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Articles and correspondence on editorial matters should be addressed to:

Dr Su-Hie Ting
Chief Editor
Issues in Language Studies
Centre for Language Studies
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak
Malaysia
shting@cls.unimas.my

For further details, visit www.ils.unimas.my

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Table 1
Types of communication strategies used across age groups

Figure 1. Frequency of communication strategy use across age groups

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Follow APA style (6th ed.) for citation and referencing, with the exception of Malay names which should be spelt in full in the text and the reference list.

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A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF BIDAYUH JAGOI PATUN

Mary Fatimah Subet¹
Shanthi Nadarajan²
Dayang Sariah Abang Suhai³
Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
¹sufatimah@cls.unimas.my
²nshanthi@cls.unimas.my
³asdsariah@cls.unimas.my

Abstract

Bidayuh Pantun or Patun remains a under researched topic in Borneo studies and language research due to the difficulties associated with obtaining critical, poetic information in oral culture, language variations and societal mobility. Existing data from anthologies however provide little detail about the instrinsic and extrinsic features ascribed to the poem by the people who produce and use them. This paper attempts to explore patun from the Jagoi community. In this study, the structural aspects, themes and moral values of 47 patun from the Jagoi community were analysed. The initial explanations suggested by the poet were further analysed to determine the various structural features to place it alongside existing mainstream lyric poetry. The analysis of the intrinsic features showed that good rhythmic patun has four to six words per line and eight to 12 syllables per line, and the final syllables of each line has assonance and consonance patterns of a-a-a-a and a-b-a-b. The themes of the patun include love, advice, forgiveness, beliefs, hopelessness and happiness, and the moral values take the form of subtle advice and admonishments. The Bidayuh patun is indeed a projection of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, and emotions of the community.

Keywords: Patun, unique, mutual discourse, structural aspects, rhythmic verses

Introduction

The Bidayuh community in Sarawak is the second largest indigenous group in Sarawak, after the Iban, with a population of 198,473 making up 8% of the Sarawak population of 2,471,140 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak, 2012). The Bidayuh live in predominantly Bidayuh areas such as Siburan, Serian, Padawan, Bau, Lundu and Samarahan. The Bidayuh groups in Bau believe that their ancestors originated from the top of *Bung Bratak* (Bratak Hill) before they dispersed into different areas and set up distinct linguistic groups as a result of attacks by warring communities. Today, a great majority of Bidayuh in Bau are Christians (Roman

Catholics in particular) and Singai continues to be used as a language of the church. This is mainly because Singai was one of the first Bidayuh groups that converted from animistic traditions to Christianity following the arrival of Christian missionaries during the British colonial era.

The Bidayuh are made up of several distinct linguistic groups as Bukar Sadong, Biatah, Singai and Jagoi. Jagoi, for instance, is the largest linguistic group in Bau which is a region located approximately 70 km west of Kuching, the capital city of Sarawak. The language used by this group, which is also called Jagoi, is not only used as a medium of daily interaction among its members, but also spoken by other Bidayuh linguistic groups living in the area as such as Serembuk and Singai. According to Chua (2009), within these dialects Jagoi exists as the dialect with the most speakers, (approximately 7,500) but the speakers can amount to more than 30,400 when the other groups, Serambu, Bratak and Singai, are taken into consideration. While a number of dialects are spoken by different dialectal groups in the region, Jagoi remains distinct from the other dialects due to its phonology. This has been attested by Rensch, Rensch, Joeb, and Ridu (2006) where despite all Bidayuh dialects having only liquid tap/flap [r] when syllable initial and a voiced apical trill [r] when word final, the Jagoi dialects would assume it to have a lateral quality, with speakers thinking of it as /l/ to mention a case (p. 39). Incidentally, all dialects in the region have lexical and syntactic differences with some language being more pronounced than others depending on the context. Although mutual intelligibility may not be high among these groups, the Bidayuh community share some common literature and language works.

In terms of common literature, *Patun* is a traditional poetic form that remains an integral part of Bidayuh community in Sarawak. Transmitted across generations as is the case for many oral traditions, the Bidayuh *patun* is viewed by the community as beautiful rhythmic verse that not only encapsulates, but serves as a source of shared experiences, values, and beliefs that needs to be maintained. Collectively owned by Bidayuh community, *patun* is considered very much alive, often learned by heart and recited from time to time in rituals and official gatherings. As an important source of culture, *patun* helps unite members of the Bidayuh community especially when recited collectively and individual during special events, gatherings and festivities. *Patun* is mainly recited by those who have high status within the community such as *tukang gawai* or *pembaca mantra* (ritual masters) during the annual harvest festival celebration. The recitation is usually accompanied by the beating of traditional drums or *bergendang*, a practice which is not uncommon among the Sarawak Malays as well.

Compared to Malay *pantun*, Bidayuh *patun* remains unique due to its distinctive imagery and cultural features. For instance, while both poetic forms share common features such as number of verses (e.g., mostly four-line verses), the unique socio-cultural elements, visual imageries and language style used in Bidayuh *patun* help create an imagery depicting an inclusive community, landscape features and communal engagement as members partake in an exchange of ideas, beliefs, and experiences during *patun* recital. These unique features need to be explored to provide a better understanding of *patun* and Bidayuh community and highlight their cultural artefact over time.

Taking these various features into consideration, the emphasis of this paper is restricted to the four-line *patun* of the Jagoi Bidayuh community. The analysis of the intrinsic aspects of the Bidayuh *patun* focuses on the structural features such as the language style, rhyme, imagery, tone, feeling, message, attitude while the analysis of the extrinsic aspects focuses on the history and socio-cultural elements that help shape the *patun*, particularly the themes and moral values.

Methodology

This is an interpretive study in that the researchers did not in any way participate in the actual *patun* recitation activities. From collection of 83 *patun* collected from the four Bidayuh linguistic groups (Bukar Sadong, Bidatah, Jagoi and Singai), 47 *patun* identified as belonging to the Bidayuh Jagoi community were selected for analysis. The *patun* were recited by three elders from the community, namely, Ji'iam anak Daek, Ahiem Anak Majin, and Siah anak Daek. They were then invited to explain the verses. The analysis of the intrinsic elements is a follow up from the event and it focuses on structural features such as the stanza, lines, and words counts, syllable, and rhymes as outlined by Hashim Awang (1984). The extrinsic features of the *patun* will be explained alongside based on what has been explicated from the discussions with the elders. The role *bergendang* plays in shaping the intrinstic elements of *patun* is not included in the scope of the study.

Analysis and Discussion

According to literary critics, for any verse to be considered as a *pantun*, they must first satisfy a number of intrinsic and extrinsic features.

Intrinsic features of Bidayuh Jagoi *patun*

For starters, the last word of the first line must rhyme with the last word of the third line, while the last word of the second line must rhyme with the last word of the fourth line to give it a rhyming pattern (e.g., *a-b-a-b*). Furthermore, each line may consist of eight or more syllables (e.g., 9, 10, and 12). The first two lines serve as a lead-in for the message that can be found in the last two lines. The lead-in, also known as the "rhymer", serves as an indicator of the message that appears in the concluding lines of a *pantun*.

In terms of lines in a stanza, Bidayuh *patun* of the Jagoi community mostly appear as four-line stanzas as shown in the example in Table 1.

Table 1
Joget Sowa Bauh by Ji'iam anak Daek, 61 years old

Tumu bikudu di puun sorai,
    Di maket jajak bijua tobuh,
Oku bilagu di onu Gawai,   →   (4 lines per stanza)
    Bilagu joget sowa bauh.
Di maket jajak bijua tobuh,
    Tobuh obuo, bijua saang,
Bilagu joget sowa bauh,   →   (4 lines per stanza)
    Samah samah 'to odi ngabang.
Tobuh ouo bijua saang,
    Saang, banuok, bisapur kuduk,
Samah otto odi ngabang,   →   (4 lines per stanza)
    Mak nuok bogok jak 'to mabuk.
Saang banuok bisapur kuduk,
    Kuduk oggi bisapur roee,
Sina garang bisapur mabu,.   →   (4 lines per stanza)
    Mabuk oggi yak nimur kaee.
Kuduk oggi bisapur roee,
    Roee inoh bilagi pongan,
Asal nye mabuk mak yak bikaee,   →   (4 lines per stanza)
    Mitiek map samah bidingan.

All five stanzas in the song are composed in lines of four per stanza. Most of the *patun* of the Bidayuh's Jagoi community are composed in this manner. The total number of lines in a stanza of *patun* – be it two, four, six or eight – create its own uniqueness. The four-line stanzas as shown in the above example are similar to those of the Malay *pantun.*

In addition to the number of lines, Jagoi *patun* is also created by carefully taking into account the number of words per line in a stanza. A good *patun* usually comprises four to six words per line. In terms of prosody, four to six words per line will make a good rhythmic *patun* and will sound orderly when recited. Examples of four to six words in a line are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Classical Bidayuh Patun (Part 1) by Ahiem Anak Majin, 66 years old

Jika tumbuh rada di pintu,   (5 words per line)
    Papan jawa batang rimbutan,   (4 words per line)
Jika la sungguh pasca begitu,   →   (5 words per line)
    badan di nyawa saya jurahkan.   (5 words per line)
Duak cina duak melayu,   (4 words per line)
    Duak tambi menjadi enam,   (4 words per line)
Apa kena' bunga dilayu,   →   (4 words per line)
    Cara puhun mula ditanam.   (4 words per line)
Betul-betul bertanam sireh,   (4 words per line)
    Batang juredang di tengah ngemas,   (5 words per line)
Jika sebetul tuan berpilih,   →   (4 words per line)
    bercarik dayang bertanduk emas.   (4 words per line)

Batang juredang di tengah ngemas,		(5 words per line)
Burung tekukur terebang tinggi,		(4 words per line)
Bercarik dayang bertanduk emas,	→	(4 words per line)
bencarik ekor yang bershama tinggi.		(5 words per line)
Mudah-mudahan limau berbuah,		(4 words per line)
Sigeklah batang lirimau manis,	→	(4 words per line)
Mudah-mudahan badan bertuah,		(4 words per line)
Mendapat bunga sekuntum manis.		(4 words per line)
Rumah bugok pintu sembilan,		(4 words per line)
Naik terubuh tiada' rubuh,		(4 words per line)
Bagai pugguk merindu rimbulan,	→	(4 words per line)
Menanti jatuh tiada jatuh.		(4 words per line)
Naik terubuh tiada rubuh,		(4 words per line)
Tanamlah cabik ngenak berdaun,		(4 words per line)
Nanti jatuh tiada berjatuh,	→	(4 words per line)
Biarku nanti seribu taun.		(4 words per line)

A number of four to six words per line in the above examples make a *patun* rhythmic when recited, and this leads to eight to twelve syllables per line in a stanza of quatrain as shown in Table 3. When recited, the *patun* sounds pleasing to the ear.

Table 3
Classical Bidayuh Patun (Part 2) by Ahiem Anak Majin, 66 years old

Ro/mah/ go/dang/ ber/din/ding/ ba/ta/ ,		(9 syllables per line)
Te/pat/ ting/gal/ ra/ja/ ba/ha/ri/,		(9 syllables per line)
Se/re/mat/ ting/gal/ pe/nyu/dah/lah/ ka/ta/,	→	(11 syllables per line)
U/mur/ pan/jang/ be/jum/pa/ la/gi./		(9 syllables per line)
Ma/nih/ be/na /bu/ah /ram/bu/tan/		(9 syllables per line)
Bu/ah/ pa/di/ di/ lan/tai/ ko/ta/	→	(9 syllables per line)
Ma/nih/ be/na/ pa/ras/mu/ tu/an/		(9 syllables per line)
Te/me/sih/ ko/pi/ ta/ru/h di/gu/la		(10 syllables per line)
Li/mak/ la/ li/mak/ ja/ri/ di/ ta/ngan/,		(10 syllables per line)
Du/ak/ ta/ngan/ ja/di/ se/pu/luh./,	→	(9 syllables per line)
Su/dah/ me/na/nam/ bu/ah/ je/rin/gan/		(10 syllables per line)
Pa/ri/ak/ mu/da/ be/rik /di/ tum/buh/		(10 syllables per line)
Du/ak/ la/ du/ak/ ta/ngan/ ja/di /se/pu/luh/,		(12 syllables per line)
Ta/nam/lah/ bu/luh /di /da/lam /pa/dang/	→	(10 syllables per line)
Pa/ri/ak /mu/da /be/rik/ di/tu/muh/		(10 syllables per line)
Ji/ka/lau /tu/muh/ ja/ngan /di/bu/ang/		(10 syllables per line)
Bu/ang/lah/ ba/ju/ ka/re/na/ ta/peh/		(10 syllables per line)
Ta/pis/laa/ di/a /ma/ngan/tas/ ku/lit/	→	(10 syllables per line)
Bu/ang/lah /ma/lu/ ke/ra/na /ka/seh/		(10 syllables per line)
Ji/ka/lau/ ka/seh/ me/nyan/di / ba/it/		(10 syllables per line)
En/cik/ a/wan/ a/nak /pang/hu/lu/		(9 syllables per line)
Du/duk/ ber/ma/in/ i/kan/ be/na/ga/	→	(10 syllables per line)
Ji/kal/au /tu/an/ ma/ti/nya/ da/hu/lu		(11 syllables per line)
Tung/gu/ sa/ya / pin/tu /syur/ga		(8 syllables per line)

The next intrinsic feature of *patun* is the final syllable of each line. Assonance and consonance play a vital role through the existence of similar vowel sounds at line endings such as *a-a-a-a,* or *a-b-a-b* that provide a heightened tempo or a signal to the context and content of the recital. This is similar to the rhythmic alliteration such as *a-b-c-a-b-c* in a sextet stanza and *a-b-c-d a-b-c-d* in an octave stanza. Table 4 shows more examples of *patun* that adhere to the rules of this orderly rhyme and metre.

Table 4
Bikalan Stiang by Ji'iam anak Daek, 61 years old

Tongon butan di pang olan,		a
Sadab poyang bikalan stiang,		b
Ninga bitang sinok bulan,	→	a
Ngokab jawa doras tiring.		b
Sadab poyang bikalan stiang,		a
Topat mamuh bujang di nouh,		b
Ngokab jawa doras tiring,	→	a
Tirang nyoka bulan ayuh.		b
Topat mamuh bujang di nouh,		a
Kajon bilajon bigati-gati,		b
Oggi di mamuh di piin koruh,	→	a
Oggi di maad kakon bilidi.		b
Kajon bilajon bigati-gati,		a
Ninga ki sobak piin mo koruh,		b
Oggi di maad kakon bilidi,	→	a
Oggi di odi nakon bauh.		b

There is a rhythmic assonance pattern of *a-a-a-a* as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Patun Patiek by Ji'iam Anak Daek, 61 years old

Bojuh bauh sluar bauh,		a
Kan eh pakai rasu yak towoh,		a
Sudik eh patuh, sikiek eh paguh,	→	a
Mun baai di piliek duwoh.		a

A good *patun* usually binds itself to the intrinsic features and these help maintain its character and uniqueness. The features must be followed closely by the creators of these *patun* to retain their significance.

Extrinsic features of Bidayuh Jagoi *patun*

The analysis of the extrinsic features of the 47 Jagoi *patun* revealed the themes and moral values play an important role in maintaining the identity of the Bidayuh *patun*. Appendix 1 shows examples of *patun* with good and appropriate choice of theme,

inculcation of personal beliefs and moral values, portrayal of societal values, advice and subtle sarcasm to name a few.

The choice of themes which border on love, advice, transmitting beliefs, expressing emotions and so forth were chosen based on one's experiences. Besides these themes, thought-provoking *patun* are also created by including lines that contain moral values which can be in the form of subtle advice or admonishment. Moral values such as honesty, sincerity, patience, tolerance, love, helping one another, kindness, thankfulness, pride and joy, high spirits of motivation and perseverance are also popular. An interesting feature of the recital is that the poets generally end their *patun* seeking readers' forgiveness. *Patun* is uttered merely to deliver advice, without any intention to offend any party. It serves as a form of entertainment rather than revenge, as follows:

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan** (by Siah anak Daek, 51 years old)	***Pantun Nasihat/Gurauan*** (Translated to Malay)

Dorod Stapok jadin kuali
    Nyaa kroja nun batuh karang
Bitapok bidenam di soon skali
    Oku suka biterus terang.
	Gunung Stapok menjadi kuali
	    Orang kerja ambil batu karang
	Berdendam tidak sama sekali
	    Saya suka berterus terang

Guru-guru to ninga katun
    Ninga katun di kasa tibi
Idoh dik oku ponai bipatun
    Patun oku simadi madi.
	Duduk-duduk tengok kartun
	    Tengok kartun di kaca tv
	Bukan saya pandai berpantun
	    Pantun saya sahaja sahaja

Batu Kawah sungi bisokap *Topat nyaa slalu ngijala* *Salah silap ku mitiek map* *Oku sikadar manusia biasa.*	*Batu Kawah sungai bercabang* *Tempat orang selalu menjala* *Salah silap ku minta maaf* *Aku sekadar manusia biasa*

The underlying aim of many of these *patun* is raising the listeners' awareness and appreciation of the lines for its merits. The *patun* creator goes to great lengths to ensure that the listeners take them in good faith and do not leave the premise with negative feelings. This is probably an intrinsic aspect of the culture itself where the speakers take precaution to ensure that they do not unintentionally belittle or ridicule anyone through their callous banter or lyrics. In other words, the *patun* is meant to entertain, raise awareness about the communities' values and inculcate tolerance and never to hurt or put anyone down.

Fowler (1965, p. 217) states that literature is a record of writers attempting to create and put forward ideas of hope, dreams, emotions, thoughts and experience as well as their relationships with society. Literature talks about humans' life in times of crisis and hurt feelings, and teaches about love, hatred, motivation, dignity, hope, sympathy and sacrifice. In this matter, the Jagoi *patun* is no different. Fowler's statements hold much truth in that *pantun* or any other kind of creative oral traditional writings are created as written projections of emotions such as happiness or sadness that one can feel. Mohd Amin Arshad (1988) pointed out that

creative writing exists as a product of creative and imaginative thinking, brought forward via literature. All these are a record of the poet's intention to put forward their ideas of hopes, dreams, ambitions, thoughts, emotions, experiences and so forth in humans' life. Therefore, in this context the Jagoi *patun* projects all aspects of life. These life aspects are used as teaching and learning tools, especially to create a balance in one's insight, mental judgement, emotions, characters and one's social well-being. Hence, it can be said that the *patun* and the Jagoi community's insight, mental judgement, emotions, characters and one's social well-being are strong combinations of individual growth and therefore non detachable. In addition, Wilkinson and Winstedt (1957) also stated that:

> One of the most important objects of Malay research is to enable those who come in contact with the Malay to comprehend his faculty for ideas and his range of passim. No one would attempt the mental history of England without study of its literature; of the Scot without study of Burns; and no one can estimate the mental scope of the Malay without an understanding of the pantun. (p. 3)

Wilkinson and Winstedt's contention makes much sense in the context of Bidayuh verses. *Patun* plays a vital role for helping the world understand the mental scope of the Malays. Similarly, the culture, the beliefs, and the *welstanchaunng* (material culture) of the Bidayuh's community is best understood via *patun.* Additional and systematic insights into the Bidayuh language and literature will enable the outside world to not only understand the language, culture, beliefs, and *welstanchaunng* but also the history and development of the Bidayuh's cultural roots and their place in the community.

Conclusion

To conclude, it must be said that the Jagoi *patun* is just one of the ways to visualise and identify key elements that provide an insight into a fast diminishing agrarian lifestyle that is being taken over by development in Sarawak. The *patun* therefore holds much promise and mirrors many other native communities' aspirations, concerns and experiences in the region. Jagoi *patun* remains important for two important reasons: firstly, it can serve as important resource for documenting social interaction patterns; and secondly, it also helps bring urban Bidayuh closer to one another and to the cultural aspects of their lives. It can also motivate members of the community to engage in mutual discourse, recreate and promote greater inclusivity and respectfulness. Passed on from one generation to the next, the *patun* remain as a beautiful rhythmic verse that encapsulates the communities' experiences, beliefs, values, emotions, and as a vital source of communal experiences. Therefore, these *patun* should be seen as tools that help boost interaction, creation, cultural dialogues and communal engagement.

Presently, given the internet and greater awareness about the need to maintain language rights and cultural resources, opportunities to expand the use of *patun* among its community members can open doors to emerging new social

spaces, ideas, and language growth. It will also provide increased focus on getting people to have a say in matters that interest them. The society may be changing and cultures melting, but *patun* gives the Bidayuh an opportunity to share a common point of view and help members understand new concepts. It is a means of paving the way to overcome new walls, meeting new friends, remembering a distant past.

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Appendix 1: Themes and moral values in *Patun*

Patun	**Translation in Malay**
Joget Sowa Bauh	**Joget Tahun Baru**

(by Ji'iam anak Daek, 61 years old)
Theme: Happiness
Moral value: Visiting each other, don't drink too much, don't quarrel, seeking forgiveness

Tumu bikudu di puun sorai,	
Di maket jajak bijua tobuh,	*Tumbuh mengkudu di pohon serai*
Oku bilagu di onu Gawai,	*Di market jaja menjual tebu,*
Bilagu joget sowa bauh.	*Saya berlagu di hari Gawai,*
	Berlagu joget tahun baru.
Di maket jajak bijua tobuh,	
Tobuh obuo, bijua saang,	*Di market jaja berjual tebu,*
Bilagu joget sowa bauh,	*Tebu habis, berjual cili,*
Samah samah 'to odi ngabang	*Berlagu joget tahun baru,*
	Sama-sama kita pergi menziarah.
Tobuh ouo bijua saang,	
Saang, banuok, bisapur kuduk,	*Tebu habis, berjual cili,*
Samah otto odi ngabang,	*Cili, ubi kayu bercampur keladi,*
Mak nuok bogok jak 'to mabuk.	*Bersama kita pergi menziarah,*
	Jangan minum banyak nanti kita mabuk.
Saang banuok bisapur kuduk,	
Kuduk oggi bisapur roee,	*Cili, ubi kayu bercampur keladi,*
Sina garang bisapur mabu,.	*Keladi ada bercampur halia,*
Mabuk oggi yak nimur kaee.	*Bercakap garang bercampur mabuk,*
	Mabuk akan menimbulkan pergaduhan.
Kuduk oggi bisapur roee,	
Roee inoh bilagi pongan,	*Keladi ada bercampur halia,*
Asal nye mabuk mak yak bikaee,	*Halia itu rempah gulai daging,*
Mitiek map samah bidingan.	*Sekiranya mabuk janganlah bergaduh,*
	Minta maaf bersama berkawan.

Bikalan Stiang	***Bikalan Stiang (nama satu tempat untuk mandi)***
(by Ji'iam anak Daek: 61 years old)	
Theme: Environment	
Moral value: Patience	

Tongon butan di pang olan,	*Pohon kelapa di tepi jalan,*
Sadab poyang bikalan stiang,	*Tepi kepayang bikalan stiang,*
Ninga bitang sinok bulan,	*Lihat bintang berdekatan bulan,*
Ngokab jawa doras tirang.	*Pancaran cahaya terangnya kuat.*
Sadab poyang bikalan stiang,	*Tepi kepayang bikalan stiang,*
Topat mamuh bujang di nouh,	*Tempat mandi orang bujang dahulukala,*
Ngokab jawa doras tiring,	*Pancaran cahaya terangnya kuat,*
Tirang nyoka bulan ayuh.	*Terang memancar bulan purnama.*

Topat mamuh bujang di nouh,
    Kajon bilajon bigati-gati,
Oggi di mamuh di piin koruh,
    Oggi di maad kakon bilidi.

    Kajon bilajon bigati-gati,
    Ninga ki sobak piin mo koruh,
Oggi di maad kakon bilidi,
    Oggi di odi nakon bauh.

Patun Ngin Ajar
(by Ji'iam anak Daek: 61 years old)
Theme: Hopelessness
Moral values: Be a person of virtue, Do not commit any wrong or evil deed

Doik tiborak sumuk ginaka,
    Doik pirassi doik tiborak,
Sukun eh nuok rasun, pak toro ninga,
    Pak daap di'eh ponai nang mak.

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan**
(by Siah anak Daek, 51 years old)
Theme: Love
Moral values: Perseverance, patience, honesty

Tiang taas jading tiboyan
    Jadin topat so nye posan bunga
Dowon mas bibunga intan
    Akan ku nupas walaupun tung nyaa.

Batu karang di daang donu
    Di ropot dorod Batu Kawah
Ku pait salam jobong di muu
    Yak bidapod sapey nyam payah.

Ikien sipat di dowon koyuh
    Rabuk ki piin bironang ronang
Bukan sitakat nye oda idip bauh
    Tandanye rindu otinnye nyayang.

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan**
(by Siah anak Daek, 51 years old)
Theme: Beliefs
Moral values: Seeking forgiveness, praying, advice

So Siniawan odi ki Bau
    Muun ninga nyaa biloma
Kakat tongan smoong tilinyuk

Pantun Nasihat

Tempat mandi orang bujang dahulu kala,
    Tunggu menunggu berganti-ganti,
Ada yang mandi di air yang keruh,
    Ada yang naik menjinjing baldi.

Tunggu menunggu berganti-ganti,
    Lihat ke hilir air sudah keruh,
Ada yang naik menjinjing baldi,
    Ada yang pergi menjinjing lagi.

Tiada guna nenek derhaka,
    Tiada belas tiada kasihan,
Cucu minum racun termenung melihat,
    Tercegat sahaja tanpa berkata jangan.

Pantun Nasihat/Gurauan

Tiang jati jadi jambatan,
    Menjadi tempat letak bunga,
Daun emas berbunga intan,
    Akan ku petik walaupun orang yang punya.

Batu karang di dalam hutan,
    Di kaki gunung Batu Kawah,
Ku kirim salam rindu padamu,
    Ingin bertemu sangatlah susah.

Ikan sepat di daun kayu,
    Jatuh ke air berenang renang,
Bukan setakat suruh hidup kembali,
Tanda rindu hatinya saying.

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan**

Dari Siniawan pergi ke Bau,
    Turun melihat orang berlumba,
Angkat tangan sepuluh jari,

Mitiek apun map di Topa.   *Minta ampun kepada Tuhan.*

Ruang kasang biyon di ragak
  Buak bungul nyikon di boru
Odi smayang bidoa di Topa
  Mitiek bidoa oda umur omu.

Biji kacang tuang ke raga,
  Bunga balung ayam simpan di tempurung,
Pergi sembahyang berdoa kepada Tuhan,
  Minta berdoa umur panjang.

Bojuh omu sluar kodok
  Bojuh motong di kedey teller
Oni di toru dosa nye bogok
  Dapod nye ngapun tanon di Topa.

Baju panjang seluar pendek,
  Baju dipotong di kedai jahit,
Kenapa takut banьyak dosa,
  Dapat kita minta ampun pada Tuhan.

Bila bigawea nye mo nai pogang
  Ogi taya gutan tun akat
Sitigal karoke nye ngabai smayang
Watnoh keh gaya nye nyaran adat

Bila bergawai kita buat lemang,
  Ada tayar digantung atas akat (sejenis tiang),
  Gara-gara karaoke sembahyang diabai,
    Begitukah kita menjalankan ibadah?

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan**
(by Siah anak Daek, 51 years old)
Theme: Forgiveness
Moral value: Humility

Pantun Nasihat/Gurauan

Batu Kawah sungi bisokap
  Topat nyaa slalu ngijala
Salah silap ku mitiek map
  Oku sikadar manusia biasa.

Batu Kawah sungai bercabang,
  Tempat orang selalu menjala,
Salah silap ku minta maaf,
  Aku sekadar manusia biasa.

***Pantun* Nasihat/Gurauan**
(by Siah anak Daek, 51 years old)
Theme: Advice
Moral values: Be humble, not egoistic and arrogant

Pantun Nasihat/Gurauan

Pakai kreta odi ki Sabah
  Singah ki hotel topat nye boos
Tanon lawa biar disah
  Apalagi nye yak supah kobos.

Guna kereta pergi ke Sabah
  Singgah ke hotel tempat tidur
Berkata sombong biarlah usah
  Apalagi nak bersumpah mati

DEFINITION FORMATION PROCESS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY: ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT

Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh
Faculty of Languages and Communication
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
kamarul@unisza.edu.my

Abstract

Orientation of language learning strategy (LLS) research which was not based on solid theory in the early stages, and differences in second and foreign language learning setting have led to the formation of LLS terminologies and definition that are inconsistent and divergent. This situation has resulted in conflicting views among researchers. Hence, this paper attempts to identify issues and developments that occur in the process of defining LLS. It begins by discussing issues that have surfaced in the definition of LLS in terms of determining whether it is conscious or unconscious in nature. Debates pertaining to LLS definition have also been muddled with issues concerning the nature of learning strategy either as an action, or a mental activity or both. Some changes in the pattern of definitions that scholars created have been identified. These include the change in focus from product to process and the change in terms of the definitions' comprehensiveness, among others. The influence of cognitive and social cognitive theories in defining LLS has also been observed after more than ten years of study in this field. As a result, this paper affirms that the main frame for the definition of LLS involves two components which are elements and purpose.

Keywords: language learning strategy, second language learning, foreign language learning, cognitive theory, social cognitive theory

Introduction

Research on Language Learning Strategies (LLS) was initiated by "Good Language Learner" studies (e.g., Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). These studies showed that one of the characteristics of excellent students is their use of learning strategies. Their assumption was that once successful learning strategies were identified, they could be taught to less successful learners to make them more effective learners. Following that, various studies have examined the relationship between LLS usage and language proficiency.Some researchers attempted to explore whether language students who perform well use LLS frequently and in large numbers (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995). Some studies

investigated whether the total number and frequency of LLS usage contribute towards the progress of language skills (e.g., Park, 1997), while others focussed on the relationship of cause and effect which shows that the use of strategy and level of language proficiency complement each other (e.g., Bremner, 1999). These studies indicate the importance of LLS in language learning and the effects in improving the level of language proficiency, skills, and achievement of students. In more recent years, this growing awareness has resulted in what Skehan (1989) calls an "explosion of activity" in the field of LLS research (p. 285).

In the early stages, studies on Second Language Learning Strategy were more inclined towards the use of "research first, theory later" approach (Skehan, 1989). At the time, LLS research was not based on a solid theory. After the emergence of the Cognitive Learning Theory, most LLS researchers began to use the theory as a theoretical frame for their researches (Griffiths, 2003; Macaro, 2001; O'Malley, Chamot, & Walker, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Purpura, 1999). This is because in their opinion, a learning strategy does not differ much from a cognitive process. Both focus on issues as to how students save, recall and obtain information when learning a new knowledge or skill (Anderson, 1983, 1985).

Apart from that, the situation of a newly learned language having the possibility of being in the context of learning a second or foreign language has often led to the construction of "Language Learning Strategy" terminologies which lack unanimity and uniformity (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Oxford & Cohen, 1992). Some researchers use the term "learner strategies" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987) or the expression "learning strategies" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), whilst the others would call it "language learning strategies" (Oxford, 1990). Additionally, there are several terms that are often used in LLS literature such as techniques (Stern, 1983), tactics (Seliger, 1983) or something similar. These different expressions imply the absence of consensus in the literature concerning either the definition or the identification of learning strategies.

The absence of theory in early LLS research and the existence of different learning contexts have led to a complicated and tedious process of defining LLS. O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper (1985) mentioned that there is no consensus on what constitutes a learning strategy in second language learning or how these differ from other types of learner activities. There is considerable confusion on definitions of specific strategies and the hierarchic relationship among strategies. Gu (1996) also pointed out that there has yet to exist a general developmental pattern in the conception of learning strategies. Hence, the definitions that were presented seemed to be somewhat fuzzy (Ellis, 1994). This situation has resulted in conflicting views among researchers (Cohen, 1999).

Definition of LLS

The word strategy originated from the ancient Greek word "strategia", which means the art of war or generalship dealing with the optimal management of troops, ships, and aircraft in wars. Later, the competitive aspect of strategy use spreads into non-military setting and non adversarial situations, where it has come to mean a plan,

step or conscious action toward achievement of an objective (Oxford, 1990). Not until recently did the concept of strategy enter into education, where it has taken on a new meaning and has been transformed into learning strategy.

As one of the earliest researchers in this field, Rubin (1975) provided a very broad definition of LLS as the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge. Rigney (1978) defined LLS as the often conscious steps and behaviours used by learners to enhance acquisition. Bialystok (1978) stated that strategies are optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language. Faerch and Kasper (1983) stress that a LLS is an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

Wenden and Rubin (1987) defined LLS as strategies which contribute to the development of the language system where the learner constructs and affects learning directly. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) offered another definition of LLS as special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.

Ehrman and Oxford (1990), on the other hand, viewed LLS as the often conscious steps or behaviours that learners adopt to assist their learning. Nyikos (1991) looked at LLS as strategic techniques used by language students to understand and process new information more deeply, to help them recall old information, and apply knowledge and skills to simplify problem solving. According to Ellis (1994), LLS refer to mental or behavioural activities related to some specific stages in the overall process or language acquisition or language use. Reid (1995), when elaborating the relationship and differences between language learning strategy and style, defined LLS as natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills. Mohamed Amin Embi (1996) defined LLS as plans and/or actions that learners take to enhance their process of language learning. Leaver, Ehrman, and Shekhtman (2005) defined it as specific actions and/or techniques used for learning.

In general, scholars have come up with various LLS definition since the early stages of LLS. They tried their best to explain the meaning, characteristics and activities of LLS. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify developmental issues and patterns that emerge from the the process of defining LLS.

Definition issues

Among issues that often arise while defining LLS are whether it is "conscious" or "unconscious", and "intentional" or "unintentional" in nature. Some of the researchers were of the opinion that "unconscious" or "unintentional" is a form of strategy. Tudor (1996) described LLS as an action taken by students whether consciously or unconsciously for the purpose of expanding and improving their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in a foreign or second language. Purpura (1997) defined LLS as conscious or unconscious mental or behavioural activities that relate directly or indirectly to specific stages in the process of second language acquisition. Nisbet (1986) stated that LLS is always purposeful and goal-oriented, but perhaps not always carried out at a conscious or deliberate level. They can be lengthy or so rapid in execution that it is impossible for the learner to

recapture, recall or even be aware that one has used a strategy. Leaver et al. (2005) was of the opinion that part of the LLS is used consciously and the other part, automatically.

Among those who characterised LLS as a process that occur "consciously" or "intentionally" was Stern (1992) who believed that learning strategy concept depends on an assumption that students consciously perform activities to achieve certain goals, and learning strategies can be considered as instructions and learning techniques that are intentional. Richard and Platt (1992) stated that LLS are intentional behaviours and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn or remember new information. MacIntyre (1994) defined LLS as the actions chosen by language students that are intended to facilitate language acquisition and communication. Grainger (1997) looked at LLS as a specific technique or action used consciously by a student to help in various aspects or aspect of language learning. According to Reid (1998), LLS is an external skill that is frequently used by students consciously to enhance learning.

The words "conscious", "intentional", and "student preference" that are frequently mentioned in the definitions show that LLS can only be categorised as strategies when they are thoughts and intentional or conscious actions to enhance language learning process. Cohen (1999) defined LLS as processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about the language. It is believed that the element of consciousness is important to LLS concept because it distinguishes strategies from those processes that are not strategic. It has been explained that if the behaviour is so unconscious that the learners are not able to identify any strategy associated with it, then behaviour can be referred to as a process and not a strategy. It has also been emphasised that the learners who select learning strategies must be at least partially aware of them even if they are not attending to them fully. Ellis (1994) pointed out that if strategies become so automatic that the learners are no longer conscious of employing them, they are no longer accessible for description through verbal report by the learners and thus lose their significance as strategies. Without the consciousness characteristic, students will certainly not be able to identify and describe the type of actions resulting from it.

As with other complex procedures, LLS also occur in a conscious, intentional, and controlled state from the beginning of learning process before they change to automatic state. LLS then cannot be considered a strategic action anymore. Oxford and Cohen (1992) believed that when a strategy has become habitual or automatic, the strategy has transformed into a process by itself. Griffiths (2003) defined LLS as specific actions consciously employed by the learner for the purpose of learning language. This definition includes Oxford's (1990) concept of LLS as specific action taken in order to learn language, and Cohen's (1999) dimension of conscious selection. Indirectly, this definition is seen to be able to differentiate between language learning strategy and language learning style.

Another problematic issue is the absence of consensus as to whether strategies need to be behavioural (observable), or mental (unobservable) processes, or both in order for them to be considered strategies. Stern (1983) and Oxford

(1990) appear to see LLS as essentially behavioural. Oxford (1990), for instance, defined LLS as behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. Meanwhile, Weinstein and Mayer (1986), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and Ellis (1994) see them as both behavioural and mental.

Development of Definition

From the definitions given, the change of focus from "product" to "process" is clearly visible. In the beginning of LLS research era, definitions were more focussed on improving language competence (Bialystok, 1978; Rubin, 1975) as a product of LLS usage. Then it changed to facilitating language learning (Brown, 1994; Chamot, 1987), and continued on to making language learning more enjoyable (Oxford, 1990). Thus, the purpose of LLS has changed from producing good learners who speak a target language fluently, to producing intelligent learners who know very well about how to learn a second or foreign language more successfully. In other words, it has expanded to the extent of making LLS process and characteristics a priority and important elements in forming the definition.

All at once, LLS objective has slowly changed from producing language students who are successful and able to speak in second language fluently to producing language students who are wise and intelligent and know sufficiently how to learn a second language more successfully (Tamada, 1997).

From a different angle, LLS have progressed from being defined in a simple and brief manner to being delineated in a more comprehensive way As mentioned before, for earlier works, Rubin (1975) used the term "strategies" in a narrow sense. Later, Rubin (1987) clarified the definition and stated that LLS are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined LLS as behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. Mayer (1988) then defined it as behaviours of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information.

Brown (1994) in short, defined LLS as a process that contributes directly to learning. Then Chamot (1987) expanded the LLS definition given by Brown (1994) to become techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information. Park (1997) maintained that LLS facilitates second language acquirement by stimulating more and better inputs by processing inputs to be taken in, and through production of outputs. Inputs are thought to be obtainable through learning, but the usage of strategy will help more, faster and better input acquirement. Nunan's (1999) comprehensive definition looks at LLS as mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to learn and use language.

Oxford (1990), on the other hand, expanded Rigney's original definition and defined LLS as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. The author provides one of the most comprehensive definitions which

also emphasise the importance of affective and social aspects of language learning strategies.

Theory underpinning language learning strategy research

As mentioned earlier, LLS research in the early stages was not based on any theory. The research literature in the 1970s and 80s can be understood as representing a growing level of sophistication in conceptualising LLS together with methodological advances leading to further empirical studies to test emerging hypotheses. Increasingly, in these early works, it became evident that a clear and precise theoretical framework was needed which would take strategy research beyond the utilitarian and pragmatic (Grenfell & Macaro, 2011). Then, after the 10 years, cognitive psychology theories began to influence LLS research and also shaped the definition of LLS (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Cognitive and social cognitive learning models are two major theoretical frameworks which have provided rationales for the use and development of LLS. Cognitive psychologists view learning as an active, dynamic process, in which the learners select from incoming information, encode it into their long term memory and retrieve it when needed (Anderson, 1983, 1985; McLaughlin, 1987). Social cognitive psychologists have also contributed to the theories of LLS. They emphasise the impact of social and cultural factors on human learning. The theory basically assumes that language learning acquisition take place through the interaction of learner and more advanced interlocutor (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). These cognitive learning theories and social cognitive models have been applied to the field of LLS by researchers such as O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Macaro (2001), and Griffiths (2003). All these underpinning theories have provided the framework to formulate the definition and classify the strategies.

Even though researchers constructed LLS definitions using a variety of expressions and different points of view in several issues, almost all described how much LLS is centered around cognitive and social cognitive theories involving information processing, and interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. Cognitive theory has left a great impact on the formation of LLS so much so that the characteristics of information processing are clearly visible on some of the definitions given (Kamarul Shukri & Mohamed Amin Embi, 2010). For instance, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined LLS as "actions and thinking used by students while learning with a hope to facilitate coding process" (p. 315). Mayer (1988) then specified LLS definition as "actions of students with a purpose of facilitating information processing" (p. 11). Anchored on social cognitive learning theory, the LLS field does not look at language learning as solely information processing related to grammar, vocabulary and phonetic system. Instead, it requires individual participations in the socialising process through interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions (Kamarul Shukri & Mohamed Amin, 2010). As Tarone (1981) notes, learning strategies are attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. Hence, the LLS definitions take the social and cultural impacts on human learning seriously. Differences in opinions which did not drag the

definitions outside the theoretical framework had proven the stability and strength of the theory, and also the maturity and strengthening of LLS definitions thereafter.

Framework of Definition

While analysing the definitions of LLS, scholars were often found to consider two components in their definition formation process. The components are:
1. Element – refers to features and characteristics of strategy.
2. Purpose – refers to reason why the said strategy is used.

The components can be considered as the main frame in defining LLS. This is clearly visible in several LLS main definition options as shown in Table 1. Among the elements frequently shown by those definitions are actions, thoughts, operations, and planning. Additionally, the purposes of strategy usage frequently mentioned are to facilitate learning and information processing, and improving language skills and achievement.

Table 1
Main LLS definitions

Researcher	Element	Purpose
Rubin (1975)	Technique or planning.	To acquire knowledge.
Bialystok (1978)	Conscious method/effort.	To exploit any information that can be acquired to improve second language skills.
Chamot (1987)	Technique, approach, and intentional action.	To facilitate learning and recall process of both the linguistic aspect and content of any information.
Rubin (1987)	Operation network, steps, planning, routine carried out by students.	To facilitate acquirement, saving, recall and usage of information.
O'Malley and Chamot (1990)	Specific thought or behavior .	To facilitate understanding, learning and retention of new knowledge.
Oxford (1990)	Specific action.	To make learning easier, faster, and more fun, more in the form of self access, more effective, and more adaptable to new situation.
MacIntyre (1994)	Actions.	To facilitate language acquisition and communication.
Nunan (1999)	Mental and communicative procedure.	To learn and use language.

Cohen (1999)	Learning process chosen or carried out consciously.	To improve learning or usage of target language through storage, retention, recall and application of information.
Mohamed Amin Embi (2000)	Planning and/or action.	To enhance learning process.

Conclusion

''Research first, theory later" orientation in the early stage of LLS study has led to unclear definitions, inconsistent terms, and caused conflicting views among LLS scholars and researchers. However, Table 1 shows that the LLS defining process at last had reached a maturity stage. When this process was going on, there were several definition issues and developments. Some scholars placed "conscious" and "unconsious" as the characteristics of LLS, whereas others consider "conscious" as an attribute of LLS. A person is not said to use a learning strategy when he is not aware of what he is doing. The issue of whether or not LLS is an action, a mental activity or both also grabbed the attention of researchers. Most scholars are more inclined to desribe LLS as something that involves mental activities and actions. LLS definition has also expanded from being focussed on solely "results" to "process" of LLS usage. Definitions also changed from being simple in nature to more comprehensive. The final definition was also based on cognitive and social cognitive theories by highlighting their elements in the definition formation process. Besides that, "element" and "purpose" have been identified as two components which often become the main frame in defining LLS.

In short, LLS can be defined as specific steps or actions taken by students to facilitate acquisition, storage or retrieval of information until learning becomes easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective, and easier to be moved to a new situation. It involves mental and communicative procedures to learn and use language in the improvement and mastery of target language main frame.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT IN MALAYSIA: TEACHERS' PRACTICES IN TEST PREPARATION

Looi-Chin Ch'ng[1]
Soubakeavathi Rethinasamy[2]
[1]Universiti Teknologi Mara, Sarawak Campus
[2] Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[1]chngl026@sarawak.uitm.edu.my
[2]rsouba@cls.unimas.my

Abstract

In the context of English language teaching, many studies that claimed to investigate teachers' assessment practices were actually exploring their perceptions and belief with little reference to what they were practising in schools. The need to address such a limitation has prompted this study to examine the current formal assessment practices of English language teachers in lower secondary schools. Specifically, this paper reports how the teachers prepare the formal assessments. Extensive structured interviews were conducted with 72 teachers from 24 schools in Kuching division, Sarawak. Relevant documents such as test papers and assessment guidelines were also collected for further analysis. The findings from this study revealed that a majority of the teachers conducted formal assessments mainly due to the requirements of the school and ministry while following pre-determined steps in preparing a test. Furthermore, the findings also revealed teachers' reliance on commercial reference books in constructing exam questions and sample answers. The outcome of the study provides an insight on the nature of English language teachers' assessment practices in relation to the classroom teaching and learning at the secondary level.This could help inform the Ministry of Education in providing necessary support for the teachers particularly assessment practices in ESL context as well as in formulating a better assessment policy for schools.

Keywords: English language assessment, assessment practices, language testing

Introduction

Assessment is generally defined as the collection and interpretation of information through a process of synthesising, evaluating and passing judgement in decision making (Airasian, 2005). Specifically, it may also be seen as an everyday, on-going part of teaching and learning in the classroom. Smith (2001) stated that assessment is the set of processes through which inferences are made about learner's learning process, skills, knowledge and achievements. There is also a changing trend as to

how assessments are used in education. Assessments are now widely administered as means to improve teaching and learning. Cizek and Fitzgerald (1996), for example, mention how teachers begin to realise the importance of using assessment for instructional purposes, in which the information gathered from the students' performance in a specific test is used to inform their pedagogical needs. Teachers therefore could identify necessary adjustments that need to be made in order to ensure students are able to master what has been taught. Nevertheless, it is argued that the use of assessment as a tool in teaching and learning largely depends on teachers' practices (Cumming, 2001; Mertle, 2005) and their understanding of the national standards (Poskitt & Mitchell, 2012).

Assessment practices cover the steps and procedures taken by teachers throughout an assessment. These steps include preparing, administering and grading of an assessment as well as the recording and reporting of assessment results. Previous studies on teachers' assessment practices have been mostly directed toward identifying the important steps involved in forming effective assessments. Black and William (1998) suggested several practices that could help improve learning, which included enhancing feedback, actively involving students in their learning, adjusting instruction and re-teaching, and engaging students in self and peer-assessment activities. There are however several procedures or steps that many teachers are not competent in. The study by Mertle (2005), for example, revealed that teachers faced problems in preparing a test and developing valid grading procedures. Cizek and Fitzgerald (1996) also discovered that teachers had the tendency to ignore the importance of test preparation by doing what they think is right rather than what is right. Malone (2013), on the other hand, highlighted the need to increase teachers' assessment literacy in order to monitor students' progress. Hence, this paper reports on the study conducted to examine this issue by focusing mainly on the practices of English language teachers in preparing tests in secondary school.

Background of the Study

Since assessment is considered pivotal in the teaching and learning process, teachers are required to base their decisions (instructional, grading, and reporting) on some knowledge of student attainment of and progress towards desired learning outcomes (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Guskey & Bailey, 2001). In general, several studies on teachers' assessment practices in schools particularly in United States (Bailey, 2004; Yueming, Eslami, & Burlbaw, 2006) have shown that a majority of the teachers valued assessments as an instructional tool that provides benefits to their students. Equally, as part of their professional practice, teachers are always involved in the observation of their learners, which leads to the development of insights about learner progress and judgements about specific learning outcomes and overall performance (Alderson & Banerjee as cited in Rea-Dickins, 2004, p. 249).

In the context of English language teaching, many studies that claimed to investigate teachers' assessment practices were actually exploring teachers' perceptions as a whole. For example, a comparative study by Cheng et al. (2004), which involved 267 English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors at tertiary levels

in Canada, Hong Kong and China was conducted to check on teachers' views on proper assessment practices. Though the results showed that the teachers mainly used assessment to inform instruction, the study did not consider whether the teachers were actually practising what they preached or viewed, or utilised the results for.

Replicating Cheng et al.'s (2004) study, Lee (2009) examined what and how teachers from middle and high schools in Korea assess students in their English language classrooms. The study involved 353 teachers from two schools and they were required to provide responses to a given questionnaire. The findings showed that the teachers from the two school settings demonstrated a similar pattern in purposes and procedures of assessment probably because of several substantial differences in their personal teaching history and educational settings which could have contributed to the similarities in their assessment decision-making. Some meaningful differences were also found in methods of assessment, favouring middle school teachers' constructive and effortful try-outs. Lee (2009) suggested the use of a more qualitative research method in uncovering teachers' assessment practices as the data collected from self-reported questionnaire may be biased and insufficient.

Previous studies discussed earlier focus mainly on instructors at tertiary level. As for ESL teachers in secondary schools, little is known about their assessment strategies Furthermore, the studies highlighted were conducted in foreign countries and the nature of teacher's assessment practices in Malaysia has yet to be well-documented and should be further explored. Studies related to language testing and assessment in Malaysian settings often focused on the strategies used by the ESL teachers in assessing specific language skills particularly writing and speaking (Vengadasamy, 2002). Moreover, there is also a strong emphasis on the validity and reliability issues of test constructs and assessment criteria and its resulting guidelines in constructing test papers and marking scheme (Khemlani-David, 1992). Limited studies have been conducted with regards to ESL teachers' assessment practices on the whole. There is a need to investigate further on ESL teachers' assessment practices as it would provide valuable input on the improvement of teaching and learning process. It is, thus, timely to gain a clear and overall understanding of what assessment practices are implemented by Malaysian English language teachers in schools. Thus, this paper examines what the teachers are currently practising in secondary school when it comes to test preparation. Assessment preparation is a very important step in ensuring that the assessment can achieve its intended goal or purpose. In the present study, the teachers were required to explain in detail on the process that they took or went through in preparing a test or an assessment. This covers the process from the initial stages of task delegation to finalisation and endorsement.

Methodology

For the purpose of the study, 24 schools were selected randomly out of the total of 31 government-funded national secondary schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*) in Kuching, Malaysia. In each school, three experienced English language teachers, one from each lower secondary form, with at least two years of teaching experience

were randomly chosen to participate in the study. Teachers who were teaching more than one form in a particular school were assigned by the researcher to provide information only on one form based on their experiences in teaching the particular form. There were 72 teachers participating in this study. For the purpose of the study, the participants were sorted according to the forms that they were teaching and were labelled P1 (Form 1), P2 (Form 2) and P3 (Form 3) respectively. Then, each teacher within the form was assigned a letter from A to X (representing 24 participants) for identification.

Participants were interviewed at their preferred time. The audio-recording of each interview session lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. The whole data collection process took approximately four months to be completed in order to cover all the selected schools.

Results and Discussions

In preparing a specific formal assessment, the teachers usually go through five main stages, namely, task delegation, content decision, guidelines selection, resource selection and finalisation. The results from this study revealed the steps taken by the teacher in each stage.

Task delegation

In terms of task delegation, the teachers were first asked on delegation of test paper preparation tasks as shown in Figure 1.
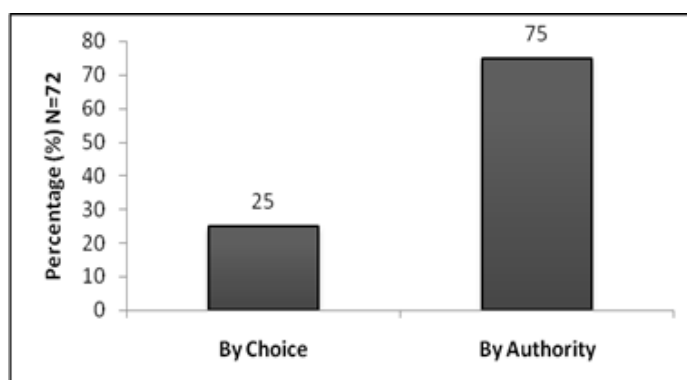
Figure 1. Delegation of assessment preparation tasks

A majority of the teachers (75%, n= 54) stated that they were assigned by a relevant authority (for example, the head of English panel) whereas 25% (n=18) of the them claimed to be assigned based on their choice. Based on the responses, it is evident that the teachers were assigned by the head of English panel to be in-charge of test paper preparation. Usually, they would know which test paper that they needed to prepare in a schooling year by referring to the "duty table" set by the head of panel. The "duty table" outlines clearly who is in charge of which test paper

and the process normally involves all teachers teaching the subject as it is done in rotation as mentioned by P1A and P2F:

> P1A: We are assigned by the head of English panel on the tasks for test preparation. It is normally done in rotation according to types of tests.

> P2F: In my school, there is a "duty table" on who is in charge of a specific test. This is decided in our English panel meeting before [a schooling] year begins.

However, in some schools, teachers could volunteer to prepare a certain test especially topical and monthly tests. Instead of being directly assigned, the teachers had the liberty to decide during the English department meeting at the beginning of the year which test they wanted to prepare. The following excerpts by P1H and P3U illustrate this situation:

> P1H: I volunteered to prepare the test papers since we [teachers] are not assigned.

> P3U: For monthly tests, I normally volunteered as I am comfortable with that. For other tests, the head of English panel decides.

Apart from knowing the instructions on task delegation, the teachers were asked about the mode of test preparations. Figure 2 shows the mode of test preparation as reported by the teachers.
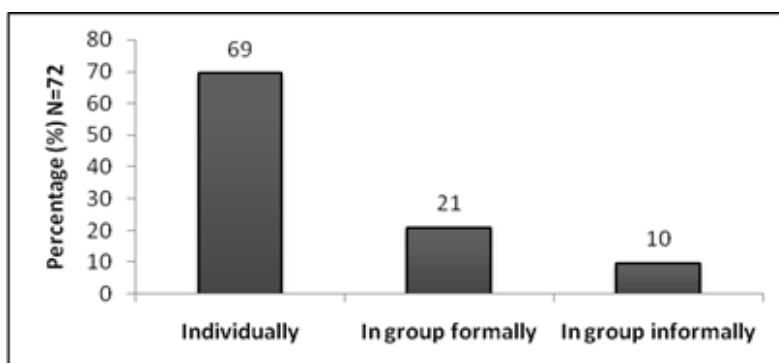
Figure 2. Mode of test preparation

Once assigned, the teachers normally prepare a particular test individually (69%, n=50). However, teachers also prepare a test in group, (31%, n=22) in order to gain more ideas and resources in preparing a test paper. When in groups, they either did it formally (21%, n= 15) or informally (10%, n=7). A formal group involved discussions with the English panel and colleagues in a formal meeting while an informal group only involved discussions with colleagues in informal settings such as

in the staff room or while having lunch at the canteen. P1T and P2H described these situations in the following excerpts:

> P1T: In my school, I need to go through formal group meeting before every test construction. Discussions are done with the English panel (other English language teachers and the head of panel).

> P2H: I normally discuss with my colleagues but informally, like when we meet after class.

Clearly, teachers had the freedom to decide whether to discuss the test preparation formally or informally. Lastly, in task delegation, the teachers were required to state which parts or sections of a paper that they were assigned to prepare as shown in Figure 3.
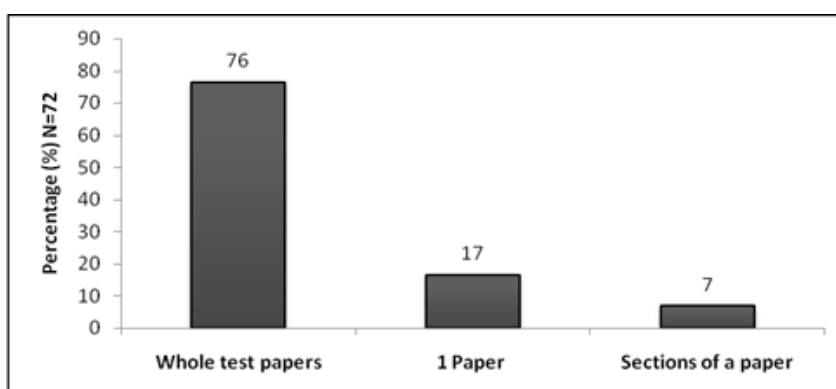
Figure 3. Parts or sections of a test paper assigned

In most schools, the teachers were assigned to prepare the whole test paper (76%, n=55) particularly tests that had only one paper such as topical tests and monthly tests as revealed in the following excerpt by P1P:

> P1P: In our school, most of the time we have two teachers to set test papers for mid-term and final. For monthly tests only one teacher is assigned to set the whole test paper because we only have one paper for monthly test unlike the major tests, have paper 1 and 2.

However, in five schools, all formal assessments in Form 3 contained two test papers without taking into account whether they were major (i.e. mid-term, final, trial tests) or minor tests (i.e. monthly tests). P3Q shared her view on this.

> P3Q: Here, all teachers are asked to set the whole paper. Our Form 3, all tests have two papers, Paper 1 and Paper 2. We don't have single paper test

like the other Forms. Well, we can still discuss with other teachers if you need to.

From the interview, 17% (n= 12) of the teachers were assigned to prepare parts of the papers. It was either Paper 1 or Paper 2 of the whole test paper especially for major tests such as mid-term and final examination. P2F explained how the division was done in her school:

> P2F: Normally two teachers are in-charge to set test papers for major tests like mid-term and final. So, among us, we divide the tasks. I do (set questions for) Paper 1 and she do (set questions for) Paper 2.

The remaining 7% (n= 5) of the teachers prepared sections of a paper such as the grammar section or the essay section. Those who were assigned to prepare sections of paper were primarily those who prepared a test in groups.

> P1E: I do sections of a paper since we have several teachers preparing one test. I am mostly involved in preparing 2 to 3 sections.

> P3K: Since I prepare a test with my fellow colleagues, we divide the tasks according to sections. One person takes several sections to work on then we combine to form a full test.

Thus, in terms of task delegation, the teachers were usually assigned by their head of English panel to prepare whole test papers, which they prepared individually.

Content decision

After asking the teachers on task delegation, they were requested to provide feedback on how they prepared the content of a test. The data on who decided on the contents are illustrated in Figure 4.
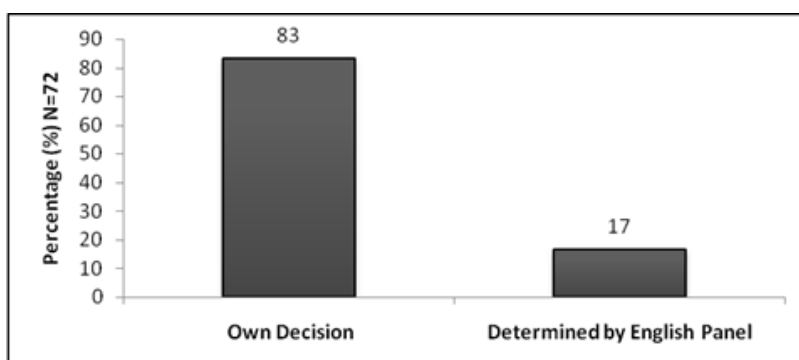

Figure 4. Decision on test content

Based on the findings, 83% (n=60) of the teachers stated that they decided on the test content based on their own judgement while the remaining 17% (n=12) mentioned the content was usually assigned by the English panel.

> P1C: I decide the content on my own based on the resources available.

> P2U: On my own [on deciding the content]. I make decision on what should be included and what should not.

> P3F: In our school, what should be covered in a test is predetermined by the English panel. We are told to follow the required content during test preparation.

Interestingly enough, as revealed by P1C and P2U, teachers were allowed to decide the test content based on their own considerations. In relation to this, the teachers elaborated on the types of test content that they included in a particular test as presented in Figure 5.
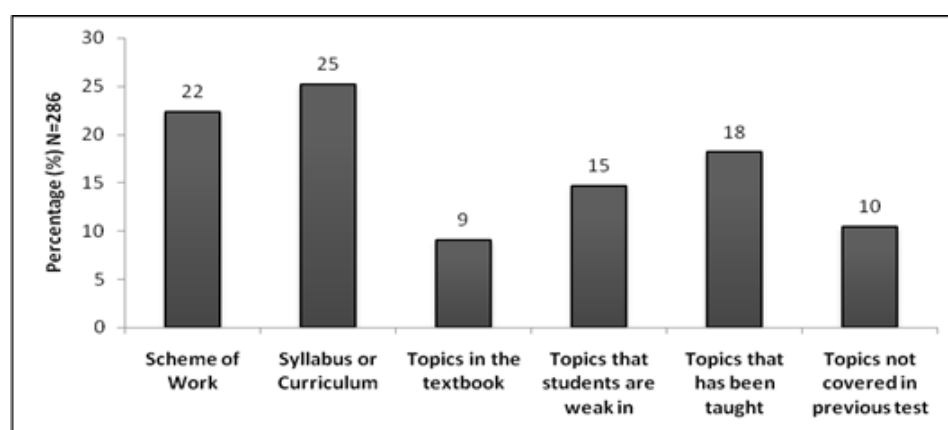
Figure 5. Types of test content included

Generally, the teachers included different types of test content.While all teachers claimed that the content was determined from the subject's syllabus (25%, n=72), a majority of them claimed the content was derived from their respective school's scheme of work (22%, n=64). However, only 9% of the teachers (n=26) stated that the content was taken from topics in the textbook. P1R and P2L explained why topics in the textbooks were not included.

> P1R: Topics in the textbook are used for teaching. So, the topics would be too familiar for the students and they might do well, which may not provide a good indicator of their performance.

P2L: I don't think the topics in the textbook are appropriate to be used as content of a test. For teaching, yes, but for testing, no.

It can therefore be concluded that teachers usually follow the syllabus and scheme of work in deciding which content should be included in a test.

Guidelines selection

Necessary references on how to prepare a test can help teachers prepare a better test that could address an intended purpose. Hence, the teachers were asked to provide input on the sources that they referred to when preparing a test paper (as shown in Figure 6).
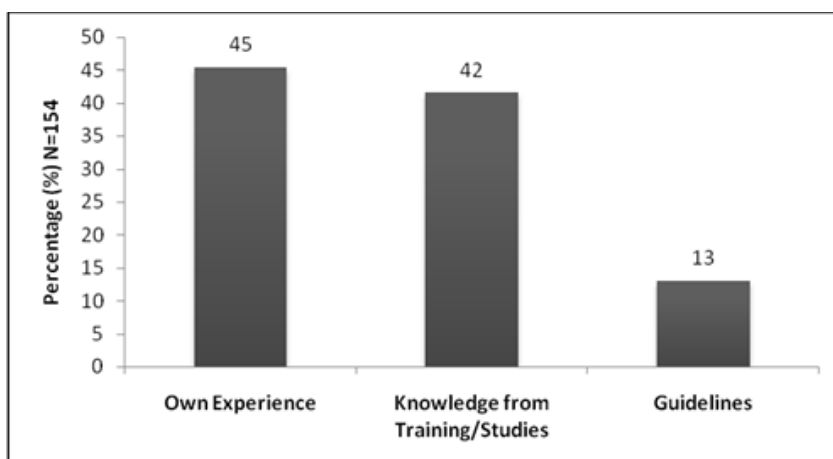
Figure 6. References used when preparing a test

The teachers stated that they relied heavily on their own experiences in teaching and test construction when preparing a test (45%, n=70). P1A and P2C echoed this sentiment in the following excerpts:

P1A: The main source is still my own experiences. I have prepared a test for many times in my 8 years of teaching, so I feel more confident even without guidelines.

P2C: Of course, my own experience is the major source. I think most teachers would agree on this. Previous experience in test preparation does help.

Clearly, they both relied on their experiences in preparing a test, perhaps due to their years of service.

Besides that, 13% (n=20) of the teachers mentioned the usage of guidelines provided by the school and the ministry (known as *Jadual Penentuan Ujian* or JPU) as their reference. JPU is a table that assists teachers to set questions or test items according to the levels in Bloom's Taxonomy (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964), from the knowledge level to evaluation level. Teachers who set test papers have to plot the JPU table in order to balance the level of difficulty for the questions.

> P2B: For major tests like final and trial tests, there is a need to follow the guidelines since it's of higher stake and we are advised to follow the ministry's JPU.

> P3H: My school has a test preparation guideline or manual. We are told to use it whenever we prepare a test.

Excerpts from P2B and P3H show the teachers' awareness on the importance of following the guidelines. In addition, the teachers also mentioned the knowledge they gained from training and studies (42%, n=64) as their source of reference.

> P1R: I also refer to the knowledge I gained during my study in the university. I did take assessment-related courses. Plus, I also obtained knowledge from in-house training.

> P2S: I attended a training course on assessment before. So I do refer to the knowledge gained from the training during test preparation as well.

> P2S: I am studying a bachelor degree on PJJ (distance learning mode) now and there are two courses related to assessment. I learned a lot from these courses and it helps me to prepare the test.

To illustrate this clearly, the teachers' (n=64) elaborations on where they obtained the knowledge is presented in Figure 7.
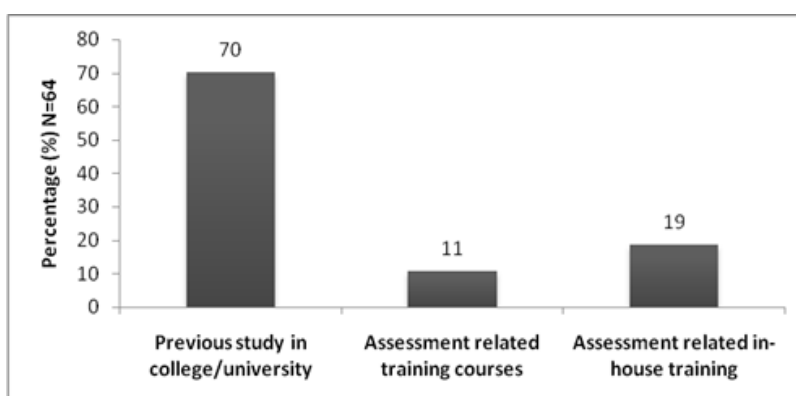
Figure 7. Knowledge sources when preparing a test

As shown in Figure 7, during test preparation, the teachers relied on the knowledge they gained from their previous study in college and university (70%, n=45), followed by in-house training provided (19%, n=12). Unfortunately, very few of them (11%, n=7) had the opportunity to participate in such training courses. Besides, there were also cases in which the teachers did not gain useful input from the courses that they attended simply because they were unable to grasp what had been delivered. As a result, they practised what they were more comfortable with.

> P2M: Though I did attend the test item construction course (assessment-related course) but when preparing the test paper, I still rely on my knowledge gathered from my training college and previous experiences because I am more comfortable with it. Besides, I don't gain much from the course.

> P3K: I have not got the opportunity to attend any assessment-related training but sometimes my colleagues share via in-house programmes, which I think is good.

The excerpts from P2M and P3K revealed the lack of training in assessments which usually prompted the teachers to make their own judgements in preparing test items. As pointed out by Mertler (2005), it also indicates the lack of assessment literacy among the teachers, which can lead to the case of "the blind leading the blind".

Resource selection

Next, the teachers were asked about the resources that they used in preparing a test. This is shown in Figure 8.
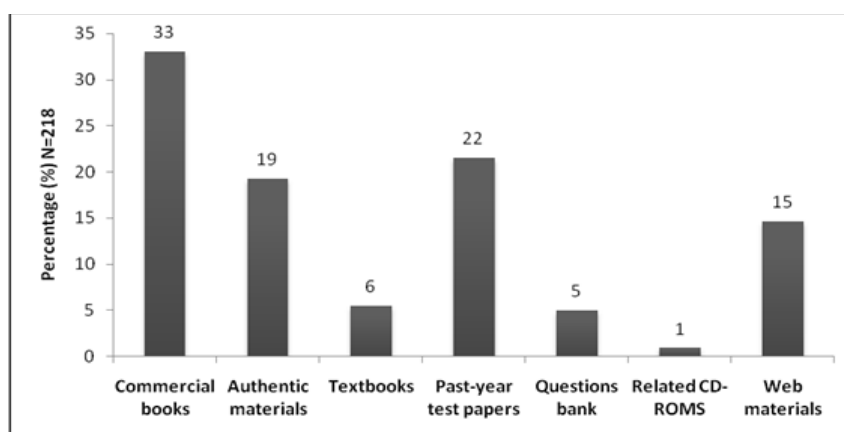
Figure 8. Resources used in test preparation

Commercial books and past-year test papers were the most used resources (33%, n=72). Meanwhile, textbooks (6%, n=12), question banks (5%, n=11) and language-

related CD-ROMs (1%, n=2) were among the least used. Authentic materials such as newspaper articles and magazine (19%, n=42) and web-based materials (15%, n=32) were also popular resources. Commercial books especially by well-known authors were often used as teachers' main resource. Excerpts from four teachers illustrate this point.

> P1A: I use commercial books a lot particularly from good authors. They have vast experience in setting questions for major exams, so following them would be a good way to learn.

> P2J and P3I, on the other hand, stated time saving as a factor that drives them to use commercial books and past-year test papers.

> P2J: It's more convenient and time saving to use commercial books and past-year test papers. I don't have to crack my head generating questions for each test.

> P3I: Obviously, using commercial books save me a lot of time. Instead of spending time looking for other resources, these books (showing a few books on her desk) help me to come up with a test paper much faster.

In this study, it is noted that very few schools have their own question banks. Only 5% of the teachers (n=11) stated that they used question banks as one of their resources for test preparation. One of them is P2K.

> P2K: We have question banks for English, compiled by our teachers and kept by our head of English panel. Teachers, like me, can access to the compilation and refer. The questions or test papers are collected throughout Malaysia.

To further understand why a resource was chosen, the teachers were asked to state the reasons for the selection of a resource.
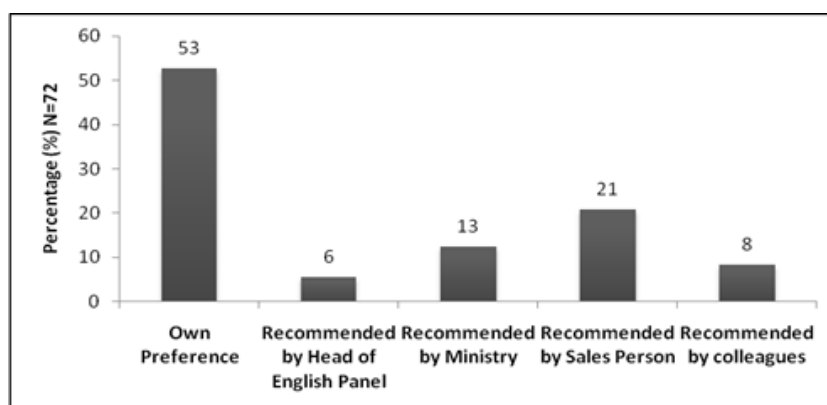
Figure 9. Reasons for choosing a resource

As shown in Figure 9, the primary reason was the teachers' own preference (58%, n=38). This was followed by recommendations from sales persons (21%, n=15). This finding is rather expected since the main resource chosen by the teachers was commercial books. The teachers were noted to be less influenced by the resources as recommended by the head of English panel (6%, n=4) and their colleagues (8%, n=6). After knowing the process of selecting resources, the teachers were asked about the final stage of test preparation which is finalisation.

Finalisation

Finalisation refers to the endorsement process that teachers need to go through after they have prepared a test. It is mainly to identify whether the process is strict or lenient according to different test types. A finalisation process is considered strict when teachers are required to follow standardised procedures as set by the school or the English panel. On the contrary, it is considered lenient if teachers are given the freedom to decide. Figure 13 illustrates the findings.
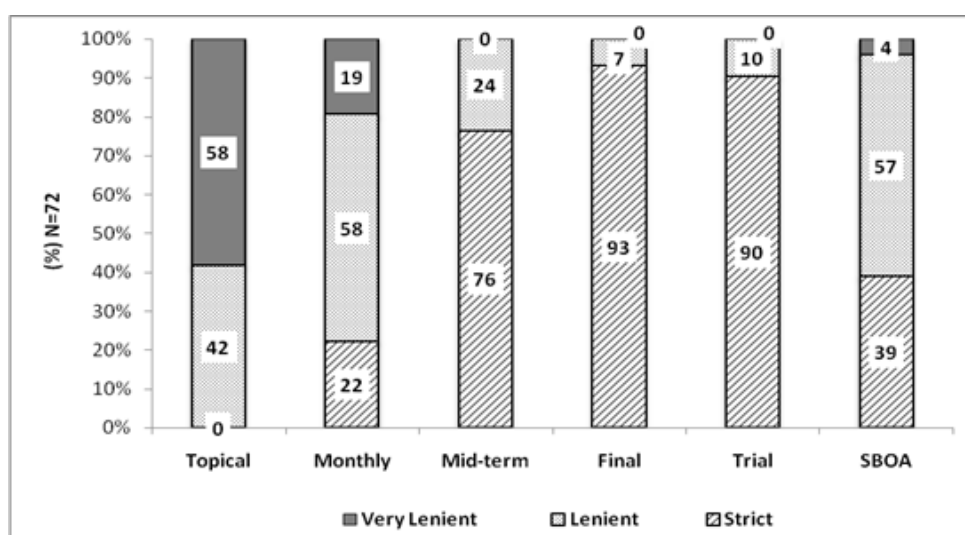
Figure 10. Level of strictness in finalising a test paper

As shown in Figure 13, the process of finalising a test paper was stricter for mid-term (76%, n=55), final (93%, n=67) and trial tests (90%, n=65). This could be due to its high importance in addressing school accountability since the results from these tests would be used indicators of school's performance. P2J and P3V shared their opinions on this matter:

> P2J: For high-stake tests like final, we do follow rigid procedures in finalising a test paper that has been prepared. We need to submit the draft to the head of English panel for endorsement and then the senior assistant or the principal need to check and approve the test paper before it can be

administered. I think this is to ensure the standard is there, before it will affect the school's reputation.

P3V: In terms of finalising the test papers for final and trial, it is not that simple or lenient. The head of English panel wants us to make sure we have followed the guidelines before she will allow it to be used. I think this is good because it enhance the quality of the test paper.

Progress-based tests such as topical and monthly tests were found to be lenient in terms of the finalisation process. A total of 58% (n=42) of the teachers mentioned that the finalisation of topical test was very lenient while the remaining 42% (n=30) stated it as less rigid. As for monthly tests, 19% (n=14) of the teachers claimed the finalisation process to be very lenient while another 58% (n=42) stated it as less rigid. Test papers prepared for such tests were normally not cross-checked by the head of English panel or senior assistants as mentioned by P1U, P2F and P3C:

P1U: Monthly tests are not so rigid. Our head (of English panel) will not check or endorse the test papers that we have prepared. It is up to us to decide.

P2F: Finalising monthly tests are less rigid. As I told you, the school regards the tests as not that important, hence we don't have to go for meetings or double check before it can be administered.

P3C: My school doesn't require us to finalise a monthly test paper. There is no need for endorsement or approval from the senior assistant. We just go ahead once it is ready.

Thus, as revealed in the excerpts, it is evident that the process of finalising a test paper is stricter in achievement-based tests thanto progress-based tests. This is due to the level of importance of each test as determined by the school.

Conclusion

This paper reports the English language teachers' practices in preparing a test in lower-secondary school. In summary, the findings of the study showed that teachers were essentially assigned to prepare a test individually with minimal interference from the English panel or other related parties. In terms of content, the teachers had a tendency of following the school's syllabus and scheme of work. Unlike teachers' dependency on textbooks in schools in Canada and China (as reported by Cheng et al., 2004), the present study revealed teachers' high reliance on commercial books in helping them to prepare the content for various tests. Textbooks, on the other hand, were rarely used. This is similar to the findings by Leung and Andrews (2012), who found that teachers in Hong Kong rarely depend on textbooks when preparing high-stakes exams as they were encouraged to develop

their own materials or test items specifically for school-based assessments. In this study, the teachers also relied on their own experience in deciding how to a test should be prepared. Lastly, in terms of finalisation, endorsements were compulsory for major tests such as mid-term and final tests and the process was less rigid for topical and monthly tests.

From this study, it is recommended that teacher development in assessment should be promoted and carried out in a more frequent manner. It is apparent that teachers still lack theoretical understanding of what constitutes good assessment practices. Professional development is thus crucial in ensuring that teachers are well-equipped with related knowledge that would assist them in conducting assessment. In addition, a more comprehensive guideline covering assessments for both progress- and achievement-based purposes is urgently needed. As indicated in this research, a majority of the teachers tend to practise what they think is right with no proper guideline to rely on as reference. The Ministry of Education could devise an assessment framework in line with the curriculum framework that aims at promoting teaching and student learning, beyond the confinement of pointing out what are covered in the public examinations.

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"NOT A SHIRT ON MY BACK, NOT A PENNY TO MY NAME": AN INSIGHT ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERACY OF STREET ADOLESCENTS AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Humaira binti Raslie[1]
Sharizan bt. Jamaluddin[2]
[1]Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[2]Centre for Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
[1]rhumaira@cls.unimas.my
[2]izan_jaydee@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study examined the presence of dominant literacy and the pedagogical scaffolding in an English Language learning classroom of an alternative school in Malaysia. Focusing on street children, two questions were stipulated to guide the research process: (1) What are the dominant practices vis-à-vis English language literacy present during teaching and learning session? and (2) How does the facilitator provide scaffolding for the students in acquiring the dominant practices of English literacy?. An observation was conducted at the research site and the data gathered was thematically analysed using the operative paradigms of New Literacy Studies and Hegemony. Consequently, it was found that the alternative school's learning system showed an inclination towards autonomous practices. However, the scaffolding efforts made by the instructor managed to fairly bridge the knowledge gap between the education system and the students. This research therefore advocates that alternative school's teaching and learning process should remove itself from the autonomous shadow of mainstream schools. In order to provide a holistic and contextualised learning environment for its marginalised clients, there is a pivotal need to acknowledge their unique socio-cultural schemata. This could be accomplished by adding ideological approaches to the existing pedagogical practices.

Keywords: Literacy, alternative school, street children, marginalised community, autonomous paradigm, ideological paradigm

Introduction

In Malaysian media, street children are typically described in a negative light; usually portrayed as loitering school dropouts (Hamdan Raja Abdullah, 2007) who are stateless, unwanted (Daily Express, 2008; Dina Zaman, 2008), and unemployable (Bernama, 2008). They are also associated with immoral and taboo activities such as glue-sniffing and casual sex. Although these adversarial connotations might be true to a certain extent, they unfortunately do not tell the whole story of these marginalized adolescents: youths who are the offspring of today's complex urban realities (Roux, 1996). The truth is, street children face a myriad forms of violation which ranges from "child labor, sex work, running for drug dealers, neglect, abuse, pornography, mumps, chicken pox, rubella, skin afflictions and, yes, sexually transmitted diseases" (Dina Zaman, 2008, p. 1). The reality faced by these children daily leave very little time or use for formal learning (Levinson, 2007). In addition, the mainstream education could also pose as a threat to those who are living without legal residential permit or/and engage in unlawful activities such as drug-dealing and prostituting (Bernama, 2008). Most parents of the marginalised group fear that their identity, illegal profession and residential status could be discovered once their children enter government establishments. This situation, however, contradicts the Education Act which clearly spells out that children must receive education until they are 17 years old (Daily Express, 2007) and failure of parents to do so would be taken in as an offence. The Malaysian Government has also stressed on a greater need for at-risk adolescents to be schooled (Education Act, 1996); as they are regarded to be potential "trouble makers" (Hamdan Raja Abdullah, 2007). Sending them to mainstream government schools is expected to keep them out of trouble and provide them with some basic skills of literacy and living (Nettleton, 2011).

The mainstream education system in Malaysia has not managed to successfully sow the interest in learning among the at-risk adolescents, let alone encourage them to go to school daily. An article written by Singh (2007) for Al Jazeera news revealed that an 11-year old son of a sex worker refused to go to school after attending it for quite some time. The reason underlying his reluctance was the taunting and bullying he received from his teachers and school mates. Shakila Yaakob (2006) pointed out that the above situation occurred mainly because in the education system, a "Malaysian nation" is usually portrayed by Malay, Indian and Chinese Malaysians who belong to either middle or upper middle socio-economic group. The overt exclusivity of such images creates an assumption that there is no room left for a fourth group of "Malaysians": immigrants and members of various marginalised groups whose background is "coloured" by socially-scorned taboos. As such, the adolescents of these marginalised communities would not be accepted by their mainstream counterpart. Consequently, they will be treated invisibly in public domains such as classroom, but ironically made to feel very "visible" outside these domains due to their cultural, social and personal identity.

Another dominant cultural practice of the education system which potentially garnered at-risk adolescents' negative reaction towards education is the autonomous take on literacy in Malaysian classrooms (Koo, 2010), especially English

language literacy. The system restricts the marginalised adolescents' access to English literacy by persistently placing pedagogical overemphasis on writing and reading skills (Koo, Kaur, & Siti Hamin Stapa, 2011). Through this teaching method, these students are also taught to read and write in a manner which is rule-adhering and decontextualized from their cultural and social bearings. Being street children, these youths receive minimal mainstream English literacy exposure from their parents, television, the Internet as well as books. Without scaffolding at home, their only contact with English language is at schools; which is unfortunately insufficient for them.

One distinctive effort made by the education system in recognition of at-risk adolescents' socio-cultural schema is the setting up of special schools such as Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (Vanar, 2009) and school programs which are specially-tailored for them. The students of these schools/programmes share the same socio-cultural background and are taught by specially-trained teachers so no one is discriminated during the teaching and learning process (Singh, 2007). However, these schools and programmes echo the current paradigm underpinning mainstream curriculum especially pertaining to literacy: emphasis is still being put on the three Rs – writing, reading and arithmetic and vocational skills such as boat making and carpentry (Nettleton, 2011; Sario, 2011). The compartmentalisation of knowledge shown by the system alludes to the education system during the colonial period; whereby village folks were taught rural-based education and urban dwellers were exposed to the dominant literacies. As a result, village folks remained to be farmers and fishermen while dominant education system churned local government and private sector officers (Hazita Azman, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

In the light of the above arguments, the purpose of this study therefore is to examine the presence of dominant literacy and pedagogical scaffolding in an English learning classroom of an alternative school for street children. This research was guided by two questions namely:
1. How are the dominant practices vis-à-vis English language literacy reflected in the process of teaching and learning?
2. How does the facilitator provide scaffolding for the students in acquiring the dominant practices of English literacy?

Theoretical framework

Literacy and new literacy studies

In its traditional sense, being literate specifically means possessing the unitary skill (Hazita Azman, 2009) of decoding print texts (Larson & Marsh, 2005). In this autonomous model, literacy is regarded as an independent variable; making it relatively easy to be the quantitative measure for economic symbols such as

progress, social mobility and economic stability. The aforementioned stand is however contested by Gee (2000) and his contemporaries such as Street (2001) and the members of the New England Group (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008) who contend that literacy is no longer as straightforward as providing uniform technical skills to those who lack them. Realistically, literacy especially in the 21st century exists in multiple forms and has become socio-culturally situated (Street, 2001). This realisation gives rise to a new literacy paradigm called New Literacy Studies (Street, 2001); which offers an 'ideological view' and socio-cultural approach on literacy components. In explaining this new literacy paradigm, Street (2001) posited literacy (and literacy practices) to be "always 'embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles'" (p. 7). It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being". On this basis, acts such as reading a bedtime story to a child or writing a thank-you card, for instance, are considered as much of a *literacy event* as learning English in a language classroom.

Literacy and the theory of hegemony

The ideological view of literacy is also related to the sphere of hegemony; a deduction made based on the knowledge that language is instrumental in constituting and expressing power relations (Perry & Purcell-Gates, 2005). Perry and Purcell-Gates further explained that this theory believes that power inequality which exists in societies leads to the exercise of power by the mainstream groups over their non-mainstream counterpart. Such act utilises mind-controlling technique instead of overt manipulation to dominate others. Van Dijk (2003) described the "others" who form the "dominated group" as:

1. trained to accept belief, knowledge and opinions of authoritative and trustworthy sources such as academic personnel and mainstream media such as newspapers, and
2. conditioned to accept institutional ideologies such as school's literacy view, and not knowledgeable enough to fight against the mainstream group.

The imposition of certain literacy values on the Bangladeshis as reported by Blackledge (2001) is an excellent example of hegemonic power in education setting. It was found through the research that Bangladeshis were made to think that their own literacy practices were inadequate to be used in their current context. Instead, they needed to take up the literacy practices of the dominant groups if they wished to be accepted into their new reality. Taking the finding into account, it is clear that hegemony in literacy leads to the hierarchical distribution of power in the academic setting and fosters compliance from the marginalised groups (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 2006).

In another study conducted by Pirbhai-Illich (2010) on aboriginal students, an alternative school which was tailored-made for children of marginalised background in Canada failed to generate interest in learning among the aboriginal adolescents. The reason for its failure was the school's ideology imposition - on the

students and authoritative dictation on students' learning styles and interests as well as blatant ignorance of the students' socio-cultural make-up. In other words, the hegemonic efforts made by Canadian mainstream schools in sustaining autonomous literacy notions created conflicts of identity in the marginalised students – eventually encouraging their complete disengagement from the education system.

Methodology

Prior to data collection, the researchers firstly searched for available information regarding at-risk adolescents in several newspapers and journal articles. Using purposeful sampling, the researchers chose street children attending a particular alternative school as the participants and research site in order to gain a full understanding of the students' literacy practice. Next, the researchers sought the permission of an administrator of the alternative school in order to get access to the research site. The proposal of this study was then sent to the administrator via e-mail. Once the permission was granted, the researchers went to the site on 8 December 2011 and collected the data through focus group observation. The researchers took upon the role of a non-participant in order to minimise the effect of their presence on the learning process.

Data were also gathered using a camera, a phone camera, and a walkman recorder – totalling the duration of both audio and video data to three hours and a half. However, only one hour and fifteen minutes of video data proved to be meaningful and worthy of transcription. Seven participants consisting of five street students (age around 8 to 13 years old), one teacher, and one teacher-trainee were present during the observation. However, the teacher-trainee was not reported in the finding because his role in the class was merely that of an observer. It must also be highlighted that the teacher is a product of the English language literacy programme adapted by the school. Demographically, he came from a similar socio-economic background as the students; with the exception that he was marginalised because he belonged to a minority race, as opposed to being on the street.

Results and Discussion

A closer look into the data obtained revealed two major themes: (1) dominant literacy practices displayed during the English language teaching and learning process; and (2) facilitator's scaffolding efforts.

Autonomous versus ideological literacy practices

On the basis of the findings, it could be inferred that the dominant practices *vis-a-vis* English language literacy pedagogy, even in a non-mainstream context such as the alternative school is still autonomous in nature. The first evidence is the use of the

words "cars" and "houses" which are typically utilised when teaching and learning grammar components such as plural-singular and adjective. Some examples of their usage in the research site were "Yes ... her car is the blue one" and "So, my house is the black one…the red one…the blue one". The problem with the usage of these concepts in an alternative classroom is their association with the middle and high class culture and their minute relevance to the street children's reality. More familiar concepts would be squatter area, wet market, stalls, living conditions such as communal living (as opposed to apartment or white terrace houses) and part-time working people such as tourist as well as unconventional literacies such as peddling, waiting tables, and begging. An effort of tapping into the student's social reality was detected only once, when the teacher made a reference to "bosses". The children could clearly relate to having 'bosses' as their current reality revolves around individuals who are consistently working (see Excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1
The addition of street children socio-cultural schemata to teaching and learning session

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T: Ok, Amy, so, which are their bosses? Bosses..boss, you know.. boss tu ar.. majikan la. Bosses..*[bosses, you know, they are employers]*
S: Their...their bosses are the ……
T: Ok, now… bila kita cakap tentang seorang ar..boss,apa punya karakter dia? [*When we talk about a person, how would we describe their characteristics?*]
S: *Asking a friend* Sombong dalam Bahasa Inggeris, apa? [*What is arrogance in English*]
T: Arrogant
S: …the arrogant ones.
T: Yes…
S: Angry ones

As such, although most aspects of the street children's reality are unconventional as compared to normal children, alternative schools' curriculum should still provide a holistic education environment for them by being culturally-inclusive and student-oriented. Particularly, the system should tap into the students' socio-cultural make-up, extract its essence and then add it *positively* into the curriculum. Pirbhai-Illich (2010) proved the success of the aforementioned method. By positively incorporating themes familiar to her at-risk research participants such as gangsterism and their interests such as computer gadgets, she achieved a full class attendance for almost a month. One important concern of not acknowledging the students' background is their negative attitude towards education, particularly their reluctance and low self motivation to go to school or obtain any form of education. This concern is proven to be highly pertinent by the research conducted by Pirbhai-Illich (2010), Hazita Azman (2009), Koo (2010), Normazidah Che Musa, Koo, and Hazita Azman (2012), who reported similar damaging outcome of decontextualized learning.

The second autonomous aspect of the alternative classroom is the teacher's pedagogical techniques which consisted largely of the traditional method of Grammar Translation method (GTM) (Brown, 2006; Leela Mohd Ali, 1989). Repetitive drillings, memorisation and recall of grammar rules which belong to the GTM pedagogical mechanism were also eminently noticed (see Excerpts 2 and 3).

Excerpt 2
An example of repetitive drilling pedagogical method

T: So, my girlfriend is the attractive one.
S: The beautiful one.

Excerpt 3
An example of repetitive drilling and grammar rule recall pedagogical method

T: Her sisters…are…beautiful
T: Ha…(pointed to the article on the board) where is your article?
S: Her sisters are the… beautiful ones

Although it is evident from the excerpt that the students were able to use the said grammar rule, the focus on form rather than meaning is feared to lead to their inability to apply the same linguistic rule on other contexts. Unlike learning science subjects such as Physics, formulaic learning could not be carried out for language acquisition. Juxtaposed against the multimodality of language usage in the 21st century such as the use of language in various new contexts, students should be able to use their linguistic resources intelligently to match the contact space.

The other danger in carrying out GTM in teaching is its emphasis on accuracy as opposed to fluency. In the case of the above excerpt, while the students could accurately imitate the rule using their own input, this does not display their fluency in the language. Their inaccurate responses to the teacher's autonomous way of teaching were without the addition of input from their own literacy reality. This conjectured their ability to accurately regurgitate rules, not their fluency in the English language. Fluency in this sense is much related to the understanding of meaning; where a speaker is deemed to be fluent in a language if the speaker could use the said language and all of its linguistic-rule underpinnings correctly across various contexts (Ellis, 2006). This feat could only be achieved if the aforesaid speaker has a clear understanding of the target language's rules.

The final Grammar Translation approach identified was the act of directly translating the English language or L3 using a language which the students commonly used, namely, the "street Malay" variety or informal Bahasa Malaysia. English is considered as L3 or the third language due to the fact that these children originated from various countries (Tan, 2006); hence there is a high possibility that their mother tongue is that of their native country such as Indonesian language, Urdu, or Tagalog.

The use of another language to assist the teaching and learning process of a target language is also common in mainstream education, especially in weaker classrooms (Mohd Sofi Ali, 2003). It is however a much debated and controversial issue in the pedagogical world (Brown, 2006; Howatt, 2004) whereby as a practice,

direct translation is frowned upon by many ESL practitioners, such as Brown (2006) and Mohd Sofi Ali (2003). In his paper, Mohd Sofi Ali expressed his concern over the use of Malay language in teaching English because he believed that teacher's language in classroom had a modelling effect on the pupils. Mohd Sofi Ali also argued that the failure of using English language only during English lessons would not only affect students' proficiency in the language, but reduced students' exposure to the many ways in which English could be used. From another angle however, the use of L1 could be regarded as a scaffolding method (Brown, 2006; Leela Mohd Ali, 1989), especially for weak students. Weak students usually do not have contact with the language outside classroom context so teaching English using the language per se might confuse them – or in some cases, lead to minimal learning in class on the students' part. As for the participants in this study, the heavy use of direct translation method had successfully assisted their learning process since they received little exposure to the English Language in their living environment. If the teacher had chosen to mediate the class fully in English, there would be a high possibility that these street children would end up not learning anything or lose interest in attending the session. The success of this method is demonstrated in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4
Use of L3 in assisting English language learning

T: Ok kalau kita tengok marker, apa dia punya adjective, dan apa dia punya saiz. Tak boleh nak cakap, handsome, or…beautiful. You just put the colour, ok. So, you must padankan, must be logic,ok. [*Ok now let's look at markers-and the adjectives suitable for it such as size (big, small). We cannot use handsome or beautiful to describe it. If you wished to use colour then it's alright. But when you match the adjectives with the objects remember it must be logical*] So, you must to find another answer. Ok, just now your answer is black, right? Ok. Halijah, which are his markers?
S4   : His marker…
T   : Ha?
S4   : His markers are the…..blue ones.
T   : The..
S4   : Blue ones.
T   : blue ones… Yes, very good.

The use of informal Bahasa Malaysia was a clever ideological move on the part of the teacher as he had reiterated solidarity with the children by drawing from the students' existing resources (Brown, 2006). At the same time, he also eased the learning of a foreign language for them. *Ease* in this context refers to the use of a familiar language to teach a foreign language such as English in an effort to make it appear less intimidating and difficult. The excerpt above clearly demonstrates the students' successful application of the rule taught to them mostly using informal Bahasa Malaysia. Despite *translation* being a part of the Grammar Translation Method, the use of informal Bahasa Malaysia facilitating literacy learning could also be considered as one of facilitator's successful scaffolding efforts in aiding students' understanding. It is also important to highlight that scaffolding efforts such as direct translation of languages have also managed to dilute or neutralise the syllabus' autonomous underpinnings.

Facilitator's scaffolding effforts

Besides the use of informal Bahasa Malaysia, the facilitator also employed several other scaffolding methods, such as incorporating songs into the teaching and learning session. This was done specifically to improve the students' speaking and writing skills. Other rhythmic materials were also included as to enhance student's knowledge especially in terms of vocabulary and word meaning. The use of both types of materials was a clever tactic to draw interest to learning because the materials inject an element of fun into language pedagogy, turning learning into an exciting experience. Conversely, two drawbacks were identified during the implementation of the pedagogy, the first one being its autonomous manner of execution. For instance, the students were required to copy down the song lyrics before eventually singing it out loud together. They were also drilled to memorise the meaning of the difficult words in the lyrics. Some of these words belonged to the mental lexicon of a more advanced learner, inadvertently mismatching the students' own proficiency level. This condition resulted in the students' inability to use the words meaningfully post lesson. Additionally, some of the words learned were figurative language and poetic devices – and the scaffolding given by the teacher was providing the students with dictionary meanings of these words. This created a knowledge gap for the students. As such, it was noticed that they reverted to using informal Bahasa Malaysia, added with minimal spattering of simple English language words such as "boring", "teacher" and "pencil case" when interacting with each other, including their teacher.

The two shortcomings explicated above stemmed from the aim of the scaffolding process itself which was to help students acquire English literacy per se. The language therefore was taught and learned in isolation and devoid of the students' socio-cultural literacy. A lucid evidence of this circumstance is the songs sung by the students. The level of language used was too sophisticated for the young learners. This occurred because the songs were selected by the authors of the syllabus, not by the teacher or the students themselves. The songs also contained frequent references to western elements which were very foreign to the socio-cultural experiences of the students. As a result, the children did not add or display

their own literacy practices during the learning session. Instead, the literacy practices they displayed echoed the teacher's teaching and scaffolding practices such as memorisation of song lyrics without knowing the meaning of most of the words. Given the opportunity, these children would have enjoyed the lesson more if the songs resembled more of their cultural reality. This claim was evidenced in one observation where during break time, the teacher willingly played the guitar to any song the students wanted. They were so excited that they forgot about recess – requesting instead for their favourite songs to be played. While most of these songs were in the Malay language, there were also several requests made for English songs sung by teenage pop idol, Justin Bieber. This finding foreshadows the high probability that if the students' socio-cultural reality was met by the learning system, the literacy programme would experience more success in generating all-rounded literate students.

The third scaffolding method identified was the teacher's pedagogical techniques. As repeatedly highlighted earlier, traces of the autonomous paradigm were prominent in the previous scaffolding methods discussed. However, the teacher neutralised the impact of these autonomous pedagogical methods by adopting the ideological voice during teaching and learning process. Since he came from a more or less similar background as the children, the teacher was very culturally sensitive when interacting with them. As a facilitator, he was both warm and understanding. For instance, when one student entered the class late on the account of staying up till dawn to help his or her mother at work, he did not scold or seek an explanation but merely assisted the student in catching up with the rest of the class. When they were unable to relate to some parts of the lesson, he would simplify his explanation and draw examples from the student's repertoire of socio-cultural experience. He knew when to use informal Bahasa Malaysia; which was during the grammar part of the lesson. Out of his own initiative, he sacrificed his break time so that the children could sing their favourite songs. The efforts he made to bridge the gap for the students is believed to be the most successful among all other scaffolding techniques detected during the short observation.

Conclusion

In view of the earlier discussions, it could be summed up that while this particular alternative school did aid street children in dominant literacy acquisition, this effort was executed autonomously. The role of the teacher who was inter-culturally sensitive seemed to have played the biggest role in bridging the gap between the students' social-cultural reality and the values imposed via dominant English language literacy. The imposition was done using (1) the syllabus which contains preselected knowledge perceived by the school as important (in the case of this research the aspect focused was grammatical rules) and (2) 'pedagogical techniques' which Bordieu (as cited in Kelder, 1996) claimed to be an act of strengthening an already solid and one-sided dominant literacy. In addition to that, Street (2005) pointed out due to the "uncontested power" bestowed to the dominant English language literacy, the dominant English Language Literacy automatically is given the

right to dictate the standards and criteria of what qualifies one to be literate and what is considered appropriate to be a discourse. Consequently, non-mainstream learners such as the street children in question would find it hard to gain access to mainstream English language discourse, let alone be accepted into the mainstream community. This occurs because they are already demographically unacceptable; thus their existing literacies would never be acknowledged to be part of literacy. This unfortunately takes place when the literacies in question are the very set of knowledge which could aid the children in gaining mainstream literacy abilities.

On the part of the research participants, they were bright and eager young minds – if they were "polished" in a holistic manner, they would not end up being the "pests" of the society; as some of them are labelled now. Their inaccessibility to literacy, or in the case of this research, English language literacy were the fact that they were poor, illegal, and marginalised by the masses and living in a non-conducive environment, academic-wise. If the education system could add an ideological resonance to their literacy continuum – accomplished by using the at-risk adolescents' existing literacies to empower them educationally, there is doubt that the vicious cycle these children are running around in could be broken. On this note, the key player to this change is the alternative schools – as not only they have the most access to at-risk adolescents such as street children, but they are probably the only legal bodies which this group of people trust. The truth is, the story of these children does not have to bear the same plot as their parents' or reflect the lyrics of the song they sang in class: "500 miles, 500 miles, 500 miles, 500 miles Lord I'm five hundred miles from my home, Not a shirt on my back, not a penny to my name". In order to break the wall of marginalisation and vicious cycle which they are currently trapped in, these children need acknowledgement of their struggle, empathy, and empowerment aids, especially from the mainstream community.

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SCHEMA INFLUENCE ON LISTENING AND SPEAKING INPUT RETENTION

Ernisa Marzuki[1]
Ahmed Shamsul Bahri[2]
Salina Pit[3]
Faidz Felani Majeri[4]
Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[1]mernisa@cls.unimas.my
[2]mtashabri@cls.unimas.my
[3]psalina@cls.unimas.my
[4]mffelani@cls.unimas.my

Abstract

Schema has been shown to influence reading and listening processes and retention of information. At the same time, it also arguably resists new information. This study aimed to find out the level of specific item recall in participants after they were given either a listening or reading input with specific altered items. It also examined the differences in the retention of participants who possessed schema of the narrative compared with those who did not possess the schema. For the specific item recall, results revealed that regardless of the type of input, the four major altered items were recalled the most. Meanwhile, the comparison between participants with schemata and without schemata showed that those with schema performed better, with participants who listened to the input and possessing schema achieving the best retention results. The results of this study highlighted the importance of narrative selection for input in teaching and learning whilst also providing evidence that cultural schema influences the type of items recalled from both types of input.

Keywords: Listening and reading input, narrative, retention, schemata, prior knowledge, second language

Introduction

The term "schema" dates back to 1781 (Carrell, 1983) and was formally introduced by Bartlett in 1932 (Ellermeyer, 1993). It refers to the cognitive formation which plays a vital role in explaining what happens when old knowledge meets new (Brewer & Nakamura, 1984). Chiang and Dunkel (1992) define schema as prior knowledge or world knowledge which interacts with the speech listened to, or text read, and might cause communication breakdown when there is a mismatch (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). The important, overlapping elements in the schema theory

seem to be: a) the existence of knowledge or experience from the past, known as prior/world knowledge (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Markham & Latham, 1987); old knowledge (Brewer & Nakamura, 1984), or background knowledge (Carrell, 1983); b) this knowledge or experience is referred to when interpreting text(s) and/or context(s); and c) the person could infer or act upon the text(s) and/or context(s) as a result of the knowledge or experience. Based on these, the working definition of schema in this study is the prior knowledge from any sources which is activated, referred to and possibly followed when encountering texts. That schema is an important facet of learning is a widely accepted fact.

Over the years, schema has been studied by numerous researchers and is deemed as "a useful and powerful tool for understanding reading processes" (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005, p. 534). Research regarding schema and reading (e.g., Baldwin, Peleg-Bruckner, & McClintock, 1985; Pritchard, 1990; Reynolds, Taylor, Steffenson, Shirey, & Anderson, 1982) provided evidence that schema aids reading comprehension. In Baldwin et al.'s (1985) study on schema and topic interest, it was found that schema on its own was sufficient to increase reading comprehension, and that it did not correlate with the interest in the reading topic. Pritchard (1990) conducted a study on Palauan and American adolescents and found that the strategies for comprehending a text differed based on the participants' schema culture. Participants recalled more idea units from the texts which they were culturally familiar with. This was clear in the longer elaborations made by the participants when they encountered a text which was culturally familiar. As culture is ever-present in the background of any language teaching and learning context (Kramsch, 1993), one can argue that cultural schema is an important aspect of text comprehension, not only in reading, but also in listening.

Research regarding schema and second language (L2) listening comprehension, however, is scarce (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1989; Sadighi & Zare, 2006). Long (1989) mentioned that more empirical studies are needed to support schema and listening hypotheses as most research seemed to deal with reading. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) examined Chinese learners' listening comprehension during lectures. Their participants scored lower on the unfamiliar text on the Amish people compared to the more familiar text on Confucius. Schmidt-Reinhart (1994) conducted a similar research on Spanish university students, but added learner proficiency into the equation. She found that topic familiarity induced higher scores on the immediate recall tests, regardless of proficiency. This is similar to Baldwin et al.'s (1985) findings which showed that schema is an autonomous construct.

As mentioned before, cultural schema is an important part of text comprehension. In folktales, Propp's 31 classifications of character functions (Tomaszewski & Binsted, 2007) are based on the cultural schema found in Russian folktales, and can be generalised to include other fairy tales from all over the world. However, Martin (2009), in her review of 25 Malaysian folktales, found that not all of Propp's classifications are satisfied by Malaysian folktales, which tend to be simpler and do not always have happy endings. The schemata of folk tales, therefore, are related to the cultural schemata of the country where they originate from. Consequently, comprehension of folktales should take cultural schema into account.

Schema has also been shown to influence the level of retention. In a series of four experiments related to prior knowledge and brand recognition, Srull (1983) observed that participants with background knowledge of a product retained information better. They were resistant to influences that affected other participants who possessed little or no schema. In Srull's experiment, the influences came in the form of moods (e.g., happy, sad). Srull found that participants with high background knowledge of the product were not affected by their mood, but those who had low background knowledge were affected. Therefore, Srull concluded that schema provided "immunity" against "irrelevant factors" (p. 575). On the other hand, it was also found that participants who possessed the schemata were less able to discriminate the correct pairings of attributes with a product. In other words, schema may cause confusion in terms of accuracy. In a similar tone, schema may "hinder learning from text" as learners tend to disregard information which is dissimilar with their knowledge, even though schema does assist in detail recollection (Shapiro, 2004, p. 162). Therefore, the existence of schema in a learner can be a good thing as it aids in retention of information but, at the same time, can pose a problem if it influences learners to resist new information.

The retention from reading or listening to a narrative whilst taking schema into account, nevertheless, has not been attempted. The comparison between retention between reading and listening has been done for academic texts (see Vidal, 2011) but not for narratives in the form of a folktale with specifically altered items. This study presents preliminary findings regarding retention from listening and reading input during an immediate and delayed post-test on an altered local folktale. We also examined the differences in retention between participants who possessed the narrative schema and those who did not. Our research questions are as follows:

- Are there any differences in the percentage of the overall retention of altered items from the listening and reading input?
- What is the percentage of degradation of retention, if any, from the first (immediate) post-test to the second (delayed) post-test?
- How did participants with prior knowledge perform compared to participants with no prior knowledge of the narrative?

Methodology

A total of 50 undergraduate students, aged between 19 and 25, from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak were selected for this study, with 31 (62%) female and 19 (38%) male participants. They were divided into two groups, namely, the listening group and the reading group. We altered 14 items in a narrative which included the name of characters, origin of characters, and actions to test the participants' recall of specific items. The original storyline was retained. The items were selected based on their importance to the development of the story and also based on their roles according to Propp's characterisation functions (Tomaszewski & Binsted, 2007). In the alteration of items, we took care to ensure that none of the altered forms could be found in any sources, online or printed. To the best of our knowledge, the 14

altered items can only be found in the narrative which we used in this study. The language was also simplified to ensure that language proficiency did not interfere.

Our aims were to find out how much of these items would be retained through listening compared to reading, and if participants with schema about the narrative would retain more items compared to those who did not possess the schema. In this sense, this study resembles the study by Srull (1983) which studied what participants recalled after being fed with manipulated input.

The original narrative in this study was a folktale on how Mount Santubong was formed (see Appendix A). It was chosen as it is quite well-known and it contains several references which makes it uniquely Sarawak. In addition, the folktale was once made into a popular song (see Appendix B) which tells about the two beautiful princesses, *Santubong* and *Sejinjang*, who were good friends initially, but then started to fight with each other. In the end, *Santubong* was cursed into a mountain (Mount Santubong) and *Sejinjang* into an island (Kera Island). In the original story, the princesses came from *Kayangan*, a mythical place of origin which can be found in the local folklore. The substitute that we selected, *Bunian*, is also found in many folktales. The names of places (altered addition: *Pantai Puteri*) and characters (original name: *Putera Mahkota Serapi,* altered name: *Putera Mahkota Bako*) in the narrative would have been familiar to most Sarawakians. *Pantai Puteri* is a real beach which exists in Kuching, Sarawak. *Serapi* is the name of another mountain in the Kuching district, whilst *Bako* is Sarawak's prominent national park.

Data collection for the study took place in three steps. The first step was to distribute pre-selection questionnaire which dealt with the participants' schemata regarding the folktale. Participants were required to assess their own knowledge of the folktale through a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (*Never heard of it*) to 4 (*Very familiar*). Those who claimed that they were familiar with the narrative were then required to write a short synopsis of what the story was about. Meanwhile, those who had no prior knowledge of the narrative were required to write their opinion on what they thought the story might be about.

Next, depending on their group, the participants were given an altered version of the narrative text. The listening group consisted of 25 participants and was called the ML group. The reading group contained 25 participants and was called the MR group. ML was required to listen to the recorded version of the narrative, twice. Repetition was done to avoid comprehension issues as the recording was in English. Once the listening exercise ended, the students were asked to write whatever they remembered from the recording. MR was given a written text of the altered narrative to read. After five minutes, they were asked to return the text and write whatever they remembered from what they read. This step of recall protocol was considered as the immediate post-test or post-test 1.

The third step, known as post-test 2 or the delayed post-test, was conducted two weeks later. Participants from both groups were asked to write whatever they could recall from the narrative which they had either listened to or read two weeks before. In order to avoid language problems, we allowed participants to code-switch in the writings. Nonetheless, as the language proficiency of the participants had been controlled earlier (all participants were of intermediate level), all of them responded in English.

Results and Discussion

The first research objective looks at differences in the overall retention of altered items. Interestingly, for all four post-tests in both types of input, the trends of specific item recall were similar, as illustrated in Figure 1.
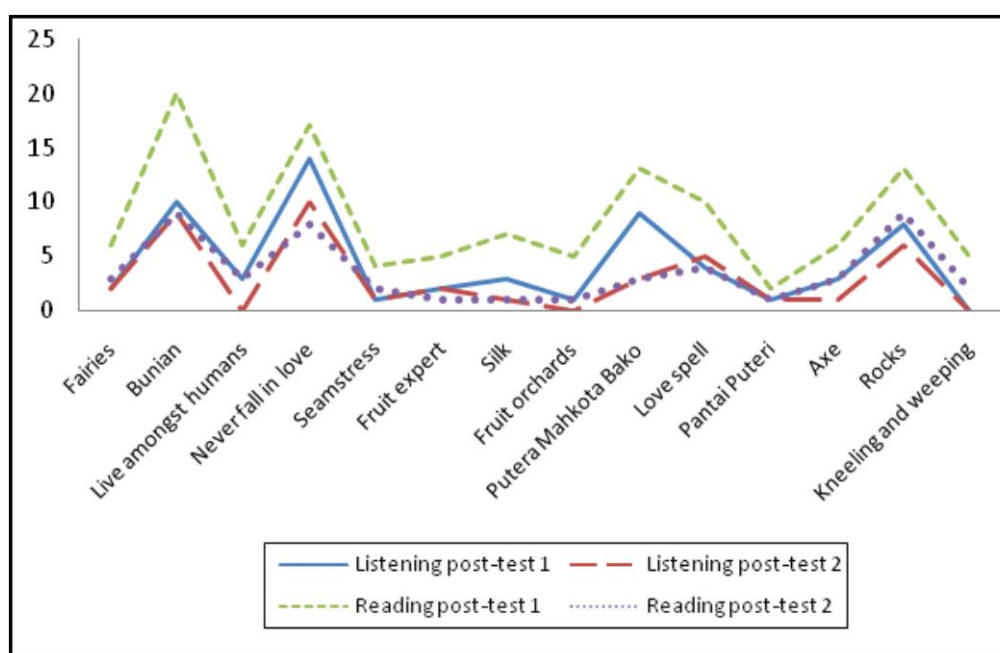
Figure 1. Trends of specific item recall for the immediate and delayed post-tests for listening and reading

It is clear from the line graph that the immediate recall after reading was the highest. Nevertheless, two weeks later, very distinct drops can be seen in the recalled items. On the other hand, immediate recall after listening was lower, but the differences in recall two weeks later did not show a gap as big as the differences between the first and second reading post-tests. Figure 1 shows that after two weeks, despite the earlier difference in the immediate recall test, the levels of specific item retention for both types of input were actually quite similar.

The similarity in the types of recalled items was striking. The four peaks of all post-tests were for Item 2 (*Bunian*), Item 4 (*Never fall in love*), Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*), and Item 13 (*Rocks*). It was conjectured that the higher recalls for these altered items was due to the fact that these four items represented important points in the story. According to Propp's feature classifications (Tomaszewski & Binsted, 2007), Item 2 (*Bunian*) is Absentation; Item 4 (*Never fall in love*) is Interdiction; Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*) is the Villain, and Item 13 (*Rocks*) is the Punishment. Even though Malaysian folktales may not fulfil all 31 features as listed by Propp (Martin, 2009), these four features are culturally familiar in most folktales. Item 13 (*Rocks*) may be recalled more often as stones and rocks are familiar

occurrences in Malaysian folktales as part of the punishment (see Martin, 2009). Particularly striking is the high peak of recall for Item 2 (*Bunian*). We believed that this was caused by the local schema concerning the belief in the existence of *Orang Bunian* (elf-like creatures). As the altered item in our narrative put *Bunian* as the origin of the princesses, some participants might have associated the place with their local schemata.

To find out whether there are differences in the percentage of retention between the immediate post-test and the delayed post-test, we then converted the number of recall for each item into percentage and compared the numbers. The results for listening are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Percentage of retention during post-test 1 and post-test 2 for listening input

Items	Post-listening 1 (%)	Post-listening 2 (%)	Difference
1	8	8	0
2	40	36	4
3	12	0	12
4	56	40	16
5	4	4	0
6	8	8	0
7	12	4	8
8	4	0	4
9	36	12	24
10	16	20	-4
11	4	4	0
12	12	4	8
13	32	24	8
14	0	0	0
Total	244	164	80
x/100%	17.43	11.71	5.71

Table 1 shows that only 17.43% of items were recalled in the immediate post-test. This dwindled to 11.71% in the delayed post-test. In the immediate post-test, participants seemed to recall Item 4 (*Never fall in love with a human being*) the most, followed by Item 2 (*Bunian*), and Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*). None of the participants recalled Items 1 (*Fairies*), 5 (*Seamstress*), 6 (*Fruit expert*), 11 (*Pantai Puteri*) and 14 (*Kneeling down/weeping*). The delayed post-test showed a small variation in the recalled items. The first two items were the same (Items 4 and 2), but the third highest recalled item shifted from Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*) to Item 10 (*Cast a love spell*) and Item 13 (*Rocks*). The illustrated differences can be seen in Figure 2.
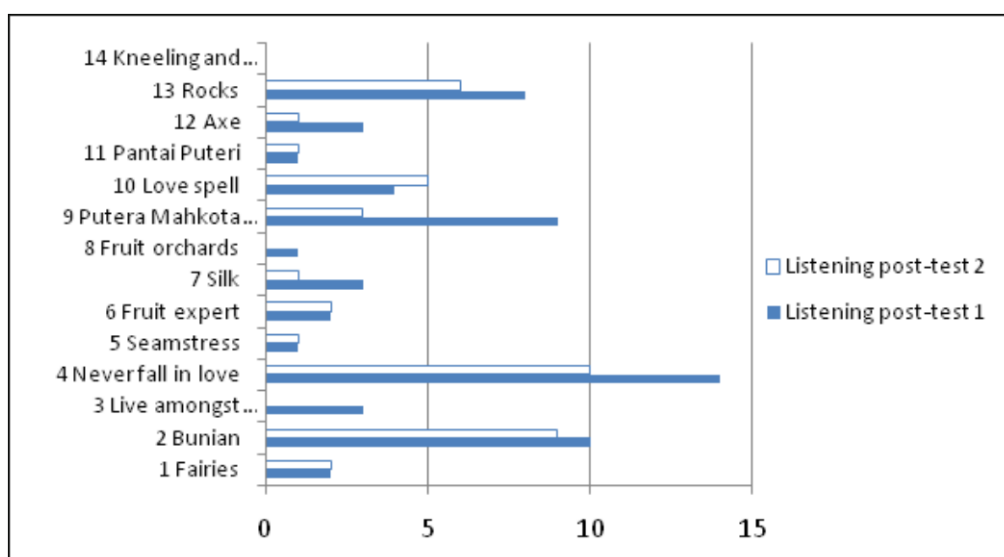
Figure 2. Frequency of specific item recall in the immediate and delayed post-tests for listening input

Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*) was found to be the item which deteriorated the most if one took into account the decrease in frequency. Meanwhile, Item 3 (*Live amongst human*) and 8 (*Fruit orchards*) were fully lost after two weeks. Worthy of note is the addition of Items 10 and 13 which were not mentioned in the immediate recall, but appeared two weeks later in the recall protocols of two participants. Item 1 (*Fairies*) and Item 6 (*Fruit expert*) were equally recalled in both post-tests by the same participants. Surprisingly, one item (Item 10: *Love spell*) gained more recall in the delayed post-test, although the increase in retention was only by one. This sudden recall of an item which was not remembered in the immediate post-test is intriguing, but as it only involved one participant, it might be idiosyncratic.

The same tabulations were applied for results from the reading post-tests. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Percentage of retention during post-test 1 and post-test 2 for reading input

Items	Post-listening 1 (%)	Post-listening 2 (%)	Difference
1	24	12	12
2	80	36	44
3	24	12	12
4	68	32	36
5	16	8	8
6	20	4	16
7	28	4	24
8	20	4	16
9	52	12	40

10	40	16	24
11	8	4	4
12	24	12	12
13	52	36	16
14	20	8	12
Total	476	200	276
x/100%	34.00	14.29	19.71

A higher retention percentage was shown for reading, as 34.00% of items were recalled during the immediate post-test. As shown in Table 2, the items which had the highest recall during the immediate post-test were Item 2 (*Bunian*), followed by Item 4 (*Never fall in love*), and Items 13 (*Rocks*) and 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*). The one distinct difference compared with the immediate listening post-test was the appearance of Item 13 (*Rocks*) on the list. The delayed post-test showed a sharp drop of recall to 14.29%, which was more than half of the original percentage of recall. Items with the highest recall stayed similar, with the exception of Item 10 (*Love spell*) which was not one of the items with the highest recall during the immediate post-test.
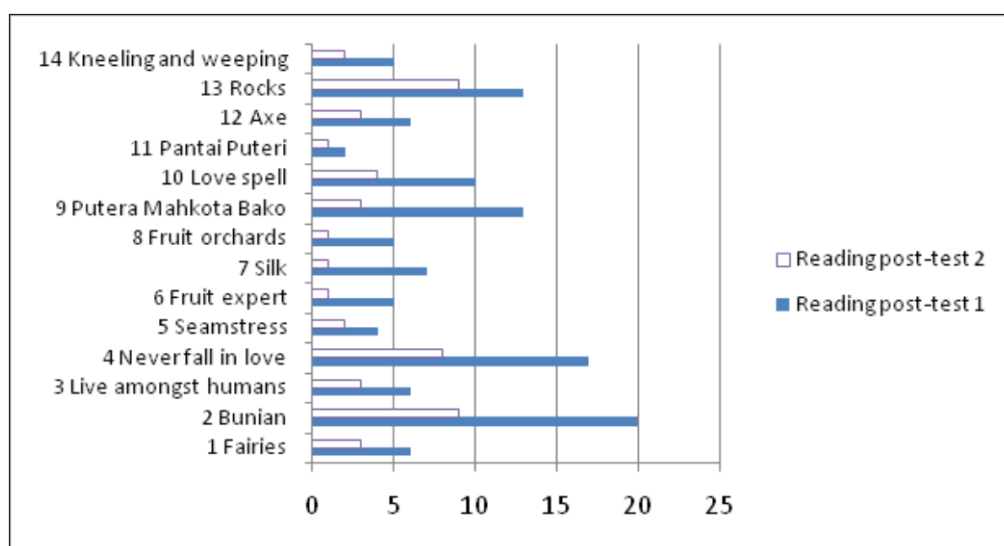
Figure 3. Frequency of specific item recall in the immediate and delayed post-tests for reading input

Input through reading showed the highest recall of items; however, it also showed the highest percentage of deterioration (Figure 3). Item 7 (*Silk*) deteriorated by 85.7%, which was the highest percentage of deterioration, followed by Item 8 (*Fruit orchards*) at 80.0% and Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*) at 76.9%. The overall decline in item recall in the delayed post-test for reading was more significant than the overall decline in item recall for listening. This finding was similar to Vidal's (2011) findings on the retention of reading and listening to academic texts. Vidal found that listening left "more durable traces than reading" for the more proficient

learners in her study, which led to better retention of words for listeners compared to readers (p. 244). This is an interesting insight. Since the pattern in our study mimicked Vidal's observation, it might indicate that the same pattern applies for both academic and narrative texts.

Our third research question deals with the differences between participants with prior knowledge and those without prior knowledge of the narrative. Schmidt-Reinhart (1994) and Srull (1983) found that participants with prior knowledge had better scores when tested compared to participants without the knowledge. On the other hand, research like Vidal's (2011) demonstrated that listeners scored better in post-tests than readers when it came to retention. To determine which trend would appear in this study, we classified participants who showed that they possessed adequate prior knowledge of the folklore by selecting those who can write a synopsis with an accurate or almost accurate (e.g., one or two minor errors such as the spelling of names) storyline and compared their results with those who did not possess the schemata for the narrative. Overall findings revealed that participants with schemata were able to recall more items, although some items were new and inaccurate. This finding therefore supported previous findings (e.g., Srull, 1983) which showed that schema assisted in retention. However, the finding that listening input resulted in better retention still held true. The best result for retention was achieved when the two constructs (input through listening and presence of schema) were combined, as summed up in Table 3.

Table 3
Differences in the retention and deterioration of items (%) between participants with schema and with little or no schema for reading and listening input

Group		Recall of items for post-test 1 (%)	Recall of items for post-test 2 (%)	Deterioration in two weeks (%)
ML	With schema	23.63	18.13	
	With little or no schema	10.71	4.76	
MR	With schema	31.43	15.71	
	With little or no schema	34.64	13.93	

The ML group had a balanced number of participants with 13 who were familiar with the folklore and 12 who were not. The immediate post-test corresponded to Schmidt-Reinhart's (1994) and Chiang and Dunkel's (1992) findings as those with prior knowledge were able to recall 23.63% of the items, far higher than those who were not familiar with the folktale. Participants with little or no schemata were only able to recall 10.71% of the items. The delayed post-test saw a decline in retention of the items. Interestingly, the levels of deterioration for both participants with and without schema were almost similar at 5.49% and 5.95% respectively. Nonetheless, participants with schema still held the higher retention percentage of 18.13% compared to 4.67% from these without schema.

The reading post-tests from the MR group, however, showed a different outcome. Only five participants were deemed as familiar with the folktale. The remaining 20 participants did not possess the schemata. Participants with schema were able to recall 31.43% of the items, whilst participants with little or no schema recalled a slightly higher percentage (34.64%) in the immediate post-test. In the delayed post-test, participants with schema could only recall 15.71% of the items, whilst those with little or no schema recalled 13.93%. The percentage of deterioration of those with schema was 15.71%, a decline of exactly half. Meanwhile, the percentage of deterioration of those without schema was 20.71%, a higher percentage compared to the listening post-tests result. As a matter of fact, within two weeks, participants who read the altered folktale had forgotten approximately three to four times the percentage of items recalled by those who listened to the folktale, even though it can be argued that those with prior knowledge about the folktale still had better recollection of items. This is in accordance with Pritchard's (1990) findings that participants who were more familiar with a text recalled more idea units when they read the text compared to those who had no prior knowledge.

From these findings, we concluded that the listening post-tests showed a higher retention level in the immediate post-test for those with schema than those with little or no schema, but with almost the same level of deterioration for both. The opposite occurred in the reading post-tests as participants with little or no schema actually recalled more items, but deteriorated at a much higher level compared to those with prior knowledge.

Conclusion

The results from this study showed that the overall retention of altered items followed a similar pattern. From this, four items were recalled the most, namely, Item 2 (*Bunian*), Item 4 (*Never fall in love*), Item 9 (*Putera Mahkota Bako*), and Item 13 (*Rocks*). We argue that the recall for these four items was higher in all four post-tests for both types of input as they formed the usual backbone of Malaysian folktales and also because they are part of narrative folktale/fairytale features as demonstrated in Propp's characterisations. This study provided evidence in accordance with previous research on schema, which showed that participants with schema recalled more information. It also provided evidence in accordance with listening and reading input, which showed that input by listening resulted in better retention. Nevertheless, the combination of listening and presence of schema produced the best retention and the lowest deterioration.

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Appendix A

Original version of the folktale

There is a famous legend behind Mount Santubong in Sarawak that recounts of two beautiful mythical sisters. Princess Santubong and Princess Sejinjang were **both from the magnificent and idyllic mythical kingdom called Kayangan**. **Both were sent to earth to restore peace between the neighbouring villages of Pasir Kuning and PasirPutih, with a strict condition that they must never quarrel with each other, as decreed by the mighty King of Kayangan.**

Princess Santubong, **an experienced weaver,** was to rule over PasirKuning while Princess Sejinjang, a **skilled rice thresher,** was to rule over PasirPutih. Princess Santubong's intricately woven fabrics were an instant success while Princess Sejinjang's paddy fields were greatly thriving. Both villages soon prospered greatly.

The beauty and talent of both princesses made them much sought after by suitors from all over the place. None won their heart until they met **Putera Mahkota Serapi (Crown Prince Serapi)** from Matang. The crown prince fell in love with both of them, but they refused to be joint wives.

Because of him, they had an awful quarrel and exchanged blows. **Sejinjang swung her thresher and hit Santubong's cheek which made her fell flat on her back. Santubong threw her weaver at Sejinjang, hitting her directly at her head. The great King of Kayangan was so angry that he cursed both of them into mountains,** putting an end to the fight.

It is said that the Mount Santubong **resembles a woman lying on her back.** The deep crevice at the peak is where the princess got hit on the cheek.

The legend was then told in a song called "Puteri Santubong" sung in local Malay dialect. It is often played by local radio stations.

Taken from http://malaysiastories.blogspot.com/2009/05/legend-of-puteri-santubong.html

Altered version of the folktale

There is a famous legend behind Mount Santubong in Sarawak that tells of two beautiful mythical sisters. Princess Santubong and Princess Sejinjang were both **fairies** from the land of **Bunian**. They were sent to earth to learn to **live amongst humans** but with one condition, they **must never fall in love with a human being.**

Princess Santubong, **an experienced seamstress,** was to rule over PasirKuning while Princess Sejinjang, **a fruit expert**, was to rule over PasirPutih. Princess Santubong's**silk** costumes were an instant success while Princess Sejinjang's **fruit orchards** were greatly flourishing. Both villages soon became very well-known.

The beauty and talent of both princesses made them much sought after by suitors from all over the place. None won their heart until they met Putera Mahkota **Bako**. The crown prince **cast a love spell**, making both of them fall in love with him.

Because of him, they had an awful quarrel at **Pantai Puteri** and started to hit one another. Sejinjang swung her **axe** and hit Santubong's cheek which made her fell flat on her back. Santubong threw her own axe at Sejinjang, hitting her directly at her head. The great King of Bunian was so angry that he cursed both of them into **rocks**, putting an end to the fight.

It is said that Mount Santubong resembles **women kneeling down, weeping.** The legend was then told by the people to each other to remember the two princesses and their unhappy ending.

Appendix B
Oooo puteri sentubong sejinjang sayang
kisah lama zaman mensia maya
Puteri Santubong, Puteri Sejinjang,
Penjaga gunung negeri Sarawak,
Manis sik ada dapat dilawan,
Anak dak dewa turun kayangan.

Ooo..Santubong Puteri,
Menenun kain... malam,
Ooo.. Sejinjang Puteri,
Menumbuk padi...siang.
Satu hari nya duak kelayi,
Beranok-anok sik renti-renti,
Sorang madah dirik bagus agik,
Sorang sik ngalah sampei ke mati,

Yalah kisah duak 'rang puteri,
Suka kelayi setiap hari,
Lalu disumpah raja kayangan,
Menjadi gunung negeri Sarawak.

Oooo puteri sentubong sejinjang sayang
kisah lama zaman mensia maya
Udah lejuk nya duak kelai
lalu bertukuk nya duak puteri
sejinjang mengayun alu ka pipi
tebi' sentubung sampei gituk ari

tapi sentubong membalas juak,lalu ditikam batang belidak
sampei terkena sejinjang kepalak
lalu bertabur jadi pulo kera
kisah sentubong kisah sejinjang
asal berkawan jadi musohan
kinek tok tinggal jadi kenangan
pakei ingatan sepanjang zaman

Adapted from http://www.justsomelyrics.com/1911721/lagu-rakyat-sarawak-puteri-
santubong-lyrics.html

TEXTUAL AND LANGUAGE FEATURES OF STUDENTS' WRITTEN DISCUSSION TEXTS

Su-Hie Ting[1]
Ai-Sze Chai[2]
[1]Centre for Language Studies. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[2]State Education Department, Sarawak
[1]shting@cls.unimas.my
[2]alison_ice03@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examined textual and language features of discussion texts written by university students. The discussion texts were written by 100 students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes course at a Malaysian university. The advantages-disadvantages essay was analysed using Feez's (1998) framework for discussion texts. The results showed that about half of the students were unable to state the issue clearly in the introduction and assess the issue based on foregoing arguments in the conclusion. For the arguments, the topic sentences and supporting details were satisfactory. Analysis of the language features in the student discussion texts revealed that conditional clauses were seldom used to present hypothetical situations to move the arguments forward but connectors were frequently used, particularly "because". More causal connectors were used than sequential connectors because of the need for reasoning in discussion texts. Shifts in arguments were signaled using adversative connectors but these were used less frequently than additive connectors for connecting similar ideas. The discussion texts were also characterised by the frequent use of modal verbs for hedging and boosting, mainly "can" and "will". The study shows that while the student texts had the relevant language features of discussions, they sometimes lacked the characteristic textual structure of discussion texts.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes, academic writing, discussion, argumentative texts, exposition, textual structure

Introduction

Expository texts encompass both argumentative texts requiring the writer to take a stance on the issue and discussion texts requiring a balanced discussion of the issue at hand (Derewianka, 1991, 2003; Jenkins & Pico, 2007; Feez, 1998). Examples of argumentative expositions include editorials, letters to the editor, sermons, political

speeches and debates (Martin et al., 1983) whereas discussions include talk shows and forums on issues. In Derewianka's (1991) words, argument and discussion belong to a "genre group called 'Exposition', concerned with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the world around us" (p. 75). In this paper, expository texts do not include explanations of processes, following the definition of Derewianka (1991, 2003). Research on expository texts has largely focused on comprehension (e.g., Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005; Weaver & Byrant, 1995), some involving recall (e.g., Hidi & Baird, 1988; Wolfe, 2005).

Another focus is the writing of expository texts and, for this the writing of argumentative texts has been studied more than the writing of discussion texts. For example, Lee (2005) found that East-Asian students are not as successful as Australian-born native speakers of English in showing audience awareness through the argument structure and interpersonal components of language features. Another study identified the problem with the argument structure. From their analysis of the writing of English majors in Argentina and students learning English for the purposes of pursuing post-secondary education or re-entering a profession in Australia, Jenkins and Pico (2007) found that the difficulty lies in the introductions and conclusions for the weaker writers. Similar findings on the argument structure were reported by Ting, Raslie, and Jee (2011). Based on their analysis of argument texts in the form of Letters to the Editor written by proficient and less proficient Malaysian learners, they reported that learners with lower English proficiency could not state and restate the stance clearly, and some omitted these crucial stages. Both groups of learners hardly used conditionals and nominalisations to move their arguments forward but their language proficiency made a difference in the use of other persuasive language features. The less proficient learners also used fewer and a narrower range of connectors in their argument texts to signal transition in ideas, relying mainly on "because". The results also showed that although proficient and less proficient learners did not differ much in the frequency of modal verbs used, the less proficient learners tended to use "need", "would" and "must" to convey strong meanings of necessity while the proficient learners preferred "will" and "should". The study also showed that the less proficient learners were not as adept as proficient learners in using modal verbs (e.g., could, may, might) to signal remote possibility. Use of modality is not easy – even academics who are non-native speakers of English sometimes use modal verbs inappropriately in their research articles (Flowerdew, 2001; Guinda, 2003). Other differences in patterns of using modality in argumentative texts have been found. For example, Japanese students used downtoning expressions in their argumentative texts whereas American students use emphatic devices (Kamimura & Oi, 1998).

In comparison to argumentative texts, the writing of discussion texts has received less research attention. A literature search using "discussion" as one of the key words led to studies on the discussion section of research articles rather than discussion of issues, and searches of expository texts led to articles on argumentative texts. In view of the paucity of research on discussion texts, studies are needed because although both argument and discussion texts make use of persuasive language features such as connectivity, transitivity and modality (Jenkins & Pico, 2007), their textual structure is different. Argument texts begin with a

statement of the stance taken on the issue and closes with a restatement of the stance after arguments have been put forward. However, discussion texts begin with an open statement of the issue for discussion and do not include a stance. Feez (1998) outlines the following as essential elements of discussion texts: Statement of Issue, Arguments for and against, and Assessment/Recommendation (p. 99). In the conclusion of discussion texts, the foregoing arguments presented on the issue are assessed and a recommendation may be made. Since the textual structure of discussion texts differs from argument texts, the findings on learner difficulties with argument textual structure may not be applicable. Hence, studies are needed to throw light on areas which may compromise the effectiveness of discussion texts. The importance of teaching students expository writing cannot be emphasised enough. In Martin et al.'s (1983) words, "exposition has an important place in our culture – particularly in our education system where students' lives quite literally depend on their mastery of this genre in evaluation situations towards the end of secondary and throughout tertiary education" (p. 91).

The study examined university students' writing of discussion texts from the aspects of textual structure and language features, focusing on conjunctions, modality and conditional clauses.

Method of Study

The discussion texts analysed in this study were written by 100 students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at a Malaysian university. The students from different language backgrounds, aged 21 to 22, were in their second or third year of their degree and from different disciplines. These students had spent about 12 years learning English in school before entering university.

In the EAP course, the students learnt to write these academic genres: classification, explanation and discussion. They were also taught to cite authoritative sources in their writing using the American Psychological Association style. Each academic genre was covered in 12 hours, spread across three weeks. Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolding was adopted whereby the instructor built up students' background knowledge on the topic (general knowledge and vocabulary) and genre in the initial field-building stage, followed by a modeling or text deconstruction stage in which the instructor explained the textual structure and language features of the genre using sample texts (Appendix 1), and this was followed by joint and finally independent construction of the text (for details, see James, Chua, & Lim, 2007).

The topic of the discussion text analysed in this study was "advantages and disadvantages of human dependency on computers". The framework for analysing the textual structure of discussion texts was taken from Feez (1998). The student discussion texts were analysed for the presence and absence of the following stages: Statement of Issue, Arguments for and against, and Assessment/Recommendation. If the arguments were repeats of earlier arguments, they were not counted as appropriate arguments the second time.

In this study, the language features analysed were conjunctions, modality and conditional clauses. Feez (1998) listed modal verbs, conditional clauses and

reader engagement strategies as important in discussion texts. Reader engagement strategies were not analysed as they could take various forms such as second person pronouns, imperatives, question forms and asides (Hyland, 2001). Instead conjunctions were included in the analysis because Derewianka (1991) had stated that connectors associated with reasoning to express cause-and-effect are more commonly used than sequence connectors in expository texts. For conjunctions, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) categorisation was used: additive, adversative, causal, and sequential. For additive and adversative connectors, only those used in the sentence initial positions were counted but not those in inter-clausal positions (e.g., "and", "also", "but"), as illustrated in the following examples:

- "The dependency on computers has both advantages <u>and</u> disadvantages" (Text 47)
- "They feel that computer networking, <u>also</u> known as the internet, helps their business grow faster" (Text 12)
- "Computers have revolutionized the world, and we have become dependent on computers – even computers give advantages <u>but</u> we can argue in many ways" (Text 11)

Care was also taken to ensure that "since" for indicating reasoning and "since" for indicating duration (e.g., since the creation and revolution of computers) were appropriately identified as causal and sequential connectors respectively. Use of modality in the student discussion texts was analysed by counting the frequency of "can", "could", "shall", "should", "will", "would", "may", "might" and "must". The percentages with which each of these modal verbs were used was computed to identify the more frequently used modal verbs.

Results and Discussion

In this section, excerpts from student discussion texts are included to illustrate the use and the texts are referred to as Text 1 to Text 100. See Appendix 2 for sample student discussion text, marked for textual structure and language features.

Structure of discussion texts

In this study, the discussion texts were analysed for the presence or absence of required stages. The results showed only 47 of 100 students clearly stated the issue (Table 1). The remaining 53 students either stated a different issue from what was presented in the question (34) or took a stance on the issue (19). If the deviation in content is disregarded, this means that 81 students began their discussion texts with a statement of the issue, showing awareness of the compulsory nature of this initial stage.

Table 1
Presence of stages in discussion texts

Stages of discussion	Frequency
Issue	47
Argument 1 –point	98
• Elaboration	98
Argument 2 – point	90
• Elaboration	92
Argument 3 – point	32
• Elaboration	28
Argument 4 – point	29
• Elaboration	29
Assessment	40

Table 1 shows that more than 90 students constructed the first two arguments appropriately, and these were usually positive points to show human dependency on computers. In contrast, the students found it more difficult to argue that humans have not become dependent on computers in certain aspects of their lives such as in counseling (Arguments 3 and 4). Less than one-third of the students were able to present the counter-arguments appropriately (32 for Argument 3 and 29 for Argument 4). They strayed into presenting negative effects arising from misuse of computers and the general weaknesses of computers (e.g., virus attack, loss of files and high cost). The problem could be topic-related as students were more familiar with ways how computers have benefitted the world but not the counter-argument.

The students did not write the closing of the discussion as well as the introduction in that only 40 students wrote an assessment of arguments presented for the issue. Example 1 indicates that the student had a good grasp of the issue discussed:

Example 1
In conclusion, after considering the arguments against and arguments for, I suggest that people are not fully dependent on computers. Computers only needed when they have some problems or work to do. But for some reason, people may become dependent on computer because they are too lazy to think and find solutions for their work. So, people must consider the attitude of the people who using computers before make a conclusion or decisions. (Text 64)

Closures similar to Example 1 assess the foregoing arguments but conclusions like Example 2 takes a definite stance and are more reflective of argumentative texts:

Example 2
Thus, in summary we can see that in terms of production, we depend on computer to increase our production. In addition, we also use computer to surf the internet to get information and communicate with others. However,

not every people in this world can afford to buy a computer. Furthermore, some people do not know how to operate a computer. Therefore after examining all the arguments, the statement 'computers have revolutionised the world and we have become dependent on computers', we should learn more about computers so that we can fully maximise the function of computers. (Text 75)

Besides these two types of conclusions, there were others which either deviated from the issue or were general conclusions along the line of "There are advantages and disadvantages of human dependency on computers" which could be written without referring to any of the arguments raised earlier.

The results on students' difficulty with introductions and conclusions concurred with the findings of other studies on argumentative texts (Jenkins & Pico, 2007; Ting, et al., 2011). It seems that regardless of the type of expository text, students tend to write introductions and conclusions which are not specific to the purpose of texts. If the introduction identifies the issue clearly, this provides a focus for readers to evaluate the viewpoints on the issue. If the conclusion assesses the viewpoints presented, then readers would have a clear idea of the arguments without even reading through the whole discussion text. Other studies have shown that university students have similar problems in writing focused introductions and conclusions for explanations (Ting, Campbell, Law, & Hong, 2013; Ting & Tee, 2009). Researchers have attributed the problem of general introductions and conclusions to instruction on the tripartite structure of general discursive essays (introduction-body-conclusion) which does not take into account the communicative purpose of the text (see Cahill, 2003; Gautreau et al., 1986; Liu, 2005). For a start, students need to be alerted to the fact that introductions and conclusions vary with the intended message of the text. Then they need to be taught the textual structure of common types of academic texts that they are expected to write at university (e.g., explanation, research articles) so that they can organise the content appropriately to achieve the purpose of the text effectively. Teaching students the conventional textual structure of common types of academic texts is a good starting point to help them master the conventions as well as understand how the textual structure enable the texts to achieve the intended purpose.

Language features of discussion texts

In this section, results are presented for the three language features of discussion texts: conditional clauses, modal verbs and connectors.

Conditional clauses. Out of 100 discussion texts analysed, only 35 students used conditional clauses. "If … then" statements were used by 29 students once, two times by four students, and three times by two students. The only type of conditional sentence used was the "if + simple present + will (verb)" to express likelihood and possibility of the condition to be fulfilled. For instance, "if the computer doesn't work, the people will be afraid and frustrated" (Text 37). The use of the present/indicative if-conditional frames the condition as factual. The students did not use other conditional constructions such as "if + future/subjunctive" (e.g., If

it rains, they will cancel the game) or "if + past imperfect/subjunctive" (e.g., If it rained, they would cancel the game) to frame the condition as hypothetical (see Ferrari, 2002). Conditional clauses open up possibilities in logical reasoning and are useful as an alternative to using facts as evidence to support arguments. In the context of research articles, if-conditionals are found to have an interpersonal role in the discussion section:

> to guide the reader's interpretation while allowing for a certain degree of independence in reaching the conclusions, to engage the reader by leaving some questions open for further discussion, to negotiate terms and concepts, to ward off possible criticism, to signal problem areas, to acknowledge other points of view or potential threats to the cogency of argumentation, and to involve the readers by directly soliciting their approval. (Warchal, 2010, p. 140)

In the discussion section of research articles, researchers assess the viability of alternative interpretations of results. Thus, in the context of discussions, and expository texts in general, if-conditionals are useful to limit the assertiveness of a claim by making its validity conditional on some other premises and also as emphatics to promote a claim to the status of the obvious once another claim is accepted (Warchal, 2010). However, the potential of if-conditionals in handling claims in arguments was not fully exploited in the student discussion texts.

Modal verbs. The students frequently used modal verbs for cohesion in their discussion texts, at an average of 95.3 modal verbs in a text of about 250 words (Table 2). The most frequently used modal verb was "can" (55.8%). For example, "People can complete their work easily …" (Text 23). As a marker of modality, "can" here could mean a high level of probability but as a marker of modulation, it would mean a median to high degree of obligation or inclination (Martin et al., 1983). The students' intended purposes for using "can" in their discussion texts were not investigated and, as such, the potential ambiguity in the functions of "can" could not be resolved. It is also possible that the students might not be sure of the exact meanings intended because Neff-van Aertselaer and Dafouz-Milne (2008) found that non-native writers use "can" in a dynamic sense with variable meanings whereas native writers use "can" more to denote definite possibility to present a change from problem to solution. Neff-van Aertselaer and Dafouz-Milne came to this conclusion based on their analysis of editorials, a type of argumentative text, written by American university writers and Spanish non-native speakers of English. In a related study, Neff et al. (2003) found that "can" was overused by non-native speakers of English (Italian, Spanish, Dutch, French, and German), in descending order of frequency.

Table 2
Frequency of language features of discussion texts

Modal verbs	Frequency	Percentage
Can	532	55.8
Will	217	22.8
May	57	6.0
Must	39	4.1
Could	33	3.5
Should	33	3.5
Might	30	3.1
Would	11	1.1
Shall	1	0.1
Total	953	100.0

The rather extensive use of "will" in the student discussion texts needs to be interpreted with the knowledge that for the Malaysian variety of English, the future tense marker is often used in place of the present tense to express a statement of fact (Checketts, 1999; Nair-Venugopal, 2003). For instance, "without computers, these presenters will not be able to present well" (Text 34). In view of the localised use of English, "will" may not carry meanings of certainty and the high frequency of "will" in comparison to "would" cannot be concluded as a deliberate choice between certainty and possibility.

A closer examination of Table 2 shows that the modal verbs were mainly used for hedging ("can", "may", "could", "might") rather than boosting ("will", "must", "should"). By hedging, the students avoided sweeping generalisations and unqualified claims that would jeopardise their arguments. The inclination towards modal verbs for hedging is partly because discussions does not require advocacy of action which is more common in argumentative texts. The findings of Ting et al. (2011) support this conclusion because their study was on argument texts and more modal verbs were used for emphasis rather than hedging. Use of modal verbs for mitigation rather than assertiveness is a characteristic of non-adversarial argumentation according to Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003).

Connectors. Table 3 shows that the most frequently connectors are causal connectors (309 occurrences or 34.56% of 894 connectors). More causal connectors are used than sequential connectors because discussion involves reasoning rather than ordering of events as in explanations of processes. The results provide empirical evidence to substantiate Derewianka's (1991) claim on the greater relevance of causal connectors than sequential connectors in expository texts. Among the causal connectors, "because" is the most popular causal connector (146 occurrences or 47.25% of causal connectors). The students tended to introduce reasons using this sentence structure, "This is because …". The other causal connectors ("so", "since", "therefore", "as a result", "hence" and "consequently") were used in sentence-initial positions.

Table 3
Frequency of connectors used in discussion texts

Category	Connectors	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Causal connectors	Because	146	47.25	309
	Thus	48	15.53	
	So	35	11.33	
	Since (reason)	30	9.71	
	Therefore	26	8.41	
	As a result	14	4.53	
	Hence	9	2.91	
	Consequently	1	0.33	
Additive connectors	Besides (that)	108	49.77	217
	In addition	46	21.20	
	Furthermore	37	17.05	
	Moreover	26	11.98	
Sequential connectors	When	57	29.23	195
	In conclusion	39	20.00	
	first(ly)	34	17.44	
	Since	30	15.39	
	Secondly	14	7.18	
	Finally	9	4.61	
	In summary	9	4.61	
	In a nut shell	3	1.54	
Adversative connectors	However	76	43.93	173
	On the other hand	54	31.21	
	Although	13	7.51	
	Instead	10	5.78	
	Even though	8	4.63	
	Apart from that	8	4.63	
	In contrast	3	1.73	
	Despite	1	0.58	
Total		894		894

Sequential connectors were mainly used to mark the co-occurrence of circumstances and the conclusion of the discussion text. In fact, "when" is the most frequently used sequential connector, accounting for 29.23% of 195 sequential connectors. "When" is useful for linking clauses in elaboration of arguments. For example, "This can minimise time for work where we do not need to send letter to the post office when we can just e-mail them to the respective persons" (Text 3). "When" may appear either at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence but the sequential connectors for signaling summary were all placed in sentence initial positions. "In conclusion", "finally", "in summary", "in a nut shell" constituted 30.77% of sequential connectors used by students in their discussion texts (Table 3). The range is extensive compared to connectors used for signaling their first two arguments ("first(ly)", and "second(ly)").

The analysis revealed that the students used a larger variety but lower frequency of adversative connectors than additive connectors. The most frequently used adversative connectors are "however" (76 times or 43.93% of 173 adversative

connectors) and "on the other hand" (54 times or 31.21%) (Table 3). Besides these, another six adversative connectors were used to signal counterclaims ("although", "instead", "even though", "apart from that", "in contrast" and "despite"). On the other hand, to signal addition of similar ideas, the students depended on "besides" (108 times or 49.77% of 217 additive connectors). Only three other additive connectors were identified from the analysis, namely, "in addition", "furthermore" and "moreover". While both additive and adversative connectors are needed to signpost advantages and disadvantages of human dependency on computers respectively, the larger number of additive connectors indicates that the positive aspects of human need for computers were elaborated in more detail than the negative aspects of human dependency on computers. The textual organisation results also showed that the pros (Arguments 1 and 2) were written better than the cons (Arguments 3 and 4), and this seems to be reflected by the higher frequency of additive connectors. Generally, the English-speaking discourse community uses more adversative markers than additive markers because they use a retrogressive strategy which requires writers to present "different sides of argumentation to reach a plausible result" (Neff-van Aertselaer & Dafouz-Milne, 2008, p. 95). The results suggest that to develop good counterarguments, adversative connectors are necessary.

From the aspect of language features, the results suggest that the students do not have much difficulty with the lexicogrammatical features of discussion texts. Connectors are used frequently to mark connections and relationships between ideas in an argument, and the only weakness lies in the reliance on a few connectors, notably "because", "besides", "when" and "however". Jenkins and Pico (2007) attributed the ease with which students insert connectors in their argumentative writing to the discrete nature of connectors but they noted that the learners may have difficulty mastering the semantics and usage as evidenced by the use of "moreover" in place of "in addition" by many Hong Kong students in Australia. In terms of frequency, the students also did not have problems inserting modal verbs in their discussion texts and they shifted between modal verbs for hedging and boosting but whether they were aware of the role of modality in signaling the writer's attitude was not examined in this study. It is highly possible that the university students in this study were also unsure about the attitudinal meanings of modal verbs that they were using. Appropriate and accurate use of connectors and modality is an area worth future investigation.

Conclusion

The study showed that the university students had more difficulty producing the textual structure of a conventional discussion text than using persuasive language features to discuss the issue. The difficulty with the textual structure lies in the unclear statement of the issue in the introduction and unsatisfactory assessment of foregoing arguments in the conclusion. The findings suggest that while it is important to teach the conventional structure of discussion texts, and expository texts for that matter, adequate practice may be needed to internalise the production of the conventional structure, without which the effectiveness of the

text would be compromised. Out of the three language features analysed, only the conditional clause was minimally used in the discussion text but a high frequency of modal verbs and connectors were used. The findings suggest that to develop the university students' academic language further, it is not adequate to teach students to insert modal verbs and connectors in their writing but to emphasise the semantics and usage to ensure appropriate usage to convey intended attitudinal and propositional meanings.

This study has succeeded in identifying the textual and language features which need attention when teaching students to write discussion texts, and the findings suggest that consciousness-raising on the conventional discourse features of different types of texts need to take real-life communicative situations and roles into account. Although the study did not investigate the approach for raising language awareness, the literature is not lacking on suggestions to implement this from established researchers in the field. Bhatia (1991), for instance, explains how business writing materials can incorporate genre analysis and input from the specialist informant who is familiar with the institutional context that governs the use of language. Breeze (2006) showed through an experimental study that even with short intensive writing programmes of this nature, students can "make rapid progress on aspects such as register or metadiscourse, seemingly independently of issues such as grammatical accuracy" (p. 446). Undoubtedly, some researchers are of the view that teaching conventionalised genres of writing restricts creativity in writing (e.g., Freedman, 1994; Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998) whereas others such as Thompson (2001) advocate combining discourse analysis with teaching of writing skills to deconstruct "the mystique of effective writing" as it is "an essential step in progressing from novice to initiate" (p. 96). Suffice it is to say that helping students to see how texts work through textual and lexicogrammatical choices is more time-saving than learning through trial and error and by immersion in the respective discourse communities.

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Appendix 1: Sample of deconstructed discussion text

The Pros and Cons of Human Cloning

Introduction
Background Info When Dolly, the first cloned sheep became news, cloning interested the masses. Not only did researchers investigate deeper into the subject but even
Statement of Issue the common people showed great interest in knowing all about how cloning (italicised) had been done. *Most of us want to know the pros and cons of cloning, its advantages to society and its potential risks to mankind*. While cloning **can**
Preview solve infertility problems and enhance genetic studies, it also causes (underlined) controversies related to human rights and religion.

Body The first advantage of human cloning is that it provides a solution to infertility.
Argument For No. 1 Cloning has the potential of serving as an option for producing children especially for couples who **can**not have a child. Cloning **may** make it possible to reproduce a certain trait in human beings. Therefore, cloning enables childless couples to have children with some of their traits.

Argument For No. 2 Furthermore, the second advantage of human cloning technologies is its usefulness to researchers in genetics. They **might** be able to understand the composition of genes and the effects of genetic constituents on human traits in a better manner. Thus, it simplifies their analysis of genes. The cloning technology allows researchers to eventually combat a wide range of genetic diseases.

Argument Against No. 1 However, one disadvantage of human cloning is that it puts human rights at stake. It remains unclear as to whether cloning **may** fit into our ethical and moral principles. Cloning leave man just another man-made being. It **can** devalue human kind and human beings **might** end up being a product as human beings with better traits **would** be sought after as materials for cloning whereas those with poor traits **would** be side-lined.

Argument Against No. 2 Another disadvantage of human cloning is that it challenges and questions the religious beliefs. It has been argued that cloning is equal to emulating God. Many religious groups have stated that religions prohibit human from trying to imitate the act of God by recreating themselves. Hence, it **would** be a very controversial issue **IF** human cloning is allowed and people are allowed to make other human beings.

Conclusion
Assessment of issue To conclude, it is clear that human cloning **can** solve problems related to infertility and genetics research but it is also ethically and religiously wrong. Thus, researchers **should** weigh the pros and cons of such act before promoting its use to the world.

Language features:
Modal verbs (bolded); connectors (boxed); conditional clauses (capitalised and bolded)

Appendix 2: Sample student discussion text

<u>In discussing the impacts of computers, it is necessary to examine a number of arguments for and against before making a decision.</u> Since the innovation of computers few decades ago, history of human being has been turned into new era which is era of technology. Gradually, computers become vital in the life of human being.

> Issue is stated but not accurate – human dependency on computers is not mentioned.
> No preview of arguments.

<u>First of all, computers are utilized in most of the daily matters in human life.</u> Computers are the necessary tools in the life of human whereby human use it for various purposes such as communication, finding information, entertainment and working as well. Such functions bring by the computers make it widely used in the life of human. After all, multifunctions of computers have lead human depend more on the computers.

> Argument For No. 1 – main point and elaboration are satisfactory

<u>The conveniences bring by the computers enhanced the degree of dependent of human on the computers.</u> The conveniences bring by the computers include portable computers, efficiency, accuracy of works and accessibility to the internet. For example, people engaged in the accounting field used computers to calculate and manage their work by easy and fast. In addition, utilized of computers **can** greatly decreased the percentage of making mistake in work. Therefore, human become more depend on the computers.

> Argument For No. 2 – main point and elaboration are satisfactory

On the other hand, human **can** be more independent and thrived to enhance the function of computers to achieve better living quality. To improve living standards, innovation of computers encouraged more thriving human to continue improve and increase the variety of benefits generated from the computers. Therefore, human **will** be more independent and put effort to innovate to make sure computers continue contribute to the development of human.

> Argument Against No. 1 – does not address issue

Lastly, human life is still well-rounded even without the computers. There are a lot of things which **can** be done without using computers. Human **can** cultivate hobbies, visit relatives and foods. For example, human **can** involve in outdoor activities such as badminton, football and basketball to spend their time. It is healthy to the life of human rather than sitting in front of the computers.

> Argument Against No. 2 – main point and elaboration are satisfactory

As a conclusion, computer **may** help human in different ways but somehow we **must** control it and not become over dependent on computers.

> Conclusion – does not assess viewpoints presented earlier

> Language features:
> Modal verbs (bolded); connectors (boxed); conditional clauses (capitalised and bolded)

THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS IN MALAYSIAN ENGLISH

Radina Mohamad Deli[1]
Asniah Alias[2]
[1]Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[2]Language Center, National Defense University of Malaysia
[1]mdradina@cls.unimas.my
[2]asniah@upnm.edu.my

Abstract

This paper examined the forms that interrogatives and tag questions can take when used by young Malaysian speakers of English language in oral communication. It offers a description of the features for both question forms as produced by the respondents compared to those of Singapore English (SE) and Standard British English (SBE). The influence of domains and the issue of mother tongue interference in relation to the subjects' usage of such features will also be investigated. Data were obtained through interviews with 19 Malaysian English (ME) speakers from three major ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia and via the recording of six conversations. The results showed various distinctive forms and features of questions in ME used by the speakers. Their usage is found to have a certain link to the domains of conversation. Further analysis revealed that mother tongue interference at the grammatical level, particularly in the case of Malay and Cantonese, plays a major role in determining the structure of ME interrogatives and tag questions as well as the subjects' unvarying use of the rising intonation as regards the latter. As a result of this interference, ME tag questions used are found to be confined to four forms whilst both the structure of wh- and polar interrogatives experience reduction in the system of tense, auxiliary and operator when used by the subjects.

Keywords: interrogatives, tag questions, mother tongue interference, Malaysian English, Singaporean English

Introduction

Is there any one form of English language that is better than the others? This is indeed a tricky question considering the fact that there are a variety of English actively and practically used across the globe. With the rise of English as a global language, it is only natural that English-speaking countries could no longer claim ownership of the language as local varieties blossom and continue to thrive (Halliday,

MacIntosh, & Strevens, 1964). Such a localisation often affects countries which were once colonised, and Malaysia is not an exception. This form of English language is commonly known as Malaysian English (ME) (Baskaran, 1994; Pillai, 2006) or Manglish (Lee, 1998). The former is typically used as a general term to refer to all sub-varieties of the English language used by Malaysian speakers whilst the latter is often associated with the colloquial version of the language. For this particular study, the term ME is used to refer to a more colloquial form of the language. It is evident that the existence of a multitude of languages spoken by the locals has largely influenced the English language spoken in the country.

In terms of question formation, the variety of ME varies from the norm of question formation in Standard British English (SBE) (Baskaran, 1994). Much of the ME grammatical structures particularly for interrogatives, similar to Singapore English (SE), also known as Singapore Colloquial English (SCE), are claimed to be influenced by either Chinese or Malay, the dominant national language, or both (e.g., Cole & Herman, 1998; Gupta, 1994; Kow, 1995; Low & Brown, 2005; Sato, 2011). How questions are formed in the English language have thus become a common source of linguistic investigation for many scholars who investigated how or how much second or foreign language speakers have attained or acquired native-like speech or language use. Intricate and complicated ways of forming questions in the English language commands extra linguistic ability in second and foreign language speakers. Consequently, errors are common in non-native speech or written data. Ting, Mahanita, and Chang (2010) found questions to be the second most frequent grammatical error among the five common ones made by less proficient learners of English in a speaking task for a subject at a Malaysian university. In South East Asia, studies of interrogatives of local Englishes are also popular (Alsagoff, Bao, & Wee, 1998; Borlongan, 2008).

There are many ways of asking questions in English. A rising intonation on a declarative may be used to ask a question (e.g., You knew him?). This is common in the case of SE where tentative particles especially *ah*, *hah*, and *hor*, too are also used to show questions (Gupta, 1994). As SE's grammatical features are usually akin to those of ME, it is easier to identify the ME interrogatives forms used by the subjects of this study and understand how the forms work based on SE. However, in order to make a valid comparison between those produced by the subjects and those of SBE, this study will focus on the forms of interrogatives and tag questions in ME.

Constructing an interrogative in SBE is extremely complex, as it generally involves inversion of the subject and the verb. Moreover, except for a handful of verbs (*be*, *have*, *do* and modal auxiliaries), an appropriate part of the verb *do* must be inserted in order to invert (e.g., Did you leave the door open?). In SE, *do-insertion* is not used at all. In ME, interrogative clauses typically disregard subject-operator inversion (Baskaran, 1987). Thus, it can be said that in SE and ME, interrogatives are much less complex than they are in SBE. The patterns of making interrogatives in SCE, as asserted by Gupta (1994), have been influenced by both Chinese and Malay, but are, incidentally also less complex than interrogatives in these two languages. Crewe (1979) has also mentioned something similar when he stated that due to the interference of the Chinese or Malay construction, the verb *to be* as well as other

auxiliary verbs is frequently omitted from a (declarative) sentence. The analysis on ME interrogatives will also include a discussion on the structure of Malay and Cantonese interrogatives in relation to the formation of interrogatives in ME, based on the works done by Kader (1981), Asmah Haji Omar (1993) and Cheung (1974). The discussion on the interference of the subjects' mother tongues' question structure is done on the basis of Mackey's (1970, p. 569) neutral definition of it as "the use of features belonging to one language while speaking or writing another", as there is no reference to norm or deviation in the definition.

The tag question, as mentioned previously, is another form of question highlighted in this study. Tag questions are questions that are tagged onto the end of a declarative sentence as in *Jason plays the guitar, doesn't he?*, which consist of a main or auxiliary verb followed by a pronoun or existential *there.* The choice of auxiliary, pronoun and tense depends on the forms in the clause (Leech & Svartvik as cited in Norrizan Razali, 1995). In speech, the falling and rising intonation of a tag indicates different meanings. Malaysian speakers, as asserted by Platt and Weber (1980) and Norrizan Razali (1995), are not aware of the different purposes served by the different intonations, that they tend to only use the rising intonation.

In regard to the forms of tag questions, most languages have one standardised form such as *n'est-ce pas?* in French, *nicht wahr?* in German and *bukan?* in Malay, as stated by Crewe (1979). ME almost achieves the same kind of unvarying tag question form by using only four forms of tag questions, *right?*, *ah*?, *is it?,* and *isn't it?* after any statement, whereas SBE uses the complicated procedure of repeating the verbal auxiliary and reversing the positiveness or negativeness of the sentence. The ME speakers' tags, as asserted by Norrizan Razali (1995), are confined to these four forms. For two of the four forms, namely, *is it?* and *isn't it?*, Gupta (1994) stated that in SCE, they are examples of inversion because they do not change according to the auxiliary in the preceding clause. Consistent with Gupta's claim, several earlier studies have also shown that the features of ME tag questions deviate from the form in SBE. In addition, Wong (1983, p. 135) states and asserts that the tag questions of colloquial ME are a "vastly reduced system" in that the tags *isn't it?* and *is it?* are used "almost interchangeably" regardless of the grammatical features of the preceding sentences. Based on the previous findings, this study attempts to identify and describe the features of tag questions used by a group of young Malaysians.

Subsequently, this study will investigate the relationship between the structure and the formation of questions in Malay, Cantonese, and Tamil (the subjects' mother tongues) with that of ME and SBE mainly involving works by Kader (1981) and Cheung (1974) – based on a study done by Kow (1995). Kader (1981) states that in Malay, a tag question is made up of a declarative sentence and a tag *bukan* (not) in sentence final position. The declarative sentence may be in the positive or negative but there is no reversal of polarity:

Liza (tidak) pergi ke sekolah kelmarin, kan (bukan)?
Liza (not) go to school yesterday, not?

Similarly in Cantonese, a tag question is formed from a declarative sentence and a tag *ah* (particle) at the sentence end. The tag question may be of either polarity, and similar to Malay, there need not be any reversals (Cheung, 1974):

> *Ngohdeih heui tai hei hou mh hou ah?*
> We go see movies good (neg.) good? (particle)

Bearing in mind the results of previous studies in the field, this study specifically investigates (1) how interrogatives and tag questions in Malaysian English are formed in the speech of young adults; and (2) whether domains and language interference or not play a role in determining question formation.

Methodology

Two types of method were used for the purpose of data collection, namely, recording of conversation and interview. For the recording, a tape recorder was used in order to record six conversations, two of which are radio conversations whilst the rest were casual in nature:

- Conversation 1 - interaction between two friends
- Conversation 2 – interaction between two housemates
- Conversation 3 – interaction between two friends
- Conversation 4 – interaction between two roommates
- Conversation 5 – radio talk show
- Conversation 6 – radio talk show

Contrary to the radio conversations, the everyday conversations were recorded with the subjects' knowledge. These conversations were later transcribed and all the grammatical features were highlighted.

The interviews, on the other hand, were done in face-to-face sessions with the subjects, where answers were written down by the researcher there and then. A set of four questions – which includes translation tasks was prepared earlier and utilised during the sessions. Questions 1 and 2 cover subjects' attitude and self-perception towards the usage of question forms in English. Questions 3 and 4 involving translation tasks are as follows:

- Is there any connection between these question forms (interrogatives and question tags) and the ones used in your mother tongue (Malay/Chinese/Tamil)?

- Translate one of the first three pairs of sentences (according to your mother tongue) into English and the last three sentences into your respective mother tongues:
  Semalam awak jumpa dia kan?
  Hari ni Mira tak datang tak?

  Naan alaga ille?

Anthe "car" alaga irukku ille?

Ngohdeih heui tai hei hou mh hou ah?
Neih mh haih behng ah?
Where did he eat?
Where does he eat?
Where is he eating?

The subjects for the study consisted of 19 students, aged 21 to 25, from the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, who were either majoring in English Language or Broadcasting. The students were selected from the three major ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia: 7 Malay, 4 Chinese, and 8 Indian subjects. The breakdown by gender is shown in Table 1. The data gathered were analysed and reported using frequency and percentage.

Table 1
Total number of subjects according to race and gender

Race	Female	Male	Total
Malay	7	0	7
Chinese	1	3	4
Indian	6	2	8
Total	14	5	19

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the subjects' oral interactions reveals several forms that interrogatives and question tags can take when used by a group of Malaysian speakers, as follows:

1. Wh-interrogatives

The omission of auxiliaries (the verb be, do) in questions requires inversion of the subject and auxiliary (questions in which the target is not the subject of the sentences) such as:

How many you smoke a week?
How you like working there?
What he work as?

2. Yes/no interrogatives

The omission of either operators (auxiliaries and modals) or the do-operator at the beginning of the sentences. For instance;

You think the framing shop will be open ah?

> *You give her the card already?*

Similarly, Govindan and Pillai (2009) found that the omission of auxiliary was common in non-standard forms (i.e., MCE) yes-no questions starting with *has/have* like the second example given earlier.

3. Question Tags

The *is it/isn't it* tags, the particle *ah* and the form *right* in tag questions were used instead of appropriate auxiliaries when responding to the first one in the clause. For example;

> To confirm:
> *They don't give you money, isn't it?*
> **Your boss is ok with you, right?**
>
> **Genuine questions:**
> *You don't want your mom to step in, is it?*
> *There's no big car, is it?*
> *Nice ah?*
> *He doesn't have any friends ah?*

The resulting four types of tag questions produced by the respondents of this study correspond with Norrizan Razali's (1995) findings. The use of *is it* or *isn't it* is also found to be very common in question tags, most of which are non-agreeing in nature as in *We are going, isn't it?* (Baskaran, 2004). Govindan and Pillai (2009) found the frequent use of *right* to end tag questions in the speech of young Malaysian Indian speakers of English in informal setting followed by other particles and phrases such as *ah* and *isn't it* respectively.

4. The phrase *or not*

The phrase *or not* was used to offer another contradicting alternative response from the first clause in an interrogative. Referring to the third example below, an observation on the modal *can* used reveals that in colloquial ME the modal takes a variety of functions including "to mean affirmation" (Wong, 1983, p. 137).

> *Alone or what?*
> *With the family or what?*
> *Can hear or not?*
> *You know how hot it is or not?*
> *You want to send them off or not?*

Govindan and Pillai (2009) found three particles frequently used in non-standard forms of yes-no questions beginning with *has/have* are *ah, or not* and *or what.* It was further stated that *or not* may have come about due to the influence of the

phrase *ke tidak?* in spoken Malay. This is a common strategy used to signify a question form. For example,

> *Sudah pergi ke tidak?*
> *Already went or not?*

5. Localised phrases in question form (direct translation of Malay, Chinese and Tamil phrases).

These localised phrases in question form are a direct translation of Malay, Chinese and Tamil phrases, for example,

> *For what?*
> *Buat apa?*
>
> *Where got?*
> *Mana ada?*
>
> *What to do?*
> *Apa nak buat?*

6. Inclusion of fillers or particles such as ah and lah at the end of questions

The inclusion of fillers or particles such as *ah* and *lah* at the end of questions for emphasis. As stated by Wong (1983), fillers, though communicating no particular denotative meaning, are used to indicate emotive, effective attitudes on the part of the speaker. It is quite noticeable, for example, that the particle or filler which may be transcribed as either *ah* and *aa* is most frequently associated with a question in colloquial ME.

> *How was your course in P.D lah?*
> *What did you do lah?*
> *How come you don't know how to write memos ah?*

Table 2 displays the total number of occurrences of each form of ME interrogatives and tag questions used in six conversations. Wh-interrogatives and tag questions had the highest frequency of occurrence (59 and 28 respectively). The sum for all ME question forms in each conversation suggests a relationship between their usage and the conversational domains in which they occur as well as the subjects' level of familiarity and intimacy with each other. With regard to the conversational domains, the friendship domain comprising Conversations 1, 2, 3 and 4 was found to contain more ME forms of interrogatives and tag questions than the talk show domain (Conversations 5 and 6) probably due to the more formal and controlled setting of the former which restricts the subjects' language use to preferably SBE. In line with the formal setting, the low level of familiarity and intimacy between the subjects (i.e., announcers and guests) play a major role in

contributing to this scarcity of usage. Data from the friendship domain, however, suggest otherwise. Conversation 3, an interaction between two close (childhood) friends contained the highest number of occurrences with 33, followed by Conversation 2, between two housemates, Conversation 4, between two roommates and Conversation 1, between friends, with 21, 19, and 18 occurrences respectively.

Table 2
Number of occurrences of each feature in six conversations

Question feature	Conversation						Total
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	
Tag question	9	14	15	9	6	6	59
Wh-interrogative (- Aux)	5	8	9	4	1	1	28
Polar interrogative (-Ops)	1	2	2	2	1	2	10
'Or not' usage	1	2	3	0	0	0	6
Questions (+ particles)	2	1	3	0	0	0	6
Localised phrases	0	1	1	4	0	0	6
Total (per conversation)	18	28	33	19	8	9	115

The ME wh-interrogatives and tag questions were further analysed to identify the use of ME form versus SBE form (Table 3) on the basis of their prospects and reliability as commonly-occurring features in ME question forms.

Table 3
Percentage of occurrences of ME wh-interrogatives and tag questions in each conversation

Conversation	Wh-Interrogatives (ME)		Tag Questions (ME)	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	5	45.5	9	100
2	8	57.1	14	100
3	9	75	15	100
4	1	44.4	6	100
5	4	11.1	9	85.7
6	1	25	6	85.7
	28		59	

Table 3 shows that none of the subjects used the SBE forms for tag questions for the casual interactions (Conversations 1 to 4) – all the tag questions with in the ME form. For the radio talk show (Conversations 5 and 6), 85.7% of tag questions were in the ME form. The difference in prevalence is due to the different levels of familiarity with each other and formality of the setting. The same pattern is shown for wh-interrogatives because the ME form was used frequently in the casual interactions than in the radio talk shows.

Table 4

Frequency of different types of ME tag questions

Tag question	Examples	Frequency
Right?	*They did it purposely, right?*	30
Ah?	*He doesn't have friends, ah?*	16
Is it?	*You don't want your mom to step in, is it?*	7
Isn't it?	*At least you've got floor space, isn't it?*	6
	Total	59

As shown in Table 4, the form *right?* occurred the most frequently (30 out of the 59 tag questions). This is followed by *ah*, *is it?,* and *isn't it* (16, 7 and 6 occurrences respectively). This concurs with findings by Govindan and Pillai (2009) for both negative and positive tags ending with *right* which made up approximately 70% of the responses respectively.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the tag questions deviated from SBE form. First, the tags were used with disregard for the grammatical features of the preceding clauses. The verb phrase of the preceding clause *did* in the first example is contradicted by the tag *right* that follows it. This form, similarly used in the rest of the examples, indubitably defies that of the SBE. Second, the negative or positive form of the tags does not comply with the rules for the formation of the SBE pattern (e.g., the use of double negative). Whilst the SBE maintains that when the preceding clause is positive, the tag has to be negative and vice versa. Third, the form *right* and particle *ah* were prevalently used by the subjects to form tag questions. In the case of the latter, its use clearly serves the function of a tag question as derived from its final position and the rising intonation complementing it – a form unknown to the SBE forms. Fourth, the pronoun form of the verb phrase in the tags, *it*, is the only pronoun found in all of the tags collected – which were used resoundingly without any recognition given to the subject of the previous clause.

Besides grammatical features, the tag questions used by the subjects also differed from SBE in the intonation. The functions of the rising and falling intonations in tag questions were also ignored by the subjects of this study in that they used only the rising intonation for all their tag questions. Platt and Weber (1980) had observed that Malaysian speakers of English are generally nescient of the fact that the rising and falling intonation of tag questions indicate different interpretations. The rising intonation was consistently used by the subjects to suggest different functions, namely, asking for confirmation, initiating a conversation, and asking a genuine question.

Your room is twice the size of mine, right?   -   To   confirm
You have heard about the accident right?   - Genuine question
All these people are communicating in silence, isn't it?   -   Conversational
technique

The different functions of the tag questions were obtained from the contexts in which they occurred, with all the four forms of tags being consistently accompanied by the rising intonation. Hence, the rising intonation cuts across all forms of tags used by the subjects to serve a universal function, as asserted by Norrizan Razali (1995).

As a conclusion, the deviant forms of tag questions as collected from the subjects can be divided into four types of violation of the SBE forms:

1. The verb phrase of the tag conflicts the verb phrase in the main clause.
2. The negligence of the SBE polarity rule for determining the negative or positive form of the tag's verb phrase.
3. An additional particle *ah* borrowed from Chinese dialects – in this case, Cantonese as well as the form *right* functioning as tag questions.
4. A tag question of varying intentions signaled by the rising intonation, with no trace of any falling intonation.

The form *right* is found to occur overwhelmingly over the other forms, followed by the particle *ah, is it* and *isn't it*. This corroborates with Norrizan Razali's (1995) claim that the Malaysian English speakers' tags are confined to four forms as mentioned earlier, although Platt and Weber (1980), and Kow (1995) contend that the tags are confined to either only one or two forms, *is it?* and *isn't it?*. This finding may suggest that *right?* is more prominently used by ME speakers than *is it?* which is often deemed as a prevalent all-purpose universal question tag (Lim, 2009).

With regard to the omission of auxiliaries, the verb be and do, for instance, in wh-questions or interrogatives which require inversion of subject and auxiliary (questions in which the target is not the subject of the sentences), it is evident that the formation of interrogatives in ME has violated the rules of formation of SBE. Reduction refers to what has been left out of the system, for example, the tense system of SBE. Linked to the usual reduction in the system of tense and aspect is the reduction in the modal auxiliary system in colloquial ME (Wong, 1983). Ting et al. (2010) also highlighted the omission of auxiliary in questions as a frequent error made by less proficient students, accounting for almost 70% of total question errors. This tendency to omit verbs and auxiliaries is not only true for interrogatives but also declaratives as stated by Crewe (1979), in the case of SCE. It is also true in the case of ME *yes/no* interrogatives. Additionally, in SBE, either *Operator + subject + rest of verb* or a *do-operator* insertion (if there is no auxiliary in the verb in the declarative) provide an interrogative form for questions requiring the answer *Yes* or *No* as opposed to the ME way of forming polar (*yes/no*) interrogatives, with its omission of *operator*, opting for the simpler *subject + rest of verb* form (e.g., You give already?). The reduction in the SBE systems is easily observed in the subjects' question

formation. For instance, in the sentences *when (is) the seminar?* and *what (do) you expect?*.

The data obtained from the subjects' responses to interview questions 3 and 4 (see Methodology section) revealed mother tongue influence in the ME forms of questions. All the subjects consider the forms of questions to have a certain connection with the ones used in their mother tongue – particularly in terms of tenses in wh-interrogatives and the usage of the particle *ah* as a tag question. The first pair in question 4 consist of the words *kan* and *tak* – which are the abbreviated forms of the Malay words *bukan* and *tidak* respectively, that function as tag questions, whilst the last pair in Cantonese were formed using the particle *ah?* which also functions as a tag in the Chinese dialect (Cheung, 1974). In the case of both languages, there is no need for reversal of polarity of tag questions.

The translations given by the Malay subjects and the Chinese subjects, all using either the *right* form or the particle *ah* as tag questions, proved to be a result of the process of interference in which the feature of non-reversal in polarity in the first language is applied to the second language, in line with Mackey's (1970) definition. According to Nabahan (as cited in Win Listyaningrum Arifin, 2011), interference occurs when typical utterances of the mother tongue appear when using another language. Additionally, the result also indicates that the respondents were not aware of the special function that a constant polarity tag question takes on which is to hint at sarcasm. Thus, it is evident that there is a decrease in the number of functions that a tag question can take on when used by the respondents.

The reason behind these confined structures can be better understood by analysing the sentence structure of the respondents' mother tongue. As previously mentioned, in Malay, there is no polarity rule in its tag question formation (Kader, 1981) and there are only two tags utilised, which are, *bukan?* and *tidak?.* The tag, *bukan,* was regarded the only tag used in Malay by both Kader (1981) and Crewe (1979). In this study, it is observed that the Malay subjects had treated the tag *tidak* or *tak* the same way as they did the tag *bukan* in the translation task, as shown in the examples below:

> *Hari ni Mira pergi kelas tak?*
> Today Mira's going to class, is it?

> *Hari ni Mira pergi kelas tak?*
> Today Mira's going to class, ah?

In Cantonese, however, the only question tag utilised is *ah?* as asserted by Cheung (1974). He also stated that there is no need for reversal of polarity in Cantonese tag question formation. Malaysian Tamil speakers, on the other hand, are evidently influenced by the formation of questions in Malay and Chinese, as in Tamil, a type of polarity reversal does exist in question tags formation – there should not be a double negative in the structure of a question tag (e.g., *I'm pretty, not? / I'm ugly, not?*). These subjects, including Tamil speakers, might have therefore presumed that a similar rule existed in the formation of the English question tag. Thus, through simplification, the subjects have arrived at the tag question structure

that utilised only these four question tags, *isn't it?, is it?, right* and the particle *ah*, as asserted by Norrizan Razali (1995) based on her previous study.

As regards wh-interrogatives formation, the non-existence of auxiliary verbs and lack of the verb tense or tensing and inflections, in Malay and Cantonese, as compared to English, has a big influence over formation of questions by the subjects – in line with Gupta's (1994) and Crewe's (1979) claims of an existent interference from both languages in ME's sentence structure. Malay does not have the category of tense – as stated by Asmah Haji Omar (1993). She further explains that the aspect verbs *sudah, telah, pernah* (the three being indicators of completed action), *masih, sedang* (both indicating action in process), *belum*, and *akan* (both indicating action not yet executed), however, do relate to time but they need not necessarily in their usage be linked to the time the action has been executed, or in the process of execution, or waiting to be executed. The use of such aspect verbs are evident in the Malay subjects' responses in the translation task during the interview sessions. As does in the Chinese subjects responses. Examples are as follows:

In Malay:

      Where did he eat?
      Dia makan kat mana [*semalam/ tadi*]*?*
      He   eat   where yesterday/ just now?

      Where is he eating?
      Dia   [*tengah*]   *makan kat mana?*
      He in the midst of   eat   where?

In Cantonese:

      Where did he eat?
      [*Tao xin*] *kui hai pin tou sik yeh?*
      Just now, where he eat?

      Where is he eating?
      [*Yi ka*] *kui hai pin tou sik yeh?*
      Now, where he eat?

In the second example of Malay usage, the subject is found to use the aspect verb *tengah* which is a more colloquial equivalent of *masih or sedang* – to denote action in process. Although in actuality the question word (equivalent to wh-word in SBE) in Malay interrogatives can be positioned at either the beginning or the end of the structure – there is a tendency for the subjects to position it at the end of each interrogative. Question words are not commonly fronted, except for *why* and *how* and this post-position of interrogatives is claimed to also be affected by the Malay language (Samida & Takahashi, n.d.). Thus, it can be said that both these features as well as the lack of auxiliary in Malay influence the subjects' formation of English interrogatives.

Tamil, however, despite it not having the auxiliary system, is found to be a highly inflected language – having verb tense as well as number markers. Wh-

interrogatives in Tamil are introduced by a pronoun, instead of an equivalent of a wh-word in Tamil – followed by a conjugated verb. The following is an example from the translation task for the sentence *where did he eat?*:

> *Avvaru engge sapetharu?*
> He   where   ate?
> (Where did he eat?)

The study done by Govindan and Pillai (2009), found that even their respondents who were dominant speakers of English used similar structures of wh-interrogatives in informal settings. On top of the omission of auxiliary, the past tense of verbs was used as in *What you ate for recess?* This means that the tense system is not unknown to Tamil speakers, making the language, to a certain extent, more similar to English than Malay and Cantonese. In light of the two possible structures of a pre- and mid-position of the wh-question word, it can be said that the Tamil speakers were also influenced by wh-interrogative structures in their mother tongue. It is worth noting that the mid-position of question word does not occur for standard Malay interrogatives thus it is assumed that this feature is characteristic of Tamil interrogative structure. With limited data on such a structure, it could not yet be determined whether it is prevalent in the English usage of Tamil speakers thus an argument will not be put forward. Their formation of tag questions, however, remains similar to that of their Malay and Chinese counterparts. At least for tag questions, it can be concluded that the Indian respondents were immensely influenced by the structure of the more dominant languages which are Malay and Chinese. Thus, on the whole, interference at the grammatical level is found to play a major part in determining the forms of interrogatives and tag questions used by young Malaysian speakers of English.

Conclusion

The study showed that the usage of various distinctive forms and features of ME questions is linked to the domains of conversation and subjects' familiarity with each other. In the more informal domain (i.e., friendship), the frequency of usage of wh-interrogatives and tag questions is higher due to the more natural environment for speech which allows for a free flow of communication strategies and techniques. The study also revealed that mother tongue interference at the grammatical level contributes greatly in determining the structure of ME interrogatives and question tags as well as the subjects' unvarying use of the rising intonation as regards the latter. This is true in the case of interference from Malay and Cantonese languages. As for Tamil speakers, while they were evidently influenced by their mother tongue in the formation of wh-interrogatives, the results for tag questions may suggest that they were influenced by the more dominant national language, Malay or the alternative, Cantonese. As a result of this interference and other processes in second language acquisition, the ME tag question structure used is more often than not confined to the four forms which were asserted by Norrizan Razali (1995) whilst

both the structure of wh and polar interrogatives experience reduction in the system of tense, auxiliary and operator.

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WORKING IN GROUPS FOR COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: THE TERTIARY STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Rosnah Bt. Hj. Mustafa[1]
Pung Wun Chiew[2]
Shirley Michael Slee[3]
[1][2]Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[3]Sarawak State Education Department
[1]mrosnah@cls.unimas.my
[2]wcpung@cls.unimas.my
[3]abadiey_paradise@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examined undergraduates' perception of group work in doing coursework assignments. It specifically investigated students' perceptions of the usefulness of group work in doing assignments; identified reasons which influence students' preference or non-preference for group work in doing assignments; determined students' expectations of instructor's roles in group work; and compared students' perceptions of group work across ethnic groups. A 39-item questionnaire was distributed to 200 students in a Malaysian public university. The findings showed that a majority of students viewed group work positively due to lesser time required to accomplish given tasks and increased interpersonal gains. Some students however disapproved of group work for several reasons including the difficulty to find mutually agreed time for discussions, domination of some group members, and the existence of slackers in the group. One major aspect highlighted in the study was students' need for continuous instructor support and assistance when group work was assigned.

Keywords: group work, collaborative learning, assignments

Introduction

The challenges of teaching and learning are diverse and teachers and educators are constantly diversifying their teaching techniques to ensure active and meaningful learning takes place, both inside and outside the boundaries of a classroom or lecture theatre. A common Malaysian classroom, whether at school or tertiary level, consists of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Such diversity often requires teachers and educators to use a variety of teaching techniques to

ensure maximum learning takes place and at the same time enhance unity. One of the most commonly used techniques is group work.

The advantages of group work have been acknowledged and researched by many (Baines et al., 2004; Burdett & Hastie 2009; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Felder & Brent 2007; Hennessy & Evans, 2006; Kennett, Stedwill, Berrill, & Young, 1996; Millis & Cottel as cited in Payne & Monk-Turner, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991; Slavin, 2006). The ability to work in a team or group is not only beneficial in classroom settings, but also at the workplace. Capelli and Bogovsky (as cited in Cohen & Bailey 1997) and Cranmer (as cited in Burdett & Hastie, 2009) stressed that many employers seek new graduates who have the ability to work in a team to achieve the companies' goals. Academics too often favour group work for its anticipated reduction in marking load (Burdett & Hastie, 2009, p. 1). The importance of working in a team is also stressed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) who argued that:

> Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding. (para 3)

According to Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Parente, and Bjorklund (2001) group work produces greater gains in student learning. Panitz (1996) stressed that group work encourages sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the group's actions. Group work encourages the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and at the same time promotes understanding and tolerance among group members regardless of differences or similarities in ethnicity, ability, and educational background. In a study involving 4000 pupils aged between five and 14 by the Institute of Education at London University (Smith, 2006), researchers found that children working in groups made rapid progress and were more focused on their work. In addition, group work also encouraged more thoughtful discussions between the children. Tok (2006) conducted a study on the effect of cooperative learning on 210 Form Four students learning literature in a Malaysian secondary school. The results showed cooperative learning benefitted a majority of respondents, both academically and socially. In subjects such as literature, it is imperative that students voice out their ideas and share their thoughts on the texts being studied. Vaughn (2002) studied the effects of cooperative learning on the achievement development and attitude towards mathematics among students of other colour. The study, which adopted Slavin's (2006) STAD method, showed that those involved in the cooperative learning method demonstrated higher achievement and positive attitudes towards mathematics. In a study similar to that of Slavin, Effandi Zakaria, Lu, and Md. Yusoff Daud (2010) found that cooperative learning improved students' mathematics ability and increased their positive attitudes towards the subject. In their study involving 82 Form One students in the state of Sarawak in Malaysia, students in the experimental group showed better

achievement and higher motivation to learn mathematics compared to those in the control group. They concluded that students in the experimental group not only exhibited higher levels of motivation and self-confidence in solving mathematic tasks, but performed well in their post-test as a result of working together with their team members.

Despite the many advantages highlighted, there are also constraints that may hinder students from working effectively in a group. While many academics would like to include group work as an effective teaching technique, there is often hesitation because of bad experiences when the group has fallen apart or has failed to complete the task. One of the constraints is the group size. There are various views on the ideal number of students in a group. Davies (1993) stated that a group consisting more than five members decreases each member's opportunity to participate actively. Conversely, Hennessy and Evans (2006) reported that clusters of four to seven students in a group are considered ideal. Rice (as cited in Jacques, 1995) proposed having six members in a group. Douglas (2000) argued that having too many people in a group may limit the chances of individual group member to contribute ideas. He believed that having lesser members in a group provides sufficient time for sharing and debating ideas.

Studies have also shown that group work is not always perceived positively by students for one reason or another (Burdett & Hastie 2009; Payne & Monk-Turner, 2006). Livingstone and Lynch (as cited in Burdett & Hastie, 2009, p. 62) argued that a group which is dysfunctional will result in collaborative efforts failing and compromised learning outcome. Volet and Mansfield (as cited in Burdett & Hastie 2009, p. 62) maintained that such negative thoughts on group work may result in avoidance of working in groups in the future. However, in spite of the growing number of studies including those that examined collaborative work activities and practices in Malaysian schools (Burdett & Hastie 2009; Chickering & Gamson 1987; Effandi Zakaria et al., 2010; Hennessy & Evans 2006; Kennett et al., 1996; Millis & Cottelas cited in Payne & Monk-Turner, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson et al., 1991; Smith, 2006; Tok, 2006), there have been very few studies investigating the perspectives of Malaysian undergraduates on this matter. More research is needed to look into undergraduates' perceptions of group work and how it benefits them. It is important to study such perceptions as Malaysian undergraduates are expected to develop good team work skills to prepare them for the working world, especially when many employers stress the importance of team work in achieving company goals. In addition, as group work is very common across faculties and universities, it is therefore apt to conduct a study on students' perspectives. With these concerns in mind, this study examined undergraduates' perceptions of group work in doing assignments. It specifically

1. investigated students' perceptions on the usefulness of group work in doing assignments;
2. identified the reasons that influence students' preference or non-preference for group work in doing assignments;
3. explored students' expectations of instructor's roles in group work; and
4. compared students' perceptions of group work across ethnic groups.

Method of Study

Data were collected through a 39-item questionnaire adapted from Kaenzig et al. Anderson (2007), Payne and Monk-Turner (2006), and Kromrey and Purdom (1995). The questionnaire was divided into five sections, namely, student demographic profile, their perceptions of group work, the advantages and disadvantages of group work, and their perceptions of instructor's role in group work. The respondents were asked to rate their preference according to a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

The subjects for the questionnaire comprised 200 third year and fourth year undergraduate students from a local university, with 38 male students and 162 female students. In terms of racial distribution, 77 were Malay, 96 Chinese, and 27 Indians and others. The rationale for choosing only these subjects was to ensure that they had acquired enough experience working in groups in completing assignments. A pilot study was done on 10 respondents to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Once the pilot testing was done, 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. To ensure that the respondents had ample time to think through their responses, the questionnaire was collected after two weeks.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data for each section. The analysis was done using SPSS version 14. For section A which included data on gender, ethnicity, programme and year of study, the frequency was keyed in for each category. For sections B, C, D, and E, the options "Strongly Agree" and "Agree' were combined as one and similarly "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" were categorised as "Disagree" for the sole purpose of getting the information on the agreement or disagreement. The study, however, did not aim to measure the level of agreement or disagreement of the respondents towards the items in the questionnaire. As such, the responses for sections B to E were presented as "Agree", "Neutral", and "Disagree". The data obtained were presented in the form of frequency, percentage and mean for each item.

Results and Discussions

Students' perceptions of group work

As Table 1 shows, the respondents generally viewed group work as useful when writing group assignments. All positive items on perceptions of group work (statements 1-8) had the agreement of more than half of the respondents. In contrast, less than half of the respondents agreed with statements 9 and 10, which are negative statements about group work. A majority of respondents (82%) felt they learned new information from group members and more than three quarter of the respondents (78.5%) also agreed they could share ideas with their group members. These findings confirm findings obtained in Payne and Monk-Turner's (2006) study, where students gained new knowledge from group members when doing group projects. These findings also concur with McManus and Gettinger's (1997) study who found that students shared ideas when they worked together.

Table 1

Percentage of students agreeing and disagreeing with usefulness of working in groups for assignments

Item	Usefulness of working in groups for assignments	Strongly Agree and Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Disagree and Disagree (%)
1.	I learned some information from my group members.	82.0	9.5	8.5
2.	I can share ideas with my group members.	78.5	15	6.5
3.	I feel more comfortable doing group assignments in a small group.	77.5	11.5	11.0
4.	I have the opportunity to interact clearly with others.	70.5	17.5	12.0
5.	I am able to use my own words to discuss material, listening to new ideas and examples.	67.5	26.0	6.5
6.	I am able to retain what I have learned.	57.5	32.5	10.0
7.	I have a great deal of confidence to express my point view.	57.0	35.0	8.0
8.	I find that it saves time in making decision on difficult tasks.	53.5	32.5	14.0
9.	I do a lot of organising and setting people together to work on group tasks.	42.5	40.0	17.5
10.	I find that my group members do not contribute to the assignments.	22.5	37.5	40.0

The results also revealed that a majority of respondents (77%) felt comfortable working in groups. Most of them agreed they had the opportunity to interact clearly with others (70.5%), freely discuss and listen to new ideas and examples (67.5%), and demonstrate their confidence in speaking out their ideas (57%). These findings are similar to the findings in a study conducted by Hennessy and Evans (2006). Hennessy and Evans found that students felt they had a right to express their views and exhibit some level of authority during small group learning in the classroom. It was also found that the students were confident in expressing themselves and had no inhibition to interact and voice out their ideas. According to Kromrey and Purdom (1995), the ability to discuss freely, listen to others' ideas, understand how other people think, and reach meaningful conclusions are important aspects of active learning. In addition, Kromrey and Purdom also stated that with the cooperative effort of the group, little time was required when making decisions when solving difficult tasks. The findings of this study also support Kromrey and Purdom's view where 53.5% of the respondents agreed that group work enabled them to save time in making decisions on a difficult task. More than

half of the respondents (57.5%) also indicated that they could retain what they had learned. This finding corroborates with Glass and Putnam's study (as cited in Watson, 1995) in that students could learn and remember information for long periods of time during cooperative learning.

In terms of the respondents' perceptions on their role in organising and setting people together to carry out group tasks, 42.5% agreed that they had to play that role. This could be due to the fact that some group members preferred to act only upon instruction from another group member. Another possible reason is non-appointment of a group leader when the group was first formed, and subsequently, all group members were unsure of their own role and responsibilities.

With regard to group members' contribution to group work, 40% of the respondents agreed that their group members contributed to group assignments. However, 22.5% also agreed that their group members did not contribute to the assignment and only benefitted from other group members' hard work. Nevertheless, respondents' perceptions of group work are related to reasons for their preference and non-preference for group work in group assignments. These reasons will be discussed in the following two sections.

In sum, the respondents generally perceived group work as useful and positive, specifically with regard to gaining new information from group members, sharing ideas with group members, retaining information learned, and having the opportunity to interact with others. The respondents also felt that they were comfortable working in groups and that group work enabled them to save time when working on difficult tasks. Nonetheless, some respondents felt that they had to be proactive in organising and setting people together to carry out the tasks. This indicates that group members have different personalities: while some members act upon their own initiative, others need to be prodded into action. As such, this implies that appointing a group leader when a group is first formed is necessary.

Reasons influencing students' preference or non-preference for group work in doing assignments

Table 2 shows the results for reasons which influence students' views of group work. In general, the respondents viewed the factors tha
t influenced them to do group work positively. More than half of the respondents agreed that they liked group work because they had good working relationship with their group members (statement 1- 73% and statement 4 – 61.5%) and they could finish the group assignment within the allocated time (61.5%). The link between good working relationship and ability to complete group tasks within stipulated time frame is also evident in Kromrey and Purdom's (1995) study involving 143 college students who completed a group project when the study was conducted.

Table 2

Percentage of students agreeing and disagreeing with reasons for preferring working in groups for assignments

	Reasons for preferring working in groups for assignments	Strongly Agree and Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Disagree and Disagree (%)
1.	I can build good rapport with my friends/coursemates.	73.0	18.0	9.0
2.	I can share my workload with other group members.	69.5	18.5	12.0
3.	I am able to contribute to the group in a meaningful way.	66.0	28.0	6.0
4.	I feel that I work well with the members of my team.	61.5	30.5	8.0
5.	I find that doing assignments in group help our group to complete our work within the allocated time.	61.5	22.5	16.0
6.	I find that doing group work help me to participate actively in discussion.	58.5	27.5	14.0
7.	I am satisfied with the outcome of group assignments than with the task I do on my own.	49.0	32.0	19.0
8.	I like to do group assignments with friends of same ability only.	22.0	23.0	55.0
9.	I like to do group assignments with friends of same race only.	21.0	26.0	53.0
10.	I like to do group assignments with friends of same gender only.	16.0	26.5	57.5

A majority of respondents agreed that group work enabled them to share the workload with the other members (69.5%), participate actively (58.5%), and contribute meaningfully (66%) during discussions. These findings are parallel with the research conducted by Hennessy and Evans (2006) where it was found that small-group discussion process was less intimidating for community college students as witnessed in their ability to express their opinions and be more engaged in the discussions.

In terms of satisfaction level on group assignments' outcome, 49% of the respondents agreed they were more satisfied with the outcome of group assignments than tasks done individually, while only 19% disagreed. In a study conducted by Vaughan (2002) on students in the United States, the findings showed that learning in groups has a positive effect on students' academic performance. The study revealed that these students performed better academically in groups than individually. This implies that group learning may improve students' academic achievement.

With regards to respondents' preferences on group members, 55% of respondents preferred working with members of mixed abilities, followed by 53% who liked to work with members of different ethnicity, and 57% who enjoyed working with both male and female group members. This implies that the respondents were not in favour of working with members who were of the same ability, ethnic group, and gender. As such, these students would have the added advantage of having no difficulty working with people of different gender and races, and with different abilities while simultaneously enhancing their interpersonal skills in the process (see McManus & Gettinger, 1997).

The findings also revealed that having good working relationship with group members and being able to share the workload with the other members were the two main factors that explained why a majority of respondents preferred group work in completing assignments. The respondents felt that group work allowed them to accomplish an assignment within the allocated time, and that it enabled them to participate actively and contribute meaningfully in group discussions. As such, a majority of respondents also perceived that the outcome of a group work was more satisfactory than the outcome of a work or a task done individually.

Among the factors that influenced students' non-preference for group work, two factors had the agreement of more than half of the respondents: the difficulty of finding a suitable time for all members to meet (52.5%) and the existence of dominating group members (52%). The problem of scheduling difficulties was also reported in Hennessy and Evans' (2006) study where it was generally acknowledged by the student participants as the reason for their resistance to small group learning.

The next four main factors why students do not prefer group work were the presence of a "slacker" or "free-rider" in the group (47.5%), little cooperation from other group members (46.5%), difficulty in reaching an agreement among group members (40%), and the longer time required to complete a task in groups (35.5%). All these four factors suggest that certain qualities are necessary for a group work to succeed. Vaughan (2002) stated that collaborative skills such as social, leadership, decision making, and communication skills are necessary in group work.

Table 3
Percentage of students agreeing and disagreeing with reasons for not working in groups for assignments

Item	Reasons for not preferring group work in group assignments	Strongly Agree and Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Disagree and Disagree (%)
1.	It is difficult to find a common time to meet to discuss the group assignment.	52.5	25.0	22.5
2.	There are group members who like to dominate the discussion.	52.0	30.5	17.5
3.	At least one group member is a slacker or a free-rider.	47.5	33.5	19.0
4.	The other members of the group give	46.5	34.5	19.0

	little cooperation while doing group assignments.			
5.	It is difficult to reach an agreement while doing group work.	40.0	37.0	23.0
6.	It takes longer time to complete the task in a group.	35.5	35.5	29.0
7.	I am forced to accept the conclusion made by the majority in the group.	26.5	41.5	32.0
8.	I have been taken advantage of by my group members.	26.5	37.0	36.5
9.	I do most of the work in my group.	20.0	44.0	36.0
10.	I feel left out of the team's decision making.	15.5	33.5	51.0

The remaining four possible reasons for students' non-preference for group work were generally not applicable to the respondents. Only 26.5% of the respondents agreed that they were forced to accept the conclusion made by the group or taken advantage of by other group members, while 20% of them perceived they did most of the work in the group and 15.5% felt left out of the team's decision making process. This finding implies that although these are possible reasons for students' non-preference for group work, they are not common experiences of the students in this study.

Students' perceptions of instructor's role in group work

The results showed that most of the respondents agreed that the instructor should assist them at the beginning of group work (65.5%) and conduct a follow-up discussion (60%). This finding correlates with the findings in Kromrey and Purdom's (1995) study where students reported needing help from the instructor as part of their cooperative learning experience. Students also reported that they required follow-up discussion at the end of the group work with the instructor who would answer their queries, clarify points and address related issues and problems.

Table 4
Percentage of students agreeing and disagreeing with instructor roles in group work

Item	Instructor roles in group work	Strongly Agree and Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Disagree and Disagree (%)
1.	The instructor should assist me at the beginning of the group work.	65.5	24.5	10.0
2.	The instructor should have follow-up discussion at the end of the group work.	60.0	29.5	10.5
3.	The instructor should be the source of input.	55.5	33.0	11.5

4.	The instructor should participate in the group discussion.	39.5	33.0	27.5
5.	I do not need the instructor's assistance; I simply need him/her to give directions and materials.	26.5	35.5	38.0

More than half of the respondents (55.5%) also felt that the instructor should be the source of information. However, only 39.5% of the respondents agreed that the instructor should participate in the group discussions. As such, this implies that respondents were keen to receive information and knowledge from their instructor, but were opposed to the instructor's involvement in their discussion. This could be attributed to the high level of respect students have for their instructor as an expert in the field and the knowledge source. The respondents, however, reported that they felt uncomfortable if the instructor participated in the group discussion. This is because they feared receiving negative comments and feedback from their instructor. The finding corroborates with Livingstone's (2002) assertion that negative comments can be embarrassing for some group members, which can hamper group functioning. A total of 38% of respondents also disagreed with the statement that they did not require instructor's assistance and that simple instructions and few materials from the instructor would be sufficient. This implies that students still need a certain amount of guidance from their instructors in group work.

The findings showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of group work and preference for certain instructor roles in the other aspects of group work. Male students had slightly higher perceptions regarding the usefulness of group work for group assignments. However, compared to the female respondents, they perceived group work negatively with regard to group members' contribution in completing assignments. This finding contradicts the finding obtained Kaenzig et al.'s (2007) study, where female college students reported having negative experiences working in groups compared to male students. As such, this supports Gallos' (as cited in Kaenzig et al., 2007) claim that women and men do not have parallel experiences when it comes to group work.

A majority of respondents viewed it was necessary for the instructor to assist them at the beginning of group work and conduct a follow-up discussion. The instructor was also generally viewed as the source of information, an important guide for the group, but not as an active member in group discussions.

Comparison of students' perceptions of group work across ethnic groups

Table 5 shows that Chinese students were found to have a more positive perception of group work in facilitating better learning retention compared to Malay students and students of other races. In terms of students' perceptions of themselves being the ones organising and setting people to carry out group tasks, Chinese and Malay students were found to hold this belief more strongly than students of other races. This implies that Chinese and Malay students are more proactive in their studies and prefer to start their work shortly after they receive the assignment tasks.

The findings also showed that Chinese students were more likely to agree that group work enabled group tasks to be completed on time than students of other races. This contradicts the findings obtained in Park's (1997) study on Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Anglo students in American secondary schools. The study revealed that Korean, Chinese, and Anglo students showed negative preferences for group learning. The difference in findings between the two studies could be due to the gap between them (more than ten years apart). The changing perspectives on education could be a possible reason why Chinese students in this study have a more positive view of group work. Compared to students of other races, Chinese students were also found to have a more positive perception of group work, claiming that it enabled them to participate actively in group discussions. Malay students, however, did not view this aspect of group work positively as they did not think active participation in discussions was a result of working in groups.

Table 5
Students' perceptions of group work across ethnic groups

Benefits of working across ethnic gorups	Malay		Chinese		Others	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Facilitating better learning retention	1.85	1.22	2.40	1.48	1.74	1.13
2. Ability to organise and set people to work on group tasks	2.56	1.42.	2.66	1.53	1.81	1.27
3. Facilitating the completion of task within the allocated time	1.77	1.34	2.42	1.58	2.25	1.67
4. Group discussions are facilitated by group work	1.83	1.25	2.40	1.60	2.03	1.45
5. Preference of working with members of the same race	3.87	1.55	3.12	1.60	4.25	1.60
6. Working with members of the same ability	3.93	1.56	3.18	1.69	4.03	1.40
7. More time needed to complete group assignment	3.29	1.61	2.55	1.50	2.25	1.48
8. Feeling left out of the group's decision making	3.93	1.44	3.62	1.42	3.14	1.56
9. Meeting at a common time was difficult	2.77	1.63	1.98	1.50	2.25	1.67
10. Instructor's need to have follow-up discussions	2.02	1.26	2.22	1.56	1.37	0.79

With regard to students' preference on working with members of the same race, students of other races preferred working in groups with members of the same race. This could be due to the fact that they belonged to racial minority groups and working with members of the same race would give them a better sense of belonging. This finding corroborates Payne and Monk-Turner's (2006) claim that students from racial minority groups often confront racist attitudes of the majorities.

Working with group members of the same race gives these students some sense of security since they do not have to deal with possible racist sentiments when working with members of other races. Similarly, compared to Malay and Chinese students, students of other races preferred to work with group members who were of the same ability. This could be due to the ease of working with them and their own sense of inferiority when working with higher ability students.

Malay students, on the other hand, reported that they needed more time to complete a group assignment compared to Chinese students and students of other races. They also reported being left out from the group's decision making process, claiming that they were the ones doing most of the work and it was difficult to meet at a common time for group discussions. This may explain Malay students' non-preference for group work.

With regard to students' perceptions of the instructor's role in group work, Malay and Chinese students claimed that they wanted the instructor to conduct follow-up discussions. In terms of students' perceptions of group work based on ethnicity, Chinese students viewed group work more positively. They maintained that group work enabled them to retain knowledge, complete group tasks on time, and allow them to participate actively in discussions. Malay students, as mentioned earlier, felt that it was difficult for all group members to meet at a common time to discuss and that group work required more time to complete. They also felt that they had to do most of the work while being left out of the group's decision making process. When choosing group members, however, students of other races had higher preference for group members of the same race and ability compared to Chinese and Malay students. With regard to students' perception of themselves being the ones organising and setting people to work on group tasks, both Chinese and Malay respondents held this belief more strongly than students of other races. The findings imply that undergraduates view group work positively. However, their perceptions of group work are also heavily influenced by factors such as the difficulty to arrange a common time to meet for the group discussion, as well as group dynamics such as group members' gender, race, ability, and the kind of personalities they have. The findings also indicate that the role of the instructor is important – not as a participating member, but as a person who oversees the discussion from start to finish.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that students were very positive about the merits of group work, as working in a group benefited them in many ways, for example, it helped improve their interpersonal skills by learning, interacting, and sharing ideas with each other. Two main factors highlighted as the advantages of group work are the ability to share the workload in doing assignments and develop good working relationships among group members. Most of the respondents agreed that the instructor should assist them at the beginning of group work and conduct a follow-up discussion. In terms of students' perceptions of group work based on ethnicity, Chinese students were found to view group work more positively. Compared to

students of other races, Malay and Chinese students preferred the instructor to conduct follow-up discussions.

The majority preference for group work in doing assignments suggests that it can be used as a means of assisting students in completing their assignments and training them to work with others. Many employers today expect graduates to have the ability to work in a team in accomplishing work related tasks and achieving company goals. Thus, it is imperative that instructors and educators provide well-planned group work tasks as a way of helping undergraduate students to meet these expectations and preparing them for the working world in the process.

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KEKELIRUAN MAKNA KATA SIFAT DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA SARAWAK: SATU TINJAUAN AWAL

Wan Robiah Meor Osman[1]
Rosnah Mustafa[2]
Salina Pit[3]
Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
[1]mowrobiah@cls.unimas.my
[2]mrosnah@cls.unimas.my
[3]psalina@cls.unimas.my

Abstrak

Masyarakat Melayu Sarawak merupakan salah satu sub-etnik terbesar di Sarawak. Masyarakat ini bertutur dalam dialek Melayu Sarawak yang mempunyai variasi mengikut daerah atau kawasan geografi masing-masing. Dalam era modenisasi yang dipayungi oleh kepelbagaian etnik dilihat terdapat kosa kata dialek Melayu Sarawak yang mulai ditinggalkan oleh generasi muda. Oleh hal demikian, makalah ini meneliti kekeliruan makna kata sifat dalam kalangan remaja Melayu Sarawak. Kajian ini memanfaatkan soal selidik yang mengandungi 10 kata sifat yang diberikan kepada 100 orang responden untuk melihat sama ada mereka memahami makna dalam bahasa Melayu Standard. Dapatan mendapati bahawa kebanyakan responden tidak memahami sebilangan besar makna kata sifat (misalnya *ganjo, dumba-dumba*, *puro*), dan sebahagiannya pula memberikan maksud yang salah untuk kata sifat yang diberikan (misalnya, *acar*, *bengak*, *langa*). Justeru, penggunaan kata tradisi yang semakin terhakis dan asimilasi terhadap bahasa Melayu standard akan mengurangkan kelestarian dan penggunaan kosa kata tradisi ini dalam interaksi sosial dalam kalangan generasi muda Melayu Sarawak.

Kata kunci: Kekeliruan Makna, Kata Sifat, Dialek Melayu Sarawak

Meaning Confusion of Malay Adjectives among Sarawak Teenagers: An Exploratory Study

Abstract

The Sarawak Malay is one of the major sub-ethnic groups in Sarawak. This ethnic group speaks a variety of Sarawak Malay dialect which depends on the district or

geographical location. In this modern era where ethnic groups come into close contact with one another, the use of some Sarawak Malay dialect words is slowly diminishing among the younger generation of Sarawak Malays. This has ignited the researchers' interest to analyse the use of adjectives in Sarawak Malay dialect among Sarawak Malay teenagers. A questionnaire containing 10 adjectives was distributed to 100 respondents to find out whether they understood the meaning in standard bahasa Melayu. The results showed that a majority of the respondents did not understand the meaning of many adjectives (e.g., *ganjo*, *dumba-dumba*, *puro*), and some gave the wrong meanings for the adjectives (e.g., *acar*, *bengak*, *langa*). The low usage of these traditional words and assimilation into the standard bahasa Melayu will lead to further diminished recognition and use of the traditional words in daily social interaction among the younger generation of the Sarawak Malay.

Keywords: Meaning confusion, adjectives, Sarawak Malay Dialect

Pendahuluan

Dialek Melayu Sarawak merupakan salah satu daripada sekian banyak dialek dan bahasa yang dipertuturkan oleh masyarakat di Sarawak. Dialek ini menjadi sumber interaksi khusus bagi kaum Melayu dan menjadi medium integrasi nasional antara kaum di Sarawak. Dialek merupakan khazanah bahasa yang terdapat di Malaysia (Collins, 1996). Kepentingan dialek sebagai khazanah bangsa yang seharusnya dipelihara dan dilestarikan menarik minat pengkaji untuk melihat sejauh mana pengetahuan dan pemahaman generasi muda iaitu pelajar peringkat menengah terhadap kosa kata tradisi yang digunakan oleh generasi tua atau terdahulu dalam komunikasi harian mereka. Hal ini penting untuk diteliti sebagai penanda aras kepada masyarakat umum tentang kosa kata tradisi yang masih digunakan oleh generasi tua, tetapi tidak diperturun kepada generasi muda. Oleh itu, hasil kajian ini akan memperjelaskan tentang tahap penyisihan bahasa yang berlaku dalam kalangan remaja yang mulai beralih menggunakan kosa kata bahasa lain dan meninggalkan kosa kata bahasa ibunda mereka. Menurut Fasold (1984) penyisihan bahasa bermakna anggota sesebuah komuniti itu memilih bahasa lain menggantikan bahasa yang sedia ada (Nor Hisham Osman, 2000, p. 154).

Data kajian

Kajian ini memanfaatkan 100 soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada golongan remaja Melayu Sarawak berusia antara 14 hingga 15 tahun yang terdiri daripada pelajar sekolah menengah berasrama penuh dan separa asrama penuh di Kuching, Sarawak. Daripada soal selidik ini pengkaji telah memberikan 10 kosa kata tradisi bagi kata sifat untuk dikenal pasti dalam skala pemahaman iaitu kenal atau tidak kenal yang bermaksud jika responden menyatakan kenal maka kosa kata tersebut difahami dan responden perlu menjelaskan maksudnya dalam bahasa Melayu standard. Manakala jawapan tidak kenal maka secara automatik difahami bahawa responden tidak memahami atau tidak pernah menggunakan kosa kata tersebut. Kajian ini juga

mempunyai limitasi kepada maksud kata yang digunakan di kawasan Kuching dan Samarahan sahaja, manakala kawasan-kawasan lain tidak dibincangkan.

Perbincangan

Berdasarkan dapatan daripada Jadual 1 di bawah memperlihatkan variasi perkataan tradisi yang dikenali dan tidak dikenali dalam kalangan remaja Melayu Sarawak. Kata sifat atau dikenali juga kata adjektif merupakan sejumlah kata yang boleh menjadi unsur inti dalam binaan frasa adjektif (Nik Safiah Karim, Farid M. Onn, Hashim Musa, & Abdul Hamid Mahmood, 2009). Menurut Asmah Omar (2009) pula kata sifat ialah subgolongan daripada golongan kata karyaan. Oleh itu, kata sifat ialah kata yang berfungsi dalam memberikan makna bagi unsur untuk manusia dan benda dari segi sifat tabii, pancaindera, ukuran, warna, bentuk, waktu, jarak dan lain-lain. Dalam dapatan yang diperoleh menunjukkan kebanyakan kata sifat yang diberikan tidak dikenali oleh remaja ini iaitu antara 60 hingga 90 orang. Hal ini memperlihatkan bahawa penggunaan yang amat kurang oleh remaja bagi kata-kata sifat tradisi ini. Jika dilihat sebagai contoh kata *ganjo* yang bermaksud tinggi lampai sebanyak 81 orang remaja tidak mengenali kata ini. Terdapat satu dapatan yang memberikan makna yang salah bagi kata ini iaitu tua. Begitu juga halnya, bagi kata *acap* yang bermaksud air yang melimpah atau banjir ataupun menececah sesuatu paras tetapi diberikan maksud salah iaitu menyebarkan, muak, tinggi, dan menebar. Bagi kata ini seramai 64 orang remaja tidak mengenali kata tersebut. Selain itu, bagi kata *bebenyin* yang bermaksud berkilat terdapat seorang remaja memberikan maksud yang salah iaitu berdenyut. Bagi kata ini jumlah remaja mengenali kata ini agak ketara iaitu sebanyak 46 orang.

Manakala kata *dumba-dumba* yang bermaksud nyalaan api yang besar hanya 5 orang remaja sahaja yang mengenali kata ini manakala selebihnya tidak pernah mendengar dan menggunakan kata ini. Terdapat remaja yang memberikan pengertian yang salah untuk kata ini iaitu cepat-cepat dan penghasut. Bagi kata sifat *puro* yang bermaksud comot, kotor atau berbedak tidak rata pula menunjukkan sebanyak 86 orang remaja tidak mengenali kata ini. Dan seorang memberikan maksud yang salah iaitu pura-pura. Hal yang sama juga berlaku terhadap kata *bengak* yang membawa maksud mulut besar telah disalahertikan oleh responden dengan memberikan maksud sebagai sombong, kebas, lembab, membuka mulut seluas-luasnya, dan bodoh. Kata ini juga menunjukkan kekerapan remaja tidak mengenalinya tinggi iaitu sebanyak 76 orang. Begitu juga halnya, bagi kata *langa* yang bermaksud dahi besar telah disalahertikan oleh remaja ini sebagai kuali besar, dan jumlah tidak mengenali kata ini ialah sebanyak 89 orang. Hal yang sama juga boleh dilihat bagi kata *juley* yang bermaksud dagu panjang diberikan maksud yang salah oleh responden iaitu menjelirkan lidah, jelir, mengeluarkan lidah, dan terkeluar, dan kata ini menunjukkan sebanyak 93 orang remaja tidak mengenali kata ini. Manakala 7 orang responden yang menyatakan mereka mengenali kata ini telah memberikan maksud yang salah. Hal ini secara tidak langsung menunjukkan bahawa kesemua responden sebenarnya tidak mengenali kata sifat ini.

Hal yang sama juga berlaku bagi kata *rembo* kerana daripada dapatan menunjukkan bahawa walaupun remaja ini menyatakan mereka memahami sesuatu

kata tradisi itu, namun maksud yang diberikan salah iaitu kata *rembo* yang bermaksud koyak, luka besar atau hancur diberikan maksud pelangi dan berwarna-warni. Menariknya, kebanyakan remaja menyatakan bahawa kata ini untuk pelangi dan mengandaikan maksud *rembo* itu berasal daripada kata 'rainbow' dalam bahasa Inggeris. Melalui dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa kata *rembo* ini memberikan tafsiran bahawa kesemua responden sebenarnya tidak mengenali kata ini. Daripada dapatan menunjukkan bahawa sebenarnya kesemua responden tidak mengenali kata ini dan secara tidak langsung memberikan gambaran bahawa kata ini tidak digunakan dalam pertuturan harian mereka.

Jadual 1

Taburan dapatan kata sifat tradisi Dialek Melayu Sarawak

Perkataan Tradisi – Kata Sifat	Kekerapan Kenal	Maksud Salah[1]	Kekerapan Tidak Kenal	Jumlah
1. Ganjo (tinggi lampai)	19	1	81	100
2. Acap (air melimpah/banjir/mencecah)	36	6	64	100
3. Bebenyin (berkilat)	46	1	54	100
4. Dumba-dumba (nyalaan api yang besar)	5	2	95	100
5. Puro (comot/kotor/berbedak yang tidak rata)	14	1	86	100
6. Bengak (mulut besar)	24	9	76	100
7. Langa (dahi besar)	11	1	89	100
8. Juley (dagu panjang)	7	7	93	100
9. Rembo (koyak/luka besar/hancur)	11	11	89	100
10. Emperin (bunyi yang sangat kuat/nyaring)	10	2	90	100

Kekeliruan ini berlaku disebabkan kurang atau jarang perkataan ini didengari oleh remaja ini menyebabkan kesilapan pemahaman maksud berlaku. Hal yang sama juga terjadi bagi kata *emperin* yang bermaksud bunyi yang sangat kuat atau nyaring tetapi diberikan maksud yang salah oleh remaja iaitu piring dan pinggan. Hal ini berkemungkinan disebabkan oleh sebutannya yang hampir sama dengan kata piring maka responden berkecenderungan memberikan maksud tersebut.

Oleh yang demikian, dapatlah disimpulkan bahawa peratusan responden tidak mengenali sesuatu kata itu lebih ketara dan tinggi berbanding kata yang dikenali. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa kata tradisi ini mulai ditinggalkan oleh generasi muda dan beralih kepada kata yang lebih kerap digunakan. Hal ini menampakkan fenomena asimilasi kata telah berlaku iaitu apabila asimilasi lebih kuat daripada kemahuan mengekalkan identiti, bahasa ibunda turut akan terasimilasi dan lama-kelamaan sukar untuk dikenal pasti (Maros, 2010, p. 87). Hal ini yang berlaku kepada generasi muda yang beralih menggunakan bahasa Melayu standard sebagai salah satu keperluan pendidikan dan kerjaya, yang secara tidak langsung mulai meninggalkan sebilangan kosa kata tradisi bahasa ibunda dalam

interaksi sosial mereka. Penyisihan bahasa merupakan kesan jangka panjang daripada pemilihan bahasa dalam masyarakat yang pada mulanya bersifat dwibahasa atau pelbagai bahasa atau mempunyai beberapa kelainan daripada sesuatu bahasa. Pemilihan bahasa mengakibatkan komuniti meninggalkan satu bahasa sepenuhnya atau sebahagiannya dan beralih menggunakan bahasa yang lain (Nor Hisham, 2000, p. 154). Maka, kelangsungan sesuatu dialek atau bahasa kebanyakannya ditentukan oleh kesedaran memilih dan mempertahankan kelestarian dialek atau bahasa itu oleh penuturnya.

Walaupun masyarakat umum mengetahui tentang kedinamikan bahasa atau dialek yang sukar dikawal perubahan dan peralihannya, namun perlu ada usaha melestarikan dan mendokumentasikan bahasa dan dialek daerah oleh semua pihak khususnya ahli linguistik. Hal ini disebabkan kedudukan bahasa daerah di Alam Melayu menghadapi masa depan yang suram dan kian terancam pupus. Jika tiada tindakan atau usaha dilakukan oleh ahli linguistik khususnya, puluhan bahasa dan dialek daerah akan punah tanpa dokumentasi, mati tanpa nisan (Collins, 2008).

Kesimpulan

Dalam era modenisasi yang dipayungi oleh kepelbagaian etnik dilihat terdapat kosa kata Dialek Melayu Sarawak yang mulai ditinggalkan oleh generasi muda. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan kosa kata tradisi semakin dilupakan dan tidak dikenali oleh golongan remaja. Pemahaman dan pengetahuan mereka terhadap kosa kata tradisi dalam interaksi sosial seharian sangat terbatas dan mengelirukan kerana wujudnya kata-kata yang dinyatakan dikenali tetapi sebenarnya tidak. Kekeliruan ini berlaku mungkin disebabkan wujudnya asimilasi bahasa-bahasa lain yang melingkungi kitaran pertuturan responden yang secara tidak langsung memberikan impak terhadap penggunaan dialek ini. Menerusi dapatan ini, diharap usaha berterusan dalam mengetengahkan, mendokumentasi, memelihara serta melestarikan khazanah bahasa turun-temurun ini terus dipergiat dan diperbanyakkan agar tidak terus ditelan oleh arus kemodenan.

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[1] Bagi maksud salah pengkaji hanya memaparkan data daripada responden untuk perkataan yang wujud dalam bahasa Melayu standard.