FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS
THE USAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN
TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE SUBJECTS

NUR FADZILAN BIN TOMI

KOTA SAMARAHAN
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Alamat Tetap:

NO. 315 JALAN ARANG
93250 KUCHING
SARAWAK

Tarikh: 19 NOVEMBER 2013

(TANDATANGAN PENULIS)

(TANDATANGAN PENYELIA)

Tarikh: NOVEMBER 19, 2003
FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE SUBJECTS

by

Nur Fadzilan bin Tomi

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment the requirements for a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Cognitive Science Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
The project entitled “Factors Affecting Teachers’ Perception Towards the Usage of English Language in Teaching Mathematics and Science Subjects” was prepared by Nur Fadzilain Bin Tomi and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Cognitive Science.

Received for examination by:

(Miss Julia Lee Ai Cheng)

Date: November 19, 2008
Acknowledgement

Alhamdullilah, thank to the Allah S.W.T to give me a chance and strength to successfully complete my final year project. Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor, Miss Julia Lee Ai Cheng for providing the initial material and guidance to me. I will never forget your motivation support and believed on me during the process to complete my final year project. I owe her favors by giving me an opportunity to doing my thesis under her supervision. Thanks for her kindness and tolerance.

I like to thanks all schools management staff and teachers that involved in my study. Without your generosity I will never complete my final year project. A special note of thanks to my beloved parent that provided me priceless material and moral support during the process to complete my thesis. Thank you for your belief in me.

To all my friends, especially Lamin, Zulizwan, Khairul, John and Rohaya thank you for all of your valuable time, ideas and guide in helping me to finish my final year project. Thank for your all priceless experience and resources. May God repay all of you for your kindness.
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Abstract

The study examines the factors that affect teachers' perception towards the usage of English language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects. The independent variables examined were competence, confidence, motivation, student ability and teaching methods. While the dependent variable examined was usage of the English language. 87 respondents involved in this study randomly selected from four secondary school in Kuching district. Instrument used for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire used is reliable (α = 0.8479). The descriptive analysis involved the use of frequency and inferential statistic used is Pearson Correlation, T-test and ANOVA. Findings show competence is the most affecting factors that influence teachers' perception towards the usage of English language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects.
Abstrak

Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Persepsi Guru Terhadap Penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam Pengajaran Subjek Matematik dan Sains.

Kajian ini menilai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi guru terhadap penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam pengajaran subjek Matematik dan Sains. Pembolehubah tak bersandar yang dinilai adalah kemahiran, keyakinan, motivasi, keupayaan pelajar dan kaedah pengajaran. Seramai 87 orang respondent terlibat dalam kajian ini dan merupakan golongan guru yang mengajar di sekolah yang dipilih secara rawak oleh penyelidik. Instrument yang digunakan bagi menjayakan kajian ini ialah borang soal selidik. Set borang soal selidik telah dikenalpasti mempunyai tahap kebolehgunaan yang tinggi iaitu pada nilai 0.8179. Analisa untuk data eksperimen merangumi penggunaan frekuensi, korelasi Pearson, Ujian-T dan ANOVA. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kemahiran merupakan faktor yang paling mempengaruhi persepsi guru terhadap penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam pengajaran subjek Matematik dan Sains.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction.

The introduction of the English Language as a medium in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects has caused changes in our educational environment. In early 2003, all schools in Malaysia began implementing the teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects in the English Language.

The changes in our education policy are to solve the problems among our students in public education especially in public universities. Students who are incompetent in the English Language are likely to be unsuccessful in their job applications. Today, our students are more exposed to “exam oriented” than “knowledge oriented” learning environments.

Mathematics and Sciences are the fields that are developing very fast. All the latest information established in newspapers, journals, books and Internet are usually written in the English Language and is difficult to translate it into our language. The simplest way is to read the information in the language it has been written. Individuals who are fluent in the English Language can manipulate the information and this will be advantageous in nation building.

Bilingual education is not a new issue in our educational history. The first attempt is the Cheeseman Programme from 1945 to 1949 and followed by the Barners Committee Report in 1951. The committee proposed bilingual model for national unity. As a result, English and Malay Languages were used as Malaysia medium of instruction.

In 1982, the New Primary School Curriculum was formulated and implemented in Primary one. The Malay Language was used as the primary language and the English Language became a second language.

The government has taken action to decrease this problem by introducing a new policy in the medium of learning. The usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects provides an opportunity to the students to improve their language competency. Chiam Heng Keng, cited in Musa, 2003). An effective means (to increase student proficiency in English) is for student to use English as a learning tool.

To begin with, all Primary One, Form One and Lower Six students in all schools will use the English Language in learning Mathematics and Science subjects. By 2009, all students in Malaysia will be using the English Language in these two subjects (Musa, 2002).

All schools are supplied with hardware and software such as notebook, LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) Projector, white screen and the sound systems and the Uninterrupted Power Supply unit. Courseware for teaching Mathematics and Science subjects in the English language are developed by the local companies that combine local and international expertise.
1.1 Problem Statement

The introduction of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects will change the way of teaching among the teachers. The English Language will replace Malay Language as a medium of teaching and learning.

The teacher preparation in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects in the English Language can be one of the problems. The success of this implementation will depend on the teacher's attitudes and perceptions.

The introduction of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects will cause some implication to the students. The second language acquisition will have its own problem. One of the problem is (Cummins, cited in Rajeretnam & Nalliah, 1999) students may become quite proficient in the grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures of the English language, but may lack of the necessary cognitive academic language proficiency to learn subject matter that is presented to them in science classrooms.

1.2 Research Objectives

In general, the aims of this study are to determine the success of implementation of English Language in the teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and the factors that influence teachers' perception.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Describe socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.
2. Determine the perception of teachers towards the usage of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science Subjects.
3. Determine differences between teachers of different socio-demographic characteristics. (gender, age, educational level, “Ikhtisas” qualification, length of services, and subjects taught)
4. Determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and teacher's competence.
5. Determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and teacher's confidence.
6. Determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and teacher's motivation.
7. Determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their student ability.
8. Determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their teaching methods.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of study in figure 1 shows the variables that are under study. The independent variables are shown in the box on the left. The independent variables are the competence, confidence, motivation, student ability and teaching methods. The independent variables are assumed not to be influenced by any other variables.

On the contrary, the independent variables have an influence over the dependent variables. The dependent variable is the teachers’ perception towards the usages of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects. The independent variables are assumed to have the ability to affect the dependent variable, be it negative or positive. Thus, the researcher wishes to determine these relationships.

Demographic characteristics of teachers will also be studied in relation to teachers’ perception of teaching Mathematics and Science subjects in the English Language. This research also determines the differences in perception (if any) that exist among teachers of
different gender, age, educational level, "ikhtisas" qualification, length of services, and subject taught.

1.4 Hypotheses

This research poses six null hypotheses to be tested. They are:

- Ho1: There is no relationship between teachers' perception of the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their competence.
- Ho2: There is no relationship between teachers' perception of the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their confidence.
- Ho3: There is no relationship between teachers' perception of the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their motivation.
- Ho4: There is no relationship between teachers' perception of the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their student's ability.
- Ho5: There is no relationship between teachers' perception of the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and their teaching methods.
- Ho6: There is no difference between teachers of various demographic characteristic (gender, age, educational level, "ikhtisas" qualification, length of services and subject taught) in terms of their perception towards the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects.

1.5 Significance of the study

The aim of this research is to uncover factors that contribute to teachers' perception about the usage of English Language in teaching Mathematics and science subjects. The findings of this study are based on the views of the teachers themselves.

Another goal of studying teachers' perception about the usage of English Language in teaching both of the subjects is to better understand the complexities of these variables and their impact on perception towards the issue. Such investigation may enable education officers to understand how teachers form attitudes that affect their perception towards the usage of the English Language and their involvement in it.

It is hoped that through this research and findings, the reality and factors that influence teacher perception about the usage of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects should then be able to reveal what the programme lack.
1.6 Technical term definition

1.6.1 Perception

Conceptual definition

Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborne (1991) defined perception as "the process through which people select, receive, organize and interpret information from their environment." Gibson cited in Gleitman, 1991) believed that perception involved the process of "picking up" information from the environment and does not require any process of construction or elaboration.

Wilkinson (1993) defined perception as the process of receiving and interpreting sensory messages in order to give meaning to the environment. (Gregory cited in Gleitman, 1991) a constructive theorist believed that the process of seeing is an active one in which our view of the world is constructed both from information in the environment and from previously stored knowledge.

Operational definition

The perception in this study refers to teachers’ interpretation and impression towards the usage of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects. The perception is constructed based on the teachers’ experience and background knowledge. The perception of the teacher is classified as either positive or negative, which will determined their respond and support towards the introduction of the English Language in teaching Mathematics and science subject.

1.6.2 Bilingual education (bilingualism)

Conceptual definition

(Fishman & Joshua cited in Solomon, 1988) refers bilingual education as implies some use of two (or more) language of instruction in connection with teaching other than language per se...

(Hornby, cited in Rajeremam & Nallah, 1999) defined bilingualism is as individual characteristic to varying degrees from minimum ability to complete in more in one language.

Operational definition

The bilingual education in this study refers to the style of education that has been implemented in our education. The Bilingual Education plays a role in delivering information to the student. The usage of the Malay Language and the English Language will provided the alternative medium in learning.
1.6.3 "Ikhtisas" qualification.

**Conceptual definition**

According to Kamus Dewan (1996), "Ikhtisas" qualification refers to individual professionalism and it relates to job and profession that need intelligent and specific requirements.

**Operational definition**

In educational systems, "Ikhtisas" qualification enhances the professionalism of the teachers. The teachers themselves will be graded by their "Ikhtisas" qualification. They need to attend some seminars and courses during their service to make sure they gain the knowledge and fulfill the requirements that are needed in their service.

1.7 Limitation of the study

This study was conducted in selected schools around Kuching district. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to reflect all teachers in Malaysia. Also, the number of respondents was small and was not able to represent the thousands of teachers in Malaysia.

The researcher sent out 100 questionnaires to be distributed to the schools, which were collected three days later. However, not all questionnaires were returned. Research sample used in this study is made up of those teachers who returned their questionnaire, which were collected on two different occasions.

Another method of distributing the questionnaire, which will ensure a maximum number of questionnaires returned, is to gather would-be participants in the same schools at one time. The researcher distributed the questionnaires himself to entertain any inquiries which may arise when questionnaires were being filled. Furthermore, this method can ensure that all questionnaires are filled and returned on that same day. Unfortunately, the school management refused to make the arrangement needed since it was difficult for them to gather all respondents in one place because the teachers were busy conducting examinations. Some of them were involved in class preparation for important exams at the end of the year.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter covers related topics and issues of past literatures written by authors of related fields. Firstly, the evolution of the English Language teaching in Malaysia is presented. Then this is followed by past studies done in perception among the teachers and lastly the variables that researcher wishes to study their relationships with teachers' perception towards usage of English language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects.

2.1 Bilingualism in Malaysia

Bilingualism as a phenomenon is widespread in Malaysia and stands out as a feature, which characterizes the lives of most Malaysians. The use of the two languages Bahasa Malaysia and English should be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Being bilingual in both languages is seen to increase earning power and provide individuals with the flexibility to take advantages of job opportunities while allowing one to acquire more marketable skills to facilitate access to today’s competitive job market. The bilingual situation should be one of co-existence, regarded as an asset rather than a liability (Ain Nadzimah Abdullah and Rosli Talif, 2002).

There is a necessity in Malaysia to master both of these languages. Using these two languages should not present itself as a competition where the development of one language jeopardizes the other. Positive consequences for one does not imply negative consequences for the other as no country will downplay its own language (Asia week, June 16, 1995). Promoting Bahasa Malaysia and English Language (bilingualism) does not advocate the development and maintenance of English at the expense Bahasa Malaysia.

2.2 Background of English Language teaching

English Language teaching was first introduced in Malaysia in early part of the nineteenth century by the British colonial government through the setting up of the English medium schools. For first thirteen years after the Federation of Malaya gained independence from Britain (1957-1970) English was retained as a medium of instruction in the education system despite the fact that the Malay Language was already the national language (Federal Constitution, cited in Solomon, 1988).

It was only in 1970 with the implementation of the National Education Policy that English as a medium of instruction was gradually phased out. In its place, the national language
(Bahasa Malaysia) was made the sole medium of instruction. However, the nationalization of the school system did not completely obliterate English language teaching in Malaysia. On the other hand, it was retained within the national school system as an “essential foreign/second language” (Post-1970 Primary English Syllabus, cited in Solomon, 1988).

Between 1970 and 1990, English language teaching in Malaysia underwent major changes. Within a period of twenty years, five syllabuses subscribing to two different English Language teaching approaches has been implemented in two phases. Phase I began in 1970 when common content of the syllabus was introduced in the school systems with the implementation of the National Education Policy.

By 1980, the process of conversion from English to Malay medium was completed. With this, Bahasa Malaysia became the dominant language in the education process. While the English language was abandoned. Phase II began in 1983 when the whole school curriculum was revamped with the introduction of the Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) and the Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah (KBSM).

2.3 English Language teaching today

The English Language plays a stronger role in the 1990s and in the millennium era especially in the face of recent developments. One of the factors that is likely to contribute to increased role is the fact that the nation professes to want to achieve a fully developed nation status by the year 2020 in the midst of a world that is highly competitive and globalized.

Vision 2020, a programme for development, provided a series of ideas about directions the nation should follow over a thirty-year period. Included in this vision, the importance of education, the place of Bahasa Malaysia in the education system, and the recognition that English Language is important for economic development and the special provision that has been made for it. In 1992, a conference organized by Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) entitled “The Role of English as a second Language” as a resource for national development showed that the government is supportive of the idea. In the keynote address, the General Director of Education mentioned that Malaysians need a very high competence in the English Language and that proficiency in the language is important if rapid development and career opportunities were to be achieved.

Herein lies a major challenge for the ministry of education “… to enable the Malaysian society to have a command of knowledge, skills and values, necessary in a world that is highly competitive and globalize, arising from the impact of rapid development in science, technology and information…” (Education Act, cited in Solomon, 1988).

In 2003, the government introduced a new education policy to strengthen the role of the English Language. Mathematics and Science subjects will taught in the English language starting on 2002/2003-school session. This policy is to support on a long-term project, Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). To be able to participate in the MSC, it would be a necessity for qualified Malaysians to be able to keep abreast with the latest development in the field of information technology (Rajeretnam & Nalliah, M.,1999).

According to Musa (2003) implementation of English language in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects provide the opportunity to students to improve their skills in English.
2.4 Problems in implementation of English Language usage

The implementation of the English Language usage has its own problems. The learner's ability in speaking the English Language in general is far from satisfactory. This is due to, firstly, the insufficient exposure to the language. Their contact with the language, more often than not, is during the English class with in the teaching-learning time between 200 to 300 minutes per week. Such amount of time is barely sufficient for the achievement of proficiency in the language. Outside the classroom, especially at home, exposure to the English Language among learners is at its minimum or none at all. Very few use the English Language when interacting with family members and friends (Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Aris, 1994) even in classrooms, normally, the teachers with whom the learners can practice their English.

Secondly, the learner's inability is due to the lack of practice in using the language for communication for the following reasons:

1. There exist no opportunity for them to use the language to communicate, such as the case in rural areas.
2. There might be an opportunity to use the language to communicate but they are shy to express themselves in English due to lack of confidence and the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at. As confirmed by (Hamayan and Tucker, cited in Jamali Ismail, 1990), shyness affects performance in the target language; the less shy the learners are, the better they will perform.
3. Even if the learners are not shy and really want to try to speak English, they might be reticulated or regarded as showing off by those around them. The learners are really in a non-supportive English language learning environment.

2.5 Perception

Perception is the process, through which people select, receive, organize and interpret information from their environment (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborne 1991). Through perception, people process information inputs into decisions and actions.

According to (Kretch and Cruthfield, cited in Tairah, 2001) perception are the processes where individual perceive and interpret the information. Perception is the process of human subjective evaluation towards others according to their ability of interpretation. Perception usually influences the behavior and attitude of the person towards others or things or situations in their environments.

Teachers tend to rely on stable factor such as skills and abilities when they formulate the causes of student achievement (Peterson & Roger, cited in Jegede & Taplin, 2000). Thus, teachers' perceptions of student's achievements are generally supported by objective evidence. Good & Brophy (1997) state that "teachers' perception of students are largely accurate and based on the best available information."

The teachers' perception concerning achievement is in a largely based on information gained from tests, assignments, and interactions with student. (Good & Brophy, 1997)
2.6 Competence

Mansfield and Mitchell (1996) refer to competence as the underlying characteristic of person which results in effective or superior performance. This refers to specific behavior and may be expressed as a motive, habit, skill, aspect of self-image, social role or body of knowledge which is applied.

Competences become part of the formal certification of an individual training. Competence is assessed during training, and its formal documentation provides evidence that the individual is qualified to a particular level (Ellington and Earl, 1999).

Adults are experienced self-direct learner, especially when solving own problems (Caffarella, 1993). In today's worlds, of work increasingly requires people who are capable in self-directing in their jobs.

Competence is the most powerful of all the motivation condition for adults. Competence acts as reality check, tell about what is achievable by an individual. Individuals have a deep desire to be competent and often seek learning as a means to his ends. Human need for competence is not to be acquired but one that already exists and can be strengthened or weakened through learning experience (Wlodkowski, 1999).

Byram (1997) suggests that there are three main scenarios where competence may be required: in the classroom, in the pedagogically-oriented experience outside the classroom, and in the independent experience. He warns about the danger of an over-simplification of competence to what can be 'objectively' tested, as it may result in the trivialization and 'the reduction of subtle understanding to generalizations and stereotypes' which have negative effect on the process of teaching and learning.

There are some factors that contribute to the lack of self competence. The three most common factors are:

1. The individual have not been socialized to see themselves to be in control of their own learning.
2. The experience in school or in a particular domain of learning has been generally negative or unsuccessful.
3. They do not believe they have a free choice as to whether or not to engage in the learning or training process.

Competency theory (White, 1959) assumes people naturally strive for effective interactions with their world. We are genetically programmed to explore, perceive, think about, perceive, think about, manipulate, and change our environment.

In formal learning situation, adults feels competent when they know they have attained a special degree of knowledge or a level of performance that is acceptable by personal standards, social standard, or both.

The relationship between competence and self-confidence is mutually enhancing. Competence allows a person to become more confident, which in turn provides emotional support for an effort to learn new skills and knowledge. Competence achievement of his new learning future buttresses confidence, which again supports and motivates more extensive learning.
2.7 Motivation

Nikolic & Cabaj (2000) refers to motivation as a spectrum of complex, varied and individualized factors. It is spurred by a need and desire to integrate and identify with a community and the latter arising from a desire to acquire skill or knowledge to use as a tool for achieving other goals.

Motivation is understood as a natural human process for direct energy to accomplish a goal. An individual uses processes such as attention, concentration, imagination and passion, to name only a few, to pursue goals such as learning. Motivation is important not only because it apparently improves learning but also because it mediates learning and is a consequence of learning as well (Wlodokowski, 1999).

Pintrich (1991) found that people motivated to learn are more likely to do things they believe will help them learn. They reflect on how well they understand what they are learning and are more likely to ask for help when they are unclear.

An individual's motivation to learn is determined by a range of factors. According to Fallows and Alinet (1999) there are seven factors that contribute and influence an individual to be motivated to learn:

1. the learner’s desire to please the teachers;
2. the perceived needs for the materials presented;
3. each learner’s degree of interest in the subject matter;
4. the personal philosophical values and beliefs of the learner;
5. the learner’s attitudes towards the material being delivered;
6. the academic and career aspiration of the learner;
7. Incentives and rewards which are expected to accrue from the learning.

2.8 Student ability

When the children are learning new ideas or concepts, teachers are looking for them to become familiar with the concept, demonstrated that they have added the concepts to their repertoire by applying that concept in a variety of other areas (Eyre, 1997).

Most of the teachers are aware of the limitations of their student learning ability. Teacher’s confidence play a major rule to measure the student ability because they are the closest person to the students in education environments (Eyre, 1997).

(Chitravelu, Sithampram & Teh Sue Choon, cited in Ellington & Earl, 1999) suggested that learning ability can be divided into three categories. Slow learners are those with lower intelligence score; they need more time to grasp a concept or to complete a task but they are not retarded. They need individual attention and assistance in order to perform satisfactorily.

Majority of the students in schools are formed by average learners. They have no extraordinary talents or skills. They are the regular mainstream learners. There are great individual differences in their needs, interest and experiences.

Fast learner or high flyers are intelligent and capable. They obtain high scores in an aptitude and intelligence. They are usually very motivated, creative and participate actively in learning sessions. Generally, classroom activities are designed for the 'average' as they make up the majority of the class.

Awareness of the student background enables teachers to prepare lessons that contains context that will broaden students' intellectual, creative and experiential horizons and within their intellectual ability.