



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PERSONAL AND
REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS BY L1 MALAY SPEAKERS**

SOO KUM YOKE

FBMK 2011 36

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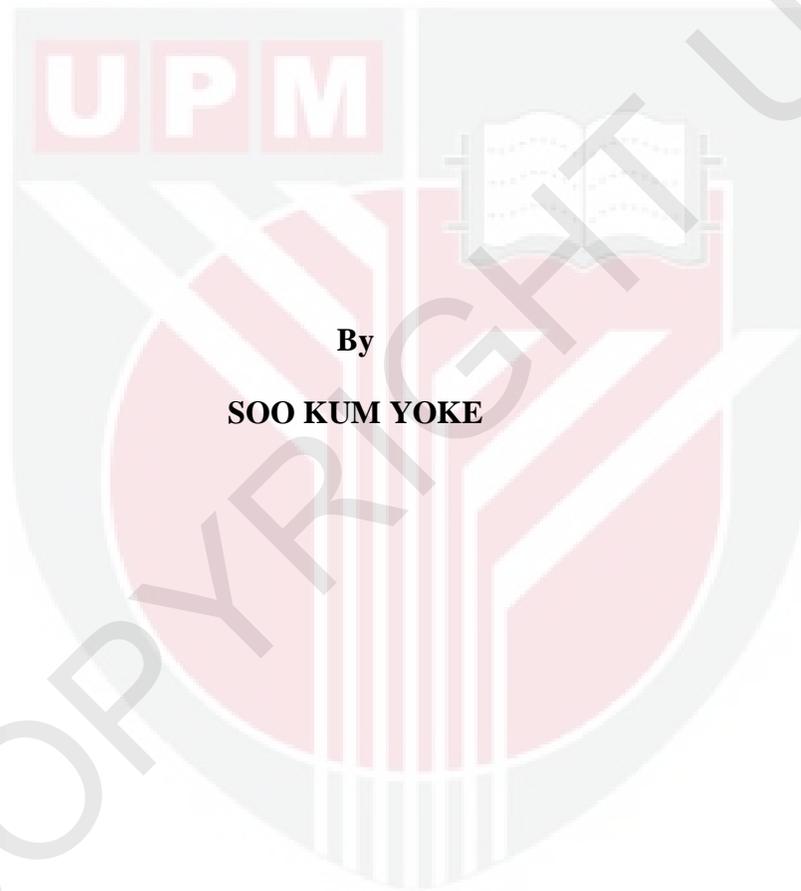


SOO KUM YOKE

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

2011

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PERSONAL AND
REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS BY L1 MALAY SPEAKERS**



**By
SOO KUM YOKE**

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

May 2011

Dedicated to mum and dad,

The head and heart of this research...

And to the rest of my family for

the shoulder to cry on,
the elbow to nudge on,
the kick to move on,
the hand to hold on,
and the smile to carry on.

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

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PERSONAL
AND REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS BY L1 MALAY SPEAKERS**

By

SOO KUM YOKE

May 2011

Chair: Associate Professor Wong Bee Eng, PhD

Faculty: Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

This study investigates the acquisition of English personal and reflexive pronouns by L1 Malay speakers in relation to the issues of development and parameter resetting in SLA within the Universal Grammar (UG) framework. In particular, we test the Failed Functional Features hypothesis proposed by Hawkins and Chan (1997) that parametric values associated with functional categories which are not instantiated in the learners L1 at the critical period of learning are not available for acquisition in their L2. A hundred and fifty respondents participated in this study. They were divided into three groups of fifty respondents each based on their proficiency levels. The instruments used were an independent proficiency test, a Grammaticality Judgement Test, a Binding Test and an Elicited Translation Task.

Malay personal pronouns do not differentiate gender and case features. Further, reflexive pronouns are not included in the Malay parts of speech. It is hence argued that these

parametric differences between the learners' L1 and L2 would impede acquisition as the learners are unable to reset L1 parameters beyond the critical period of learning. They would therefore have to find other mechanisms in order to fit their L1 settings within the constraints of UG. The findings show that with longer exposure to the L2, the intermediate and advanced groups were better able to acquire the pronouns compared to the elementary group. However, their performances were still far from native speaker competency. The results also suggest that features which were available in the learners L1 such as the number feature were better acquired compared to the gender and case features in personal pronouns. While reflexives were not available in the learners' L1, they were still able to acquire them because a substitute form of reflexive-like pronouns was found in the learners' L1. Comparatively, reflexive pronouns remained more difficult to attain. Binding property A tested showed that the learners found it difficult to acquire the property because of influence from the parametric values of the pronouns tested which were problematic.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEMBELAJARAN KATA GANTINAMA DIRI DAN
KATA GANTINAMA REFLEKSIF BAHASA INGGERIS OLEH
PENTUTUR BAHASA MELAYU IBUNDA**

Oleh

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Pengerusi: Profesor Madya Wong Bee Eng, PhD

Fakulti: Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Penyelidikan ini mengkaji pembelajaran kata gantinama diri dan kata gantinama refleksif Bahasa Inggeris oleh pentutur Bahasa Melayu ibunda dan hubungannya dengan isu perkembangan dan pengubahsuaian parameter dalam SLA di bawah teori *Universal Grammar* (UG). Khususnya, hukum *Failed Functional Features* yang dikemukakan oleh Hawkins dan Chan (1997) akan diuji berdasarkan sama ada parameter yang berkaitan dengan kategori functional yang tidak digunapakai di dalam bahasa pertama pelajar pada jangkamasa pembelajaran kritikal boleh digunapakai untuk pembelajaran bahasa kedua pelajar. Seratus lima puluh peserta terlibat dalam kajian ini. Mereka dibahagikan kepada tiga kumpulan berjumlah lima puluh peserta setiap kumpulan mengikut tahap kemahiran bahasa. Alat pengukur yang digunakan ialah ujian kemahiran bahasa, *Grammaticality Judgement Test*, *Binding Test* dan *Elicited Translation Task*.

Kata gantinama diri dalam Bahasa Melayu tidak membezakan unsur jantina dan kes. Di samping itu, kata gantinama refleksif tidak termasuk dalam tatabahasa Bahasa Melayu. Maka, dinyatakan bahawa perbezaan parametrik di antara bahasa pertama dan bahasa kedua pelajar mungkin menjadi masalah kepada pembelajaran kerana pelajar tidak dapat mengubahsuai parameter bahasa pertama selepas melalui jangkamasa pembelajaran kritikal. Jadi, mereka terpaksa mencari cara lain untuk menyesuaikan set bahasa pertama mereka dalam konstrain UG. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa dengan pendedahan lebih lama kepada bahasa kedua, pelajar kumpulan tahap tengah dan tahap tinggi dapat memperolehi kemahiran kata gantinama lebih baik daripada pelajar tahap rendah. Ini menunjukkan bahawa mereka dapat menstrukturkan tatabahasa mental mereka kepada bentuk bahasa kedua tanpa mengubahsuai parameter bahasa pertama mereka. Namun, pencapaian mereka masih tidak setanding dengan penutur asal Bahasa Inggeris. Maka dinyatakan bahawa walaupun pelajar dapat membina tatabahasa mental untuk Bahasa Inggeris, ianya masih tidak setaraf penutur Bahasa Inggeris asal dan perlu menggunakan cara lain untuk pembelajaran seperti latih tubi atau penghafalan. Keputusan kajian ini juga mencadangkan bahawa unsur-unsur yang wujud dalam bahasa pertama pelajar seperti unsur bilangan lebih disenangi berbanding dengan unsur jantina dan kes. Walaupun kata gantinama refleksif tidak wujud dalam kelas tatabahasa Bahasa Melayu, pelajar masih dapat mempelajarinya kerana masih wujud bentuk penggunaan kata yang seakan-akan kata gantinama refleksif di dalam bahasa pertama pelajar. Secara perbandingan, kata gantinama refleksif lebih sukar dipelajari daripada kata gantinama diri. Hukum binding A yang diuji menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mengalami kesukaran

mempelajarinya tetapi ujian lanjut yang dijalankan menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh dari perbezaan parametrik telah mempengaruhi keputusan.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on **5th July 2011** to conduct the final examination of **Soo Kum Yoke** on her thesis entitled “**The Acquisition of English Personal and Reflexive Pronouns by L1 Malay Speakers**” 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 institution.

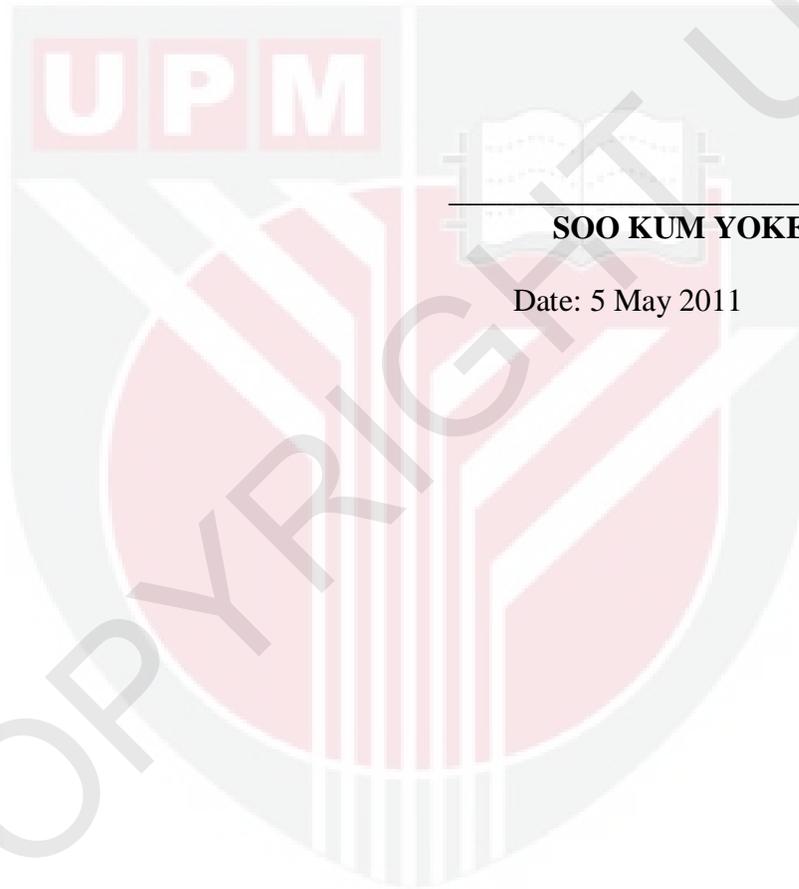


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
APPROVAL SHEETS	ix
DECLARATION	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of Problem	8
1.3 Purpose of the Study	10
1.4 Research Questions	10
1.5 Theoretical Framework	11
1.6 Significance of the Study	14
1.7 Scope of the Study	15
1.8 Overview of the Thesis	16
2 STUDIES ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	17
2.1 The Role of First Language in Second Language Acquisition	17
2.2 Developmental Stages	22
2.3 Parameter Resetting and the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis	25
2.4 Studies on the Acquisition of Personal Pronouns	31
2.5 Studies on the Acquisition of Reflexive Pronouns	33
2.6 Summary	37
3 LINGUISTIC ASSUMPTIONS	40
3.1 English and Malay Personal Pronouns	40
3.2 English and Malay Reflexive Pronouns	47
3.2.1 <i>diri</i> (+ pronoun)	55
3.2.2 <i>diri</i> (+ pronoun) <i>sendiri</i>	56
3.2.3 <i>sendiri/diri</i>	58
3.3 Summary	59

4	METHODOLOGY	63
	4.1 Research Design	63
	4.2 Method	65
	4.2.1 Sampling	65
	4.2.2 Test Instruments	67
	4.3 Summary	78
5	DATA ANALYSIS	79
	5.1 Respondents' Background	79
	5.2 Test Results	82
	5.3 Oxford Placement Test	82
	5.4 Grammatical Judgement Task	83
	5.4.1 Test of Judgements on the Usage of (Third Person) Personal Pronouns	83
	5.4.2 Test of Judgements on the Usage of Reflexive Pronouns	88
	5.4.3 Test of Features in (Third Person) Personal Pronouns	94
	5.4.4 Test of Features in Reflexives	110
	5.5 Binding Test	127
	5.6 Elicited Translation Task	130
	5.6.1 English Personal Pronouns in the ETT	131
	5.6.2 Reflexive Pronouns in the ETT	132
	5.6.3 Test of Features in (Third Person) Personal Pronouns	134
	5.6.4 Test of Features in Reflexive Pronouns	149
	5.7 Conclusion	160
6	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	162
	6.1 General Overview of the Study	162
	6.2 The Acquisition of English Personal and Reflexive Pronouns by L1 Malay Speakers from Different Proficiency Levels	163
	6.2.1 The Acquisition of English Personal Pronouns	164
	6.2.2 The Acquisition of English Reflexive Pronouns	166
	6.3 Features in English Personal Pronouns	169
	6.3.1 Gender	169
	6.3.2 Case	171
	6.3.3 Number	173
	6.4 Features in English Reflexive Pronouns	175
	6.4.1 Gender	175
	6.4.2 Number	177
	6.4.3 Person	179
	6.5 Binding Principle A in the Acquisition of English Reflexive	

Pronouns	181
6.5.1 The BT Results for Binding Property A	182
6.6 Conclusions and Implications	184
6.7 Recommendations for Future Studies	189
REFERENCES	190
APPENDICES	199
BIODATA OF STUDENT	250
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS (Publications that arise from the study)	251

