

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS
AMONG SELECTED WEAK ESL LEARNERS
AT UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

*To grandma
with love*

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the strategies used and the problems encountered by weak ESL learners in the process of writing business letters. The study also looked at how strategy use affected this writing process.

The participants of this study were selected from the Faculty of Economics and Management of Universiti Putra Malaysia. These students had enrolled for a compulsory course in business correspondence for one semester. All the participants were then involved in four practice sessions for the think-aloud procedure. Subsequently six were selected to undergo two data collection sessions. A writing task was assigned for each think-aloud session. Field notes were taken and post-session interviews were conducted after each think-aloud session. The think-aloud and interview protocols were then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Three flow-charts were developed to help the researcher chart specific features of writing strategies used in the analysis of the think-aloud protocols. A frequency count was also conducted to identify frequent and common strategies used. The interview protocols were scrutinized for episodes on problems encountered by the students and for support on the use of particular strategies.

The written drafts were also analyzed to support findings from the earlier analysis to identify how strategy use had affected the writing of business letters.

The study found that cognitive strategies were used more frequently for management of task comprehension requirements, while metacognitive strategies were used for production of ideas in the writing process. Social strategies were found to be used in both instances, but were often used to manage negative emotions. The study also found that while some students were able to identify their problems in writing accurately, others were not able to do so. This affected the range of strategies adopted in the writing process. The study suggests possible links between the use of higher order cognitive reading strategies like summarizing and making connections with writing effectiveness.

**Strategi Untuk Penulisan Surat Perniagaan di Kalangan
Pelajar Bahasa Inggeris Terpilih Yang Lemah
di Universiti Putra Malaysia**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mencapai kefahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai penggunaan strategi dan masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar Bahasa Inggeris yang lemah dalam proses penulisan surat perniagaan. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh penggunaan strategi terhadap proses penulisan ini.

Peserta dalam kajian ini dipilih dari kalangan pelajar Fakulti Ekonomi dan Pengurusan di Universiti Putra Malaysia yang telah mendaftar untuk kursus penulisan perniagaan dalam Bahasa Inggeris selama satu semester. Semua peserta dilibatkan dalam 4 sesi latihan untuk membiasakan mereka dengan prosedur suaraan-fikiran dalam proses penulisan. Hasil daripada sesi latihan ini, enam pelajar telah dipilih untuk mengikuti dua sesi pengumpulan data. Penyelidik telah mengikuti sesi ini dengan mengambil nota pemerhatian, dan pada akhir setiap sesi pelajar diajak berbincang mengenai masalah yang dihadapi ketika menulis surat tersebut. Protokol setiap sesi kemudian ditranskripsikan untuk penelitian lanjutan.

Tiga carta diwujudkan semasa penganalisisan protokol suaraan-fikiran untuk membantu penyelidik mengenal pasti ciri-ciri tertentu untuk strategi penulisan

yang digunakan. Kiraan frekuansi juga dilakukan untuk menentukan kekerapan dan kegunaan strategi di kalangan pelajar. Protokol temubual diteliti untuk menyediakan laporan tentang masalah yang dihadapi, manakala draf surat yang ditulis diteliti untuk menentukan sebarang pengaruh yang timbul daripada penggunaan strategi terhadap proses penulisan surat perniagaan.

Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa strategi kognitif seringkali digunakan untuk menguruskan keperluan kefahaman soalan, manakala strategi metakognitif digunakan untuk proses pertumbuhan idea dalam proses penulisan. Strategi sosial pula digunakan dalam kedua-dua situasi. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa hanya sesetengah pelajar dapat mengenal pasti masalah yang dihadapi dengan jitu, dan tanggapan mereka mengenai masalah yang dihadapi mempengaruhi strategi yang digunakan. Data kajian ini juga menunjukkan kemungkinan bahawa terdapat perhubungan di antara penggunaan strategi pembacaan tahap tinggi dengan mutu penulisan di kalangan pelajar yang lemah.

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