

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Needs Analysis study aimed at finding information about the BM needs of the international Students of the University of Malaya. In this chapter, the summary of the main findings will be presented in relation to the three research questions of the study. Based on the findings, some recommendations will be made regarding the type of class activities, the content of the syllabus, and the teaching and learning resources. Finally, some suggestions will be given for further research.

The 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?

To explore answers to the research questions, a mixed methods Sequential Explanatory Design was followed. The research procedure started with the quantitative phase, which used a questionnaire adapted from Brindley (1984) as the main data collection instruments, and ended with the quantitative phase with semi-structured interviews as a tool to collect more in-depth and explanatory data based on the findings from the quantitative method.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

In the following sections, after a brief description of the participants, the main findings will be presented.

### **5.2.1 The Participants**

#### *The Quantitative Phase*

The participants in the quantitative phase, 25 females and 27 males, were pursuing their undergraduate, Master's or PhD studies. Out of the 52 participants who responded to the questionnaire, 25 were undergraduate students, 16 were Master's students and 11 were PhD students.

Among the participants, 44 students came from eleven different faculties of the University of Malaya, and eight students came from other institutes in the university.

The participants of this study came from 13 different countries. The biggest group of participants was Iranians (32.7%), followed by students from Korea (11.5%). The next two countries were Iraq with 9.6% and Bangladesh, China and Nigeria each with 7.7% of the participants.

The average number of months the participants' had stayed in Malaysia at the time they filled out the questionnaire was 23.94 months.

Only 11.5 % of the participants (N= 6) were working in Malaysia at the time, all of whom were postgraduate participants.

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

(IPS) in UM also confirms that more than 30% of UM's international students are from Iran, followed by students from Middle East (see Figure 1.1).

### *The Qualitative Phase*

The participants of the interviews were one male and one female from the postgraduate group and one female and one male from the undergraduate group.

#### **5.2.2 Research Question 1: Language Skills Needed**

This section will suggest some answers to the first research question: 1) What language skills of Bahasa Malaysia do international students need more frequently?

Speaking skills received the biggest numbers of positive responses from the participants. 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 Bahasa Malaysia as much as they need to perform well in speaking and reading skills. Thus, to cater for the students' needs and 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.

### **5.2.3 Research Question 2: Language Notions and Functions Needed**

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

The most frequently used language functions were identified by looking at the most useful language skills and functions chosen by the participants in Part B of the questionnaire and in the interviews.

The most helpful and necessary language functions needed by the students in different highly useful target situations are greeting, asking for and giving directions, functions needed for shopping, providing personal information, asking for information, requesting, stating preference, expressing different feelings and moods, and ordering food in restaurants.

### **5.2.4 Research Question 3: Learning Style Preferences**

This section will provide a summary of the findings regarding the students' learning style preferences with an aim to provide answers to the third research question of this study: What are the learning style preferences of international students?

The third research question will be answered with reference to the terms used in Reid's (1995) classification of learning style preferences of learners (see 2.7.6 CATEGORIZATION OF LEARNING STYLES, page 45). Based on the finding from the last section of the questionnaire (Part C), the majority of the international students of the University of Malaya can be considered to be *global* learners as they learn more effectively through interactions with other people. Regarding the *sensory learning styles*, they can be identified as *visual* learners, as they learn better by looking at pictures and posters, watching videos and films, and using PowerPoint presentations. Most of them can also be put in the category of *auditory* learners, since they learn through listening to the teacher or their peers.

Between the two *environmental learning styles*, the UM international students are *sociological* learners, rather than physical learners, as they care more to the variables such as group, individual, pair, and teamwork, and level of teacher authority.

As for *personality learning styles*, they can be categorized as *extroverted* learners, because they are keen on working in groups and having relationship with others.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this NA study aimed to provide the BM syllabus designers with feedback from students to review and evaluate the current course if necessary, thus, prepare, organize and administer a language course that can meet the general and specific language needs of the international students. Furthermore, the data collected through this NA study is hoped to serve as valued input for all the stakeholders in the BM course, including students, teachers, and course planners.

With reference to the findings of the study, in this section, some implications will be suggested.

### **5.3.1 Implications for the Students**

The first and far most important implication is for students. Conducting needs analysis studies brings about a valuable outcome, which is creating an awareness of needs in students by asking them about their needs and preferences. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have pointed out, one of the things that makes learners of an LSP course different from learners of a general language course is that LSP learners are aware of their needs. Awareness of needs and realizing the crucial role of identifying one's learning style preferences can be highly beneficial for language learners. The findings of this study or similar studies help students think about, and try to discover their language needs and preferred learning styles. This knowledge of styles, needs, strengths and weaknesses, and would in turn enhance and enrich the students' learning experience. Moreover, knowing about ones needs and learning styles improves a learner's self-esteem and self-confidence. Learners feel more comfortable and confident when they know what they want to learn, what they need to learn, and how they can learn them best. Confident learners are more enthusiastic about achieving their goals, and are prepared to face the challenges of learning a new language.

### **5.3.2 Implications for the Teachers and Course Designers**

#### ***Recommendations about the Syllabus: Language Skills and Functions***

This section addresses the teachers and syllabus designers of the BM course. Since the most needed language skills are speaking, reading, listening and writing

respectively, the lessons planned for the course would better match those needs. Regarding the speaking skills, we can refer to the most frequently needed language functions. Based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, the most needed language functions are 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;

Each of the language functions above can perfectly be a topic for a lesson in a notional-functional syllabus. The current booklet that is used as the course book in the BM classes includes greeting, providing personal information, and asking for information, but the other key functions are missing. There are many different books available in Malaysia that focus on different aspects of the BM. These books use different approaches to teaching the language, such as teaching through grammar, reading, speaking or writing. Since the most important and necessary language skill for the international students is speaking, one book can be suggested to be used as the course book of the course. The title of the book is *Everyday Malay: Phrasebook and Dictionary*, written by Thomas G. Oey (2004), revised by Sharifah Zahra Alwee Alkardi, and published by Periplus Editions.

*Everyday Malay: Phrasebook and Dictionary* is a small book of 169 pages and contains seven chapters together with a bilingual English-Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Malaysia-English dictionary at the back. The book teaches BM through English and contains some useful information for the foreigners about Malaysian culture. The first chapter includes the basics of pronunciation, basic greetings, requests, questions and vocabulary. The second chapter focuses on the grammar of BM by introducing different parts of speech, tenses, imperatives and possessives. The next 5 chapters focus on different everyday language needs with topics such as Small Talks, Travel, Food and Drink, Shopping, and Practical necessities such as Banking, Filling out forms, Health and Illness and many more. Each chapter has a few pictures relevant to the topic. The bilingual dictionary at the back of the book contains the most frequently needed words by foreigners in Malaysia. The book is small in dimensions and can be carried around by the students all the time to be used as a reference. The only disadvantages of the book are that since it is not meant to be used in a language classroom, it does not have class activities and language exercises nor does it have listening materials. However, these shortcomings of the book can be easily overcome by providing extra resources and classroom activities for the learners.

Nevertheless, *Everyday Malay* is just an example among many useful resources available that can be used in the classrooms or as guidance and reference for the syllabus designers of the course to revise and adapt the current syllabus so that it could more adequately meet the learners' needs. There are a few online resources that can benefit the students greatly if introduced in class. The teachers can also use the activities and lessons in those websites to provide a variety of learning resources and activities for the students. Two examples of useful websites are *Learn*

*Bahasa Malaysia the Simple and Fun Way* (at <http://www.bahasa-malaysia-simple-fun.com/>), and *Basic Malay Language Course* (at <http://malay.pgoh13.com/>). In the first website (*Bahasa Malaysia, Simple and Fun*), there are lessons for basic to elementary learners. BM is taught through English and teaches BM mainly through conversations and key vocabularies. It also has lessons on grammar, pronunciation and spelling. It has lessons on topics such as Food, Malaysian history and culture and many more useful links to different websites that share information about Malaysian language and culture. In most of the lessons, photos and drawings are used to make the lessons more attractive and interesting.

The second website, *Basic Malay Language Course*, contains 64 lessons from basic to intermediate, which teach BM through English. It has lessons with grammatical topics or notional-functional topics. It provides lively pictures in some lessons. For each topic, it has also given extra information for those who want to know more about the delicate linguistic or cultural points. Moreover, it has a free online BM-English and English-BM dictionary.

These two websites are only two examples of the online free resources for learners of BM. Since the students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century deal with computers and the internet on a daily basis, it seems to be a good idea that the teachers encourage students to use online resources.

### ***Recommendations about Teaching and Learning Activities and Resources***

This section will provide several implications regarding the type of language teaching approaches that can be used by the teachers to enhance the delivery of the lessons. Furthermore, several types of learning activities and language exercises will be suggested to be implemented in the lesson plans that would improve the students'

learning experience by encouraging them to participate in the activities that best match their particular types of learning style. The implications will be presented in numbered paragraphs for easier reference.

1) Most importantly, teachers should keep in mind that students do not like working individually or in one large group. The students have reaffirmed in different responses that they learn more effectively when they interact with their peers and when listening to them. Thus, it is strongly recommended that teachers attempt to encourage students to share their ideas and do the activities in small groups or pairs.

2) The students like doing homework and are willing to spend a few hours a week on homework assignments. These homework assignments should encourage students to use their BM with Malaysians outside the classroom. In addition, some homework should be assigned to make students review the lessons taught in class.

3) The international students have mixed preferences regarding receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills. It is recommended that the learning activities emphasize both types of these language skills.

4) Regarding teaching new vocabulary, it is a good idea the students be asked to use the new words in a sentence, or try to infer the meaning of the new vocabulary in a context. Pictures can also be used to teach new vocabulary items. Besides, since the students like to use translation as part of the lessons, students should be allowed to look up unknown words in bilingual dictionaries.

5) The students prefer immediate correction of their spoken mistakes. The teachers are therefore encouraged not to delay encouraging and positive corrective feedback on the students' errors. Moreover, the students can be asked to correct their own or their peers' writing.

6) Students welcome all types of audio-visual aids, especially visual resources such as videos, pictures, posters or PowerPoint presentations. Teachers should try to use different types of these resources to create intriguing lessons that would encourage students' participation.

7) Other types of highly interactive class activities such as language games, role-plays, pair work and group work are strongly recommended to be used as part of lesson plans.

8) Discussing and exchanging information about Malaysian culture should be implemented in the coursework, as the students have acknowledged that a language cannot be learned separate from its cultural context.

9) It seems to be a good idea to use translation into English as part of the lessons. However, it is recommended that the teacher speaks in BM as much as possible. The students can also be asked to memorize conversations since the duration of the course is not enough for them to learn useful conversations and function over time. However, the students should be encouraged to use the conversations and functions they learn in their daily interactions to ensure that they would remember them throughout their stay in Malaysia.

10) Teachers should bear in mind that students feel satisfied and encouraged when they test their competence in BM in their real life encounters. It is however, highly beneficial to give students frequent quizzes to motivate them to review the lessons and monitor their progress.

12) Finally, the majority of the students are encouraged and motivated to attend the BM classes. The teachers should exert their utmost attempt to maintain and enhance this motivation by adapting the lessons to their language needs and their learning

style preferences. Nevertheless, since this course is compulsory, some of the participants might not be internally motivated to attend the classes. Thus, it is the challenge of the teacher to ensure that class activities and the content of the syllabus are rich enough to encourage even the unmotivated students to enjoy the course and more importantly, to learn.

#### **5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research was a formal Needs Analysis study conducted in the University of Malaya to assess the international students' needs, wants, and learning style preferences regarding the official language of Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia. The purpose of this study was to inform the stakeholders of the BM course, of the students' language needs and learning style preferences. The aim was for the syllabus designers of the course to make any necessary changes to the syllabus and lesson plans to adapt it to the students' needs and preferences. Due to lack of previous official research and recorded findings concerning the Bahasa Malaysia course, this study can be considered a preliminary research or an initiating step for several further researches on this topic. The suggestions and recommendations will be made in numbered paragraphs.

1) If a similar research, with the same methodology and procedure were to be made again, the most important suggestion would be for the researcher to increase the number of participants in both phases of the study. Due to different limitations, this study could elicit data from almost half of the international students who had attended the course in a semester. A future NA study that could address all the participants of the course in a given semester or even the students who have finished the course in the previous semesters would provide much more reliable and

comprehensive data, thus enabling generalization to the whole population of international students in UM.

2) Different studies could also be conducted to evaluate the effects of variables such as attitude, gender, age, level of English language proficiency or level of tertiary programme, on the students' language needs or learning style preferences.

3) A study could be carried out to compare language needs and learning style preferences, and achievements between international students attending a BM course in the University of Malaya and other university in Malaysia.

4) An experimental research could be done that would use different syllabi for two groups of learners with an aim to compare learning outcomes and achievements of the two groups, thus suggesting the more effective and successful approach.