post* is one of the newspapers written in English. It shows that English is widely used all over the world. The most important part in the newspaper is undoubtedly the headlines, appearing in the very front page of the newspapers. Generally, any

kinds of newspapers have headlines. “Newspaper headlines will be functionally defined as relevance optimizers which means that they are designed to optimize the relevance of their stories for their readers” (Sperber & Wilson, as cited in Dor, 2003). In other words, successful headlines are those which involve the readers’ understanding. “A headline does not tell an accurate story if its language is ambiguous, open to more than one interpretation” (Bremner, 1972, p.11).

### **Theory**

A newspaper headline is a phrase providing a brief summary of the content of the news in a newspaper. A headline is very helpful as it helps readers get fast and clear idea about the news without reading the text. ”In journalism and desktop publishing textbooks, headlines are viewed as a riveting short-cut to the contents of newspapers. This means that, in principle, headlines seek to perform two functions: (a) summarize and (b) attract attention to the full-text newspaper article” (Ifantidou, 2009, p.699). Another definition of headlines comes from Dor (2003) who states that newspaper headlines are commonly characterized as “short, telegram-like summaries” of the news. Thus, it is important for a headline to be brief and understandable. Dor (2003) further states that:

Obviously, some newspaper headlines do provide what seems to be a summary (or abstract) of their stories, but the general theoretical conception...seems to be too narrow, for at least three complementary reasons. First, ... ‘quality newspapers’, do not always summarize their stories. ... some headlines even contain material which does not appear in the news item itself. Second, the traditional notion of headlines-as-summaries definitely does not capture the function of headlines in more popular newspapers, and especially in tabloids. The third reason to reject the traditional conception is the simple fact that headlines seem to have an additional, pragmatic function, beyond the semantically-oriented function which is supposed to be captured by the headline-as-summary analysis (p.3).

In relation to the circumstance above, Ifantidou (2009) says the same thing that headline writers often violate the characteristics of a good headline: ‘be clear, easy to understand, and unambiguous’. They attempt to create memorable headlines by being purposely ambiguous, less clear and less easy to understand.

According to Wasow *et.al* (2005), “Ambiguity is a semantic property. Semanticists argue over exactly what meaning is, but it surely involves associating expressions in a language with something else, such as things or events in the world, mental representations, sets of possible worlds...” (p.1). Schvaneveldt and Meyer (1976) mention that there are a lot of English words which have two or more distinct definitions and that they are called ambiguous words. To find out the meaning of those words, contextual cues provided by other words are used to determine the intended meaning.

### Theory Application

As mentioned by Saeed (2009), there are at least three types of ambiguity namely lexical, structural, and scope ambiguity. Scope ambiguity results from the use of quantification which is not clear. Saeed (2009) states that “One important feature of natural languages...is **quantification**. All languages have strategies for allowing a proposition to be generalized over ranges or sets of individuals. In English for example quantifiers include words like *one, some, a few, many, a lot, most* and *all*” (p.311). This idea is supported by Kurtzman and MacDonald (1993) stating that “This ambiguity concerns *quantifier scope*, and it can arise when two or more noun phrases (NPs) in a sentence contain a quantifier term such as *every, some, a, many, or a few* in the determiner position” (p.243). For instance,

- (1) Many people went to the exhibition.
- (2) Most people went to the exhibition.
- (3) All people went to the exhibition.

Saeed (2009) declares that “The relationship between the quantifier phrase and the rest of the formula is described in two ways: the quantifying expression is said to **bind** the variable in the predicate expression; and the predicate expression is said to be the **scope** of the quantifier” (p.313). When the use of the quantifier in a sentence is not clear, the ambiguity appears, as seen below.

- (4) Two students have two cars.

It cannot be obviously concluded whether one student has one car or one student has two cars. This ambiguity results from the use of quantifier *two* which is not clear. The example of ambiguity above is caused by the quantification.

Hurum (1990) says that “Natural languages contain a variety of ‘logical operators’ which interact with each other to give rise to different types of ambiguity. The logical operators recognized by the scoping program include quantifiers, coordinators and negation” (p.58). The following example shows the scope ambiguity caused by coordination.

- (5) Bob will run or walk fast

The above sentence may mean that Bob will either run fast *or* walk fast. However, it may also mean that Bob will either run (without considering the speed) *or* walk fast. It can be said that this ambiguity involves the use of coordinating conjunction, such as *or, and*, etc. Finally, here is an example of scope ambiguity caused by negation as given by Hurum (1990, p.58).

- (6) John didn't meet Jane or Mary
- (7)  $\neg$  [[John met Jane]  $\vee$  [John met Mary]]
- (8)  $\neg$  [ $\neg$  [John met Jane]  $\vee$   $\neg$  [John met Mary]]

Sentence (6) may mean that John didn't meet either Jane or Mary (7) or that he didn't meet at least one of them (8).

This study firstly attempts to discover scope ambiguity appearing in the newspaper articles of the headlines. Secondly, it aims to figure out what causes scope ambiguity in the articles. According to Hurum (1990), scope ambiguity is caused by the unclear use of quantification, coordination, and negation. The data of this research are headline articles of *The Jakarta Post* published on May 2015. They are gathered randomly in the website of *The Jakarta Post*. Overall, there are 65 articles to analyze. Firstly, the headline articles are analyzed to identify scope ambiguity appearing in the texts. Secondly, they are classified based on the causes of scope ambiguity, i.e. quantification, coordination, and negation. Finally, the analysis of those ambiguities is presented in Discussion. The analyses represent the type of scope ambiguity (quantification, coordination, and negation). Thus, not all of the scope ambiguities found in the articles will be analyzed in the Discussion. However, the whole data containing scope ambiguities are presented in the table in Appendices.

This discussion provides the analysis for two types of scope ambiguity, i.e. scope ambiguity caused by quantification and coordination. In addition, the analysis in this discussion also covers the ambiguities involving both quantification and coordination. The third type of scope ambiguity, which is caused by negation, is not presented or analyzed here because this type of ambiguity does not appear in the headline articles of *The Jakarta Post*.

The first scope ambiguity to analyze is those related to quantification. As what is mentioned by Hurum (1990), quantification is the first cause of scope ambiguity. The article *Hundreds of children in Siberut have no access to education* tells about the condition of education life in Siberut in which students get no easy access to go to school. They have to walk for many hours to reach the school. They sometimes take small motorized canoes. The coordinator of the education and culture division of the *Citra Mandiri Mentawai Foundation* (YCMM) has run forest schools since last year as a solution to overcome the problem.

Scope ambiguity caused by quantification is found in this article which can be seen in the following.

(9) These students must leave their home village and stay at a relative's house in Saliguna to prepare for the national exams.

There are two interpretations that can be drawn from sentence (9). It can firstly mean that each student, who has to leave his village, has his own relative's house and that he has to stay there to prepare for the national exams. However, it can also mean that those students have to stay in the same relative's house because of the quantifier *a*. According to Kurtzman and Macdonald (1993), a *relative's house* has "wide scope" and *these students* has "narrow scope," there is one particular house where the students must stay. Other examples of scope ambiguity caused by quantification are:

(10) During his visit to Ambon, Maluku, on Thursday, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo reiterated his plan to disburse Rp 100 billion (US\$7.6 million) to 98 cities in the country for infrastructure projects that suited local characteristics.

(11) Jokowi made the remark as he started a five-day visit to several provinces in eastern Indonesia, namely Maluku, North Maluku, Papua and West Papua, which have long been considered the country’s backwater regions.

Both of the ambiguities above appear in a headline article entitled *Jokowi tours eastern regions of Indonesia*. This headline article is about President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo who visited several provinces in eastern Indonesia, namely Maluku, North Maluku, Papua and West Papua. During his visit, he declared that he was going to disburse a certain amount of money to 98 cities in the country for infrastructure projects, such as markets, roads, bridges or ports, and other projects.

In sentence (10), scope ambiguity is caused by the quantified noun phrase *98 cities*. It can be interpreted that the amount of money (Rp 100 billion) is going to be given to each city. It means that the government should provide Rp 9800 billion to improve infrastructure in the eastern Indonesia. However, the article does not clarify whether Rp 100 billion is going to be disbursed to an individual city or 98 cities altogether. If the 98 cities are given the total of RP 100 billion, it means that each city will receive around Rp 1 billion. Kurtzman & MacDonald (1993) argue that “Quantifier terms have been of substantial interest to linguists and philosophers of language, largely because, ... quantifier terms contribute to the expressive capacity of natural language by making possible the expression of generalizations about variously sized sets of individuals” (p.245).

In sentence (11), scope ambiguity occurs as a result of the quantified noun phrase *several provinces in eastern Indonesia*. Kurtzman and MacDonald (1993) state that this ambiguity arises when two or more noun phrases in a sentence contain a quantifier expression such as *every, some, several, a, many, or a few* in the determiner position. What is ambiguous in sentence (11) is whether the five-day visit was for each individual province or whether the five-day visit was for those provinces. The former means that the president spent 15 days to visit Maluku, North Maluku, as well as Papua and West Papua. Meanwhile, the latter means that the president spent five days only to visit those three provinces.

The next type of scope ambiguity to analyze is those involving coordination. There are only 2 examples of this kind of scope ambiguity found in the headline articles.

(12) With well-designed ventilation and lighting, the market remained cool and bright despite being crowded with thousands of vendors.

(13) Pembayun, who completed most of her education abroad, has served as president director and president commissioner of PT Madu Baru, PT Mataram Mitra Manunggal, PT Yogyakarta Tembakau Indonesia and PT Yarsilk Gora Mahottama.

The above sentences are ambiguous. Wasow *et al.* (2005) declare that “An expression is ambiguous if it has two or more distinct denotations – that is, if it is associated with more than one region of the meaning space” (p.1). This idea is supported by Gillon (1990) who states that “An expression is ambiguous if the expression has more than one meaning” (p.4). Sentence (12) can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the market remained cool and bright with well-designed ventilation and well-designed lighting. On the other hand, it can also mean that the market remained cool and bright with well-designed ventilation and lighting. So, it is only the ventilation which is well designed. Sentence (13) is rather complicated to interpret. It can be said that Pembayun is both the director and president commissioner of those all companies. In the meantime, another interpretation can also be drawn. She might be a director of only some of the companies mentioned and a president commissioner of only some of the companies mentioned. According to Schvaneveldt and Meyer (1976), the intended meaning can be determined by relying on the cues provided by other words in the text. However, the meaning cannot be identified because there is no information or cues given in the text. It involves a problem of “how to handle the scoping of multiple copies of the same operator which may occur when the operator is embedded inside a coordinated expression” (Hurum, 1990, p.59).

Finally, the examples below show ambiguities related to the scope of quantification and coordination. In other words, the use of quantifiers and coordination in the following sentences is not clear and that it causes scope ambiguity.

(14) She thought that Jokowi was a popular member of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) as shown by his successful two terms as mayor of Surakarta and later winning the governorship of Jakarta.

(15) The parking lot was transformed into long lanes of booths and two stages were installed at the end of the street and in front of the shopping center.

As mentioned before, scope ambiguity can arise because of quantification and coordination (Kurtzman & MacDonald, 1993; Hurum, 1990). In sentence (14), *two terms as mayor of Surakarta and later winning the governorship of Jakarta* can be interpreted in different ways. It firstly means that Jokowi had become mayor of Surakarta twice and then, he won the governorship of Jakarta. Another interpretation is that the two terms refer to his being mayor Surakarta and the governor of Jakarta. The similar case can be seen in sentence (15) in which the use of quantifier expression *two* is not clear. It might mean that there are two stages built at the end of the street and that there are other two stages built in front of the shopping center. On the other hand, it might also mean that there is only one stage built at the end of the street and that there is another stage built in front of the shopping center.

## Conclusion

This paper attempts to discuss scope ambiguity as seen in the online headlines of *The Jakarta Post*. It has two aims, which are to discover scope

ambiguity in the headline articles as well as to identify the cause of the scope ambiguity. Based on the theory mentioned in the Introduction, scope ambiguity is caused by the use of quantification, coordination, and negation which is not clear. In collecting the data, the researcher randomly gathered headline articles from the website of *The Jakarta Post*. Overall, there are 65 headline articles to analyze.

In analyzing the data, the researcher firstly analyzed the scope ambiguity appearing in the articles. Secondly, the researcher identified the cause of the scope ambiguity and classified the ambiguities based on the three causes (quantification, coordination, and negation). Some of the scope ambiguities are analyzed in the Discussion to represent each cause of the ambiguity. Meanwhile, the whole data are presented in the table in Appendices.

The result shows that there are 6 scope ambiguities caused by quantification, 4 scope ambiguities caused by coordination, and 7 scope ambiguities caused by quantification and coordination. The third cause of scope ambiguity, which is negation, is not discussed here because this type of scope ambiguity does not appear in the headline articles of *The Jakarta Post*.

## References

- Bremner, J. B. (1972). *A study in news headlines*. Kansas: Palindrome Press.
- Dor, D. (2003). On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers. *Journals of Pragmatics*, 35(5), 695-721. Retrieved on May 8, 2015, from [http://www.newsu.org/course\\_files/newsu\\_headlinesThatWork10a/pdf/newspaper-headlines-as-relevance-optimizers.pdf](http://www.newsu.org/course_files/newsu_headlinesThatWork10a/pdf/newspaper-headlines-as-relevance-optimizers.pdf)
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Collins, P. & Blair, D. (1983). *An introduction to language*. New South Wales: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Gillon, B. S (1990). *Ambiguity, generality, and indeterminacy: Tests and definitions*. Retrieved on May 8, 2015, from <http://semantics.uchicago.edu/kennedy/classes/s06/readings/gillon90.pdf>
- Hurum, S. (1990). *Handling scope ambiguities in English*. Retrieved on May 8, 2015, from <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/acl/A/A88/A88-1008.pdf>
- Ifantidou, E. (2009). Newspaper headlines and relevance: Ad hoc concepts in ad hoc contexts. *Journal of Pragmatic*, 41(4), 699-720. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2008.10.016
- Kurtzman, H. S. & MacDonald, M. C. (1993). *Resolution of quantifier scope ambiguities*. Retrieved on May 15, 2015, from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.460.4104&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Owolabi, D. & Nnaji, C. I. (2013). The English language and the mass media as tools for sustainable development in multilingual nations. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 1(4), 124-130. doi: <http://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20130104.16>
- Saeed, J. I. (2009). *Semantics*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

- Sasaki, M., Suzuki, T. & Yoneda, M. (2006). English as an international language in non-native settings in an era of globalization. *Comparative Sociology*, 5(4), 381-404. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1163/156913306779147326>
- Schvaneveldt, R. W. & Meyer, D. E. (1976). Lexical ambiguity, semantic context, and visual word recognition. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 2(2), 243-256. Retrieved on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, from [www.interlinkinc.net/Roger/Papers/Schvaneveldt\\_Meyer\\_Becker\\_1976.pdf](http://www.interlinkinc.net/Roger/Papers/Schvaneveldt_Meyer_Becker_1976.pdf)
- Sharifian, F. (2009). *English as an international language: An overview*. Bristol: MPG Books Ltd.
- Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wasow, T., Perfors, A. & Beaver, D. (2005). The puzzle of ambiguity. In: O. Orgun and P. Sells (Eds.), *Morphology and the web of grammar: Essays in memory of Steven G. Lapointe*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Widyanti, E. R., & Yulia, M. F. (2013). A study on modals used in text your say of the Jakarta Post. *A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 16(1), 11-21. doi: <http://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2013.160102>

## **SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN THE READING MATERIALS OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES LEVELS 1 – 3**

**Widdy Wijanti**

Sampoerna University, Jakarta, Indonesia

wijanti.widdy@gmail.com

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200204](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200204)

received 7 July 2017; revised 12 August 2017; accepted 5 September 2017

### **Abstract**

In Indonesia, English is still considered as a foreign language and has become a crucial subject of study especially in the university level. For this reason, English for Academic Purposes has been conducted in the first year of college level for many years. Unfortunately, although many Asian countries including Indonesia have run the EAP course, the output is that there are still many Indonesian students who do not meet the vocabulary size and syntactic complexity that are expected while their learning process in the university. This results lower grades that they have in their assignments. Therefore, the recent study is aimed at evaluating the reading materials of EAP, especially in measuring the syntactic complexity containing in the texts as it is strongly believed in English learning that a good language output comes from a good language input. The data is taken from the collections of reading materials taken from EAP course Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 which are compulsory subjects for students at Sampoerna University in their first 2 years of study. The data then is processed using the Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (Ai & Lu, 2013). The findings showed that the reading materials of EAP course Level 3 text is mainly suggested to be reviewed and revised in order to fulfill the five categories of syntactic complexity, i.e. the length of production unit, the sentence complexity, the subordination, the coordination, and the particular structure.

**Keywords:** vocabulary size, syntactic complexity, syntactic complexity analyzer, reading text

### **Introduction**

Over the past decades, English has become a mandatory subject that should be taken in the first year of university life in Indonesia because students have to read imported textbooks and write assignments in English which is not their first language. In addition, college students who have good English competence have wider opportunities for student exchange program that will also enhance their learning experience in other countries. Several years later, they will use their knowledge and experience in the work life, and English is one of the important factors that support them in their career and further education. This is due to the fact that English is a language that is used internationally, which means it is understood and used by a lot of people in the world, especially in the

education and work life (Crystal, 2012, pp. 3-4). For that purpose, a number of lecturers use English (as a second language) as a medium of instructions in delivering their university subjects (Dudley-Evans, 1998, p. 38).

English for Academic Purposes has been taught in the universities for a long time, but especially in Indonesia, the students are still unable to reach the minimum target of English competence, that is to acquire the minimum size of Academic Word List as suggested by Nation (2001) i.e. as much as 10% or 570 word families or 2,570 words (p. 18). Based on the research conducted by Schmitt (2010) about the vocabulary size produced by university students between some Asian countries, i.e. Japan, China, Indonesia, and Oman, Indonesian students have the lowest number of vocabulary size after taking the similar number of instruction hours in English. This may be the result of poor quality of the materials given for learning English. One of several problems related to the materials is the lack of exposure in syntactic complexity in the reading materials given in the texts at university level. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on reviewing the materials given to the students at university level in Indonesia.

Besides knowing enough vocabulary needed to be used in the receptive skills (listening and reading skills), language learners need to be able to use the words they know in the productive skills (speaking and writing skills) to any forms of phrases, clauses, sentences, and even paragraphs by combining different words into one unity. Cutler (1983, p. 45) mentions that "Semantic complexity covers a fairly wide range of variations between words". Lu (2009, p. 4) also adds that language users have high syntactic complexity if they are able to use the vocabulary to produce simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences. Simple sentences are produced when the words are combined together containing one subject (S), one predicate (P), one object (O) (optional), and some complements (C) (optional). For example: John writes a letter every month. John (S), writes (P), a letter (O), every month (C). Compound sentences are produced when there are two or more simple sentences combined into one sentence using one or more connectors, i.e. for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. For example: *John writes a letter every month* are combined with *Jane writes a letter every month*. Because there are several parts of speech that are the same, i.e. *writes* (P), *a letter* (O), *every month* (C), there are only the different subjects that are combined together using and that is to become *John and Jane write a letter every month*. The next is complex sentences, this kind of sentence can be produced when there are two or more simple sentences combined using one or more subordinators, i.e. *who*, *which*, *that*, *whom*, *because*, *therefore*, *while*, etc. For example: the first simple sentence is *John writes a letter every month*. The second simple sentence is *John likes a blue T-shirt*. From the second sentence, it can be seen that it is a sentence that explains more about John, therefore, the subordinator that is appropriate is using relative clause *who*. The sentence combination becomes *John **who likes a blue T-shirt** writes a letter every month*. The italic-bold words are called dependent clause because it is attached with the subordinator; while the italic words are called independent clause. In other words, complex sentences are the combination between independent clause and dependent clause. Therefore, if

the students are able to produce more complex sentences, their English proficiency is higher than the ones who can only produce simple sentences.

Syntactic Complexity means “the range and degree of syntactic structures that surface in language production and has been recognized as a very important construct in second language writing teaching and research” (Ortega, 2003) as quoted from Ai and Lu (2013, p. 249). In other words, if the language learners have a good use of syntactic complexity, then they will produce good variation of sentence structure, such as the use of compound and complex sentences, and also the varied use of transition signals which make the writing seem more coherent and grammatically correct. It is then shown from how many dependent clauses that the language learners can produce in their written works. It does not matter how long the sentences are as long as they produce many word/sentence elements in their works, i.e. the use of complex sentences, subordinators, coordinators, and good sentence structure. The present study uses *Syntactic Complexity Analyzer* (SCA) suggested by Ai and Lu (2013) in order to know whether the syntactic complexity performance in reading materials selected in the university, that the researcher is teaching, is suitable to the level of EAP course.

The researcher works at Sampoerna University which conducts EAP courses for 3 levels in the students’ first years of study. The materials are chosen and compiled from several sources from books or websites that are suitable with the topics in the syllabi which are designed by Institute of Languages and Communication (in which the researcher takes part in the material preparation process). However, this materials compilation technique has some drawbacks. Subjectivity is possible to happen as mentioned by Jordan (1997, p. 127) that one of several factors that materials provider choose the materials is “attractive”. In other words, the materials compiler tend to choose the materials which seem highly interesting to him and probably seem less interesting to the students. This gap will cause the materials delivery less effective because students are not in to what are being discussed. For this reason, the present study will evaluate the compilation of the reading materials whether they are chosen objectively and appropriate with the students’ levels.

This is significant to evaluate the reading materials of EAP course levels 1, 2, and 3 whether the selected compilation has already been in order according to the learners’ leveling or not because the compilation process of the reading materials was done only based on the chosen topics listed in the syllabus design, the source books available in the library at the SU, and the online materials provided to be downloaded. In addition, the result will be some indicators for ILC lecturers whether the syntactic complexity of the materials is suitable for the Sampoerna University students to improve their English competence and whether there is compulsory to augment the EAP materials for the future use.

Although there have been several studies of Syntactic Complexity in second language oral and written production conducted by Laufer & Nation (1995), and Lu (2012) (for oral production), not many studies have been done to analyze the quality of reading texts in terms of Syntactic Complexity. Therefore, the present study aims to know the quality of the reading materials selected for EAP course in each level (levels 1, 2, and 3) whether the Syntactic Complexity is suitable to

generate the English competence that the learners have, “What are the syntactic complexity differences between the reading materials in EAP course level 1, level 2, and level 3?”. In other words, suitable means whether the difficulty level of reading materials are gradually increasing or not, or whether the syntactic complexity is generating them to improve their language competence. By doing such research, there is a possibility whether there is a need to augment the materials in the future. Moreover, the study in the SC can give another practical contribution in the selection of sentence types to be successfully learned by language learners in the form of various contexts. In addition, the study can also give some suggestions on any types of reading materials that are fruitful for learners to use in the language learning process in order to develop their grammatical correctness in sentence level, coherence in paragraph level, and unity in a bigger frame, for example in an essay. If they are able to improve their language competence from the reading materials provided, they will be successful in their academic life.

After knowing enough frequently-used vocabulary, language learners are expected to be able to combine those words into good sentences using good sentence structure, which can be seen as syntactic complexity. Ortega (2003) as quoted from Ai and Lu (2013) defines that syntactic complexity is “the range and degree of syntactic structures that surface in language production recognized as a very important construct in second language writing teaching and research” (p. 3). Therefore, if someone is able to produce various kinds of sentences in their written products and grammatically correct, he or she is considered having good syntactic complexity. Various kinds of sentences are including the sentences using various sentence connectors, i.e. *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, who, which, that, whom, whose, because, because of, since, although*, etc. This means that a good syntactic complexity can be shown by the frequent use of the correct combination between independent clauses and dependent clauses, as known as compound sentences and complex sentences.

There are several computer programs to measure the syntactic complexity level as cited in Lu (2010). For example, computerized profiling (Long et al., 2008), Coh-Matrix (Graesser et al., 2004), and D-Level Analyzer (Lu, 2009) (p. 4). Those advance programs are usually used to measure people’s language development for productive skills, especially in written forms to see the second language learners’ progress after several weeks of language learning process, or in spoken forms to find out the range of sentences that can be produced, for example by people who have limitations with their language production in the brain system (people who are suffering from Alzheimer disease, or people in early ages—toddlers in their language acquisition period).

The present study measures the language quality of language input taken from reading materials that are used in the learning process of EAP course in the university level. The result will be used to determine whether language exposure provided in the text is suitable with the leveling of the course, so there can be some adjustments done for betterment. The measure that the researcher will use is the one that was developed by Lu (2009). She used this analyzer to measure the language development of toddlers: the syntactic complexity analyzer which is also

called as D-Level Analyzer (Ai & Lu, 2013, p. 4). In details, the present study will use the fourteen syntactic complexity measures, provided in the D-Level Analyzer, as reviewed by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) and Ortega (2003) in students' written products as cited in Ai and Lu (2013, p. 5).

## Method

This research uses quantitative approach according to Dörnyei (2007) because it "involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods," (p. 24). This research will use an online-computerized programs suggested by Lu (2013) that is Syntactic Complexity Analyzer to measure the Syntactic Complexity of the reading materials compiled for the three levels of EAP course at Sampoerna University.

In addition, this advance program is displaying numeric results; therefore the analysis will be based on quantitative approach where the list of vocabulary ratios of each data will be analyzed according to the numeric results from the computerized programs that measure the syntactic complexity which is parts of statistical methods. Moreover, the results will be analyzed to see the difference of Syntactic Complexity between the levels when compared.

### 4.2 Source of Data

- a. Printed Sources: (1) Brook-Hart, G. (2004). Academic Reading Passage 1. In *Cambridge instant IELTS: Ready-to-use tasks and activities* (pp. 33-36). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2) Cambridge. (2002). *Cambridge IELTS 3: Examination papers from the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp. 8-11), (3) Cambridge. (2006). *Cambridge IELTS 5: Authentic examination papers from University of Cambridge ESOL examinations*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, (4) Cambridge. (2009). *Cambridge IELTS 7: Authentic examination papers from University of Cambridge ESOL examinations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (5) Cambridge. (2013). *Cambridge IELTS 9: Authentic examination papers from Cambridge ESOL*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (6) Hallows, R., Lisboa, M., & Unwin, M. (2013). *IELTS express: Intermediate course book*. Andover, Hampshire [England: Heinle Cengage Learning], (7) Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C. (2012). *Step up to IELTS*. UK: Cambridge University Press, (8) Lougheed, L., & Barron's Educational Series, Inc (2010). *IELTS practice exams: With audio cds*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, (9) May, P. (2004). *IELTS practice tests: With explanatory key*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (10) Phillips, D. (2003). *Preparation course for the TOEFL test*. USA: Pearson: Longman, and (11) Douglas, N. (2010). *Reading explorer 3: [student book]*. Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning.
- b. Online Sources: (1) Clark, D. (2011, July 12). Visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles (VAK). Retrieved July 3, 2014, from <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/vakt.html>, (2) Gravity. (2013, June 8). Men vs. women: Who's saving and who's spending? |visualnews.com. Retrieved April 14, 2014, from

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/visualnewscom/men-vs-women-whos-saving-and-whos-spending\\_b\\_3714079.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/visualnewscom/men-vs-women-whos-saving-and-whos-spending_b_3714079.html), (3) Identify Irrelevant Sentences in Paragraphs 7. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.grammarbank.com/identify-irrelevant-sentences.html>, (4) Paris offers free public transport to reduce severe smog - BBC News. (2014, March 14). Retrieved March 14, 2014, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26574623>, (5) Pravas, V. S. (2013). Different types of pollution: Causes of water, air, soil, thermal, light and noise pollution. Retrieved July 3, 2014, from <http://readanddigest.com/what-are-different-types-of-pollution/>.

In this present study, there were three steps taken in collecting and analyzing the data. The first step of data collection was re-typing the modules using Microsoft Word. This was done in order to make the texts easier to process in the software because there were some pdf files which could not be copy-pasted directly to the txt file. After that, the researcher converted the data from Word file into txt file with encoding code: UTF-8 to be able to run with the program by copy-pasting the whole texts compiled for each level of EAP course and saved the txt file in a different file, for example: Level1.txt was for EAP course level 1 containing 11 different texts, Level2.txt was for EAP course level 2 containing 8 various texts, and Level3.txt was for EAP course level 3 containing 10 lengthy texts.

The next step was to process the syntactic complexity of the reading texts. The researcher focused on measuring the syntactic complexity using the Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (SCA) as suggested by Lu (2013) and the program was used online via <http://www.personal.psu.edu/xx113/downloads/l2sca.html>. The researcher used the online demo which has the same function—determining the syntactic complexity of each compilation of reading texts in Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. Because the program cannot process the data which contain less than 50 words and more than 1500 words, the data in txt.file encoding UTF-8 needed to be separated into several txt files. Each Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 was separated into 5 separated txt files, and then they were saved in zip files separately. With the zip files then the data could be uploaded to be processed using the SCA, that is Web-based L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (Batch Mode) covering “(1) length of production units, (2) amounts of coordination, (3) amounts of subordination, (4) degree of phrasal sophistication and overall sentence complexity”. Then, the results of all Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 were combined and analyzed to determine the syntactic complexity of the reading texts.

Finally, the last step was to find and analyze the differences of syntactic complexity between levels 1, 2, and 3.

## Findings and Discussion

### *The Comparison of Syntactic Complexity of the Reading Texts*

Table 1. The Comparison of Syntactic Complexity between Levels 1, 2, and 3

| Syntactic Complexity Analyzer Result     |      |           |           |           |
|--|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| MEASURE                                  | CODE | LEVEL 1   | LEVEL 2   | LEVEL 3   |
| <i>Type 1: Length of production unit</i> |      |           |           |           |
| Mean length of sentence                  | MLS  | 1,041.991 | 1,079.367 | 1,102.705 |
| Mean length of T-unit                    | MLT  | 940.922   | 1,003.059 | 967.992   |
| Mean length of clause                    | MLC  | 606.339   | 691.334   | 670.166   |
| <i>Type 2: Sentence complexity</i>       |      |           |           |           |
| Sentence complexity ratio                | C/S  | 86.029    | 78.813    | 83.384    |
| <i>Type 3: Subordination</i>             |      |           |           |           |
| T-unit complexity ratio                  | C/T  | 77.736    | 72.983    | 73.165    |
| Complex T-unit ratio                     | CT/T | 2.3479    | 1.9821    | 2.1829    |
| Dependent clause ratio                   | DC/C | 2.0239    | 1.8964    | 1.7716    |
| Dependent clauses per T-unit             | DC/T | 3.1665    | 2.7688    | 2.6483    |
| <i>Type 4: Coordination</i>              |      |           |           |           |
| Coordinate phrases per clause            | CP/C | 1.4958    | 2.0245    | 1.7108    |
| Coordinate phrases per T-unit            | CP/T | 2.2989    | 2.8579    | 2.4623    |
| Sentence coordination ratio              | T/S  | 55.341    | 53.839    | 57.024    |
| <i>Type 5: Particular structures</i>     |      |           |           |           |
| Complex <u>nominals</u> per clause       | CN/C | 78.100    | 92.831    | 84.310    |
| Complex <u>nominals</u> per T-unit       | CN/T | 120.970   | 135.783   | 122.239   |
| Verb phrases per T-unit                  | VP/T | 110.839   | 107.896   | 104.218   |

Table 1 displays the result comparison of syntactic complexity of the reading texts used in the Levels 1, 2, and 3 of EAP course. As mentioned earlier, the fourteen items analyzed in the text can be grouped into five types, i.e. *the length of the production unit*, *the sentence complexity*, *the subordination*, *the coordination*, and *the particular structure*. For the first type, i.e. The Length of the Production Unit is shown from the scores of the MLS, MLT, and MLC. Table 1 shows that the total MLS (Mean length of sentence) of Level 1 (1,041.991) is lower than that of Level 2 (1,079.367), and the MLS number is lower than that of Level 3 (1,102.705). This means that there is an increase in the total length of the sentences provided in the text as the level gets higher. This increase is good because when the English learners are in the higher level, they need to read more

sentences in order to expand their vocabulary and sentence structure knowledge. In addition, the calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between MLS Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.42, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. While the chi-square value between MLS Level 2 and MLS Level 3 is 0.62, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Next, Table 1 shows that the total MLT (Mean Length of T-Unit) of Level 1 (940.922) is lower than that of Level 2 (1,003.059). The total MLT (Mean Length of T-Unit) of Level 2 (1,003.059) is higher than that of Level 3 (967.992). This means that in Level 1 besides having more sentence length, the students are also reading more main clauses and dependent clauses. In Level 3, the students read less main clauses and dependent clauses. It is not good because as the level gets higher, the MLT number has to get higher in order to provide more exposure in main clauses and dependent clauses. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.16, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.43, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Next, Table 1 also shows that the total MLC (Mean Length of clause) of Level 1 (606.339) is lower than that of Level 2 (631.334), and the total MLC (Mean Length of clause) of Level 2 (691.334) is higher than that of Level 3 (670.166). This means that between Level 1 and Level 2, there is a good increase in the MLC, while between Level 2 and Level 3, the decrease in number is not good because it is not suitable with the ideal concept of syntactic complexity where the higher level the students are, the more clauses that they need to learn from the reading materials which means the number of MLC should get higher as the level increases. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.02 which means that there is a significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.57, which means that there is no significant difference in the value.

The numbers give a recommendation to have the materials of Level 3 to be augmented especially in the subtype of Mean Length of T-Unit (MLT) and Mean Length of clause (MLC) where the numbers should get higher because the revision can give more benefits for students in their learning process, that is for example as a good exposure of written texts.

The second type, i.e. the Sentence Complexity Ratio, is shown from the scores of the C/S. Table 1 shows that the total C/S (Sentence Complexity Ratio) of Level 1 (86.029) is higher than that of Level 2 (78.813), and the total C/S (Sentence Complexity Ratio) of Level 2 (78.813) is lower than that of Level 3 (83.384). This means that there is a decrease in the C/S in the Level 2 and the increase in the C/S in the Level 3. This fluctuating number in C/S is not good because the sentence of complexity ratio needs to increase as the level increases in order to raise the challenge for students to familiarize with the sentence structure. Moreover, the calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.57, which means that there is no significant

difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.72, which means that there is no significant difference in the value.

The third category, i.e. the Subordination, is shown from the scores of the C/T, CT/T, DC/C and DC/T. Table 1 shows that the total C/T (T-unit complexity ratio) of Level 1 (77.736) is higher than that of Level 2 (72.983). While the total C/T (T-unit complexity ratio) of Level 2 (72.983) is lower than that of Level 3 (73.165). The fluctuating number of the T-unit complexity ratio (C/T) is not good because the C/T number should increase as the level gets higher. Therefore, the C/T of Level 1 should be lower than that of the Level 2, and the C/T of Level 2 should be lower than that of the Level 3. Students need to have more exposure in the complexity of main clause and dependent clauses as their English level gets higher. In addition, the calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.70, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. While the chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.99, which means that there is no significant difference in the value.

Next, from the table, it also shows that the total CT/T (Complex T-Unit ratio) of Level 1 (2.3479) is higher than that of Level 2 (1.9821). While the total CT/T of Level 2 (1.9821) is lower than that of Level 3 (2.1829). This fluctuating number means no good because the number of CT/T is supposed to be increasing as the level gets higher. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.86, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. While the chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.92, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Lastly, the table also displays the total DC/C (Dependent clause ratio) of Level 1 (2.0239) which is higher than that of Level 2 (1.8964), and the total DC/C of Level 2 (1.8964) is higher than that of Level 3 (1.7716). This means that the difference in the use of dependent clause is not good because it is decreasing as the level gets higher. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.95, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. While the chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.95, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

The table also displays the total DC/T (Dependent clauses per T-unit) of Level 1 (3.1665) which is higher than that of Level 2 (2.7688). The total DC/T of Level 2 (2.7688) is higher than that of Level 3 (2.6483). This means that there is a decrease in the production of dependent clauses from Level 1 to Level 2 and from Level 2 to Level 3 where it is supposed to be increasing as the level gets higher. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.87, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.96, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

From the data given, it can be concluded that in the subordination category, the Level 2 text contains less beneficial materials for students compared to the Level 1 text because the complexity in the subtypes (C/T—T-unit complexity

ratio, CT/T—complex T-Unit ratio, DC/C—dependent clause ratio, and DC/T—dependent clauses per T-unit) tend to decrease as the level gets higher. Moreover, when the Level 2 texts are revised, the Level 3 texts should also have some adjustments to suit the criteria of a good text which provide good syntactic complexity where the number of C/T (T-Unit complexity ratio), CT/T (Complex T-Unit ratio), DC/C (Dependent clause ratio), and DC/T (Dependent clauses per T-unit) should get higher as the level increases in order to give more benefits for students in their learning process, that is for example as a good exposure of written texts.

The fourth category, i.e. the Coordination, is shown from the scores of the CP/C, CP/T, and T/S. Table 1 shows that the total CP/C (Coordinate phrases per clause) of Level 1 (1.4958) is lower than that of Level 2 (2.0245). While the total CP/C of Level 2 (2.0245) is higher than that of Level 3 (1.7108). This fluctuate number means that the Level 3 texts should be revised in order to have higher CP/C number than that of the Level 2 texts. The Level 2 text has already provided good exposure in the use of coordinate phrases per clause for students in their learning process because the ratio gets higher as the level of competence gets higher. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.78, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. While the chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.87, which means that there is no significant difference in the value.

The table also shows that the total CP/T (Coordinate phrases per T-unit) of Level 1 (2.2989) is lower than that of Level 2 (2.8579), and the total CP/T of Level 2 (2.8579) is higher than that of Level 3 (2.4623). This fluctuating number of CP/T means that the Level 3 texts need to be augmented because the number has to be higher than that of the Level 2 texts. The Level 2 text has provided good ratio in the use of coordinate phrases per T-unit because it gives more use of it as an exposure to students. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.81, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.86, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Lastly, the table also displays the total T/S (Sentence coordination ratio) of Level 1 (55.341) which is higher than that of Level 2 (53.839), and the total T/S of Level 2 (53.839) which is lower than that of Level 3 (57.024). This fluctuating number of T/S means that the Level 2 texts and the Level 3 texts need to be augmented because the number has to be higher as the level gets higher in order to give more frequent sentence coordination to give more challenges to students in learning English. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.81, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.76, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Based on the result in the subtypes of the Coordination category, the materials of Level 2 and Level 3 need to be augmented especially in the subtype of T/S (Sentence coordination), Coordinate phrases per clause (CP/C) and

Coordinate phrases per T-unit (CP/T), in order to give more samples for students in their learning process, i.e. a good exposure on how to provide good sentence combination.

The last category, i.e. the Particular Structure, is shown from the scores of the CN/C, CN/T and VP/T. Table 1 shows that the total CN/C (Complex nominals per clause) of Level 1 (78.100) is lower than that of Level 2 (92.831). The total CN/C of Level 2 (92.831) is higher than that of Level 3 (84.310). This means that the Level 2 text provides good use of complex nominals per clause (CN/C) and it also provides more challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 1 text. The Level 3 text does not provide good use of complex nominals per clause (CN/C) and it also provides less challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 2 text. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.26, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.52, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

Next, from the table, it also shows that the total CN/T (Complex nominals per T-unit) of Level 1 (120.970) is lower than that of Level 2 (135.783). The total CN/T of Level 2 (135.783) is higher than that of Level 3 (122.239). This means that the Level 2 text provides good use of complex nominals per T-unit (CN/T) and it also provides more challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 1 text. The Level 3 text does not provide good use of complex nominals per T-unit (CN/T) and it also provides less challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 2 text. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.36, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value between Level 2 and Level 3 is 0.40, which means that there is no significant difference in the value.

The last, the table also displays the total VP/T (Verb phrases per T-unit) of Level 1 (110.839) which is higher than that of Level 2 (107.896). This means that the Level 2 text does not provide a lot of good uses of verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T) and therefore, it does not provide more challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 1 text. While the total VP/T (Verb phrases per T-unit) of Level 2 (107.896) is higher than that of Level 3 (104.218). This means that the Level 3 text does not provide good use of verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T) and therefore, it does not provide more challenge for students to understand the written texts as the level gets higher compared with that of the Level 2 text. The calculation using the Chi-square shows that the chi-square value between Level 1 and Level 2 is 0.84, which means that there is no significant difference in the value. The chi-square value is 0.80, which means that there is also no significant difference in the value.

The result in subtypes of the Particular Structure category gives a recommendation to have the materials of Level 2 and Level 3 augmented especially in the subtype of the use of verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T), the use of

complex nominals per clause (CN/C), the use of complex nominals per T-unit (CN/T), and the use of verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T) in order to give more samples for students in their learning process, i.e. a good exposure on how to provide good variety of the verb phrases use.

Based on the comparison data of syntactic complexity between Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, the first category, the length of production unit between Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, especially the sentence length (MLS) is already suitable with the ideal percentage, i.e. Level 1 is shorter than Level 2, and Level 2 is shorter than Level 3. Therefore, the Level 3 texts need to be augmented especially to increase the number of sentence length (MLS), T-unit length (MLT), and clauses length (MLC) in order to increase the challenge as the level gets higher. For the second category, the sentence complexity (C/S), the Level 1 has more sentence complexity than the Level 2. This result is not suitable with the ideal concept. As the level gets higher, students need to have higher sentence complexity. Therefore, the Level 2 text needs to be reviewed. However, the Level 2 has less sentence complexity than the Level 3. This result is suitable with the ideal concept. As the level gets higher, students need to have higher sentence complexity. Therefore, if the Level 2 is augmented, there needs to be some adjustments in the Level 3 that is to have higher C/S than that of the Level 2 texts.

The next category is the subordination. For all subtypes, the Level 1 has more numbers than the Level 2. This is not suitable with the ideal concept where Level 2 should have higher number of subordination in the T-unit complexity ratio, complex T-unit ratio, dependent clause ratio, and dependent clauses per T-unit in order to expose more variation of sentence types. The comparison between Level 2 and Level 3, for two out of four subtypes, i.e. the T-unit complexity ratio (C/T) and the complex T-unit ratio (CT/T), the Level 2 has smaller numbers than that of the Level 3. This is in line with the ideal concept where Level 3 should have higher number of subordination in all four subtypes. However, the numbers in the subtypes of dependent clause ratio and dependent clauses per T-unit of Level 2 text are bigger than that of Level 3 text. Therefore, the text in the Level 3 needs to be reviewed in order to expose more variation of sentence types.

The fourth category is coordination. The subtypes of Level 1, i.e. coordinate phrases per clause and coordinate phrases per T-unit, have less number compared with Level 2. This is already in line with the ideal concept. However, the number of the last subtype is the sentence coordination ratio of Level 1 is bigger than that of Level 2, where it is supposed to lower. Therefore, there is a need for Level 2 text to be reviewed, especially in this subtype. The last category is particular structure. Two of the three subtypes of the Level 1 text in this category are lower than that of the Level 2 text. This result is in line for the ideal concept. However, in the last subtype, i.e. the number of verb phrases per T-unit of Level 1 text is bigger than that of Level 2 where the higher the level, the bigger the number of verb phrases per T-unit. Therefore, there is a need for Level 2 to be reviewed in the future. The comparison between Level 2 and Level 3, the subtypes of Level 2, i.e. coordinate phrases per clause and coordinate phrases per T-unit, have bigger numbers compared with Level 3. This is not in line with the ideal concept. Therefore, the Level 3 text needs to be reviewed. However, the number of the last

subtype is the sentence coordination ratio of Level 2 is smaller than that of Level 3. This result is ideal.

The last category is particular structure. All three subtypes of the Level 2 text in this category are bigger than that of the Level 3 text. This result is not in line with the ideal concept where the higher the level, the bigger the number of particular sentence structure needs to be exposed to English learners. Therefore, there is a need for Level 3 to be reviewed in the future. After we see the comparison of lexical richness between Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, let us now see the comparison of syntactic complexity between the three levels. The first category, the length of production unit between Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3, ideally there is a gradual increase as the level gets higher. However, from the data, it is shown that the Level 3 texts really need to be reviewed, especially in the sentence length (MLS), T-unit length (MLT), and clauses length (MLC) because the numbers of MLT and MLC need to be higher than that of Level 2 in order to increase the portion of the sentence length. The second category, the sentence complexity, the Level 3 needs to be reviewed because although it has more sentence complexity than the Level 2, the Level 2 has lower sentence complexity than the Level 1. These numbers show that there is no gradual increase in the sentence complexity where the ideal concept is as the level gets higher, students need to have higher sentence complexity.

### Conclusion

From the data comparison, the numbers show that there is no gradual increase in the subordination, especially in all four subtypes. Therefore, the text in the Level 3 needs to be reviewed in order to expose more variation of sentence types. The fourth category is coordination. Similar to the previous category, the numbers show that there is no gradual increase in the coordination, especially in all three subtypes. Therefore, the text in the Level 3 needs to be reviewed in order to expose more variation of sentence coordination. The last category is particular structure. From the data comparison, the numbers show that there is also no gradual increase in this category, especially in all three subtypes. Therefore, the text in the Level 3 needs to be reviewed in order to expose more variation of sentence structure.

### References

- Ai, H., & Lu, X. (2013). A corpus-based comparison of syntactic complexity in NNS and NS university students' writing. In A. Diaz-Negrillo, N. Ballier, & P. Thompson (Eds.), *Automatic treatment and analysis of learner corpus data* (pp. 249–264). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Crystal, D. (2012). *English as a global language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cutler, A. (1983). Lexical complexity and sentence processing. In G. B. Flores d'Arcais, & R. J. Jarvella (Eds.), *The process of language understanding* (pp. 43-79). Chichester, Sussex: Wiley.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge university press.
- Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for academic purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Laufer, B., & Nation, P. (1995). Vocabulary size and use: Lexical richness in L2 written production. *Applied linguistics*, 16(3), 307-322.
- Lu, X. (2009). Automatic measurement of syntactic complexity in child language acquisition. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 14(1), 3-28.
- Lu, X. (2010). Automatic analysis of syntactic complexity in second language writing. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 15(4), 474-496.
- Lu, X. (2012). The relationship of lexical richness to the quality of ESL learners' oral narratives. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(2), 190-208.
- Nation, I. S. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

## THE ROLE OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL SELF-REGULATION IN STRUCTURE III

**Thomas Wahyu Prabowo Mukti**

Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
thomaswpm@gmail.com

**DOI:** doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200205

received 4 June 2017; revised 10 July 2017; accepted 25 September 2017

### **Abstract**

One of the important factors that influence the language learning, especially learning the basic rule of a language, is motivation. Many studies have tried to find out the correlation between motivation and self-regulation with the students' academic performance and they find out that both motivation and learning language are correlated so much. Thus, this paper specifically tried to find out the role of students' motivational self-regulation with the students' learning strategy. This research employed quantitative approach by employing survey method using observation sheet, questionnaire, and interview on some participants. The results of this study showed that the students' motivation was high but they cannot self-regulate themselves.

**Keywords:** motivation, motivational self-regulation, Structure III

### **Introduction**

Nagy (1995) states that learning English as a foreign language is not the same as when people learn other subjects. It is not only a matter of learning vocabulary, structure, listening or speaking skills but also sociocultural. Language attitudes, cultural stereotypes, and even geopolitical considerations are the sociocultural factors that affect the second language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Further, Nagy (1995) considers that learning a foreign language involves more than only the language skills but it also requires the learners to adapt to the culture of the language itself.

Considering the fact that learning language is not the same as learning other subjects, language learning requires motivation and self-regulation in the learning process in order to be successful in mastering the language. Gardner (2007) ponders that motivation can play an important role in learning a second language. Further, Gilakjani, Leon, and Sabouri (2012) even consider "motivation as the heart of learning and teaching activities" in the class (p. 9). By having the motivation to learn a language, the students will be able to self-regulate themselves since based on Lett and O'Mara (1990) and Gardner (2000), one of the most influential factors that affect students' self-regulation is their motivation. Students will be able to manage and control their effort on the classroom academic tasks (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 33). Moreover, students will be

able to maintain their cognitive engagement in the task that makes them be able to perform better (Zimmerman & Pons, 1988, p. 8).

However, students' motivation is often neglected by teachers (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p. 9). They add that teachers often forget that all of the learning activities success depends on the students' motivation. In this sense, students control the flow of the classroom. They consider that without students' motivation, there is no spirit for learning in the class. Similarly, Dornyei (2005) identifies that teachers may do not realize that even prodigies cannot accomplish long-term goals without motivation.

Teachers nowadays should consider that motivation, especially self-motivation, is important in learning English. In addition, they have to be able to notice that motivation is continuously changing because of a variety of internal and external forces (Dornyei, 2001). Thus, it becomes clear that the internal monitoring, filtering, and processing mechanisms that learners employ in this dynamic process will have an important role in shaping the motivational outcome (Dornyei, 2005, p. 65). Besides, there are three components of motivation that should be considered, namely an expectancy component, which includes students' beliefs about their ability to perform tasks, a value component, which includes students' goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, and an affective component, which includes students' emotional reactions to the task (Eccles, 1983; Pintrich, 1989).

Motivation is needed by EFL students who learn grammar because it is considered as one of the most important components in learning a language. Grammar is the structural foundation of learning a language (Zhang, 2009; Wang, 2010; Subasini & Kokilavani, 2013). Further, Wang (2010) considers that with a good knowledge of grammar, students can improve their English proficiency. Nevertheless, grammar is considered as a powerful undermining and demotivating force among L2 learners. Students perceive that grammar is a problem and they are difficult to relate grammar to their lives (Nawaz et al., 2015, p. 2).

The conditions may make the students lose their motivation in learning English. The students may feel less interested in learning grammar so that it affects their academic performance. This condition may also affect the way students learn and it will also affect their achievement. Therefore, this study tries to propose the role of students' motivation self-regulation that closely relates to students' self-regulated learning in academic performance in a Structure III class. Based on the research background above, this study addresses one research question: What are the roles of students' motivational self-regulation in students' learning strategy in Structure III class?

### ***Motivation***

Motivation is something that prompts, incites or stimulates action. Motivation leads to the initial stages of an action (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p. 9). It means motivation is related to the arousing initial interest and turning it into a decision to engage in some activity. The need to maintain this state of arousal, to determine someone to make the necessary effort to complete an action is also of great importance (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p.9). Furthermore, Williams & Burden, (1997) see motivation as a state of cognitive

and emotional arousal that leads to a conscious decision to act and keep intellectual and/or physical effort. Similarly, Gardner (1985) sees motivation is a combination of effort plus desire to achieve a goal plus favorable attitudes towards the goal to be accomplished. In short, motivation is something that stimulates people to act for the goals they set and keep the effort for reaching the goals.

Pintrich and De Groot (1990, p. 33) propose a model that pictures students' motivational components that may be linked to the three different components of self-regulated learning. The components are (a) an expectancy component, which includes students' beliefs about their ability to perform task, (b) a value component, which includes students' goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, and (c) an affective component, which includes students' emotional reactions to the task. Those three components will be discussed below.

First, the expectancy components are linked to students' metacognition, their use of cognitive strategies, and their effort management (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 34). Some studies suggest that students who believe they have capability of learning languages and performing tasks will engage in more metacognition, use more cognitive strategies, and are more likely to do a task better than students who do not believe they can perform the task (Fincham & Cain, 1986; Paris & Oka, 1986; Schunk, 1985 as cited in Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

Second, the value component of student motivation involves students' goals for the task and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the task (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 34). This motivational component is related to students' reasons for doing a task. The research suggests that motivated students who understand the importance of the activity they do will engage in more "metacognitive activity, cognitive strategy use, and effective effort management" (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p.35).

Third, affective component is related to the students' affective or emotional reactions to the task (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p.35). There is a variety of affective reactions that might be relevant to the affective components the most important in the school context is the students' anxiety (Wigfield & Eccles, 1989) while the anxiety itself is linked to "students' metacognition, cognitive strategy use, and effort management" (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p.35).

In summary, the writer would like to emphasize three components of motivation affect students' academic performance. The components are expectancy component, value component, and affective component. Those motivational components were linked in important ways to student cognitive engagement and academic performance in the classroom (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

### ***Self-Regulated Learning***

Self-regulated learning is a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences (Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011). This process occurs when student's purposeful actions and processes are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills. Zimmerman (1990) states that self-regulated learners face

the tasks in the school with confidence, diligence, and resourcefulness. He also emphasized that self-regulated learners are aware when they know a fact or possess a skill and when they do not.

Further, self-regulation is considered to be an important aspect of student learning and academic performance (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) consider that there are three components related to students' classroom performance. First, self-regulated learning includes students' metacognitive strategies for "planning, monitoring, and modifying their cognition" (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005, p.207). Second, self-regulated learning also includes students' management and control of their effort on classroom academic tasks. It focuses on how students are able to do a difficult task or block out distractors in order to maintain their cognitive engagement in the task that makes them enable to perform better (Corno, 1986; Corno & Rohrkemper, 1985 as cited in Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Third, self-regulated learning also relates to the actual cognitive strategies that students use to learn, remember, and understand the material (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Different cognitive strategies will help foster active engagement in learning and it will help students reach higher levels of achievement (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

#### ***Motivational Self-Regulation***

Related to the motivation and self-regulated learning, Dornyei (2005) highlights the importance of learner self-regulation by integrating the learners' proactive involvement in controlling the various aspects of their learning. He also underlines that self-regulation also includes motivation as one of the most important components. Thus, he defines the correlation of motivation and self-regulation as the motivational self-regulation. The focus of the motivational self-regulation is on "the 'whole' person and how they control their own motivation, emotions, behavior (including choice, effort, and persistence), and their environment, has been a welcome addition to research on academic self-regulation" (Dornyei, 2005, p.91). It means that students' self-regulation and motivation are interdependent and they affect students' academic performance.

It is assumed that students who have motivational self-regulation are able to maintain their motivation and keep themselves on task and they are expected to learn better than students who are less skilled at regulating their motivation. It can be understood since learning is the effortful process with a lot of obstacles may interfere students' initial motivation. Therefore, students' ability to keep in control with what they are doing or their goals should be considered as an important indicator for self-regulated learning (Wolters, 2003). In addition, Ushioda (2003) argued that the function of motivational self-regulation is to help learners to adapt motivational belief systems and engage in constructive and effective thinking to regulate their motivation. It means that by having motivational self-regulation, students will be able to maintain their motivation so they will engage in the task and reach their goals.

In summary, the motivational self-regulation plays important role in students' academic performance. By having the motivational self-regulation, students will be able to maintain their motivation to reach their goals. They also

will be able to find the cognitive strategy that will help them to analyze their learning and understanding the right method for their learning.

### **Method**

This research employed quantitative methods in order to collect and analyze the data. Specifically, it is survey research. Surveys enable the researcher to find out the major attitudes and opinions of a group of people toward some issue (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, Razavieh, 2010, p. 351). There were three steps the writer employed to conduct this research.

First, the writer observed one of Structure III classes in English Language Education Study Program. In this observation, observation sheet was used for generating the general knowledge of the students' motivation (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, Razavieh, 2010, p. 351). The focus of this observation is to observe students' attitudes directly in the class.

Second, after observing the class, the writer distributed questionnaires to all students who attended the class. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen statements related to the factors that make them motivated to learn, the strategy(s) to learn and how they manage their effort in learning. Further, the questionnaire also helped the writer to assess the students' attitudes toward Structure III class by presenting a set of statements related to their attitudes and their strategy they employed in Structure III class. (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, Razavieh, 2010, p. 351).

Third, the writer interviewed four participants in order to know the motivation of the participants and the way they regulate their effort, emotion, and strategy to learn. The writer recorded the data into transcripts. The data from the interviews were analyzed by using Creswell's (2009) qualitative data analysis by using QDA Miner®. They were organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading all the data, coding, representing the data in qualitative narrations, using the coding to generate categories or themes for analysis, and interpreting the data.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In this subchapter, the writer will combine the results of the observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Here are the analyses of the findings:

#### ***The Role of the Students' Motivational Self-Regulation on the Students' Academic Achievement***

In this chapter, the writer would like to elaborate the students' attitude, self-regulation, the motivational self-regulation and how those factors affect the students learning.

##### ***Students' Attitude in Structure III***

Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri (2012) state that motivation is related to the arousing initial interest and turning it into a decision to engage in some activity (p. 9). Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri (2012, p. 10) and that the need to maintain this state will determine someone's effort to complete an action. It means that students who have motivation can be observed from their actions and attitudes in the class. In order to know the students' attitude that also determines their motivation in the

class, the writer employed observation sheet, questionnaire and interview guideline.

The students' attitude in the class was good. It can be observed from the observation (please refer to appendix 1) that I did on 16 November 2016. Most students show their enthusiasm by doing every task in the class, answering lecturer's questions, paying attention to their lecturer's explanation, asking questions when they do not understand the lecturer's explanation.

However, it should be noted that not all students showed their enthusiasm in the class. The writer found that some students were sleeping in the class, some students did not participate in the class activities and answer the lecturer's questions. Moreover, from the questionnaire statement number 11 which is "I always feel motivated in learning grammar both in the class and in my house/boarding house", only 34% students felt motivated in learning in the structure III class.

In summary, the students' attitude in Structure III class was good. It can be seen from the observation results that show students were quite enthusiastic in following the class activities. However, some students did not have the same enthusiasm as other students. To conclude, more than 80% students were enthusiastic in following the class activities which indicates that students were motivated in learning Structure III, a subject that considered to be the hardest subject by them.

#### *Students' Motivation and Motivational Self-Regulation in Structure III*

The components proposed by Pintrich and De Groot (1990, p. 33) to indicate the students' motivation in learning in the class. They are (a) an expectancy component, which includes students' beliefs about their ability to perform task, (b) a value component, which includes students' goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, and (c) an affective component, which includes students' emotional reactions to the task. Those three components will be discussed below.

First, students showed that they believe in themselves that they are capable of passing the structure III class. Through the questionnaire, as can be seen in Figure 1, I discovered that 44% students believe that they will be able to get an A in the class while 22% students do believe that they will get an A.

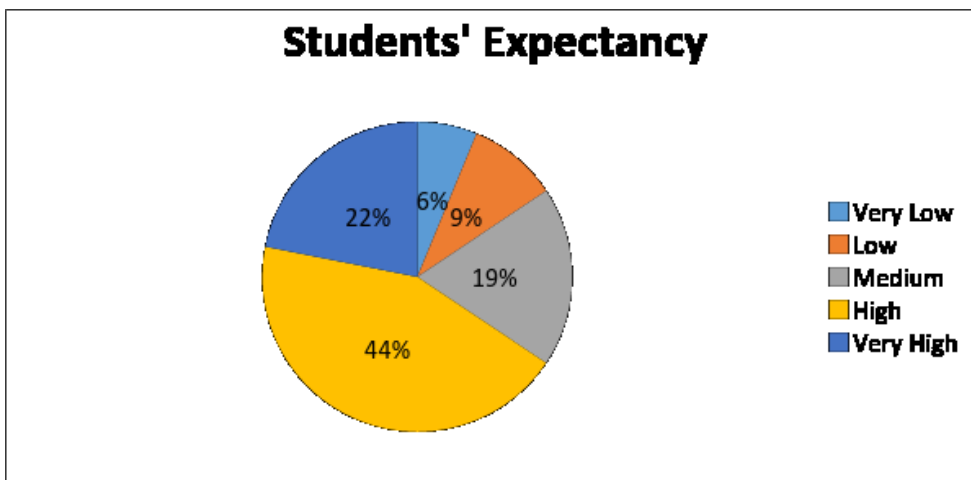


Figure 1. Students' Expectancy

Furthermore, the data from interviews also indicate that students have high expectancy. RDI state, “*Kalau berdasarkan lihat nilai-nilai kemarin, kayae bisa dapat A* (If I consider my previous scores, I think I can get an A).” However, MD, DTA and GPA stated that they only expect a B and they felt that they were pleased with it. From the fact above, the writer concludes that actually, students believe in themselves but they do not expect an A as their final score. They believe in their effort and the expectancy is mostly influenced by their quizzes and midterm test scores.

Second, the results of the questionnaire and interview show that students have their own reasons for doing the task (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p.34). Based on the statements number three and four (“I learn English because I like the language and the culture” and “I learn English because I believe that English will be beneficial for my future”), the writer found that students actually have their own goal in learning structure III. The data can be seen on the next page:

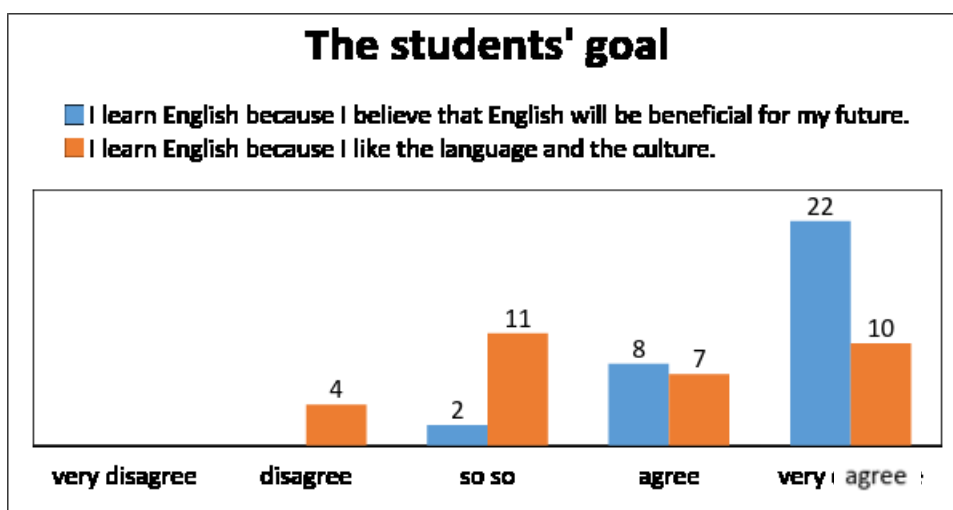


Figure 2. Students' Goal

Based on the data from the questionnaire, it can be concluded that most students have their own goal in learning structure III. It may vary from the personal growth (statement number 2) until the functional use (statement number 3) but most students learn grammar for the functional use. In addition, the interview results strengthen the students' goal on the functional use. MD states, "*Iya. Karena kita mungkin ngajar di SMP SMA kan? SMP itu tenses sudah belajar, terus kalimat aktif pasif juga udah. Terus di sini kita juga ngulang disitu tapi lebih dalam konteksnya.* (Yes. We will teach in junior or senior high school, right?. In junior high school, they have learned tenses, active and passive sentence. We learn here but in deeper context)" when she was asked whether she will be a teacher or not in the future. In summary, the students' reasons in learning grammar were mostly about the functional use since someday they will be teachers thus they believe that they need to master grammar.

Third, it is related to the students' affection in doing tasks and/or tests. There is a variety of affective reactions that might be relevant to the affective components the most important in the school context is the students' anxiety (Wigfield & Eccles, 1989). MD and GPA stated that they felt that they were not really enthusiastic about doing tasks or preparing for the tests. However, RDA states, "*Aku tu malah nunggu-nunggu saat tes tu lho mas.kaya aku tu bener-bener kaya fell in love sama structure (I am actually waiting for the test. I think I fell in love with structure.)*." Moreover, DTA stated that she was afraid of doing the test. She was afraid of making mistakes that actually led her to make mistakes. In brief, students' affections were different one to another in doing tasks and/or tests and it was reflected through the way students prepare and do the tasks and/or tests.

From those explanations about the students' motivation, the writer could also relate it to the self-regulated learning and motivational self-regulation. First, the students' motivation leads students to have the strategies for planning, monitoring, and modifying their cognition (Zimmerman & Pons, 1988). It can be seen from the students' learning strategy to prepare quizzes or tests. From the questionnaire data, 78% students agree that learning grammar is hard, so they need a strategy(s) in order to understand it (questionnaire statement number 6). It means that students are aware and they should have a strategy to learn. It also shows that they are motivated to learn.

However, students did not have their own schedule to learn grammar. It was only 16% of the students who had the strategy to learn grammar. Moreover, from the interview, all of the participants only learned before they have quizzes or tests. It means that students had the motivation but they did not manage themselves to learn more and have a better strategy.

Second, the students' motivation makes students able to manage and control their effort on classroom academic tasks (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990). From the observation, the writer could observe that some students tried to always listen to their lecturer. Though, some students did not pay attention to their lecturer. Some even slept in the class. MD and DTA admitted that they were sleepy in the class. GPA even underlined that the lecturers' method in teaching grammar is monotone and it demotivated him. It means that students did not really put their effort into learning in the class although they are motivated in learning grammar.

In summary, after considering the students' attitude, motivation and the way they self-regulate themselves, the writer could conclude that students have a high motivation in learning grammar but some students could not really self-regulate themselves both their learning strategy and motivation. They know that they needed to learn harder on structure III but they did not manage themselves to learn more and have a better strategy to learn. As stated by Dornyei (2005, p. 91), the focus of the motivational self-regulation is on the 'whole' person and how they control their own motivation, emotions, behavior (including choice, effort, and persistence), and their environment. Some students could not manage their motivation into action that affects their way of learning. Therefore, students still need to manage their effort and persistence in learning grammar.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the writer concludes that students' motivation in learning grammar is high. However, they were demotivated for many factors and they also could not manage their motivation into action. In addition, some students were still not able to regulate their learning and motivation. Those factors affect the students' learning strategy. For the lecturers who teach Structure or Grammar class, they should consider the factors that make student motivated and demotivated, how to manage the students' motivation into action and how to help students regulate their motivation and learning strategy.

### References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Razavieh, A. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Al Kaboody, M. (2013). Second language motivation: The role of teachers in learners' motivation. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 3(4), 45-54.
- Al-Mekhlafi, A. M., & Nagaratnam, R. P. (2011). Difficulties in teaching and learning grammar in an EFL context. *Online Submission*, 4(2), 69-92.
- Boekaerts, M., & Corno, L. (2005). Self-regulation in the classroom: A perspective on assessment and intervention. *Applied Psychology*, 54(2), 199-231.
- Buckledee, S. (2008). Motivation and second language acquisition. *ELOPE: English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries*, 5(1-2), 159-170.
- Corno, L. (1986). The metacognitive control components of self-regulated learning. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 11(4), 333-346.
- Corno, L., & Mandinach, E. (1983). The role of cognitive engagement in classroom learning and motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 18, 88-100.
- Corno, L., & Rohrkemper, M. (1985). The intrinsic motivation to learn in classrooms. *Research on motivation in education*, 2, 53-90.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Singapore: Cambridge University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of language learners: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eccles, J. (1983). Expectancies, values and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motives: Psychological and sociological approaches* (pp. 75-146). San Francisco, CA: Free man.
- Engin, A. O. (2009). Second language learning success and motivation. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 37(8), 1035-1041.
- Fincham, F. D., & Cain, K. M. (1986). Learned helplessness in humans: A developmental analysis. *Developmental Review*, 6(4), 301-333.
- Gardner, R.C. (2007). Motivation and second language acquisition. *Porta Linguarum*, 8, 9-20.
- Gilakjani, A. P., Leong, L. M., & Sabouri, N. B. (2012). A study on the role of motivation in foreign language learning and teaching. *I.J.Modern Education and Computer Science*, 7, 9-16.
- Lett Jr, J. A., & O'Mara, F. E. Predictors of Success in an Intensive Foreign Language Learning Context. *Document Resume*, 228.
- Nagy, W. E. (1995). *On the role of context in first-and second-language vocabulary learning*. Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Center for the Study of Reading.
- Nawaz, H., Amin, M., & Tatla, I. A. (2015). Factors Affecting Students' Motivation Level to Learn English as a Second Language in the Pakistani University Context. *Journal of Research & Reflections in Education (JRRE)*, 9(2).
- Paris, S. G., & Oka, E. R. (1986). Children's reading strategies, metacognition, and motivation. *Developmental review*, 6(1), 25-56.
- Pintrich, P. R. (1989). The dynamic interplay of student motivation and cognition in the college classroom. *Advances in motivation and achievement*, 6, 117-160.
- Pintrich, P.R & De Groot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 82(1). 33-40.
- Root, E. (1999). *Motivation and learning strategies in a foreign language setting: A look at a learner of Korean*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.
- Schunk, D. H. (1985). Participation in goal setting: Effects on self-efficacy and skills of learning-disabled children. *The Journal of Special Education*, 19(3), 307-317.
- Stefánsson, E. G. (2013). *Second language acquisition: Mine the effect of age and motivation*. Unpublished Thesis: Universitatis Islandiae Sigillum, Reykjavic.
- Subasini, M., & Kokilavani, B. (2013). Significance of grammar in technical English. *International Journal of English Literature and Culture*, 1(3), 56-58.
- Ushida, E. (2005). The role of students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning in online language courses. *CALICO Journal*, 23(1), 49-78.

- Veronica, A. C. S. (2008). Motivation in language learning. *Economic Science Series*, 17(1), 557-562.
- Wang, F. (2010). The necessity of grammar teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 78-90.
- Weinstein, C. E., Mayer, R. E., & Wittrock, M. C. (1986). The Teaching of Learning Strategies. In: Wittrock, M., Ed., *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. Macmillan: New York, 315-327.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (1989). Test anxiety in elementary and secondary school students. *Educational Psychologist*, 24(2), 159-183.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolters, C. A. (2003). Regulation of motivation: Evaluating an underemphasized aspect of self-regulated learning. *Educational psychologist*, 38(4), 189-205.
- Zhang, J. (2009). Necessity of grammar teaching. *International Education Studies*, 2(2), 184 -187.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist*, 25(1), 3-17.
- Zumbrunn, S., Tadlock, J., & Roberts, E. D. (2011). Encouraging self-regulated learning in the classroom: A review of the literature. *Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC)*, 1-28.

## **TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN INDONESIAN CONTEXTS: FINDINGS FROM HIGH SCHOOLS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

**Dwi Agustina**

Pekalongan University, Pekalongan, Indonesia

tina50@yahoo.co.id

**DOI:** doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200206

received 29 June 2017; revised 1 August 2017; accepted 24 August 2017

### **Abstract**

Learner autonomy has become one of the main topics in the current research and conferences in Indonesia. This suggests that learner autonomy has received more attention in Indonesian contexts. However, there has been no space for discussions about the meaning of learner autonomy from high school teachers' points of view. A multi-case study conducted by Agustina (2017) has found diverse understanding of autonomy as reported by Junior High School English teachers in Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This paper discusses those teachers' understanding in a more detailed way along with the implications when the concept is understood differently. This paper supports Agustina's argument that the diversity in understanding and developing autonomy should be anticipated since teachers have different beliefs about autonomy. Referring to Agustina's findings this paper proposes the need to consider the consequences of allowing the presence of various understanding of learner autonomy particularly when it is set as an educational goal.

Keywords: learner autonomy, multi-case study, secondary schools

### **Introduction**

With the increasing attention given to learner autonomy, conducting a research or publishing the work on this concept is one way to contribute to the local, national and international discussion within the field of learner autonomy. Similarly, this paper intends to contribute to the field of autonomy by discussing the meanings of autonomy as understood by English teachers in Agustina's (2017) study. With more and more practices of developing autonomy in Indonesian context, for example, Ardi's (2017) study, it is important to discuss what learner autonomy actually means and what teachers actually understand about it. However, there is not much discussion about the meaning of autonomy both in tertiary and secondary education in Indonesia.

This paper fills the gap in the discussion of learner autonomy by elaborating the most recent research findings. Agustina's study also shows that different ways in perceiving the concept of autonomy brought some implications on teachers' classroom practices. This paper looks at each of the meanings of learner autonomy as understood by teachers along with its implications. The paper continues by

discussing the consequences of offering teachers great flexibility in understanding the concept of autonomy. Diverse understanding about learner autonomy may present challenges to the achievement of the educational goal of creating autonomous learners set by the government of Indonesia. Different understanding may lead to different practices of developing autonomy which can be either similar or dissimilar to what is required by the curriculum set by the government. This suggests that uniformity in understanding autonomy may initially be required before teachers begin implementing the curriculum which highlights the development of learner autonomy.

### **Theory**

A number of definitions of autonomy can be found in the literature across the years although the earliest one was given by Holec (1979, p. 3) where he defined autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”. With the emphasis on the word “ability”, this definition focuses on what students can do to be responsible for the learning they are conducting. Holec explained further that the ability of an autonomous learner includes the ability to decide the learning objectives, materials, evaluation and progression. Little (1991, p. 4) proposes that autonomy is “a capacity-for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action”. Similar to Holec’s definition, Little’s definition covers learners’ ability to make decisions in their learning while also touches learners’ ability to act independently in learning. Apart from those definitions, Benson and Voller (1997) give the examples of various uses of the term ‘learner autonomy’. They mention that autonomy can be seen as a situation (where the students learn independently without a teacher), as skills (which students can learn), as an inborn capacity, as an exercise of students’ responsibility over their learning, and as the students’ right to decide their learning (pp. 1-2). In this regard, learner autonomy has a range of meanings, covering not only skills, capacity, or responsibility, but also students’ right for learning as well as the situation for their independent learning.

Dam (2000) emphasizes that the development of learner autonomy can be enhanced through the involvement of the learners in their learning. Dam adds that in autonomous learning, learners’ task is to maintain an active engagement to the learning and the awareness about it. Benson (2011a) defines autonomy as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” because, for him, using the term “control” eases the research on this concept as the term “control” is more open to investigate than the term “charge” or “responsibility” (p. 58). Huang and Benson (2013) describe control as power to select and decide the learning aspects and implement them. Benson (2013) also suggests that autonomy is reflected in autonomous language learning activities where learners have the control in their learning or particularly when they conduct outside-classroom language learning. Based on the definitions above, learner autonomy is mostly associated with learners’ ability, responsibility, control, skills and engagement particularly in learning, in making decision and in acting or learning independently. Among those associations, the notion that autonomy includes learners’ greater control in their learning has got huge agreement in the field (Benson, 2011b). Even so,

autonomy remains a multidimensional construct (Benson, 2011b) and it is even a complex idea (Huang & Benson, 2013). Thus, it is unlikely that we can use a sole definition to describe this concept.

### **Theory Application**

With the availability of various definitions and descriptions of autonomy, those implementing the concept of autonomy may use different definition based on their own understanding of this complex concept. In Indonesian contexts, Agustina's (2017) study has found various understanding along with some misconceptions about the concept of learner autonomy. The concept of autonomy has been introduced in the new 2013 high school curriculum in Indonesia and Agustina studied how high school English teachers perceived this concept. The data were collected through the use of Likert scale questionnaire designed by Borg and Al-Busiadi (2012). Agustina also studied how English teachers' perceptions about learner autonomy affected classroom practices. The study employed 145 English teachers in Magelang regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Nine of the teachers were then purposefully selected for building a multi-case study about the implementation of learner autonomy in Indonesian context. Almost all respondents felt positive about the concept of autonomy as they expressed their agreement in the questionnaire that learner autonomy contributes to the success of students' language learning. However the multi-case study revealed that English teachers had various understanding about learner autonomy and thus the way they promoted it in the classroom varied considerably. Looking at Agustina's finding may help us to see the differences of understanding along with the implications for classroom practices. The followings are the findings of Agustina's study (p. 217) which reflects different beliefs and practices in developing learner autonomy in English classrooms in Indonesian contexts:

a. Teachers believed that smart learners could conduct autonomous learning.

Some teachers strongly believed in the ability of their smart students in learning autonomously. The basic idea is smart students are able to conduct autonomous learning. This suggests that these Indonesian teachers believed that learner autonomy is part of the *inborn capacity* that students brought even before they entered the schools. One of the teachers taught in a favorite school and the students in her school were good students who had passed elementary school examinations with good grades. Her students also entered the schools through highly competitive selection processes. She perceived these students as smart since they could understand her when she used English in her classrooms. Her teaching experiences convinced her that her students could conduct independent learning both inside and outside the classrooms. This belief led her to teach in such a way that more time was spent for students' autonomous or independent learning. As an example, after she introduced the learning topic in one of the lessons, she asked her students to work together in groups to search the materials in the internet and then present the materials in front of the class. The students thus became the learning resources for their friends. After each group presented the materials, they sent the materials to the teacher and the teacher would use those

materials as the test materials in the following weeks. In this way, this teacher served more as a learning facilitator, manager of the class, as well as the evaluator of the students' learning progress. This finding brings an implication towards the practice of developing autonomy. By perceiving that smart students could learn independently, teachers may not recognize the needs for students to keep learning how to learn. Teachers may assume that students have already acquired the skills needed for autonomous learning activities. It is also possible that teachers perceive "not smart" students as having no ability to conduct autonomous learning. This affects the promotion of learner autonomy in the classrooms as teachers may only give independent learning tasks to those whom teachers perceive as smart students.

- b. Teachers believed that when students learn autonomously, their workload would be alleviated.

A number of teachers believed that they would be more relaxed when students learned independently. When students are autonomous, they can learn without a teacher. Teachers thus believed that they only need to sit and observe the students. They assumed that they did not need to teach in front of the class anymore. They felt that the only times they should act was when students needed their helps. For them this meant the reduction of their work. I consider this kind of belief as an example of the misconception about the concept of learner autonomy in my study. Rather than having the reduction of the workload, teachers obviously have new roles and responsibilities in facilitating students' autonomy development. This has been specified by Gremmo and Riley (1995) that teachers have to acquire new professional skills to act as a learning facilitator, helper, and counselor. This finding suggests the lack of understanding of teachers' roles in an autonomous class. Teachers should be made aware of their new roles because developing autonomy in Indonesian context is a new task in which teachers may need some training. Without having sufficient understanding about learner autonomy, there is a risk that teachers let students learn the learning materials independently without proper guidance and monitoring.

- c. Teachers believed that providing information to students would provide students with skills needed for independent learning.

Some other teachers believed that it was necessary for them to teach the students how to learn independently. Holding this belief, teachers guided their students on what and how to do a particular task. In this sense, teachers perceived autonomy as learned skills. Students could acquire the skills in the classrooms and then apply the skills for outside classroom learning activities. As teachers perceived autonomy as learned skills they may consider the need to be autonomous themselves before teaching their students the skills for conducting autonomous activities. Those who did not perceive themselves as autonomous may feel hesitate in teaching students to be autonomous. This becomes something to consider when teachers are required to develop autonomy in their learners.

- d. Teachers believed that students could complete out of class learning tasks such as homework.

Some teachers found that each of the tasks given to students could be accomplished well. This made the teachers believe that students had the capability to learn and work independently at home. Besides, teachers believed that students were responsible in completing the task and finding ways to do it. Therefore, teachers often gave homework after the lesson. The finding suggests that teachers see learner autonomy as the capacity to complete the task alone. Learner autonomy was also seen as students' responsibility to handle the tasks by using the resources they found themselves outside the class. The homework that teachers give can also be seen as an exercise for students' responsibility. However, the more autonomy students need to develop does not mean the more homework they have to complete and this should be made clear to the teachers.

- e. Teachers believed that autonomous learners could make decision over classroom materials, group sizes and learning activities.

Based on their teaching experiences, teachers found that students could decide the materials to learn, the learning activities to do, and the size of groups when they were about to work with their peers. The teachers perceived their students as having high level of autonomy. Teachers could share the control over the learning materials and activities with their students. Learner autonomy in this regard was closely associated with learners' right to direct their learning. Based on this finding, it seems that being autonomous means having the ability to decide what to learn and how to learn. Seeing autonomy in this way may challenge teachers' own capability in mastering the learning materials. When students have the ability to select what and how to learn, teachers may need to be ready to facilitate students' learning. Students may come with a completely new topic for the teacher and the teacher has to be ready to discuss this when students bring the topic in the class. The key to autonomy development for this kind of learner autonomy is thus teachers' readiness and openness to cope with the new learning materials and activities

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study reflect the notion that the concept of autonomy is complex. There are various meanings of autonomy both in practice and in theory. Benson and Voller's (1997) theory has been reflected in Agustina's (2017) study findings where autonomy is perceived differently: as inborn capacities, as situation when students learn alone, as learned skills, and as students' capability and responsibility in completing the task. The implications coming with these varied understanding of autonomy can be seen in the way learner autonomy is promoted as discussed above. Allowing teachers to promote autonomy based on their own understanding about the concept seems to be the fair policy in the light of respecting teacher autonomy in enacting their teaching practices. However, it is necessary to set the boundary on what is considered as a misconception about the concept of autonomy and what is not. The misconceptions about learner autonomy should be minimized by providing sufficient information about what learner

autonomy means, what autonomy covers, what roles teachers should take in developing learner autonomy and how to promote autonomy in their classrooms. The findings of Agustina's (2017) study above also reflect the need for teacher professional development activities particularly prior to implementing the curriculum which supports the development of learner autonomy. Professional development activities can help teachers to modify their beliefs about autonomy especially those which are not in line with the principles for promoting learner autonomy in classrooms. Finally, it is also necessary to consider the present challenges when teachers hold a particular belief about learner autonomy so that their belief does not limit the promotion of autonomy in their classrooms.

### References

- Agustina, D. (2017). *A complex system of teachers' beliefs and practices in developing learner autonomy in Indonesian junior high school contexts: A mixed-methods study* (Doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand). Retrieved from <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/6351>
- Ardi, P. (2017). Promoting learner autonomy through Schoology m-learning platform in an EAP class at an Indonesian university. *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(2), 55-76.
- Benson, P. (2011a). *Teaching and researching autonomy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Harlow: Longman.
- Benson, P. (2011b). What's new in autonomy? *JALT*, 15-17.
- Benson, P. (2013). Learner autonomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(4), 839-843. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.134>
- Benson, P. & Voller, P. (1997). Introduction: Autonomy and independence in language learning. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 1-12). New York: Longman.
- Borg, S. & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). *Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices* (ELT Research Paper 12-07). London: British Council.
- Dam, L. (2000). Evaluating autonomous learning. In B. Sinclair, I. McGrath, & T. Lamb (Eds.), *Learner autonomy, teacher autonomy: Future directions* (pp. 48-59). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Gremmo, M.-J., & Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self access in language teaching and learning: The history of an idea. *System*, 23(2), 151-164. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X\(95\)00002-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(95)00002-2)
- Holec, H. (1979). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Huang, J., & Benson, P. (2013). Autonomy agency and identity in foreign and second language education. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 7-28. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2013-0002>
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

## **VOCABULARY ENHANCEMENT OF FEMALE ESL LEARNERS THROUGH SHORT STORIES: A RURAL/ URBAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Naseer Ahmed**

Lahore Garrison University, Lahore, Pakistan

naseerahmed159@yahoo.com

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200207](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200207)

received 5 July 2017; revised 30 August 2017; accepted 27 September 2017

### **Abstract**

Teaching English has progressed rapidly with the changing requirements of society. Current study has not only the purpose of testing vocabulary enhancement by short stories but also monitors its effects on rural and urban population at secondary level. Present study utilizes Pre-test, post-test experimental design. Before the commencement of study, 50 students took their pre-test from rural site and 50 students took their pre-test from urban site. Only those 20, 20 students were selected from both sites whose accumulative score was almost the same. After this, five short stories were taught to both groups for five weeks with the same methodology. After the completion of coaching, a post-test was conducted. Marks of pre-test and post-test of both rural and urban groups were compared to see difference in learning. Data was analyzed statistically by using SPSS 20 for windows. Analysis of data proved that urban group had statistically significant improvement as compared to rural group.

Keywords: short stories, vocabulary building, ESL, ELT

### **Introduction**

Language learning is of prime importance in almost every walk of life. Without sufficient vocabulary, one faces difficulty in the expression of views. A lot of work has been done to devise different novel and interesting teaching methodologies to improve vocabulary. Use of literature in language teaching has been appreciated by a lot of researchers especially by Maibodi (2008) and Vaughn et al (2004). Nasreen (2010) further strengthens this view by saying that “short-stories” will create a marked difference in the process of language teaching and improving vocabulary.

Students in Pakistani schools are taught English from the very first class but most of graduates are unable to use English fluently and correctly which is the result of rote-learning system. To cope with this situation, a number of changes are being introduced in the field of education which is quite evident from the conversion of Urdu medium schools into English Medium by Government of Pakistan. Waqas (2011) further supports it by saying that Punjab government has felt the importance of English language by making it a compulsory subject from class one. Government teachers are regularly trained to teach English efficiently. Present study is designed to do a comparative analysis of rural and urban students regarding vocabulary enhancement through short stories. It was hypothesized for

the present study that short stories will prove to be an effective tool in vocabulary enhancement of both rural and urban students. It was also to be tested that for which group this methodology was more suitable. Moreover, it is an effort to reduce tension and anxiety among students as it is really useful not only for teachers but also for students, parents and policy makers to use new techniques in language teaching.

#### ***Number of Vocabulary Items Learners Must Know***

Many researchers have tried to estimate the number of lexical items that native speakers of any language know to assess that how many words other than non native speakers must know to learn the language. For a native speaker, this estimate varies between 12,000 to 20,000 words depending on the level of education (Goulden, Nation and Read, 1990). Exposure of a few words can lead to greater comprehension for non native speakers. For instance, the students who have the knowledge of most frequent 20,000 words would be able to understand almost 80% of the words in an average text and if the knowledge of words is 50,000, then learner's understanding is increased to 88.7% (Francis and Kucera, 1982). For spoken language 1,800 words make up over 80% of the spoken corpus. (McCarthy and Carter, 2007).

#### ***Vocabulary Enhancement through Short Stories***

Short stories are also considered to be very powerful teaching tools especially for vocabulary enhancement. According to Pesola (1991), storytelling gives more fruitful results with young language learners than anyone else. Isbell (2002) further elaborates it by saying that children enjoy only those stories which include repetitive phrases and unique words. Meyer (2000) is also of the view that stories contain culture load which refers to the way in which language and culture are related and the amount of cultural knowledge which is required to understand meanings in order to participate in activities. Students should know not only the words but also cultural background and they should learn the vocabulary in context.

Short stories also help children to recall or reread the story to build their conceptual knowledge. Stories help learners to develop concepts about new words, print and books as well as evaluating students current language levels (Morrow, 2001). Students' language proficiency is also developed with the help of such practices. Richgels (2000) is of the view that story recall provides students with an opportunity to organize the sequence of events, to utilize the vocabulary items present in the story and to expand children's comprehension of the world as well. Story recall is not only a research tool for the researchers as it gives a large amount of data to gain insight into learner's comprehension processes (Goodman, 1982) but also an instructional strategy that has the potential to improve many literary skills.

#### ***Attitudes towards Vocabulary Enhancement through Short Stories***

It is proved by research that students have a positive attitude towards short stories methodology. Maibaodi (2008) conducted a study on learning English through short stories on 200 female adult, Persian speaking university undergraduates and found that they showed positive attitude towards short stories. Erakaya (2003) is of the view that short stories enable the students to engage all

the four skills of English language. Lao and Krashen (2000) conducted a study between two groups. The results of first group showed their improvement through reading literary texts and the other group showed results of non literary texts. Oster (1989) also affirms the importance of “literature by saying that literature helps students to write more creatively” (p. 85). Nasreen (2010) also conducted a study on higher school level students and found a positive response of research population towards this strategy. Khatib (2011) conducted a study at Allameh Tabataba’i University Iran with 24 students in one group and 21 in other group. This study suggests that short stories remained effective in improving student’s linguistic skills regardless of the way used to teach to students. Kirkgoz (2012) conducted a study on 21 Turkish university students regarding their responses towards short stories. The findings of this study suggested that short stories contribute a lot in the overall understanding of the students. Strodt-Lopez (1996) used short stories to improve comprehension skills of the students. Findings signify the importance of short stories. Pardebe (2012) also used short stories on Indonesian students to improve their linguistic proficiency and the findings of this study suggested that utilization of short stories improved students’ language proficiency. Murdoch (2002) is of the view that short stories enhance the linguistics and paralinguistic competence of the students. Ellis and Brewster (1991) are of the view that stories motivate the students towards learning English as a foreign language. The research question is “Does rural/urban setting affect vocabulary enhancement and to what extent can vocabulary be enhanced through short stories in rural and urban settings?”

### **Method**

As mentioned earlier that out of 100 students, only 40 selected students of class 9th participated in this study. Out of these forty students, twenty belonged to rural site i.e. GG High School SherGarh District Okara and twenty belonged to GG High School Hujra Shah Muqem District Okara. It was kept in mind that accumulative score of both groups in pre-test was almost the same which showed that students of both groups were almost of the same intellectual level.

Pre-test, containing 10 MCQs out which five were related to antonymous and 5 were related to synonyms. The lexemes were selected from the textbook of class 8th that has been read by both rural and urban students. Post-test also contained same number of questions on the same pattern that was used in pre-test. The difference was that now the content of the post test was selected from the short stories which were taught by the researcher.

Before the actual start of the study, formal consent of the students was sought. 100 students took pretest and the result of pre-test marks enabled the researcher to select twenty students from rural and twenty from urban site. On the very first day of commencement of classes, every student was provided with a short story and it was read aloud in the class room. Students were asked to underline unfamiliar words while reading and they were explained these difficult words with the help of TPR (total physical response) along with contextual clues, key word method. One week was spent on each story. Short stories were available in the class room for students. Their availability in the classroom facilitated the

students for self study. The rest of the four short stories were taught to both rural and urban group students through the same methodology as explained above. At the end of the whole intervention, all the students appeared in a very formal post-test session at their respective sites.

**Findings and Discussion**

Results of pre-test showed that mean score and standard deviation in pre-test for rural group were 6.80 (2.419) and for rural group mean score and standard deviation were 6.60 (1.429). These results showed that both groups had almost the same results. The detail of this data is showed in table 1.

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation in pre-test of both groups

| <b>Variable</b> | <b>Group</b> | <b>No. of Students</b> | <b>Mean Score</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Pre-test        | Rural        | 20                     | 6.80              | 2.419                 |
|                 | Urban        | 20                     | 6.60              | 1.429                 |

Results of independent samples t-test proved that there was no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores as  $t(38) = 0.352, p = 0.727, \alpha = 0.05$ .

Post-test marks of both urban and rural groups showed that there was an improvement in the mean score and standard deviation of both groups. Mean score and standard deviation for rural group was 7.65 (1.089) and for urban group, mean score and standard deviation in post test were 7.85 (0.988). So increase in mean score of post-test for rural group was from 6.80 to 7.65 (difference = 1.00) and this increase for urban group was from 6.50 to 7.85 (difference = 2.35). Table 2 and 3 proved that both groups had performed better than before.

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation in post-test for both groups

| <b>Variable</b> | <b>Group</b> | <b>No. of Students</b> | <b>Mean Score</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Post-test       | Rural        | 20                     | 7.65              | 1.089                 |
|                 | Urban        | 20                     | 7.85              | 0.988                 |

Table 3: Mean change in test-score for both groups

| Variable  | Pre-test |       | Post-test |       | Change |       |
|-----------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|--------|-------|
|           | Rural    | Urban | Rural     | Urban | Rural  | Urban |
| Post-test | 6.80     | 6.50  | 7.65      | 7.85  | 0.85   | 1.35  |

Post-test results proved that rural group had improved much more in its mean score of post-test. Further analysis of improvement in post-test of both groups was conducted by using paired samples t-test. Paired samples t-test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in post-test score of rural group as  $t(19)$ ,  $p = 0.163$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Paired samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test marks of urban group as  $t(19) = -2.37$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

It clearly proves the hypothesis that location has an effect on the learning of the students. So, it can be concluded that in terms of statistical significance, urban group had improved much more than the rural group. All this change was due to the change in location of school. Short stories for vocabulary enhancement proved to be effective for both rural and urban groups but there was a significant difference in improvements of rural and urban students. One possible reason was the past exposure of urban students to short stories in the form of rhymes having short stories in them that they used to have at the beginning level of school. For rural students, it was quite a new methodology due to which they couldn't perform like urban students. It may also be concluded that we can have wonderful outputs from students by introducing short stories from the very beginning level at school. All the possible steps were taken to provide controlled environment to both rural and urban groups of this study. Hard copies of short stories were provided to each student but before leaving the classroom, after lecture they were asked to submit these copies. So that no group member can have any help from her home. This was done because urban students might have some help from their parents or tuition teachers but rural students are commonly not provided with such type of guidelines. So students were asked to do everything at their own honestly and were prohibited to seek any type of help except teacher. It was also tried at researcher's level best that all the rural participants should belong to purely rural areas. Same precaution was also taken into account for urban group. Most of the participants of this study found vocabulary enhancement through short stories an interesting methodology. These were the core after effects of this methodology. Yet there was a significant difference between the outputs of rural and urban groups.

### Conclusion

Rural students expressed a wish that this methodology should be introduced from the primary level. In an informal session, they said that teachers should be properly trained by government for successful implementation of this strategy. It

can be concluded that vocabulary enhancement through short stories is an effective methodology and it enhances vocabulary of urban secondary level students more than the rural secondary level students. Government should take steps to introduce literature for language teaching not only at secondary level but also at the beginning level.

### References

- Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (1991). *The storytelling handbook: A guide for primary teacher of English*. Hamond Swath: Penguin.
- Erakaya, R. O (2003). Benefits of using short stories in the EFL context. *Asian EFL Journal*, 1(3).
- Goodman, M. (1982). Retelling of literature and the comprehension process. *Theory into Practice*, 21(4), 300-307.
- Isbell, R. (2002). *Telling and Retelling Stories Learning Language and Literacy Young Children*, 57 (2), 26-30.
- Khatib, S. (2011). Applying the reader response approach in teaching English short stories to EFL students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(1), 151-159.
- Kirkgoz, Y. (2012). Incorporating short stories in English language classes. *Novitas Royal*, 6(2), 110-125.
- Lao, C. Y and S. Krashen (2000). The impact of popular literature study on literacy development in EFL: More evidence for the power of reading. *System*, 28, 261-270.
- Maibodi, H.A. (2008). Learning English through short stories. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, 2(1), 41-72.
- Meyer, L. (2000). Barriers to meaningful instruction for English learners. *Theory into Practice*, 39(4), 228-236.
- Morrow. L. M. (2001). *Literary development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Murdoch, G. (2002). Exploiting well-known short stories for language skills development. *IATEFLCS SIG Newsletter*, 23, 9-17.
- Nasreen, (2010). Improving vocabulary through short stories at higher school level (PGD Thesis, Punjab University).
- Oster, J. (1989). Seeing with difference eyes: Another view of literature in the ESL class. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23 (1), 85-103.
- Pesola, C. A. (1991). Culture in the elementary foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24 (4), 331-346.
- Richgels & McGee, L. M., (2000). *Literary beginnings: Supporting youth readers and writers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Vaughn, S., & Hickman, P. (2004). Story book reading: Improving vocabulary and comprehension for English language learners. *Atahe Reading Teacher*, 57(8), 720-730.
- Waqas, S.A. (2011). The status of English language teaching in Pakistan. *ELT Weekly*, 3(88), 10-19.

## **TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE FREQUENT TEST: VOCABULARY COURSE**

**Elizabeth Wulan Wahyuningtyas and Fransiska Selvy Wulandari**

Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[elisabeth.wulan03@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.wulan03@gmail.com) and [selxaveria@gmail.com](mailto:selxaveria@gmail.com)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200208](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200208)

received 16 December 2017; revised 30 June 2017; accepted 5 August 2017

### **Abstract**

Through frequent test, students have higher self-motivation to understand every material in order to make them prepared in attending frequent test. This paper aims to see the teachers' and students' perceptions on frequent test. In addition, as the further finding, the writers will focus on the benefits of frequent test. The paper is an observation paper that focused on students 'and teachers' perception through frequent test, and its benefits. The finding shows that both of the teachers and students show the positive perspective toward frequent test. Thus, frequent test is beneficial to both, the teachers and the students in learning process, even though there are also the negative effects.

Keywords: teachers' perception, students' perception, benefits, frequent test

### **Introduction**

The classroom activity needs both of teachers' and students' participation to reach the learning objectives. Teachers make some material design and classroom activity design to help the students master every material. Especially, in this digital era, teachers try to make more and more interesting material design, which can increase the students' interest. Quiz, drill, and test are such tools which can help teachers measure the students' performance and understanding. Thus, those tools also can help students to have more motivation. In this paper, the writers concern on the use of frequent test as a classroom activity.

Frequent test is a test formation given every week or every two weeks, which helps students to master the materials part by part. Geist and Soehren (1997, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 36), conclude that frequent test or test gives some advantages and meaningful effects on learners' performance. Through the frequent test, the students have more motivation to understand and master the materials because they will undergo the frequent test in the following meeting. The teachers will have such a tool to measure the students 'learning progress. When the teachers find that the students' mark is decreasing, they can make such a review of the materials and make the further explanation to help the students.

However, frequent test takes the teachers' time in making the questions and burdens the students. Usually teachers prefer testing the students after they finish the material (summative assessment) rather than giving the periodic or frequent test (formative assessment). From the background above, there are three research

questions formulated such as what are the teachers' perceptions toward the frequent test? what are the students' perceptions toward the frequent test? and what are the benefits of frequent test (toward the student)?

### ***Perception***

According to Romanov (2007), perception is including senses, feelings, ideas, thoughts, and theories. It is people's capability to see the variation. On the other word, perception can be one's opinion, belief, and thought of something. One's perception can be influenced not only by interests but also other motives and desires (Vernon, 1972, p. 178). It means that one's perception can be persuaded by internal and external factors. Vernon also said that 'perception is never instantaneous' (p. 32). That statement indicates that one cannot make or create her or his perception of something without thinking about that thing. It intends that one needs to think it first before making the perception.

Based on Xiao & Carless (2013, p. 16), students' perception is divided into two, negative and positive feelings. "Negative feelings mainly arise from three aspects: pressurized school life and heavy workload; perceived negative sentiments following from unsatisfactory or disappointing results; and discouraging conversations with teachers." Therefore, positive feelings mostly come from achievement and pleasant feeling, such as satisfying mark, teacher's and friends' support (p. 16).

Xiao & Carless (2013, p. 1) also say that "educational and social context in which the students are studying influence the experience and perception." The disagreement with peers may change their perception toward school. There are many cases, which result on the students' hatred toward certain lesson because of their trauma toward the teacher. Thus, the students' hatred happens for years. Huhta et al., (2006 as cited in Xiao & Carless, 2013, p. 3), find that students' perception was "complex and multi-faceted in that they expressed varied emotions during a single episode and over time." Students revealed different roles within a series of repertoires: hard-working or lazy, skilled or unskilled, cool or nervous, lucky or unlucky." Students are unstable in their age; they change frequently because of their emotional condition and their surroundings. Their mood drives them to be interested or uninterested in such case. However, teachers have to be able to give the students some test variation to avoid the boredom.

Teacher's perception is such an important factor to enhance and influence the teaching learning process. According to Yu (1986 as cited in Srakang & Jansen, 2013, p. 50), teachers' perceptions influence what teachers do both inside and outside the classrooms." In addition, Barcelos (2000, as cited in Srakang & Jansen, 2013, p. 50) finds that language educator's perception will affect the language that the educator practices in teaching learning activity. Thus, the teachers' perspectives determine their attitude inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, teacher is the energy activator for the students, so the teachers have to be able to maintain his or her own perspective. When the teachers do not show their interest in the class, the whole class' feeling will be affected. It results in the uninteresting teaching learning process.

Moreover, Srakang & Jansen (2013, p. 50) say that Educator have to be careful of what they think and trust when doing the teaching learning activity.

Meaning that the educators' perceptions are the base to build the judgment and decision making for the educator. Based on Srakang & Jansen (2013, p. 50), "teachers' perceptions have played a crucial role in teaching and learning processes due to the fact that they not only influence teachers' actions and teachers' decision making but also provide significant insight into aspects of education." Teachers' decisions influence the students' future. When teachers have a bad perspective toward the students or class, they will possibly say something, which will hurt the students and probably kill the students' motivation to learn.

### ***Test***

In a simple word, test is a tool to measure someone's capability, skill, and knowledge that occur at particular times in a curriculum (Brown, 2003, p. 3). In a test, teacher give some questions related to the materials which given to measure the learners' degree of understanding and capability to accept what is being learn. Besides, Brown said that a test measures performance, but the result stated the learner's ability (p. 4). In the test, teachers are willing to know the learners' level of understanding and their ability of processing the new materials.

According to Brown (2003, p. 5), test can be implemented in many forms and its own guideline, such as multiple choices with prescribed correct answer, essay, and writing prompt with a scoring rubric, oral interview based on a question script and list of the expected response, and so on. Again, Brown mentioned two types of test, formative and summative assessment (p. 6). Based on Brown (2003, pp. 6-7), formative assessment is an assessment that evaluates learners in the 'processes' of forming their performance and ability to help learners continue the growth process and summative assessment aim to measure or summarize the overall ability that learners have gotten. It is usually implemented in the end of the chapter or semester. Besides, in a test, there is a factor called learners' rater reliability. It is in line with how students deal with the situation around them, such as fatigue, bad day, anxiety, temporary illness, and other physical or psychological factors.

### ***Frequent Test***

According to Bertrand (1962), tests are media used to measure and evaluate the growth and development of children. It is in line with frequent test that aims to monitor the development and growth of learners. Frequent test is a test that given every week or once in two weeks in a course. It attends to measure the development of learners in the process of learning. Through frequent test, teachers are able to measure learners' ability in understanding the new materials and evaluate how well learners accept it. Frequent test also help learners memorize the materials for longer period and help them ready for the next test (Johnson & Kivineimi, 2009, p. 29, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 36).

Zarei (2008, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37) states that frequent test supply motivation for learners to attend the class. Besides, Wilder (2001, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 36) in his study also concludes that learner's attendance increased 10% when the frequent test is held. Mostly, learners will not lose their chance in a test, so they will come and prepare for any tests.

## **Method**

This paper is a qualitative study on teachers' and students' perception toward the frequent test. Based on Ary, Joacobs, & Sorensen (2008, p. 29), qualitative study concerns on "getting an absolute picture and deeper understanding rather than the analysis of data which presented in numeric form". Moreover, in qualitative study, the writers also pointed on understanding the social phenomena from the perspective of a human participant in a natural setting (p. 21). The phenomenon that would be discussed in this paper is related to the perceptions of frequent test, teachers' and students' perception.

The instrument of this paper was questionnaires. The writers distributed the questionnaires to the participants. There are 12 scaled questions (Likert scale) to the students, and 12 scaled questions and 2 open-ended questions to the teachers. In the questionnaire, the scales are also five; (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) uncertain, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. Based on Wiersma (1995, p. 318), Likert Scale, usually has five scale which represent a set of related response and the participants will give their response by checking a point (letter or number) representing a point on the scale. Based on McDonough & McDonough (1997, p. 176), open-ended questions give space to the participants to extend information and their point of view in detailed.

The participants of this study are 15 English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students, Vocabulary Course lecturer and 3 English Education Master's Program (EEMP) students (who work as teachers) who implement and undergo the frequent test in their classroom activity. The ELESP students were first semester who experience the frequent test in vocabulary course.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Based on the findings gained from the participants, the writers will elaborate teachers' perception toward frequent test. The first is that frequent test is beneficial for the teachers and the students. Geist & Soehren (1997, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 36) say that frequent quiz has an advantage and effect on learner's performance. According to Gholani & Moghaddam, (2013, p. 37), frequent testing is advantageous because through giving the frequent quiz, school have the chance to collect the useful information about the students' performance. The participants assume that frequent test may help both teachers and students in monitoring and evaluating self-performance learning process. In addition, it is one of effective way to help the students mastering the materials part by part. The participants argued that if the teachers do not use frequent test, teachers would give too much burden for the students because they will study the whole material at once and the learning ends up ineffectively.

The second is that frequent test may burden the students even though there are so many benefits of frequent test. "Frequent testing might also become tedious for students and decrease students' interest in the material and learning in general" (Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37). If the teachers cannot create different kind of the frequent test, it may make the students be bored to do the frequent test. Therefore, teachers should be able to create different types of the questions for the frequent test so that the students will be interested in. Besides that, frequent test is

sometimes time consuming and burden the teachers in creating and marking the students' works. According to Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37:

Too much testing does not lead to fruitful and lifelong learning because teachers put their focus only on the test and teach to the test, providing the students only with the amount of information they need to do well on the test. Because teacher teach to the test and students read to the test, learning does not last for a long time.

It means that the teachers should be able to deliver the materials with proper method and then the students will be able to put the materials in the long-term memory. Therefore, the learning process will be meaningful to both, the teachers and the students.

Table 1 presents the percentage of students' perception toward the frequent test. The data gathered based on questionnaire.

Table 1. Students' perception toward the use of frequent test

| No. |   | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree  |
|-----|---|----------|-----------|--------|
| 1.  | Agreed the existence of frequent quiz         | 6.67 %   | 33.33%    | 60%    |
| 2.  | Frequent test is time consuming               | 53.33%   | 13.34%    | 33.33% |
| 3.  | Frequent test is burdensome                   | 33.33%   | 46.67%    | 20%    |
| 4.  | Frequent test is an effective learning method | 53.33%   | 46.67%    | -      |
| 5.  | Frequent test give the positive benefits      | -        | -         | 100%   |

Based on the students' point of view, mostly the participants agree with the existence of frequent test (60%). There were only 33.33% of the students who are uncertain about the existence of frequent test, and there are 6.67 % of the participants who disagree of the existence of frequent test. From the students' point of view, there are some supporting reasons why they agree of the frequent test.

Firstly, according to Dustin (1971, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37), one of the benefit of frequent testing is making the extrinsic motivation for the learners, since the learners who want to gain the good mark make some effort and spend lot of time to equip the quiz. Frequent test is time consuming, considers that the students have to prepare themselves to be ready to face the upcoming quiz. However, 53.33% of the participants disagree with the statement saying that the frequent quiz is time consuming. While 13.34% of the participants are uncertain, and 33.33% of them are agreed that frequent test is time consuming. The participants do not realize that as a student, they tend to enjoy preparing the frequent test and forget how long they spend their time to study every week.

Secondly, there are 20% of the participants who agree that frequent test is such a burdensome activity. It can be burdensome because they have to

understand and memorize the material in order to make themselves be ready for the frequent test, which come once in a week or once in two weeks. Dustin (1971, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37), believes that “stress is reduced through frequent testing”. Dustin’s word is proven by the participants’ answer. There are 33.33% of the participant who disagree and 46.67% of them are uncertain that frequent test is such a burdensome activity. The material tested in the frequent test is part by part, so the students will not face too much material.

Frequent test sometimes used by the teacher to help learners to master the material little by little. Thus, there are 53.33% of the participants who consider frequent test as the effective learning method, and there are 46.67% of the participants who are uncertain about it. The last, all of the participants (100%) agree that frequent test give them the positive benefits in teaching learning process.

From the questionnaires that were distributed to the teachers and the ELESF students, the writers found the benefits of giving and receiving or doing frequent test. In this part, the writers will elaborate findings of the study. This part is decided into two; teachers’ point of view and students’ point of view.

#### *Teachers’ Point of View*

On teachers’ point of view, there are several benefits from the participants gained by giving the frequent test to the students. Firstly, by giving frequent test, teachers may help the students to build self-motivation in learning. One of the ways to that is by giving additional score to the diligent and hardworking students. At first, students do it and get good results because of the rewards given by the teachers but then, the students will be able to motivate themselves to always do the best to grab the great score. According to Zarei (2008, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37), frequent test is a good source of motivation that let the students to do good preparation for the test in order to get good upshot. Unconsciously, it will make the students perform better in their learning so that they can gain good score for their own. Dustin (1971, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37) says that one of the benefits of frequent testing is making the extrinsic motivation for the learners, since the learners who want to gain the good mark make some efforts and spend lot of time to equip the quiz.

Besides that, frequent test can make students more diligent or enthusiast to come to the classroom. Some studies (Clump, Bauer, & Alex, 2013; Jones, 1984; Wilder et al., 2001, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37) found that frequent test could increase students’ attendance to the class. It is because students need to attend the entire class so that they will get the whole materials given and then, they will be able to do frequent test well. In addition, they will not lose one chance to gain good grade by attending the frequent test.

Secondly, the teachers can easily monitor the students’ performances in learning. Frequent testing can give the beneficial advisory of the school performance toward the students (Bangers-Drowns et al., 1986; Standlee & Popham, 1960, cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37). Teachers may know how much the students understand and when the teachers find that they did not perform well, the teachers will review the materials again. In addition, the

teachers can help students to monitor themselves which part of the materials they do not understand yet. It is one of the characteristic of independent learning.

#### *Students' Point of View*

The first benefit is that frequent test can motivate the students to study harder than usual. 10 of 15 students (66.67%) assume that frequent quiz may help them to motivate themselves to learn the materials harder than usual they do. Zarei (2008, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37) said that students will do good preparation for frequent test and it is a good motivation and also, it can motivate the students to come to class. However, some of the students (20%) agree that frequent test increased their attendance in the class, 53.33% students are uncertain about that and the rest (26.67%) disagree with that.

Then, the second benefit is that frequent test is able to help the students to learn and understand the materials part by part. Most of the students (86.67%) agree that frequent test help them in understanding the materials given in the class gradually. Based on Standlee & Popham (1960, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 37), frequent test covers small number of materials to be learned by the students so that they are able to understand deeply and meticulously. Furthermore, students may take shorter time to study the materials because they do not learn the whole materials at once but part by part. So that, the students apprehend the materials for longer period and help them more to the bigger exam (Johnsom & Kiviniemi, p. 29, as cited in Gholani & Moghaddam, 2013, p. 36). Some students (33.33%) assume that frequent test still takes longer time to study the materials and 9 from 15 students (60%) are uncertain about that and then the rest (6.67%) agree with that.

The third benefit is that frequent test may help students to evaluate their performance in order to develop their performance in learning process so that they will get better mark. Most of the students (73.33%) agree that frequent test helps them to develop their self-evaluation in learning process and the rest (26.67%) are uncertain about that. Besides, there are 7 from 15 students (46.67%) agree that frequent test is able to help them increase their mark and the rest (53.33%) are not sure about that. McDaniel, Wildman, & Anderson (2012, p. 19) say that learners who do not attend the test or take fewer test have significantly smaller score on exam than the learners who attend the entire test.

#### **Conclusion**

Both of teachers and students have the positive perspective toward the frequent test. Frequent test is good to be implemented by the teachers in the classroom. It is beneficial to both, the teachers and the students, in creating the effective and meaningful learning. Even though, sometimes, the teachers and the students will take more time in making the questions, in preparing self to do the frequent test, and in marking the works. However, frequent test may help the teachers and the students in developing learning process.

## References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. (2008). *Introduction to research in education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Betrand, A. (1926). *Test, measurement and evaluation: A develop mental approach*. Manila: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Brown, H. D. (2003). *Language assessment: Principles, and classroom practices*. San Francisco: San Francisco State University.
- Gholani, V., & Moghaddam, M. M. (2013). The effect of weekly quizzes on students' final achievement score. *LJ Modern Education and Computer Science, 1*, 36-41.
- McDaniel, M. A., Wildman, K. M., & Anderson, J. L. (2012). Using quizzes to enhance summative-assessment performance in a web-based class: An experimental study. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 1*, 18-26.
- McDonough, J & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research methods for English language teachers*. London: Arnold.
- Romanov, N. (2007). *What is perception?* Retrieved on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, from <http://journal.crossfit.com/2011/06/romanov7perception.tpl>
- Srakang, L. & Janssem, A. (2013). *A study of teachers' perceptions toward using English textbooks: A case study of 10th grade English teachers in Mahasarakham province*. Retrieved on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, from <http://www.litu.tu.ac.th/journal/FLLTCP/Proceeding/049.pdf>
- Vernoon, M. D. (1971). *The psychology of perception* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Penguin Books.
- Wiersma, W. (1995). *Research methods in education: An introduction* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: A Simon and Schuster Company.
- Wilder, D. A., Flood, W. A., & Stromsnes, W. (2001). The use of random extra credit quizzes to increase student attendance. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*. Retrieved on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010, from <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi>
- Xiao, Y., & Carless, D. R. (2013). Illustrating students' perception of English language assessment: Voices from China. *RELC Journal, 44*(3), 319-340.

**READING HABITS IN DIGITAL ERA:  
A RESEARCH ON THE STUDENTS IN BORNEO UNIVERSITY**

**Firima Zona Tanjung, Ridwan, and Uli Agustina Gultom**

Borneo University, Tarakan, Indonesia

[english\\_zone@borneo.ac.id](mailto:english_zone@borneo.ac.id), [ridwan.fkipubt@gmail.com](mailto:ridwan.fkipubt@gmail.com), and

[ulie\\_goeltoem@yahoo.com](mailto:ulie_goeltoem@yahoo.com)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200209](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200209)

received 19 June 2017; revised 21 July 2017; accepted 24 September 2017

**Abstract**

This research aims to explore the current reading habits of university students. Moreover, it aims to determine the effects of widespread use of the internet and other digital resources in reading habits and to give some possible recommendation to improve students' reading habits in the digital era. The research design was descriptive survey research. The instrument of the research was questionnaire, which is based on Akarsu and Dariyemez (2014) and Chauhan and Lal (2012). The participants of the research were 320 students studying in six majors in Faculty of Teachers Training and Education at Borneo University. They were selected through the cluster random sampling. The questionnaire involved six categories, namely demographic information, frequency of items read, contents of online reading, online activities, content first clicked when online, and techniques to develop reading habits. All research data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 22 program.

Keywords: reading habits, university students, digital era

**Introduction**

Nowadays, the easy access to digital media is a big challenge for reading habits. It gives an impact for everyone unexceptionally students. Certainly, students need technology in the form of internet to share, discuss, and process the information simultaneously. Their comfort of using technology e.g. smart phones or tab makes them prefer these devices than printed document. Additionally, it is a new kind of reading habits at which EFL students preferred internet-based reading than paper-based one (Shen, 2006). Further, internet enable people to learn something through rapid process and expect the contents in a concise and easy to digest format (Verma & Malviya, 2014). Related to two previous statements, it can be considered that internet is popular among younger generation. Moreover, the numbers of these people are increasing significantly because they can gain information and entertainment easily through this media (Shahriza & Hasan, 2007). Particularly, the shift of paper-based reading to internet-based reading is related to students' preference and motivation. They can have easy access to the source of information if they use digital resources. For example, as students, books are very important for them to have. However, today the way to get the information not only from printed version but "it can be through accessing

electronic book at which they can save and then it can be taken anywhere with ease (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014)”. Thus, considering the explanation, this paper focused on answering following research questions: what are the major trends of reading interests and reading mediums of university students in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Borneo University Tarakan? how influential is the digital media on students’ reading habits? and what are possible suggestions in order to improve students’ reading habits in the digital era mainly at the university student level?

**Method**

Design of this research was descriptive survey research. This research aimed to make careful descriptions of educational phenomena so the researchers made use of both quantitative and qualitative approach. Related to the research objectives, the researchers used one-shot survey design at which the research instrument or tools given to the participants. The participants of this research were all university students from six majors in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Borneo University Tarakan. They were second year students. Most of them have studied English language around 8-10 years. The research procedure was displayed in figure 1.

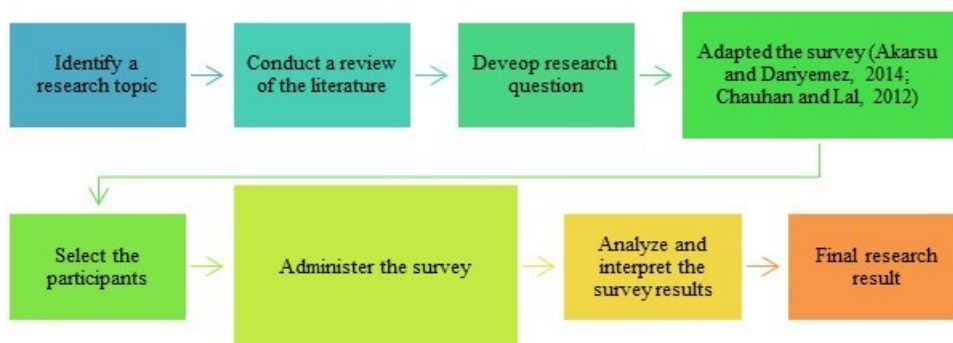


Figure 1. Steps in descriptive survey research (adapted from Lodico et al., 2010)

The researchers used a questionnaire to get the data of this research. The questionnaire was adapted from the work of Reading Habits Questionnaire (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014), and the study result of Chauhan and Lal (2012) titled ‘Impact of information technology on reading habits of college students’. The questionnaire was made online so that the students could respond it easily, anytime and anywhere. The questionnaire was launched in Bahasa and edited several times due to the suitable translation from the original version. It was part of considering the various background of departments from the participants involved in this research.

From 480 students who were expected to respond the questionnaire, there were 320 students who gave their response. The number of participants was reduced because of the multiple response given by the same participants and the

number of students who were not active/taking leave of absence at the time the research being conducted.

### Findings and Discussion

The major trends of students' reading interests and reading mediums in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Borneo University Tarakan.

Table 1. Demography of respondents

| Aspect of Demography | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>        |           |            |
| Male                 | 74        | 23.13      |
| Female               | 246       | 76.87      |
| Total                | 320       | 100        |
| <b>Age</b>           |           |            |
| Under 20 years old   | 306       | 95.63      |
| 22-23 years old      | 13        | 4.06       |
| 24-25 years old      | 0         | 0          |
| 26-27 years old      | 1         | 0.31       |
| Total                | 320       | 100        |

Due to the data collected, the gender who enrolled in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education were unbalanced at which the number of female students were greater than male ones. There were 246 females and 74 males. They were dominantly in the age of under 20 years old.

Table 2. Time spent on accessing internet daily

| Hours             | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Less than 1 hour  | 51        | 15.94      |
| 1 – 3 hours       | 105       | 32.81      |
| 3 – 6 hours       | 88        | 27.50      |
| More than 6 hours | 76        | 23.75      |
| Total             | 320       | 100        |

The above result showed that students mostly accessed internet every day because it enables them to gain information faster, cheaper, and more conveniently. It is supported with the result of finding stated by Shahriza & Hasan (2007) that younger people are more familiar with the information and entertainment in a digital format. Certainly, they do not like to spend much time without getting what they want to know. Thus, using internet is considered as one of the ways to obtain information instantly without spending much time on topics they do not want to explore. It is easily done by inserting keywords and the information available all at once.

Table 3. Number of magazines the students read in a year

| Number of Magazines   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| None of Magazines     | 70        | 21.88      |
| 1 – 4 Magazines       | 147       | 45.94      |
| 5 – 9 Magazines       | 66        | 20.63      |
| More than 9 Magazines | 37        | 11.56      |
| Total                 | 320       | 100        |

As shown in Table 3, most of students (45.94%) read 1-4 magazines, 20.63% read 5-9 magazines, and 11.56% read more than 9 magazines. None of them (21.88%) read any single magazine with a vary of reasons, e.g. they do not like reading magazines, there is no magazine, have no interest in reading magazines.

Table 4. Number of novels the students read in a year

| Number of Novels   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| None of Novels     | 44        | 13.75      |
| 1 – 4 Novels       | 142       | 44.38      |
| 5 – 9 Novels       | 78        | 24.38      |
| More than 9 Novels | 56        | 17.50      |
| Total              | 320       | 100        |

Considering the result in Table 4, most of students (44.38%) read 1-4 novels, 24.38% read 5-9 novels, and 17.70% read more than 9 novels. None of them (13.75%) like to read any novel with a vary of reasons, e.g. they do not know, they never read any novels, they do not like reading novels, there is no any new novel, etc.

Table 5. Frequency of items read

| Reading            | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | Participation Level |
|--------------------|-----|------|----------------|---------------------|
| Newspapers         | 320 | 2.12 | 0.57           | Sometimes           |
| Magazines          | 320 | 1.88 | 0.53           | Sometimes           |
| Text Books         | 320 | 2.6  | 0.65           | Often               |
| Novels             | 320 | 2.36 | 0.76           | Sometimes           |
| Emails             | 320 | 2.08 | 0.68           | Sometimes           |
| Online information | 320 | 3.03 | 0.79           | Often               |

Table 5 showed that the range of mean values were from 2.08 to 3.03. Related to the available result, the least frequent number of the items was reading emails and the most frequent one was reading online information. The number of respondents who read newspapers, magazines, novels, and emails were included into the level of sometimes. Meanwhile, textbooks and online information were frequently read. Particularly, it indicated that they had a purpose in reading. Hence, indirectly there was a relationship between students' choice of reading materials and their reading purpose. As university students, they chose textbooks and online information as

the materials they often read. In addition, respondent chose reading online information frequently because they liked to get fast and current information.

Table 6. Priority of reading materials the students read when online

| Reading Material   | Mean    | Priority |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| Online news        | 2.82813 | 1        |
| Food/Nutrition     | 2.7875  | 2        |
| Joke               | 2.58438 | 3        |
| Health information | 2.54688 | 4        |
| Story and novel    | 2.45625 | 5        |
| Sport              | 2.45313 | 6        |
| Movie review       | 2.44688 | 7        |
| Fashion            | 2.40938 | 8        |
| Sale information   | 2.25    | 9        |
| Journal articles   | 2.24375 | 10       |
| Comic strips       | 2.19688 | 11       |
| Job information    | 2.1125  | 12       |
| E-books            | 2.0375  | 13       |
| Emails             | 1.98125 | 14       |
| Weather forecast   | 1.9625  | 15       |
| Online magazine    | 1.95    | 16       |
| Horoscope          | 1.6625  | 17       |

The first priority of reading materials mostly chosen by the respondents was reading online information, followed by food/nutrition, then joke etc. This results pointed to the high rate of reading for general information (online news), in this sense, the students tend to read for pleasure/entertainment or for the purpose of grabbing rich of information for the sake of their own (top of five priorities related to their daily life matters) rather than reading for the academic purposes (reading journals or e-books). Surely, it is very contrast with the previous finding at which students chose textbook. However, getting back to the priority, they preferred choosing their daily needs fulfilment (both physically and mentally) to academics needs.

Table 7. Online activities

| Activities                      | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------|
| I listen to music               | 76.56   | 23.43  |
| I play games                    | 38.75   | 61.25  |
| I look at photos                | 86.87   | 13.12  |
| I read all kinds of information | 94.37   | 5.62   |
| I shop online                   | 40.62   | 59.37  |
| I use MSN                       | 42.18   | 57.81  |

|                     |       |       |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| messenger           |       |       |
| I check my email    | 51.25 | 48.75 |
| I chat with friends | 96.87 | 3.12  |
| I downloaded movies | 59.06 | 40.93 |

The frequent activity done by the respondents was chatting with friends (96.87%). It was followed by reading all kind of information (94.37%) and looking at photos (86.87%). Next, the respondents stated that that they listened to music (76.56%) as their activities during online. From the number of activities done during online, students can be given some advices to do their activities in purpose of improving reading skills e.g. read all kinds of information and write the summary or key points of each, check and reply their emails, or facilitating their reading and writing skills simultaneously e.g. chatting with friends.

Table 8. Content first clicked when online

| Category               | Percentage % |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Art and Humanities     | 12.50        |
| Business and Economy   | 9.06         |
| Computers and Internet | 21.56        |
| Education              | 17.81        |
| Entertainment          | 19.69        |
| Government             | 0.31         |
| Health                 | 3.44         |
| News and Media         | 5.94         |
| Recreation and Sports  | 3.13         |
| Regional               | 0.00         |
| Science                | 0.31         |
| Social Science         | 0.00         |
| Society and Culture    | 0.94         |
| Facebook               | 5.31         |

The most frequent content first clicked when the respondents were online being about computer and internet (21.56%). Then, it was followed by entertainment (19.69%) and education (17.81%). This result is interesting because majority of the respondents, as the university students, did not put education as the content first clicked when they were online. Instead, they chose about computer and internet then entertainment. Indeed, it strengthens the possible reason previously stated that they had a purpose of being entertained during surfing on internet.

To sum up, the respondents can be encouraged to access not only computer and internet or entertainment but they can be encouraged to access education as it is connected directly to their daily life as students. Though the number of respondents for accessing education content was still in the third place

but it may become different if the lecturer makes use of some applications or make group on sites such as Edmodo as the media of learning and sharing so the students can develop their reading habits on education content too.

Table 9. Techniques to develop reading habits

| Techniques                                    | N   | Yes | Yes (%) | No  | No(%) |
|---|-----|-----|---------|-----|-------|
| Parental guidance & encouragement             | 320 | 223 | 69.68   | 97  | 30.31 |
| Motivation by teachers                        | 320 | 273 | 85.31   | 47  | 14.68 |
| Reading materials about hobbies and interests | 320 | 308 | 96.25   | 12  | 3.75  |
| Consistent use of dictionary                  | 320 | 192 | 60      | 128 | 40    |
| Daily newspaper reading                       | 320 | 99  | 30.93   | 221 | 69.06 |
| Book reading                                  | 320 | 287 | 89.68   | 33  | 10.31 |
| Visiting libraries                            | 320 | 216 | 67.50   | 104 | 32.50 |
| Well-prepared reading material                | 320 | 217 | 67.81   | 103 | 32.18 |
| Studying to improve vocabulary knowledge      | 320 | 304 | 95      | 16  | 5     |

The most frequent technique to develop reading habits was reading materials about hobbies and interests (96.25%). Hence, by providing many reading materials about hobbies and interests around the students' corner in the university, the respondents can be more motivated to develop their reading habits. Then, the technique in the second place was studying to improve vocabulary knowledge (95%) followed by book reading (89.68%). The respondents were still confident that these techniques could develop their reading habits. The more they read, the more vocabularies they master. The numbers of frequency became smaller for the options consistent use of dictionary (60%) and daily newspaper reading (30.93%). It was possibly connected to the speed and space needed to access by the respondents. As millennial generation, they preferred to use media that can access any information fast without time limit. That finding is supported by Shen' survey results (2006) at which EFL students' reading habits have shifted from paper-based to internet-based reading.

Related to the result of questionnaire, the respondents, studying in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education from a variety of departments, often enjoyed reading online information and textbooks. Particularly, it is closely related to the use of gadget among students such as smart phones or tabs which are simply exploited to access the current online news.

Next, besides they often read online news, they also frequently read textbooks. It indicated that students did their reading in purpose. As the university students, they preferred reading materials related to their needs in daily academic life. Further, related to the content first clicked when they were online, the

respondents chose online news. The least popular items to choose was online magazine and horoscope. For the least popular item here, online magazine got more attention because in the previous questions, the respondents frequently chose reading 1-4 magazines. Hence, the use of internet for reading magazine was less popular than reading magazines in the printed version.

Considering all findings being displayed, the students of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education from various background of departments had particular level of reading habits. It is shown from the results at which they prefer reading online news and other types of reading materials. Yet, they also have had some preference on choosing media of reading items such as printed magazines rather than the online ones. Thus, it can be inferred that they have certain level of reading habits and also reading medium based on their preference simultaneously.

To answer the question about the widespread use of internet, the discussion is started from the duration of online surfing done by the students of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. Related to the result, they spent their time between one up to three hours a day. Because these duration is average, the lecturers must consider it in order to make use of internet as the medium for developing students' reading habits. The ways can be done are through making group on sites, discussing more on the information, contents available online, maximizing the use of virtual class available in the university, and giving task sent via email. Hence, the use of internet will be fruitful as reading tool for students.

Additionally, during their online surfing, they did activities such as chatting with friends (96.87%), reading all kind of information (94.37%), looking at photos (86.87%), and listening to music (76.56%). Due to the activities done by the respondents, the lecturers can give recommended websites that enable students to improve their reading skills align with their reading habits. Later, related to the results of contents of reading materials being accessed, students had various texts to read. Therefore, they have used internet not only for obtaining information from the same sources every day. They like surfing different websites to get diverse materials.

Associated with the length of online time the students have every day, it can be a consideration for lecturers to stay connected and provide wide opportunity to students to use internet as the medium of learning through the task given or online discussion. Besides, all activities they always do can be directed to support students' reading habits. Thus, students should be given about what do's or dont's when online is needed in the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of using internet among students.

Reading skill has been challenged today by the existence and the popularity of internet. Nowadays, students feel more comfortable to read information instant through their smart phones or other digital sources. Shen (2006) stated that EFL students' reading habits have shifted from paper-based to internet-based reading. Considering the popularity of internet among youngsters as the highest numbers of internet users, several possible recommendations can be done in order to improve students' reading habits in the digital era.

First, their reading habits should be developed by integrating the use of communication or digital devices in classroom activities. Here, the responsibility

of lecturers is very important because they can give motivation to the students as it was represented in the questionnaire result (85.31%). Lecturers play a significant role to direct and supervise students in accessing the online sources of reading appropriate with their needs as youngsters and scholars.

Second, as reading connected to other skills in language such as listening, writing, and speaking, it is meaningful to inform students that they may have various ways of interacting with their classmates. One of them is through chatting live on some sites such as Facebook or other sites that enable them to do so. The topics they have to discuss with their friends may vary appropriate with their interest. Certainly, the topics of discussion can be taken from any sources. This activity, precisely, combines multiple skills to practice such as listening and speaking. The other thing is lecturers may give students task of taking different reading online texts aligned with the learning materials and ask them to write their understandings in the form of argumentative essays or any other types of writing. Thus, they can have benefit from their reading activities in order to improve writing skill.

Third, the possible recommendation to improve students' reading habit is organizing events related to reading especially done by academic institutions. The events may be in the form of "study circle, debate clubs, seminars, essay competitions, quiz competitions (Akanda, Hoq, & Hasan, 2013)". For example, if language department organizes poem reading competition, the committee can open the opportunity for the youngsters to compete and read poems aloud in front of public. Certainly, it is to develop the youngsters' self-confidence. Besides, it can also develop their reading habits. The more contests being organized; the more participants especially young generation get involved in the effort of making reading as part of their culture. Moreover, the habits of youngsters can be more developed through games. It will be fun and meaningful for them to participate and try their best. In short, the participants will read a lot and use all information they have to compete in the reading competition. Hence, unconsciously, it is one of the alternative things can be done to develop their reading habits.

As well as organizing reading contests, the fourth recommended thing is providing more books available to students around their environment so that their interest in reading can be increased (Akanda, Hoq, & Hasan, 2013). Not only books, the students are also provided with the interesting and various content of the reading materials. Hence, lecturers should make use of texts, pictures, and any other texts to be discussed inside or outside class. It is also to minimize students' boredom on same materials being used along the class session in one semester.

Fifth, students will pay their attention on reading materials which are accessible in anytime and anywhere. Thus, the easy access to websites and other online sites enable them to keep their interest in reading. It is as recommendation for the policy makers in university to provide more online access and books for students. Moreover, all educators at the faculties in the university can hold reading campaigns by inviting more influential or inspiring figures so the students will be more attracted to participate in the reading events. The campaigns can be in the form of reading week, reading hour (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014). These activities are recommended to be held in and out of the classroom. Therefore, the students

will not consider reading as the only thing they have to do in the classroom during teaching learning process but it is the activity that they need to do as part of their daily lives.

As the final recommendation, it is very needed to attract youngsters or Y generation in the effort of maintaining balance in the use of gadgets and traditional reading. Together, librarians and educators warn about the effect of “time eating machines” that can influence the youngsters themselves (Loan, 2009). If they pay more attention on those machines, it will influence the education systems reorganization (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014). Thus, the optimal use of technology and traditional reading should be kept balance so students are not addicted to the devices at all. Yet, they can determine when, where, how, and what they read appropriate with their reading purposes and the availability of the medium.

Overall, all aspects should participate actively in the effort of developing reading habits starting from the students themselves, educators, librarians, figures, and society. The support they bring, particularly, will give an impact on creating Indonesian future generation having strong literary power.

### **Conclusion**

As this article has outlined, the advances in technology alter people interest on reading from printed version to digitalized one. They prefer using gadgets to read information every day. It is supported by the length of their time accessing internet which is approximately one up to three hours a day. Nevertheless, they also have had some preference on choosing reading medium such as printed magazines rather than the online ones. Thus, it can be said they have particular level of reading habits and reading medium based on their preference simultaneously.

The use of technology in the classroom can be a consideration for lecturers to stay connected with their students. But realizing the widespread use of internet as part of technology advancement, lecturers should explain what do's or dont's when students search for information. It has to be done in the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of using internet as reading medium among students.

Active participation in the effort of developing reading habits should be done by all elements starting from the students themselves, educators, librarians, figures, and society. Without the cooperation among those elements, reading is never part of the culture. Yet, if it is considered seriously and supported wholly can bring a good impact for bringing reading not only as habits but also culture mainly in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Borneo University and broadly in Indonesia.

### **References**

- Akanda, A.K.M., Ali, E., Hoq, K.M.G., & Hasan, N. (2013). Reading habit of students in social sciences and arts: A case study of Rajshahi University. *Chinese Librarianship: An International Electronic Journal*, 35. Retrieved on August 20, 2017 from <http://www.iclc.us/cliej/c135AHH.pdf>

- Akarsu, O. & Dariyemez, T. (2014). The reading habits of university students studying English language and literature in the digital age. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10(2), 85-99. Retrieved on May 20, 2016 from: [dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/jlls/article/download/.../5000078393](http://dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/jlls/article/download/.../5000078393)
- Chauhan, P., & Lal, P. (2012). Impact of information technology on reading habits of college students. *International Journal of Research Review in Engineering Science and Technology*, 1(1), 101-106. Retrieved on May 15, 2016 from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.300.7473&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Loan, F. A. (2009). *Impact of new technology on reading habits: A glimpse on the world literature*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved on May 21, 2016 from: <http://eprints.rclis.org/20084/1/NCERT.pdf>
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D., & Voegtle, K. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Shahriza A.K.N., & Hasan, A. (2007). Reading habits and attitude in the digital age: Analysis of gender and academic program differences in Malaysia. *The Electronic Library*, 25(3), 285-298. Retrieved on May 20, 2016 from: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nor\\_Abdul\\_Karim/publication/20677317\\_Reading\\_habits\\_and\\_attitude\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_age\\_Analysis\\_of\\_gender\\_and\\_academic\\_program\\_differences\\_in\\_Malaysia/links/55e6aefd08aec74dbe74f078/Reading-habits-and-attitude-in-the-digital-age-Analysis-of-gender-and-academic-program-differences-in-Malaysia.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nor_Abdul_Karim/publication/20677317_Reading_habits_and_attitude_in_the_digital_age_Analysis_of_gender_and_academic_program_differences_in_Malaysia/links/55e6aefd08aec74dbe74f078/Reading-habits-and-attitude-in-the-digital-age-Analysis-of-gender-and-academic-program-differences-in-Malaysia.pdf)
- Shen, L. (2006). Computer technology and college students' reading habits. *Chia-nan Annual Bulletin*, 32, 559-572. Retrieved on May 20, 2016 from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.526.1818&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Verma, Jyoti, & Malviya, V. (2014). The impact of internet and digital media on reading habit. *XXIV National Seminar of the IASLIC*, 50. Retrieved on May 20, 2016 from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234264060\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Internet\\_and\\_Digital\\_Media\\_on\\_Reading\\_Habit](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234264060_The_Impact_of_Internet_and_Digital_Media_on_Reading_Habit)

## **ERRORS AND CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN WRITING: IMPLICATIONS TO OUR CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

**Maria Corazon Saturnina A. Castro**

University of the Philippines, Quezon City, The Philippines  
[mcsacastro@gmail.com](mailto:mcsacastro@gmail.com)

**DOI:** [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200210](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2017.200210)

received 6 July 2017; revised 30 August 2017; accepted 29 September 2017

### **Abstract**

Error correction is one of the most contentious and misunderstood issues in both foreign and second language teaching. Despite varying positions on the effectiveness of error correction or the lack of it, corrective feedback remains an institution in the writing classes. Given this context, this action research endeavors to survey prevalent attitudes of teachers and students toward corrective feedback and examine their implications to classroom practices. This paper poses the major problem: How do teachers' perspectives on corrective feedback match the students' views and expectations about error treatment in their writing? Professors of the University of the Philippines who teach composition classes and over a hundred students enrolled in their classes were surveyed. Results showed that there are differing perceptions of teachers and students regarding corrective feedback. These oppositions must be addressed as they have implications to current pedagogical practices which include constructing and establishing appropriate lesson goals, using alternative corrective strategies, teaching grammar points in class even in the tertiary level, and further understanding the learning process.

**Keywords:** writing, errors, corrective feedback, classroom practices, teaching strategies

### **Introduction**

Academic writing is not easy. It is cognitively complex as it tests the student's ability to use a language and to express ideas in that language. For second language learners, academic writing is more complicated as they go through different stages of acquisition of the different elements of the second language (L2) and make errors reflective of the second language acquisition (SLA) processes. Corder (cited in James, 1998) defines errors as the result of some failure of performance. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) state that errors are the flawed side of a learner's speech or writing. An error is any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or causes might be. There have been a number of error taxonomies presented in second language (L2) literature. Corder (1973) classified errors into four categories: omission of some required elements; addition of some unnecessary elements; selection of incorrect element; disordering of elements. James (1998) noted that errors may be interlingua, i.e., mother-tongued influenced. These are

errors resulting from the learner indulging in a literal translation from L1 to L2. The target language may also cause intralingua errors. The learner may also resort to some communication strategies- based errors such as approximation and circumlocution errors. Lastly, induced errors are errors that result from the language situation rather than the learner's incomplete competence of the target language or the interference of the mother language. Corder (1967) argued that making errors is part of second language (L2) developmental stage.

If errors are inevitable and integral part of L2 learning, how would teaching practitioners treat errors specifically in writing. Error correction is one of the most contentious and misunderstood issues in both foreign and second language teaching. Until the 70's, L2 writing was primarily for language practice—that is to say, manipulate grammar forms, learn and use new vocabulary items (Ferris and Hedgecock, 2005). Teachers paid a lot of attention to accuracy and error correction was a major component of writing instruction. However, there was a paradigm shift after this period and composition teachers focused on the process of writing. Discovering ideas, drafting, revising was given importance and students were empowered to make decisions about refining their own work. Composition instruction entered a “period of benign neglect of errors and grammar teaching” (Ferris, 1995). A number of scholars also pointed out the limitations of the process approach. The reality is, as many of us have observed even in our own classes, that students' accuracy does not automatically improve by itself (Eskey, 1983). There is still a need for teacher instruction and intervention. Inevitably, this observation resulted in a renewed interest in error correction and grammar instruction even at the tertiary level.

In the University of the Philippines, despite varying positions on the effectiveness of error correction or the lack of it, corrective feedback remains an institution in the General Education (GE) writing classes. Given this context, this action research endeavors to survey prevalent attitudes of teachers and students toward corrective feedback and examine their implications to classroom practices. This paper poses the major problem: How do teachers' perspectives on corrective feedback match the students' views and expectations about error treatment in their writing? This major inquiry is further broken down into the following sub-problems such as what are the dominant positions of teachers regarding corrective feedback? what approaches do teachers adopt to correct errors in the students' writing? do students find value in corrective feedback? what specific corrective feedback do students find helpful in their writing? and in what ways do students find corrective feedback helpful in their writing?

## **Method**

Faculty members who taught writing classes during the 1st Semester of School year 2016-2017 at the Department of English and Comparative Literature of the University of the Philippines were surveyed. These faculty members ranged from Instructor to Full Professor rank. Their teaching experience ranged from three (3) years to thirty-seven (37) years. All have handled English 1, 10, 30 which are the writing courses in the University. English 1 is Basic College English and it tackles basic grammar, usage, and composition skills in English.

English 10 is College English and it focuses on the writing and critical reading of forms of academic discourse essential to university work. Lastly, English 30 is English for the professions and it concentrates on principles and the uses of writing in English in the various disciplines/professions. One hundred (100) students enrolled in the three writing classes participated in the survey which was administered between September-November, 2016.

**Findings and Discussion**

To determine the dominant positions of teachers regarding corrective feedback, two related questions were asked of them: do you think that errors in writing must be corrected? And do you think that every error must be corrected? If your answer is NO, state your reasons and write down what types of errors must be corrected.

Table 1. Number of respondents: 15 Faculty

| Question  | yes  | No  |
|---|------|-----|
| 1. Do you think that errors in writing must be corrected? | 100% | 0%  |
| 2. Do you think that every error must be corrected?       | 20%  | 80% |

The results of the survey show that all the teachers agreed that errors must be corrected; however, majority believe that not every error must be corrected. The reasons for not correcting all errors range from affective concerns to pedagogical/teaching issues. They observed that students get discouraged when they see their papers full of marks. Too many corrections can also prove overwhelming and counterproductive to revision. For the pedagogical issues, not a few shared the idea that students must eventually learn to identify, correct their errors, and rely “on their sense of language.” Teachers must point out or correct errors that are glaring and repetitive and this strategy may involve identifying just top three types of errors. The students must be allowed to find and correct their own errors with minimal intervention on the part of the teacher. Some faculty also noted time management issues. Correcting all errors of 25-27 students in one class can be time consuming and may veer the attention away from content. All errors, therefore, can be corrected in stages across several writing sessions. One young faculty highlighted the variety of English that students are familiar with. She argued that “errors that are considered acceptable features of the variety of English that the student is immersed in need not be corrected.” This pedagogical position actually calls for not only a more tolerant view of “errors” but, of a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics involved in the teaching of English. Those who answered that all errors must be corrected pointed out the primary responsibility of the teacher to exhibit a “certain standard of

English.” According to her, “Details matter as many people still judge one’s credibility and intelligence based on his/her proficiency in English.”

Like the faculty, the students also believed that all errors must be corrected but unlike the faculty, 80% of the students said that all errors must be corrected (see Table 2). The students strongly believed in the value of error correction and have specific reasons why all errors must be corrected. For most of them, error correction raises the awareness of the students of grammar forms resulting in the improvement in the knowledge of the language structure and of the composition itself. Errors, grammatical or otherwise, can distort the idea/message that students want to convey. The communication of thoughts and the comprehensibility of the composition can be dramatically improved by addressing morphological and syntactic weaknesses. In addition, the students also expressed apprehension that uncorrected errors would have impact on their future. Some of them articulated that “learning the rules of grammar through corrective feedback would be helpful throughout their careers as employers prefer employees who are proficient in the language.” While many expressed that corrective feedback is really meant for them to improve their language skills, some argued that error correction is primarily the professor’s responsibility and that “withholding correction is equivalent to refusing to teach.”

Table 2. Number of respondents: 100 students

| Question  | Yes  | No  |
|---|------|-----|
| 1. Do you think that errors in writing must be corrected? | 100% | 0%  |
| 2. Do you think that every error must be corrected?       | 80%  | 20% |

Those who answered that not every error must be corrected share the opinion of most of the faculty that correcting every error can be cognitively and affectively counterproductive. One student wrote that too many corrections can be “disheartening.” For most of these students, the teachers must just guide /advise students but allow them to discover and correct their own errors. The students and the faculty were also matched in the belief that only fossilized and repetitive and global errors must be pointed out. Global errors are those that affect the overall sentence organization of a text. They are the ones which are likely to have a marked effect on comprehension (Ellis, 2008). The respondents articulated that they should be allowed to address their own stylistic issues that can be reflected in word choice, sentence structure (e.g. passive vs active; loose vs periodic structures) or even in the variety of English preferred by the student. This argument potentially moves students toward the idea of independence and learning autonomy. Given these results, it is important for teachers to give feedback that will encourage rather than dishearten the students to analyze their

own errors and self-correct. However, this task is easier said than done. It entails the teacher's recognition of the fact that students possess various levels of English even if they are all labeled L2 learners. The students' level of proficiency will have an impact on how well they can understand and apply the corrective feedback. It may not be effective nor feasible to simply point out without explanation an error (e.g. by merely encircling errors).

To find out what approaches do teachers adopt to correct errors in the students' writing and what specific feedback do students find helpful in their writing, two related questions were asked:

1. For the teachers: In correcting errors, what kind of corrective feedback do you give?

Direct feedback \_\_\_\_\_

Indirect Feedback \_\_\_\_\_

Both \_\_\_\_\_

If your answer is **both**, which type of feedback do you think is **more helpful** to the student in revising the error/s and why?

2. For the student: What kind of corrective feedback do you want your teacher to give you?

Direct feedback \_\_\_\_\_

Indirect Feedback \_\_\_\_\_

Both \_\_\_\_\_

If your answer is **both**, which type of feedback do you think is **more helpful** to you in revising the error/s and why?

Eighty-six percent of the faculty provide both direct and indirect corrective feedback. Direct feedback means that the instructor provides the correct linguistic form and the students are merely expected to copy the teacher's suggested correction. On the other hand, indirect feedback occurs when the teacher simply indicates that an error has been made and leaves it to the student to correct the error (Ferris, 2011). The faculty, however, noted that indirect feedback is more helpful to students as they are more challenged to process—think, compose, revise. Direct feedback is done only for commonly committed errors (e.g. SV agreement and verb tense). They also expressed the perception that students prefer both types of feedback. This perception acknowledges the fact that learners have different learning and writing strategies, levels of proficiency, and goals in writing. Giving both direct and indirect feedback provides wider issues that

teachers can focus on. One noted that “too much direct feedback can be overwhelming; while all indirect can be confusing.” Both types of feedback allow the teacher to provide a range of comments from grammatical to vocabulary, content, organization, even the cultural context of the composition. Direct feedback works well with the grammar items while indirect feedback is found suitable in addressing issues in style and organization. In effect, simultaneous attention is given to form and content as well as local and global errors. Studies have shown that L2 learners improve on both content and form during revisions. They are aware of their linguistic deficiencies and are motivated to address writing problems that have been pointed out (Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

The students were aware that their teachers provide direct and indirect feedback; however, majority preferred direct feedback. The students also conveyed the notion that students, in general, prefer direct feedback. Convenience is basically the reason for the preference. “The correct answer is given right away” and students know exactly what to improve on. According to the same, “solution is given; and time is saved.”

Studies in SLA have acknowledged the benefits of direct feedback. Lalande (1982) noted that clear, explicit feedback can actually help students master the structure of language. However, self-editing strategies can be achieved through “guided learning and problem solving.” A different scenario was presented by Ferris (2006). Ferris found out that direct feedback led to more correct revision than indirect feedback. Because students find direct feedback easier and faster, positive results may be seen from one draft to another, to the final paper. However, she also found out that throughout the semester, the students who received primarily indirect feedback reduced their error frequency substantially than those who received direct feedback. Lalande (1982) noted that the cumulative effect of indirect feedback resulted in overall accuracy. Needless to say, the goal of the writing instruction influences the type of feedback the teacher opts to provide. It is apparent that the teachers in the study preferred the type of feedback that would lead the students to think for themselves, develop their own editing styles and strategies, and overcome their language deficiencies with minimal intervention.

The mismatch between what type of feedback teachers provide and what students prefer can lead to a dilemma. How can the use of direct feedback not lead to laziness and overdependence on teachers’ markings? What circumstances would make direct feedback appropriate? Ferris (2006) noted that there are at least three circumstances in which teachers may consider giving direct feedback: 1) when students are at beginning levels; 2) when errors are untreatable (untreatable errors are idiosyncratic in nature and requires acquired knowledge of the language to self-correct. Examples are idiomatic expressions, word choice); 3) when the teacher wishes to focus the student’s attention on particular error patterns. Since the GE students are already in the tertiary level, what the teachers must consider would be the level of proficiency. For students whom the teachers have identified at low-proficiency, direct feedback may be more beneficial until they are deemed able to self-correct. These students are also more likely to commit repetitive errors. Studies in SLA posited that the input of the teacher has

demonstrated to aid learner's acquisition of the target forms (Ellis et al., 2008). The teacher may opt to prioritize frequent errors and provide direct correction targeting identified weak areas of specific students. Gradually, direct correction can transition to partial indirect correction—that is to say, erroneous part may be pointed out and metalinguistic information can be given instead of the correct form. Later on, grammar instruction, which may involve students identified to commit similar errors or the entire class, can be planned or adopted to address areas of difficulty.

To determine the importance of corrective feedback to the students, they were asked the question: In what way do students find corrective feedback helpful in their writing? It is heartening to know that the students indicated openness and positive attitude toward corrective feedback. For them, corrective feedback raises their language awareness; their critical thinking is also exercised when processing their teacher's comments. Once they become aware of choices available to them, they are encouraged to review and critique their own compositions by looking for ways to refine their lexical choices and check their grammar accuracy. For them, lexical analysis combined with renewed syntactic awareness would impact on the precision and readability of their compositions. Beyond immediate revision concerns, the students also highlighted the importance of corrective feedback in their future workplaces. While it is important for them to produce error-free texts, it is equally important to develop innovative writing techniques and control their academic language for professional uses.

## **Conclusion**

One implication of the study is that something has to be done regarding the mismatch between the expectations of teachers and students in the type of corrective feedback that teachers should provide. Ultimately, the goal of corrective feedback should be toward learner autonomy. Teachers should explain corrective feedback philosophies and strategies (i.e., which errors to address; how errors will be corrected; when errors will be corrected) so students will be able to manage their expectations and even their anxieties in receiving feedback. Teachers should also set realistic goals. Marking every error is stressful and teachers eventually experience burnout; In addition, corrective feedback is not expected to eliminate all errors. This condition led one teacher to suggest correcting errors across different writing assignments—that is to say, for teachers to do selective correction in various writing activities until all errors have been identified and addressed.

Teachers must also recognize some issues that relate to second language acquisition (SLA). Errors made by students reflect different types and levels of linguistic knowledge. Truscott (1996) argued that different types of errors need varying treatments in terms of error correction. It would be beneficial to both teachers and students if the teachers would make themselves familiar with SLA theories that can support correction strategies. Grammar issues and correction would then be put in perspective.

Teachers must provide a broad range of commenting strategies. They can request more information, address grammar, style, organization. These various

instructional feedbacks should inform students of the location and nature of their errors while providing encouraging feedback. This strategy engages the students and motivates them to take an active participation in writing instead of simply copying the teacher's correction. In effect, two issues in corrective feedback can be addressed—the affective and the pedagogical.

The survey showed that most of the errors found in students' composition are grammar errors. Grammar correction can be complemented by grammar instructions even in the tertiary level. However, unlike in elementary and High School, supporting grammar instruction must be brief, focused, and based on students' needs as determined by diagnostic tests and other writing assignments. Depending on the teacher's evaluation, grammar instruction can be given to individual students or small groups during conferencing or to the entire class.

Some errors may be too complicated and may not be addressed through written feedback. Conferencing, therefore, may be more effective. The teachers must consider student willingness and ability to understand and cope with conferencing dynamics. As teacher-student relationship adds a layer of stress or awkwardness on the part of the student, teacher-student can be relaxed so teachers can ease the transformation of students from passive to active participants in conferences. In a study by Sheppard (1992), it was noted that students who negotiate meaning in a teacher-student conference are likely to be accurate in their use of language that those who are drawn to repair techniques (e.g., direct feedback).

Some teachers indicated peer evaluation as an alternative mechanism for feedback. Theoretical perspectives in both SLA and writing have acknowledged the benefits of peer evaluation but teachers must caution against actual problems, the most common of which is, the students not knowing what and how to correct. Peer evaluation works well within the context of students who have similar levels of proficiency but the reality in the classroom is, students have varying levels of abilities as writers. Slower students may benefit from the more advanced students. Unprepared students, on the other hand, might find the process of collaborative correction helpful or intimidating. What is important though is for teachers to re-evaluate the goals of using peer evaluation in their own classes, the general attitude of students, and the procedure used in peer evaluation.

The results of the study should make teachers re-evaluate their perspectives in corrective feedback. Teachers need to shift their students' focus as well as their own. It is understandable that students want feedback but they should also know that for long term goals, direct feedback may not be as effective as indirect feedback. The teachers, on the hand, must begin to address differing perspectives in providing feedback by arming themselves with pedagogical and theoretical issues in SLA and corrective feedback. This way, they will have a better understanding of language processes and more significantly, of their own teaching.

## References

- Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language two*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferris, D.R. (2011). *Treatment of errors in second language student writing* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Ferris, D.R., & Hedgecock, J.S. (1998). *Teaching ESL compositions: Purpose, process, and practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hedgecock, J.S., & Lefkowitz, N. (1994). Feedback on feedback: Assessing learning receptivity in Second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 141-163.
- James, C. (1998). *Errors and language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Lalande, J. F. (1982). Reducing composition errors: An experiment. *Modern Language Journal*, 66, 140-149.
- Sheppard, K. (1992). Two feedback types: Do they make a difference? *RELC Journal*, 23, 103-110.
- Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, 46, 327-369.

## Notes for contributors

### General Conditions

1. Articles should have never been published elsewhere.
2. Articles will be subjected to editorial review. Contributors may be required to revise their articles for reasons of style and content.
3. Rejected articles will be returned to contributors if requested in advance.
4. Statements in articles are the responsibility of contributors.
5. Contributors are entitled to 2 (two) copies of *LLT Journal*.

### Articles

1. Articles must be on language and language teaching.
2. Articles should be type-written, in English, double-spaced on quarto-sized paper or file, 12-15 pages (saved as Word Document or Rich Text Format).

### Submission of articles

1. Address articles to Redaksi *LLT Journal*, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Mrican, TromolPos 29, Yogyakarta 55002.
2. Contributors may submit a soft-copy of the articles.
3. Contributors are required to submit their biodata, consisting of (a) their institution, (b) educational background, (c) research interests, and (d) contact number and/or address (e-mail address is acceptable).

### Text

1. Articles should include (a) Title, (b) Name of contributor without academic title, (c) Abstract, (d) Keywords, (e) Introduction, (f) Body, (g) Conclusions, (h) References, and (h) Appendices – optional.
2. Abstract is provided in English, 250 words at most, stating (a) the purpose of the study, (b) basic procedures in the study, and (c) principal conclusions.
3. Select 2-3 keywords or short phrases that will assist indexers in cross-indexing the article.
4. Text formatting follows The American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.
5. Footnotes must be avoided. Their contents are incorporated into the text.
6. Document sources in The American Psychological Association (APA) system of in-text citations and references described in the following section.

### References

1. Alphabetize entries by author's last names; if a work has no author, alphabetize it by its title.
2. The order of entry is as follows:  
Author's Last Name, Author's Initials.(Year of Publication).*Title of the book*. City of Publication: Publisher.
3. See examples.

### Reference list entry

#### Guidelines for listing authors

Levenstein, H. A. (2003). *Revolution at the table: The transformation of the American diet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#### Articles in periodicals

##### Article in a journal paginated by volume

Morawski, J. (2000). Social psychology a century ago. *American Psychologist*, 55, 427-431.

##### Article in a journal paginated by issue

Smith, S. (2003). Government and nonprofits in the modern age. *Society*, 40(4), 36-45.

##### Article in a magazine

Raloff, J. (2001, May 12). Lead therapy won't help most kids. *Science News*, 159, 292.

**Article in a newspaper**

Lohr, S. (2004, December 3). Health care technology is a promise unfinanced. *The New York Times*, p. C5.

**Review**

Gleick, E. (2000, December 14). The burdens of genius [Review of the book *The Last Samurai*]. *Time*, 156, 171.

**Books**

**Book with an editor**

Bronfen, E., & Kavka, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Feminist consequences: Theory for a new century*. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Translation**

Steinberg, M.D. (2003). *Voices of revolution, 1917*. (M. Schwartz, Trans.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Original work published 2001)

**Edition other than the first**

Helfer, M. E., Keme, R. S., & Drugman, R. D. (1997). *The battered child* (5<sup>th</sup>ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Article or chapter in an edited book**

Luban, D. (2000). The ethics of wrongful obedience. In D. L. Rhode (Ed.), *Ethics in practice: Lawyers' roles, responsibilities, and regulation* (pp. 94-120). New York: Oxford University Press.

**Multivolume work**

Luo, J. *Encyclopedia of contemporary Chinese civilization (Vols. 1-2)*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

**Electronic sources**

**Article from an online periodical, if the article also appears in a printed journal**

Whitmeyer, J. M. (2000). Power through appointment [Electronic version]. *Social Science Research*, 29(4), 535-555.

**If there is no print version**

Ashe, D. D., & McCutcheon, L. E. (2001). Shyness, loneliness, and attitude toward celebrities. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 6(9). Retrieved July 3, 2001, from <http://www.uiowa.edu/~grpproc/crisp/crisp.6.9.htm>

**Article from a database**

Holliday, R. E., & Hayes, B. K. (2001). Dissociating automatic and intentional processes in children's eyewitness memory. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 75(1), 1-5. Retrieved February 21, 2001, from Expanded Academic ASAP database (A59317972).

**Nonperiodical web document**

Cain, A., & Burris, M. (1999, April). *Investigation of the use of mobile phones while driving*. Retrieved January 15, 2000, from [http://www.cutr.eng.usf.edu/its/mobile\\_phone\\_text.htm](http://www.cutr.eng.usf.edu/its/mobile_phone_text.htm)

**Other sources**

**Dissertation abstract**

Yoshida, Y. (2001). Essays in urban transportation (Doctoral dissertation, Boston College, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 7741A.

**Government document**

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Statistical abstract of the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

**Report from a private organization**

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). Practice guidelines for treatment of patients with eating disorders (2<sup>nd</sup>ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

**Motion picture**

Soderbergh, S. (Director). (2000). *Traffic* [Motion picture]. United States: Gramercy Pictures.

**Television program**

Pratt, C. (Executive Producer). (2001, December 2). *Face the nation* [Television broadcast]. Washington, DC: CBS News.



Sanata Dharma University

