CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND

Malaysia is a multiracial country with three major ethnic groups; Malay, Chinese and Indian, each speaking their own language(s) and dialects. Prior to 1957, there were four types of schools. Three of these schools represented the three main ethnic groups. The fourth type was the English school, which was based on the British education system. The school was established during the British occupation of Malaya with English as the medium of instruction, and therefore all the subjects were taught in English.

The running of the various types of schools with the exception of the English school was based on the basic principle of culture and values of each ethnic group and that the medium of instruction of these schools was the dominant language of each of the ethnic groups.

Type 1: In Sekolah Melayu (Malay School), Bahasa Melayu (BM) was the medium of instruction.

Type 2: In Sekolah China (Chinese School), Mandarin was the medium of instruction.
Type 3: In Sekolah Tamil (Tamil School), Tamil was the medium of instruction.

All the schools, except the English school, did not teach English at the primary level of education.

According to Tian (1992), the Education Ordinance was passed in 1952 when it adopted the major part of the Barnes Report. As a result, English and Bahasa Melayu were made the medium of instruction in national schools.

Chinese and Tamil schools were known as vernacular schools during the pre-independence of Malaya as they used their own language as the medium of instruction that is Mandarin for Chinese schools and Tamil for Indian schools.

Syn (1964) says that the Indians of Malaya were mainly from South India and as such the Tamil language was the main medium of communication. Hence, most of the Indian schools used Tamil as the medium of instruction, although Hindi (the Indian National language), Gojarat, Urdu and others were taught.
Under the 1952 Ordinance, Chinese and Tamil would only be taught in the National schools if at least 15 pupils of any class specifically requested for the vernacular class.

In 1956, Razak Report of the Education Committee was published. The Report officially included Chinese primary education in the National Education system but the status of Chinese Secondary schools was left ambiguous.

The definition of primary Education is expressed as follows:

We have agreed that there shall be a variety of Primary schools, falling into two types:

(a) Standard Primary schools in which the medium of instruction shall be the Malaysian National language;

(b) Standard-Type Primary Schools in which the main medium of instruction may be Kuo (Mandarin) or Tamil or English.

(Yap Sin Tian, 1992: 10)

Type (a) school was known as ‘Sekolah Kebangsaan’ (National School) for example ‘Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Gurney’ (SK Jalan Gurney).
Type (b) school was known as ‘Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan’ for example ‘Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina’ (SJK China) and ‘Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil’ (SJK Tamil).

In 1956, the Razak Report was incorporated in the Education Ordinance of 1957. It became the education policy of the newly independent Federation of Malaya.

The education policy as stated in the 1957 Education Ordinance is as follows:

“The education policy of the Federation is to establish a national system of education acceptable to the peoples as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their culture, social, economic and political development as a whole, with the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of peoples other than Malays living in the country.”

(Yap Sin Tian, 1992: 11)

Sya (1964) in “The Process of Education in Malaya During the Post War Period, 1947 – 1960” says that,
"Another concern dealt with the 1957 Ordinance was the establishment of "Standard Primary" and "Standard-type Primary" schools. In the Standard Primary school, the medium of instruction is the Malay Language with English as the second language whereas the medium of instruction may be Mandarin, English or Tamil in the Standard-type Primary schools. In the Chinese and Tamil medium both Malay and English must be taught with Mandarin and Tamil offered when requested. For National-type Secondary school (now existing four-stream schools) both Malay and English must be added to the curriculum. However, the chief medium of instruction will be in the Chinese or Indian Language."

(Sya, 1964: 195)

With the proclamation of independence on 31 August 1957, Bahasa Melayu (BM) was made the National Language as well as the official language and the medium of instruction in all national types schools and institutions of higher learning.

Now English is taught as the second important language after the National Language. The thinking underlying the National Education Policy is that English is an important language to help keep abreast with the scientific and technological development and in acquiring knowledge about international trade and commerce. It is also important in providing additional means of access to professional and recreational materials.
In Malaysia, English is studied as a second language (L2) by all pupils from the age of seven with exception of pupils in the vernacular schools (Chinese and Indian) who begin learning English at the age of nine. For National-type schools, Mandarin and Tamil are the medium of instruction, where primary school pupils from standard 1 to 2 had to undergo a two-year basic study of the native language before studying English. Such policy is adopted as part of the social obligation which is aimed at preserving and maintaining a good standard of the native language in vernacular schools.

The English language syllabus for primary schools aims to equip pupils with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate orally and in writing in and out of school.

By the end of the primary school education, pupils should be able to achieve the following:

(i) To listen and to understand simple spoken English in certain context;

(ii) To speak and respond clearly and appropriately in familiar situations using simple language;

(iii) To read and understand different purposes and in different kinds of texts for enjoyment and information; and
(iv) To write for different purposes and in different terms using simple language.

Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan, 1996.

The English language syllabus for secondary schools aims to extend the learners' English language proficiency in order to meet their needs to use English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition and for future workplace purposes.

The aims of the English language curriculum for the secondary school are for the students to do the following when they complete their education.

(i) To maintain relationship through conversation and interaction, and interact to obtain goods and services.

(ii) To obtain, process and use information from various audio visual and print sources, and present the information in spoken and written forms.

(iii) To view, read and respond to different texts and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written forms, and

(iv) To show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.

Similarly, English is taught in all secondary schools under the Kelantan Islamic Foundation or Yayasan Islam Kelantan (YIK). These are religious schools where Arabic is the medium of instruction. The ultimate aim of running these schools is to provide as many students with strong religious background.

The students who enter YIK's secondary schools will be enrolled in remove classes in which they have to undergo one year of 'familiarization' study to equip them with enough knowledge of the 'Jawi', an old Malay language whose alphabet is based on Arabic characters. Jawi was widely used in the Government schools and private schools during the pre-independence of Malaya. Prior to that, students have to sit for admission test on Jawi and the reading of Al Quran, failing which they will be denied entry.

Students who have finished their Form V studies and wish to continue their education can enroll in the form six classes of YIK schools. At the end of their lower six studies the students have to sit for the Higher Certificate of Religious studies or Sijil Tinggi Ugama (STU), or continue to upper six where they will sit for the Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) Examination.
The English language is one of the subjects taught in the lower six studies and it is tested in the STU Examination. The holders of the STU certificate will be eligible to further their studies in Islamic universities in Egypt and Jordan, while STPM holders in religious studies will be eligible to enter local universities that offer courses in Islamic based studies. However, English is not taught in this level (Upper six).

Alternatively the students of the YIK secondary schools, who after their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination may not wish to further studies in the Islamic school, may take courses provided by the matriculation programme of the Ministry of Education. They will not be doing form six in Islamic studies under the YIK programmes.

In general, all students in YIK's schools ranging from remove to upper six classes undergo the same syllabus like that of the National schools under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The only exception is that they have to take religious subjects like the study of Al Quran and Sunnah, Islamic Law, Tasawwur, Higher Arabic Language and History. These subjects are taught in Arabic. Therefore, students in the YIK system have to cope with 3 languages namely BM, Arabic and English. Such scenario has somewhat affected the learning of English. Usage of English has been greatly minimised because of the increase
in the usage of Arabic in teaching/learning of Arabic subjects. Therefore, English is then regarded as a third language since Arabic has been introduced as an important second language.

The sample of this study is taken from the Sekolah Menengah Ugama (Arab), Shamsul Maarif (P) which is a Girls’ school, or in Arabic, a ‘Lilbanat’ school in Pulai Chondong, Machang, Kelantan. The school has a population of about 850 students. In the year 1998, there were five form V classes namely; Form V Khadijah, Form V Aishah, Form V Zainab, Form V Fatimah and Form V Asma’. The names of the classes commemorate the names of Prophet Muhammad’s wives and daughters.

1.1 Rationale

There is evidence to show that the students of Arabic schools under the YIK who learn English, generally face acute difficulties in acquiring the language. This is evidenced through the researcher's experience and observation teaching in Sekolah Menengah Ugama, Shamsul Maarif for three years before this study was conducted.
A unique situation faced by the students in these schools is that they are required to learn two second languages simultaneously i.e. Arabic and English.

However, the more dominant of the two languages is Arabic as most of the subjects are taught in Arabic. Therefore, this hampers the students' ability to be competent in English as the English language is the only subject taught in English. It is taught only twice a week which is equivalent to 70 minutes per week.

To add to the problem, the existing study system of these students requires that major subjects like Pengajian Al Quran and Sunnah, Tauhid Pendidikan Islamiah, Tasawwur, Bahasa Arab Tinggi be taught in Arab. In addition the students are required to learn by heart or 'memorise" line by line the verses of the Al Quran and the notes of the Hadith, which are all in Arabic.

The students are further required to provide accurate quotation from the verses of the Al Quran and hadith when answering questions in the examination or test. Misquotation of the verses means zero marks for the students. The constraint face by the Arabic schools students in acquiring English as second language is shown in Figure 1 below:
Figure 1

Constraint Faced In Learning English

Subject taught in Bahasa Melayu

L1 (BM)

Subject taught in Arabic that require memorizing

Student L1 (BM)

1. Sejarah Malaysia/Dunia
2. Sains
3. Perdagangan
4. Mathematics
5. Geography
6. Bahasa Melayu

Subjects taught in either Arabic of English

1. Tasawwur
2. Tauhid
3. Pendidikan Syariah Islamiah
4. Pengajian Al-Quran & Sunnah
5. Bahasa Arab Tinggi
6. Bahasa Arab Komunikasi

Subject taught in English

English Language

Therefore, it can be seen that the students have little time for English. Furthermore, a compulsory pass for the English paper is not needed for students to progress to the next level in the school system. As a result, the 'tak apa' or 'never mind' attitude towards English is prevalent among the students.
With the aim of maintaining the standard of English in all schools, the Education Ministry is constantly undertaking various steps such as revising and improving the existing syllabi. However, the learners' performance in English is still considered far from satisfactory even among learners in national schools. This is acknowledged by the Cabinet Committee:

"the quality of teaching and learning the English language in schools, especially the national type schools is found to be less than satisfactory. Some of the pupils do not know how to read and write in English, even in its simplest form. The percentage of passes in public examination for National type schools is very low."


The low performance in English in national-type schools that is Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan China/Tamil (SJK C/T) is expected because they learn English only at the age of 9 years or in standard III as compared to the pupils of national schools that is Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK), where they learn English at the age of 7 or in standard I. Yet their performance in English is not satisfactory.

Similarly, among the secondary schools students of YIK in particular the students of Sekolah Menengah Ugama (Arab), Shamsul Maarif, Pulai Chondong majority of whom come from rural and
suburban areas, their English proficiency is found to be unsatisfactory even though they have undergone the same education curricula over the same number of years as students from urban areas.

The researcher agrees with Dulay and Burt (1975) who have observed that most of the L2 curricula do not reflect the process of L2 learning, as not much was known about the process until recently. To the researcher's knowledge there is no specific study done on whether the curricula for primary and secondary schools in Malaysia and what more that of the YIK school system really reflects the needs and ability of English learners in the context of the current Education Policy whereby English language is the only subject taught in English.

In the case of the present study on English interrogatives, the researcher is in the view that the curricula designed by the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education of Malaysia does reflect the needs of current English learners as these students need to be able to form questions in order to be able to take part in interaction and to obtain information.

Being able to form questions is one of the learning outcomes as outlined by the Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (PPK). Therefore, it is also one of the language
outcomes of the language content of the Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu that is KBSM 2000 (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2000).

It is important for students to be skillful in formulating questions. Questions that are incorrectly formed may be misinterpreted, thereby eliciting wrong responses. Such skill is particularly important in subjects such as Law, Mathematics and Science as they involve inquiry and discovery skills.

As Morine (1973) says, throughout a child’s life, he has to seek new areas and learn new truth; the answers he will arrive at are the functions of skillfully formulating questions.

It is hoped that this study will establish some of the common errors made in forming questions in English and the reason(s) students face difficulty in forming questions. With this knowledge, proper measures can be adopted to improve their linguistic competence in general and most specifically to enable them to form questions correctly in English.
1.2 Statement Of The Problem

English is taught and learnt as a compulsory second language in Malaysian schools. Thus, students who have completed their primary school education and are now in Form V (as the sample of this study) should have acquired sufficient skills in asking/forming questions in English. However, the researcher who is also, the English teacher in the religious school, Sekolah Menengah (Arab) Shamsul Maarif, observes that most of the fifth formers of the school have difficulty in forming questions even the simplest questions such as wh and yes-no questions. They face even more difficulty in forming complex questions such as embedded and tag questions.

Students who could not ask questions correctly would not be able/motivated to be analytical as they are not able to formulate questions even though back in their mind they have questions to ask. In addition, questions that are incorrectly formed may be misinterpreted by the hearer and as a result an incorrect response is given. This would further hamper their discovery and inquiry skills. In today's world of information age, students need to be able to formulate enough questions especially in English to keep abreast with knowledge.
Generally students who could not formulate questions correctly is because they do not follow the syntactical and lexical transformational rules pertaining to question formation.

The basic rules in forming wh questions are:

(1) **Lexical substitution:** Substitute the constituent being questioned with an appropriate wh word.
(2) **Wh fronting** : Move the wh word to the front of the question.
(3) **Subject auxiliary inversion** : Invert the first auxiliary verb and the subject noun phrase.
(4) **Do support** : Insert DO support where no auxiliary verb or copula BE is present.

The basic rules in forming yes-no questions are:

(1) **Fronting due to subject/verb inversion** : Advance auxiliary verb and tense marker to initial position of question.
(2) **Auxiliary verb/copula: BE/DO fronting** The auxiliary verb (the first in sentence) should appear initially and mark the tense of the question. If there is no auxiliary verb, the copula BE should be fronted and carry tense. If there is no auxiliary or BE verb to carry tense, DO support must be introduced in initial position and combined with tense to serve the function.

(Celce-Marcia and Freeman, 1983).
Therefore, it can be seen that the rules mentioned could be rather complex for students to follow and since they lack the opportunity and the motivation to use English this could lead to their inability to form questions correctly.

Corder, (1981: 35) in “Error Analysis and Interlanguage”, points out that the study of L2 learners’ errors is significant as it provides valuable feedback of knowledge for teachers about the processes of language teaching and learning. Hence, the study of errors will enable the teachers to gauge whether their teaching is effective or otherwise.

This study aims to identify errors in forming wh and yes-no questions since the researcher observed that some of the students have yet to master the syntactical and lexical transformational rules in forming question even though they have been learning English for several years. This problem concerns the researcher because these rules are important aspects in formulating question before looking into the semantic component of questions.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the data with the aim of answering the following questions:

1. What are the syntactical and lexical errors made in forming questions?
2. What are the possible sources of errors in formulating questions?

1.3 Limitations Of Study

This study will be confined to a sample of 80 students from a rural Arabic school, Sekolah Menengah Ugama (Arab), Shamsul Maarif, Pulai Chondong in the district of Machang, Kelantan. Therefore, it does not claim to represent all students in Arabic schools.

In addition, the study does not seek to look into the influence of Arabic language as a secondary interference that might have possible effect on the sample’s ability in forming questions in English.

This study will also be limited to an Error Analysis of the production of wh and yes-no questions. Its limitation is also on whether the students can use the appropriate question words (lexical substitution) and that the question words are used in initial positions of the questions which is also known as ‘fronting’ (syntactic rule).

Lastly, only the rules of syntactic components of interrogatives were studied. The rule of semantic components were beyond the scope of this study.
1.4 Significance Of The Study

In the context of the existing Education system in Malaysia, English is a compulsory subject in both the primary and secondary schools in line with the Education Policy of 1979 which states that the teaching of English is to enable school leavers to use English in everyday and work situations as well as to pursue higher education in the medium of English.

The findings of this study may be relevant to YIK and the Education Ministry. It would indicate to them which areas in English learning particularly with regard to interrogatives that learners face difficulty in so that YIK and the Education Ministry would initiate some special consideration for English language learners in Arabic schools.

The researcher is in the view that it is quite 'impossible' for the YIK's schools students to master English with the limited time and effort in the present constraint they face. The decline of English among Malay students in national secondary schools is an evidence that even with 'ample time' given to them, their result in English in the SPM Examination still shows a decline among the Malay students.
If the Malay students in non-Arabic schools are unable to gain competence in English, what more with YIK's students whose time is spent on 'memorising' most of the Islamic studies subjects in Arabic.

The researcher concludes that with the present constraint, students cannot be expected to perform 'miracles' in acquiring English what more with the students' attitude towards English. It may wise to suggest that a closer relationship be established between the Ministry of Education and YIK. In addition more supervision and guidance from the Ministry could further help YIK in their efforts to improve the English proficiency of Arabic schools students.