

ABSTRACT

Every year, thousands of students from various countries begin their tertiary education in different universities and higher education institutes in Malaysia. Many of these international students are required or recommended to attend one or two courses of Malaysia's first official language, Bahasa Malaysia (BM). Completing a BM course is compulsory to all the international students in the University of Malaya. A large number of international students from various language and cultural backgrounds attend the BM courses every semester. Therefore, it is necessary that the content of the course and the teaching and learning activities match the students' language needs and learning style preferences, to ensure a pleasant and effective learning environment. With an aim to identify the learners' language needs and learning style preferences, three research questions were posed: 1) what language skills of BM do international students need more frequently? 2) What specific notions and functions of BM do international students need more frequently? 3) What are the learning style preferences of international students? A mixed methods Sequential Explanatory Design was used to collect the data. The data collection was carried out through a questionnaire adapted from Brindley (1984), for the quantitative phase, and through semi-structured interviews for the qualitative phase. The participants of the quantitative phase were 52 international students pursuing their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the University of Malaya. In the second phase (the qualitative phase), four students, who had participated in the quantitative phase, were selected to partake in exploratory interviews. The findings revealed that the most needed language skills by the international students are speaking, reading, listening and writing skills respectively. Furthermore, the most frequently needed language functions are greeting, giving and asking for information,

requesting, giving and asking for directions, ordering food and drinks in restaurants, expressing preference, expressing different feelings, giving opinions, and agreeing or disagreeing. The results regarding the students' learning style preferences showed that international students prefer to work in small groups, or pairs; like doing homework; prefer visual and auditory learning resources; appreciate their peers' correcting their written work and the teacher' immediate feedback on their speaking errors; prefer to learn new vocabulary items in authentic contexts; and feel most satisfied when they find that they can perform well in their interactions with Malaysians outside classroom and in real life situations. Finally, some recommendations were made to the course designers of the BM course regarding the content, the types of teaching methods, and the learning activities used in the programme plan. In the end, some suggestions were made for further research concerning the topic of the present study.

ABSTRAK

Setiap tahun, beribu mahasiswa dari pelbagai negara melanjutkan pendidikan tinggi mereka di berjenis jenis universiti serta institusi-institusi pendidikan tinggi di Malaysia. Kebanyakan pelajar antarabangsa diwajibkan atau dicadangkan untuk mengambil satu atau dua kursus bahasa rasmi Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia (BM). Melengkapkan kursus BM adalah wajib untuk semua pelajar antarabangsa di University of Malaya. Sejumlah besar pelajar antarabangsa dari pelbagai bahasa dan latar belakang budaya menghadiri kursus BM setiap semester. Oleh yang demikian, kandungan kursus ,aktiviti pengajaran serta kegiatan belajar adalah perlu sesuai dengan keperluan bahasa serta gaya belajar pelajar, untuk memastikan lingkungan pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dan produktif. Dengan tujuan untuk mengenalpasti keperluan bahasa serta preferasi gaya pembelajaran, tiga soalan kajian diajukan: 1) Apakah kemahiran bahasa BM yang diperlukan oleh pelajar antarabangsa lebih kerap? 2) Apakah pengertian khusus dan fungsi BM yang diperlukan oleh para pelajar antarabangsa lebih kerap? 3) Apakah preferasi gaya belajar pelajar antarabangsa? Satu kaedah “Sequential Explanatory Design” digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui “questionnaire” yang diadaptasi dari Brindley (1984), untuk tahap kuantitatif serta melalui wawancara semi-berstruktur untuk fasa kualitatif. Sebanyak 52 pelajar antarabangsa mengambil Ijazah Sarjana Muda dan Sarjana. di Universiti Malaya. Di tahap kedua (fasa kualitatif), empat pelajar, yang telah menyertai pada tahap kuantitatif, diiliah untuk meyertai sesi wawancara eksplorasi. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kemahiran bahasa yang paling diperlukan oleh para pelajar antarabangsa adalah berbicara, membaca, mendengar dan menulis. Selain itu, fungsi bahasa yang paling sering diperlukan adalah bersalam,

memberi dan meminta maklumat, meminta, memberi dan menanyakan arah, memesan makanan dan minuman di restoran, meluahkan preferasi, mengungkapkan perasaan yang berbeza, memberikan pendapat, serta bersetuju atau tidak bersetuju. Keputusan mengenai gaya belajar pelajar menunjukkan bahawa pelajar antarabangsa lebih memilih untuk berkerja dalam kumpulan kecil, atau berpasangan; seperti menyiapkan kerja rumah; lebih suka visual dan auditori sebagai sumber belajar; lebih menghargai rakan-rakan mereka membetulkan hasil kerja mereka dan maklum balas dari guru keatas kesalahan berbicara, lebih suka belajar kosa kata baru dalam konteks sebenar, dan berasa puas apabila mereka boleh berinteraksi dengan baik dengan orang luar dan dalam situasi hidup sebenar. Akhirnya, beberapa cadangan yang dibuat untuk pereka kursus kursus BM mengenai isi, kaedah pengajaran, serta aktiviti kegiatan pembelajaran yang digunakan dalam rencana program. Pada keseluruhannya, beberapa cadangan telah dibuat untuk kajian lebih lanjut mengenai topik kajian ini.

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