



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**KNOWLEDGE OF EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURE ACROSS
DIFFERENT TASK CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONSE FORMATS
AMONG ESL TERTIARY LEARNERS IN MALAYSIA**

MASOUMEH AKHONDI

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By

MASOUMEH AKHONDI

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2011



To my late father, I miss you dad,
my loving mother, I love you mom,
my nice husband Faramarz, you are my best friend,
and to my cute son Farbod, I love you



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Faculty: Educational Studies

This study examined knowledge of expository text structure across four response formats; summary writing, incomplete outline, graphic organizer, and short-answer questions, when characteristics of the task change from diffuse to compact. Participants were 180 tertiary learners. Analysis of the data revealed that there is no statistically and practically significant difference in the proficiency levels between the students of different academic semesters. There were three main and two specific research questions. The first research question investigated the extent to which each of the four response formats measures the test takers' knowledge of expository text structure on reading tasks with two different characteristics, diffuse and compact. Two separate



Structural Equation Modeling analyses were applied and the two models were compared to observe the differences in eliciting the knowledge of text structure. Comparing the two models across diffuse and compact texts it was realized that the students performed better when the text is long and the components of text structure (main idea, major idea, and supporting details) are distributed across the passage equally. Qualitative findings supported the quantitative results, as the majority of the students preferred the long passage in locating the components of text structure. The second research question examined the extent of variations in test takers' performance in the four response formats and the two texts due to their proficiency level. Two separate Repeated Measures Two-way ANOVAs were applied to investigate the interaction effect of students' proficiency with their performance on four response formats across the two texts. The diffuse text indicated no statistically significant interaction effect between students' level of reading proficiency and their performance on the four response formats. High-achievers outperformed the two other groups across the four test tasks and intermediate-achievers stands in upper position compared to low-achievers in incomplete outline and graphic organizer tasks, while the two groups achieved similar results in summary writing and short-answer questions. Repeated Measures Two-way ANOVA for the compact text revealed a significant interaction effect between proficiency and test formats in summary writing, incomplete outline tasks as the low-achievers outperformed high- and intermediate-achievers in summary writing, and they stand at the same place with high-achievers in incomplete outline task. Low-achievers' performances on graphic organizer and short-answer questions were significantly lower than the two other groups. The third research question is qualitative enquiry. The themes



extracted from the qualitative data were in line with the quantitative results. The fourth question investigated the differences in test takers' performances due to the task order. It was revealed that there were significant interaction effects between students' proficiency level and their performance due to the order of the test formats. The last research question examined the most appropriate way to elicit students' perception of the rhetorical nature of the text. There were MCQ and short-answer questions asking about the rhetorical structure of the text. The frequency distribution for the two question types revealed that the students were successful in determining the structure of the text when the question was in the MCQ format.



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PADA PEMBELAJAR TERSIER ESL DI MALAYSIA**

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Kajian ini menyelidik sifat pengetahuan expository text structure dalam empat format respon (penulisan ringkasan, rangka tak lengkap, graphic organizer dan soal-jawab singkat) apabila ciri-ciri tugas berbeza (teks membur, teks padat). Data telah dikumpulkan daripada 180 pelajar, namun hanya data daripada 160 mahasiswa yang diakui sebagai data lengkap dan disertakan dalam analisa statistik. Data dikumpulkan daripada mahasiswa dari semester pengajian yang berbeza dengan pendapat bahawa jumlah paparan terhadap teks-teks akademik akan mempengaruhi prestasi. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan ketara secara statistik dan secara praktikal pada tahap kemahiran di antara mahasiswa-mahasiswa dari semester akademik yang berbeza. Oleh kerana itu, mereka diperlakukan sebagai sampel homogeny daripada 160 peserta kajian. Terdapat tiga soalan kajian utama dan dua soalan kajian khusus untuk kajian ini.



Soalan kajian pertama meneliti sejauh mana setiap empat format respon mengukur pengetahuan peserta kajian tentang expository text structure dalam pembacaan teks dengan dua sifat berbeza, membaaur dan padat. Bagi menjawab soalan kajian pertama, dua Model Persamaan Struktural yang berasingan telah diaplikasikan dan dibandingkan untuk mengkaji perbezaan dalam mengukur pengetahuan text structure. Dengan membandingkan dua model merentasi teks membaaur dan teks padat, disedari bahawa tahap kemahiran mahasiswa adalah lebih baik sekiranya teks panjang dan komponen-komponen text structure (idea utama, idea major dan butiran sokongan) adalah diagihkan dalam teks secara seragam. Penyelidikan kualitatif lanjut dari para peserta menyokong keputusan kuantitatif, kerana majoriti pelajar memilih petikan panjang dalam mencari komponen text structure. Soalan kajian kedua meneliti sejauh mana variasi dalam prestasi peserta dalam empat format respon dan dua teks bergantung kepada tahap kemampuan mereka. Dua Ujian Berulang ANOVA telah dilaksanakan untuk mengetahui pengaruh interaksi antara kemampuan peserta dengan prestasi mereka di empat format respon dalam dua teks. Mesej diffuse interaksi secara statistik tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan antara tahap kemampuan pelajar membaca dan prestasi mereka dalam empat format respon. Kumpulan peserta berprestasi tinggi mengungguli dua kumpulan lain dalam ke empat-empat tugas ujian dan kumpulan berprestasi sederhana mencapai kedudukan atas berbanding dengan kumpulan berprestasi rendah dalam ujian rangka tak lengkap dan graphic organiser, sedangkan dua kumpulan mencapai keputusan yang sama dalam menulis ringkasan dan soal-jawab singkat. Ujian Berulang Dua-Arah ANOVA untuk teks padat menunjukkan pengaruh interaksi yang nyata antara kemampuan dalam format ujian menulis ringkasan, rangka

tak lengkap kerana kumpulan berprestasi tinggi mencapai keputusan lebih baik berbanding kumpulan berprestasi sederhana, dan mereka mencapai keputusan yang sama dengan kumpulan berprestasi tinggi dalam ujian rangka tak lengkap. Pencapaian kumpulan berprestasi rendah dalam graphic organizer dan soal-jawab singkat adalah lebih rendah secara signifikan berbanding dua kumpulan lain. Soalan ketiga adalah soalan kajian kualitatif dikumpulkan dari 15 pelajar yang dipilih secara rawak daripada sukarelawan. Tema diambil dari data kualitatif sesuai dengan keputusan kuantitatif. Soalan keempat meneliti perbezaan prestasi peserta dengan menggunakan susunan tugas. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa ada pengaruh interaksi yang signifikan antara tahap kemampuan pelajar dan prestasi mereka kerana susunan di mana mereka telah menerima format ujian. Soalan kajian terakhir meneliti cara yang paling tepat untuk mengukur persepsi pelajar tentang sifat retorika teks. Terdapat soalan-soalan aneka pilihan (MCQ) dan soalan struktur yang menguji struktur retorika teks. Kekekapan pengedaran dua jenis soalan menunjukkan bahawa peserta telah berjaya dalam menentukan struktur teks jika soalan itu dalam format MCQ.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on **January 28, 2011** to conduct the final examination of Masoumeh Akhondi on her thesis entitled “**Knowledge of Expository Text Structure across Different Task Characteristics and Response Formats among ESL Tertiary Learners in Malaysia**” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institutions.

MASOUMEH AKHONDI

Date: 28 January 2011



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