

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

English is the second most important language in the hierarchy of the Malaysian languages, seen in terms of the official recognition given to the language, it is important as a language of education instruction and is an important language in the professions (Asmah, 2003). In fact, the inclination to use English among Malaysians is proven in a few studies conducted by local researchers (Asmah, 2003, David, 2003, Pillai, 2006).

According to Asmah (2003;100) there are also Malaysians who speak English as their first language. Most of them are Eurasians, but there are also Chinese and Indian families in the urban areas, particularly in Kuala Lumpur, who have adopted English as their first language (see David, 1996, Platt, 1982, Pillai, 2006, David, 2006). The preference for English among Malaysians is also observed in the Punjabi Sikh community of Petaling Jaya in Malaysia which has shifted to English and/or use a mixed code that consists of three languages. English has become the dominant language in this mixed discourse of code-mixing, code-switching and code shifting (David, 2003). Discussing the Malaysian Tamil Community, David (2003) states that

half of the middle age respondents; 34 to 60 age group had English as their dominant language. The majority of the respondents from all ages and both genders admitted that they were in favor of using English or a mixture of three languages namely, English, Tamil and Malay when outside the homes.

English being regarded as a lingua franca undoubtedly plays a significant role in multiracial, multicultural and multilingual Malaysia. Not only is it perceived as a means of obtaining knowledge, it also has significant roles for economic and social advancement.

It is through education that the younger generation of Malaysia will be able to attain the satisfactory proficiency in English. The English Language subject, which is taught as a core subject, must be learned by all pupils in government and government-aided schools and private schools (The Education Act 1996). An ordinary Malaysian student has an opportunity of studying the language for almost 11 years (from Primary 1 to Form 5) and 270 minutes are allocated for English in National schools. The eleven years of exposure to the language should make Malaysians proficient speakers of English but this has not happened for a number of reasons (Kirkpatrick, 2002 cited in Faridah, 2004). The number of years learning English in school appears not be sufficient (David, 2004) and many undergraduates in Malaysia are unemployed due to their low proficiency in the language. The majority of them are Malays (New Straits Times, 2002: 4, cited in Faridah, 2004).

The success in the second language partially depends on the exposure of or the sum total of contact to the language itself. Learners are exposed to English in varying degrees depending on the environment they are in. A learner who grows in a big city is inevitably exposed to English a lot more than a learner who grows up in a place where the population consist of one ethnic group and such a learner will have very little exposure, if any, to English (David, 2007). The exposure to the target language is regarded as an aid in language learning. Chandrasegaran (1981:9 cited in Faridah, 2004) explains that learners will be more competent when they listen or read more in the language they are learning. Knowing that English is substantially important, many teachers in rural schools would like to improve the English of their students and develop a positive attitude towards the language. However, the lack of exposure to English for such students demotivates them (Ee, 2001). It also leads to a feeling of inferiority and lack of self-worth (Ratnawati, 2004).

1.1 Attitudes and Factors Contributing to Attitudes in Learning English as a Second Language

Apart from the exposure or the sum total of contact to English, the attitude of the learners has a significant role in determining their success in learning English. Attitude has been one of the psychological constructs of Icek Ajzen (1980), Martin Fishbein (1980), Robert C. Gardner and Wallace E. Lambert (1972), Corinne Mantle-Bromley (1995) and Baker (1992). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Gardner and Lambert (1972) use attitude as a predictor of behavioural outcomes. It is believed that

one's attitude influences one's behavior. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), attitudes are a function of beliefs; attitudes are determined by beliefs. An individual is likely to have a positive attitude towards a behaviour if he thinks it leads to positive outcomes. Karahan (2007;84) avers that "positive attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards learning English". In contrast, negative outcomes arise from negative attitudes shown by the individual. James in Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) states that human beings by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives. In the English as a second language and English as a foreign language context, students' English achievement is predicted by looking at the attitude that students have in learning the language. In 1985, Gardner hypothesized that L2 learners with positive attitude toward the target culture and people will learn the target language more effectively than those who do not.

Many researchers have revealed that, besides attitude, motivation plays a considerably significant role as far as learning a foreign language is concerned. The reason for learning the language can be identified as motivation to learn the language. Dörnyei (1998:117) notes that motivation is not only "one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second language or foreign language learning", he also suggests that motivation is also a pre-requisite for the "sustained process of mastering an L2" (Dörnyei, 2005:616). In the context of learning English as a second language in Malaysia, significant amount of motivation is required as to ensure the effective learning of the language.

There are many factors that may affect the attitudes of the learners in learning English. In second language learning context, factors like age, gender, language background, type of school attended and peer influences are some of the variables that influence language acquisition and attitudes (Merisou-Strom, 2007). The other potential factors are identified as social, behavioural, cultural and educational factors. (see Chapter 2.5, 4.3). Two of the main influences on attitudes include *history* and *motivators*. *History* refers to the socio milieu in which the person lives and the personal family background. *Motivators* indicates teacher variables that affect students' *attitudes towards the learning situation* (Gardner, 2001;5).

1.2 Background of the study

1.2.1 The Status of English in the Malaysian Education System

In Malaysia, English in line with its status as a second language is taught as a second language in all primary and secondary schools. Learners are taught the English language to enable them to use the language in everyday life, to further their studies and for work purposes. With globalization, all Malaysians will need to be proficient in English as a medium of communicating with people from other countries. Acquisition of the language is to prepare them for the future, when they contribute to nation building as a bureaucrat or a technocrat or in other types of professions (Asmah,

2003;73). In order to achieve that, schools are targeted as the most important vehicle to instill the love of the language as well as to build the foundation to master the language.

1.2.2 The Curriculum

The English language curriculum enables learners to form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence, take part in social interaction and obtain goods and services. Learners are to obtain, process and use information from various audio-visual and print sources and present the information in spoken and written form. The English language curriculum also enables students to show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002).

The English language curriculum is organized in a manner that reflects the way English is used in society in everyday life. The integration of four major language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing are incorporated in learning the language. Meanwhile, the learning outcomes prepare learners to meet the challenges of the real world by focusing on language use in society. Learners are encouraged to meet with people outside the classroom so that they learn to use the language in real-life situations.

English has become a compulsory learning subject throughout the Malaysian students' life starting at the primary school level to that of university. Asmah (2003:89) explains that in the school, English is a compulsory language to be acquired but it is not used as a medium of instruction except in private schools and colleges which prepare students for private universities both in Malaysia and abroad. Malaysian children have been learning English in the classroom for thirteen years but based on the researcher's own experience in teaching English for nine years in school, some of the Form Five and Form Six students have no mastery of basic structures and hardly use appropriate and varied vocabulary.

Therefore, recently many English enhancement projects have been introduced by the Ministry of Education so as to help to improve the standard of English among Malaysian students. These programmes include Early Literacy through English (ELiTE). ELiTE is an intensive programme planned for Year One students to acquire the basic skills of the English Language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. At the same time, it prepares them for the basic foundation for learning Science and Mathematics in English. The programme has been introduced as there are primary school students who do not comprehend lessons taught in English (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2007).

Meanwhile, Refined Examination Assessment Coordinated Training (REACT) aims at improving the percentage of those who pass the English Language subject in the public examinations namely Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), Penilaian

Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Modules were distributed to schools in Perak so as to aid the low achievers of the English Language in their learning (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perak, 2007).

1.2.3 Background of the Research Site - SMK Sri Tapah

The research was conducted in SMK Sri Tapah, Tapah, Perak. The school which was previously known as LSS Tapah or Tapah Lower secondary school (Form 1 to Form 3) was established on 11th June 1965. The medium of instruction was then English before it shifted to Bahasa Melayu in 1979 when the school changed to its new name SMK Sri Tapah (the enrolment then was from Form 1 to Form 5). The school is a grade A school which is located in a small town in the vicinity of Tapah, in the district of Batang Padang in the southern part of Perak. It is a co-educational, a single session (morning) and a semi-residential school. Hostels are provided for the Orang Asli boys and girls who live in the interior where there is no proper transport or roads. There is also a remove class for students from Chinese and Tamil medium primary schools. But normally the number of enrolment for this class is rather small since students from Chinese and Tamil medium primary schools are free to continue their secondary education either in SMK Sri Tapah, Tapah (National School) or SMJK Choong Hwa, Bidor (National Type School).

The school is categorized as a grade A school as the number of students enrolled was 935 (31st January 2007). 452 students or 48.3% of the enrolment were boys, while another 51.7% were girls. The Semai students made up 61% of the total population in the school with 570 students (61%). The remaining students in 2007 were Malays 23.8% (223 students), Chinese 9.7% (91 students) and Indians 5.5% (51 students).

The feeder schools for SMK Sri Tapah are Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) and Sekolah Orang Asli Penuh (SOAP) for instance SK Batu 14, SK Batu 7, SK Pos Musuh and SK Pos Gedong, Tapah. In Perak, there are 27 primary schools categorized as SOAP schools, with 8 schools in the Batang Padang district itself. A school is categorized as SOAP when it is located in an area where the major population is Orang Asli and when almost 100% of the students enrolled in the school are the indigenous minority people of Peninsular Malaysia. Bahasa Melayu is used as the medium of instruction. There is no difference in their curriculum and that of the National Schools in the country.

There are 40 teachers in the school. However, only five teachers teach English. All these teachers are graduates.

Students in the school learn English for five periods every week and 40 minutes is allocated for each period. In a week, 200 minutes or 3 hours and 20 minutes is allotted for the teaching of English. However, subtracting, conservatively, 10

minutes a day for administrative and management duties, this means only 150 minutes are available for the teaching and learning of the English language.

1.2.4 The Background of the Orang Asli

The Orang Asli are the indigenous minority peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. The name Orang Asli is a Malay term which means the 'original peoples' or 'first peoples.' It is a collective term introduced by anthropologists and administrators for the 18 sub-ethnic groups generally classified for official purposes under 3 main groups which are Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay. These sub-groups are different in language, social organization, economy, religion and physical characteristics. They numbered 147 412 in 2003 representing a mere 0.5 per cent of the national population (Center for Orang Asli Concern, 2004). Due to their small number, the Orang Asli is regarded as a minority group in Malaysia.

Ogbu (1978) cited in Cummins (1984) distinguishes three types of minority groups which are the autonomous, the caste and the immigrant minorities. The autonomous group is differentiated by its distinct racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural identity and is generally not related economically or politically to the dominant group. The Jews are an example of an autonomous group. Meanwhile, the caste minorities are regarded inherently inferior by the dominant group. Ogbu stresses that:

Caste minorities children naturally acquire the linguistic, cognitive, motivational and other skills or personal attributes adaptive to their adult roles. These skills may promote their failure in the dominant group's type of school success, but in that very way schooling improves their adaptability to the menial social and occupational roles they will play as adults (1978:41).

The pattern too is identified among the caste group in the United States, Australia (The Aborigines), New Zealand (Moaris), Japan (Buraku outcastes), Israel (the Oriental Jews) and the Orang Asli of Malaysia. The third type of minority group is the immigrant minorities who moves into the host society more or less voluntarily and tend to have instrumental attitudes towards the host society and its institution. The Chinese and the Japanese in the United States are examples of immigrant minorities.

The Orang Asli, it must be emphasized are not a homogeneous group. The term Orang Asli is used to describe a heterogenic aboriginal people of uncertain origin who are thought to be the first inhabitants of Malaysia. Each has its own language and culture, and perceives itself as different from the others. Linguistically, some of the northern Orang Asli groups (especially the Senoi and Negrito groups) speak languages, now termed Aslian languages; that suggests a historical link with the indigenous peoples in Burma, Thailand and Indo-China (Jumper, 1999).

The members of the Proto-Malay tribes, whose ancestors were believed to have migrated from the Indonesian islands to the south of the peninsula, speak dialects which belong to the same Austronesian family of languages as Malay, with the exceptions of the Semelai and Temoq dialects (which are Austroasiatic).

The Orang Asli have varied occupations and ways of life. The Orang Laut, Orang Seletar and Mah Meri, for example, live close to the coast and are mainly fishermen. Some Temuan, Jakun and Semai people have taken to permanent agriculture and now manage their own rubber, oil palm or cocoa farms.

About 40 per cent of the Orang Asli population including Semai, Temiar, Che Wong, Jah Hut, Semelai and Semoq Beri live close to, or within forested areas. Here they engage in swidden farming (hill rice cultivation) and do some hunting and gathering of forest products for trade as well as food. These communities also trade in 'petai', 'durian', rattan and resins for cash incomes. A very small number, especially among the Negrito groups (such as Jahai and Lanoh) are still semi-nomadic, preferring to take advantage of the seasonal bounties of the forest (Nicholas, 2007).

However, many have developed a certain amount of interaction with the other ethnic groups, particularly with the Malays who reside along the fringes of the forest. A fair number also live in urban areas and are engaged in both waged and salaried jobs (Nicholas, 1997). Some who live in towns, work with the government or private sector (Abdul Talib Bon, 2003) and have even assimilated with the modern lifestyle and have improved their social status. Some even hold prominent positions and contribute substantially to society (Orang Asli Berjaya, 2004). For instance, Dato' Long Bin Jidin from a Jakun sub-ethnic group was appointed as a Member of Parliament in 1997 for his contributions to the country and the Orang Asli community respectively. Associate Professor Juli Edo who is from the Semai community is the

first Orang Asli anthropologist and academician and now works in the Sociology and Anthropology Department in the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

1.2.5 The Background of Semai

With an estimated population of 26 046 (Department of Orang Asli Affairs, 2005) the Orang Asli, the Semai are mostly found in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly Northwest Pahang and southern Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and the central mountain area (see map: Figure 1.1).

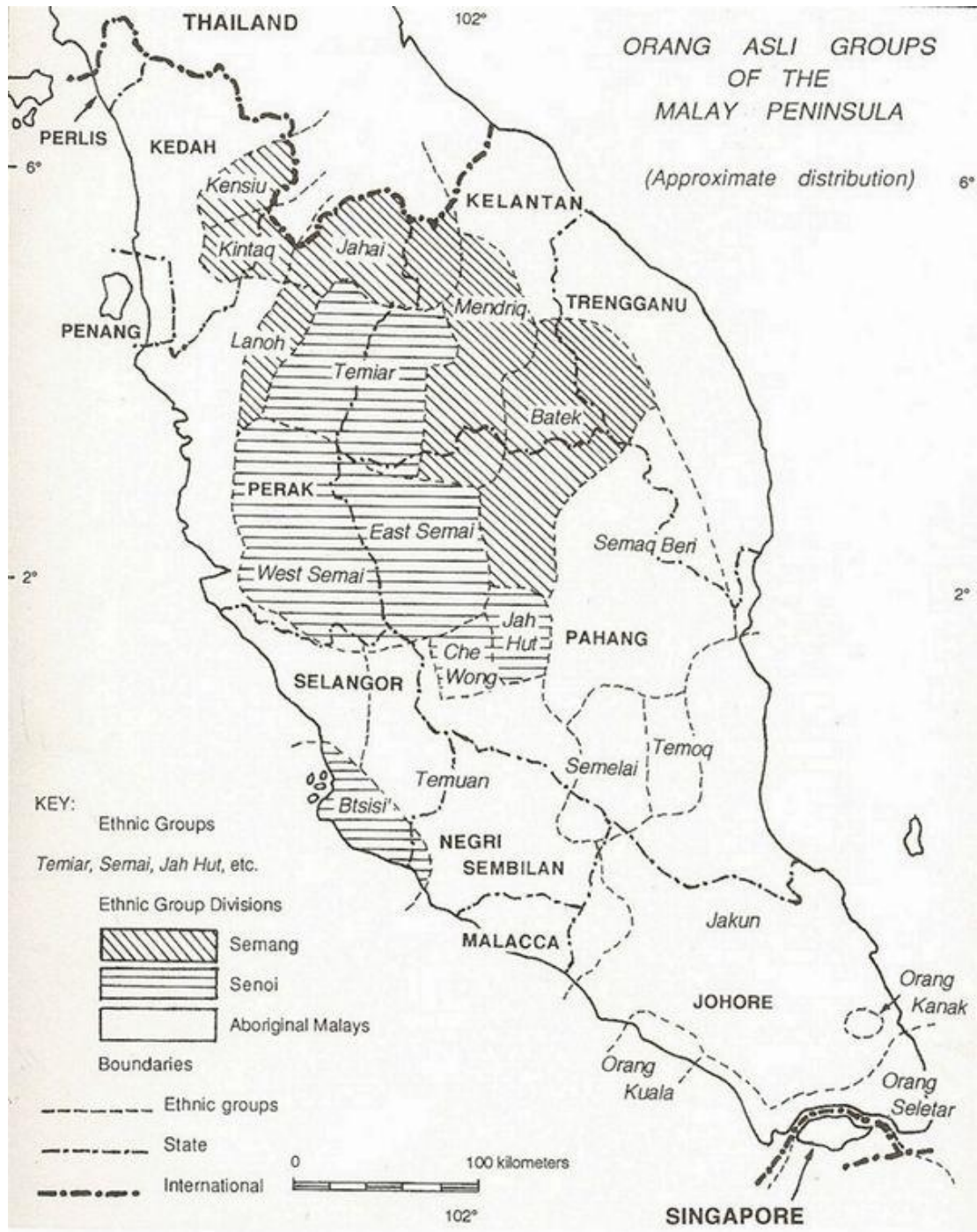


Figure 1.1 The distribution of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia.

(source: <http://www.keenestate.com>)

The indigenous group Semai is classified under Senoi and subscribe to the Central Aslian dialect which is spoken by other sub-ethnics like Temiar, Semoq Beri, Che Wong, Jah Hut and Mah Meri (Benjamin, 1976:37-128 as in Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 2008).

1.2.6 The State of Orang Asli Education

According to Cummins (1984), minority students are unlikely to perform adequately in English if their exposure to English has been minimal. This is because of several significant factors like lack of exposure to the school language, language mismatch between home and school, cultural mismatch between home and school, inferior quality of education provided to minority students, factors related to socioeconomic status and disrupted patterns of inter-generational cultural transmission as a result of majority-minority group status relations (Cummins, 1984).

Pattnaik (2005) appears to concur with this view and discussing the aboriginal groups in India stated they strove to adapt to an unfamiliar and very different culture. There were cases of aboriginal children who dropped out of school because of severe punishment (in response to non-attendance and academic failures), academic pressure,

and the competitive nature of Indian schooling; all practices unfamiliar to the aboriginal children in their respective communities.

In Malaysia, the ethnographic portrayals of the Orang Asli is that of defenceless creatures with limited intelligence and capacity for self-reliance (Nicholas, 2000:78). The Orang Asli community is described as sensitive, close and isolated. When interacting with mainstream society, they lack self-esteem and display an inferiority complex (Hood, 1980, Uda, 1984, Edo, 1984 and New Sunday Times, September 21, 2008). The Orang Asli are inherently weak intellectually (interview with Associate Professor Dr. Juli a/l Edo). This could be due to poverty resulting in an unbalanced and non-nutritious diet. Truancy and dropout among the Orang Asli students is rampant as it is due to an inferiority complex and because they are ridiculed by students of other races about their physical features (New Sunday Times, September 21, 2008). They are called names such as '*sakai*' which is literally translated as uncivilized people (Edo, 1984).

In 1961, a policy to integrate the Orang Asli into the wider society was implemented. Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA) in particular, was "to adopt suitable measures designed for the Orang Asli protection and advancement with a view to their ultimate integration with the Malay section of the community." (Government of Malaysia, 1991;2-3) As the Orang Asli were backward and isolated from the rest of the national society (Uda, 1984, Zawawi, 1996) and for that reason they had to be modernized in order to be regarded as being on par with the other

communities in Malaysia. Therefore, education was introduced as it is one of the most important channels for social integration and social mobility of the Orang Asli with the national system (Hood, 1980).

The Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (revised in 1974) recognizes some rights of the Orang Asli. For example, it stipulates that no Orang Asli child shall be precluded from attending any school only by reason of being an Orang Asli. Equal opportunity for education is provided to every child, including those from remote and rural areas. Parents can also choose to enroll their children into National Schools where Malay is the medium of instruction and National-Type schools of their choice where Chinese and Tamil are the medium of instruction (Education Act, 1996).

With the introduction of JHEOA, the Orang Asli is assured of getting proper education similar to the opportunities given to the other races. Educational assistance in terms of infrastructure, motivation, financial support and trained personnel are provided in order to stem the drop-out phenomena among the Orang Asli (Government of Malaysia, 2003:62).

In terms of infrastructure, the SOAP schools are relatively well-equipped with teaching and learning aids and materials such as books and writing instruments for the teachers and students. Well-trained teachers have been posted to such schools to assist the Orang Asli students in learning hence motivating and inspiring them to engage in the teaching and learning process (interview with Azshar, an officer from the Batang

Padang Education Department). More qualified Orang Asli teachers are also recruited and more qualified Orang Asli individuals are encouraged to join the teaching profession (Government of Malaysia, 2003). In 2005, RM11 206 640 was spent on numerous items such as school uniforms, transport, school fees, activities, food rations, allowances and scholarship (IPT) (8th Malaysia Plan 2001-2005). Every SOAP (Sekolah Orang Asli Penuh) is entitled to the Rancangan Makanan Tambahan (RMT) or free daily food. The Orang Asli students also do not have to pay fees. Meanwhile, hostels and meals are provided for Orang Asli schools in remote areas (Government of Malaysia, 2003:62).

Educational programmes have been intensified for the Orang Asli community. Steps are being taken to increase the awareness of the importance of education for the Orang Asli by fostering closer interaction between the school and the community. More students from the community are encouraged to enroll in institutions of higher learning, particularly in polytechnics and community colleges (Government of Malaysia, 2003: 82). As a part of the social development programme in the 8th Malaysia plan 2001-2005, the Woman Motivator Programme or 'Penggerak Wanita' was introduced to inculcate awareness of the importance of education. 113 Orang Asli women were trained to carry out educational training which benefited 1380 Orang Asli children (Government of Malaysia, 2003:402).

In early 2006, 60 Orang Asli students from Perak were given an opportunity to take part in an educational trip to visit ELTC (English Language Training Centre) and

other interesting places in Kuala Lumpur so as to expose them to the progress in the education sector (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perak, 2007).

However, despite the privileges given and facilities provided to the Orang Asli students, numerous studies done by JHEOA (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli) and independent researchers (see Hood, 1980, Edo, 1984 and Nicholas, 2006) indicate that the dropout rate among the Orang Asli students is significantly high. Nicholas (2000:24) analyzing JHEOA's statistics found that the drop-out rate at the primary level was 54.5% for the period 1976 to 2000 (see Table 1.1). The reasons for the dropout is multi-faceted as factors related to poverty (Edo, 1984, see also Arif bin Embong in Zawawi Ibrahim, 1996), contrast in the pedagogy (Abdul Talib Bon, 2003) and the culture of Orang Asli, gaps in the attendance and also the non-delivery of educational assistance have been cited (Nicholas, 2006 and Long Alang Chukas cited in Zawawi Ibrahim, 1996).

Table 1.1 The Drop-out Rate among the Orang Asli Students in Malaysia.

(Source: Department of Statistics as in Nicholas, 2000)

Year of admission	No. of registered students in Primary 1	Year completing Primary 6	No. of students completing Primary 6	No. of students dropping out	Drop-out rate (%)
1976	2105	1981	630	1475	70.1
1977	2151	1982	741	1410	65.6
1978	2317	1983	705	1612	69.6
1979	3102	1984	757	2345	75.6
1980	2304	1985	654	1650	71.6
1981	2416	1986	783	1633	67.6
1982	2729	1987	944	1785	65.4
1983	2868	1988	1000	1868	65.1
1984	2651	1989	1052	1599	60.3
1985	2879	1990	1124	1755	60.9
1986	2942	1991	1031	1911	64.9
1987	2988	1992	1217	1771	59.2
1988	2881	1993	1255	1626	56.4
1989	2970	1994	1466	1404	48.9
1990	3078	1995	1699	1379	44.8
1991	3248	1996	1679	1569	48.3
1992	3202	1997	1825	1377	43.0
1993	3379	1998	2264	1115	33.0
1994	3128	1999	2574	472	15.1
1995	5505	2000	3144	2361	42.9
Total	58 843		26 504	32 117	54.6

The illiteracy rate among the Orang Asli students is significant. Based on a report; Laporan Analisis Data Belum Menguasai 3M Orang Asli Negeri Perak (Data Analysis of Non-mastery skills of 3M Among Orang Asli in Perak) by the Curriculum Unit, Academic Management Sector, Perak Education Department (2007), 1447 out of 3953 Orang Asli students in Perak (from Standard Two to Standard Six) are illiterate (see Table 1.2). A special programme, 'Program Kelas Intervensi 3M Sekolah Murid Orang Asli' or '3M Intervention Class for Orang Asli Students' School programme (POLIKIA3M) was introduced to overcome the problem of non-mastery of 3M skills (*'membaca, menulis, mengira'* or reading, writing and counting). The programme aims at assisting teachers on ways to use effective pedagogy through interesting teaching approaches in order to eradicate the problem of illiteracy among the Orang Asli students.

Table 1.2 Percentage of Non-mastery of '3M' Skills among the Orang Asli Students in Perak.

Districts	No. of Illiterate Students	Percentage (%)
Hulu Perak	377	46.77
Kuala Kangsar	502	43.05
Batang Padang	420	31.65
Kinta	97	24.31
Perak Tengah	51	20.00
TOTAL	1447	

1.3 Statement of the Problem

English is a foreign language for the Semai students. Therefore, the attitude of the Semai students towards learning English is determined by their perception of the language itself which obviously has an effect on their proficiency and achievement in English. The aim of this research is to identify the factors that affect the students' low proficiency in English. The study attempts to reveal attitudes of the Semai students in one school towards learning the language and factors contributing to the attitudes.

The Semai students in general seldom or rarely use English in their daily life. Due to the lack of proficiency in the English language, they prefer to converse in their mother tongue, Semai and Bahasa Melayu which is their second language when talking to their friends who are of the same or different ethnic background. It is only during the English lesson that the Semai students have the opportunity to use and communicate in English.

Based on the researcher's observation (in her own school), even though the Semai students have learnt English for eleven years since Primary One (at the age of seven) to Form Five (at the age of seventeen) the majority of them prefer Bahasa Melayu and are still very weak in English. They are weak in grammar, vocabulary, writing and also speaking.

Most Semai students in the target school are from the rural area and have inadequate exposure to the target language. They lack the exposure needed to converse in English.

1.4 The Purpose of the Study

In this study, the objective is to determine the attitudes of the Semai students in learning English. The study also aims to point out some of the factors that contribute to the Semai students' attitudes towards learning English.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed in this study

1. What are the attitudes of the Semai students towards learning English? (see Chapter 4.2)
2. What are the factors that determine these attitudes? (see Chapter 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 4.3)
 - a) How social factors affect these attitudes? (see Chapter 4.3.1)
 - b) How behavioural factors affect these attitudes? (see Chapter 4.3.2)
 - c) How cultural factors affect these attitudes? (see Chapter 4.3.3)
 - d) How educational factors affect these attitudes? (see Chapter 4.3.4)

1.6 The Significance of the Study

Generally, the study will provide new insights to the teaching and learning of the English language among the Semai students at lower secondary level and at the same time provide grounds for further research on the same subject in the future. The findings, could if used, help to minimize the problems associated with the teaching and learning of English among Semai. It could explain factors contributing to the attitudes of the Semai students towards English. The benefits of the study can be of considerable use to the educational fraternity and language teachers in primary and secondary schools.

1.7 The Limitations of the Study

The study is restricted and confined to a total of 40 Semai students studying in Form 3 in SMK Sri Tapah, Tapah, Perak. When the interview sessions were recorded, the presence of the researcher made the students feel uncomfortable and self-conscious. Besides that, not all respondents were comfortable disclosing information about themselves during the interview.

The study may not be appropriate as a generalization nationwide since the study focuses on a small group of subjects from only one school in the district of Batang Padang.

There is also an element of non-truthfulness as students tend to provide answers expected which meet the teachers' expectation. In fact, even the teachers who have experience teaching the Semai students have preconceived ideas and prejudices concerning the Semai students and their society.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that the study will throw light on the learning and teaching of English to the Semai students.

1.8 Conclusion

The study is designed to identify the attitudes of the Semai students who are mostly third language learners of English. Understanding and identifying the Semai students' attitudes towards learning English is important because as their attitudes are gauged and identified, an understanding of why their proficiency in English language is low can be understood and solutions sought.