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**ATTITUDE AND ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS BAHASA MELAYU AMONG THE
SPEAKERS IN THE STATE OF PAHANG**

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the speakers of bahasa Melayu in the east coast of the Peninsula or more specifically in the state of Pahang Darul Makmur. Six districts in Pahang have been chosen as the area of study namely Temerloh, Maran, Jerantut, Muadzam Shah, Kuala Lipis, and Kuantan. In this study, the attitude and view of the urban and rural communities towards the capability and commercial value of bahasa Melayu will be seen and compared, whether or not they have changed. A close look at the language attitude has been made, and sociolinguistic approach has been used as a theoretical frameworks. As many as 200 questionnaire forms had been distributed to respondents aged between 10 to 61 years old. Other than the questionnaires, the data was also obtained using the interview and the observation methods. Data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate that the language attitude of the East Coast community varies according to the variables that have been determined. Language attitude based on age, religion, educational level and residential location have illustrated a significant difference. However, from the income level and marital status, the language attitude does not show significant difference. All in all, based on the tests of validity and reliability, the finding shows that the attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu in the Malay community residing in the East Coast has been very positive.

Keywords: Level of acquisition, language attitude, acceptance level, sociolinguistics approach, commercial value of bahasa Melayu.

INTRODUCTION

Children acquire their first language sufficiently by the age of five with the help of an innate language acquisition device known as Universal Grammar. This language acquisition device is present in children minds since they are born, and it said to be genetically programmed (Elliot 1987). Chomsky (1988) viewed the process of acquiring

one first language more of an adaptation process that is adapting the Universal Grammar with the grammar of the children first language. In the process of being proficient in bahasa Melayu as the first or second language, the way the first knowledge language is mastered is different from the way the second language is mastered. Unlike the process of mastering the first language knowledge, the mastery of the second language requires more work and a more careful planning. In the process of acquiring second language knowledge, it is very much influenced by the affective factors, namely the attitude and motivation. Positive attitude and higher motivation will result in a better level in the process of acquiring a second language (Noels 2001). Attitude serves as one of the important factors in language learning because if one has a negative attitude towards a language there is no amount of exposure and teaching would have been successful in the language learning process.

Bahasa Melayu has an important role as a language of national integration. This function is applied as the medium of instruction in schools. However, the acceptance towards this language has gradually, day by day, become slowly declining and it is as if this language awaits it's time to be preserved. This study seeks to find out just how far the acceptance of the residents in the rural areas towards bahasa Melayu, the impact of the globalisation and the elevated status of the English Language as the 'great' language to speak at the moment.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Although bahasa Melayu has been sealed in the Constitution, there are still some parties who have neglected it or adopting the attitude of not putting too much emphasis on the language. There have also been doubtful voices expressed over the capability of the language, especially relating to its ability to fully replace English (Awang Sariyan 2007:843). In the implementation process to raise the position of the bahasa Melayu as the language of knowledge, some pressing issues are issues like attitude, interest and also

the determination to instill self-awareness on the use of bahasa Melayu. Such awareness cannot possibly be raised if the language is not granted a high social status value. After more than 52 years that bahasa Melayu has been hailed as the national and official language, the mastery and proficiency of the language among the users of the language still lags behind, although we are talking about the Malay communities themselves (Zainal Abidin 2007:847).

A lot of studies have been done to examine the language attitude on the capability of bahasa Melayu in fulfilling its multifarious functions. In this issue, bahasa Melayu has often been placed next to English in comparison. Therefore, a comprehensive study needs to be carried out in order to see the language phenomenon especially among the societies in Pahang. In this study, researchers intend to examine the language attitude. The main objectives of this study are manifold:

1. To identify the level of acquisition of the standardised bahasa Melayu of the residents of the larger part of Pahang.
2. To identify the attitude and level of acceptance towards the standardised bahasa Melayu of the residents of the larger part of Pahang.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, researchers have selected some methods regarded as suitable to the study, namely the questionnaire method, informant interviews and participatory observation method. The questionnaire form functions as a study tool used to collect the primary data in this language attitude study. The questionnaire encapsulates the questions which measure the level of mastery of bahasa Melayu, the attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu as well as the attitude and opinion on the capability of this language. As many as 200 questionnaire forms are prepared by the researchers to be distributed to six districts

in the state of Pahang. The form is formulated to measure the language attitude among the East Coast societies. The first part of the questionnaire covers eight variables namely; age, gender, marital Status, race, religion, income, education and residential Location. The questionnaire also contains 40 questions divided into three main parts that is measuring the mastery level of bahasa Melayu knowledge, the attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu, and also the attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu.

In this study, the interview method were applied on respondents who are illiterate, suffer from sight problem, and also those finding it difficult to understand the instructions of the questions. Thus, researchers are responsible to interview by way of reading and explaining every question posed in the questionnaire. The interviewees comprise of four Masters Students majoring in Malay Language Studies at The National University of Malaysia. The study began in the district of Temerloh, next Maran, Jerantut, Muadzam Shah, Kuala Lipis and finally the district of Kuantan.

The participatory observation method is also chosen to enable the group to see for themselves how the actual language is spoken among the societies, other than witnessing the culture of the communities being studied. At this point, the purpose of the method lies in looking at the extent of truth held by the data and information compiled. In this study, the group had gone to visit the study areas to look for themselves the level of mastery of the language, the attitude and acceptance also the attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu among the people in the East Coast.

The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analysed by means of the SPSS method. The advantage of using this method is that it is easy to handle and data or information can be processed quickly. Apart from that, this method is able to analyse data with various variables in one time. In this study, the Cross tabulation method, the percentage, the Anova, the validity and reliability methods which contained in the SPSS system have been used by the researchers to process data. The reliability test has used the *Alpha cronbach*, whereas to measure the validity, the *product moment* correlation

method has proven useful. In the Anova statistical test, the *post hoc test* has been adopted.

For the theoretical framework, this study use sociolinguistics theory. Sociolinguistic investigate the relationship between language and society that links the two areas to be studied, the formal structure of language and sociological structure. This study was conducted according to a fixed platform. Researchers use the theory of Ralph Fasold as guidelines for the analysis. Fasold (1984:180) in his book *The sociolinguistics of society* postulated that the sociolinguistic research is interesting because of the language selection phenomenon. Fasold illustrated the sociolinguistic aspects of language using the term *societal multilingualism* which shows that there are many languages in the community.

Selection of a language according to Fasold (1984:180) is not a simple task. Therefore, a person who acquires two or more languages must choose which language he would use to communicate. Use of language in society relate to various factors whether linguistic factors or non-linguistic, such as factors related to socio-cultural. Thus, each community has uniqueness in terms of socio-cultural values and variations of language use in social interaction. Fasold (1984) mentioned that the phenomenon of variations in language use in society is controlled by social factors, culture, and situation.

LITERATURE SURVEY

De Gaer, Pustjens, Van Damme and De Munter (2006) have done a study to look at the relationship between attitude towards language learning and school environment. Their finding shows that there is no significant relationship between the school environments with the attitude towards the language learning process faced by the students. The study also discovers that there is no significant relationship between the attitude towards language learning and student's intelligence level. Students categorised as smart students

also demonstrate less positive attitude and low motivation towards the language learning process, if they are not really happy with the school environment.

The study done by Asmah Haji Omar (2006) who focuses on *Pertemuan antara Peradaban Melayu dengan Peradaban Luar: Tumpuan Khas Kepada Sikap Terhadap Bahasa dan Unsur-Unsur Budaya* (The relation between Malay and External Civilisation: Special Focus On The Attitude Towards Language and Cultural Elements) is also a substantial work that examines the Malay attitude towards language and culture of other communities as the outcome of the symbiosis with the external culture. Following Asmah, in any given civilisation, there has already existed societal members' behavioural control, which enables or disallows certain conducts or actions.

A study done by Bernaus, More and Azevedo (2007) illustrates that the affective factor which is the attitude and motivation have a significant and important correlation with the background or the demography of the students. If we draw a comparison of the influence of two main factors, which is the student's background and the policy enforced by the administrators, it is apparent that the background factor influences the affective factor more. In other words, the policy formulated by the ruling authority must be set to match the aspirations of the people. If a policy is forced onto the people, it would have been difficult to be accepted by the public.

A study carried out by Csiger and Donyei (2005) sheds light on an interesting finding, whereby in the second language learning process, it is very much influenced by the integrational motivation of the students. The integrational motivation means the desire to be part of the speakers of a particular language. High integrational motivation is able to guarantee the success of language education process. This study by csiger dan Donyei has clearly demonstrated to the second language education programmes' planners and implementers, that the second language learning process can have a greater possibility of being more successful if the teachers and school can elevate the level of integrational motivation among students.

In the work of Zamri Mahamod and Zarina Othman (2001), it is discovered that the performance on the subject of bahasa Melayu (BM) released by the Malaysia Board of Examination shows a decline be it at the SPM or the PMR level. In this context, attitude is said to be one of the contributing factors to the decline of the students' achievement in BM. Bearing this in mind, Zamri Mahamod and Zarina Othman (2001) have conducted a study entitled *The Attitude of Chinese Students towards the Learning of BM as the Second Language*. The study outcome finds out that a lot of Chinese students are uncertain why they have to learn BM. Yet, almost half of the Chinese students still adopt a positive attitude towards the BM learning process as their second language, especially female Chinese students.

The work carried out by Loewen, Li, Thompson, Nakatsukasa, Ahn and Chen (2009) among university students using the Likert-scaled questionnaire forms has found out that the assumption or belief towards the importance of grammar varies among the university students who learn English as the second language or foreign language. The finding also shows that the university students have varying assumptions on the grammatical exercises or drills in the language teaching and learning processes. Other than that, the respondents also have different assumptions on the importance of making corrections, and the effect of grammatical error analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Data was analysed using the SPSS system. The findings are presented based on the already-established variables namely age, gender, marital status, race, religion, income level, level of education and residential location. The influence or effect of every variable has been analysed, and the findings given in the section below.

Age

Based on the data obtained, it is found that there has been no difference in the mastery of bahasa Melayu based on age. There are no significance differences on the level of the acquisition of bahasa Melayu when compared between different age levels. The statistics can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level of Acquisition of Malay Based on Age

Source of Variation	JKD	DK	MKD	F	P
Between Group	385.211	4	96.303	1.379	0.243
In Group	13548.528	194	69.838		
Total	13933.739	198			

p > 0.05

Attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu according to age difference have well demonstrated a rather significant difference. The age group of 20 years and below has shown a low level of attitude and acceptance compared to those aged 21 years and above. The possible reason for this is that the people aged below 20 years is the time of adolescent when the young teenagers have yet to understand the significant role of the language. At this age, they are more drawn to the outside culture than towards the local culture. This means that a great influence is seen in the factor of adulthood, especially where the attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu are concerned. From the aspect of the social maturity at this early adulthood level, they still cannot relate cultural components especially language with something that needs to be understood and internalised into their thoughts and emotions.

Same goes with the attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu that sample the lowest mean which is at the 20 years of age and below, although statistically there is no significant difference among the existing groups. This issue is still directed at the social intelligence of teenagers aged 20 years and below, where they are more influenced by certain symbols. In such a modernised world, it remains a fact that bahasa

Melayu is not a language made globalised or known to all races. Science and technology are more frequently provided in English, so much so that there emerges a sense of disbelief or lack of certainty among the teenagers towards the ability of bahasa Melayu in the world of globalisation. In summary, those who are at this age level are still unable to think deeply over the potential of bahasa Melayu in the world of science and technology. To add to this, the issue of teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English will become a *soft stimulus* that instils the thinking that the quality of bahasa Melayu is deteriorating in the rat race of the globalised world. In turn, for the middle and late adulthood groups, they seem to be able to accept that the teaching and learning of English only stand out as a *brainstorm* to enhance the learning of science and mathematics, not the reality about the poor status of bahasa Melayu among other world languages.

Gender

When looking at the gender, the level of acquisition, attitude and acceptance as well as attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu show that there is no significant difference between men and women. This is explained by the fact that either gender has equal opportunity to learn, gain information and facilities to know every dimension of knowledge that has advanced at the moment.

In terms of the mastery of bahasa Melayu between the genders, they have possessed the same ability, because bahasa Melayu is taught in every level of education - primary school, secondary school, and even in the tertiary level. In reality, between female and male there is observed to be the same behaviour in the learning and teaching processes so much so that it has left an impact to the attitude and acceptance over bahasa Melayu, also the attitude and opinion of the capability of the language.

Marital Status

In terms of the marital status, is it those who are already married or those who have not, no difference is observed in terms of the mastery and acquisition of bahasa Melayu. This is caused by the fact that the mastery of knowledge of the language is a formal aspect among the Malaysian communities in Malaysia - something that is very obvious that the language is important to be known and mastered by the communities. Where the attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu, also the attitude and opinion on the language's capability are concerned both groups have shown a significant difference. This is because of the psychosocial maturity owned by the ones who have been married, where they have the stabilised, more broadened way of thinking as they treasure the cultural heritage that they possess. The marriage factor in extensive *literature* is known as an aspect that influences the way one thinks. People who are married are likely to look at something abstract more than they would at concrete matters.

Race

For race or ethnicity, the mastery level, attitude and acceptance also attitude and opinion on the language's capability, a difference is noted between the Malay ethnic groups and the non-Malay counterparts. If we look at the level of mastery, for the non-Malays, it is understood that they have a lower level of mastery of bahasa than the Malays. This is due to the fact that for the Malays, bahasa Melayu is their mother tongue or their first language. Data from the research can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Level of Acquisition of Bahasa Melayu According to Race

Race	N	Mean	SP	DK	t	P
Malay	178	46.15	7.98	195	3.549	0.00
Non-Malay	19	39.21	9.20			

The same applies for the aspects like attitude and acceptance, also attitude and opinion on the ability of bahasa Melayu, the non-Malays have sampled a lower level than the Malay counterparts, probably because of the sociocultural factor, that human is inclined to take language as part of their culture, and that it will create egocentricity in culture. From the viewpoint of the cognitive psychology, culture has been ingrained as early as one can remember and one that has become the schema in one's way of thinking. To put simply, there has already been the likelihood that the best culture is the culture of our own community. Everyone will try to show that their own culture fares way better than other cultures.

Religion

In terms of religion, the mastery of language, attitude and acceptance also attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu have shown that the Muslims stay at a higher level compared to the non-Muslims. This is due to the social statement of 'Islam is Malay and Malay is Islam'. As we speak of the Malay issues, whether in the social, culture or political contexts, they are synonymous with Islam - this makes it plausible that the non-Muslims have not shown the same level with their Muslim counterparts. Religion is one very subjective issue and carries along a very strong emotional attachment. Everyone will be prone to reject anything that is not included in the religion he or she believes in. Table 3 shows this data.

Table 3: Attitude and Acceptance Based on Religion

Religion	N	Mean	SP	DK	t	P
Muslims	177	75.34	9.21	193	5.922	0.00
Non-Muslims	18	60.94	14.80			

p < 0.05

Income Level

In terms of income, the mastery of knowledge, attitude and acceptance also the attitude and opinion on the capability of the language does not demonstrate any difference. This is due to the fact that the income variable does not significantly influence the communication process in bahasa Melayu, whether they have high or low income. Also, the attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu are not influenced by income. In many aspects, income is a variable that is influential on life pattern, whereas it is less influential where the cultural pattern is concerned.

Educational level

In terms of the educational level, the level of mastery of the bahasa Melayu knowledge does illustrate the difference in attitude. It is found that highly educated people show a higher level as compared to those whose education finished at secondary and primary schools. This is explained by the fact that the influence of higher education in this country by way of raising the status of bahasa Melayu as the language of knowledge, which sees the advancement of the language at the higher education level.

The attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu receive the same fate, where the highly educated group would show a higher level compared to those from other educational backgrounds. This is because, the influence of the culture of the education

that has stressed on the use of bahasa Melayu, while the attitude and opinion on how able bahasa Melayu is, do not show any difference. To explain this, the concept on the capability of this particular language leans more towards the cultural pattern that bahasa Melayu is seen more as the national language of the country.

Residential Location

When we talk about the location, there has been no difference between the mastery level of bahasa Melayu of the urban and rural residents. A reason for this is the fact that the societies, either living in the rural or urban areas tend to use bahasa Melayu as their official language. This means that both the urban and rural citizens have received the same education on bahasa Melayu, whereas a striking difference is observed among the attitude and acceptance as well as the attitude and opinion on the capability of bahasa Melayu between rural and urban areas. In this context, the rural residents tend to have a higher level than those residing in the cities. This is because they are yet to receive any kind or form of influence that changes their attitude towards bahasa Melayu. Put simply, the influence of modernisation and globalisation gives the implication towards the attitude adopted and opinion held on the capability of the language. The city dwellers are more likely to be affected by modernisation and globalisation. Other than that, it can be said that for the rural people, they still cling on firmly to the culture, especially when the symbolisation of language mirrors this aspect.

There is a relationship between the mastery level of bahasa Melayu with the attitude and acceptance of the language. It shows the fact that one's knowledge can really influence his or her attitude. In the theory of cognitive development, knowledge is the policy capital for one to form a perception towards any object or something he faces. The perception varies according to the knowledge that he has.

There is also a correlation between the mastery level of bahasa Melayu knowledge with the attitude and acceptance of the language. This shows that the knowledge relates

with the assessment of an object. This means, the higher and the better the knowledge on a subject, the higher and the better the assessment given on that subject. Knowledge and attitude of a person can affect the assessment on a particular object

CONCLUSION

Findings from this research illustrate that attitude have a significant and important correlation with the background or the demography of the respondents. It is apparent that the background factor influences the affective factor of respondents. The attitude refers to the affective matters, which have a lot to do with the feelings or something felt in the soul. Attitude would normally be able to determine one's behaviour, for example one with a positive attitude towards something may be inclined to do something more eagerly, and somehow avoids from doing things contrasting to his or her feelings and inclinations.

Attitude can be defined as a behaviour shown towards something. The term Language Attitude partly refers to the assumption and evaluation given by the society towards a particular language, or about other dialects in a language. From the definition and the presumption of the language attitude, it can be concluded that one's attitude towards a language can be seen based on various factor such as psychological, geographical, cultural, education and others.

Base on the statistical analysis and discussion done earlier, researchers have found that the language attitude of the East Coast communities varies following variables that have been determined. Based on the SPSS analysis, the percentage calculation, the Anova statistical test and both the validity and reliability methods demonstrate that there is a significant difference between age, race, religion, educational level and residential location. However, if we look at the level of income and the marital status, the analysis shows that the difference is not very significant.

Based on the data of this study, to look at it as a whole, the East Coast communities specifically in the state of Pahang have a positive view, especially the Malay ethnic group towards bahasa Melayu. In terms of the level of proficiency of bahasa Melayu, attitude and acceptance of bahasa Melayu, as well as the attitude and opinion held over the capability of the language, Malays show a higher level and more positive views in comparison with other ethnic groups.

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