

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion of the findings of the study. Recommendations on how other researchers can build on this study and pedagogical implications of the findings are also provided.

5.1 Summary of Research

The study aims to determine the attitudes of the Semai students in learning English. Factors that determine the attitudes of the Semai students in learning English are revealed. Research questions asked in the study are:

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 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)

Two research tools were used as a means of collecting data from the respondents. There were questionnaires and interview sessions conducted with both student and teacher respondents. A number of 40 Semai student respondents and nine teacher respondents were chosen as subjects in the study.

From the analysis and discussion in Chapter 4, the students agree that English is an important language and have a positive attitude towards learning it but are not yet motivated to learn due to multiple factors. The students showed preference for Bahasa Melayu as a medium of communication even in the English classroom. Factors such as social, behavioural, cultural and educational factors are believed to contribute negatively to the attitudes of the Semai students in learning English. Social factors can be traced down to family socio-economic status, language spoken at home, the place they live and parents' level of education. Crucially important are behavioural factors which include lack of effort, strategies employed in learning English, students' strong preference of Bahasa Melayu over English and the passive and accommodative nature of the Semai students. Cultural factors include the Semai community's attitude

towards education and English and the beliefs of the community. Educational factors include Orang Asli as the dominant ethnic group in a school, a uniform English language syllabus, the use of non-effective methods in the English language classroom and the non-use of English as a medium of instruction during English language lesson.

Based on Ajzen's Model of Planned Behaviour (1980), three components which contribute to the attitude of the Semai students learning English are revealed. In the the 'attitudes towards behaviour' the students' are regarded as having a negative attitude as they perceived learning English as something difficult to understand, a challenging undertaking requiring much effort. Naji (1999) also obtained similar findings pertaining to students' attitude towards the Arabic language which affected their proficiency level. She said that students with positive attitudes tend to do better in Arabic.

The Semai students also lack the practice and exercise needed to improve their skills in the language. This is shown in the number of books they read in a month and their reluctance to speak and practice English even with their English language teacher in the English classroom. Their reluctance to practice English has resulted in poor performance in English.

As for 'perceived behavioural control' it is discovered that numerous problems arise when they learn English and this affects their level of confidence and motivation to learn English. Problems identified are lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence and

difficulty in translating their ideas in English. These problems resulted in the students having low motivation to learn English and who eventually less successful in learning English.

High motivation has been cited as an important factor that causes successful learning (see Cook;1996, Sanchez;1998, Oxford;1999, Skehan;1989 in Gass and Selinker (1995), Mantley Bromley;1995 and Chandrasegaran;1981).

‘Subjective norm’ reveals the social influences and includes the low socio-economics status of the respondents’ family and the low education level of the parents which contribute to the lack of practice and exposure to the language. The place where they live does not provide a conducive environment to practice English and English is regarded irrelevant or non-important in their society. In school, the students are reluctant to speak English as the majority of their friends are also from the Semai community and they are much more comfortable speaking in their native language when communicating. Ee (2001) who examined cultural factors affecting English proficiency in rural areas of Terengganu also discovered similar results.

The students are also lack parental support as some parents are not aware of the importance of education and learning English to their lives (see 4.3.1). Both studies (Baker, 1992 and Rahimabe, 2002) indicated that lack of parental support resulted in lower motivation for students to learn the language and resulted in unsuccessful language acquisition.

The findings of the study suggest that there is a need for teachers to be trained as facilitators (see 4.4.4), who facilitate the learning process and provide a safe environment that encourages learning (Cheng, 2004). Teachers are to provide a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment so as to motivate students active involvement in the classroom (Ratnawati, 2004).

5.2 Recommendations

In addition to the present study, the researcher would like to recommend several suggestions for further research. The study limits its scope to the subjects in only one particular school, hence the result obtained does not represent the enrolment of Semai students in all secondary schools. Therefore, there is a need for further research to include a larger sample of subjects from different schools and other districts in Perak. Studies on the attitude and factors that contributes to the attitude of other Orang Asli students such as Semelai, Temuan and Jakun in learning English also can be conducted to compare the different factors determining the attitude of the students.

The problems of low academic performance among the Semai students should be dealt with from the root. The government and JHEOA should have more intensive and effective programmes of education for the Orang Asli parents so that they are informed of their children's prospects for the future. Ideally, schools should organize

more programmes so as to increase the awareness of the importance of education to the Semai community. Parents of these Semai students should be regularly informed of the importance and advantages of formal education for the students as that could help to minimize the drop-out and absenteeism problems among the Semai students. By getting involved in their children's education, it could also change their views on education and its implications on their life since they regard education as less important in their lives. Only then, the learning of English would be accepted and relevant to the community. Schools too, should conduct more courses for the students so as to elevate the English standard of the Semai students.

An experimental study on the conducive environment for the learning and teaching of English should be conducted among the Semai students. Two groups of Semai students who come from the same background are placed in two different schools; one with a majority of Orang Asli students and one in a national school with a multi-ethnic enrolment in the school. Over a period of time, their performance in English can then be tested based on the two different backgrounds.

An experimental study too should be conducted as to see the significance of music versus traditional approach as an effective and alternative way of teaching English. The study is crucial as the result would provide an alternative teaching method.

Dealing with students from different social, academic and culture backgrounds, the Education Ministry should be more sensitive on the importance and suitability of a common and uniform English language curriculum for all. The English language curriculum should be varied and designed according to the various social and culture backgrounds of students. Schools with major enrolment of Orang Asli students should be empowered to offer English language syllabuses of their own choice as to maximise the ability of their own students.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications of the Findings

The result of this study would be relevant to language teachers who are dealing with Semai students as it provides some social, behavioural, cultural, educational and pedagogical backgrounds which affect the students' academic performance.

Determining the attitudes of the Semai students could greatly help the teacher to find more effective methods for better teaching and therefore help the students attain a higher proficiency in English. Teachers should vary their teaching styles and techniques so as to stimulate students' interest in learning the subject. Teachers should act as a facilitator by raising learners' awareness of the importance of learning English, encouraging and helping learners to overcome obstacles. In addition, it is important for the teachers to have a correct attitude and not to pre-judge the students. Teachers need to develop a good relationship with the students by initiating

communication even when outside classroom. As these Semai students become more comfortable with the teacher, they will be less intimidated. Hence, they would be more receptive and willing to accept education and English more openly.

Furthermore, English teachers could help to create a more conducive environment in learning English. Teachers should provide a rich teaching language environment where the teacher should understand their students' difficulties and try to cater to their needs in learning the language.

The Education Ministry should be aware that the Semai students learn English as their third language (L3) and Bahasa Melayu as the second language (L2). In the Malaysian context, the Education Ministry needs to address the different levels of proficiency in the English language which depend on the places and areas the students reside (big towns or rural areas). The curriculum planners and language policy makers should realize the importance of having different language packages and syllabi in order to cater for the different groups of English learners. There should not be a centralized English Language syllabus for all students who come from various backgrounds. Effective methodology for learning English should be introduced to students who live in different learning environments.

The Semai language introduced as a subject in school would help to motivate the students to learn and help them develop a sense of comfort in school. Students

would feel their language and their race are significant in the education system and that hopefully will lead to confidence among the Semai students.

A trilingual dictionary of Bahasa Semai-Bahasa Melayu-English should be more comprehensive and have more complete entries than the Kamus Trilingual (Limited Edition) that was drafted by the Education Ministry of Malaysia in May 2007. A dictionary which is meant for the use of primary school teachers who are teaching in SOAP schools in Perak and Pahang contains only 2124 entries. If revised and made more comprehensive the target users should not only be teachers but also Semai students. This dictionary should be made easily available for those who are interested in using the dictionary (see Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1 A Diagram on Three Languages Used in a Trilingual Dictionary Suggested for the Use of Semai Students

The usage of bilingual dictionary (Bahasa Melayu- English) should be replaced with trilingual (Semai Language - Bahasa Melayu - English) so that the students will have a better understanding of the words and meanings. The introduction of the dictionary is a good move as students can learn and improve their Bahasa Melayu

while learning English. For instance, a word ‘jerled’ is given a meaning in three languages; Semai Language, Bahasa Melayu and English (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 An Example of the Usage of the Word ‘jerled’ in Three Languages (Extracted from Kamus Trilingual Semai Language-Bahasa Melayu-English, 2007: 33)

Languages	Sentence						
Semai Language	<i>Tulung</i>	<i>Jerled</i>	<i>kerita</i>	<i>adeh</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>Tepi</i>	<i>nong.</i>
Bahasa Melayu	<i>Tolong</i>	<i>undurkan</i>	<i>kereta</i>	<i>ini</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>Tepi</i>	<i>jalan.</i>
English	Please	Reverse	the car	-	to	the side of	the road.

Hopefully the availability of the trilingual dictionary of Semai Language-Bahasa Melayu-English for the Semai students will help them to learn English faster and more effectively.

The idea of establishing SOAP (Sekolah Orang Asli Penuh) or schools with major enrolment of Orang Asli should be rethought. The present SOAP schools have the advantages of providing a “comfort zone” classroom environment. However, not allowing them to interact early with other ethnic groups could contribute to other issues like being less competitive and having less exposure to English language. The interaction with other ethnic groups as early as primary school would hopefully make them more open towards education and receptive towards things which are different from their culture. It would hopefully provide them a more supportive environment to learn English.

Since researches on the Semai students' attitudes towards education in general and learning English in particular are severely lacking or non-existent, this study, modest in its proposal attempts to provide ideas to overcome the Semai students attitudes and motivational problems. Hopefully this heightened awareness could help the education policy makers to promulgate better policies so as to reduce problems like low performance in academia, high absenteeism and drop-outs among the Semai students. This hopefully would motivate the students to take education more seriously and exert the effort needed to be successful in academic and in learning English.