CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter offers background information on the methods used to obtain the essential data for this study, namely the use of role play in eliciting the spontaneous use of the English language as used by Malaysian bilinguals.

This research hopes to study the communicative strategies used by bilinguals. It is thus, essential to obtain the data for this study through spontaneous discourses designed to elicit the important data needed.

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 Instruments

Bilingual conversations amongst PTPL students were analysed and explained in relation to communicative strategies. Three stages of data collection were proposed for this study. They were role plays, interviews and observations.

The first choice involved the selection of two role-playing situations and the selection of a main or dominant language for the entire conversation. The main language served to frame the code switching choices made although "authentic and spontaneous language switch and negotiation between participants take place [during code switching] at this level" (Auer, 1995).

For this study, two role-plays were adapted from Crookal and Oxford (1990). The first, called the "Island Game" (Appendix 7), was designed to help develop a range of skills in the target language. The simulated situation was one in which the group, playing the roles of UN delegates, are stranded on an island. A volcano would erupt in 30-60 minutes, so an escape plan had to be implemented quickly. There were lifeboats to carry all to safety to neighbouring islands, but an overall group consensus had to be reached on who would go there, with who, et cetera. The second game was called "Who Gets the Heart" in which the subjects had to play the roles of heart surgeons, deciding on one patient that should have a heart transplant (Appendix 8).

In both the situations, the subjects were expected to give their opinions, argue, convince and in the end, come to a decision required by the task. The "Island Game" required the students to come to a consensus as to who should be allowed to stay alive and who should be left behind. In a somewhat similar way, "Who Gets the Heart" needed the "surgeons" to make a crucial decision that would save someone's life. These situations were chosen because they provided a comfortable atmosphere, one that valued efforts to use language and that focused on meaning before form, best facilitated language and literacy development. (Crookal & Oxford, 1990)

There were 26 subjects selected for this study. They were divided into 6 groups. The organisation of the games were as follows:

1. Organisation

26 subjects were selected. They were divided into 6 groups.

2. Preparation and warm-up

The subjects were given 5 minutes to study the situation and make notes relevant to their discussion.

3. Procedure

The group made decisions to reach a consensus. The facilitator made sure that everyone had a chance to speak. The time span for each discourse to complete was 30 minutes.

4. Follow-up

The subjects ranked the order and discussed the main factors that led to their decisions. It was at this level that the subjects were interviewed on the strategies they had adopted during the discourse. The discourse that took place was tape recorded and transcribed for analyses.

3.1.2 Non-verbal Communication

Since this study is interested in understanding the communicative strategies used by bilinguals in speaking the English language, it was also essential that their gestures and non-verbal communication were observed. Thus, a table adapted from the American Psychological Association and D'Acierno (as reviewed in Chapter 2) that lists the gestures and non-verbal communication was designed to assist in identifying the body language that would benefit this study. The table consists of the major cues for interpreting non-verbal communication and gestures (Appendix 17)

3.2 The subjects

The 26 respondents chosen for the study were from the diploma and the matriculation programs. These two groups of students differ in terms of:

a) socio-economic background – the diploma students came from very strong financial background as opposed to the matriculation students (sponsored by MARA)

b) experience – some of the diploma students had working experience whereas the matriculation students were directly enrolled into the program after the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM).

c) Language background – matriculation students comprised those who had Malay, Kadazan, Chinese and English as their first languages. The private students were generally proficient in English, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and Kadazan.

These students were of the moderate level and had previously participated in speaking activities conducted in the classroom (please refer Appendix 9 for the students' profile). The selection was based on the students' second semester's performance in which they received lessons on communicative skills and tests (refer to criteria in Appendix 19).

3.3 Data analysis

The data were collected from spontaneous discourses. The speaking activities took 30 minutes per session and were tape recorded and later transcribed for further analysis.

In relation to this study, the recorded discourses were transcribed following the transcription standards adapted from the model used by Jamaliah (2000) in her study. It was

noted that the transcriptions consisted of two parts. Firstly was the "header", which contained the background details of the transcribed recording such as date, time and the number of participants.

The ethnicity of the participants was also highlighted in the "header" for example:

       *K(m) – m indicated Malay speaker

       *H(c) – c indicated Chinese speaker

       *R(i) – I indicated Indian speaker   (Jamaliah, 2000)

* - K, H and R are to indicate the students' intials.

Secondly was the "body", which highlighted the speech lines which refer to the transcribed speech of the participants and are essential to the whole meaning of the transcription. There are symbols used when utterances are described :

Speech symbols		
	Prosody CAPITAL used for emphatic on contrastive stress Used to mark lengthening of continuant Used to mark question intonation	: ?
	Audibility Uncertain speech is enclosed in parentheses Unintelligible speech is transcribed as three dots in parentheses	(speech) (…)

Meta symbols	Pauses	
	A short pause	/
	A longer pause with unspecified duration	//
	Overlap	
	When two or more speakers speak at the same time. All the words of each speaker that overlap are put inside indexed and matched square brackets	[n speech] n
	Latching	
	When one speaker starts talking as another one stops (without either pause or overlap)	
	Latched utterance	
	Latching utterance	Speech =
		= speech

(Jamaliah, 2000)

The "information lines", gives us the information about tape changes that take place during the recording, and allow comments to be made, for example, gestures, movements, facial expressions et cetera that cannot be presented directly in the speech. This is essential for this study since the focus does not lie merely on the language the participants use, but also on alternative ways that they use besides the language to achieve their meaning in informal discourses. Information lines begin with the character '@' followed by the comments relating to the participants' behaviour.

3.3.1 Verbal communication as Communicative Strategies

The study of communicative strategies in this research is modeled after Jamaliah's (2000) study. The model is as follows:

Communicative strategies	Forms
Supporting and agreeing	1. use of personal names 2. echoing what is said 3. repeating information 4. use of "you know"
Appealing	5. use of "you know" 6. use of "you see" 7. use of "lah" particle
Emphasizing	8. echoing what is said 9. repeating information 10. use of "lah" particle
Disagreeing and Repair	11. use of personal names 12. repeating information 13. use of "you know" 14. use of "lah" particle
Eliciting and Providing Feedback	15. use of "ya" and "ya/ya" 16. use of elaborated "ya" 17. use of "ya" 18. use of "you know", "okay", "you see", "alright" and "yes" 19. use of "aha" 20. the use of "No" 21. use of "so"
Reformulating	22. use of "so"
Providing endorsement	23. use of personal names
Summarizing information	24. use of "so" 25. reformulation and deletion
Checking for relevance	26. nomination
Marking politeness and rapport	27. use of personal names 28. use of "you know" and "you see"
Indicating dominance	29. number of word tokens 30. verbal space
Indicating Dynamics and Comparative Levels of Interest	31. speakers' contributions as shown in the number of word tokens and utterances per session

The analysis of the data gathered will be based on this model and new findings from this research will be compared against this model and added on to it.

3.4 Pre-Survey

3.4.1 Communicative Strategies

The groups had two discussions prior to the actual recording. The discussions were done in order to identify the problems that might arise during the actual recordings. Two

assistants, who happened to be English tutors, helped to identify the problems and amendments were made to the speaking tasks.

From the pre-survey, it was also found that the students were not comfortable being video taped. They were found to be rather nervous and kept on looking at the video recorder. Thus, their speech was found to be in check all the time and the researcher was unable to get the feedback needed.

Thus, it was decided that only audio recording would be done to collect the data. The decision not to use a video recording method was further supported by Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993) who mentioned that "the use of recording equipment may be intrusive and the speech act being studied may not occur naturally very often" (p. 24)

3.4.2 Non-Verbal Communication

A list of criteria was designed (refer Appendix 17) based on the ones suggested by D'Acierno (2000) which focuses on:

a) eye contact – looking downward, looking upward, leering, gazing, staring, avoiding eye contact (to show dissatisfaction)

b) expressing of emotions – satisfaction, dissatisfaction, attempting ironic smile

c) facial expressions – smiling, frowning, supporting

d) body – leaning forward (to show support), moving away (to indicate dissatisfaction), slouching

3.4.3 Manpower

Two assistants helped the researcher to record the gestures made and indicate the number of times they occurred. Once the recordings were finished, the researcher went through the recordings with the students. The interview with the students was done immediately. This was done in order to capture the students' immediate feedback (on the communicative strategy they adopted, as well as the gestures they made) while the discussion was still fresh in their minds.