



**MARA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (UiTM)
SARAWAK**

**PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING ENGLISH
LANGUAGE AND LEARNING STRATEGIES
EMPLOYED IN COPING
WITH THE HESITANCY: A CASE
STUDY OF FIRST SEMESTER
STUDENTS AT MARA
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (UiTM)
SARAWAK**

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ABSTRACT

It has been acknowledged that English is the second most important language learned in schools in Malaysia. In academics, oral communication skills not only provide opportunities for students to practise and develop important communicative skills; these skills are also widely conversed in the attempt of improving themselves in the language. In higher education, these second language learners still face problems in the language mastery. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the problems pertaining learning English language and the learning strategies used as resolutions to reach the target goal by 134 first semester students at MARA University of Technology (UiTM) Sarawak. The study employed a survey design which involved administering questionnaires of five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 – 5, by adopting Rebecca Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Semi-constructed interview was also conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the problems and the suitable learning strategies used by the students. The study revealed that the major problems faced by these students are; the lack of vocabulary, the low understanding of grammatical structure, confusion in using the correct usage of words, wrong pronunciation, the lack of confidence and less exposure to the English language. It was reported that cognitive strategies were the most frequently used. These strategies include manipulation or transformation of the language through reasoning, analysis, note taking, functional practice in naturalistic setting, as well as formal practice with structures and sounds.

Keywords: English Language Problems and Learning Strategies

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

In Malaysia, English language has been introduced and used since kindergarten. Therefore, Malaysian students are exposed to the language at an early age, i.e. as young as four (4) or five (5) years old. They then continue learning it until Form Five of the secondary level and by then, students would be seventeen (17) years old. The Malaysian government has, since a long time, acknowledged that English is the second most important language learned in schools in Malaysia after Malay language (Mohd Faisal Hanapiah, 2002). It is taught both in Malaysian primary and secondary schools amounting to eleven (11) years of tutored exposure to the language by the time they complete form five. With this tutored exposure to English, it is believed that the learners should have mastered the language fairly well (Suliana Wan Chik, 2009). As English is a way of communication in daily activities, much needed in the private sector and certain job situations, the objective of the English language curriculum in schools is to allow learners to acquire proficiency in the language so as to provide them with appropriate communication skills and ample knowledge of the language that will enable them to expand their general knowledge, as well as for work-related and leisure based purposes after they finish their studies (English Language Syllabus, Ministry of Education, 1998). However, after these long years of continuous learning of the language, students have not been able to speak English fluently.

English language may not necessarily be the second language for Malaysian students. It can be the first, second, or even a foreign language depending on among other things, the locality they live in. For most students in the rural areas, English is