

INVESTIGATING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH  
STRATEGY TRAINING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the development of learner autonomy through strategy training in the ESL classroom. Learner autonomy refers to learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning while strategy training refers to the explicit introduction of language learning strategies during lessons where learners are given explanations as to when, how and why these strategies can be used to facilitate the learning process. The study examined both the implementation and the effects of a 15 week Strategy Training Programme. The subjects of this study involved one TEST trained teacher and an ESL class of 42 Form Four students in an urban secondary school in Selangor, Malaysia.

The study employed a four-pronged system of collecting data. This included techniques such as classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews and the examination of written documents such as learning journals and learning contracts. Data from all these sources were constantly compared, contrasted and triangulated using both deductive and inductive approaches to draw conclusions.

First and foremost, it was found that strategy training was effective in developing learner autonomy. This was corroborated by the fact that by the end of the training programme, approximately 81 per cent of the students indicated that they were successful in managing their own learning and were capable of working independently. Secondly, strategy training resulted in a significant increase in the use of language learning strategies among students. This increased use of strategies helped the students to become better language learners and equipped them with the ability and willingness

to take responsibility for their own learning. This was evidenced in their success to plan, organize and monitor their own learning. Thirdly, although the teacher's responses and analysis of students' learning journals and learning contracts indicated that students were successful in evaluating their work, they, themselves did not perceive this to be so.

At the implementation level several observations were made. Firstly, successful implementation required the teacher to strike a balance between 'what to learn' (product) and 'how to learn' (process). Furthermore, the successful integration of learning strategies into regular English Language lessons enabled the teacher to introduce a variety of direct and indirect strategies in each lesson. Thirdly, classroom observations indicated that the teacher provided students with more opportunities for organizing and monitoring learning as compared to planning and evaluating the learning process. In addition to that, metacognitive and cognitive strategies were given more emphasis compared to affective strategies. This probably resulted in students possessing little confidence in self-assessing their own learning.

The findings imply that strategy training is an effective tool to help students take responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, equal emphasis on content or 'what to learn' and process or 'how to learn' appear to be the key factors that need to be considered when planning and designing language courses. Such a move would help equip learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve learner autonomy for life-long learning.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meninjau perkembangan autonomi pelajar melalui latihan strategi dalam bilik darjah Bahasa Inggeris (ESL). Autonomi pelajar dimaksudkan sebagai keupayaan pelajar-pelajar memikul tanggungjawab untuk belajar sendiri manakala latihan strategi merujuk kepada pengenalan yang jelas dan terperinci terhadap strategi-strategi pembelajaran bahasa semasa belajar, dengan pelajar-pelajar diberi penerangan yang jelas akan bila, bagaimana and kenapa strategi-strategi itu boleh digunakan untuk memudahkan proses pembelajaran. Kajian ini meneliti kedua-dua aspek pelaksanaan dan kesan-kesan Program Latihan Strategi yang telah dijalankan selama 15 minggu. Subjek kajian ini melibatkan seorang guru yang terlatih dalam TESL dan sebuah kelas ESL yang mengandungi seramai 42 orang pelajar Tingkatan Empat disebuah sekolah menengah dalam bandar di negeri Selangor, Malaysia.

Kajian ini menggunakan sistem serampang empat mata untuk mengumpul data-data. Ini termasuk teknik pemerhatian proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam bilik darjah, soalselidik, temurama dan penelitian dokumen bertulis seperti jurnal-jurnal pembelajaran dan kontrak-kontrak pembelajaran. Data-data dari pelbagai sumber ini sentiasa diperbandingkan untuk mencari perbezaan dan persamaan secara tiga hala dengan menggunakan pendekatan deduktif dan induktif untuk mendapat rumusan.

Hasil dapatan utama kajian, menunjukkan bahawa latihan strategi berkesan dalam pembentukan autonomi pelajar. Ini telah disokong dengan hasil yang tercapai diakhir program latihan. Didapati hampir 81 peratus pelajar menyatakan mereka telah berjaya dalam mengendalikan sendiri pembelajaran mereka, dan berupaya untuk bekerja

secara sendirian. Kedua, latihan strategi ini telah mengakibatkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan strategi-strategi pembelajaran bahasa di-kalangan pelajar. Peningkatan dalam penggunaan strategi-strategi itu telah membantu pelajar-pelajar menjadi pengguna bahasa yang lebih baik dan melengkapkan mereka dengan kebolehan dan kesediaan untuk memikul tanggungjawab untuk belajar sendiri. Ini dibuktikan dengan kejayaan mereka untuk merancang, mengurus dan memantau pembelajaran mereka sendiri. Ketiga, walaupun maklum balas guru dan analisis jurnal-jurnal dan kontrak-kontrak pembelajaran pelajar-pelajar menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar telah berjaya menilai kerja-kerja mereka, namun mereka sendiri tidak begitu yakin akan kebolehan mereka untuk menilai kerja sendiri.

Di peringkat pelaksanaan, beberapa pengamatan telah didapati. Pertama, pelaksanaan yang berjaya memerlukan seseorang guru itu mengimbangkan diantara "apa hendak dipelajari" (hasil) dengan "bagaimana hendak belajar" (proses). Selanjutnya, strategi-strategi pembelajaran yang berjaya diintegrasikan ke dalam pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang biasa membolehkan guru itu memperkenalkan beberapa strategi secara langsung dan tidak langsung ke dalam setiap pelajaran ESL. Ketiga, pemerhatian dalam bilik darjah menunjukkan bahawa guru telah memberi pelajar-pelajar lebih peluang untuk mengurus dan memantau pembelajaran kalau dibandingkan dengan perancangan dan penilaian proses pembelajaran. Di samping itu, strategi-strategi metakognitif dan kognitif telah diberi penekanan yang lebih kalau dibandingkan dengan strategi-strategi afektif. Ini telah mengakibatkan pelajar kurang berkeyakinan menilai sendiri pembelajaran mereka.

Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa latihan strategi adalah suatu alat yang berkesan untuk membantu pelajar-pelajar memikul tanggungjawab dalam pembelajaran mereka sendiri. Seterusnya, penekanan yang sama ke atas kandungan (apa yang hendak dipelajari) dengan proses (bagaimana hendak belajar) merupakan suatu faktor utama yang perlu dipertimbangkan apabila merancang atau membentuk kursus-kursus bahasa. Langkah seupama ini akan membantu melengkapi pelajar-pelajar dengan pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang sewajarnya bagi memperolehi autonomi pelajar bagi pembelajaran seumur hayat.

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LHTL	Learning How To Learn
LTM	Long-Term Memory
MOE	Ministry of Education
P. J.	Petaling Jaya
PMR	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> (Lower Secondary Assessment)
RBA	Right-brain activity
SAC	Self Access Centre
SACs	Self Access Centres
SAL	Self Access Learning
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
STM	Short-Term Memory
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Malaysian High School Leaving Certificate)
TAP	Think-aloud procedure
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TPA	Total Physical Response
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
viz.	namely