CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present and discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaire and interviews. It is hoped that the data collected through the quantitative and qualitative methods help provide useful information about BM needs of the international students of the University of Malaya, for the BM course designers and teachers in UM and other universities. The findings related to the first and second research questions, which are concerned with the most frequently used language skills and language functions, will only be comparable to the findings from the preliminary study discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.9.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS, page 53). The results related to the third research question, which involve the international students' learning style preferences, will be compared to the findings reported in Riazi and Riasati (2007) who have used the same questionnaire adapted from Brindley (1984) to identify learning style preferences of 219 Iranian EFL learners.

The data will be analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and the results will be presented in tables. The findings will be discussed aiming to suggest answers to the three research questions posed in Chapter 1.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Most of the findings about the international students' personal particulars and backgrounds have been presented in Chapter 3 (see 3.7 THE PARTICIPANTS, page

71). However, the results about the participants' language background were not presented in that section. The reason for presenting and discussing the students' language background in this chapter is the important effects of a learner's language background on their needs and preferences regarding learning a new language.

4.2.1 Mother Tongue

Among the 52 participants, the biggest group with 16 students was Farsi (Persian) speakers, nine were Arabic speakers, six spoke Korean, three were English speakers, two spoke Sindhi and two Chinese. Other languages such as Turkish, Ebira, Masathi, Tamil, and Urdu, each had one speaker in this group. Five respondents from Africa and South East Asian countries spoke other different languages as their mother tongue.

Table 4.1 Respondents' Mother Tongue

Mother Tongue	N	%
Persian	16	30.8
Arabic	9	17.3
Korean	6	11.5
Bangla	4	7.7
English	3	5.8
Sindhi	2	3.8
Chinese	2	3.8
Turkish	1	1.9
Ebira	1	1.9
Masathi (Indian)	1	1.9
Tamil	1	1.9
Urdu	1	1.9
Other	5	9.6
Total	52	100.0

The majority of the international students in UM speak Persian or Arabic as their mother tongue. The data obtained from the Institute of Postgraduate Studies in UM also confirms that more than 30% of UM's international students are from Iran, followed by students from the Middle East (see Figure 1.1).

4.2.2 Other Languages

A significant majority of the participants (80%) indicated English as their second spoken language. This shows that after their mother tongue, international students highly rely on the English language to communicate, which reconfirms the fact that with a good command of English, foreigners living in Malaysia can fulfil their communication needs in different situations. On the other hand, only two students mentioned BM as their other means of communication. Table 4.2 demonstrates other languages spoken by the participants.

Table 4.2 Other Languages

Other Languages	N	%	Valid %
English	40	76.9	80.0
Arabic	3	5.8	6.0
Persian	2	3.8	4.0
French	2	3.8	4.0
Bahasa Malaysia	2	3.8	4.0
Urdu	1	1.9	2.0
Total	50	96.2	100.0
Missing	2	3.8	
Total	52	100.0	

To identify the participants' command of the English language, an item in the questionnaire asked the students to rate their level of proficiency in the four English language skills. Table 4.3 shows the students' perception of their English language proficiency.

Table 4.3 Perception of Proficiency in English

Proficiency in English	Reading		Listening		Speaking		Writing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	16	30.8	16	30.8	19	36.5	18	34.6
Very Good	26	50.0	26	50.0	21	40.4	20	38.5
Average	10	19.2	8	15.4	9	17.3	14	26.9
Not Good	0	0	2	3.8	3	5.8	0	0

As shown in Table 4.3, more than 70-80% of the participants believed that they have excellent or very good command of different English language skills. 36.5% of the students claimed that they have an excellent command of speaking English. Another 40.4% believed that their command of the English speaking skill is very good. 17.3% indicated that their English speaking is average and only 5.8% admitted that their English speaking is not good. Reading and Listening skills show identical percentages in the Excellent and Very Good levels of proficiency, respectively 30.8% and 50%. For English Writing, 34.6% of the participants checked Excellent and 38.5% checked Very Good as their level of proficiency.

By looking at the students' perception of their English language proficiency, which is mainly marked as Excellent or Very Good, the high dependence of the international students on the English language, which was revealed in the previous section, is justified. In other words, when the majority of the international students feel comfortable and confident about their English proficiency, they tend to use it as the main language for their communication purposes in Malaysia.

4.2.3 Prior Knowledge of Bahasa Malaysia (Lacks)

It is assumable that, the students who attend the BM course generally do not have any knowledge of the BM. However, to test this hypothesis, the students were asked to mark their knowledge of the BM before joining the course from the list provided in item number nine on Part A of the questionnaire. The results confirm the assumption since 75% of the participants indicated that they had not had any knowledge of the language, among which, 40.4% knew only a few words. 17.3% of the students asserted that they knew only some expressions and a small minority stated that they could make some sentences. None of the participants had been able

to express themselves in BM or speak BM fluently. Table 4.4 presents the findings from related to the students' knowledge of BM before attending the course.

Table 4.4 Prior Knowledge of BM

Prior Knowledge of BM	N	%
Not at All	18	34.6
Only a Few Words	21	40.4
Only Some Expressions	9	17.3
Could Make Some Sentences	4	7.7
Could express myself in Bahasa Malaysia	0	0
Could speak Bahasa Malaysia fluently	0	0
Total	52	100.0

With the results from this item of the questionnaire, we can also identify the *lacks* of the international students regarding BM. *Lacks* as defined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) is the gap between the existing proficiency of the learners and their target proficiency. Based on the findings, the international students can be considered beginner learners of BM with very little or no knowledge of the target language. The target proficiency based on the content and syllabus of the current course is to an elementary or upper-elementary level.

4.2.4 Medium of Instruction in UM

To explore whether the international students in UM need BM for academic purposes, the participants were asked to indicate the medium of instruction used in their classes in UM. For 87.8% of the students, English was the medium of instruction. 21.2% asserted that both English and BM are used to discuss or deliver lessons in their classes. Clearly, none of the participants marked BM as the only medium of instruction in the classes. Table 4.5 shows the results about the medium of instruction used in classes in UM.

Table 4.5 Medium of Instruction at UM

Medium of Instruction at UM	N	%
English	41	78.8
Both English and Bahasa Malaysia	11	21.2
Bahasa Malaysia	0	0
Total	52	100.0

To extend the discussion on the findings about the medium of instruction, we can refer back to the discussion in Chapter 2 about whether the BM course in UM is a general language course or a language course for specific or academic purposes (see 2.4 on page 26). A comparison was made there between the BM course, LSP, and General language courses, and it was concluded that, because the international students do not need BM for academic or professional purposes, the BM course is more similar to General language courses. The findings from this item support that assumption by showing that the majority of the students (78.8%) do not need BM to fulfil their studies at UM. The 21.2% of the participants, who had marked both English and BM, were all undergraduate students. All of the postgraduate participants had checked English as the medium of instruction used in their classes. Table 4.6 compares the results between the two groups.

Table 4.6 Medium of Instruction at UM for the Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Medium of Instruction at UM	Undergraduate		Postgraduate	
	N	%	N	%
English	14	56.0	27	100.0
Both English and Bahasa Malaysia	11	44.0	0	0
Bahasa Malaysia	0	0	0	0
Total	25	100.0	27	100.0

As shown in the table above, 44% of the undergraduate participants are exposed to both English and BM in their classes. The undergraduate interview participants were asked to indicate the proportion of the use of BM in the lectures or any other academic activities. They stated that for some of the programmes, especially in the faculty of Built Environment and Faculty of Science, because there

are only a few international students in the classes, some parts of the lectures or even some hand-outs are in BM. The international students are then asked to check with their classmates for translation or further clarification. It is informing to know that for undergraduate students, the BM course can also be helpful in their tertiary studies in UM. The BM course designers, therefore, should be aware of this fact and try to use a specific set of activities and lessons for undergraduate students based on their needs for the language in their studies. Currently, the same textbook is used for both undergraduate and postgraduate candidates.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the research design applied in this study was a mixed methods Explanatory approach based on which, the data obtained from the interviews (qualitative method) help explain and shed more light on the results from the questionnaire (quantitative method). Thus, for each research question, first the findings from the questionnaire from different items will be presented. The findings from the interviews will be presented and merged within the discussion and data analysis of the questionnaire findings. It should be noted that the interviews only focused on the significant or unexpected findings. Thus, the interview responses will be discussed only when the significant findings are analyzed.

The three research questions of this study are as follows:

1) What language skills of Bahasa Malaysia do international students need more frequently?

2) What specific notions and functions of Bahasa Malaysia do international students need more frequently?

3) What are the learning style preferences of international students?

4.3   ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1

This section will present the data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews with an aim to suggest answers to the first research question; what language skills of Bahasa Malaysia do international students need more frequently?

Part B of the questionnaire provided the respondents with a list of situations where the international students might need to use BM. Situations, which would require students to use each of the language skills were grouped together on the list. The four language skills, which are speaking, listening, writing, and reading, will be discussed separately. Furthermore, the last five situations provided on the list, might involve a combination of different language skills, thus these situations will be put under a category named Combination of Skills".

Following the order of the items appearing on the questionnaire, first, the results about the students' needs for speaking skills will be presented and analyzed.

4.3.1 NEED FOR SPEAKING SKILLS

Items 1 to 16 are categorized under speaking skills. The items related to speaking skills are relatively more than all the other skills. Except for the order the items appear on the questionnaire, almost all of the items are the ones used in Brindley's (1984) questionnaire (see Appendix G). Table 4.7 summarizes the findings from these items. The results are presented in frequency counts (N) and percentages (%).

Table 4.7 Need for Speaking Skills

Do you need Bahasa Malaysia so that you can:	Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Tell people about yourself.	9	17.3	35	67.3	8	15.4
2. Tell people about your family.	3	5.8	33	63.5	16	30.8
3. Tell people about your job.	10	19.2	27	51.9	15	28.8
4. Tell people about your education.	18	34.6	27	51.9	7	13.5
5. Tell people about your interests.	12	23.1	26	50.0	14	26.9
6. Talk to doctors/hospital staff.	17	32.7	31	59.6	4	7.7
7. Talk to your professors.	7	13.5	21	40.4	24	46.2
8. Talk to officials/office workers.	19	36.5	27	51.9	6	11.5
9. Ask for/give directions/addresses.	28	53.8	22	42.3	2	3.8
10. Communicate with your neighbours.	14	26.9	22	42.3	16	30.8
11. Speak to your house owner or your real estate agent.	12	23.1	25	48.1	15	28.8
12. Speak to shopkeepers.	23	44.2	24	46.2	5	9.6
13. Talk to Malaysian friends.	19	36.5	31	59.6	2	3.8
14. Receive/make telephone calls.	14	26.9	25	48.1	13	25.0
15. Order food in restaurants.	18	34.6	27	51.9	7	13.5
16. Speak to taxi drivers.	20	38.5	22	42.3	10	19.2

By looking at the findings of this category, we can see that, generally, the middle option (Useful) contains higher percentages compared to the other two options. This indicates that the students, consider almost all of the items on the list useful. A few of the items, however, show more tendency towards the "Not Useful" or "Very Useful" options. For example, 46.2% of the respondents believed that they do not need BM to talk to their professors. This reconfirms the fact that students generally do not need to speak Bahasa Malaysia to communicate for academic purposes.

The postgraduate interviewees acknowledged that they had never had to speak BM when talking to their professors. They believed that, those who have marked this target situation useful probably needed casual or formal greetings, aiming to create a better rapport with their professors. The undergraduate

interviewees, however, expressed that sometimes, they need to comprehend some sentences said in BM during classes, either by their lecturers or by their peers. A postgraduate respondent believed, "if there are courses given in BM, then there is a need for undergraduate students to take the BM course early on". She continued, "I don't feel that the BM course offered in UM for international students would provide them with all the skills they need to take a course in BM". Once again, we are faced with a situation, where the BM needs of the undergraduate candidates differs from the postgraduate students'. The BM course designers, therefore, should address this specific need of the undergraduate students.

Two other situations that received a relatively high percentage (30.8%) under "Not Useful" are "Tell people about your family" and "Communicate with your neighbours". This can indicate the scope of international students' conversations with Malaysians. The students did not find these two categories useful, perhaps because they do not usually need to talk to Malaysians about their family or they do not usually need to talk to their Malaysian neighbours. Nevertheless, cumulatively, 69.2% of the students have considered learning to speak with their neighbours very useful or useful.

In the interviews, the students said that they speak English when they communicate with Malaysian, because almost all of the people they meet can speak it even at a minimum level. Thus, they do not find it necessary to speak in BM with them. Besides, they stated that they do not speak BM that fluently so that they can actually use it in their interactions with neighbours. They believed however, simple greetings and basic conversations in BM can help them create better bonds with their Malaysian neighbours.

Regarding the "Very Useful" situations, asking for or giving directions or addresses was considered very useful by 53.8% of the respondents. In addition, this item has also been marked "Useful" by 42.3% of the other respondents. This very significant result indicates that asking for and giving directions is a highly frequent target situation, and that the international students frequently need language functions and expressions needed in this situation. This result is in line with the findings from the preliminary study discussed in Chapter 2, where 61.3% of the respondents had expressed that they had problems with asking for and giving directions (see 2.9.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS, page 53).

Two of the interviewees said that they had failed to be understood by some locals a few times they had been lost looking for addresses. Thus, they agreed with the majority of the respondents that knowing how to give and ask for directions can help them very often as it is quite probable that they face similar situations in the future. Besides, one of the interviewees referred to the fact that as international students they "are new to Malaysia", therefore, often, they would need to ask for directions.

Speaking to shopkeepers was considered very useful by 42.2% and useful by 46.2% of the students, which marks this target situation as the second most frequent situation. This indicates that international students generally find it difficult to communicate with shopkeepers and sales people and believe it is useful for them to learn the language used when shopping. In the preliminary study, likewise, 55.4% of the students had asserted that they had problems communicating with shopkeepers.

The interview participants believed that the expressions used for shopping can be the most valuable lesson to be implemented in the BM course, because

shopping is something that they do almost every day. The other reason they mentioned was the fact that very frequently, they have faced some problems communicating with shop assistants as most of them, especially in those in hypermarkets, do not speak good English.

The next useful target situation is speaking to officials and office workers, with 36.5% of the students marking it very useful and 51.9% marking it useful. This is probably due to the fact that, office workers, especially in offices outside the university campus, generally have a moderate or poor command of the English language. Therefore, the international students, who for any reason might need to interact with these officials, find it useful to learn common conversations that would help them communicate more effectively with officers and clerks.

Some of the interviewees given accounts of a few problems they had faced in some offices outside or even inside the university. One of them suggested that learning how to make simple requests or ask for information can majorly help the international students with their enquiries in different offices, such as post offices, insurance offices, or travel agencies.

Another highly useful situation marked by the participants is speaking to taxi drivers. Communicating with taxi drivers has also been marked as one of the most problematic situations by 63% of the international students in the preliminary study. 38.5% of the participants of this study checked this speaking situation very useful and 42.3% have marked it useful. This can imply that the majority of the taxi drivers have average or poor command of English, thus, making it difficult for foreigners to communicate with them.

The interviewees were all of the same belief that taxi drivers are not usually fluent in English. They stated that by learning a few common interactions such as giving directions, or usual requests such as asking the driver to wait or pick them up at a specific time, the international students can more easily communicate with taxi drivers.

Ordering food in restaurants, talking to Malaysian friends, and telling people about their education were the next most useful situations chosen by the international students. One participant argued that, it is fun and interesting for his friends when he uses a few words in BM. He asserted that by doing so, he can show his friends that he cares about their culture and their language and is willing to learn more.

All the other items on this list have been mostly marked useful or very useful by the students.

Overall, we can summarize that, although some of the items have been voted slightly more useful or less useful, learning to be able to use BM in all of the target situations on the list are generally considered useful by the participants. Therefore, we can conclude that learning to speak BM is important for the international students. Furthermore, the findings from this section prove that the international students frequently need to speak BM in their daily lives, especially with those groups of Malaysians who usually do not have good command of English, such as office workers, taxi drivers, waiters or shopkeepers.

Hence, it is highly recommended that practicing speaking skills be one of the main components of the BM course, to ensure that international students are exposed to plenty of language resources that they might need to use when they speak to Malaysians, either on or off campus.

4.3.2 Need for Listening Skills

The next set of items in Part A included listening skills. There were three items on the list that fell under the category of listening skills. Those three situations are understanding public announcements, watching TV, and listening to the radio. The results obtained for this category are more clearly distinct compared to the speaking skills discussed in the previous section. Table 4.8 illustrates the findings.

Table 4.8 Need for Listening Skills

	Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
Do you need Bahasa Malaysia so that you can:	N	%	N	%	N	%
17. Understand public announcements.	30	57.7	20	38.5	2	3.8
18. Watch TV.	10	19.2	19	36.5	23	44.2
19. Listen to the radio.	10	19.2	17	32.7	25	48.1

As shown in the table above, only the first situation, which is understanding public announcements, is significantly voted very useful by the students. In fact, only 3.8% of the students (N=2) believed that learning to comprehend public announcements is not useful. Whereas, 57.7% of the respondents considered this listening skill very useful and 38.5% considered it useful. This significant expression of need towards this particular situation is probably because more often than not, the public announcements made in different places such as public transport stations, shopping malls, or hospitals are in BM.

On the other hand, the majority of the participants voted the other two listening skills, which are watching TV and listening to the radio, not useful. This might be due to the abundance of TV and radio channels in Malaysia that broadcast their programmes in English. Thus, the international students simply do not need to watch or listen to programmes presented in BM.

In the interviews, the students were asked why the international students do not think that they need BM to watch television or listen to the radio, they suggested several possible reasons. One postgraduate student said he never watched TV because he usually did not have time for it. He continued that he prefers to follow the news or watch movies using the internet. The other postgraduate student stated that she did not have a television set at home, and that even if she had, she would prefer to watch the programmes in English. The undergraduate students also referred to limited free time and preference to watch English programmes. They believed, watching films or TV programmes in English would be more beneficial to them since they always need to improve their English. Furthermore, they both said that they never listened to the radio.

Regarding the significant positive responses to learning the language of public announcements, the interviewees argued that although most of the times the public announcements in BM are followed by an English translation, they have all experienced instances of announcements made only in BM. One of the respondents remembered an instance when something had been announced on a train only in BM, and that he had been quite confused when he had seen all the passengers leaving the train. It seems that on such instances, when the announcements are not routine, it is quite probable that they are made only in BM. Therefore, for listening activities in the BM classes, which in the current syllabus are completely missing, examples of public announcements seem very useful. Besides, when the students are exposed to the language they more frequently need and use, they become actively engaged in the lessons, hence, learn better.

4.3.3 Need for Writing Skills

The next two items in Part A were situations where international students might need to write in Bahasa Malaysia. The situations listed were writing letters or emails, and filling out forms. The results are tabulated below.

Table 4.9 Need for Writing Skills

Do you need Bahasa Malaysia so that you can:	Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
20. Write letters/e-mails.	3	5.8	18	34.6	31	59.6
21. Fill out forms.	20	38.5	19	36.5	13	25.0

The results show that the participants only needed to learn those language expressions and structures that would help them fill out forms in BM. 38.5% marked this item very useful and 36.5% marked it useful. Filling out forms had also been voted as a problematic situation by 79.7% of the participants in the preliminary study. Surprisingly, although the language of instruction and all the academic interactions and correspondence in UM are supposed to be done in English, more often than not, for their registration or other different academic requirements, the students need to fill out forms that are in BM. Therefore, the international students need to identify the information required, and fill it in.

The other item, which indicated the need for writing letters or emails in BM, was voted not useful by the majority of the participants (59.6%). This shows that the international students seldom encounter situations where they need to write emails or letters in BM.

The findings from the interviews are in accordance with the results tabulated and discussed above. None of the respondents could remember an instance when they had needed to write a letter or email in BM. However, they had all received one

or a few letters written in BM from different organizations such as insurance companies, the traffic police or telecommunication centres. They believed having samples of such letters could be used as reading passages in the BM classes. Regarding forms, one of the respondents stated that she had seen some important official forms which were only in BM, such as banking forms or even different forms they needed to submit to the offices in UM.

4.3.4 Need for Reading Skills

The last category of the language skills on the list were reading skills. Eight different types of texts such as billboards, bills, traffic signs, newspapers, magazines, catalogues, and food labels were provided under this category. The results are illustrated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Need for Reading Skills

	Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
Do you need Bahasa Malaysia so that you can:	N	%	N	%	N	%
22. Read billboards and signposts.	22	42.3	22	42.3	8	15.4
23. Read electricity/water/internet bills.	22	42.3	26	50.0	4	7.7
24. Read traffic signs and notices.	27	51.9	22	42.3	3	5.8
25. Read newspapers/ books/ magazines.	14	26.9	26	50.0	12	23.1
26. Read academic texts.	9	17.3	20	38.5	23	44.2
27. Read catalogues/manuals.	14	26.9	18	34.6	20	38.5
28. Read advertisements.	19	36.5	23	44.2	10	19.2
29. Read food labels.	17	32.7	26	50.0	9	17.3

Similar to speaking skills, the students have expressed a considerable need for reading skills related to almost all of the items listed. Two of the items, however, received high percentages of the negative responses. The results indicate that, for 44.2% of the international students, reading academic texts in BM is not required. 38.5% of the respondents, however, have marked this item useful. This relative

tendency towards the negative end of the scale for this item, once again shows that the international students do not need to use BM for academic purposes, and therefore do not find it useful to learn how to deal with academic texts written or spoken in BM.

The interviewees stated that they had never been asked to study academic texts in BM for any of their courses in the university. One of the postgraduate students, however, added that being able to read and comprehend only abstracts of the dissertations and theses written in BM could be beneficial to the students who are doing their research projects and dissertations.

The next item that was mostly voted not useful by the students (38.5%) was reading catalogues or manuals. This means that international students do not generally need to read catalogues and manuals written in BM, which is probably due to the fact that these kinds of texts are usually translated to English even if the products they describe are made in Malaysia.

The most useful reading category, which was marked very useful by 51.9% and useful by 42.3% of the respondents, is reading traffic signs and notices. This is because, traffic signs are commonly written in BM. This item has similarly been marked as the most problematic area by 54.7% of the participants in the preliminary study.

When the interviewees were asked why more than 94% of their peers have marked this item useful, they all said, in one way or another, that they had rarely seen traffic signs and notices on the roads or in the cities, written in English. One of the participants expressed that she had had many problems with the signs in BM. One other student gave an account of a time when he was trapped in the middle lane

of a highway, right before a toll station at midnight. He explained, "I didn't have a Touch &Go card, and didn't know that I could pay in cash, because I didn't know the meaning of the word 'tunai' on some of the gates, which later I found out means 'cash'". He described how desperate he had been, until a driver had asked him if he could help, and so guided him to the "Tunai" gates.

Overall, to avoid similar incidents, and to improve the international students' knowledge of the traffic laws and types of notices and signs they often see on the roads, a complete unit can be dedicated to this topic, including signs and notices as reading passages, and common conversations with traffic police officers as the speaking lesson. Apart from the fact that the international students very frequently need texts on these particular topics, using authentic passages and conversations in the coursework can enhance the quality of the lessons as they include real life activities.

Learning to read and comprehend different kinds of utility bills, such as electricity, internet, gas , or telephone bills, was the next most valuable item, being voted very useful by 42.3% and useful by 50% of the respondents. Similarly, in the preliminary study, 57.3% of the respondents expressed difficulty in reading different kinds of bills and more that 80% of the respondents had asserted that a lesson should be dedicated to the translation of bills. Almost all the bills issued for different facilities, are in BM and it would be practical and valuable if samples of these bills were used as reading passages, and some main vocabulary were translated into English for the students, so that they could use them for later reference.

The interviewees also acknowledged the need for translation of bills, and believed comprehending some of the bills is sometimes difficult.

Other highly useful reading material were billboards and signposts by receiving 42.3% of responses both for very useful and useful. If we consider reading advertisements, which was also regarded useful by the majority of the respondents, relevant to billboards and signposts, we can then conclude that because these kinds of texts are normally written in BM, if international students learned their commonly used vocabulary items and expressions, they would benefit from the information they receive through advertisements and billboards.

Finally, more than 80% of the international students believed, it would be useful if they could read food labels on Malaysian products, which are commonly written in BM. One respondent expressed that "some of the food labels are not translated, and sometimes you need to know the ingredients of an item to make sure you don't have allergies to a particular ingredient". Moreover, one of the interview respondents argued that it would be a fun and beneficial activity if the students were asked to bring some food labels to class and work in groups to find the meanings to the texts and ingredients written on them.

Overall, except for academic texts, catalogues and manuals, the international students favoured all the other types of texts given on the list. This high demand for reading skills puts this skill in the second place for highly useful language skills after speaking skills.

4.3.5 Need for a Combination of Skills

The last category in this section is the category with situations that would require international students to use a combination of language skills. The five items (items 30-34) that belonged to this category are applying for a job, making travel arrangements, using buses or trains, complaining about or returning goods, and

giving, accepting, or refusing invitations. To apply for a job, the students might need to read advertisements in newspapers or on websites, correspond through email, or make telephone calls, hence require a combination of language skills. Furthermore, to qualify to apply for many jobs, especially in business and technical fields, the applicant must have at least a basic command of BM. Likewise, to make travel arrangements, one needs to go through advertisements of tour packages, send emails, make telephone calls, negotiate, or visit the travel agencies. To use buses or trains, one must read maps, check routs, buy tickets, listen to public announcements and follow the signs. The last two items are basically language functions that are specific to fulfil a communicative purpose. Complaining about goods and accepting or refusing invitations might be done through different means, such as emails, letters, or phone calls.

The results related to the last five items in Part A are displayed below.

Table 4.11 Need for a Combination of Skills

	Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
Do you need Bahasa Malaysia so that you can:	N	%	N	%	N	%
30. Apply for a job.	17	32.7	16	30.8	19	36.5
31. Make travel arrangements.	5	9.6	30	57.7	17	32.7
32. Use buses/trains.	19	36.5	17	32.7	16	30.8
33. Complain about or return goods.	15	28.8	27	51.9	10	19.2
34. Give/ accept/ refuse invitations.	8	15.4	26	50.0	18	34.6

The first item, applying for a job, has received rather similar responses throughout the scale. On one hand, more than 32% of the respondents believed they need BM to apply for a job, and on the other hand, more than 36% believed that they do not need BM for that purpose. At the same time, more than 30% of the students have marked it useful. This can signify a varied range of needs among the international students when looking and applying for a job are concerned. As the

results can imply, over 36% of the students were either not interested in looking for a job in Malaysia, or even if they were interested, they did not believe that they needed BM to apply for a job or work in Malaysia.

Learning expressions used for making travel arrangements seems not to be very useful to 32.7% of the participants. However, the majority of 67.3% believed that they would benefit from learning the language used to make travel arrangements. This might be due some difficulties the international students might have faced in communicating with travel agents, tour guides, or receptionists at accommodation amenities such as hotels, motels or guesthouses. Therefore, a lesson with the topic of travelling that covers the usual expressions and language functions seems necessary in the syllabus of the course.

Learning language expressions needed when using buses or trains was also given almost even responses throughout the scale, receiving 36.5% for very useful, 32.7% for useful, and 30.8% for not useful. However since the tendency is towards the positive end of the scale, we can conclude that the language expressions associated with public transportation should be included in the coursework.

Since the last two options in Table 4.11 are specifically language functions. The findings related to them will be discussed in the corresponding section.

4.3.6 Summary

In the end, with an aim to provide a summarized answer to the first research question the findings discussed above will be reviewed in the following paragraphs.

By looking at the findings related to different language skills, we can see that, among the four skills, need for speaking skills has received the biggest numbers of

positive responses. The majority of the participants voted all except one situation in the speaking skills section very useful or useful. The only target situation, which was discarded by a rather large number of the participants (46.2%), was speaking to university professors.

The next mostly needed language skill was reading. Only one item among the listed targets was voted unnecessary, and that was reading academic texts. Learning to read all the other types of reading passages were significantly voted very useful and useful.

Only one writing skill that is filling out forms, and one listening skill that is understanding public announcements received significant positive responses.

In conclusion, it seems that international students do not need to practice writing and listening skills of BM as much as they need to perform well in speaking and reading skills. Thus, to cater for the students' needs and to enable them to practice the language skills they mostly need, learning activities and coursework materials implemented in the syllabus are recommended to be more speaking and reading oriented. Besides, a few lessons on practicing writing and listening skills, mainly focused on the topics the international students prefer to learn, which are reported above, would be advantageous and constructive.

4.4   ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2

This section will attempt to suggest answers to the second research question: What specific notions and functions of BM do international students need more frequently?

When referring to language, a ***notion*** is a particular 'context' or 'situation' in which people communicate. A ***function*** is a specific purpose for a speaker in a given context (Brown 1994). In other words, "notions are the meanings and concepts the learners needs in order to communicate (e.g. time, duration, location)", and the "language needed to express these concepts and meanings" are called functions or ***speech acts*** (Richards & Schmidt 2002, pp. 365-366). Language functions can also be defined as specific reasons to use language to meet a specific need or desire. Some examples of language functions are requesting, complaining, accepting or refusing, stating preference, or giving reasons.

To identify the most frequently used notions and function of BM and answer the second research question, we will refer back to the findings from Part A of the questionnaire, which were reported and discussed in the previous sections. In fact, some of the items in Part A are functions of language. The rest of the items are language skills and target situations or notions for which the students would need to learn and use specific language functions. Therefore, the same items and the findings related to them can help identify the most needed and useful language notions and functions of BM for the international students.

Since frequency and percentages of responses to the items in section A of the questionnaire have already been presented and discussed in the previous sections, and to avoid repetition, for the discussions in the following sections, only the items with the majority of positive responses will be presented without referring to the percentages. However, reference will be made to the tables in which the figures have appeared.

4.4.1 Needed Language Notions and Functions

The first category of target situations included using speaking skills. The mostly rated items as very useful or useful and the language functions relevant to them will be discussed in this section. Items 1-5 in this group are 1) tell people about yourself, 2) tell people about your family, 3) tell people about your job, 4) tell people about your education, and 5) tell people about your interests. These five items have been voted very useful or useful by the majority of the respondents (see Table 4.7). The language functions that are needed to express the above notions are the expressions used to introduce oneself. Therefore, the functions needed include, greeting, making introductions, talking about similarities and differences, stating preferences, and expressing feelings and opinions about different hobbies and interests.

Table 4.12 Telling People About Oneself

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Telling people about:	greeting; making introductions; talking about similarities and differences; stating preferences; expressing feelings and opinions about different hobbies and interests
Oneself	
Family	
Job	
Education	
Interests	

Talking to hospital staff and doctors was one of the other highly needed target situations by the students (see Table 4.7). The language functions usually involved in conversations at a doctor's office can be requesting an appointment, giving personal information, describing illness, expressing feelings, and finally, requesting a follow-up appointment.

Table 4.13 Talking to Hospital Staff

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Talking to:	greeting; requesting an appointment; giving personal information;
Hospital Staff	
Doctors	describing illness; expressing feelings; requesting a follow-up appointment

The next mostly needed target situation was talking to officials or office workers (see Table 4.7). When visiting different offices, the students might have various purposes, most probably involving stating intention, requesting to meet a particular person, complaining, expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction, making suggestions, expressing preferences, describing situations, or asking for information.

Table 4.14 Talking to Officials

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Talking to:	greeting; stating intention; asking for information
Officials	requesting an appointment with a particular person; complaining; expressing preferences;
Office workers	expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction; making suggestions; describing situations

Item number nine in the category of necessary speaking skills, was asking for and giving directions or addresses. This item, which is a language function itself, was the most useful item in this category (see Table 4.7). One other highly needed item in this category, which is a language function, was ordering food in a restaurant.

According to a large group of the students, learning expressions associated with shopping and speaking to shopkeepers, was another particularly useful lesson (see Table 4.7). The language that the international students need to use when shopping includes expressions and vocabulary in the functions such as greeting, asking for prices, requesting a discount, requesting different sizes, colours, or types, stating preference, and requesting a receipt.

Table 4.15 Talking to Sales People

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Talking to:	greeting; asking for prices; requesting a discount; requesting different sizes, colours or types; stating preference; requesting a receipt
Sales People	
Cashiers	

Another greatly useful target situation was talking to Malaysian friends. Interacting with friend usually involves inviting them out, or accepting their invitation, asking for address and time, greeting, agreeing or disagreeing, giving opinions, stating preference, giving advice, expressing feelings or moods, and making suggestions.

Table 4.16 Talking to Malaysian Friends

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Talking to:	inviting or accepting their invitation; asking for address and time; greeting; agreeing or disagreeing; giving opinions; stating preference; giving advice; expressing feelings or moods; making suggestions
Malaysian Friends	

Speaking to taxi drivers was another frequent target situation for the students. Conversations with taxi drivers mainly involve giving directions or addresses. Occasionally, requesting to wait or requesting a receipt might also be needed.

Table 4.17 Talking to Taxi Drivers

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Talking to:	
Taxi Divers	giving directions or addresses; requesting to wait; requesting a receipt

The reading and listening skills and target situations listed in Part A of the questionnaire do not require any language functions, as basically, language functions are discussed and dealt with when producing a target language is concerned.

Regarding writing skills, there were only two items in this category. Besides, only one of them was rated useful by the student, and that was filling out forms. To fill out forms, the students would need to provide personal information, and answer different questions relevant to the purpose of the form.

The last group of items were discussed in the section named "Need for a Combination of Skills". Among those five items, two were voted useful, including using buses or trains, and complaining about or returning goods. The latter is a language function itself. Concerning using trains and buses, language functions such as asking for information regarding timetables or prices of tickets, asking for direction, asking for destinations or stops can be mentioned.

Table 4.18 Using Buses or Trains

Target Situation	Needed Language Functions
Using:	
Buses	asking for information about timetables or prices of tickets; asking for direction; asking for destinations or stops
Trains	

4.4.2 Summary

The most common language functions used in each of the target situations have been summarized and listed in the tables provided in this section. Nevertheless, to review the whole section and to provide a summarized answer to the second research question, we can identify the most frequently needed functions appearing in the tables in this section.

The most frequently needed language functions needed by the students in different highly useful target situations were as follows:

- Greeting;

- Asking for and giving directions;

- Functions needed for shopping;

- Providing personal information;

- Asking for information;

- Requesting;

- Stating preference;

- Expressing different feelings and moods;

- Ordering food in restaurants;

In the current syllabus of the course (see Table 1.1), there are lessons on greeting, providing or asking for personal information, and information questions. However, there is no or very little emphasis on functions such as making requests, expressing different feelings, complaining, inviting, accepting or stating preference. Due to the high demand for these very frequent language functions, it would be very beneficial for the international students to have a few lessons on these topics. Examples and lessons on language functions are normally delivered in conversations and role-play exercises in different language textbooks.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Part C of the questionnaire contained questions about the students' learning style preferences, and their satisfaction from the course. The results from this section

were hoped to help identify what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) call *learning needs*. Learning needs are the things a learner needs in order to learn.

One important issue that course designers and language teachers need to be aware of, is the important role of the students' learning style preferences in their success when learning a new language. As discussed in Chapter 2, Reid's (1987) study on 1234 non-native speakers of English with different nationalities showed that, students from different cultures and learning backgrounds have different learning style preferences. Several other studies, which aimed to investigate the effects of learning a language based on learning style preferences, proved that when teaching methods and learning activities match the students' preferred learning styles, they achieve higher scores and learn better (see Debello, 1985; Perrin, 1984; Perrin, 1990).

The results from this section of the questionnaire are also comparable to the results presented and discussed in Riazi and Riasati (2007) that involved 219 Iranian EFL students.

The following sections will present and discuss the findings about the students' learning style preferences, in the order that the items have appeared on the questionnaire. The findings from the interviews will be reported together with the discussion of the findings from the questionnaire.

4.5.1 Satisfaction with Achievements

The first question asked the students whether they were satisfied with their achievements in learning BM throughout the course. 63.5% (N= 33) of the

respondents asserted that they were satisfied with their achievements and the remaining 36.5% (N= 19) stated that they were not.

Table 4.19 Satisfaction with Achievements

	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
1. Satisfaction with achievements in learning BM	33	63.5	19	36.5

Although we cannot ignore the 19 respondents' dissatisfaction with their learning of BM, the overall satisfaction of the majority of the students proves that the course have been useful to them and they have been successful.

In the interviews, the students were asked to think of possible reasons for the 19 negative responses to this question. The students suggested that lack of satisfactory achievements might have been because the students in BM classes were not engaged in the lessons most of the times. One of the postgraduate participants, who was an English language instructor himself, stated that in the classes, they had been generally supposed to listen to the teacher talking about the topics, translating the new words, and explaining the grammatical structures. He added that he had been one of those who had expressed unhappiness with his learning of BM. He believed, in a language classroom, the students must be engaged in the lessons all the time, and that a significant amount of time must be dedicated to pair and group work. He continued, to learn a new language, the students must be given ample chances to practice the new words and structures through role-plays, writing, reading and listening tasks.

Similarly, one of the undergraduate respondents stated, they had had only one type of activity in the classes, and because of that, her friends would lose interest in the lessons. She added that some listening or videos could have greatly enhanced the

students' interest in the lessons. She believed, most of the activities and lessons in the textbook were useful, but the way they were presented and done were not appealing to all of the students. She even suggested that one attempt to improve the students' learning was to change the textbook with a book with visuals and diverse types of activities and lessons.

4.5.2 Individual versus Group Learning

The second question aimed to identify how the students prefer to do the class activities, whether they prefer to learn individually, in pairs, in small groups or in one large group. The majority of the respondents preferred individual work (57.7%), pair work (63.5%) and small group work (76.9%) over learning in one large group. Among these three types, working in small groups was the most popular type. On the other hand, 59.6% of the students did not like learning in one large group. Table 4.20 Shows the results related to this item.

Table 4.20 Individual and Group Learning

	YES		NO	
2. In class, do you like learning...?	N	%	N	%
a) individually	30	57.7	22	42.3
b) in pairs	33	63.5	19	36.5
c) in small groups	40	76.9	12	23.1
d) in one large group	21	40.4	31	59.6

In Riazi and Riasati (2007) however, "only 35.2% of students expressed their preference for working individually". Although the percentage received by learning individually is slightly over 50% (57.7%), it is significantly different from the results reported by Riazi and Riasati (2007) regarding this item (35.2%). Nevertheless, similar to the present study, a majority of the students in their study (64.8%),

preferred other modes of learning the language, such as learning in pairs or in groups.

Based on the findings from this section and in line with Riazi and Riasati's (2007) conclusion, and as the interviewees had insisted, learners seem to support a communicative approach to language learning. "It seems they feel more comfortable, productive, and relaxed by working in other ways, e.g. in pairs, or in groups where their voices would be heard, and views listened to and valued" (p. 105). It is, therefore, recommended that more activities that can be done in small groups or pairs be implemented in the coursework. More pair and group work would encourage students to learn better and to engage more in the lessons and learning activities.

4.5.3 Homework

Item 3 in Part C asked the students if they like to do homework. Interestingly, 57.7% of the students stated that they like doing homework. Although the other 42.3% of the respondents expressed that they do not enjoy doing homework assignments, the students' overall willingness towards doing homework shows that the students feel that doing some activities outside classroom as assignments are useful and help them learn better. Kavaliauskiene (2003) (as cited in Riazi and Riasati, 2007, p. 101) had reached a rather similar finding that "93 percent of learners support the idea of homework against 7 percent who reject it".

The next question asked the students who liked to do homework to write how much homework they would like to do in a day or in a week. The average of the amount of time the students prefer to spend in a day doing homework was 1 hour and 49 minutes. The average of the responses about the amount of time they were willing to do homework assignments every week was 2 hours and 13 minutes.

The current class booklet of the BM course in UM has many activities and exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks, matching, substitution and many more. The teacher of the course can assign these exercises as homework or ask students to do other types of assignments. Table 4.21 shows the number of responses to this question and the means and median obtained.

Table 4.21 Hours of Homework

| | No. of Respondents | | HOURS | |
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median
Hours a Day	22	30	**1.49**	**2.00**
Hours a Week	30	34	**2.13**	**2.00**

The next question asked the students to indicate the type of homework they prefer to do. 63.5% of the respondents did not like to spend time preparing for the next class. However, the majority of 65.4% liked reviewing the day's work and a large group of 71.2% preferred to do activities based on their personal experience. Table 4.22 shows the results about the students' preferred type of homework assignments.

Table 4.22 Type of Assignments

	YES		NO	
4. How would you like to spend this time?	N	%	N	%
a) preparing for the next class	19	36.5	33	63.5
b) reviewing the day's work	34	65.4	18	34.6
c) doing activity based on your personal experience	37	71.2	15	28.8

Personalized homework activities, therefore, was the most favourite type, which highlights the importance of activities and assignments based on real-life experiences. These types of activities are even more crucial to be implemented in LSP courses where learners have specific needs regarding the language, and aim to use the target language for a particular purpose in their professional or daily life situations. The BM course was previously compared to LSP courses and it was

concluded that, since this course aims to specifically prepare students to function more effectively in their daily life interactions with Malaysians, it is similar to LSP courses. Thus, it is recommended that real-life uses of the language and activities based on them be included in the coursework, and as part of the homework assignments.

4.5.4 Learning Time

Item number 5 asked the students if they want to spend all their learning time in the classroom, or spend some time in class and some time outside classroom, practicing their BM with Malaysians. Once again, the results confirm the popularity of real-life environment in the language learning experience.

Table 4.23 Learning Time

5. Do you want to	N	%
a) spend all your learning time in the classroom?	16	30.8
b) spend some time in the classroom and some time practicing your Bahasa Malaysia with people outside?	36	69.2

As shown in Table 4.23, 69.2% of the participants asserted that they prefer to spend some of their language learning experience with native speakers of the language outside the classroom.

One of the interviewees pointed out that an intensive class of BM offered over a course of few weeks does not give the learners enough exposure to the target language. Thus, the students need to spend some extra time practicing their BM doing different homework assignments outside classroom. In line with the students' favourite type of homework activities, that is doing something related to their personal experience, the findings from this item can guide the teachers and course

designers of the BM course to assign homework activities that would encourage students to interact with Malaysians.

4.5.5 Learning Style

The next item, aimed to identify the students' preferred learning style. This item provided the respondents with a list of different approaches and styles that learners use to learn and remember new materials. The respondents were supposed to choose their learning style from a) by memory, b) by listening, c) by reading, d) by copying from the board, e) by listening and taking notes, f) by reading and making notes, g) by repeating what you hear, h) by making summaries. The results are displayed in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24 Learning Style

6. Do you like learning	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
a) by memory?	31	59.6	21	40.4
b) by listening?	44	84.6	8	15.4
c) by reading?	41	78.8	11	21.2
d) by copying from the board?	32	61.5	20	38.5
e) by listening and taking notes?	37	71.2	15	28.8
f) by reading and making notes?	37	71.2	15	28.8
g) by repeating what you hear?	44	84.6	8	15.4
h) by making summaries?	25	48.1	27	51.9

The results show that the majority of the international students in UM prefer auditory learners, as the most preferred learning style was by listening and by repeating what heard, both yielding a high percentage of 84.6. Furthermore, listening and taking notes and reading and making notes were other highly preferred style with a percentage as high as 71.2. The results from this item were rather similar to the results from Riazi and Riasati (2007). Although unlike the present study, learning by only "listening" did not prove to be very popular among the students involved in

their study, "listening and taking notes", and "reading and taking notes" were the learning approaches chosen by the majority of the respondents in their study with 78.5% and 67.6% of the YES responses. What they have concluded from these results was that "students do not want to adopt a totally passive role in the learning process" and that "they are inclined to be involved in classroom interactions" (p. 106). They believe such results convey a message to language teachers to take necessary measures to involve students in the classroom activities as much as possible.

Unlike in Riazi and Riasati (2007), the students in this study, are inclined to rather passive methods of learning by choosing learning by reading as their second favourite style with a percentage of 78.8 and, as referred to earlier, learning by listening as their most preferred style with the highest percentage of 84.6.

Learning by copying from the board and learning by memory were the other two favourite learning styles to which 61.5% and 59.6% of the respondents voted YES respectively. The least favourite learning style was making summaries, which held more than half of the NO answers (51.9%).

4.5.6 Learning New Vocabulary

To identify how the international students like to learn the new vocabulary, item number 7 asked the participants to choose from a list of approaches to learning new words. The options were: a) by using the word in a sentence, b) by thinking of relationship between known and new, c) by saying or writing words several times, d) by avoiding verbatim translation, e) by guessing the unknown, and f) by reading with no dictionary help. Table 4.25 presents the results.

Table 4.25 Learning New Vocabulary

	YES		NO	
7. When learning new vocabulary, do you like learning	N	%	N	%
a) by using new words in a sentence?	45	86.5	7	13.5
b) by thinking of relationships between known and new?	44	84.6	8	15.4
c) by saying or writing words several times?	29	55.8	23	44.2
d) by avoiding word for word translation?	27	51.9	25	48.1
e) by guessing the unknown?	34	65.4	18	34.6
f) by reading without looking up words?	19	36.5	33	63.5

The dominantly preferred method of learning was using words in a sentence, with a high percentage of 86.5. This highlights the students' preference to contextualize words rather than trying to remember the meaning of words out of context and in isolation. Similarly, the majority of students (91.3%) in Riazi and Riasati (2007) gave priority to using new words in a sentence.

As cited in Riazi and Riasati (2007), "such finding is in congruence with Stapa's (2003) study in which learners, who were doing an ESP course in Malaysia, preferred to learn the new words when they are contextualized" (p. 107).

The second most favourite approach chosen by 84.6% of the students was the thinking of relationship between known and new, which also needs the words to appear in a context and among other sentences. Likewise, this approach was the second most proffered by the students in Riazi and Riasati (2007) receiving 78.5% of the YES responses. The next three preferred approaches were guessing the unknown or guessing the meaning of a word in its context, with 65.4%, saying or writing words several times, with 55.8%, and avoiding word for word translation with 51.9% of the YES responses. As they have also argued "learners are not reluctant to guess the meaning of new vocabulary or infer the meaning from the context" and that "students are not willing to learn new words in isolation, nor by simple rote memorization" (p. 107). Thus, the learning resources used in the course must present new vocabulary items in contexts "rich enough to provide adequate clues for

students to guess a word's meaning". They further argue that "the reason behind such tendency may be the fact that, in students' view, meaningful information is retained longer and retrieved more easily" (Riazi & Riasati, 2007, p. 107).

The least favourite approach was reading without looking up words, which accounts for 63.5% of NO answers. This shows that the students prefer to know the meanings of the words in reading or listening passages, by either guessing their meanings from the context or looking them up in a dictionary.

The interviewees were asked to suggest an explanation for the results obtained from this item. One of the interviewees asserted that he could not imagine any other way to learn a new word than seeing it in a sentence, or associating it with the picture of the object the word signified. He believed that, learning new words in lists and memorizing their meanings are meaningless and ineffectual methods of learning new vocabulary. Another participant expressed that by using words in sentences and guessing their meanings in a context, students would be able to make connections in their mind with the words they already know and the new words, thus, the new words would be remembered better.

In conclusion, the results obtained from this item are the evidence for the significant role of contextualization and visualization of the new vocabulary in helping the students to learn and remember the meanings of new words. Unfortunately, in the current textbook of the course, most of the vocabulary items are presented in lists and mainly out of context. Based on these findings, the new words need to be taken out of lists and glossaries and applied in sentences and reading passages, or presented with pictures to maintain the learners' interest and engagement in the lessons, and facilitate learning of the new words.

4.5.7 Corrective Feedback

Item number 8 in this section aimed to help identify how the students prefer to be corrected by the teacher when they make mistakes while speaking the target language. The options and the results are presented in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26 Corrective Feedback

	YES		NO	
8. When you speak do you want to be corrected	N	%	N	%
a) immediately, in front of everyone	39	75.0	13	25.0
b) later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone	23	44.2	29	55.8
c) later, in private	16	30.8	36	69.2

As can be seen, the majority of 75% chose the direct and immediate corrective feedback. In other words, a large group of the international students in this study would prefer to be corrected immediately and in front of everyone if they made mistakes in their speech. On the other hand, the other two methods of correction were voted out by the majority of the students. Those two rejected methods were for the teacher to correct them either "later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone", with 55.8% of the NO responses, or "later, in private", with 69.2% of the NO responses. With similar results reported in Riazi and Riasati (2007), we can conclude that, students do not like delayed correction and believe that immediate correction is more effective. Although immediate correction, in front of the whole class does not seem to be very effective and constructive, especially with shy students, the results from this item proves that students do not mind to receive such feedback from the teacher, and prefer to be corrected without delay.

The next item, which was also related to corrective feedback, was concerned with feedback on the students' written work. The first item asked the students if they want their written work to be corrected by a peer. The results show that 69.2% of the

learners did not mind if their peers, that is the other students in class, correct their writings. Similarly, 71.2% of the students would not mind if they were asked to correct their own writing. The results are shown in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27 Feedback on Writing

	YES		NO	
9. Do you mind if	N	%	N	%
a) other students sometimes correct your written work?	16	30.8	36	69.2
b) the teacher sometimes asks you to correct your own work?	15	28.8	37	71.2

One of the most effective ways to correct language learners' written work is peer correction. Students learn better if they discuss the mistakes they make with each other and remember to avoid the common errors made by their peers and themselves. As the results shown, the international students appreciate their peers feedback on their written work.

One other valuable and constructive feedback is for the students to correct their own writings. Through this method, the teacher marks the errors in the student's written work, and asks the student to find why the marked part is wrong and then try to revise that part by writing the correct form. Through this approach, the student becomes aware of his or her common written errors and by attempting to find the correct forms, he or she can remember to avoid the error in his or her future writings. By looking at the students' responses to this question, we can see that most of the participants of this study (71.2%) find it useful and constructive to be asked to correct their own written work.

Regarding teacher's feedback, one of the interviewees, pointed out an important observation. He said that practicing a new language through speaking, writing, reading and hearing it is very important. He continued, "…without practice, one cannot learn a new language", and insisted, "…the teacher's feedback is also as

important and constructive as the students' practicing a target language". He (being an Iranian himself) added, "Iranian students, especially, learn most when they study for quizzes or exams", and by "the feedback they get from the exams, students will know about their problems and mistakes and try to correct them".

One of the undergraduate participants stated that, one of the best ways for him to improve his English had been through writing and receiving his teachers' feedback and corrections on his writings. He added that the same approach applied to his learning how to speak English. The postgraduate participant from Saudi Arabia believed "without the teacher's correction and feedback the students never know if they are on the right track… and if they are speaking or writing correctly". Considering immediate feedback, she argued, "if you are not corrected at the moment you make the mistake you might forget the mistake, and it no longer has a context".

4.5.8 Audio-visual Aids

Media have an undeniable role in enhancing the language teaching and language learning experience. Hence, item 10 asked students what audio-visual aids they like learning from, by choosing a) television/video/films, b) radio, c) CDs/audio materials, d) written material, e) the board, f) pictures/posters, or g) PowerPoint slides . Results are tabulated below.

Table 4.28 Audio-visual Aids

10. Do you like learning from	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
a) television/video/films?	41	78.8	11	21.2
b) radio?	21	40.4	31	59.6
c) CDs/audio materials?	19	36.5	33	63.5
d) written material?	45	86.5	7	13.5
e) the board?	39	75.0	13	25.0
f) pictures/posters?	47	90.4	3	5.8
g) PowerPoint slides?	41	78.8	11	21.2

As shown in the table, except for two of the items on the list, which were "radio" and "CDs", the rest of the audio-visual aids were dominantly marked YES by the respondents. Surprisingly, the majority of the participants, who proved to be auditory learners and stated that they learned better by listening (see 4.5.5 Learning Style), rejected the audio materials as useful learning aids; 59.6% said NO to using the radio, and 63.5% said NO to listening to CDs and audio materials. In fact, the most popular aids selected on this list were visuals. For example, the overwhelming majority of 90.4% of the respondents have selected pictures and posters as useful learning aids. Furthermore, two other most preferred learning aids were television, videos, and films from one category, and PowerPoint slides from another category both with a soaring percentage of 78.8. The reason could be the fact that students find videos and films, as opposed to radio or listening materials, more useful and attractive, because through such media, they can see what they hear, which makes the whole experience more engaging and memorable. Learning from written materials was the second most selected item on the list, accounting for 87.5% of the YES responses. Yet another visual aid, which was marked as an effective learning aid, was the board, with 75% of YES responses. Riazi and Riasati (2007) also obtained similar results from this question, as 90% of their respondents had marked television, videos, and films as useful learning aids. They have cited Celce-Murcia

(2001) to argue why students prefer such media; it is because "media motivate students by bringing a slice of real life into the classroom and by presenting language in its more complete communicative context" (p. 110).

In summary, the interview respondents expressed their appreciation towards a variety of learning activities through both audio and visual aids. They believed only one or two types of activities or learning materials, however productive and helpful, can become tedious and boring if used all the time. One of them pointed out that since they are learning their host country's official language, there are so many ways that they can learn BM through a variety of audio and visual aids. One of the other respondents believed that by using resources that reflect and implement real life encounters of the international students with BM, the students would learn better.

Considering the fact that the international students have proved to be both auditory and visual learners, it is recommended that the class activities and learning materials include various types of audio and visual resources to ensure a balanced collection of teaching and learning aids.

4.5.9 Learning Activities

Item 11 asked about the activities learners find useful in the classroom. These include role play, language games, songs, talking with and listening to other students, memorizing dialogues, getting information from guest speakers, getting information from planned visits, and learning about culture. Translation of texts from Bahasa into English was added to this list as it proved to be considered useful by the students in the results obtained from the preliminary study discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.9.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS, page 53). Table 4.29 presents the

findings related to the students' preferred classroom activities and teaching and learning methods.

Table 4.29 Learning Activities

	YES		NO	
11. Do you find these activities useful?	N	%	N	%
a) Role play	36	69.2	16	30.8
b) Language games	45	86.5	7	13.5
c) Songs	31	59.6	21	40.4
d) Talking with and listening to other students	50	96.2	2	3.8
e) Memorizing conversations/dialogues	38	73.1	14	26.9
f) Getting information from guest speakers	33	63.5	19	36.5
g) Getting information from planned visits	39	75.0	13	25.0
h) Learning about culture	40	76.9	12	23.1
i) Translation of texts from Bahasa into English	42	80.8	10	19.2

The participants voted all the items on the list provided in this question useful. One of the items, however, was voted useful by an absolute majority of 96.2% of the participants. This absolutely popular class activity is "talking with and listening to other students". Working with other students in pairs and in small groups had already been voted useful in response to question number 2 in Part C (see Table 4.20). Besides, the participants had also expressed that they like to receive feedback from their peers on their written work (see Table 4.27). These similar and reconfirming findings prove that the students highly value working with their peers, interacting with them, and learning from them. Riazi and Riasati's (2007) respondents had also chosen this item (talking with and listening to other students) as their most favourite class activity (81.7%).

They have suggested one way to explain such results; "when language learners interact with each other, they experience some difficulties as they attempt to use the target language to communicate", which in turn helps them know what they lack in order to communicate effectively with their peers. This would encourage

135

seeking help from their fellow students, hence a more cooperative and pleasant learning environment.

The interviewees had previously been asked about how they liked to do the class activities, and they had all reaffirmed the responses from the questionnaires, in which the majority had expressed preference towards pair work and small group work activities (see Table 4.20).

As opposed to Riazi and Riasati's (2007) participants, who did not favour language games, 86.5% of the students involved in the present study showed great interest in playing language games by choosing it as their second most useful class activity. Language games are fun and greatly interactive. It seems that the international students prefer to have a fun and friendly learning environment, where they can learn BM in a less stressful and serious atmosphere as opposed to the other courses they attend in UM for their tertiary fields of study.

The other learning activity, which was voted useful by 80.8% of the learners, is translation of texts from BM into English. Although it is usually recommended that language teachers do not use translation as part of the learning and teaching practices, and students do not normally favour translation, for this particular course, the students considered translation into English helpful. This preference towards translation activities in the BM course, unlike other language courses, could be because the students do not have enough time to master the language in the short course of only a few weeks. Thus, they tend to resort to translation into English perhaps as a way to save time for other learning activities such as games and role-play, which were highly voted useful by 86.5 and 69.2 percent of the respondents.

To explain why the international students had considered translation into English helpful, one of the interviewees suggested it could be due to the very short length of the course. He pointed out that a few weeks is not enough for a learner to learn a foreign language, therefore, the students felt it was necessary for them to choose translation as a way to learn more vocabulary items or expressions, as translation speeds up the pace of the lessons. He continued, however, by saying that to provide more exposure to BM, the teachers should speak in BM as much as possible. He said, in their BM class, the language of instruction had been English, and he believed the teacher could have spoken in BM in so many occasions.

Students were also very keen on learning about culture, as 76.9% considered it useful. Similar results from Riazi and Riasati (2007) (71.7%) and the preliminary study (74.7%), highlight the fact that language learners consider culture and language greatly related and linked to each other. "Although teachers devote a good deal of time, effort, and attention to the teaching of language skills, gaining linguistic competence is not adequate for many learners to achieve their goals" (Riazi & Riasati, 2007, p. 113). Learners need to achieve "foreign language cultural competence" to be able to communicate effectively. This awareness from the side of the learners and their need to learn about the culture associated with the target language, only highlights the important role of the language teacher to expose students to cultural values, concepts, and norms. The teacher can also show the students how these norms and values may lead them to more effective and meaningful interactions in different situations.

Another favourite activity among the students was getting information from planned visits, to which 75% responded YES. It seems that international students are eager to visit places they might encounter in their daily life in Malaysia. It is then

very instructive to plan some visits to places such as restaurants, shopping malls or public transport stations where students can practice the target language functions in a real atmosphere.

A rather surprising finding is the students' willingness to memorize dialogues and conversation in the target language. 73.1% of positive responses to this activity can be explained by referring to an issue discussed earlier: shortage of time. A few weeks of exposure to instructions and lessons of a foreign language is definitely not sufficient for the learners to grasp and remember the conversations they need to use. This is probably why the international students consider it useful to memorize frequently used conversations and functional expressions.

Getting information from guest speakers, which received 63.5% of the responses, seems to be encouraging for the BM learners, because they would be exposed to authentic sources of information.

Using songs and learning from them with 59.6% of the responses is the learners' least favourite class activity. This is perhaps because it is very improbable for the international students to be exposed to songs in the target language. Furthermore, the learners probably believe that they are not competent enough to entirely grasp the meaning of the songs and therefore consider it not very useful compared to other types of learning activities.

4.5.10 Assessment

Item 12 asked about assessment. Here, the learners were asked how they would like to find out how much their BM is improving. The choices were: a)

through written tasks set by the teacher, or b) the ability to use language in real-life situations. Results are illustrated Table 4.30.

Table 4.30 Criteria for Improvement

	YES		NO	
12. How do you like to find out how much your Bahasa Malaysia is improving?	N	%	N	%
a) By written tasks (quizzes) set by the teacher?	34	65.4	18	34.6
b) By seeing if you can use the language you have learnt in real-life situations?	50	96.2	2	3.8

Although 65.4% of the learners favoured formal written assessment as a criterion for their improvement, almost all of the students (96.2%) asserted that they would like to evaluate their knowledge of BM based on their performance in real-life situations where they need to use the target language to interact with native or non-native speakers of BM. This finding is in line with Riazi and Risati's (2007) regarding this item. To explain why the 91.3% of their respondents were positive towards this method of assessment, they argue that students "see tests as a threat to their competence, because they are afraid that they will not perform well", hence, the reason for them to be "more willing to assess themselves based on the extent to which they are successful in real-life situations". Another way to explain this finding is that, the BM course is being offered to international students to help them learn useful language functions and skills for their daily life interactions. The purpose of the BM course is not to prepare students to take a formal BM language proficiency test, nor is it the purpose of the students. Therefore, it would be more pleasant for the students to test their language knowledge in their interactions with Malaysians, and pass that test by making a meaningful and successful conversation.

To include some other ways of giving feedback on the students performance and achievements, item 13 asked students if they get a sense of satisfaction from a) having their work graded, b) being told that they have made progress, or c) feeling

more confident in situations they found difficult before. The table below displays the findings.

Table 4.31 Sense of Achievement

	YES		NO	
13. Do you get a sense of satisfaction from	N	%	N	%
a) having your work graded?	44	84.6	8	15.4
b) being told that you have made progress?	39	75.0	13	25.0
c) feeling more confident in situations that you found difficult before?	50	96.2	2	3.8

As seen in the Table 4.31, all types of feedback were appealing to the respondents with significant percentages of over 70. The last item, however, was marked YES by 50 out of 52 respondents (96.2%). This shows that students find it highly rewarding to see that they can perform efficiently in situations they had found challenging before. They would rather see it for themselves that they have improved, than be told so or see it in the test results. Being formally graded by the teacher or other authorities also seems to be a favourite type of feedback, probably because getting high grades would help the students feel confident with their level of competence in the target language. Finally, the respondents stated that they would like if they were told that they have improved. This signifies the encouraging effect of receiving positive feedback and positive reinforcement in the process of language learning.

Regarding assessment, the interviews generally favoured one final exam. However, they also found small quizzes helpful as a form of continuous and quick feedback for the students on their performance.

4.5.11 Motivation

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, one of the most important issues that needs to be considered by the language teachers and course planners is creating and maintaining motivated learners. To achieve such goals, they need to know the internal and external factors that keep students motivated to not only attend classes but also be active and enthusiastic learners. Some of the external factors that can affect students' motivation are the physical factors such as the location, and facilities of the classes. Another influential factor is the time the classes are held during a day or within a week.

To know if the international students are motivated to participate in the BM classes, they were asked to respond to three questions: 1) Are/Were you satisfied with the venue of the classes?, 2) Are/Were you satisfied with time of the classes?, and 3) If the BM course was not compulsory, would you choose to take it, or not to take it?

The results are illustrated in the following table.

Table 4.32 Satisfaction with Time and Venue

Satisfaction	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
14. With the venue of the class	34	65.4	18	34.6
15. With the time of the class	35	67.3	17	32.7

As can be seen in Table 4.32, over 65% of the participants were satisfied with both the time and the venue of the classes. Although a mere "Yes" or "No" respond is too general to enable a sound judgment, the overall satisfaction shown through the responses to these two questions shows that the students are generally content with the setting of the BM classes. It is however of utmost importance to take into

account the rather high dissatisfaction regarding the time and venue of the classes (figures presented in Table 4.32).

One of the interviewees mentioned a very important point regarding the time and duration of the course. He confirmed that the BM classes are held in different time slots throughout the week, thus the students are free to choose the time slots that best fit their schedules. He however, expressed dissatisfaction with the duration of the course. He appreciated the effort by the faculty of the language and Linguistics in UM to conduct this course, but he believed a few weeks is not enough for the students to grasp what is need to be learned. He added that a short and intensive course has its own advantages, as it would fit well in most of the students' schedules. He believed, the rather short length of the course would defeat the purpose of the course, which is "learning a language". This participant has shared quite valid views. Previously, the BM course was offered in 14 sessions over a period of an academic semester, which is more than four months. The conductors of the course have probably changed that arrangement for good reasons. One possible reason could have been avoiding the BM course to clash with the students' midterm or final study and examination periods. To resolve this dissatisfaction, the course designers could offer the BM course in two different durations, both intensive and extensive, to cater for the students' different preferences. Moreover, one of the participants, complained about long duration of each session. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, the students spend two sessions of 4-hour duration and one session of 2-hour duration each week. The participant expressed that spending 4 hours in language classroom had been quite tedious some times.

Finally, to test whether the students were intrinsically motivated to participate in the BM classes, the last question in this section asked students if they

would have taken the BM course if it were not compulsory. As can be seen in Table 4.33, almost 70% of the students affirmed that they would have chosen to take the course even if the course had not been compulsory.

Table 4.33 Attendance

16) If Bahasa Malaysia course were optional, I would choose:	N	%
a) to take it	36	69.2
b) not to take it	16	30.8

This high motivation to participate in the course among the international students signifies the fact that the students have expectations from the course. Almost 70% of the students would attend the course not only because they had to do so. They attended the classes purposefully, because they were motivated to learn their host country's lingua franca. This enthusiasm indicates that the international students feel the need to learn BM, and expect to receive what they need to learn in the BM classes.

The interviewees were asked to explain this result. One of them pointed out a very thoughtful observation. He had noticed that in their BM class, the most active learners were the ones with a lower level of English proficiency. He continued with explaining how it is sometimes difficult to communicate with non-academic Malaysians through English, and that for most cases, you need to be a very good English speaker to be able to communicate with low proficiency English speakers. He believed, learning BM would be very beneficial for most of the international students who do not speak fluent English, because with BM they could express themselves when communicating with shopkeepers, taxi drivers, or officers who usually do not speak English fluently.

With students motivated to learn, the teacher and course planners' job becomes rather easier, because they can make sure the students are intrinsically motivated and enthusiastic to learn. On the other hand, this makes the teachers' job more challenging since they must plan and deliver lessons that could suitably meet the students' expectations from the course. It is hoped that the findings reported in this study would serve as a helpful source of information for the BM course planners and teachers to identify the international students' needs and expectations from this language programme.

4.5.12 Summary

This section will provide a summary of the findings regarding the students' learning style preferences. This section is also a summarized answer to the third research question of this study. For easy reference, the summary will be laid out in numbered paragraphs.

Students' Learning Style Preferences

1) Students do not like working in one large group. They prefer working in small groups, in pairs, or individually to study or to do class activities. In response to different questions, students affirmed repeatedly that they enjoy interacting with their peers, receiving feedback from them and learning with them.

2) Students like to do homework, and they prefer to do activities based on their personal experience. They also want to spend some of their learning time outside classroom and practice their BM with native speakers of the language.

3) Students prefer types of learning activities that put emphasis on receptive skills such as listening and reading, as well as productive skills such as role-play and taking notes.

4) Students' most ideal strategies to learn vocabulary items are using words in a sentence, thinking of relationships between known and new, and guessing the meaning of unknown words.

5) Students showed that they do not mind to be corrected immediately in front of everyone. In fact, they also expressed that they do not like to be corrected later in private. Regarding feedback on their writings, they do not mind to correct their own writing or even to be corrected by their peers.

6) Regarding audio-visual aids, learners are greatly interested in pictures and posters, since they would like to associate what they learn to their pictures and visual manifestations. Moreover, students favour the use of written materials, PowerPoint presentations and the board as teaching resources. Besides, they like watching videos and films, which make the language learning experience more interesting and effective. On the other hand, learners did not prove to be interested in listening to audio materials and songs. Nevertheless, they have expressed tendency towards learning through listening. Therefore, the group of participants seems to include some that were "visual" learners as well as some that were "auditory" learners (the terms used by Reid (1995), see 2.7.6 CATEGORIZATION OF LEARNING STYLES, page 45).

7) Students are greatly positive towards language games and other types of fun and interactive classroom exercises such as role-plays, pair work and group work. The absolute majority of students proved to be Global learners as they enjoyed talking

with and listening to their peers, getting feedback from them, and interacting with them.

8) Students proved to be interested in learning about Malaysian culture, which shows that they highly value developing cultural competence as well as linguistic competence.

9) They also find translation of texts into English, and memorizing conversations helpful to their learning.

10) Students expressed that they would feel most satisfied with their achievement in BM if they could use the language effectively in real-life situations. They also get a sense of satisfaction not only by getting their work graded and being told that they have made progress, but more so by seeing that they are more confident in situations they had found difficult before.

11) The students are generally satisfied with the time and location of the classes.

12) Finally, they claimed that they would have taken the course even if it had not been compulsory.

In the end, with reference to Reid's (1995) classification of learning style preferences of learners (see 2.7.6 CATEGORIZATION OF LEARNING STYLES), the international students of the University of Malaya can be put into the following categories:

- *Cognitive learning styles*
    - **Global learners:** by learning more effectively through interactions with other people;
- *Sensory learning styles*

146

- o **Perceptual learning styles**

    - **Visual learners:** by learning by looking at pictures, posters, PowerPoint presentations, watching videos and films, enjoying reading and seeing the words, and enjoying seeing what they are hearing;

    - **Auditory learners:** by learning through listening to the teacher or their peers;

- o **Environmental learning styles**

    - **Sociological learners:** by being concerned with pair and group work activities;

- *Personality learning styles*

    - o **Extroverted learners:** by being keen on working in groups and have relationship with others.