UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANXIETY AMONG MONOLINGUAL AND TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICES IN TWO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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By

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Chair : **Assoc Prof. Hazlina Binti Abdul Halim, PhD**
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Listening anxiety presents an imminent danger to foreign language acquisition. Anxiety prevents students from achieving excellent academic performance in learning a new language. Many studies have explored the methods to reduce learners' listening anxiety, but only a few have investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety (FLA) and listening proficiency in a multilingual context. Based on Vygotsky's SocialCultural Theory (1978) in language learning development, this research aims to determine the differences of students' performance in listening comprehension through monolingual and translingual practices in a French foreign language classroom, to investigate the correlation of classroom language policy of both practices on language listening anxiety, and to analyze the practicality on the use of different language instruction facing language anxiety in the French language classroom. The present study utilized the mixed-method research data from students' classroom assessment (CA) reports, the listening comprehension tests, classroom observations, and interviews of 56 French language learners in a secondary school in Sabah. The quantitative result indicated a significant increase in student performance and achievement in listening comprehension in a translingual classroom. Nonetheless, the data findings implied that translingual practices had no significant influence on students' listening anxiety. The outcome of the interviews showed that students have positive opinions of translingual practices and believed that translingual practices increased their comprehension, efficacy, and motivation towards learning the French language. Three integral functions were involved in translingual practices: interpretive, managerial, and interactive, that facilitated students' language acquisition. The result suggested that translingual practices reduced listening anxiety caused by language barriers in the classroom and resolved listening comprehension difficulties. This finding provides recommendations for new teaching and learning approaches for students, teachers, and policymakers as a stepping stone for further research in learning French as a foreign language studies in Malaysia.

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

KEBIMBANGAN KEFAHAMAN MENDENGAR DALAM AMALAN MONOLINGUAL DAN TRANSLINGUAL DI DUA SEKOLAH AWAM DI SABAH, MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Kebimbangan dalam mendengar memberi kesan buruk kepada pembelajaran bahasa asing. Kebimbangan ini menghalang pelajar mencapai prestasi akademik yang cemerlang dalam pembelajaran bahasa baharu. Sebilangan besar pengkaji menyelidik cara untuk mengurangkan kegelisahan mendengar pelajar, tetapi tidak ramai yang menyiasat hubungan antara FLA dan kecekapan mendengar dalam konteks pelbagai bahasa. Berdasarkan Teori Sosial-Budaya Vygotsky (1978) dalam perkembangan pembelajaran bahasa, kajian yang dijalankan ini bertujuan untuk menentukan perbezaan prestasi pelajar dalam pemahaman mendengar melalui praktis monolingual dan translingual dalam kelas bahasa Perancis, untuk menyiasat korelasi antara kedua-dua amalan bahasa dalam bilik darjah dengan kebimbangan mendengar, dan untuk menganalisis kecekapan penggunaan pembelajaran bahasa yang berbeza dalam menghadapi kebimbangan bahasa di kelas bahasa Perancis. Data penyelidikan melalui kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui laporan penilaian bilik darjah pelajar, ujian pemahaman mendengar, pemerhatian bilik darjah, dan wawancara bersama 56 pelajar yang mempelajari bahasa Perancis di dua buah sekolah menengah harian di Sabah. Keputusan analisis data kuantitatif menunjukkan bahawa dalam bilik darjah translingual, terdapat peningkatan yang ketara dalam prestasi dan pencapaian pelajar dalam kefahaman mendengar. Namun begitu, pelajar percaya bahawa translingual tidak mempunyai pengaruh yang kuat terhadap kebimbangan mendengar pelajar. Dapatan temu bual pula menunjukkan pelajar mempunyai pendapat yang positif tentang amalan translingual dan mereka percaya bahawa amalan translingual meningkatkan pemahaman, keberkesanan dan motivasi mereka terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Perancis. Tiga fungsi utama yang dikenal pasti dalam penggunaan praktik translingual, iaitu praktik interpretatif, pengurusan, dan interaktif, yang didapati memudahkan pembelajaran bahasa Perancis

pelajar. Dapatan penyelidikan ini juga menunjukkan bahawa amalan translingual mengurangkan kegelisahan mendengar yang disebabkan oleh amalan bahasa yang digunakan dalam interaksi di dalam kelas dan membantu menyelesaikan masalah pemahaman pendengaran. Penemuan ini memberi cadangan pendekatan pengajaran dan pembelajaran baharu kepada pelajar, guru, dan pembuat dasar dan seterusnya menjadi batu loncatan untuk penyelidikan lebih lanjut dalam bahasa Perancis sebagai bahasa asing di Malaysia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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This is to confirm that:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
CEFRL	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DELF	*Diplôme d'études en langue française*
SLL	Second language learning
FL	Foreign language
FLA	Foreign language anxiety
FLCAS	Foreign language classroom anxiety
FLAR	Foreign language anxiety reduction
SLA	Second language acquisition
SCT	Socio-cultural theory
CSL	Chinese as Second language
TL	Target language
FFL	French as foreign language
L1	First language
L2	Second language
FLLAS	Foreign language listening anxiety scale
ZPD	Zone proximal development
SPM	*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*
DSKP	*Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran*
CALL	Computer assisted language learning
MALL	Mobile-assisted language learning
GT	Google translate
MOE	Ministry of Education

SMK   *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*

CA   Classroom Assessment

CIEP   *Centre international d'études pédagogiques*

FEI   France Education International

CLL   Community Language Learning

JPN   *Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri*

R   Respondent

S   School

CO   Classroom observation

W   week

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has several sections. It presents and discusses the background of this study, the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, the significance, the limitations of the research, and the definition of the terms used related to this study.

1.1   Background of the study

In this era of rapid globalization and international migration, the ability to communicate in more than one language has become increasingly important. Foreign language learning (FLL) facilitates access to a vast pool of information and therefore creates a populous that helps its government achieve goals vital to sustainability and economic growth. Previous research in foreign languages studies identified reasons for learning the languages, such as possible career opportunities, economic development, and a deep interest in a foreign culture (Dos Santos, 2018). Therefore, languages have become crucial to economic progress as it serves as a bridge connecting people across nations.

Acknowledging the importance of foreign languages in preparing a "global citizen" to accommodate international demands, teaching and learning foreign languages in Malaysia is one of the essential components in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025. According to the MEB 2013-2025, 30% of the students should acquire the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) independent user level in additional languages by 2025. The aim is to produce students that communicate effectively through reading, listening, writing, and speaking in at least three languages and are ready for the international market.

The FLL in Malaysia also aspires to offer students valuable skills from an educational, social, cultural, and professional perspective, openness to the other cultures and promote intercultural exchange (*Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran* Tingkatan 2, 2015). Under this pretense, the government had taken measures to promote foreign language teaching in Malaysian secondary schools (Patricia Nora Riget & Roshidah Hassan, 2020). Therefore, as of2021, 130 schools offered the Japanese language, 77 schools offered the German language, 101 schools offered the French language, and 11 schools offered the Korean language (Source: Curriculum Development Centre, MOE, 2021).

Nonetheless, learning another language is not an easy task. According to CEFRL, to grasp a language, learners must have a good command of four

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language competencies: listening comprehension, written comprehension, writing, and speaking. Among these four linguistics skills, listening comprehension is the most significant skill to acquire, as it plays an essential role in a student's learning of a language (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). In addition, there is also a direct link between speaking and listening, and thus, learners with listening difficulties would also have speaking difficulties. Rost (2015) claimed that the ability to use listening as a language learning tool distinguished a successful and less successful learner.

1.1.1   French as a foreign language (FFL) in Malaysia

The French language was one of the earliest foreign languages offered to Malaysian students. It was first introduced in 1973 at Selangor Secondary Science School and expanded to other boarding schools by 1976 (Hazlina Abdul Halim, 2011). In 2005, the French language was gradually introduced in public schools. As of January 2021, 101 schools provided French as a foreign language lesson. The 101 schools comprised 45 boarding schools, 51 daily schools, and five religious' schools. In total, at the time of this study, 13,761 students were learning French throughout Malaysia.

Accordingly, the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) examination recognized the French language as a subject. The language, however, was taken out of the exam in 2016 due to the lack of candidates. Nevertheless, students learning the French language had the opportunity to take the international French language examination, *Diplôme d'études de la langue française* (DELF). According to Nor Zihan Hussin (2011), students have been sitting for DELF since 1998 to ensure their language proficiency is on par with international standards.

In the FFL context in Malaysia, listening comprehension was identified as the major problem among local students. The 2015-2019 DELF results showed that learners performed poorly in listening comprehension compared to other skills.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 below presents the DELF results of the four language competencies in two Sabah examination centers that shows the low achievement in listening comprehension among French language learners in Sabah.

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Table 1.1: DELF Results (2015-2019) - Kota Kinabalu Examination Center

Year/ Competency	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Written Comprehension	18,06	17,50	17,54	18,63	17,74
Writing	18,84	20,81	18,31	20,26	17,20
Listening Comprehension	12,78	14,00	13,60	17,47	14,96
Speaking	19,56	20,34	17,70	18,83	18,88

Table 1.2: DELF Results (2015-2019) - Lahad Datu Examination Center

Year/ Competency	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Written Comprehension	-	18,51	16,85	17,91	18,70
Writing		20,64	19,96	20,60	18,43
Listening Comprehension		13,96	13,28	16,08	15,73
Speaking		17,04	14,65	17,96	16,94

Past research on listening comprehension also acknowledged the lack of listening competency among French language learners in Malaysia. Nor Zihan Hussin (2011) explored the implementation of listening comprehension in the French language curriculum in Malaysian secondary science schools and the listening strategies used by students. Whereas, Dinie Asyraf Salehan & Omrah Hassan (2017) studied cognitive strategies used in listening comprehension among Bachelor's Degree students in the French language. Both types of research conducted on FLL in Malaysia focused on listening strategies used by the students and found that French language learners in Malaysia used metacognitive and cognitive strategies in listening comprehension classrooms. However, the solution to listening incompetence has been less explored.

A recent study conducted by Jenniesy Majunggi & Hazlina Abdul Halim (2021) in one of the secondary schools in Sabah identified anxiety as one of the factors that caused incompetency in Malaysian students' listening comprehension. Siti Faridah Kamaruddin et al. (2019) found that learners' anxiety and listening also related to the relationship of learners' ineptitude in understanding information and in listening activity tasks that increased anxiety levels. Therefore, when learners fail in their listening tasks, they experience low self-esteem that makes them anxious. Accordingly, teaching and learning a foreign language in Malaysia should emphasize the students' listening anxiety.

1.1.2 Listening comprehension and listening anxiety

Previous research on anxiety and listening comprehension showed the need to downplay the anxiety effect in listening comprehension lessons. Day (2017) and Teoh Mei Lin et al. (2019) claimed that many listening approaches and practices remained the same despite their ineffectiveness. The listening approaches are the grammar-translation approach, the direct method approach, the grammar approach, and the communicative approach (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Based on the traditional grammar-translation approach, the listening activity focused on the description of the second language (L2) in the first language (L1). As for the direct-method approach conducted thoroughly in the target language (TL), the listening activity conducted by "Osmosis" enabled students to listen and answer questions by assuming that students could hear and later understand. This aural/oral method relied on the effectiveness of monolingual teaching; that is, the TL was the only language used by the teacher and students. Finally, the communicative approach enabled listening activities that involved dialogues and role-playing. The activities involved real-life aspects of the communication actions, and mistakes are tolerated, provided they do not interfere with communication. Students have the liberty to use any language and knowledge to complete an activity. The input used during the activities was not restricted solely to a particular lesson, and teacher intervention was restricted once the lesson started. These different methods presented by researchers prove that language instruction in the classroom had an impact on students' listening skills.

Furthermore, Siti Isrokah (2016) claimed that learners' mother tongue or native languages helped avoid blockage during the lesson and minimize learning anxiety. The 10-year research by Ganschow et al. (1998) also concluded that "FLL performance is related to native language learning, that most poor foreign language learners have overt or subtle problems with the phonological/orthographic (and syntactic) components of language, that affective differences are likely to be a consequence of successful or unsuccessful FLL, and that direct and explicit instruction of the language codes holds promise for these students." (p. 254). However, those who believed in monolingual practices believed that other languages in the classroom, bilingual practices, and translingual practices as bad practices (Martin, 2005) or a careless language habit (You, 2007) that provoked language cross-contamination. Another research on French language learners in tertiary education (Hazlina Abdul Halim, 2011; Lai Wan Ho, 2019) acknowledged that native languages highly influenced the errors committed by students in their writing.

The monolingual language policy in the classroom was a common practice until the 19th century (Hall & Cook, 2012). In the 20th century, multilingualism began to gain popular attention among researchers, and the use of native language (L1) in the classroom was no longer forbidden. Previous studies on multilingual classrooms identified the English language as the bridge language or the depot language. It is believed that through a facilitating language, access to the foreign

language becomes easy. On the other hand, in French language learning, Van der Auwera & Van Olmen (2017) concurred that English was "the most romantic of the Germanic languages," and thus, it is the best gateway language to learn French. In addition, English was also used in multilingual classrooms where it was not the teachers' first language (Pugh, 2013).

Other studies on multilingual or translingual classroom policy in Malaysia centeredon the use of Bahasa Malaysia in English language classrooms (Macalister, 2017; Nor, Leong & Ka, 2017). In 2020, a study conducted by Anbareen Jan *et al.* on the use of English in "language other than English (LOTE)" classroom research among international students in Malaysian private universities found that English is the main medium for communication during French, Korean, and Mandarin lessons. Although some international students could communicate in Bahasa Malaysia, English still served as the main medium of communication. The findings of the study also showed that the participants favored monolingual teaching compared to multilingual or translingual teaching although they acknowledged the benefits of using English in facilitating the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

However, the existing literature failed to address neither the role of Malay and English in French language classrooms among local students nor the impact of both language policies on the anxiety of French language learners in Malaysia. Therefore, this research attempts to address these questions.

1.2   Problem Statement

Over the past four decades, research on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and academic achievement was consistent. The meta-analysis research conducted by Botes et al. (2020) on the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and the five forms of academic achievement in foreign language courses confirmed the negative associations and its parallel to the occurrence of both anxiety and low achievement in language learning classrooms. The results indicated that each competence (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) is related negatively to FLCA and not significantly influenced by moderators (age, gender, and type of institution). However, the findings academic achievements for writing and listening and the moderators were underpowered as the studies on this subject were exiguous. Towards the end of their research, Botes et al. (2020) urged researchers to investigate methods in reducing and managing anxiety and its potential effects on achievement in the language learning process.

On the other hand, some studies believed that classroom interaction influenced foreign language acquisition. Scholars believed that direct teaching of the concept in language acquisition was impossible and pointless. For example, Vygotsky (1978) in SCT believed that a child's development occurs through

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interaction. The negotiation and collaboration of knowledge during the learning process developed quality interaction in the classroom (Mercer, 1995) between students and teachers to acquire new knowledge (Duarte, 2019). More knowledgeable teachers and peers were responsible for guiding and assisting in completing linguistic tasks and language production through interaction (Hanna Sundari, 2017). The classroom interaction also determined learners' self-confidence (Thompson & Lee, 2013) and their fear of ambiguity in the classroom (Dewaele & Wei, 2013). Hence, the success of learning depended on the quality of the educational interaction instead of individual capability or teachers' skills (Mercer, 2007).

Consequently, some researchers promote different teaching approaches for partnership and group interaction that facilitate language acquisition. For example, task-based language teaching (Feryok, 2017), collaborative language learning (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018; Storch, 2021), pair and group work/peer interaction (Villarreal & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2021; Kibler, 2017), cooperative learning (Marashi & Khatami, 2017), drama techniques (Masoumi-Moghaddam, 2018), flipped learning, (Forsythe, 2017), and scaffolding strategies (Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2017). Similarly, the study conducted by Özkaynak (2020) concurred with the idea of the association between translingual practices in overcoming language anxiety. Learners participated in the collaborative dialogue that expanded their knowledge and problem-solving abilities, thus reducing their anxiety. Consequently, the medium of instruction or the language used in the classroom was essential to facilitate knowledge exchange. Nevertheless, many are still skeptical about the place of other languages in the foreign language classroom (Anbareen Jan et al., 2020). Therefore, the current research attempts to study the correlation between monolingual and translingual classroom language policy and learners' language anxiety.

Apart from that, FLL research proved that anxiety affected students' language learning process and negatively influenced students' classroom participation (Wan Iman Wan Salim et al., 2017). In Malaysia, there were high anxiety levels among Japanese language undergraduate students. Female students had more anxiety than male students (Muriatul Khusmah Musa et al., 2013). As for the Arabic language, previous studies on lower secondary school students showed that the anxiety level was high and negatively affected their performance (Afandi Yusoff et al., 2019; Mohd Ieruwan Mohamed Mokhtar, 2020). In this research, the fear of negative evaluation was the main factor that highly influenced students' anxiety levels. The "fear-of-losing-face attitude" was prevalent among students. This perception made students scared and avoid expressing themselves in the target language, thus, affecting their learning achievement. Nonetheless, there is little research on French language learning and listening anxiety, especially among public secondary schools in the local context. Indeed, more research in this area is needed to determine the practicality of different language instructions facing language anxiety in French language classrooms.

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1.3 Research objectives

This research addresses different approaches used by teachers in the French language classroom and their impact on students' listening comprehension. In detail, the purpose of this research is as follows: -

a) To determine the differences in students' performance in listening comprehension through monolingual and translingual practices in French as a foreign language in classrooms.

b) To investigate the correlation between classroom language policy of both practices and language listening anxiety.

c) To analyze the practicality of different language instructions facing language anxiety in French language classrooms.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions intend to determine students' achievements through communication in a foreign language classroom during a listening comprehension lesson. Therefore, the questions addressed in the research are as follows: -

a) What are the differences in students' performance in listening comprehension through monolingual and translingual practices in French as a foreign language in the classroom?

b) What is the correlation between the classroom language policy of both practices and language listening anxiety?

c) How practical are different language instructions facing language anxiety in French language classrooms?

1.5 Significance of research

The findings of this study will have a theoretical and pedagogical impact on listening comprehension in FFL.

Accordingly, this study contributes to the present body of knowledge on listening anxiety in FFL from a theoretical context. The present study provides insights into the interaction of knowledge resources in the ZPD model and establishes the relationship among key variables in foreign language listening comprehension. In short, the present research will ascertain the relationship between classroom language policy and students' listening comprehension.

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Further, this study explores the impact of both practices in the Malaysian FFL listening comprehension classroom from a pedagogical context. Firstly, this research seeks to adopt these practices as learning and teaching approaches in the FFL classroom. This study is integral because it provides recommendations of learning methods likely to help solve the listening comprehension problems faced by French language students in Malaysia. To that extent, comparisons of two language practices determined their effectiveness in student learning. This way, it would be easier for teachers to choose the best teaching method and reinvent their existing teaching methods, especially listening comprehension.

Secondly, the research results give teachers and the Ministry of Education essential indications of the students' learning needs. In turn, this helps to find the best possible way to accommodate learning necessities. Emphasizing and highlighting the learning difficulties is fundamental to solving the problems and improving the students' learning incompetence.

Thirdly, there is a lack of research conducted on the learning and teaching of the French language in Malaysia. Therefore, this research aims to shed light on the importance of acquiring new languages and the benefits of being multilingual in Malaysia, in particular, the French language. Most importantly, this research aims to improve the French learning system and contribute to the latest data of the French language research in Malaysia.

1.6   Limitations of research

This study concentrated only on 14-year-old public school students in Sabah that enrolled in a French-language class for two years. There were only two active public schools in Sabah that offered French language classes, i.e., SM SANZAC and SMK Elopura. The French language learners in both schools consisted of 56 Form Two students who eventually became the respondents for this research. The students' French language proficiency was restricted to low proficiency A1 level French learners to answer the objectives of this study. The selected participants could understand simple phrases. The selection excluded Form One students as their vocabulary was very minimal, and Forms 3, 4, and 5 students to find a solution for the lack of competency in listening comprehension from its roots, in the hopes of overcoming the problems faced by other students. Therefore, the research results applied to this group of students only and cannot be generalized to include all French language learners.

Another limitation of this study is related to the theme of the research, i.e., listening comprehension. The study only focused on listening comprehension in secondary schools and excluded other competencies, such as speaking, written comprehension, and writing. However, listening comprehension was chosen over the other competencies as this skill had always been the major problem

among French language learners in Malaysia (Nor Zihan Hussin, 2011). Thus, the study result cannot represent the other skills.

The context of the research also posed a limitation in the present study. Even though initial research focused on the relationship between classroom language policy and student listening achievement in a traditional classroom setting, it was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the research was successfully conducted through online learning via ZOOM and Google Meet. Hence, the findings does not imply to the other types of learning methods.

1.7 Definitions of terms

1.7.1 Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of tension, apprehension, and nervousness associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety may cause distraction and poor absorption of information during the learning process (Xu, 2011). In the present study, the term refers to stress, worry, and fear of students learning a foreign language, i.e., the French language.

1.7.2 Monolingual practice

Monolingual is defined "as a person who knows and uses only one language" or "a person who has an active knowledge of only one language, though perhaps a passive knowledge of others". In this current study, monolingual practice relates to the exclusive use of the French language in the classroom, where all conversation was in the said language (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

1.7.3 Translingual practice, Translanguaging, and Translingualism

Translingual is the idea of the capacity to interact and use multiple languages to communicate (Canagarajah, 2012). In translingual practice, the spatial repertoire of a speaker is constituted by the communicative resource configuration that goes together in particular activities. In the present study, translingual practice explains the situation where language users employ, create, and interpret different languages and transform the information collected to make a new meaning. On the other hand, translanguaging refers to the act of moving between and among languages, while translingualism refers to the instance of moving among languages or a state of being translingual.

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1.7.4 Listening comprehension

According to Ridge (as cited by Wolvin & Coakley, 1994), listening competency is the competence in listening acquired by knowing and doing; and proven by giving appropriate feedback or response. Therefore, listening comprehension incompetency means the inability to understand what he or she heard and to know the meaning of it. In this research, listening comprehension incompetency relates to the students' poor performance and lack of achievement in listening comprehension.

1.8 Structure of research

There are five chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 discusses the background of the research that relates to the purpose and the research questions on listening comprehension incompetency due to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among French language learners in Malaysia, the limitation of this research, and its significance to the research of foreign language learning and teaching.

In Chapter 2, the literature review discusses listening comprehension and foreign language anxiety. This chapter also highlights previous research dimensions related to translingual and monolingual practices. The researcher also focuses on explaining the research gap of this current research based on the concepts of Zone proximal development and scaffolding of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978).

Chapter 3 provides the outline of the research methodology used in this research. The chapter also elaborates the contextual information of the participants, data collection, and analysis procedure in detail.

The research findings in Chapter 4 are in response to the research questions in Chapter 1 with the quantitative (listening comprehension results and listening performance band scores) and qualitative (interview) analysis of the data collected from classroom interaction with the participants.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this research and also discusses research implications and recommendations for future research.

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