UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**STUDY BEHAVIOUR, HOME ENVIRONMENT
AND ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH**

NORASIAH BT HAJI ISMAIL

FPP 1995 8

STUDY BEHAVIOUR, HOME ENVIRONMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH

By

NORASIAH BT HAJI ISMAIL

**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science
in the Faculty of Educational Studies,
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia**

May 1995

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SMAB   -   Sekolah Menengah Aminuddin Baki
                (ABSS - Aminuddin Baki Secondary School)

SMPT   -   Sekolah Menengah Padang Tembak
                (PTSS - Padang Tembak Secondary School)

SMB   -   Sekolah Menengah Bangsar
                (BSS - Bangsar Secondary School)

SMAS   -   Sekolah Menengah Alam Shah
                (ASSS - Alam Shah Secondary School)

SMRA   -   Sekolah Menengah Raja Abdullah
                (RASS - Raja Abdullah Secondary School)

SMKB   -   Sekolah Menengah Kampong Batu
                (KBSS - Kampong Batu Secondary School)

SMTM   -   Sekolah Menengah Taman Maluri
                (TMSS - Taman Maluri Secondary School)

SMSB   -   Sekolah Menengah Sentul Baru
                (SBSS - Sentul Baru Secondary School)

SMDL   -   Sekolah Menengah Datok Lokman
                (DLSS - Datok Lokman Secondary School)

SMJC   -   Sekolah Menengah Jalan Cheras
                (JCSS - Jalan Cheras Secondary School)

SMJI   -   Sekolah Menengah Jalan Ipoh
                (JISS - Jalan Ipoh Secondary School)

SMSA   -   Sekolah Menengah Seri Ampang
                (SASS - Seri Ampang Secondary School)

SMPW   -   Sekolah Menengah Puteri Wilayah
                (PWSS - Puteri Wilayah Secondary School)

SMKB   -   Sekolah Menengah Kepong Baru
                (KBSS - Kepong Baru Secondary School)

SBQ   -   Study Behaviour Questionnaire

HEQ   -   Home Environment Questionnaire

PSES   -   Parental Socio-economic Status

PAE   -   Parental Attitudes and Expectations

HPR	-	Home Practices and Resources
HOME	-	Home Environment
CLASS	-	Classroom Study Behaviour
BEHAVE	-	Study Behaviour during Individual Study
INT	-	Interaction Behaviour Outside the Classroom
SB	-	Study Behaviour
SRP	-	Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (LCE - Lower Certificate of Education)
SA	-	Student Achievement

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Senate of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

STUDY BEHAVIOUR, HOME ENVIRONMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH

By

NORASIAH BT HAJI ISMAIL

MAY 1995

Chairman: **Jamali Ismail, Ph. D.**

Faculty: **Educational Studies**

This study was basically an attempt to obtain an insight into the pattern of relationships among students achievement in English, study behaviour variables and home environment variables. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the relationship of each of the study behaviour variables to student achievement in English, the relationship of each of the home environment variables to student achievement in English, the relationships among the study behaviour variables and home environment variables, the combined effect of the various study behaviour variables and home environment variable on student's achievement in English.

This study was conducted in fourteen secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur. A total of 485 boys and 515 girls from Form Four Science, Arts and Commerce streams were involved.

The independent variables in this study were study behaviour and home environment. The analysis of data was based on two sets of questionnaire, i.e., the study behaviour questionnaire and the home environment questionnaire. The dependent variable in this study was student achievement in the SRP English examination.

From the results of the study and a review of related literature, it is inferred that the independent variables studied had considerable influence on the dependent variable. The study also revealed that the three study behaviour variables and the three home environment variables combined explained 27.6% of the total variance in English achievement; the best single predictor of English achievement was classroom study behaviour; and a substantial amount of variance in English achievement remained unexplained.

The findings have significant long-term implications for English teaching and learning in Malaysian schools. In view of the importance of study behaviours brought to light by this study, it is recommended that good learning strategies be taught to students in schools to facilitate them develop the right attitude towards English learning, and subsequently relevant study behaviour that helps improve their performance in English. It is also suggested that parents need to be kept informed of the objectives and implications of the English programme in schools so that they can provide a supportive environment at home which may help their children do well in English.

As the study is a survey based only on the use of self-report questionnaire on study behaviour and home environment, information gathered from the questionnaire though valuable is relatively limited. Therefore it is recommended that a follow-up study be carried out using a more precise measure and should include a check of the self-reports against actual observations and interviews with teachers, parents and learners.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Pertanian Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains.

CARA BELAJAR, PERSEKITARAN RUMAH DAN PENCAPAIAN BAHASA INGGERIS

Oleh

NORASIAH BT. HAJI ISMAIL

MEI 1995

Pengerusi: **Jamali Ismail, Ph. D.**

Fakulti: **Pengajian Pendidikan**

Kajian ini pada dasarnya adalah percubaan untuk memperoleh gambaran tentang bentuk pertalian terhadap pencapaian pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris, pembolehubah cara belajar dan pembolehubah persekitaran rumah. Khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memastikan pertalian tiap-tiap pembolehubah cara belajar dengan pencapaian dalam bahasa Inggeris, pertalian tiap-tiap pembolehubah persekitaran rumah dengan pencapaian pelajar dalam bahasa Inggeris, pertalian antara pembolehubah cara belajar dengan pembolehubah persekitaran rumah, kesan gabungan pembolehubah cara belajar terhadap pencapaian pelajar dalam bahasa Inggeris, dan kesan gabungan persekitaran rumah terhadap pencapaian pelajar dalam bahasa Inggeris.

Kajian ini telah dijalankan di empat belas buah sekolah menengah di Kuala Lumpur. Seramai 485 orang pelajar lelaki dan 515 orang pelajar perempuan dari Tingkatan Empat Sains, Sastera dan Perdagangan telah terlibat.

Pembolehubah tak bersandar ialah cara belajar dan persekitaran rumah. Penganalisisan data didasarkan pada dua set soalselidik, iaitu soalselidik cara belajar dan soalselidik persekitaran rumah. Sementara pembolehubah bersandar pula ialah pencapaian pelajar dalam mata pelajaran bahasa Inggeris Sijil Rendah Pelajaran.

Berdasarkan kepada keputusan kajian dan kajian-kajian yang berkaitan, ianya boleh dirumuskan bahawa pembolehubah tak bersandar mempunyai pengaruh yang sederhana terhadap pembolehubah bersandar. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pembolehubah cara belajar dan pembolehubah persekitaran rumah menerangkan 27.6% daripada jumlah varian pembolehubah bersandar dalam pencapaian bahasa Inggeris; cara belajar dalam bilik darjah adalah penunjuk yang paling baik dalam pencapaian bahasa Inggeris; dan banyak jumlah varian pencapaian dalam bahasa Inggeris tidak dapat diterangkan.

Dapatan kajian mempunyai implikasi jangka panjang yang signifikan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah di Malaysia. Oleh sebab dalam kajian ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa cara belajar yang betul dalam bahasa Inggeris itu penting, maka adalah dicadangkan bahawa cara-cara belajar yang baik dan berkesan diajarkan kepada pelajar-pelajar di sekolah-sekolah untuk membantu mereka membentuk sikap yang positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris serta cara belajar yang bersesuaian yang boleh meningkatkan kemahiran mereka dalam bahasa Inggeris. Dicadangkan juga bahawa ibu bapa perlu diberitahu tentang objektif dan implikasi program bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah supaya mereka dapat

memberikan kerjasama dari segi menyediakan persekitaran yang sesuai untuk membantu kejayaan anak-anak mereka dalam bahasa Inggeris.

Kajian ini hanya berdasarkan kepada soalselidik laporan kendiri ke atas cara belajar dan persekitaran rumah. Maklumat yang diperolehi adalah terhad. Oleh itu, adalah dicadangkan kajian seterusnya perlu menggunakan ukuran yang lebih tepat serta mengadakan pemerhatian dan temuduga dengan guru-guru, ibu-bapa dan pelajar-pelajar.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Role and Status of English in Malaysia

English in Malaysia today is officially described as 'an effective second language' (Platt and Weber, 1980: 162), a position reflected in the fact that it is taught from the first year of most primary schools. The reason for this status is largely historical: English was the medium of instruction in many schools and most tertiary institutions until 1982 (Platt and Weber, 1980: 161). Hence, large numbers of Malaysians over the age of twenty five have had the major part of their education in this language and use it almost as well as they use Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese or Tamil.

The 1980's, however, represent an important phase in the planning and development of the new English Language curriculum in Malaysia. By this time the gradual process of changing the medium of instruction from English to Bahasa Malaysia has reached the tertiary level. The main thrust of the government's language policy has been the replacing of English by the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, throughout the public sector (including the education system) and as far as practicable, in the private sector. The position of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction is securely established in all secondary and tertiary education. And all this has inevitably affected the position of English as the official language and also the amount and quality of English used in the education and the employment domains.

1

Nevertheless, the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in the Malaysian education system does not mean that there is no place for English. In the education policy, English has been retained and gazetted as the second most important language in the education system and a compulsory subject in all Malaysian schools. The need to be competent in English still exists because 'English holds a dominating position in international councils and commerce, in the textbooks and literature of the world. A command of it is one of our national assets' (Platt and Weber, 1980: 162).

Statement of the Problem

The official aims of the English Language programme for upper secondary school are 'to equip the students with the skills and knowledge of English to communicate in certain everyday activities and certain job situations, and also to provide point of take-off for various post-secondary school needs' (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia 1989: 1). In other words, the programme seeks to enable the students to utilise the English language in a meaningful and relevant way in the everyday context of need to communicate.

In line with the official aims of maintaining English as an important second language, it is taught in all National schools from Primary One to Form Three. After six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education, students are required to sit for a national examination, i.e., the Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (Lower Certificate of Education) examination or in short the SRP in which English language is a compulsory subject. Those who pass this examination proceed to upper

secondary education. On entering the first year of upper secondary education, i.e. Form Four, the students will have been exposed to the English language for nine years.

Despite this long exposure to English language, students entering Form Four differ widely in their ability to communicate effectively in English. In terms of ability, students range from those who can hardly cope with basic communication needs to those who are very proficient. Parents, teachers and those concerned with education realise that the level of English proficiency among the present-day students has dropped drastically. Although the Ministry of Education has put in a lot of effort to improve the standard of English in schools through the implementation of new curriculum, methodology, in-service training and provision of facilities in schools, the wide disparity in ability among present-day students still exists and warrants investigation. Therefore, based on the views presented above the researcher feels it is important to look at other variables such as study behaviour and home environment to find out to what extent these variables are related to students' achievement in English.

The process of English language learning is very much affected by the students' study behaviour. Studies have shown that study behaviour has a significant effect upon students' academic performance (Biggs, 1970, 1972). Many of our teachers also feel that a majority of the students who are weak in English may need help in using the right strategies when learning English, but there is the question of knowing where and how to begin remedying this problem. The importance of having a supportive environment at home to help students improve their

English proficiency also cannot be overlooked. Asiah Abu Samah (1977) in her study among Primary school pupils shows that home environment positively affects primary pupils' language development. Since students' study behaviour and home environment may influence their levels of proficiency and affect the teaching-learning situation, a study of the variables and their influence would help in giving a better understanding of the situation. It is hoped that the findings may serve as input in the process of planning and preparing materials in the teaching of English as a second language. It is also hoped that careful planning and preparation of teaching materials will successfully facilitate the teaching and learning of English so that students will be able to communicate effectively in the language.

Objectives of the Study

This study is principally concerned with assessing the relationships among various variables of the study behaviour, variables of the home environment and students' achievement in English.

More specifically, the study aims to investigate:

i) the relationship between the study behaviour variables and students' achievement in English;

ii) the relationship between the home environment variables and students' achievement in English; and

iii) the relationship between the study behaviour variables and the home environment variables.

These can be translated into hypotheses. They are hypothetical statements which are to be validated, i.e.;

i) There are no significant relationships between students' achievement in English and each of the following variables of the study behaviour:

 a) Classroom study behaviour;

 b) Study behaviour during individual study;

 c) Interaction behaviour outside the classroom;

 d) Overall study behaviour.

ii) There are no significant relationships between students' achievement in English and each of the following variables of home environment:

 a) Parental socio-economic status;

 b) Parental attitudes and expectations;

 c) Home practices and resources;

 d) Overall home environment.

iii) There are no significant relationships among the study behaviour variables and the home environment variables.

Operational Definition of Terms

This section will deal with definitions of some concepts or constructs which will be utilized in the study.

Study Behaviour

Study behaviour in the context of this study are operations or steps used by a learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage or retrieval of information (Rigney, 1978).

In this study, the study behaviour of a student is operationally defined and measured by the following variables:

a) Classroom Study Behaviour

This measures what the students actually do or do not do in a language class.

b) Study Behaviour During Individual Study

This measures what the students actually do or do not do when they are studying English on their own.

c) Interaction Behaviour Outside the Classroom

This measures what the students actually do or do not do when they are interacting with others outside the classroom.

Home Environment

The home environment of a student is taken to comprise the following variables:

a) Parental Socio-economic Status

The socio-economic status is the reflection of the occupation of the parents, their income and their level of education.

b) <u>Parental Attitudes and Expectations</u>

This measures the parents' attitudes towards the child's English language education and their expectations of the child's achievement in the language in school as perceived by the child.

c) <u>Home Practices and Resources</u>

This serves to find out the kind of practices and materials provided at home, to which the child attends or reacts.

Achievement in English

There will be one measure of students' achievement in English, i.e., the SRP national examination 1990.

Oral achievement is not included in this study because the oral test is conducted by different examiners in different schools and as such, the grades are not obtainable because they are strictly confidential.

Significance of the Study

This study looks at the relationships of study behaviour, home environment and achievement in English. It is commonly assumed that students' study behaviour has significant effect upon performance in examination (Robinson, 1961). This assumption has given rise to a great deal of research, much of which is summarized by O'Malley *et al.* (1985) who conclude that strategy training is effective in improving the performance of students on a wide range of reading and problem-solving tasks (e.g., Wittrock *et al.*, 1975; Brown *et al.*, 1983; Chipman *et al.* in

Press) and that favourable strategies do contribute to academic performance.

A number of studies have also looked into the influence of home environment on children's scholastic achievement. These studies show that there is indeed a relationship between home environment and school attainment (Frazer, 1973; Keeves, 1975; Asiah Abu Samah, 1977; Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1973).

Although findings from these studies proved to be of tremendous use in formulating and directing educational policy, perhaps, a supplementary study will serve well to provide directions in specific area of education, e.g., English language. These findings can then be utilized by English teachers to improve the study behaviour of those students who are weak in English and whose study behaviour deviates seriously from the practices of the successful ones. It is also hoped that findings from this study can be used as a basis to advise parents on how they can provide a favourable environment at home to help their children do well in English. Since many of the elements such as home practices are actually malleable and open to deliberate modification, such a step taken to help children from disadvantaged home is practical.

Limitations of the Study

Study behaviour variables which are personal and individual traits may not differ as such between urban and rural areas. Thus, findings with respect to study behaviour can possibly be generalized to rural areas. However, findings with regards to the nature and extent of relationship

between achievement in English and the home environment variables may not be generalized to students in the rural areas.

The approach adopted is the survey method. Since a national survey is impossible for one person to undertake due to problems of manageability and time constraint, the survey is limited in scope to fourteen selected secondary schools from one location.

Finally, it has to be pointed out that although a number of variables of the study behaviour and home environment have been included in this study, there may well be some other variables which have been left out. This study only attempts to investigate the components identified within each of these two variables, i.e., the study behaviour factors and the home environment factors. These components are used as the independent variables in this correlational study.