



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**EFFECTS OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING AND QUICKWRITING
ON LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND WRITING PERFORMANCE**

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**EFFECTS OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING AND QUICKWRITING ON
LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND WRITING PERFORMANCE**

By

SAROYA YAHYA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

March 2004



DEDICATION

To my mother.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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The purpose of this study is to compare the effects of dialogue journal writing to that of quickwriting in the teaching and learning of the English language. The effects of the treatments on language anxiety and writing performance were assessed. This ten week quasi-experimental study involved 96 matriculation college students.

Data was derived from questionnaires and writing performance test administered prior to and after the treatments. Descriptive statistics, ANCOVA and t-test were employed to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed that dialogue journal writing group's performance on language anxiety and writing showed significant improvement than that of the quickwriting group. Significant differences between the two groups in terms of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation levels were also noted. In addition, the dialogue journal writing group was also seen to have

significantly higher scores in the writing assessment categories namely content, organization, language use, vocabulary and mechanics compared to that of the quickwriting group. In sum, dialogue journal writing showed favourable effects on language anxiety and writing performance.

The findings of the present study were in accordance with theoretical assumptions of dialogue journal writing, language anxiety and writing performance. The results provided support for the view that dialogue journal writing has the potential to bring about a non-threatening language-learning atmosphere necessary to reduce language anxiety and improve writing performance. The implication of the study suggests that dialogue journal writing could be beneficial in lowering language anxiety and improving writing quality in the second language classroom.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**KESAN PENULISAN DIALOG JURNAL DAN PENULISAN PANTAS KE
ATAS KERISAUAN MEMPELAJARI BAHASA DAN PRESTASI PENULISAN**

Oleh

SAROYA YAHYA

Mac 2004

Pengerusi : Arshad Abdul Samad, Ph.D.

Fakulti :Pengajian Pendidikan

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk membandingkan kesan penulisan dialog jurnal (*dialogue journal writing*) dengan kaedah penulisan pantas (*quickwriting*) di dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Kesan daripada kedua-dua teknik ini dilihat terhadap tahap kerisauan mempelajari bahasa Kedua dan prestasi penulisan. Kajian berbentuk kuasi eksperimen yang berlangsung selama 10 minggu ini melibatkan seramai 96 orang pelajar kolej matrikulasi.

Data diperolehi berdasarkan soal selidik dan ujian penulisan. Kemudian, data ini dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis deskriptif, ANCOVA dan ujian t. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan pelajar yang menggunakan teknik penulisan dialog jurnal memperoleh kesan yang signifikan dari segi tahap kerisauan mempelajari

bahasa Kedua dan ujian penulisan berbanding kumpulan yang mempraktikkan kaedah penulisan pantas. Perbezaan signifikan antara kedua-dua kumpulan dari segi kerisauan berkomunikasi dan kerisauan terhadap evaluasi negatif juga dapat dikesan. Markah ujian penulisan akhir kumpulan dialog jurnal dari aspek isi, penyusunan isi, tatabahasa, perbendaharaan kata, dan ejaan juga memperlihatkan peningkatan yang signifikan berbanding kumpulan penulisan pantas. Kesimpulannya, teknik penulisan dialog jurnal menunjukkan kesan yang positif terhadap kerisauan mempelajari bahasa Kedua dan prestasi penulisan.

Dapatan kajian ini adalah selari dengan teori-teori berhubung penulisan dialog jurnal, kerisauan mempelajari bahasa Kedua dan prestasi penulisan. Keputusan kajian menyokong andaian bahawa penulisan dialog jurnal berpotensi dalam menyediakan suasana pembelajaran yang selesa bagi membantu mengurangkan tahap kerisauan mempelajari bahasa Kedua dan meningkatkan prestasi penulisan. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa penulisan dialog jurnal bermanfaat dalam mengawal tahap kerisauan mempelajari bahasa Kedua dan meningkatkan kualiti penulisan pelajar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Many second language learners perceive second language learning as an anxiety-evoking experience (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1989; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Aida, 1994; Casado, 2000). Learning a second language can be an uncomfortable process due to the uncertainties and frustration one might feel when using a language with which one has limited proficiency (Beebe, 1983; Horwitz et al., 1989; Cohen and Norst, 1989; Young, 1999). The feeling of being unsure when using a second language, frustration and desire to excel can lead to anxiety as the learner sees himself as lacking (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz et al., 1989). Since research has shown that second language learning context is anxiety provoking (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989, 1991, 1994a, 1994b), investigating the effectiveness of anxiety-reducing strategies in the second language class is deemed important.

Background of the Study

Humanistic education stresses the importance of considering learners' emotions in the learning process (Moskowitz, 1978). For language-learning researchers, affect is seen as an important factor in acquiring language (Krashen, 1982; Schumann, 1978). Research in affective variables showed that emotion could influence cognitive processing capacity (Schumann, 1978; Zajonc, 1984). Thus, the role of affect in language-learning calls for language teachers to improve language instruction and

create a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere so that students can learn comfortably and focus on the learning task (Young, 1999).

With regard to second language learning, many studies have so far shown that language-learning context is anxiety evoking (Beebe 1983; Bailey 1983; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner 1989, 1991, 1994; Casado 2001; Pappamihel 2002). Researchers who had the experience of learning a foreign language reported in their diaries that the learning process was difficult and anxiety provoking (Moore, 1977 in Bailey, 1983; Bailey, 1983). It is assumed that the nature of language-learning itself contributes to students' anxiety. Beebe (1983), in explaining the nature of second language-learning points out that it is impossible not to take risks in the second language classroom. The risks, according to Beebe (1983) include:

“ a bad grade in the course, a fail on the exam, a reproach from the teacher, a smirk from a classmate, punishment and embarrassment imposed by oneself” (pp.42)

Therefore, in order to take risks, second language learners need to learn in a supportive learning atmosphere in which they do not feel intimidated.

Creating an affective classroom environment is timely as a growing body of literature shows that language anxiety hampers language performance by dividing attention in performing the learning task (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Young, 1991; Aida, 1994; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991,1994b; Vogely, 1998; Casado, 2000; Pappamihel, 2002). When attention is divided, it becomes difficult to focus

on the tasks. Therefore, an anxious student risks performing poorly as anxiety affects cognitive processing (Eysenck, 1979; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994b).

Many studies on second language learning have focused on identifying the sources of language anxiety and suggested practical solutions to counter this problem. One of the many proposed ways to help anxious learners is the use of journal writing and quickwriting in the second language classroom (Bailey, 1983; Blanton, 1987; Foss and Reitzel, 1988; Oxford, 1990; Williams, 1991; Samimy and Rardin, 1994; Leki, 1999; Marra and Marra, 2002; Nascente, 2001).

To date, there are few studies exploring the effectiveness of writing strategies in reducing anxiety in the classroom. Although the use writing tasks in understanding language-learning process and lowering anxiety have been recommended by many researchers (Schumann, 1977 in Bailey, 1983; Bailey, 1983; Cohen and Norst, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Song, 1997; Leki, 1999), very few studies have attempted in doing so.

Many studies that investigated the use of dialogue journals and quickwriting in the second language classroom were mainly focusing on writing skills (Blanton, 1987; Peyton, 1990; Nair, 1991; Spack and Sadow, 1983; Staton, 1980; Whitworth, 2001). Apart from enhancing writing abilities, effective writing could also lead to decrease in frustration with writing task and less anxiety. In fact, writing activities, as noted that by psychiatrists, could act as strategies for alleviating anxiety (Pennebaker and Beall, 1988; Smyth, Hurewitz, Stone and Kaell, 1999).

Creating a supportive classroom environment is in line with the humanistic approach to education. Students should be given a sense of security to make learning enjoyable and meaningful (Moskowitz, 1978). A sense of security, as stated by Maslow (1968) would satisfy students' psychological needs. In order to achieve this, it is important to assess the use of anxiety reducing strategies that can promote emotional security. Rogers (1969) noted that being able to listen with empathy is fundamental to being humane. Thus, it is necessary for language teachers to be emphatic and sensitive to learners' problems.

Students are normally anxious in learning English in the classroom. Due to the lack of confidence in using English and other psychological problems such as fear of negative evaluation, low self-esteem and incomplete understanding of the second language, students feel anxious in the English language class (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; Saito, 1998).

To avoid frustration and embarrassment, students become less willing to engage in activities that require them to demonstrate their language ability (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). This is parallel with several findings of studies, which look into the factors that contribute to students' language anxiety (Price, 1991; Young, 1990). In describing the sources of their fears, students reported that harsh manners in correcting errors and unrealistic expectations were the most anxiety inducing factors.

Language anxiety, according to Horwitz et al. (1986) is a problem in second language classes because it has negative consequences to students' learning experience and language performance. In addition, language anxiety also poses a

problem for teachers who identify apprehension in students' behaviour but have no practical means of intervention.

The use of anxiety reducing strategies in the second language classroom is hoped to address students' problems. Students' fear in learning the language could be identified by the teacher. Students who have high anxiety level could be helped so that they would continue to engage in the language-learning process.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, competency in English is deemed important. Students who enroll for the matriculation programme are required to take English language course to fulfill matriculation requirement. Students studying in a matriculation college are required to be competent in the English language. The rate of progress that is expected from these students has the potential to be anxiety provoking for them. The desire to perform well could lead to fear and even panic in the English language class. Besides, worrying about potential failure could also lead to anxiety.

Apart from the high expectations from external elements mentioned, the students find that they have to perform well in English to meet the matriculation programmes' requirement. Students are mostly concerned with their performance in the English language tests.

Since learning English is seen as anxiety evoking by the students, the need arises to find a technique to reduce anxiety and foster meaningful learning environment in the

English language classroom. Dialogue journal writing and quickwriting are selected for this purpose as both strategies have been widely recognised in many disciplines for their use in alleviating anxiety. In the foreign language-learning context, Song's (1997) study showed that dialogue journal writing may be an effective tool in lowering writing apprehension of college students in Korea. Although the results were not statistically significant, the gains were reported to favour the dialogue journal writing group.

In the clinical psychology field, writing has long been identified as useful in helping patients to recover from traumatic life events. Several studies that were carried out to investigate the therapeutic value of writing had focused on alleviating stress among undergraduates and trauma in spouses of suicide victims and rheumatoid arthritis patients (Pennebaker and Beall, 1986; Pennebaker and O' Heeron, 1989; Smyth, 1999). Researchers noted that psychological changes in the patients led to improvement in biological functions as the coping process took place.

In the Mathematics area, Jurdak and Rihab (1998) suggested that journal writing was an excellent way to bring students' attitudes and feelings out in the open. It could also function as a tool for self-reflection where one could see his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

In this study, dialogue journal writing was utilized by the experimental group to see whether the students' emotional expression concerning their problems in learning the second language could lower their language classroom anxiety level. As was suggested by previous studies using dialogue journal, the teacher responded to the