



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND MANAGEMENT
OF LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION**

ANNISA NOR JETTEY

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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By

ANNISA NOR JETTEY

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirement
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2006



DEDICATION

For my Pap, Mohd Nor Jettey
and my late Mum, Ruby Abdullah

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia
in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: Arshad Abdul Samad, PhD

Faculty : Educational Studies

This study reports on how English language (EL) teachers perceive and manage oral communication apprehension (CA) among learners in the language classrooms. The main purpose of this qualitative study was to understand language teachers' perception and how they think they are addressing the phenomenon. This study reports on how teachers operate in the language classrooms in relation to learners' fear of oral communication and how they manage it. Additionally, the issues and problems that have emerged in relation to oral language development in general will be presented and discussed.

A qualitative methodology was employed to explore the respondents at their natural setting. The data generated through interviews, classroom observations and document reviews were able to capture the teachers' thoughts, teaching and management of learners in relation to the phenomenon in five Malaysian secondary schools.

A total of twelve respondents were involved in this study. They comprised eight English language teachers, one principal and three heads of the English language department. The teachers are the primary respondents. These teachers shared their thoughts, experiences and perceptions on the phenomenon. The data from the primary respondents were triangulated with the secondary respondents, the principal and the heads of the language department.

The data were analyzed manually by coding and categorizing them based on common patterns that emerged. The study found that teachers are perceptible of learners' manifestations, which indicated that the learners are oral communication apprehensive. The findings confirmed some of the manifestations mentioned in earlier literature and at the same time present new information. It is interesting to note that Malaysian EL teachers are also sensitive to learners' emotive disposition at oral communication. However, their perceptibility of learners' fear of oral communication was not reflected in their pedagogical practices due to 'constraints'.

The findings too revealed EL teachers' view of oral CA learners. This is another new finding as no previous study investigated teachers' views concerning the issues in the language classrooms. Findings illustrated that teachers' views were influenced by their perception of oral language development. This study confirmed earlier findings on the implementation of the language curriculum, that teachers do not put emphasis on oral language development. It also found that oral language was carried out as a 'by-product' towards achieving other language skills namely reading and the writing skills. Since oral language is not given emphasis in the language class, consequently, teachers do not give attention to oral CA and oral CA learners are marginalized.

The study managed to uncover the rationale behind teacher' actions in the classrooms. The teachers' working practical knowledge emerged from the demands teachers felt that were imposed on them. At the top of the demands list was that teachers have to produce results in examinations. Further investigation revealed that oral language does not play a part in the determination of grades, thus the development of the speaking skill was not given equal emphasis in the language classrooms and thus further marginalizing oral CA learners.

This study has implication on theory and practice of managing oral CA learners. It is recommended that a review of teaching and assessment is conducted.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERSEPSI DAN PENGURUSAN GURU BAHASA INGGERIS
TERHADAP KERISAUAN KOMUNIKASI LISAN**

Oleh

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Kajian ini bertujuan melaporkan persepsi dan pengurusan guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris terhadap kerisauan komunikasi lisan di kalangan pelajar. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk memahami persepsi dan pengurusan guru terhadap fenomena ini dan bagaimana mereka menguruskan fenomena ini dalam bilik darjah. Kajian ini menyahut soalan 'Bagaimana guru berfungsi dalam bilik darjah berkaitan kerisauan komunikasi lisan dan bagaimana guru mengurus kerisauan komunikasi di kalangan pelajar. Isu-isu dan permasalahan yang timbul berkaitan perkembangan bahasa lisan dalam bilik darjah secara umumnya akan dipersembahkan dan dibincangkan.

Pendekatan kaedah kualitatif telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk mendapat gambaran sebenar apa yang berlaku di tempat kajian. Penjanaan

maklumat berdasarkan teknik sesi temu bual, pemerhatian bilik darjah dan analisis dokumen telah dapat merakamkan pemikiran guru, pengajaran dan pengurusan pelajar yang berkaitan dengan fenomena ini di lima buah sekolah menengah di Malaysia.

Sejumlah dua belas orang telah ditemubual. Mereka terdiri daripada lapan orang guru Bahasa Inggeris, seorang Pengetua sekolah dan tiga orang Ketua Bidang Bahasa. Guru Bahasa Inggeris ini merupakan responden utama dalam kajian ini. Mereka telah berkongsi pendapat, pengalaman dan juga persepsi mereka berkenaan fenomena yang dikaji, dengan itu mengkayakan data kajian ini. Data daripada responden utama telah ditrangulasikan dengan responden sekunder yang terdiri dari seorang Pengetua dan tiga orang Ketua Bidang Bahasa.

Data dianalisis secara manual. Data telah dikod dan dikategorikan berdasarkan persamaan pola yang timbul. Kajian ini telah dapat mengenal pasti bahawa guru-guru peka akan perlakuan pelajar berkaitan kerisauan komunikasi lisan. Dapatan ini telah dapat mengesahkan dapatan dalam sorotan kajian malahan telah juga dapat melihat perlakuan kerisauan komunikasi lisan dengan lebih mendalam lagi. Guru didapati peka terhadap perasaan emosi pelajar apabila mereka diminta berkomunikasi secara lisan. Walau bagaimanapun, kepekaan guru terhadap kerisauan komunikasi lisan di kalangan pelajar tidak terserlah dalam amalan pedagogi mereka kerana 'kekangan' tertentu.

Dapatan yang diperoleh juga membongkar atau menyuarakan pandangan guru Bahasa Inggeris tentang kerisauan komunikasi lisan. Kajian ini juga mengesahkan dapatan awal pelaksanaan kurikulum bahasa iaitu guru tidak menekankan perkembangan lisan. Oleh sebab lisan tidak diberi penekanan di dalam kelas bahasa, maka pelajar yang mempunyai masalah kerisauan komunikasi lisan tidak diberi perhatian dan sering dipencilkan.

Kajian ini juga mencungkil rasional yang menentukan perlakuan guru dalam bilik darjah. Pengetahuan praktikal kerja atau 'working practical knowledge' guru wujud dari tuntutan dan tekanan daripada berbagai pihak. Pencapaian cemerlang dalam peperiksaan merupakan tuntutan dan tekanan yang utama disuarakan oleh guru. Penelitian yang dijalankan menjurus bahawa pertuturan lisan tidak memainkan peranan dalam penentuan gred peperiksaan, dengan itu kemahiran tersebut diabaikan dalam bilik darjah.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on October 2004 to conduct the final examination of Annisa Nor Jettey on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "English Language Teachers' Perception and Management of Learners' Oral Communication Apprehension" in accordance with the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

ANNISA NOR JETTEY

Date:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION/ NOTATION/GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| CA | Communication Apprehension |
| EL | English language |
| IELTS | English Language Testing Services |
| KBSM | Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah |
| L2 | Second Language |
| MoE | Ministry of Education Malaysia |
| MUET | Malaysian University English Test |
| O.E.T. | Oral English Test |
| PMR | Penilaian Menengah Rendah |
| PRCA24 | Personal Report of Communication Apprehension |
| R&D | Research & Development |
| SMK | Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan or the National Secondary Schools |
| SPM | Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia |
| TESL | Teaching of English as a Second Language |
| TL | Target Language |

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

Introduction

I found myself in an occupational dilemma of having to defend my peers when the local media reports that school leavers and undergraduates are not able to communicate in the English language. As a language officer at the State Education Department in Melaka, I was troubled with a concoction of disturbed and concerned feelings. My job specification required me to monitor and supervise the development of the English language in all schools in the state, which include evaluating teachers in the classrooms. A discussion usually followed the classroom observations and I realized that teachers had much to share of their classroom experiences.

I had taught the English language in secondary schools in various states since the 1980's and had had the chance to head the department, thus enriching me of the experience of managing fellow teachers. I also had the opportunity to follow a few developmental professional courses before I was chosen to head the English language unit at the State Education Department. My sense of concern at how EL teachers work and my desire for understanding and sharing their thoughts at work, initiated my interest in the topic. I then chanced upon Amy Tsui's book on

“Understanding Expertise in Teaching” (2003) where Tsui critically examines teacher thinking and shows how teachers’ theories, knowledge, experience and goals shape their classroom practices. Her book and other further readings on the topic have led me to embark on this study.

Background to the Study

Communication Apprehension and its Influence on Second-Language Learning

Learners’ passivity or fear of oral communication has been researched quite thoroughly for the last four decades, especially in the United States and among native language speakers of English. Only for the last two decades have researchers realized that second language (L2) learners too experience fear of oral communication. Studies have indicated its debilitating impact on learners’ ability in L2 oral interaction (Lucas, 1984; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Bahiyah, 1992; MacIntyre, 1995; Shameem Rafik-Galea et.al. (2001).

The phenomenon of learners’ fear of oral interaction is termed ‘communication apprehension’ (CA) and is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977; 1984:13). Researchers believe that patterns of

reinforcement that an individual experiences in the environment are the dominant components of the development of CA (Glaser, 1981; McCroskey, 1982; McCroskey, 1984). This is based on the belief that children make an effort at communication and if they are positively reinforced they will be encouraged to communicate and if the opposite happens, the child will be less willing to communicate.

Glaser (1981) explains the phenomenon of CA through the Negative Cognitive Appraisal Model. This model assumes that learners who 'suffer' from CA were earlier criticized for their language performance. Consequently, they learned to expect negative reactions and subsequently learned to avoid these unpleasant experiences by keeping quiet.

There are a few local studies concerning oral CA carried out on Malaysian EL learners. Bahiyah (1992) did an interesting study on a related phenomenon, the 'Malu' or the 'shy' syndrome experienced by Malaysian EL learners at oral interaction. She concluded that there is a 'connection between shyness and anxiety' (1992:99). While the earliest study on CA (employing the PRCA 24) was carried out by Rosna (1994) on Universiti Utara Malaysia undergraduates. She reported that the students in her study were apprehensive at oral interaction and that the phenomenon exists across grades. In 1999, Parilah studied Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia students and reported that these students expressed anxiety during their English classes. Aizan and Rohaiza (2001) examined Universiti Utara Malaysia undergraduates and reported that they too were