

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the explanation of the methods that were used to collect the data as well as the analysis. In the first section of this chapter, the research design is described. This is followed by data collection, background of participants and research procedure.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a systematic plan to gather data in terms of whom, how and when to collect the data as well as how to analyse it. Normally, researches can be divided into two different categories which are qualitative and quantitative research. In a quantitative research, the researcher's aim is to determine the relationship between one independent variable and the dependent variable. On the other hand, qualitative research aims at understanding human behavior and the causes which lead to such behavior. For this study, a qualitative research is used. Qualitative research refers to "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problems, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 2005). In this research, face to face interaction is being used to get natural data from the subjects. After the recordings were done, the subjects listened to the conversation after which they filled up a simple form. After that, the data was transcribed and analysed.

The analysis was done mainly based on Beebe et. al's(1990) classification on refusals framework which revolves around the direct and indirect refusals. Apart from that, other aspects were also taken into account such as interjections, language proficiency as well as turns. Interjections usually have no grammatical connection with the sentence. They are usually used to convey emotions. Expressions such as lah, mah, lor and et cetera are examples of interjections used in the Malaysian context. Apart from that, filled pauses such as erm, hmnn, err and et cetera are also interjections.

For the purpose of this study, language proficiency refers to the ability of an individual to speak in an acquired language in order for the messages to be put across. For non-native speakers, the influence of their first language may affect the messages that they try to put across. Apart from that, in a multi racial country like Malaysia, the influence of other languages around them would also affect the speakers. For the purpose of this research, the subjects' SPM English language results were looked into. The SPM exam is equivalent to the British GCSE. The table in the next page illustrates:

Table 3.1 Core papers for SPM

Malay Language
English Language
*Islamic Studies
**Moral
History
Mathematics
***Science
*Compulsory for all Muslim students
**Compulsory for all non-Muslim students
***Compulsory for students in the Commerce, and Literature and Arts streams only. Students in the Pure Science, Religious Science, and Humanities Science streams are required to take their respective Science electives in lieu of this subject.

For this study, the subjects' English Language result is looked into. The researcher identified and chose the subjects who achieved 1A and 6C in their SPM English. This is because 6C is the minimum grade which the subjects need to achieve in order to get themselves a place in the university which they are studying in.

The grading system is as follows:

Table 3.2 Grading System for SPM

Grade	Grade interpretation
1A	Very Good
2A	Good
3B	Pass-With-Credit
4B	
5C	
6C	
7D	Pass
8E	
9G	Fail

Therefore, with reference to the grading system for SPM, the selected subjects are those who are the best and those who are the weakest in the university, based on their SPM English result. The reason why the subjects are streamlined into these 2 categories is because it is hypothesized that subjects who are weaker in the language are more direct in refusing as compared to subjects who have a stronger command of the language.

3.2 Data Collection

Recordings of oral data were done at the university where the subjects were studying at. The recordings were done after consent from the subjects involved was obtained. Consent is essential if recorded conversation is used for analysis in any sorts of studies (Tannen, 1984). Prior to the recordings, the subjects were informed about the recording of their conversations. However, they were not informed where or when the recording was going to take place. This was done for the purpose of extracting naturally spoken data. The recordings were done in classrooms around the university compound between the months of November and April. Noises were kept at minimal level. Although the subjects did not know when or where the recordings were taking place, they were aware that their conversations would be recorded.. The data was then transcribed using Jefferson's (1978) transcription.

3.3 Background of the Participants

Eighty university students, both male and female were selected for the purpose of this research. They range from age 18 to 19. The students are from different parts of Malaysia. They have completed their SPM and are all doing their foundation

programme in the university. The subjects are familiar with the researcher as they are all from the university where the researcher works. The table in the next page shows their personal details:

Table 3.3 Background of participants

No	Gender	Age	SPM English
1	M	18	6C
2	F	18	6C
3	F	18	6C
4	F	18	6C
5	F	18	6C
6	M	18	6C
7	M	18	1A
8	F	18	6C
9	F	18	6C
10	M	19	6C
11	M	18	6C
12	F	18	6C
13	M	18	6C
14	M	18	1A
15	M	18	6C
16	M	18	1A
17	M	18	1A
18	M	19	6C
19	M	18	1A
20	M	18	6C
21	F	18	6C
22	M	18	6C

23	M	18	1A
24	F	18	6C
25	F	18	6C
26	F	18	6C
27	F	18	1A
28	M	18	6C
29	F	18	6C
30	F	18	6C
31	M	18	6C
32	M	18	1A
33	F	18	1A
34	F	18	6C
35	M	18	1A
36	M	18	1A
37	M	18	1A
38	M	18	1A
39	F	18	6C
40	M	18	1A
41	F	18	1A
42	M	18	6C
43	M	18	6C
44	M	18	6C
45	F	18	6C
46	M	18	1A
47	M	18	6C
48	M	18	6C
49	M	18	1A
50	M	18	6C
51	M	18	1A
52	M	19	1A

53	F	18	1A
54	M	18	1A
55	M	18	1A
56	F	18	1A
57	M	18	6C
58	M	19	1A
59	F	18	1A
60	M	18	6C
61	M	19	1A
62	F	18	6C
63	F	19	6C
64	M	18	1A
65	M	18	1A
66	F	18	1A
67	F	18	1A
68	M	18	6C
69	F	19	1A
70	M	18	1A
71	M	18	1A
72	M	19	6C
73	F	18	1A
74	M	19	1A
75	F	18	1A
76	F	18	1A
77	F	18	6C
78	M	18	6C
79	F	19	1A
80	M	18	1A

3.4 Research Procedure

A task was set where the question “Can you be the emcee for the charade finals?” was posed to the subjects and their responses to this question were recorded. The reason why this question was formulated was because it was deduced that the subjects would refuse to the request made by the researcher as it was a challenging task and also because the competition was supposed to be held on a Saturday. After the recordings were transcribed, it was analyzed using Beebe et. al’s (1990) classification of refusals. Based on this, several aspects were looked into inclusive of terms of address used, interjections as well as tone. Apart from that, based on the hypothesis that teenagers who are weaker in English would tend to be more direct as compared to the teenagers who have better command of English, the teenagers’ SPM English result was therefore used as an indicator of the teenagers’ command of English.

3.5 Analysis of Data

Refusal strategies were analyzed based on the classifications developed by Beebe et. al. (1990). It can be seen that the subjects used various refusal strategies when they attempted to make a refusal. All these strategies are shown with examples extracted from the data. The direct or indirect strategy that are being analyzed would be based upon the reaction they give to the question posted by the researcher which is “Can you be the emcee for charade competition?” and the number of turns counted would be from the beginning after the question is posted until the turn when they reject the request of the researcher. The table below shows the data identified under the adapted version of Beebe et al’s classification of refusals:

Table 3.4 Classification of Refusals Found in the data

A. Direct strategies: 1) "No" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat No • Fillers followed by "No" • Question followed by "No" • Emphatic No 2. Negative willingness/ability (e.g., "I can't"; "I won't"; "I don't think so"). 3. "I don't want"	
B. Indirect strategies	
Strategy	Example
Avoidance: Repetition of part of request.	"What did you say? You wanted me to get you a cup of...what?"
Acceptance that functions as refusal: Unspecific or indefinite reply or lack of enthusiasm.	"I'll do that when I have time"
Statement of alternative: Suggesting other alternatives or possibilities in order to maintain a positive relationship with the interlocutor	"I can do X instead of Y"; "
Excuse, reason and explanation	"I'm sorry. I have to in school at the exact same time tomorrow."
Non verbal Laugh Hesitation	"Erm... well, I think I..."

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described the steps and procedures in conducting the research. Background of the subjects is also elaborated in this chapter and this plays an important role as it reflects the study.