

STUDENTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND ITS RELATED REASONS AMONG DIPLOMA STUDENTS IN TATI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE (TATIUC)

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Abstract

90 Diploma students in TATI University College (TATIUC) participated in the study that investigated their language background and its related reasons. Data were collected using questionnaires and measured in percentage scores. The resulting reasons were found to collaborate with cognitive, affective and psychological aspects.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Language Background, Related Reasons.

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Introduction

Our country needs more students who competent with two or more language in order to compete with others internationally. But first, the linguistic background must have been identified by the educator in order to comply with methods and strategy of teaching and learning process. In Malaysia, it is common for an English Language lecture in private college to be filled with more than 50 students. It is crucial for lecturers to know the different language background of the students in teaching and learning process as they cannot just simply assume that each student belong to a same linguistics background. In a same lecture, there are students who can speak more than one language. Nowadays, being bilingual or multilingual is a norm for everyone around the world, rather than being monolingual (Milroy and Muysken, 1995). Siguan and Mackey (1987), Lambert *et al.*, (1961) and Romaine (1995) claimed that a person should be called as a bilingual when he is capable to talk and write other language and at the same time has an equal ability in native language. Meanwhile, as a claimed by Bloomfield (1935), he suggested that bilingualism as "... control in a native-like manner of two languages". In social settings, we usually use more than one language, dialect or style of conversation according to the context that we are in; code. According to Wardhaugh (2011), a code is a system used for communication between two or more parties. It is rare to find a speaker that only use only one code for every occasion that he is in. In a multilingual country like Malaysia, the ability to code-switch and code-mix in conversations is accepted now. The students in TATIUC tend to use their native language during lecture to communicate with their lecturers. Hence, the lecturers need to use both languages in order to promote English language. People tend to switch between codes or even mix codes in an utterance. This concept would be known as code-switching and code-mixing (Auer, 2002). Malaysian citizen consists of Malays, Chinese and Indians as the majority races. The Malay language is the official language as well as the native language of the Malaysian people. However, the English language has now being promoted and accepted as the language of

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communication of the people between races (Pavlenko, 2004) because of the globalisation. The students also tried to speak in English Language even though their English is ungrammatical correct with international students who join their lectures. Due to these reasons, the study aims to investigated students' language background and its related reasons in order for TATIUC English Language lecturers to improve the students' performance and to enhance skills in teaching and learning process.

Methodology

Of the 100 set of questionnaires, only 90 respondents completed and returned the questionnaires. This study is conducted by using questionnaires to the diploma students in TATIUC. The questionnaires consist 3 parts; Part A, Part B and Part C. Part A entailed the demographic information of the respondents, Part B had twenty items inquiring students' language background in three aspect; the language used when speaks to people, the language used by others when speak to the respondent, and the language used when doing daily activities and Part C consisted of three open-ended questions requiring respondents to give a reason why they choose the language. Respondents give a variety of responses in Part C where they need to state the reasons why they preferred the respective linguistic group. All the identified categories were grouped into three clusters namely: *cognitive*, *affective* and *psycho-social*. Data were categorized according to the mutual key words appeared in the written responses. The process of identifying the key words was conducted repeatedly on all written responses until all categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. All the questionnaires were returned of which 33 were male and 57 female students. The data were collected and measured in percentage scores.

Result and Discussion

1.1. What is the distribution linguistics group of diploma students in TATIUC?

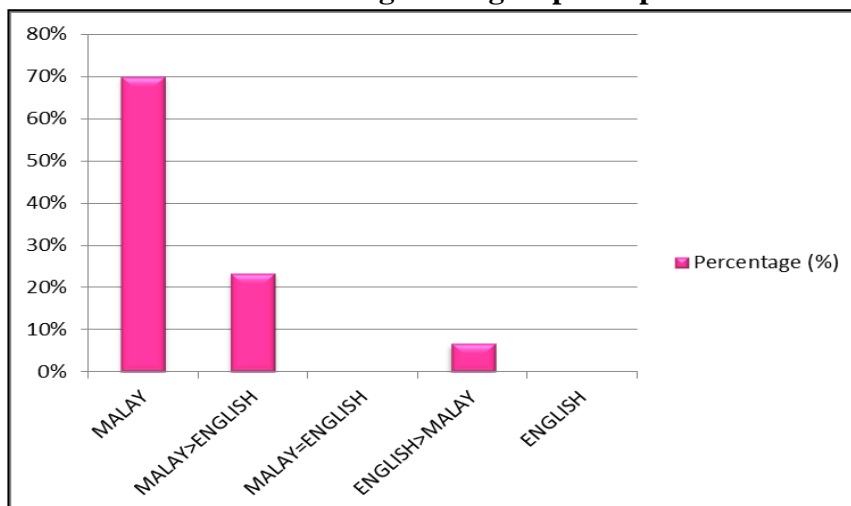


Diagram 1: Distribution Linguistics Group of Diploma Students in TATIUC

Out of 30 respondents, 70.00% are belonging to Malay only group. Meanwhile, 23.33% of the respondents are in Malay>English group followed by 6.67% of them are in English>Malay group. There is no respondents belong to Malay=English and English only group. The results obtained indicates that majority of the respondents use only Malay Language when they talk to others, when others talk to them and when they do their daily activities.

1.2. What is the distribution of linguistics group based on gender of the diploma students in TATIUC?

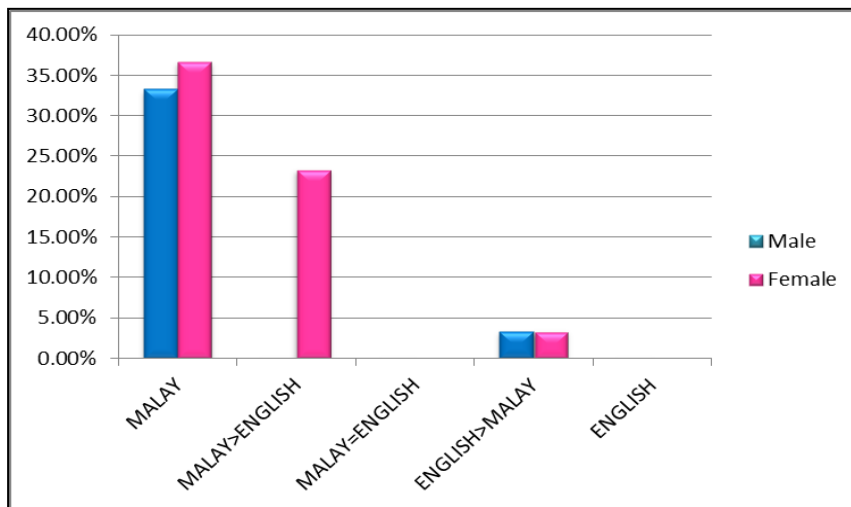


Diagram 2: Distribution Linguistics Group Based on Gender of the Diploma Students in TATIUC

Diagram 2 reveals that in Malay only group, the female respondents (36.67%) get the higher percentage than male respondents (33.33%). Meanwhile, only female respondents (23.33%) are categorized in Malay>English group. Then, both gender; female and male respondents have a same percentage which is 3.33% distribution in English>Malay group. The results indicate that majority of the female respondents use only Malay Language when they talk to others, when others talk to them and when they do their daily activities.

1.3. What were the reasons for diploma students in TATIUC belong to the preferred linguistics group?

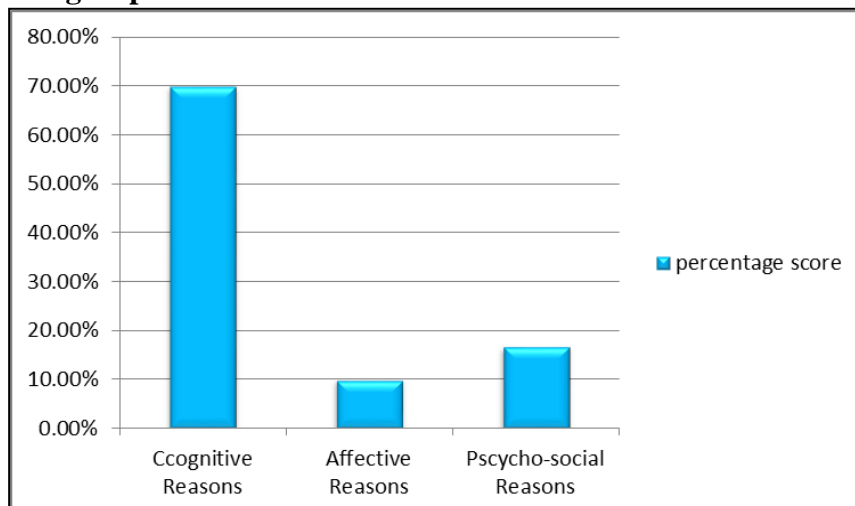


Diagram 3 Average Distribution of Reasons for Diploma Students in TATIUC preferred the respective linguistics group

Diagram 3 represents the reasons for diploma students in TATIUC preferred the respective linguistics group. The average percentage scores calculated showed that the respondents ranked Cognitive Reasons the highest (73.34%), followed by Pscyo-social Reasons (16.66%) and Affective Reasons (10.00%).

Cognitive accommodates reasons that associate with language competency. The key words such as “faham” (understand), “*fasih*” (fluent), “mudah” (easy), etc. were extracted from the verbatim. For example, *Saya fasih dalam bahasa Melayu* (I am *fluent* in Malay language) and *Mudah untuk bercakap* (Easy to speak). Affective reasons focuses on participants’ feelings and emotion, desirability, and intrinsic motivation towards the preferred language. It includes reasons that carried words such as “suka” (enjoy), “minat” or “gemar” (like, love or interested), “ingin” (desire, want), etc. For example, *Saya suka belajar dalam bahasa inggeris* (I enjoy learn in English). The psycho-social cluster focuses on the utilitarian purpose of the language which emphasizes on personal gains and benefits as well as the social importance of the language. For example, *Saya ingin menyambung pelajaran saya di universiti luar negara.* (I want to further my study at oversea university) dan *Saya ingin mrnjadi seorang pembantu jurutera/ juruteknik yang fasih dan mahir menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris* (I want to be an engineer assistant/ technician who can use English Language fluently).

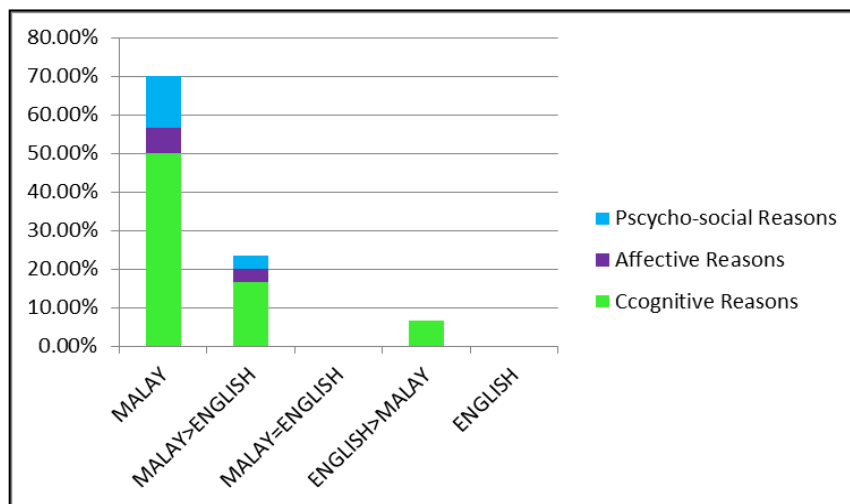


Diagram 4 Distribution of reasons for Diploma Students in TATIUC Center based on respective linguistics group

Diagram 3 represents the distribution of reasons for diploma students in TATIUC based on respective linguistics group. In Malay only group, 50.00% of the respondent said that the Cognitive Reasons is the reason why they preferred the Malay only group. Meanwhile, 13.33% of them said that the Psycho-social Reasons and 6.67% of them said that Affective

Reason is the reason why they preferred the Malay only group. In Malay>English group, 16.67 of the respondents claimed that Cognitive Reasons is the reason why they preferred the Malay only group followed by 3.33% each for Psycho-social and Affective Reasons are the reason why they preferred the Malay>English group. Meanwhile, only Cognitive Reasons contributes to the English>Malay group (6.67%).

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' language background and its related reasons with regards to gender and the linguistic group among the diploma students in TATIUC. Primary data were collected by randomly distributing questionnaires to 90 students. The following conclusions can be drawn from the study. To begin with, the results of this study indicate that there are significant differences based on gender between female and male students' linguistics group. Majority of the female students were in Malay only and Malay>English group and majority of the male students were in Malay only group. The study also reveals that the majority of the students are in Malay only group which indicate monolingual. The study also shows that on the related reasons for the language choice, it was found that most pupils preferred a language that brings cognitive benefits. It is recommended to English Language lecturer to organise a programme that can help to promote English Language and enhance lots of fun activities in their teaching and learning process because the students claimed they are weak in cognitive reasons. However, these findings are only true for diploma students in TATIUC and cannot be generalized to other university students. Since this study had only focused on a small portion of respondent, it is recommended that further studies be carried out on a larger group of students to see whether there are any similarities in the findings.

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