A COMPARISON BETWEEN ORAL READING FLUENCY IN ENGLISH AND BAHASA MALAYSIA AMONG PRIMARY 1 STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is important measure to identify whether the students understand their reading and learning process. The performance of oral reading fluency is one of the factors affect the measure. In Malaysia, the main language used is Bahasa Malaysia and English is the second language. Therefore, this study intended to compare the performance of oral reading fluency between English and Bahasa Malaysia among Primary 1 students. This study was involved 865 students from 11 randomly selected government schools. They are tested with their ability in oral reading fluency in both languages. This study is take place in Kuching, Sarawak. The result indicates students score well in Bahasa Malaysia than English. The average score in Bahasa Malaysia is bigger than in English. Meanwhile, the girls outperform boys in both languages. Then, students with English as their second language perform average in English oral reading fluency. The causes of these results are then identified and discussed.

Keywords: oral reading fluency, gender, Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia, English, English as second language.
ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: kefasihan membaca secara lisan, jantina, Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia, Bahasa Inggeris, Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Malaysia is known as one of the countries that use English as a second language after Bahasa Malaysia (BM). Malaysian students are tested orally in English and BM while in school.

Most research of oral reading fluency (ORF) is done in monolingual English users (Lipka & Siegel, 2011). Similarly, in Malaysia, the research conducted has been in English language. Khor, Low and Lee also stated the same. Until now, most studies are conducted in English (Khor, Low & Lee, 2014).

A study from Yasin, Shaupil, Mukhtar, Ghani and Rashid (2010) showed despite different environment of learning, English level in Malaysian students merely the same. The study conducted among polytechnic students in Malaysia. Yasin et al. (2010) said that the students are still not able to conquer in the oral, reading and writing skills. Another study has been done among Form Two students by Khor, Low and Lee in Malaysia. The fluency domain comprising accuracy, reading rate and prosody has been reported to have a strong relationship with reading comprehension (Khor, Low & Lee, 2014).

Both studies focused only on the English. There is a need to examine student's ORF performance in both English and Bahasa Malaysia (BM) in order to detect and help student with ORF problems to prevent it from getting worsen. Muhamad, Shah, Ibrahim, Sarudin, Malik and Ghani's paper has stated their evidence. They stated that few graduate and undergraduate who have been learning English since primary school are still having problem in achieving free error structures of language during their studies (Muhamad et al., 2013).

Proficiency in English always has been a concerned issue among Malaysian educators (Asraf & Ahmad, 2003). Asraf and Ahmad (2003) also stated that country schools have many
students have the problem to understand English well. Only a few of them are able to speak simple English communication skill (Asraf & Ahmad, 2003).

**Learning.** Learning is an important thing in human's life. It enables human being to survive in this planet so-called earth by providing new knowledge. From the Stone Age, the ancestors have tried to discover new things to enhance their living. They used different styles of hunting, cooking and so on. This shows the example of the meaning of learn in human.

What is learning? Learning is actually an active process of development which learning is social aspect (Wilson & Peterson, 2006).

**Language.** People also learn the language to communicate. Language is actually about the simple type of communication that went through evolution in humans and society (Mitra & Raj, 2011). Language can be learn through orally or formal education. Mitra and Raj (2011) mentioned that to learn a language completely, a person must be able to understand, speak, read and write properly.

**Bilingualism.** Bilingualism is derived from 'bi' and 'lingual'. Schambach (2006) stated that bilingualism is a person that rose with two languages. Bilingualism is a process of learning more than 1 language at same time (Mitra & Raj, 2011). Bilingualism occurs when a person is capable in two languages that well developed (Bourguet, 2006).

There are two types of bilingualism. These types are natural bilingualism and unnatural bilingualism. Schamback (2006) stated that unnatural bilingual is kids learn another language with another help by books for instance. Natural bilingualism is when children learn both at same times without any artificial help.

**Mother tongue.** Such as oral education, people are said acquiring their language from their mother tongue. Mother tongue is no simply the language that used by the mother. Mitra and Raj (2011) stated that the language taught to a person from small is the mother tongue. The mother tongue for the family is the most used language for them to communicate.
The process of learning in schools is easier for bilingual than monolingual (Mitra & Raj, 2011). This is supported in Lindholm's paper where the result shown that kids in bilingual curriculum were achieving around 10 marks better in reading and maths tests than monolingual (as cited in Bourguet, 2006).

**English as a second language (ESL).** Golberg, Paradis and Crago (2006) defined it as how the verbal academic skill of second language is mastered by minority first language students.

Daramaju (2002) stated that students who undergo socialization and involuntary to learn the second language may face problem in mastering English as a second language. This is because the language used in school is quite different for country that has mixed racial population. The students may have difficulties to master it since they learned their mother tongue. Similarly, Cummins stated in his paper that children between 5 to 7 years old English learning English as a second language children will always left behind in academic marks compared to their peers with English as first language (as cited in Jean & Geva, 2008, p. 154). This is supported by Mitra and Raj in their paper. Students that go to school but not yet mastered the authorized language are at risk (Mitra & Raj, 2011).

Most countries have foreigner families that stayed in the countries. The children have to go to a school that teach other language than their native language. They may face some problem in leaning the new language.

Damaraju (2002) stated that in the United States, the hispanic population will become the biggest minority population. Hispanic students have their native language which is Spanish. This is not only occurring with minority people. The majority people in a country such as China also face some difficulties in learning English as their second language due the mother tongue. Weak English users such as Chinese and Hispanic students used metacognition to read English (Block as cited in Jiminez, Garcia and Pearson, 1995, p. 69).
Another reason due to lack of experiencing English is the students are focused more on homework such as workbook in classroom but never have chance to apply so in real life (Krishnan, Rahim, Marimuthu, Abdullah, Mohamad & Jusoff, 2009).

**Oral reading fluency.** One process of learning is reading. According to Weaver (2009), reading is a process where the brain actively processing the words and the style of reader affected by the social cause. Serious problems in reading are actually dyslexia (Perfetti, 2001). One component of reading is fluency which can be done orally—rephrase.

There are various definitions done by previous researchers about ORF. Wolf and Cohen (2001) defined ORF as reading effortlessly and high comprehension. Another definition has been made by Hudson, Mercer and Lane. They stated that person with ORF can keep fluency for a long time, can recall back the ability after long period of non-usage and able to do texts generalization (Hudson, Mercer & Lane, 2005). Speece and Ritchey (2005) mentioned ORF as fluent reading as how fast and accurate the text is read orally.

There are two types of oral reader. First type is fluent reader and second type is dysfluent reader. Wilger (2008) stated that to be a fluent reader, a person should sound natural when reading. The person has to be fast, correct and perfect intonation while read. Perfetti (2001) mentioned in his paper that readers who are skillful are the one that score higher than standard marks in the assessment. A dysfluent reader is a person who makes more errors and slow in reading due to misindentification of the words and his lack of expression in reading (Wilger, 2008). Tunmer and Greaney (2009) stated that weak readers have limited ability to apply contextual repetition in continuous process of sentences. It is important to do oral reading test because fluency is related with the result of the reading comprehension (Wilger, 2008). This means if a student is fluent reader, she or he can score well in reading comprehension test.
Klauda and Guthrie (2008) stated that reading fluency had been given a lot more attention lately. This is because spoken presentation are important element in subjects offered in faculty in universities (Muhamad et.al., 2013). Plus, most of the researches targeting on analyse the mistake of writing only instead oral (Muhamad et.al, 2013).

**Gender differences.** Gender difference is defined as the distinctness between women and men socially (Nobellius, 2004). The research on this subject are abundant nowadays.

Jones, Howe, and Rua (1999) stated that there was a difference between genders. They indicated that boys tend to pursue physical sciences whereas the girls pursued soft sciences such as biology. Roivainen (2011) studied the processing speed between males and females. The study showed that females performed better in reading, writing, digits, alphabets and rapid naming tasks (Roivainen, 2011). While as, males did better in the reaction time of finger tapping (Roivainen, 2011). Hannon (2014) was conducted on adult reading comprehension. She stated that males performed well in word decoding and reading comprehension than females (Hannon, 2014). From these studies, males were likely to be associated with physical task while females were associated with non-physical task.

**Poor, average and good performers.** Performance can be divided into three groups: below average, average and above average.

Molfese, Key, Kelly, Cunningham, Terrell, Ferguson, Molfese and Bonebright (2006) used event-related potential (ERP) response to divide these children in the three group mentioned above. ERP gave information about amplitude and latency (Molfese et al., 2006). They stated that above average children showed the fastest latency whereas the below average children showed the slowest in latency (Molfese et al., 2006). Thus, the average performer was between them.

Another method was standardized score. This method was used in Savage, Frederickson, Goodwin, Patni, Smith, and Tuersley (2005). The scores used to assign the
children in these groups (Savage et al., 2005). The children scored between -1 and 1 were average performers (Savage et al., 2005). Thus, below average performers were within below -1, whereas above average were in the range above 1.

**Problem Statement**

In Malaysia, there are currently few studies that have focused on comparison between both languages; English and BM in ORF. Moreover, these studies are not focused on primary schools. Yasin et.al (2010) was research on polytechnic students. While Muhamad et.al (2013) was research on university students. There is a need to do so that it can be a reference for the future researchers to further the topic.

**Research Objective**

**Main objective.** This study will focus on the comparison between ORF in English and BM among Primary 1 students.

**Specific objectives.**

1. To investigate the performance of ORF among Primary 1 students.

2. To determine the differences between ORF performance in English and BM among Primary 1 students based on gender.

3. To find out percentile that has higher number of students of ESL.

**Research questions.**

1. What is performance of ORF among Primary 1 students?

2. What is the performance between ORF in English and BM among Primary 1 students based on gender?

3. Which percentile has higher number of students with ESL?

**Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant difference in ORF among Primary 1 students

2. There is no significant differences between ORF in English and BM among Primary 1
students based on gender

Definition of Terms

Conceptual terms.

**Oral reading fluency.** Speech and Ritchey (2005) stated that ORF is defined as how fast and accurate the text is read orally.

**English.** Wierzbicka (2006) stated that English is the most broadly used language in planet.

**Bahasa Malaysia.** Based on Takari (2013), Bahasa Malaysia is lingua franca in Southeast Asia (Takari, 2013).

**Gender.** Gender is human being's biological sex that associated with belief, feel and attitude from a given culture (American Psychological Association, 2014).

**Poor, average and performer.** Respondents showed lowest latency in ERP is the poor performer whereas high latency is the good performer (Molfese et al., 2006).

Operational terms.

**Oral reading fluency.** In this study, ORF is defined as the ability of the students to read the given texts at given time fast and fluently.

**English.** English is the second language used in school after Bahasa Malaysia in government schools.

**Bahasa Malaysia.** Bahasa Malaysia is the main language used in government schools in Malaysia.

**Gender.** The gender in Primary 1 students in government schools; which are boys and girls.

**Poor, average and performer.** Students with ESL who scored less than -1 are the poor performers while good performers are score above 1. The average performers lie between these two groups.
Significance of Study

This study contributes to the extant literature. The practitioner’s understanding about the importance of student’s ORF also can be enhanced. Through this research, the selected schools can know the performance of ORF in English and BM among their Primary 1 students. This benefit the school as the result can provide knowledge about the performance of the student’s ORF. Hence, the schools can utilize the information provided by this study to take necessary measures if needed.

Scope of Study

This study involves all Primary 1 students from 11 randomly selected schools (government) in Kuching, Sarawak. These students were 7 years old on average.
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

A quantitative study of comparison between oral reading fluency in English and BM was conducted in Kuching, Sarawak. This study used collected data in a larger study of Dr. Julia Lee Ai Cheng entitled “Development of a Comprehensive Diagnostic Instrument for the Identification and Classification of Language and Literacy Skills in Primary School with Reading Disabilities”.

Participants

The current study focused on part of the larger study, which is oral reading fluency on languages, English and BM. The current study involved Primary 1 students from 11 randomly selected government schools. The age of the students were 7 years old on average. Total number of participants was 866 students. The demographic of participants involved boys (53.29%) and girls (46.71%). The students were from different racial groups in Sarawak such as Malays, Iban, Bidayuh and so on.

Sampling Procedures

Each schools were distributed a consent form to be filled by the parents. Only student with approval of parents were tested in the study. The schools were selected with random sampling method. The number of boys was \( n = 461 \) and girls \( n = 404 \). This number of students was same for both languages.

This study was tested individually in a room provided by the schools. Each enumerator handled one student in each test. Beforehand, the enumerators were undergoing the test in practice session.

Measures

The measure that had been focused on was oral reading fluency in English and BM
Oral reading fluency. Based on Speece and Ritchey (2005), oral reading fluency is how fast and accurate the text is read orally. This study was conducted to see the ability of the students to read the given texts at given time fast and fluently.

Beforehand, the enumerators undergo training before conducting a real test with students. The training was hold in a month before the real study was conducted.

This study has two reliability tests in order to make the result of the study is reliable.

Retest. After the students undergo the test, a random selection of students from the listed name was chosen. These students had to retest and undergo the same process. This step must be done within a week. This is done to ensure that the student's performance is similar after a week. If the results are similar, then the test is reliable.

Text Form A and B. The students were given text or a short story on English and BM taken form the larger study. Each language had 2 form; Form A and B. The two forms can lessen practice's effect. These texts were stored in a file. The enumerators also had a file with these texts for their references. Wrong words will be marked or crossed out thus only corrected words were counted.

Poor, average and good performer. The students were analysed by using standardized scores. Students scored between -1 and 1 were average students. Less than -1 was poor performer while above 1 was good performer.

Procedure

The ORF task was individually administered. Students were called one by one during the test. These students sat next to the enumerators and the instructions of the test were explained by the enumerators. Each enumerator was provided with a stopwatch. Figure 1 showed how the task conducted for ORF in English and BM.
Figure 1. The flow of ORF test carried out for both languages, English and BM.

Data Analysis

The data collected will be analysed using SPSS version 22. Research question 1 was analysed using descriptive analysis and frequencies analysis. Research question 2 was analysed using independent samples test while research question 3 was analysed using frequency analysis and Z-score analysis.
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The result of the analysis showed girls outperformed boys in ORF for both languages. The standard deviation of ORF in English for girls was higher than ORF in English for boys. The same result resulted in ORF in BM. ORF in BM had higher mean score compared to ORF in English. The standard deviation of total ORF in English was smaller than total ORF in BM.

The students were identified then classified into 3 groups of percentiles. For group below 25th percentiles, there were 231 students. There were 413 students placed between 25th and 75th percentiles. Next, 212 students only were placed in above 75th percentiles. From the results, average students, who score in ORF English, were found out their English were their second language.

The missing data was filled in with “999”. This data existed due to incomplete data gathered. Furthermore, the data were not filled by the parents but the teachers. They were unsure of the first language of these students.

Descriptive Analysis, Frequencies Analysis and Z-score analysis

To answer research question 1 and 2, descriptive analysis was done on each research questions. Research question 3 was answered by using frequencies analysis and Z-score analysis. The results of each test were obtained.

Research question 1: What is performance of ORF among Primary 1 students?

Based on Table 1, the total number of students involved was 865 for both English and BM. The range of the ORF in English was between 0 and 92.5 words in 30 seconds. For ORF in BM, the score ranged from 0 and 80.0 words. Mean score of ORF in English ($M = 16.72$) was smaller than mean score of ORF in BM ($M = 22.18$). This result showed that students scored 16.72 words in 30 seconds on average during the test for ORF in English. For ORF in BM,
students scored 22.18 words in 30 seconds on average. The standard deviation for English was 19.35 while BM was 20.08.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score of ORF</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahasa Malaysia</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>22.18</td>
<td>20.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *N* = 865. ORF = oral reading fluency. Min = minimum score. Max = maximum score. M = mean. SD = standard deviation

Research question 2: What is the performance between ORF in English and BM among Primary 1 students based on gender? Table 2 showed the results of Descriptive Analysis on ORF in both languages and gender. This test evaluated to compare the performance of ORF between boys and girls in English and BM. The number of boys was 461 students whereas there were 404 girls involved in the test.

There is a significant difference in the ORF performance in English for boys (*M* = 13.38, *SD* = 17.26) and girls (*M* = 20.53, *SD* = 20.86). This result showed girls performed better in ORF of English than boys. On average, girls scored 20.53 words in 30 seconds yet boys scored 13.38 words in 30 seconds. The boys were behind about 8 words than girls in ORF.

Based on the result, there is significant difference in performance of ORF in BM for boys (*M* = 18.48, *SD* = 18.42) and girls (*M* = 26.40, *SD* = 21.48). The girls scored 26.40 words in 30 seconds compared to boys who only scored 18.48 words in 30 seconds on average. This showed that the girls also outperformed boys in ORF in BM. The girls read approximately 7 words faster than boys in ORF BM.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score of ORF</th>
<th>Boys&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th></th>
<th>Girls&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Note. \(^a n = 461. \) \(^b n = 404. \) ORF = oral reading fluency. \(M = \) mean score. \(SD = \) standard deviation.

Research question 3: How many students with ESL are poor, average and above average performer in English ORF? Frequencies analyses were done on the group of students. Students were ranged in 25\(^{th}\) percentiles, 50\(^{th}\) percentiles, 75\(^{th}\) percentiles. Then, descriptive analysis was done on each percentile to find out the number of students in it. Z-score analysis was done to find out the poor, average and good performers.

Range of percentiles. Table 3 showed the range of percentiles of ORF in English only. The cut point of 25\(^{th}\) percentiles was 0.5 words only in 30 seconds. The cut point of 50\(^{th}\) percentiles was 9.0 words in 30 seconds. For 75\(^{th}\) percentiles, the cut point was 29.0 words in 30 seconds.

Then, the number of students in each percentile was analysed. This resulted in Table 4. There were 231 students below the 25\(^{th}\) percentile. Out of 865 students, 413 of them were in between 25\(^{th}\) and 75\(^{th}\) percentiles. The rest was above 75\(^{th}\) percentiles \((n = 221)\).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>Total Scores of ORF English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ORF = oral reading fluency.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 25 and 75</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 75</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poor, average and good performers with ESL. Students with good and average performers then identified their ESL background. This resulted in Table 5.