

Speaking Skills

A Survey on Malay Language Teachers in Malacca

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to assess the level of speaking skills among Malacca Malay language teachers. A total of 152 primary and secondary school teachers are chosen to be the sample. The quantitative approach with survey research design was adopted. This study used questionnaires to determine the level of sample speaking skills. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assist of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results showed that the Malay language teachers in the Malacca state have a good level of speaking skills. The findings also show that there is a significant difference in the level of speaking skills by gender and teachers' expertise. However, there is no significant difference in speaking skills between Malay language option teachers and non-option teachers. This study has good implications for the Malacca State Department of Education for future improvement.

Keywords: Malay language, quantitative study, speaking skills

1. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the level of communication skills of language teachers is rarely measured. This has been the case in developed countries since 1985 (Nantah, 2014). This has been overlooked by some parties, although such reviews have been proposed by several previous researchers such as Samu (1992) and Norris and Ortega (2000). Communication skills are defined as the transmission of information that involves a mutual understanding between the contexts in which communication occurs (Saunders & Mills, 1999). These skills are very important to a teacher as they will pass on the knowledge to the students.

Effective communication involves listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills (Khan et al., 2017). Effective communication skills are very important for a teacher in delivering education, classroom management, and interaction with students in the classroom. Teachers need to teach students a different way of thinking. To teach in line with students' abilities and abilities, a teacher needs to practice communication skills that motivate students towards their learning process (Bee, 2012). Good communication skills also are a fundamental requirement for a teacher to determine students' academic success, and professional success in life (Khan

et al., 2017). Teacher performance in the classroom depends entirely on communication skills especially speaking skills. If a teacher has good communication skills then he or she can easily convey the content of the subject or deliver a comprehensible lecture (Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle, 1997). One of the communication skills that teachers need to master is speaking skills (Muhammad et al., 2012).

Speaking skills refer to the ability to speak verbally with a visual aid and verbal elements to support the delivery of meaning, and it involves aspects of speech, presentation, discussion, and interpersonal communication (William et al., 2012). The Ministry of Education (2018) defines speaking skills as a means of communicating with humans. These skills involve the practice of pronouncing sounds produced from pronunciation tools or known as articulators to produce meaningful language sounds. Body language and voice tone plays an important role in speaking skills and has a significant impact on listeners and information content (Lantz, 2004). Speech is important for scientists because they need the skills to convey information to the public (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010). This is also important for teachers, as they need to practice teaching and learning.

Speaking skills are one of the aspects contained in the Malay Language Standard Framework (MLSF). The ability and efficiency of language users to talk or speak

can determine their level of speaking skills (Wahid et al., 2018). Speaking skills in languages used either formal or informal. This will lead to abuse of the use of the Malay language with a variety of patterns and variations (Ahmad & Abdullah, 2006). According to Muhammad et al. (2012), speaking skills are the most important skills in mastering the language learned. Therefore, we need to test the Malay speakers among citizens, especially Malay Language teachers.

Malay speaking skills include four basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Listening skills and speaking skills are categorized into verbal skills. Speaking skills are the ability of individuals to express their thoughts, and feelings either creatively or critically by using proper pronunciation or intonation. Teachers' speaking skills have a huge impact on students (Aminuddin, Sabil, & Jamian, 2019). Teachers as leaders in the teaching and learning process need to have high levels of speaking skills. This is because teachers play an important role in the teaching and learning process (Karim et al., 2018).

The mastery of verbal skills in pronunciation and intonation is considered to be one of the most important aspects (Abd Aziz, 2000). One of the techniques for testing spoken language skills is to provide a subject as a stimulus for the person to start talking and do conversation between subjects (Nor 'Azian, 2018). Testers can assess students' speaking skills in terms of pronunciation, intonation, paralinguistic elements, use of broad terms, and sophistication of communicating (Fadzilah & Norazlina, 2015). Speaking skills as a benchmark for the success of a language.

Rosli, R. M. (2017) conducted a study of speaking skills. The case studies were carried out using the concept of talking face to face and using video footage to the respondent. The research is to detect problems speaking skills on the Malay language among foreign speakers. This study shows that in terms of pronunciation, all respondents difficult to differentiate between middle vowel sounds and front vocal. All of the respondents did not yet have the skills to use intonation correctly. In terms of fluency, all six respondents had difficulty speaking fluently. In terms of vocabulary, most of the words used are basic words and are based on respondents' personal experiences. Abstract words are difficult to understand and speak.

The study by Punitha, Jalil, and Shahir (2017), in turn, identified informal and student-centered learning strategies to teach Malay language skills among adult foreign speakers. The study conducted using this action research method involved 20 adult foreign language learners who attended the Intensive Malay course of competency from January 2014 to December 2016 at higher education institutions. Through this action research, teachers can distinguish the problems that arise in the Malay language classes and find a solution

through an informal learning approach to help the sample to master Malay language speaking skills.

The findings also indicate a strategy of Malay culture, events, or different situations such as staging, singing, games, arts and culture and so much to stimulate spontaneous speaking skills, especially those involving role-play or date-talk between adult foreign speaker with native speakers. This strategy exposes the weaknesses of adult foreign speakers in terms of vocabulary, phonetics, structure, and style of speech followed by simultaneous language correction and recovery processes. These strategies are able to turn the speakers of the language among foreign children to think in Malay culture, improve the smoothness of the speaking and add confidence to speak the Malay Language

The findings also lead to high achievement among adult foreign speakers through speaking skills. This high achievement involves continuous evaluation, testing, and final evaluation of courses among adult foreign speakers. The assessment of spoken and evaluated speaking skills is interactive in that they include role play components, specific topic conversations, general conversations, formulate ads or graphic materials, provide audio-visual feedback, comment on language and proverb expressions, and so on. Thus researchers suggest that exaggerated learning Malay informally seeks to encourage more participation of foreign speakers to attend Malays Language courses at more robust learning in higher education institutions. The impact of speaking skills through informal learning methods motivates educators to adopt a variety of effective learning strategies at their discretion.

Speaking skills are often tested based on speech tests such as those performed by Othman and Awang (2012), Azizi and Kamisah (2015), Erka (2017), Bachore and Satenaw (2018), and Nuraishah and Helmeleya (2013). Their study also involved students only. However, there is still less research on teachers and based on questionnaires and survey design. The literature review also found that they conducted a case study in the form of case studies conducted by Rahman et al. (2017). This study is also in line with the recommendations (Nantah, 2014) which suggests that a tool for measuring the level of teacher speaking skills should be established to determine whether teachers are qualified to teach the first language (B1) or second language (B2). This study aims to assess the level of speaking skills of Malay language teachers around the Malacca state.

The main challenge in upholding the Malay language is the use and mastery of standard Malay language. This is seen as a student who is still at the unsatisfactory level. This also can be seen through the achievement of the Malay language in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), which is still far from the target and has not yet reached the level of language proficiency.

The declining trend of achievement is reflected in student achievement in SPM from 2013 to 2015 (Figure 1). This indicates that action must be taken to address this problem.

Therefore, the Institute of Education Malay Campus (IEMC) has been mandated to uphold Bahasa Melayu via Roadmap Malay Education from 2016 to 2025. Upholding the Malay language refers to the effort in strengthening the role of the Malay language as the national language, official language, intermediate language, the language of instruction, and language of unity. The strategy is to improve language proficiency and expansion of the use of the Malay language in various fields at the national, regional, and international levels. One of the 11 initiatives is to build MLSF (Ministry of Education, 2017). This can be achieved by improving the competency of the Malay language teachers (Ministry of Education, 2017).

2. METHODS

This study aims to assess the level of speaking skills of Malay language teachers. The study has the main objectives of reviewing the level of Malay speaking skills teacher. This study uses a survey research design. Quantitative data is collected through questionnaires distributed online. The questionnaire using Likert scale was developed by researchers based on MTSL. The validation process has been created and done. Based on the expert evaluation, the questionnaire has good validity with a CVI value is equal to 1. While the reliability of the questionnaire is 0.98 (Mohd Afifi, Maridah, & Hapsah, 2019). The reliability of the findings resulting from the pilot study was conducted by researchers over 35 Malay Language teachers in Selangor. The questionnaire consists of 43 items to measure the Malay language teacher speaking skills.

The number of samples is determined based on their population size (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This is important so that the findings can be generalized to all Malay teachers in Malacca. Researchers have used simple random methods to formulate a study sample. Researchers submit a link <http://bit.do/kemahiranbertutur> to officials of the Education Department of Education State for distribution to Malay language teachers. A total of 250 respondents answered the questionnaire. Samples were selected based on respondents who responded to the questionnaire using the sampling method that was specified. A total of 152 teachers were sampled to achieve the purpose of the study. The number of samples selected is in agreement with Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Mean and the standard deviation was

carried out to determine the level of Malay speaking skills. The findings of the study were interpreted using the following table of class intervals (Table 1). Data were also analyzed using non-parametric inference statistics after normality testing.

Table 1. Mean interpretation

<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1.00-2.50	low
2.51-4.00	Medium Low
4.01-5.50	Medium
5.51-7.00	Medium Good
7.01-8.50	Good
8.51-10.00	Very Good

(Mohd Azmir, 2015)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

In order to conduct the data analysis, a normality test was done on the data collected. According to Table 2, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows that the speaking skills are significant. This result indicates that the significant value of .000 has violated the assumption of normality, which means that the data is not normal. The statistical techniques to be used in the following data analyses will require a non-parametric statistic. The Mann-Whitney test will be used to answer the inferential statistic research question 2 and 3.

Table 3 shows that the speaking skills level of the Malay Language teachers in the Malacca state is at the mean score value of 7.535 and standard deviation of 1.789. By referring to Table 1, mean scores between 7.01-8.50 indicate a good level of speaking skills

Table 2. Normality test

Tests of Normality						
	<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov^a</i>			<i>Shapiro-Wilk</i>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Speaking skills	.119	152	.00	.938	152	.00
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Table 3. Level of speaking test

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Speaking skills	152	2.58	10.00	7.535	1.789
Valid N (listwise)	152				

Table 4. Rank test

Ranks				
	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Speaking skills	Males	23	113.15	2602.50
	Females	129	69.97	9025.50
	Total	152		

The non-parametric analysis of Mann-Whitney test is used for testing the differences between two independent groups of continuous data (males n=23, females n=129 as in Table 4). The test will convert the continuous data to ranks across the two groups (males rank=113.15, females rank=69.97).

Table 5 shows the Mann-Whitney test statistic for these groups. The results show the Z value is negative 4.335 with a significance level of p=.000. The probability (p) is less than or equal to .05, so the result is significant. There is a statistically significant difference in the speaking skills between males and females. H01 is rejected.

The Mann-Whitney test is used for testing the differences between two independent groups of continuous data (options n=68, non-options n=84). The test will convert the continuous data to ranks across the two groups (options rank=81.87, non-options rank=72.15) as in Table 6.

Table 5. Mann-whitney u

	Speaking skills
Mann-Whitney U	640.500
Wilcoxon W	9025.500
Z	-4.335
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Table 6. Rank test

Ranks				
	Options	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Speaking skills	Options	68	81.87	5567.00
	Non-options	84	72.15	6061.00
	Total	152		

Table 7. Mann-Whitney test

Test Statistics ^a	
	Speaking skills
Mann-Whitney U	2491.000
Wilcoxon W	6061.000
Z	-1.353
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.176

a. Grouping Variable: Options

Table 7 of the Mann-Whitney test shows the Z value is negative 1.353 with a significance level of p=.176. The probability (p) is not less than or equal to .05, so the result is not significant. There is no statistically significant difference in the speaking skills between Malay language option teachers and non-option teachers. In other words, both options and non-option teachers have the same level of speaking skills. Therefore, H02 is accepted.

3.2. Discussion and Implication

Speaking skills is very important in teaching has formulated in a teaching process that takes place in the classroom, a teacher will speak two-thirds of the entire teaching time. Teacher's speech indirectly affects students such as in delivering, giving instructions and criticizing. This shows the importance of teacher communication in shaping classroom interaction so that the teaching and learning process can run smoothly. Teachers need to be actively involved in teaching and learning sessions and sharing ideas between teachers and students. Teachers should always encourage students to answer and give opinions in class in the way the teacher himself explains orally along with relevant examples. Indirectly, teachers must master speaking skills as well as master the content skills of the subjects taught.

Speaking skills are not just seen in the way a person communicates, but speaking skills involve language code, know what to say, and how to pronounce it appropriately in certain situations. During the speaking process, speakers and listeners will sometimes experience some disruptions caused by weaknesses and difficulties in mastering a speaking skills in order to convey its message. This situation will encourage the speaker to use various alternatives to ensure that the message he wants to convey is successful. One of the ways to improve teachers' speaking skills is through appropriate teaching methods. The best method is to use questioning techniques in the teaching and learning process. The more often the question and answer process takes place in the classroom, the smoother a teacher's speech will be.

In conclusion, teachers 'speaking skills are very important to improve students' skills. Teachers need to present the content of the lesson, ask students, do discussion sessions, answer student questions and do

presentations. All of these things involve speaking skills. Therefore, teachers' speaking skills need to be given attention so that students' knowledge and skills can be improved. Because the teacher's job involves a lot of speaking skills, it is important for those responsible to think of a way or method to improve speaking skills. Thus, this study has positive implications for the responsible parties, especially the Malacca State Education Department. This study has also filled some gaps in the study where there is less study of speaking skills using quantitative methods. In addition, the study of speaking skills on teachers is also less conducted. Thus, this study has given good implications for the field of study. Most studies involve students and second language users only. Thus, this study successfully helped to expand the field of study and achieve its research objectives.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has achieved the objectives and answered all the research questions. The results showed that the Malay language speaking skills of teachers in the state of Malacca still have a gap for improvement. This study is expected to have implications for the Ministry of Education Malaysia, especially the Melaka State Education Department. These parties have to think of measures for improvement in the future so that Malay language teachers have excellent speaking skills. This is in line with MLST which puts this skill one of the things that need to be achieved. In order to produce students who are skilled in speaking skills, teachers also need to show themselves having excellent speaking skills. Teachers are considered as role models to develop their students. Researchers suggest that courses be implemented for teachers with a low level of speaking skills.

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