DIFFICULTIES FACED BY OMANI POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN AN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES CONTEXT

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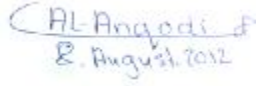
Candidate's Signature  Date: 8 August 2012

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to identify the difficulties faced by Omani postgraduates in the use of English for academic purposes (EAP). Seven areas of academic language use at a public university in Malaysia were identified as the focus of this investigation.

The study employed a mixed method approach to utilize both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through a questionnaire and interviews. A questionnaire and interviews were designed and administrated to 13 Omani postgraduates from 7 faculties in the academic year 2010/2011. The students were asked to indicate the problems they faced in performing the following academic language tasks: note taking, writing critical reviews, answering exam questions, understanding lecturers, reading and understanding academic book and journals, participating in group discussion and tutorials and oral presentations.

In addition, two sets of interviews were administrated after getting the consent from the interviewees. The interviewees for the first set were two Omani students; one each from the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Science. The interviewees for the second set were two lecturers of the same university; one each from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, and the Faculty of Education. The aim of the first set of interview was to identify the academic language difficulties faced by the Omani students and the reasons for such difficulties. The aim of the second set of interview was to obtain the lecturers' perception of the academic language difficulties the Omani students face, their causes and the possible ways to overcome them.

The study found that 'writing critical review' (69.22%) and 'note taking' (61.53%) were the most frequently cited difficulties among Omani postgraduates. This is followed by 'reading/understanding academic books and journals (46.14%), 'participating in group

discussion and tutorials' (38.45%),'answering examination questions' (30.76%), 'oral presentation (30.76%), and 'understanding lecturers' (15.38%) respectively.

Analysis of the lecturers' and students' interviews confirmed that 'writing critical reviews' was the students' most frequently cited academic language difficulty. Lecturers stated that students need to obtain the academic language skills and it requires immediate action. In addition, the study found that Omani postgraduates faced academic language difficulties because of the following reasons: poor English language proficiency, no academic language skills prior to entry and difficulties to adjust to the new academic culture.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji kesukaran yang dihadapi calon pascasiswazah Oman dalam penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris untuk tujuan akademik (EAP). Tujuh bidang penggunaan bahasa akademik di satu universiti awam di Malaysia telah dikenalpasti untuk menjadi tumpuan kajian ini.

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran untuk memungut data kuantitatif dan kualitatif melalui soalselidik dan temubual. Soalselidik dan temubual telah dibangunkan dan dijalankan keatas 13 orang calon pascasiswazah Omani dari 7 fakulti dalam sesi akademik 2010/2011. Pelajar diminta untuk menyatakan masalah yang mereka hadapi dalam menjalankan tugasan bahasa akademik berikut: mengambil nota, menulis rumusan kritikal, menjawab soalan peperiksaan, memahami pensyarah, membaca dan memahami buku dan jurnal akademik, mengambil bahagian didalam perbincangan berkumpulan dan tutorial, dan pembentangan lisan.

Selain dari itu, dua set temubual telah dijalankan selepas mendapat persetujuan dari pihak yang berkenaan. Dua orang calon pascasiswazah dari Oman, seorang dari Fakulti Pendidikan dan seorang dari Fakulti Sains telah ditemubual bagi set yang pertama. Bagi set yang kedua, seorang pensyarah dari Fakulti Bahasa dan Linguistik dan seorang lagi pensyarah dari Fakulti Pendidikan telah ditemubual. Kedua-duanya dari universiti yang sama. Tujuan temubual bagi set yang kedua ialah untuk mendapatkan persepsi pensyarah tentang kesukaran bahasa akademik yang dihadapi pelajar Oman, serta sebab dan cara kesukaran ini boleh ditangani.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa, menulis rumusan kritikal (69.22%) dan mengambil nota (61.53%) merupakan kesukuran yang paling kerap dihadapi dalam kalangan pelajar pascasiswazah Oman. Ini diikuti membaca dan memahami buku dan jurnal

akademik(46.14%), perbincangan berkumpulan dan tutorial (38.45%), menjawab soalan peperiksaan (30.76%), pembentangan lisan (30.76%) and memahami pensyarah (15.38%).

Dapatan dari temubual bersama pensyarah dan pelajar mengesahkan bahawa penulisan rumusan kritikal merupakan penggunaan bahasa akademik yang paling sukar. Pensyarah menyatakan bahawa pelajar perlu mempertingkatkan kemahiran bahasa akademik dan ia harus ditangani secepat mungkin. Selain dari itu, kajian ini mendapati pelajar pascasiswazah Oman menghadapi masalah kesukaran bahasa akademik kerana sebab berikut: Kemahiran bahasa Inggeris yang lemah, tiada kemahiranbahasa akademik sebelum menjejak masuk keuniversiti dan kesukaran memadankan diri dengan budaya akademik baru.

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