



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS ON ATTITUDE IN
LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AMONG RURAL
SCHOOL STUDENTS***

FARAH BINTI ZULKEFLY BALAN

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STUDENTS**

By

FARAH BINTI ZULKEFLY BALAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

September 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS ON ATTITUDE IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AMONG RURAL SCHOOL STUDENTS

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September 2017

Chairman : Abu Bakar bin Mohamed Razali, PhD
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Students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language is not a new issue. A lot of research have been done pertaining the factors leading to these attitudes. However, very little is known about *how* these factors actually affect the students' attitudes through the lens of not only the students but also their parents, teachers, as well as the educational authorities. Using the social perspectives based on two theories (i.e., Spolsky's (1989) Model of Second Language Learning and Gardner's (1985) Second Language Acquisition Theory) as the research framework, this study examines Malaysia students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language in one rural school in the country, involving 6 students from 3 different classes. Three questions were formulated to guide this study, namely: (i) What are rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning the English language?; (ii) What and how are the social and psychological factors influence rural secondary school students' attitude towards learning the English language?; and (iii) How can positive attitudes be fostered for rural school students to learn the English language?

Working within the tradition of descriptive and exploratory qualitative research, this study employed a case study approach. A rural school in a southern state in Malaysia was selected with 6 students from 3 different classes as the primary participants. These students were individually interviewed twice and were individually observed at least thrice during English lesson in the classrooms. The researcher also analyzed their learning materials (i.e. their notes, exercises and homework). To complement the data, the researcher also interviewed 6 parents (of the selected students), 3 English teachers from the school, and 3 prominent educational authorities (i.e., the school principal, the district's SISC+ English teacher and the Head of Education District Office). All of the collected data were analyzed and triangulated. The data were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results from the study showed that social and psychological factors have been found as significant factors affecting the students' attitudes towards learning English as the second language in many ways. In term of psychological factors, students' personality traits and their reactions to certain circumstances in their learning and personal lives have been found to be important factors leading them to have positive attitudes in learning English language. As for the social factors, the influence and support from the family is found to be an influential factor affecting students' interest in learning English language. Based on the findings, a typology of the kinds of ESL learners was developed. Three types of students were identified from this research, namely; i) Independently Interested Learners, ii) Dependently Interested Learners, and iii) Uninterested Learners. The findings also suggest that in order to develop positive attitudes among secondary school English language learners, it is crucial for the teachers as well as the educational authorities to understand the types of students in order to deal with their attitude. Also, it is important to have good cooperation from the parents and the students themselves, in helping to make the students better ESL learners.

As the researcher discusses rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English in general and the attitudes of the students in this school in particular, the researcher also discusses the efforts that should be put forth in fostering positive attitudes among rural secondary school students in learning English as the second language, focusing on the parents' support, the teachers' instructional methods and psychology as well as the educational system and policies.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENGARUH FAKTOR PSIKOSOSIAL TERHADAP SIKAP DALAM
PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA
DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR LUAR BANDAR**

Oleh

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Sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua bukanlah suatu isu yang baru. Banyak kajian telah dijalankan berkaitan faktor-faktor yang membawa kepada sikap ini. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak banyak yang diketahui tentang bagaimana faktor-faktor ini sebenarnya memberi kesan kepada sikap pelajar bukan sahaja melalui kanta pelajar tetapi juga ibu bapa mereka, guru-guru, dan juga pihak berkuasa pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan perspektif sosiobudaya berdasarkan dua teori; Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Kedua oleh Spolsky (1989) dan Teori Pemerolehan Bahasa Kedua oleh Gardner (1985) dalam kajian ini, ia mengkaji sikap pelajar terhadap belajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di sebuah sekolah luar bandar di negara ini, yang melibatkan 6 pelajar dari 3 kelas yang berlainan. Tiga soalan telah dibentuk bagi memandu kajian ini, iaitu: (i) Apakah sikap pelajar sekolah menengah luar bandar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris?; (ii) Apakah dan bagaimanakah faktor-faktor sosial dan psikologi yang menyumbang kepada sikap pelajar sekolah menengah luar bandar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris?; (iii) Bagaimana sikap positif dapat dipupuk dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah luar bandar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris?

Dengan mengaplikasi kajian kualitatif deskriptif dan penerokaan, kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes. Sebuah sekolah luar bandar di sebuah negeri di bahagian selatan Malaysia telah dipilih. 6 pelajar dari 3 kelas yang berbeza dipilih sebagai peserta utama. Pelajar-pelajar ini telah ditemuramah sebanyak dua kali (secara individu) dan telah dicerap sekurang-kurangnya tiga kali semasa pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di dalam kelas. Penyelidik juga menganalisis bahan-bahan pembelajaran mereka (iaitu nota, latihan dan kerja rumah mereka). Bagi melengkapkan data, penyelidik juga menemuramah 6 ibu bapa (kepada pelajar yang dipilih), 3 orang guru Bahasa Inggeris dari sekolah tersebut, dan 3 pegawai tertinggi pendidikan (pengetua sekolah, guru SISC+ Bahasa Inggeris daerah, dan Ketua Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah).

Semua data yang dikumpul telah dianalisis dan di tiangulasi. Data juga telah dikodkan dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa faktor sosial dan psikologi adalah sebagai faktor yang mempengaruhi sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Dari aspek psikologi, semangat diri pelajar merupakan faktor penting yang membawa kepada pembentukan sikap positif terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Dari aspek sosial pula, sokongan daripada keluarga adalah faktor yang memberi impak terhadap pembentukan minat dalam diri pelajar untuk mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris. Berdasarkan hasil kajian, sebuah tipologi telah terbentuk dalam mengklasifikasikan pelajar ESL, iaitu; i) Pelajar Berminat yang Independen, ii) Pelajar Berminat yang Dependen, dan iii) Pelajar Tidak Berminat. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa dalam membentuk sikap positif dalam diri pelajar untuk mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris, para guru, ibu bapa dan pihak berkuasa pendidikan perlulah memahami jenis-jenis pelajar ESL. Selain itu, kerjasama dari pihak ibu bapa juga sangat diperlukan dalam membantu pelajar menjadi lebih baik dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

Dalam membincangkan sikap pelajar sekolah menengah luar bandar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris secara umum dan sikap pelajar-pelajar di sekolah ini pada khususnya, penyelidik juga membincangkan usaha-usaha yang perlu dikemukakan dalam memupuk sikap positif di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah luar bandar di belajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dengan memberi tumpuan kepada sokongan ibu bapa serta pedagogi pengajaran dan teknik psikologi oleh para guru serta sistem dan dasar pendidikan kerajaan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 September 2017 to conduct the final examination of Farah binti Zulkefly Balan on her thesis entitled "Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Attitude in Learning English as a Second Language among Rural School Students" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPRD	Educational Planning, Research and Development
TESL	Teaching of English as a Second Language



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on eight sections, namely; (i) the research background, where the researcher discusses the general state of English as a Second language in Malaysia and outside the country, (ii) statement of the problem, (iii) rationale of the research, (iv) objectives of the research, (v) research questions, (vi) significance of the research, (vii) scope and limitation of research, and (viii) definitions of terms.

1.2 Research Background

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 states that education will help Malaysians to have better lives in which it will lead to a brighter future. Through proper education, the nation will be able to have good communication with people from various backgrounds, religions and ethnicity.

Since 1957, the education system has made major progress. At the time Malaysia got its independence, half of the population had no formal education and only 6% of the children in Malaysia had education till secondary level. Education has only been transformed five and a half decade later. In 2011, the enrollment at the primary level reached 94% and the percentage of students dropping out of school have reduced tremendously (in 1989 from 3% to only 0.2% in 2011) This is the indication that the education system in Malaysian is working towards improvement.

(Malaysian Blue Print 2013-2025, p. 4)

With reference to the statement from the Malaysian Education Blueprint above, Malaysia aims to make a big improvement in the education system. However, this improvement is not parallel with the English proficiency of most Malaysian students, particularly those staying in the rural areas (Ler, 2012). Being a global language, English is a must-know language in order for one to fit into the real world. For this reason, English plays a significant part in Malaysian Education system, where it is regarded as a second language and a language of knowledge, which can help Malaysians gain better employment and thus gain better social status. However, many students view English as a foreign language, which is spoken only during language lessons (Tom, Aiza, Awang & Siti, 2013). Despite the fact that the learning of English is supposed to prepare individuals for the real world, Hiew (2012) claims that the eleven years of learning the

English language does not do much help in improving the proficiency of the majority of Malaysian students.

The problem with students' lack of English language proficiency is most prominent among rural students in Malaysia. This is due to the inadequate exposure to the language itself as well as insufficient practice of English language (Rosli Talif & Jayakaran Mukundan, 1994; Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Aris, 2002). Jamali Ismail and Hasliza Arif (2002) stated that the secondary school students in rural areas fail to see the need to use English in their lives. Consequently, both their motivation to learn the English language and their proficiency in the language decrease. Other than factors, such as age, gender, achievement, and types of school that affect their English language proficiency, Baker (1985) asserted that students' attitude toward language is related simultaneously with students' home-language and cultural background.

Often times, attitudes are also shaped by the social contexts, which “develop early in childhood and are the result of parents and peers' attitudes” (Brown, 2000 p.180), together with the contact with others from various cultures. Attitudes towards a language, especially when it comes to one's belief towards the worth of the language usually begins at home. A research done by Siti Norliana (2008) on students' attitudes towards learning English literature in Terengganu suggests that family backgrounds influenced students' attitudes concerning literary study. The results show that students with parents who read more, spent more time being read to, and who had more variety of books available at home and had better attitudes towards literary study. In addition, Roth (2008) mentioned that parental encouragement plays a big role in shaping the attitude of the students in either a positive or negative way. Also, with adequate parental encouragement, students would be more motivated in learning English. This proves that the attitudes that students have towards learning English, be it positive or negative, are related to their family backgrounds as well as their area of living, such as their culture, mentality and beliefs about things—all of which affects their learning.

With regard to improving the English language proficiency of Malaysian students, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013) is currently the main source of reference for Malaysia's education system. The Malaysian Education Blueprint consists of six aspirations for student improvement. One of the aspirations is *Bilingual Proficiency*, in which every child is expected to be “at minimum, operationally proficient in the national language, Bahasa Melayu, and the international language of communication, the English language. Upon leaving school, students should be able to work in an environment that encompasses these languages” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p.12).

In the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013), it is stated that one of the 11 shifts is to “ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English Language” (p.12). In the Blueprint also, there are three waves of changes to be done in the Malaysian education system. The first wave was about the blueprint implementation, where there will be more support for teachers and focus on core student skills. In the second wave,

there should already be changes and improvements in the system. Whereas, in the final wave, schools are expected to have autonomy to handle their own administration.

Even though the Malaysian education system is currently in the second wave of the Blueprint plan (i.e., undergoing changes and improvements in the education system), these changes and improvements in the system still seem so far away when it comes to students' proficiency in English, particularly those in rural areas. This may be due to the students, especially those in remote or rural areas, are unable to see the immediate need to use English in their lives. Consequently, they lack the motivation needed in learning or using the language. Their proficiency in the language is also not up to par (Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Arif, 2002).

To reiterate, the low proficiency level of English among Malaysian students has a significant relationship with their negative attitudes towards learning English in school. For example, when Science and Mathematics were taught in English, there were many critical comments about it, and the Malaysian government was urged to change the policy. A research was conducted by Associate Professor Hashima Jalaluddin of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, as reported in *The New Straits Times Online* on 7th of September 2008, shortly after the policy was implemented in 2003 (John & Aniza, 2008). In her research, she studied 43 teachers and 971 Form One students from six schools in the central and southern states of Peninsular Malaysia, and she found that 70 per cent of the students said they would be more interested if the two subjects were taught in Bahasa Melayu. This indicates that the negative view towards the policy has started as early as it was implemented.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The issue with students' lack of English language proficiency is mostly among rural school students in Malaysia as they have insufficient exposure to the English language. Also, there is lack of English language practice among these students (Rosli Talif & Jayakaran Mukundan, 1994; Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Aris, 2002). Despite the fact that "Malaysian people in general accept and acknowledge the role of English as the national second language in Malaysia and its important role as a language of communication within the globalized society" (Abu Bakar, 2013, p.3), many students view English as a foreign language which is spoken only during language lessons (Tom, Aiza, Awang and Siti, 2013). Ler (2012) stated,

The English divide between the urban and rural students is really wide and getting wider by the year (Gaudart, 2001). The government after proclaiming Bahasa Melayu the official language made English the second language but the latter becomes the third or fourth and even a foreign one to students of different ethnic backgrounds. Hence if this distinction is made less confusion arises especially in the rural context (p. 15).

While students in urban areas tend to have better proficiency level of English as compared to students studying in rural areas (Rosli Talif & Jayakaran Mukundan, 1994; Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Aris, 2002), Malaysian students who are staying in remote or rural areas fail to see the need to use English in their life. This eventually leads to their lack of motivation and proficiency in the language (Jamali Ismail & Hasliza Arif, 2002). This situation is quite disturbing because without seeing the practicality of using the second language in their community circle, there is a high tendency for these students in the remote areas to have a negative attitude towards learning the language

There is a pattern that students' attitude and achievement towards English is very much affected by the region of where they are staying. Apparently, students who are staying in secluded areas do not show positive attitude towards learning English. In a research done by Ler (2012) on students and teachers from different ethnic backgrounds and different levels of English language proficiency in six rural schools in Terengganu, it was found that both teachers and students felt that the extensive use of Bahasa Melayu is one of the reasons why the English proficiency is poor among rural students. Ler stated that the rural setting, traits practices and culture are the factors causing the low proficiency of English. He came to a conclusion that "the rural cultural setting does affect the proficiency level of English among the students in rural schools" (p.12). He added that rural students are inclined to be more shy and reserved when it comes to learning English. The problem of low proficiency in English is very serious in rural areas where the failure rate in the English language subject is rather high (Rahimah, Mohd Sahar, Fozilah, and Hamidah, 2004). Thang, Ting and Nurjanah (2011) also mentioned that attitudes and motivation of these students who live in rural and remote areas towards learning English is believed to be among the factors to low proficiency and low passing rates in schools.

Considering all the problems and issues highlighted on students' attitudes towards the learning of English language, it can be seen how secondary school students, particularly the ones staying in rural areas, are still struggling psychologically and academically, when it comes to English learning. Hence, it is important for the researcher to find out why these problems occurred and what are the factors involved directly / indirectly in regard to these problems. Also, most importantly, the researcher intend to find out how these factors actually shape the students' attitude. This is crucial so that a better understanding can be achieved regarding these issues.

1.4 Rationale for the Research

Gardner and Lambert (1959) stated that success in language learning is related to attitudinal variables. These variables are attitudes towards the language learned and towards the speakers of that language and culture. As cited in Kanjira (2008), Ellis (1986) defines 'attitudes' as sets of beliefs that students have on the target language culture as well as the students' own culture. To connect the relation between students' proficiency level and their attitudes, Kanjira also cited that students' attitudes affect their L2 proficiency level (Ellis, 1994). For example, as cited in Siti Sukainah and Melor (2014), a study done by Noraini and Noorizah (1999) stated that many students are aware of the importance and advantages of learning English, however, they tend to not put enough efforts to improve their learning.

In addition, in the research done by Ler (2012) on 20 students from different ethnic backgrounds and English language proficiency in six rural schools in Terengganu, it is found that people living in rural areas perceive staging an English drama as "unislamic" due to the cultural difference between eastern and western communities. This is a clear example of a negative attitude towards the native speakers of the language (English) and their culture. Besides, there also has been an issue in the early of introduction of English into the school curriculum because the community feared that the practice of the English language might threaten the local language (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Teh (2014), in an article published by Malaysian Digest entitled "An Unsolved Problem: Urban-Rural Gap In English Language Proficiency," reported that a teacher teaching in a rural area in Pulau Pinang believes that the main reason for the gap in English language proficiency between students in urban areas and students in rural areas is the lack of exposure and the insufficient resources to adequately teach the language in rural districts. This statement is in parallel with Siti Norliana (2008), who stated that students who had more variety of books available at home (i.e., more exposure to the target language) had better attitudes towards literary study.

Even though there has been a number of research done on this topic and topics similar to it, many of them were done quantitatively (see Akey, 2006; Ansarimoghaddam and Tan, 2014; Biber, 2006; Ler, 2012; Gobel, Thang, Sidhu, Oon, & Chan, 2013; Gajalakhsmi, 2013; Jain & Sidhu, 2012; Kanjira, 2008; Kaur, 2014; Lau & Habibah, 2011; Domakani, Roohani & Akhbari, 2012; Mohd Asyraf, 2013; Morreale, 2011; Muftah & Rafik-Galea, 2013; Nancy, 2003; Nik, Syed & Norazlina, 2014; Normazidah, Koo & Hazita, 2012; Nor Syahidzan, Agnes Anak Buda, & Nur Syafiq Aqiera, 2014; Parasanganin, 2014; Parilah, 2002; Qin, 2012; Rahimah et al., 2004; Samsiah, Kamaruzaman, Nurazila, Musdiana, & Taniza, 2009; Siti Norliana, 2008; Siti Sukainah & Melor, 2014; Smith, 2010; Supyan, Nooreiny & D'Cruz, 2000; Tariq Shah, 2008; Thang et al., 2011; Navarro-Villarroel, 2011; Wang, 2008; Wentzel, 2000; Yihong, Gao, Yuan, Zhao, Ying, Cheng & Yan, Zhou, 2007). And, while these quantitative studies have been very helpful in understanding this issue, there should be more qualitative research that can further illuminate this issue in depth. This is because according to Yin (2011), a qualitative research contributes insights into existing or emerging concepts that

may help to explain human social behaviour, which in this study would be the students' attitude towards learning English. In addition, according to Patton and Cochran (2002), a qualitative research and its methods aim to understand aspects of social life rather than just producing numbers.

It is therefore important to do an in-depth qualitative research that can help teachers, policymakers, teacher educators and researchers as well as parents and other stakeholders to understand that students' social life, economic status and family backgrounds are very much connected on the attitudes students have towards the learning of English in school. Thus, an in-depth qualitative research on students' attitude towards learning English language can help to understand the in-depth issues to rural students' attitudes towards learning English and how these attitudes affect their learning of the English language.

All in all, regardless of how well the Malaysian Education Blueprint was planned, there needs to be an in-depth understanding of the real situation of the students first before the success of the Blueprint can be achieved. There is a dire need for in depth case study in order to find out how the students truly feel about English language with regard to their social and demographic factor. This would help a lot in fulfilling one of the five system aspiration in the Blueprint which is *Equity*: 50% reduction in achievement gaps (i.e., urban-rural, socio-economic, and gender) by the year 2020.

1.5 Objectives of the Research

This research aims to understand the attitudes of students studying in a rural school in a southern state in the Peninsular of Malaysia on the learning of English language. This study specifically looks to examine how the social and psychological factors in this area affects the students' attitudes towards learning English. The main objectives of this research are:

- i) To investigate rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning the English language
- ii) To explore how the social and psychological factors may influence the rural secondary school students attitudes towards learning the English language
- iii) To suggest ways to foster positive attitudes for rural secondary school students to learn the English language

1.6 Research questions

This study focuses on three research questions, which are as follow:

- i) What are rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning the English language?
- ii) What and how do the social and psychological factors influence rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning the English language?
- iii) How can positive attitudes be fostered for rural school students to learn the English language?

Using these questions, this qualitative research hopes to describe in detail how well the learning of English language is perceived by rural school students and explore their attitudes on learning English.

1.7 Significance of the Research

Research on the students' attitudes towards learning English can bring a number of benefits towards the education system in Malaysia, particularly in the context of English education for rural students. The findings of this research will be helpful to give in-depth descriptions and explanations on how social and psychological factors affect students' attitudes towards learning English language. It will also help in giving a clear vision on students' positive and/or negative attitudes when it comes to learning the English language. Based on these possible outcomes, the teachers may want to change the pedagogy used for their instruction. Also, the authorities, the policymakers and the stakeholders would better understand the situation and may want to take necessary actions pertaining to the issue being studied.

Despite learning English for 11 years during their primary and secondary education, most rural students in Malaysia can hardly master the language (Hussein Islam & Parilah, 2014); and this issue is apparent when they further study to tertiary education or when they enter the workforce. There is a significant relationship between the rural students' attitudes and their English Language achievement (Adnan, 1985). It is therefore important to conduct a research on this topic because by understanding the rural students' attitudes, more understanding can be achieved about the lack of English proficiency amongst rural students in Malaysia and thus provide suggestions to avoid problems in the future. The findings of this research will not only benefit the students (in their learning), but it will also benefit the teachers and the society at large in which it will help them to understand how their roles affect the students' attitude. This may hopefully lead the teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and make necessary changes to address this issue.

An in-depth qualitative research, such as a case study or an ethnographic research, is the best research design for this topic because it helps in understanding the real culture of the community in rural areas. This is where the researcher seeks to find understanding of this phenomenon or this issue (i.e., case) by going below the surface and beyond assumptions to study about this matter in depth. By understanding the social and cultural elements that contribute to the students' attitude towards learning English, only then will we be able to understand the reason behind their negative attitudes when learning the English language.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of the study revolves around the students, teachers, parents and educational authorities (i.e., school principal, Head of Education District Office, etc.) in a public secondary school in a focused rural area in a rural district of a southern state in the Peninsular of Malaysia. Within this scope of research, one of the limitations is the fact that the number of participants might decrease as the research progresses. As a qualitative study, this research would require detailed information from the participants (especially the students as the main participants) to obtain rich data. However, the participants might, for whatever reason, decide to withdraw during the course of the study. To avoid this problem, the researcher abided to all responsible conducts of research, and made sure that the participants of this research (i.e., primary and secondary participants) are always informed of the requirements and progress of the research. They were also informed of the steps that will be taken to ensure that their identities and other relevant information are kept safe by the researcher. Also, she ensured that she did the interviews, observations and analyses of the learning/teaching documents as well as her own field notes in the best ethical manner to keep the participants away from any uncomfortable feelings.

Aside from that, given the fact that the researcher is the resident in the research area, there is a possibility for biasness or preferences to arise from the collection of data or from analysis of data. To curb this possible issue from occurring, the researcher always consulted her supervisor and did member checking with each of the research participants during and after reporting about them in her research report. She also engaged in detailed audit trail recording system to keep track of all the details and decisions that are made during the data collection and data analysis phases. Audit trail is really important because apart from detailing the records of decisions made for data collection and data analysis, audit trailing is also done in that the researcher will record the logistical and financial aspects of the research. All of these records were done to ensure validity and reliability as well as to ensure that the research is done ethically and responsibly. The explanation on audit trail will be explained further in chapter 3, i.e., Research Methodology.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

Attitude. According to Gajalakshmi (2013) and Tariq Shah (2008) attitude is determined by one's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioral beliefs). One's attitude is portrayed based on the estimations of those outcomes or attributes. On the one hand, if a person holds strong beliefs that a positive outcome will result from performing the behavior, s/he will have a positive attitude towards the behavior. On the other hand, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behavior will automatically show negative attitude towards the behavior. In this research, the definition of the word "attitude" is focused on one's belief towards the learning of English in school, and how this belief navigates the students' attitudes towards the learning of the English language. The attitudes of the participants involved in this research were measure through the observations sessions in the classroom, the interview sessions, the field-notes, as well as the documents analysis (of the homework, exam papers, and notes).

Rural school. Johnson and Strange (2005) define rural school as a school which is located in a place outside the urban area. The population in this school should not exceed 2,500 people. According to the Educational Development Master Plan by the Ministry of Education (2006), rural schools are schools with lack of infrastructures, basic facilities, and support from both the community and the parents. In this research, this term is narrowed to refer to a public secondary school in a focused rural area in a rural district of a southern state in the Peninsular of Malaysia, in which this school is placed outside of urban area and lack infrastructure and basic facilities as compared to those in the urban areas.

Social factors. According to Spolsky's (1978) model of second language, learning, the social pressures influencing the language education in society includes the number of language in use in the community, the number of speakers in the community, and the number of bilinguals in the particular community. He also highlighted the social provision of language learning situations and opportunities of various kinds. In the context of this research, the social factors are specified to the students' geographical, societal, and familial background that might inform their perceptions and attitudes towards the English language. In order to obtain the data to determine the social factors influencing the students' attitudes, the researcher interviewed not only the students, but also their parents, as well as their teachers. The researcher also referred to the filed notes made throughout the formal and informal observation sessions.

Psychological factors. According to Henriques (2004), psychology is a broad field as it "can be rightfully thought of as stretching from the simplest animal behaviours all the way to human consciousness" (p.1219). However, in this research, the psychological factors that would be focused on would be the students' individual and/or personal experiences on their English learning (both formally and informally) as well as the teacher's roles in gaining students' interest to get involved in the English lesson in the school. Similar to how the data was obtained for social factors, the researcher also captured the data for psychological factors through the multiple interview sessions with

the primary and secondary participants. The researcher also used the data obtained through the formal and informal observations and the field-noted made throughout the process.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has explained the background of this study and why it is important to carry out the research. There are four research objectives that serve as the focus of the research. Based on these objectives, this research focuses on students' in rural area and how their attitudes towards learning the English language is affected by the social and psychological factors. In the next chapter, the researcher provides the review of related literature pertaining this topic of study (i.e., students' attitude towards English learning) to give further explanations of the review of past research and the contexts that describe rural students' attitudes towards learning the English language, as well as the theories that guide this research.

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