

Learning Strategies of Malay Language Among International Students in Institution of Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper is focusing on the strategies used by the international students in learning Malay language. The most frequent strategies applied by students in learning Malay language via their second language; English will be determined. Besides that, this research was also to analyse the relationship between the learning strategies and predisposing factors in learning the language. The Language Learning Strategy Model by Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) has been adapted and modified to fulfill the research objectives. The sample was taken from among the first year students from the Multimedia University, Cyberjaya. The population was from seven countries. There were 79 questionnaires managed to be gathered and analysed by using SPSS and MS Excel to reach the accurate information and findings of the study. The findings of the study showed that from the 20 strategies listed, 4 strategies were the most frequent applications among the students to learn Malay language in the class. In determining the learning strategies mastered by the students, instructors could plan the lecturing sessions so that the learning could be better in making the international students become more interested in learning the national language. According to Tyacke and Mendelson (1986), instructors who could teach students the language properly, could influence them with effective strategies. Students were also managed to use varities of methods, techniques, ways or strategies like the ones used by their language teachers.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Predisposing factors, Malay language and International students

Background

In the globalisation era, people are free to further their studies in any countries of their choice. In vision Malaysia as one of the excellent education in this region, Malaysia welcomes students from all over the world. To cater that scenario and the needs of these international students, the Private Institution of Higher Education (PIHE) has a lot of private institutions in Malayia. To ensure the quality of the graduates, in 21st December 2005, government has decided to combine the National Acreditation Syndicate (LAN) and the Division of Quality Assuarance, Ministry of Higher Education to become a new entity and responsibility to guarantee the quality of the programmes offered in both public and private sectors. In 1st November 2007, LAN taken over bv the Malavsian was Qualifications Agency (MQA) and functions as the sole agency to supervise and coordinates the quality assuarance of the higher accreditation of this country.

In Malaysia, there are 25 registered private universities. In order to overcome the communication problem among the international students in Malaysia and with accordance to Phase 152 Constituency, the syllabus for Bahasa Kebangsaan B that is Malay language is offered to interested non-Malaysian citizens. Bahasa Kebangsaan B is the compulsory subject to be taught in the private institution and English language is the medium of instruction. The teaching and learning of this language emphasises on the aspect of communication and the easy method of teaching. The goal of learning the Malay language not only to assist the foreign students to use the Malay language in their daily activities, but also could help them to do the reference books and other academic materials in Malay language.

The learners can be acquired the target language easily only if the language is made use of in our daily affairs (Nirmala and E.Sugantha Ezhil Mary, 2011). Besides that, the succesful of the international students in learning the Malay language, instructors also should play important role in determining the suitable, effective and good strategies to inculcate their interests. Based on the students' interest, instructors could motivate the students to use the most effective strategy to enhance their learning process. According to Abu Talib (1998), learning strategy is a way that students take to quicken their process of absorbing, storing, recalling and using of sources of information to help the students to produce effective learning process. The knowledge about the student's strategy are benefit to instructors. Therefore. instructors should play important role in teaching Malay language to these non-native speakers.

Weinstein and Hayer (1986) said that the reason of using strategy is to 'influence' the motivation situation or the effective learning of selecting, receiving, organizing or interacting with new knowledge as below:

a) Centralising the chosen and new aspects of information,

- b) Analysing and controlling information while receiving,
- c) Organising or controlling new information while in the process of guessing,
- d) Evaluating the learning after work is settled, and
- e) Assuring someone that the learning process does happen to help in reducing doubts.

The communication strategies are important especially in determining meanings, linguistics structure or even sociolinguistics methods which are not given fairly between the learning of the second language and the second speaker (Tarone, 1981).

Objective of Study

- i. To determine the strategies used by the international students in learning Malay language.
- ii. To analyse the relationship between the learning strategies of the Malay language and the predisposing factors.

Significance of Study

In determining the most frequent language learning strategy applied by the international students, instructors could plan the teaching and learning process to be more effective. This study is important especially to instructors who teach Malay language as a foreign language. The language is not only being taken at the highest peak but at the same is spread to all over the world. In determining the predisposing factors in the basic level, the process could help the students to learn their third language. They will become more motivated to learn more about Malay language.

Literature Review

In general, the expansion of literature review on learning strategies have been indentified since a few years ago; a few studies indicate that there are several strategies that have been applied by students to master the knowledge of the language and the application of these strategies is also influenced by its external factors. Studies that have investigated language learning strategies (LLS) in foreign language in Malaysia are such as Kang, Hyeok (1999) –Korean, Roslina Mamat (1999) – Japanese, Anida Abdul Rahim (2003) – Arabic, Neo Swee Leng (2005) – Spanish, and Suzana Ismail (2005) – Japanese.

Apart from the efforts that have been undertaken to identify the types of LLS for foreign languages, studies on LLS in the learning of English and Malay have also received attention among researchers. These studies are generally conducted to see the relationship between the uses of language learning strategies with the success achieved by the students in language learning, and to suggest a model of language learning based on the findings of the research. Examples are Mohamed Amin Embi (1996), Abu Talib (1998), Mohd Nazali et al. (1999), Zamri Mahamod et al. (2002), Supian (2003) dan others. Previous studies on LLS in the subject of Malay language as the first language or second language were at the primary school, secondary school or university level. However, the application of LLS in a group of foreign learners who are learning the Malay language as the third, fourth or foreign language in developing countries, for example Malaysia fails to be detected.

To further clarify the differences of LLS, the majority of researchers have touched on issues relating to the identification of strategies used by language learners who excelled (Griffiths, 2003; Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999), analysis of relationship between the use of LLS and the achievement of students' performance (Wharton, 2000), differences between students across different academic levels in self regulated learning strategies (Abdul Rahman Awad Al Asmari and Nasrah Mahmoud Ismail, 2012) or the evaluation of students' strategic performance in the different areas of language skills (Rocio Dorninguez and Silvia Pessoa, 2005). Meanwhile, the findings of these past studies have given different views. The difference lies in the level of flexibility of the student when choosing strategies, and the manner in

which the LLS are applied to specific situations. In addition, the findings of research on the LLS factors are also not so consistent and consensus that is uniform failed to be achieved. Research on gender differences showed that the use of LLS that is significant by females (Green and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983) while the research by Tran (1988) and reported the opposite. With regard to the relationship of language ability and the use of LLS, new findings have also been reported. Several ESL/EFL (English as a Second Language/ English as a Foreign Language) research have shown that the level of language ability influences the use of LLS, with students of higher language ability generally using more varied strategies (Chang, 1991) and using the strategies more frequently compared to students of weaker language ability. However, there are studies that report no consistent differences between the skill groups (Phillips, 1991).

Based on the past studies before this, researchers and teachers around the world have been conducting research that includes students of different races, nations, countries or cultures. Most of them focus on the examination of factors that influence the student's choice of learning strategies. The majority of these factors are related to motivation. age, gender, attitude and confidence. type of activities, teaching methods, learning styles, level of academic ability, cultural background and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, most of the researchers have neglected the notion of 'influence of culture, community and educational policy' from their research consideration in LLS. Clearly, this research that is grounded on the identification of LLS and the extralinguistic factors among the foreigners seems really necessary.

Methodology

The quantitative method through the questionnaire was used to materialize the objectives of the study. There were 80 forms given to the students while they were in the class toward the end of the semester.

Nevertheless, one student did not come on the day of the study was conducted. This resulted in 79 forms were returned to be analysed.

They were the first year university students. Furthermore, they came from different programmes like Engineering, Management, Information Technology and Creative Multimedia. Due to the big number of students, the 80 respondents were divided into two separate classes. Even though they learned from two separate classes, the instructor is the same people and they were using the same syllabus. The only different was at the time and venue.

All of the population number has been used as the sample of this study. Besides, the samples of this study were made compulsory to follow this subject Bahasa Kebangsaan B that is the basic Malay language based on the syllabus given by the MQA-*Malaysian Qualifications Agency* for one semester that is 14 weeks. They follow the lesson in a class complete with air-conditional, computer and other basic needs like chairs, table and whiteboard. The *Basic Malay* (2009) book was given to them as guidance and exercises besides the use of '*power point*' slides presentation in the class.

The questionnaire consists of questions on strategies used by the students in learning Malay language in, out classroom and during examination based on the Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) model. The modification was done according to its suitability with the subject and types of study. The modification included purpose, needs and opinions from the subjects in learning Malay language.

Based on the questionnaire, data were gathered and analysed in answering the two objectives of the study. The objectives are to determine the strategy used by the international students in learning Malay language and to analyse the relationship between the learning strategy of the Malay language and predisposing factors. The quantitative analysis of this study was conducted by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 18.

The Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to strategies in learning Malay language only among the international students. The population of this study is the first year students who took this Bahasa Kebangsaan В paper in the Multimedia University. They were at the range of 21 to 25 years old. The samples were form these 7 countries; Iran, Bangladesh, Arab Saudi, Mauritius, China, Botswana and German. Malay language is a foreign language to them. In this study, the students were asked to evaluate 40 strategies listed; 20 strategies learn in the classroom, 14 strategies learn outside the classroom and 6 strategies used in the examination. The researcher had this assumption of the students' mastery level of English language is homogenous.

Methods of the Study

- i. *Questionnaire*: The distribution of the questionnaires was based on the Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) model. The modification was done according to its suitability with the subject and types of study. The modification included purpose, needs and opinions from the subjects in learning Malay language.
- ii. *Observation*: Researcher was observing the behaviour of the students in the classroom for 3 hours for 14 weeks.
- iii. *Library Research*: Journals, thesis and magazines were used to check on the past studies.

Instruments of Study

Questionnaire was the main source to collect the data for this study. The statements in the questionnaire were divided into two sections; Section One consists of 4 parts (A, B, C and D), Section Two has 8 demographic questions on gender, age, faculty, programme, semester, mother tongue and a question on the status of Malay language to them.

The statements in Section One are as follows:

- i) Part A has 20 questions about strategies used by the students in the class.
- ii) Part B has 14 questions about strategies used by the students outside the class.
- Part C has 6 questions about iii) strategies used by the students during the examination.
- iv) Part D has 9 questions about the predisposing factors in learning Malay language.

To each statement in Section One, there are four numbers that need to be chosen by the subject of the study based on their learning strategies. Each number represents as the following:

- 1 as Strongly Disagree i)
- ii) 2 as Disagree
- iii) 3 as Agree
- 4 as Strongly Agree iv)

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively by using MS Excel and SPSS. For the statistical test, Pearson Correlation was used to determine the relationship of the Malay language learning strategies in the classroom, outside the classroom and during the examination. The formula for the test is as follows:

Pearson Correlation,
$$r = \frac{S_{XY}}{\sqrt{S_{XX}S_{YY}}}$$

where

where
$$S_{XX} = \sum X^{2} - \frac{(\sum X)^{2}}{N}$$
$$S_{YY} = \sum Y^{2} - \frac{(\sum Y)^{2}}{N}$$
$$S_{XY} = \sum XY - \frac{\sum X \sum Y}{N}$$

with these hypotheses;

- H_0 : r = 0 (there is no relationship between the learning strategies and predisposing factors in learning the Malay language)
- H_A : $r \neq 0$ (there is a relationship between the learning strategies and predisposing factors in learning the Malay language)

Research Findings

Objective 1: To determine the strategy used by the international students in learning Malay language.

Ouestionnaires have been distributed to 79 international students in MMU. The table below was the finding based on the analysis from the 20 learning strategies for Malays language in the classroom which have been arranged according to its mean level.

According to the finding of this study, the international students prefer or like to learn Malay language through the instructor in the classroom. The main and most frequent strategy in learning the language is paying attention to the instructor while she/he is teaching. This strategy obtained the highest mean that is 3.38. The second higher is 3.22 with the strategy of the students asked for further explanation from the instructor if they do not understand what is being taught. The third strategy is listen to carefully to what the lecturer is saying in the Malay language with 3.21 for the mean.

Furthermore, the strategy that was rarely applied while learning Malay language was referring to the dictionary whenever they do not understand the mining of the word learned. The mean is 2.21 only. Other strategies were doing exercises (2.28), and reading textbooks (2.35). This clearly showed that the international students who learned Malay language dislike or rarely used reference books. Seflf study was also no their favourite strategy. The following paragraphs will be explaining findings for learning strategies outside the classroom and during the examination.

Based on the analysis given, the learning process happened most of the time in the classroom and relying on the instructor is their best strategy. This happened because they have an open opportunity to learn and understand the language only in the class. This opportunity will be happening outside the classroom especially at the location or learning centre near the city. The environment somehow will encourage them to communicate in English.

Referring to a dictionary is the least favourite strategy since they know that they can rely on the lecturer. Using reference books is also not the students' choice. Hence the students prefer to read the textbooks as their main aim is to pass the exam. Therefore they will be using all the strategies that they feel could help them to make sure they pass. This can be seen from the figure below:

The Scale of 3 and 4 in the questionnaire are representing the more positive learning strategy. Scale 1 and 2 are less positive. From the figure above, it was found out that the highest percentage 61.7% came from the Scale 3 and 4 to the learning strategies in the classroom. The strategy became less positive when they were applied outside the classroom and during the examination, 47.7% only. As for the prediction, the Malay language learning strategy outside the classroom is more practical compared to strategies in other situations.

The comparison of the learning strategies in the classroom and during the examination at the positive scale of 4 found out that the strategy applied during the examination was higher with 32.2% compared to in the classroom with 29.2%. Through this findings, the international students could be seen as applying the positive learning strategies when sitting for the examination.

Objective 2: To analyse the relationship between the learning strategy of the Malay language and predisposing factors.

Overall, the learning strategy in the classroom showed significant correlation. The factor that the international student like to attend the Malay language class became the predisposing factor as the highest correlation when the strategy was applied into the classroom. Clearly shown that instructors play important role in the effort of inculcating interest onto the international students in learning Malay language. Whereas the correlation value for learning the language outside the classroom is to used when bargaining prices when buying goods. Students were seen as using all the strategies for the outside purposes most of the time. This scenario shows that Malay language is so useful during shopping here in Malaysia.

On the other hand, the correlation between learning strategies during examination and the predisposing factors was not convincing at all. The table above shows only four from the nine predisposing factors were significant with weak correlation value. If everything was to be taken into account, the combination of D1 till D9 failed to show the significant relationship with learning strategies while sitting for examination. In a nutshell, learning strategies were not influenced by the predisposing factors during the examination.

D1- I like Malay language so much. D2-Learning Malay could help me communicate better in Malaysia. D3- While ordering food and beverage. D4-Asking for directions to certain destination. D5- Reading signboards. D6- Bargaining prices of goods. D7- Feel friendlier with Malaysian citizens. D8- I like to attend my Malay language class. D9- Malay language is easy to be learned.

In the overall findings from Table 2, the predisposing factors to communicate with the locals was the lowest correlation value in the strategy of learning the Malay language in the classroom, outside the classroom or even during examination. It clearly shown that the statement of problem highlighted at the beginning of the study has been proven true that the communication factor with the locals was not the predisposing factor or the main reason they learned the Malay language. The findings of this study is hoped to be the motivation factor to those who would love to plan for teaching and learning Malay language among the foreign speakers. This also showed that a question should be studied again especially in getting to know the methods of teaching and learning especially in the effort to spread the Malay language around the world.

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that lecturers play important role in encouraging the students to use the language learning strategies in learning Malay language. According to Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) one of the predisposing factors to success in learning a language is to find and use opportunity to practise the language in the reality world. On the other hand, this study shows that the students prefer to rely on the instructors in learning the language. Therefore the lecturers need to use the teaching method through the outside activities so that the students are exposed the real environment.

Based on the findings, students rarely did their revisions after the class, prepare before the class or even use a dictionary to refer to difficult words. To make sure these strategies will be used, instructors could give assignments to the students based on the topic discussed in the following class. One of the activities that can encourage the students to use the dictionary is by asking the students to create words from the letters given. To make this activity more interesting, it can be done in groups and make it as competition.

determining the language learning In strategies used by the students, lecturers can plan their teaching and learning lesson properly. Students will use varieties of techniques, ways, methods or even strategies to learn like the ones used by the instructors themselves. This study also emphasised on the Malay language learning strategies among the foreign speakers that encompased adults and children. Tyacke and Mendelson (1986), said that instructors who teach the students to learn the language good will make the students learn the language good as well. From day to day more and more international students have chosen Malaysia to further their studies in any education institutions; public or private. Therefore we need to value this golden opportunity so that our Malay language can be used widely among the international students here in Malaysia. Finally, the proper and well arranged teaching and learning of the language can make the process effective. This matter does not only will take the standard of Malay language high but to spread our national language around the global.

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	Table 1: Malay Language Learning Strategies in the Classr Questions (According to students' performance)	Mean	Standard Deviation
A5	Whenever the teacher is teaching I pay fully attention.	3.38	0.70
A6	If I don't understand the teacher's explanation, I ask him/her to repeat it to me.	3.22	0.92
A15	During the lesson I listen carefully to the way the teacher speaks Malay.	3.21	0.82
A16	I translate what I hear during the lesson in my own language. (e.g. English)	3.09	0.92
A4	I get the teacher attention by sitting in front.	3.05	0.93
A19	I was active in the class activities.	3.04	0.84
A9	I volunteer to answer questions only when I am sure of the answer.	2.92	0.97
A18	I try to brave to speak Malay in class.	2.91	0.94
A17	If I can't answer the question posed by the teacher I get help from my friends.	2.86	0.81
A7	If I don't understand the teacher explanation I ask my friends to explain it.	2.85	0.89
A13	During the Malay lesson I try to speak Malay.	2.79	0.99
A20	I prefer the role play during the classes.	2.77	0.95
A12	If I don't understand something taught in class I ask my friend after the class.	2.72	0.95
A10	I answer it silently to myself when teacher asked another student a question.	2.71	1.06
A8	I volunteer to answer questions asked by the teacher.	2.68	0.87
A3	I sit someone who is good in Malay.	2.62	1.02
A14	I read over work done in class after each lesson.	2.39	0.93
A1	I read the textbook before the lesson.	2.35	0.95
A2	I do exercises in the text/workbook	2.28	0.89
A11	If I don't understand a word used during the lesson I use a dictionary.	2.21	1.08
	Total mean in the class	2.80	0.92

Table 1: Malay Language Learning Strategies in the Classroom





	Predisposing Factors									
Learning Strategy	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	Overall (D1- D9)
In the Classroom (A)	0.413*	0.233*	0.261*	0.346*	0.306*	0.299*	0.327*	0.487*	0.241*	0.517*
	(0.000)	(0.044)	(0.024)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.037)	(0.000)
Outside the Classroom (B)	0.464*	0.257*	0.308*	0.395*	0.305*	0.466*	0.407*	0.417*	0.279*	0.563*
	(0.000)	(0.026)	(0.007)	(0.000)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.015)	(0.000)
During the Examination (C)	0.359*	0.154	0.186	0.208	0.128	0.257*	0.196	0.319*	0.266*	0.312
	(0.002)	(0.188)	(0.110)	(0.073)	(0.273)	(0.026)	(0.091)	(0.005)	(0.021)	(0.050)

Table 2: Statistical Correlation between the Predisposing Factors and Malay Language Learning Strategy

Note: * significant at 95% confidence level. The probability value of the correlation test is reported in the ().

	Арр				and Reliab	ility Test (C	Cronbach's Alph			
		Γ	Descriptive S	Statistics		Reliability Test				
Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
A1	79	2.35	0.95	0.34	-0.74	150.01	595.77	0.6179	0.8960	
A2	79	2.28	0.89	0.20	-0.68	150.08	598.51	0.5957	0.8964	
A3	73	2.62	1.02	-0.03	-1.09	149.74	597.99	0.5255	0.8967	
A4	79	3.05	0.93	-0.69	-0.42	149.31	612.55	0.2566	0.8993	
A5	78	3.38	0.70	-0.94	0.54	148.98	613.07	0.3366	0.8988	
A6	79	3.22	0.92	-0.55	-1.34	149.15	607.31	0.3794	0.8983	
A7	79	2.85	0.89	-0.36	-0.60	149.51	607.73	0.3802	0.8983	
A8	78	2.68	0.87	-0.15	-0.60	149.68	608.72	0.3679	0.8984	
A9	77	2.92	0.97	-0.53	-0.69	149.44	607.30	0.3556	0.8984	
A10	75	2.71	1.06	-0.17	-1.20	149.65	612.07	0.2302	0.8997	
A11	78	2.21	1.08	0.39	-1.11	150.16	604.81	0.3636	0.8983	
A12	78	2.72	0.95	-0.33	-0.73	149.64	602.69	0.4668	0.8974	
A13	78	2.79	0.99	-0.38	-0.87	149.57	609.13	0.3095	0.8989	
A14	79	2.39	0.93	0.22	-0.74	149.97	599.74	0.5441	0.8968	
A15	77	3.21	0.82	-0.70	-0.36	149.15	607.63	0.4185	0.8980	
A16	79	3.09	0.92	-0.68	-0.48	149.27	611.74	0.2777	0.8992	
A17	78	2.86	0.81	-0.02	-0.88	149.50	612.27	0.3068	0.8989	
A18	78	2.91	0.94	-0.20	-1.15	149.45	599.56	0.5416	0.8968	
A19	79	3.04	0.84	-0.47	-0.50	149.32	604.57	0.4845	0.8975	
A20	79	2.77	0.95	-0.27	-0.84	149.59	602.51	0.4703	0.8974	
B1	75	2.21	1.08	0.37	-1.12	149.35	605.07	0.4629	0.8976	
B2	74	2.66	1.07	-0.18	-1.17	148.75	576.78	0.0970	0.9348	
B3	75	2.76	0.96	-0.29	-0.82	149.44	604.88	0.5269	0.8973	
B 4	74	2.88	0.86	-0.36	-0.48	149.80	605.86	0.4222	0.8979	
B5	73	2.23	1.03	0.36	-0.97	149.52	605.61	0.4720	0.8976	
B6	74	2.74	1.04	-0.36	-0.98	149.72	598.80	0.6250	0.8963	
B7	74	2.68	0.94	-0.15	-0.80	150.15	593.50	0.5827	0.8960	
B 8	75	2.51	1.14	0.01	-1.38	149.70	599.19	0.4782	0.8971	
B9	75	1.88	1.10	0.97	-0.47	149.60	601.06	0.4954	0.8971	
B10	75	2.11	1.03	0.42	-1.03	149.48	605.44	0.4500	0.8977	
B11	75	1.80	1.03	1.16	0.15	150.13	611.71	0.2446	0.8995	
B12	75	2.49	0.95	-0.16	-0.86	149.62	602.51	0.4251	0.8977	
B13	75	2.77	0.86	-0.03	-0.80	149.68	601.40	0.5011	0.8971	
B14	75	2.40	1.12	0.20	-1.30	149.85	598.71	0.4542	0.8973	
C1	74	3.15	0.86	-0.93	0.41	150.48	604.84	0.3562	0.8984	
C2	75	3.01	0.94	-0.50	-0.81	150.25	608.73	0.3037	0.8989	

Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.9000)

C3	75	2.80	0.95	-0.13	-1.03	150.56	603.59	0.4094	0.8979
C4	74	2.49	1.20	0.10	-1.52	149.87	599.27	0.5381	0.8968
C5	74	2.80	0.93	-0.44	-0.56	149.59	607.51	0.4034	0.8981
C6	75	2.40	1.12	0.09	-1.34	149.96	596.79	0.4970	0.8968