

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusion and implications of this study. It comprises the summary of the findings, conclusions, pedagogical implications, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Findings

The sections below describe the summary of the findings for each of the research questions formed earlier in Chapter I of this study.

##### 5.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the core values / invariant meanings of determiners (i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers) in English and Bahasa Malaysia?

From the Entity Number analysis, it was found that most of the demonstratives and quantifiers in English and BM possess marked semantic properties which distinguish them from one another. Besides, the grammatical number analysis employed to the noun referents in English and BM suggests that the deployment of the grammatical number in these languages is dissimilar. The noun number in English corresponds to the semantic properties of the quantifiers and demonstratives which means that the singularity or plurality of the noun referent indicates the meaning of the demonstratives and quantifiers which co-occur whether ‘ONE’ or ‘MORE THAN ONE’ (see section 4.1.3, page 152).

For instance, the invariant meaning of the indicator of large entity such as ‘a large number of’ is realised as ‘indefinite bigger quantity of plural countable noun (greater than many)’ as it occurred with the plural noun referents as in ‘a large number of British industries’ and ‘a large number of people’ (see section 4.1.2.2.2(c), page 108). The ‘-s’ signal of the noun referent ‘industry-s’ designates the meaning of ‘MORE THAN ONE’ and at the same time, ‘people’, although does not signify any morphological identity which indicate ‘MORE THAN ONE’, this noun referent postulates the meaning of a plural entity as it is identified as ‘an aggregate of human beings’ which means ‘MORE THAN ONE’.

There were also other instances where the noun referents did not signify any ‘-s’ morphemes but denote the meaning of ‘MORE THAN ONE’ as in the case of irregular plural such as ‘plenty of women’ (see section 4.1.2.2.2(d), page 111). However, this was resolved through the grammatical number analysis by determining the semantic properties of the irregular plural (i.e. women) as ‘an aggregate of female human beings’. On the other hand, there were also circumstances where the noun referents were identified as ‘ONE’ despite the occurrence of ‘-s’ signal which signifies ‘MORE THAN ONE’. Such occurrence was traced in ‘[47b] some welcome news’ when ‘news’ is morphologically identified as ‘news-Ø’ but not ‘new-s’. The identification of ‘-s’ as in ‘new-s’ results in the word losing its point of departure as ‘new’ is not a noun but its part of speech is identified as an adjective. Hence, the ‘-s’ is not an indicator of plurality but a signifier which makes the word to hold the semantic properties of a noun.

The findings have indicated that lexical items which designate similar semantic properties may occur interchangeably in sentences. The quantifiers like ‘numerous’ and ‘a great number of’, ‘the majority of’ and ‘most’, ‘a lot of’ and ‘lots of’, ‘a little’ and ‘a bit of’, ‘several’, ‘a few’, ‘a couple of’ and ‘a number of’ were identified as designating identical semantic properties as these words are able to be used alternatively in the

sentences as the noun referents which co-occur are sharing similar semantic properties in terms of their countability (see Appendix, Table 4.1.2.1, page 315 and Table 4.1.2.2, page 326).

Besides, from the analysis, there were two functions or meanings realised for the quantifier ‘any’ which distinguish one another as each functions to quantify noun referents in different context (i.e. indicating optional entity and zero entity). Moreover, the analysis has also managed to certain extent solve the problem of identifying the invariant meaning of ‘each’, ‘every’ and ‘all’ which are identified as more or less similar through the prescriptivists’ view (i.e. ‘each’ means ‘every’ member of the noun referent is involved that embraces ‘all’).

On the contrary, the Entity Number System employed for the BM noun referents designates that noun referent in BM always carries the meaning of ‘ONE’ despite the occurrence of quantifiers which indicate the meaning of ‘MORE THAN ONE’ as nouns which indicate plurality are reduplicated where these nouns do not require quantifiers to occur. For instance, in ‘*ratusan guru-Ø*’ (tr. hundreds of teachers), the zero indicator highlights the meaning of the noun referent ‘*guru*’ (tr. teacher) as ‘ONE’. This is opposite to the meaning of ‘*ratusan*’ which means ‘more than one hundred’ (i.e. MORE THAN ONE) that denotes plurality (see section 4.1.2.2.2(a), page 101). Plurality of a noun referent in BM is indicated through the occurrence of ‘entity-entity’ which means that the noun referent undergoes reduplication unlike English where this is indicated by ‘entity-s’.

The analysis of invariant meaning has revealed that although ‘*banyak*’, ‘*ramai*’ and ‘*para*’ are defined more or less similarly (i.e. indicators of large entity), each of these quantifiers carries an invariant meaning which makes them to be non-identical as they are used in dissimilar contexts (see section 4.1.2.2.2(b), page 105). Likewise, there were also some slight differences realised for the indicators of the whole entity (i.e.

'*sekalian*' and '*seluruh*', '*semua*' and '*segala*') through the context of their occurrences as they are non-interchangeable. At the same time, from the analysis, there were a few quantifiers which were identified possessing identical meanings such as '*ratusan*' and '*beratus-ratus*', '*ribuan*' and '*beribu-ribu*', '*setengah*' and '*separuh*', '*setiap*' and '*tiap-tiap*' (see Appendix, Table 4.1.2.1, page 315 and Table 4.1.2.2, page 326).

The countability function of the demonstratives and quantifiers whether or not to be used to quantify count or mass noun referent is clear through the Entity Number analysis. However, the noun number does not have any effect in determining the precise amount (degree) of the quantifier (i.e. the scale whether big or small) and the proximity of the demonstratives (i.e. proximal or distal). Therefore, the context of occurrence needs to be taken into consideration in identification of the invariant meaning of the demonstratives and quantifiers in English and BM which have at least some differences if not salient in between them. Moreover, Reid (1990:77) opined that nouns are employable as both 'mass' and 'count' referents and hence, their "morphological identity does not resolve their interpretation but it must be resolved by the context." Various dictionaries that resemble the prescriptivists' view of grammar although provide information related to the function of determiners whether or not applied for the countable or uncountable noun, the invariant meaning (s) is not explicated. The analysis of Entity Number with invariant meaning has undoubtedly furnished the meaning or function of these lexical items more appropriately.

Overall, the analysis of invariant meaning performed to the demonstratives and quantifiers in English illustrates that these determiners are defined through its function to modify either singular (i.e. count or mass) or plural noun referent (i.e. count) whereas BM quantifiers are defined through its function to modify either animate or inanimate noun referent.

**5.1.2 Research Question 2: Is there any difference in producing determiners in English noun phrases between the experimental group (which received the semantic-based explicit contrastive grammar instruction of the use of determiners, i.e., demonstratives and quantifiers) and control group (which received no treatment)?**

The findings of the quantitative method (i.e. quasi-experimental design) have shown that the semantic-based explicit contrastive grammar instruction has developed the students' use of the demonstratives and quantifiers in producing the English noun phrases. For BM, although the results suggest that there is a significant improvement in the scores achieved by the students in the experimental group between the pre-test and post-test, no significant difference was found between the scores of the experimental and control group (see section 4.2.5, page 193).

From the students' English writings, there were some instances of the BM influence identified in the way of composing and constructing the English noun phrases. However, it was not salient and moreover, the questionnaires that were distributed to some of the students after the post-test have revealed that these students resorted to their L1 (i.e. BM) when they had problems constructing sentences in English (i.e. limited vocabulary). Hence, their L1 helped them to produce sentences in English instead of impeding their skills in English writings (see section 4.2.4, page 190).

All these findings suggest that these grammar items (i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers) are not taught to the learners in isolation but through the analysis of their occurrence by emphasising the semantic properties of the noun referent (i.e. singular [count or mass] and plural [count] for English, animate [human or non-human] and inanimate for BM) and additionally, exposure to the linguistic environment on how these words are being employed is considered as equally important.

## 5.2 Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Chapter II of this study has described the transitional period from one method to another in the teaching of grammar to ESL learners by discussing the pros and cons of each approach. Whether or not to teach grammar in an ESL classroom and if it is taught, the best method to deliver the input of grammar always remain debatable. To begin with, the implicit and explicit methods were employed to teach the ESL grammar to the learners. In implicit way of teaching, the grammar items are not exposed to the learners overtly but grammar is introduced in context with meaningful function-based activities. In other words, grammar is not learned but acquired incidentally without any focus over its form which is formally taught.

At the same time, in explicit teaching of grammar, the grammar rules are presented explicitly to the learners either by deductive approach (i.e. grammar rules are exposed in the beginning before arriving at the language samples or practice) or inductive approach (i.e. language samples or practice are provided before explanation on underlying rules are emphasised). Grammar rules are however, presented in isolation without any relation to the context of its occurrence as it is believed that accuracy is more important than fluency when using the language.

Both methods were found favourable in the teaching of grammar. Nevertheless, the effects seem to be peripheral when these methods are employed independently. Therefore, the integration of both methods in teaching the ESL grammar is welcome as it was found that this has a greater tendency in improving the learners' language proficiency in terms of accuracy and fluency (DeKeyser, 2003 cited in Hulstijn, 2005; Ellis, 1995; Ellis, 2006; Li & Tian, 2008).

In Malaysian Education System, the aim of the KBSM (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*) syllabus is to develop the students' ability to use the English language appropriately in real life situation. The Communicative Language Teaching

approach (CLT) is seen prominent to provide meaningful contextualised input to the students to be able to use the language. In this approach, grammar is not taught in isolation but it is integrated into the four language skills (i.e. reading, listening, speaking and writing) as fluency turns out to be the primary concern. As grammar explanation becomes supplementary in CLT, the ability of the students to use the language accurately especially in speaking and writing becomes disputable although the students may be perceived as successful communicators. Thus, the explicit instruction over the forms is seen indispensable in order for accuracy to be attained. This gives way to the form-focused instruction to be highlighted as another method which introduces the form (i.e. rules of grammar) with meaning-based activities.

As both form and function are inseparable entities in learning a language, in this study, the Saussurean view of language is adopted and applied to the ESL learners to see its effectiveness in developing the learners' use of language. In the Saussurean sense, language works as a system and therefore each lexical item carries a vague or abstract meaning (i.e. invariant meaning) which differs from one another and at the same time, reciprocates with the message which is being communicated (Tobin, 1990). Based on this concept, the function of word(s) in a language is realised through its occurrence in real context and not merely contorted language examples. The linguistic analysis performed is not to identify how language should be used but rather how it is being used in real context for effective communication of messages to take place.

The integration of meaning or semantic-based approach into the explicit teaching of grammar seems to be applicable to develop the L2 learners' use of the language to some extent. However, the issue of L1 (first language) interference into the learning process of L2 (second language) appears to be another drawback in learning appropriate use of L2 as it is believed that the students' native language serves as the source of inappropriate use of L2 (Marlyna Maros et al., 2007; Nor Hashimah

Jalaluddin et al., 2008). As for that reason, this study employed the contrastive grammar with semantic-based explicit grammar instruction to teach grammar items to the Malay ESL learners.

In this study, the element of linguistic meaning analysis was integrated into the teaching and learning method to see its effectiveness in developing the use of the grammatical category of determiners (i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers) in producing English noun phrases. For the first research question, the data collected were authentic language samples which were extracted from materials of established standard (i.e. The Independent and *Utusan Malaysia*) and English (Concordancers) and BM (*Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*) written corpus. In order to determine the invariant meaning of each demonstrative and quantifier in English and BM, linguistic analysis was performed on the language samples using the Entity Number System (Reid, 1991; Tobin, 1990). These meanings were then instructed explicitly to the students through a quasi-experimental design to see its effectiveness in developing the students' use of these grammatical items in their writings.

The deployment of the Entity Number System or grammatical number analysis in English was discovered profoundly beneficial in imparting the knowledge of grammar items (i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers) to the ESL learners. The signals of the noun referent (i.e. '-Ø' and '-s') which take the meaning of 'ONE' and 'MORE THAN ONE' entity were identified to determine the semantic properties of the noun entity (i.e. singular, plural or mass). The difference identified in a language in terms of morphology, for instance 'book-Ø' and 'book-s', 'tiger-Ø' and 'tiger-s' (i.e. when the nouns are inflected) gives information on singular and plural number which differentiate the grammatical categories of a particular noun (Eberhard, 1997:147). For instance, the morphological identity (i.e. '-s') in 'house-s' indicates the meaning of 'more than one house' whereas 'house-Ø' signifies the meaning of 'one house'.



Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that the signals of a noun referent may not necessarily tally with the noun referent. There are a few circumstances where some noun referents are not inflected with an ‘-s’ but carry the meaning of ‘MORE THAN ONE’. ‘Women-Ø’, ‘people-Ø’ and ‘staff-Ø’ are some words of this kind to be mentioned. These words although disclose a ‘zero signal’, the zero indicator does not signify the meaning of ‘ONE’. This issue of contrasting Entity Number signals does not end at this point but it further expands to other words like ‘news-Ø’, ‘politics-Ø’, and ‘economics-Ø’ which designate ‘zero entity’ that signifies the meaning of ‘ONE’ despite the occurrence of ‘-s’. Likewise, words that have spanned the semantic opposition of the Entity Number like ‘trousers-Ø’, ‘scissors-Ø’, ‘suspenders-Ø’ and ‘spectacles-Ø’ are also given attention to solve the problem areas of Entity Number. In spite of this, how the noun referent in focus is classified or grouped seems to be the immediate solution for defining the grammatical number of a noun referent as it was mentioned by Reid (1991:50), “how you categorise what is being counted affects the results.”

The linguistic analysis performed on the language samples in this study could be indeed beneficial to the language teachers to apply in the classroom as this study has made an attempt to reveal the importance of identification of meaning and message as a whole in order to define the function of a grammar item. The strategy of identifying the semantic properties of a noun referent by categorisation could be applied by the students in the language classroom when learning to use appropriate demonstratives and quantifiers. As for that reason, ESL teachers should first of all expose students the knowledge on how to categorise things that they have intended to perform counting so that demonstratives and quantifiers are appropriately used in writings to generate appropriate noun phrases despite the fact that observation of the countability of a noun referent may fluctuate from one point of view to another.

The findings of this study is parallel to the Saussurean's claim that language is flexible and inconsistent where there is no predetermined principle that indicates how it should be used but it all depends on how the message is being communicated in context and therefore, language should be taught as 'a system as a whole' but not as discrete items.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The semantic-based explicit contrastive grammar instruction has indicated a significant development – based on the inferential analyses (see section 4.2.5, page 193) – among the Malay ESL learners in the use of demonstratives and quantifiers in producing English noun phrases. It can be recommended that if meaning is integrated, explicitly, with contrastive grammar instruction; and practised by the ESL teachers in the classroom to teach the grammatical category of determiners (i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers), it might help the learners better in comparison to the other methods, e.g., without teaching it explicitly.

The teaching of determiners commences with the analysis of the semantic features of the noun referent and therefore, determiners like demonstratives and quantifiers are best taught by relating them to the meaning of the noun referent (i.e. ONE for singular and mass referent and MORE THAN ONE for plural referent) based on its context of occurrence. Subsequent to that, it is greatly suggested that the students in the ESL classroom are exposed to the language samples (i.e. sentences used in a context instead of isolated sentences) which are extracted or derived from materials of established standard (i.e. newspapers or magazines) along the process of learning the language. A vast exposure to the use of the language in real context with the integration of explicit meaning can be a valuable strategy to be adopted by each language educator to be exercised in the ESL classroom.

The findings obtained for the BM writings that served as *incidental* in this study suggest that the teaching of demonstratives and quantifiers in this language should also begin with the analysis of the semantic properties of the noun referent, whether animate (i.e. human or non-human) or inanimate noun. Similar to that of English, it is deemed necessary to provide practice that are taken or simplified from the real language samples to develop the students' use of these grammar items.

The interference of L1 (i.e. BM) into the students' English writings was not salient. In spite of this, this study recommends the use of contrastive grammar (i.e. English and BM) in the ESL classroom as a method of teaching grammar items to the learners as it helps them to understand the *concept* of the grammatical devices in both languages by comparing the similarities and differences. Additionally, this may also inculcate the awareness among the ESL learners over the existence of a varied system in different languages which then leads them to value the uniqueness or rather the exclusiveness of a language.

The importance of integrating the linguistic element into the teaching and learning process in an ESL classroom appears necessary. Teachers are not merely language educators and this role needs to be expanded. This study serves as a platform for the language teachers to consider the inclusion of elements of linguistic analysis to reinforce the pedagogic explanation. Hence, each language instructor to some extent should be able to take a stance to perform the role of a language researcher before teaching the language.

The ability of performing the linguistic analysis over authentic language samples on how the lexical and non-lexical categories are being utilised in real context is one of the advantages that should not be overlooked by language teachers. The linguistic knowledge helps the language teachers to develop course book materials to be used in the language classroom as a source of reference to the students. Saussureans believe that

language is not merely a rule-governed behaviour and each lexical item in a language is a sign which holds a vague meaning that is revealed through the context of its use (Tobin, 1990). As such, the study of meaning (i.e. semantics) based on its use (i.e. pragmatics) is eminent in determining the various functions of the grammatical categories in a language by scrutinising how messages and meanings are interpreted.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research and Conclusion**

Determiners in English consist of four categories. They are demonstratives (i.e. ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘those’ and ‘these’), possessives (i.e. ‘his’, ‘my’, ‘your’, ‘its’, and ‘Radika’s), quantifiers (i.e. ‘a few’, ‘many’, ‘much’, ‘a large amount of’ and ‘any’) and articles (i.e. definite ‘the’, indefinite ‘a’ and zero article). All these four elements are dependent on each other to form an appropriate complete noun phrase in English. From the analysis of the students’ English writings, although generally the percentages of inappropriate use of demonstratives and quantifiers were able to be decreased from the pre-test to post-test after the treatment, the patterns of the students’ English writings indicated inappropriate uses of articles that were encountered recurrently.

The students’ responses through the questionnaire illustrated that albeit exposed to the grammar of the language (i.e. overtly or covertly) in primary and secondary education, the ESL learners are still not aware of the appropriate use of the articles (i.e. when to use and when not to use). As such, further research –other than Sudhakaran’s (1999) (see section 2.7, page 29) – on the use of articles among the ESL learners is needed to find out the causes of the inappropriate use of articles to occur in their English writings and bring to light the most appropriate strategy of teaching this grammar item to the ESL learners. This study has limited the demonstratives and quantifiers as the determiners in focus. However, as a noun phrase is made up of determiners (i.e. demonstratives, quantifiers, possessives and articles) and a noun head,

in order to achieve development in students' use of noun phrases, the semantic-based explicit contrastive grammar instruction is suggested to be applied to teach all four categories of determiners to see its effectiveness in generating complete appropriate noun phrases in English.

Besides, as this study was only performed on the Malay ESL learners, the findings obtained cannot be generalised to students who are not the native speakers of Malay. Therefore, researchers in future may conduct this study by including other students (i.e. Chinese, Indian and others where Malay is not the native tongue) to see the effectiveness of the semantic-based explicit contrastive grammar instruction between English and BM to all ESL learners despite varied ethnicity. This is due to the fact that BM is not only the first language for the native speakers of Malay, but it is the national language of the country. Consequently, it has become the first language for most of the Malaysians as they are exposed to BM as the medium of instruction in schools.

On the other hand, for BM, the uses of reduplicated nouns despite the occurrence of the quantifiers which indicate 'MORE THAN ONE' entity (see section 4.2.4, page 190) was found as a recurring pattern in the students' writings. This indicates that the students are not only facing difficulties in learning the grammatical category of determiners in English but also in their L1. As for that reason, further research is required to identify the reasons for such occurrences in the students' writings and simultaneously suggest the appropriate teaching strategies to infuse the knowledge of appropriate use of reduplicated nouns in BM.

As an overall conclusion, perhaps the results of this study and other similar studies would be to some extent beneficial to be attempted by the ESL teachers in their language classroom for whatever positive outcome it might bring in developing, improving, increasing, and further strengthening and sustaining the level of proficiency

in the English language among the Malaysian learners. The existence of eclectic teaching approaches, either conventional or contemporary is handy but educators are to be selective and should be able to personalise the context of the teaching and learning process to meet their own students' level of understanding.