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Learning English in a Non-supportive Environment among Malay Learners in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRAK

Kertas kerja ini dihasilkan berasaskan pada satu kajian yang bertujuan untuk menyelidiki perkara berikut: (i) tahap pendedahan terhadap bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di kalangan pelajar Melayu, and (ii) kekuatan pertalian antara pendedahan terhadap bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar berkenaan dengan pencapaian mereka dalam bahasa tersebut. Andaian yang digunakan ialah semakin tinggi tahap pendedahan terhadap bahasa Inggeris yang diterima oleh pelajar berkenaan, maka semakin cekaplah mereka dalam menguasai bahasa tersebut. Sampel kajian melibatkan 441 orang pelajar Melayu Tingkatan Empat dari beberapa buah sekolah pilihan di Selangor. Untuk mengumpulkan data, soal selidik digunakan bagi mendapatkan maklumat tentang pencapaian pelajar dalam kertas Bahasa Inggeris peringkat SRP dan untuk mengukur tahap pendedahan mereka terhadap bahasa Inggeris. Penganalisisan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan prosedur jadual silang dan korelasi. Hasil kajian ini membuktikan bahawa para pelajar yang pada keseluruhannya lemah dalam bahasa Inggeris didapati menerima kadar pendedahan yang minimum terhadap bahasa tersebut. Terdapat juga bukti tentang wujudnya korelasi yang signifikan antara pendedahan terhadap bahasa Inggeris dengan kecekapan dalam bahasa tersebut. Kertas kerja ini seterusnya membincangkan situasi pemelajaran bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia yang pada keseluruhannya tidak menggalakkan. Kertas kerja ini juga mencadangkan strategi pengajaran yang mungkin boleh diambil untuk mengatasi masalah pemelajaran ini.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the degree of exposure to English as a second language amongst Malay learners and the strength of the relationship between exposure to English amongst the learners and their competence in the language. It was assumed that the higher the degree of exposure to English the learners received, the more competent they were in the language. The sample of the study consisted of 441 Form Four Malay learners from selected schools in Selangor. For the collection of data, a questionnaire was used to gather information relating to the learners' achievement in the SRP English Language paper and to measure the degree of their exposure to English. The analysis of data was carried out by using the cross tabulation and correlation procedures. The study showed that the learners, who were generally weak in English, received a minimal amount of exposure to the language. There was also indication of the presence of a significant relationship between exposure to English and competence in the language. The learning environment for English in Malaysia which is generally non-supportive is also discussed and possible teaching strategies to overcome the learning problem are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

English in the Malaysian Education System

Teachers of English today are generally disheartened by the deteriorating standard of competence in English among learners. In spite of its status as a second language (L2), English has in reality moved towards that of a foreign language (FL). The assumption among educators and the public is that this is due to the existing education system (first implemented in 1970) in which Malay is the medium of instruction in all schools while English, formerly the medium of instruction, is taught only as a subject.

The Standard of English Proficiency

Although English occupies the status of an L2 within the education system, it is genuinely an L2 only to a handful of English-educated urbanites to whom the deteriorating standard of competence in the language is of concern. Nonetheless, this situation is inevitable because the education system is not producing English-educated individuals as it had during the pre-1970s. At the same time, the majority of Malay-medium learners of today see English as nothing more than a school subject.

The English Language Programmes in Schools

Following the change in the education system, the exposure to English among learners has reduced considerably. To meet this situation, several measures have been taken by the Ministry of Education, such as setting up committees responsible for the planning of the English programmes for the primary and secondary school levels. Syllabuses have been designed and put into practice (e.g. the Communicational Syllabus for Upper Secondary Schools in 1977, the New Curriculum for Primary Schools in 1982, and the New Curriculum for Secondary Schools in 1988) and supporting materials such as handbooks and textbooks are produced for teachers and learners. Extensive exposure to English for learners is provided by the Educational Radio and Television Programmes of the Ministry through the educational media services. Apart from this, more teachers of English are trained through the pre-service and in-service Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) training programme offered in local colleges and universities; some promising candidates are sent overseas for the same purpose.

English in Tertiary Institutions

In conformity with the education system, English is no longer part of the requirement for admission into local tertiary institutions. It is at the discretion of these institutions to determine the level of English required for their students and to design their own English curriculum. Normally, the programmes range from the very basic to the most advanced, depending on student needs. The primary concern of teaching English is not so much to enable students to speak or to write effectively, but rather to enable them to extract information from reference materials which are mostly in English. In other words, the emphasis is on English for Special Purposes (ESP). Subsequently, student achievement in speaking and writing, as it is in schools, is far from satisfactory.

Factors contributing to Low Achievement in English

There are a number of factors related to the education system that have contributed to low achievement in English, some of which are discussed below.

Contact with English

The design and implementation of the existing education system are such that opportunities for contact with English among learners are greatly reduced. In schools, the allocation of class time for the learning of English, i.e. between 200 to 300 minutes per week as the sum total of exposure to the language, is insufficient. Given the time constraint, nothing much can be achieved by the learners.

Outside school, the situation is far from encouraging. The majority of learners come from deprived homes or from rural areas whose immediate need for English is almost non-existent; whose environment is detached from the use of the language. Unlike the situation in the pre-1970s, the English learning environment for most learners today has diminished.

The Syllabus

The common content syllabus has to be covered by the teacher irrespective of the learners' ability. Every item in the syllabus is taught and equal weight is given to all items for fear that an item not taught may be tested in the examination (Rodgers 1979).

Thus teachers are left with no alternative apart from covering the entire syllabus and drilling the learners to answer examination type questions so that the passing rate could be maintained at an acceptable level. In such a situation, very little learning takes place.

However, the pace of teaching cannot be slowed down for the under-achievers. What matters to the education authorities and the public is that learners should achieve some degree of success in examinations. Therefore, it has become a common practice among teachers that the focal

point of classroom teaching is the syllabus and not the learners. The syllabus, which should have been treated as a guide for teaching, is not adapted to meet the level of a particular class.

Public Examination

There are two public examinations conducted by the Ministry of Education in which English is a compulsory subject for all candidates, i.e. the Sijil Rendah Pelajaran or SRP (the junior certificate) and the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or SPM (the school certificate) examinations. But English is not a prerequisite to certification in the sense that even if a candidate fails the subject he could still pass the examinations. This has affected the learners' attitudes and motivation to learn the language which are detrimental to achievement.

Teachers of English

The shortage of English teachers continues to be acute especially in the rural schools. Some do not have any TESL training and are specialists in other disciplines (see Table 6). The shortage is aggravated by the annual increase in the number of the school-going population[1]. At the same time, it is difficult to get candidates from among the Malay-medium school leavers to be recruited as teachers of English. Therefore, with a class of between 30 to 40 learners and with several classes of English to teach, the workload for teachers is very heavy. This has serious repercussions on the quality of teaching.

The Learners

Among learners, at one extreme, there is a handful who are proficient in English. At the other extreme, there are the poorly proficient ones who form the majority. The latter are generally not exposed to English except, of course, during the English lessons. Their attitudes are largely determined by the language learning situation and by examination priorities. They would rather spend more time on other subjects which are compulsory for certification and neglect English which has no impact on examination results.

The negating factors discussed above illustrate the fact that the learning environment for most learners is generally non-supportive. This is chiefly due to the lack of exposure to English as observed in a study reported below.

THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the issue of the failure of learners to achieve an acceptable level of competence in English despite having learned the language for many years in school. Teachers often remarked that the learners' failure was due to, among other things, insufficient exposure to the language. To confirm this, quantitative data relating to competence as the dependent variable and exposure as the independent variable were gathered for analysis.

The questions that guided the study were as follows:

(1) Does the level of English competence among Malay-medium learners indicate underachievement?
(2) Are the learners sufficiently exposed to English?
(3) Is there a significant relationship between competence in English and exposure to the language amongst the learners?

The assumptions were as follows:

(1) The learners were generally weak in English.
(2) They were not highly exposed to the language.
(3) There was a significant relationship between competence and exposure, i.e. the higher the degree of exposure to English the more competent the learners were in the language.

METHODOLOGY

The study involved 441 Form Four Malay learners of English as an L2 from nine selected schools in the Kelang and Kuala Langat-Sepang districts of Selangor who had been studying the language for nine years. The sampling technique adopted was that of cluster sampling, i.e. a number of schools were identified and selected, and from these schools all learners from the required ethnic group (i.e. Malay) and the required educational level (i.e. Form Four) were selected.

Although the study was conducted within the confines of an insufficiently large sample of

[1]Based on figures from the Ministry of Education, 117,242 government school candidates sat for the SPM examination in 1980 and 168,344 in 1990; therefore the annual increase of the school-going population is about 2.76%.

Malay learners of English as an L2, being Malay-educated and with a generally rural background, they characterized other Malay learners of English as an L2 in the country.

A questionnaire was used, modelled on the Likert-type scale, to measure the degree of exposure to: (1) written English (through reading materials such as books, magazines/periodicals and newspapers), (ii) scripted spoken English (as heard through radio and television); and (iii) unscripted spoken English (through verbal interaction with family members and friends). The questionnaire also provided information relating to the learners' competence in English as indicated by their achievement in the SRP English paper.

A total score of a cluster of items for each of these three variables was computed - the top two-fifths of the total score representing high exposure, the middle one-fifth moderate exposure, and the bottom two-fifth low exposure. Therefore, it was the overall score on exposure and not the individual score for each item that formed the basis of categorization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Competence in English:

The learners were found to be generally weak in English as indicated by their achievement in the SRP English paper (Table 1). Only 14 (3.2%) obtained grades 1-2 (distinction) and 116 (26.3%) grades 3-6 (credit), as many as 212 (48.1%) grades 7-8 (weak pass) and 99 (22%) grade 9 (fail).

TABLE I
Distribution of sample on SRP English paper

Grade		Frequency	
1–2	(Distinction)	14	(3.2%)
3–6	(Credit)	116	(26.3%)
7–8	(Pass)	212	(48.1%)
9	(Fail)	99	(22.4%)
Total		441	(100%)

Exposure to English:

Overall, the students were generally found to be insufficiently exposed to: (i) written English (Table 2), (ii) scripted spoken English (Table 3) and (iii) unscripted spoken English (Table 4).

TABLE 2
Distribution of sample on exposure to written English

Exposure	Frequency	
Low	367	(83.2%)
Moderate	64	(14.5%)
High	10	(2.3%)
Total	441	(100%)

TABLE 3
Distribution of sample on exposure to scripted spoken English

Exposure	Frequency	
Low	173	(39.2%)
Moderate	218	(49.4%)
High	50	(11.3%)
Total	441	(100%)

TABLE 4
Distribution of sample on exposure to unscripted-spoken English

Exposure	Frequency	
Low	355	(80.5%)
Moderate	74	(16.8%)
High	12	(2.7%)
Total	441	(100%)

The learners were not highly exposed to written English in the sense that very few of them read enough English books, magazines/periodicals and newspapers. Their contact with the scripted form of the language, through radio and television, was slightly higher than their contact with the written and unscripted spoken forms of the language. This could possibly be due to the entertaining nature of the media. Exposure to the unscripted spoken form of the language was also minimal. Very few used English when interacting with family members and friends.

Relationship between English Competence and Exposure:

The correlation (Pearson product-moment) matrix (Table 5) shows significant relationships between competence in English (SRP) and exposure (i.e. exposure to written English [EWE]; exposure and scripted spoken English [ESSE]; and exposure and unscripted spoken English [EUSE] as a cluster of variables).

TABLE 5
Inter-variable correlation coefficients
(Competence-exposure)

	SRP	EWE	ESSE	EUSE
SRP	1.000	.183 ***	.156 ***	.264 ***
EWE		1.000	.190 ***	.397 ***
ESSE			1.000	.285 ***
EUSE				1.000

Total Sample: 441
*** Significant at <0.001
** Significant at <0.01
* Significant at <0.05

Abbreviations:
SRP Sijil Rendah Pelajaran English Paper
EWE Exposure to Written English
ESSE Exposure Scripted Spoken English
EUSE Exposure to Unscripted Spoken English

The correlations between the variables yield values of:

(1) r=0.183 p<0.001 on EWE and SRP;
(2) r=0.156 p<0.001 on ESSE and SRP; and
(3) r=0.264 p<0.001 on EUSE and SRP.

The low but positively significant correlations offer slight support for the assumption that learners who had a higher degree of exposure to English (in this case written English, scripted spoken English and unscripted spoken English) are more competent in the language than those who did not.

The link between the two variables as indicated in the table is compatible with previous studies (Briere 1978, Chandrasegaran 1979, Chesterfield *et al.* 1983, Hamayan *et al.* 1977 and Seliger 1977). This implies that exposure is important in attaining proficiency in the Target Language (TL). Exposure provides a learner with opportunities to communicate in the TL which is considered the most effective means of learning the language (Spolsky 1968). Hence, the lower the degree of exposure the lower will be the expected level of proficiency.

The Learning Environment for English as an L2 in Malaysia

Studies by Jamali Ismail (1990a, 1990b) indicate that the Malay-medium learners' weakness in English is neither a question of negative attitudes nor the lack of motivation. No doubt attitudinal-motivational variables are important but that favourable attitudes and strong motivation are not necessarily a condition for success in L2 learning. Their weakness is apparently a question of insufficient exposure to the language and probably the outcome of some instructional as well as family socio-economic variables.

Outside the classroom, at home especially, exposure to English among learners is at its minimum. In other words, the environment is not at all supportive for the learning of English. In schools every measure is taken to facilitate learning - i.e. the introduction of new curricula, the use of effective methodology, the training and retraining of teachers. However, there is no denying that learning needs to be supplemented by a supportive environment outside the classroom to enable the learners to improve their performance in English through active use of the language. Upshur (1968) has confirmed that the most efficient language learning occurred in informal situations outside the classroom when the learner must make communicative use of the language variety to be learned.

Studies conducted by Briere (1978), Chesterfield *et al.* (1983), Hamayan *et al.* (1977) and Seliger (1977), for example, provide ample evidence indicating the importance of exposure in determining success in L2 learning. This being the case, learners of the L2 in the L2 community (i.e in the 'natural' L2 setting) are at the advantage of substantially being exposed to the language whereas the great majority of L2 learners learning the L2 outside the L2 community (as in the case of learning English in Malaysia) are not.

It is now evident that learning an L2 in a formal setting must be supplemented by exposure and practice in a supportive informal setting. But the setting in Malaysia is not always supportive in

terms of exposure to the language and in terms of the attitutes of the teachers, the learners and the community.

First, in schools some teachers fail to understand the learning situation and the attitutes of the learners. They also have a low opinion and low expectation of their learners. But teachers are rarely aware of their own attitudes. In addition, the teachers might come from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, or they might be teachers of other subjects and therefore lack the insight of psychological, sociological, linguistic and methodological aspects of L2 teaching. Worse still, the teachers might not be proficient enough in the language (probably due to the environment and not that they refuse to improve themselves - *The Star*, May 6, 1991: 2) and teach the subject due to the shortage of staff. Consequently, there is a great range of difference in the manner teachers deal with learners.

In the placement of teachers, the tendency is to send the newly trained young teachers to serve in rural schools (where the bulk of the school-going population in the country is) since in such schools the shortage of English teachers is critical. Senior teachers generally refuse to serve in the schools for too long, their preference being the schools in the bigger towns. This also applies to women teachers (the majority of whom happen to be teachers of English) who prefer to be with their husbands who serve as senior executives in town (*The Star*, March 6, 1991: 1). Consequently, some urban schools have excess teachers of English who end up teaching other subjects while the rural schools continue to be staffed by new and inexperienced teachers (Table 6).

Second, learners, whether from the villages, small towns or even the state capitals, generally share a common ethos, i.e. respect for authority and the elderly. Therefore in class, in front of their teacher - the authority - they appear passive. In reality they are shy but, given the proper encouragement, they could be very responsive. Unfortunately, their passiveness has often been misinterpreted as laziness, which some teachers fail to understand especially those who are ill-equipped for the job but have been compelled by circumstances to teach English.

Shyness among the learners leads to reluctance to practise speaking English. They are generally reticent and lack the confidence to speak the language for fear of making mistakes and being laughed at. It has been proven that shyness affects performance in the language; the less shy the learners are the better they perform (Hamayan *et al.* 1977).

Finally, the community within which the learners live generally disfavour the use of English. Those who try to speak English might be ridiculed or regarded as showing off. At the same time the general feeling is that the ability to speak English is regarded as a sign of belonging to a higher social class and a symbol of urbanization although not all urban people are English-speaking (Asmah Haji Omar 1975). Actually, since colonization, the prestige of English among Malaysians has always been unquestionably high. Their expressed lack of interest in English is merely an excuse for their being weak in the language. Malay learners are therefore 'sort of in a dilemma' (Jamali Ismail 1990a).

TABLE 6
Distribution of English teachers (%) based on years of teaching experience by schools

Schools	Years of teaching experience						Total:
	–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	+26	
Rural	73.0	18.9	5.4	2.7	–	–	100.0% (N=37)
Urban	30.6	32.7	6.1	18.4	10.2	2.0	100.0% (N=49)

Note: The total N (i.e. 86) were sampled from eleven schools (four rural and five urban) in Selangor. Among them, 59.5% of those in rural schools and 32.7% of those in urban schools were teachers of other disciplines not trained to teach English.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

In spite of the non-supportive environment, some measures could still be taken to encourage the learning of English. First, the possibility of streaming or regrouping learners needs to be taken into account since the wide range of learner ability in class is rarely given attention. The effect of regrouping on the weaker learners can be psychologically detrimental when the feeling of being inferior creeps in. However, regrouping can narrow the range of language ability of a particular class since the advanced and the weaker learners are placed in separate classes. At the same time, this will ease the teacher in his task as he no longer has to face a class with a wide range of language ability, leaving the brighter learners unchallenged and the weaker learners neglected. Besides, whenever necessary, remedial measures can be taken to help the weaker students.

Second, class size has to be reduced to enable the teacher to pay individual attention to learners. It is not uncommon to see, at all school levels, classes consisting of about 30 to 40 (or even more!) learners. This is due to the shortage of teachers and classrooms both as a result of a growing number of school children from year to year (as discussed earlier). In such a situation, a teacher will find it difficult to attend to the learners' individual needs. For the English teacher, with several classes of English to teach and with so many learners in a class, a thorough assessment of learners' work is a heavy burden. The only way out is to reduce the amount of assignments; this means that there will be lack of practice on the part of the learners, the outcome of which is detrimental to achievement. Further, in the context of Malay-medium schools, since it is the English teacher who is the main conversational partner for the learners as a resource of increasing English proficiency, the smaller the class size the greater will be the opportunity for teacher-learner interaction in the language.

Third, teacher qualifications need to be improved by sending more teachers for in-service courses or to provide wider opportunities for them to go for further studies. A teacher should have a sound knowledge relating to his subject and to his job. He should

> ... have acquired an understanding of current theories of language acquisition and to be familiar with and attuned to the sociocultural traditions of the students.
>
> (Tucker cited in Alptekin 1981: 281).

Unfortunately, the training programmes themselves do not often help develop cross-cultural understanding as part of teachers' pedagogic task. In the Malaysian context, this is of prime importance owing to the multi-ethnic background of the country. Teachers, who might come from different sociocultural backgrounds, should be sensitive to the rural sociocultural traditions of his students.

Teacher attitudes and teacher expectation of learner performance need to be suitably adjusted to meet the present English learning situation. He must understand his learners and, in addition, he must be interested in them more than anything else. It is the teacher who determines how well and how much the learners should learn. An enterprising and creative teacher will always be able to devise and adapt his teaching materials to his learner's ability. In the hands of a skillful teacher, even unsatisfactory teaching material can be used successfully in class. However, not all teachers are 'born' - creativity and skill are developed through experience.

The shortage of teachers has to be overcome by training more teachers, i.e. pre-service training. The possibility of getting assistance from English-speaking countries in the supply of teachers should be given due consideration. Above all, well-trained and experienced teachers should be posted to rural schools (*The Star*, May 5, 1991).

Finally, ways and means have to be sought to compensate for the insufficient exposure to English, at least in class. This can be achieved by providing as much opportunity as possible for the learner to practise speaking (and later writing) in the language. Speaking is the best way to learn to speak. The speaking task given should be within the learner's ability to perform. Success in his performance will create interest and confidence.

Creating situational contexts and role play can provide opportunity for the learner to practise speaking in the language (Haycraft 1978). Opportunities to be in the real situation for most learners are very rare or even non-existent. So, the teacher has to depend on simulated situations in the classroom.

> The situation will be controlled carefully to teach the new language material...in

such a way that there can be no doubt in the learner's mind of the meaning of what he hears' (Pittman 1967).

The primary value of foreign language classes....may be, therefore, the creation of a range of situations in which the student may learn the language varieties appropriate to those situations....
(Upshur 1968: 121).

Language laboratories can undoubtedly facilitate aural-oral practice (Dakin 1973; Haycraft 1978: Howatt and Dakin 1974). But, the high cost of establishing one is beyond the means of the average school. However, a cassette-recorder can be used as an alternative and, being cheap, almost all schools should be able to afford one. The English teacher should certainly have one as part of his teaching equipment. The cassette-recorder can be a vital tool in listening comprehension exercises. It also provides opportunities for the pupils to listen to other speakers - perhaps even native speakers of English - besides the class teacher. Varieties of teaching materials for aural-oral practice are available in the market. A teacher could also prepare his own materials to suit the needs of his class.

The possibility of using a video recorder can also be explored as it is easily available in the market. Video is apparently superior to audio in helping a learner to understand what is being said because '...gestures, the physical context and behavioral clues are all present' (Gower and Walters 1983: 163).

Equipment like computers can also be used in teaching. In fact, this equipment is now becoming increasingly popular among language teachers. Many teacher training institutions have introduced computer-assisted language learning course (or CALL) as a component in their training programme.

There are also other activities. i.e. singing and listening to selected songs, language games, etc., that can be carried out to increase the volume of communicative exercises and at the same time to make English learning more meaningful and enjoyable. Materials from magazines and newspapers can be adapted and used for teaching. All available teaching aids should be used extensively during the teaching session. Their use should be entertaining in nature so as to create interest among learners. If necessary, the session may be followed by a non-taxing simple discussion to provide the learners opportunities to speak in the language.

Given the time constraint for English teaching, the use of situational contexts in class, audio-visual and other teaching aids would increase the amount of contact with the TL among learners. The use of such aids is actually nothing new in language teaching, teachers being advised to make full use of them even while under training.

Last, but not least, the school library should be provided with carefully selected entertaining materials such as comic books and pop music, movie or sports magazines, apart from usual materials for heavy reading found in school libraries. It has been the tradition among some school administrators to ban such entertaining materials from school premises. But, considering their popularity among youngsters, undoubtedly due to the pictures rather than what is written, their availability might initiate exposure to written English eventually. School administrators are well aware that most school libraries, stocked with nothing but materials for heavy reading (some in English which, for the majority of students, are incomprehensible,) attract only a handful of book-worms. Surely, with the availability of more entertaining materials, the library might be frequented.

It should be noted that the suggestions above are not really new to teachers. But the question is: To what extent have these suggestions been taken into account in teaching?

It should also be noted that no attempt is made to discuss teaching methods. This is not to say that methods are of no importance in accounting for learner achievement. Yet, effective L2 learning depends, amongst other factors, on the amount of exposure to and practice in the language (Spolsky 1968).

CONCLUSION

The deterioration in the standard of English competence among Malay-medium students is a fact that has to be accepted. Unfortunately, certain quarters of the general public are unable to come to terms with the reality of the situation so much so that even the drop in the passing rate for Eng-

lish in the 1990 SPM examination which accounts to only 1.5% (the passing rate for 1989 being 58.6% and for 1990 57.1%) has been given too much coverage in the mass media. But, the drop in Bahasa Malaysia and some of the sciences and arts subjects (*The Star,* March 6, 1991: 1) is ignored. Being proficient in English is undeniably advantageous; but only a small proporation of the Malaysian population really needs English. Among them are those in the diplomatic and commercial professions where English is essential for international communication and those in the academic field where English is needed for the acquisition of knowledge.

Comparing the number of candidates taking the English paper in public examinations against the number of those who fail to make the grade, the deterioration in the standard of competence appears alarming. However, the public should be aware that not every Malaysian needs English and that every year there are still quite a number of candidates taking and passing the 1119 Cambridge GCE English Language paper.

From the discussion above, it is noted that the direct result of the existing education system is the recession and spread of English in the country. Before the implementation of the system, the standard of English was high but the learning of the language was confined only to those attending English schools in towns. Therefore, the language did not really reach the Malaysian masses. Now the standard has declined but everbody in schools throughout the country has the opportunity to learn the language. Despite the decline, there is still room for improvement in order to maintain English as a strong second language without necessarily changing the existing education system.

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