AN ANALYSIS ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT AGAMA RAKYAT SCHOOLS IN PERAK

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TESIS DIKEMUKAKAN BAGI MEMENUHI SYARAT UNTUK MEMPEROLEH IJAZAH SARJANA PENDIDIKAN (TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE) (MOD PENYELIDIKAN)

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to gain preliminary insights on how English language is taught at Agama Rakyat schools in Perak. Twenty-eight English language teachers from nine Agama Rakyat schools participated in the study. Quantitative and qualitative measures were taken in collecting and analyzing data. A survey was carried out to gain teachers' views on their teaching and learning practices in schools. Classroom observation sessions were also made to examine the teaching methodology practiced by the teachers involved. This was followed by interview sessions with the teachers to gauge the underlying principles for the respective English language teaching behaviors observed in the classrooms. It was found that almost all the teacher participants lack pedagogical content knowledge and some have never received any forms of formal teacher training. The classroom observations that were carried out generally showed a climate which is not conducive to support English language learning. The research results have provided insights in an effort to understand the realities and complexities of teaching English language at the Agama Rakyat schools in Perak. The need for qualified teachers to teach English language is crucial to develop students' competence in the language. Various forms of support from the board committees of the Agama Rakyat schools are necessary to ensure effective teaching and learning of the English language.

SATU ANALISIS MENGKAJI BAGAIMANA BAHASA INGGERIS DIAJAR DI SEKOLAH AGAMA RAKYAT DI PERAK

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini telah dijalankan bertujuan untuk mendapatkan pandangan awal mengenai bagaimana Bahasa Inggeris diajar di sekolah menengah Agama Rakyat di Perak, Malaysia. Ia melibatkan 28 orang guru Bahasa Inggeris dari 9 buah sekolah menengah Agama Rakyat. Analisa kuantitatif dan kualitatif telah digunakan dalam mengumpul dan menganalisis data. Satu tinjauan telah dijalankan untuk mendapatkan pandangan guru terhadap amalan pengajaran dan pembelajaran mereka di sekolah. Beberapa sesi pemerhatian dalam kelas juga telah dijalankan untuk meneliti kaedah-kaedah pengajaran yang diamalkan oleh guruguru yang terlibat. Ini diikuti dengan sesi temu bual dengan guru-guru untuk mendapatkan maklum balas terhadap tingkah laku pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang ditunjukkan dalam bilik darjah. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa hampir kesemua responden mempunyai tahap pengetahuan tentang pedagogi pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang amat rendah di samping hampir kesemuanya tidak pernah mengikuti sebarang bentuk latihan ikhtisas secara formal untuk melayakkan mereka menjadi guru. Pemerhatian bilik darjah yang telah dijalankan secara amnya menunjukkan suasana pengajaran yang tidak kondusif untuk menyokong pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Hasil penyelidikan telah memberikan kami penilaian awal dalam usaha untuk memahami tentang realiti pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah Agama Rakyat di Perak, Malaysia

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CLT   Communicative Language Teaching

MOE   Ministry of Education

SABK   Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan

SAR   Sekolah Agama Rakyat

SMAN   Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri

SMI   Sekolah Menengah Islam

SMKA   Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama

SRI   Sekolah Rendah Islam

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

This research plans to investigate how English language is taught at nine private Agama Rakyat (SAR) schools in Perak. Lately the community has raised the issue on the moderate performance of the English Language subject at Agama Rakyat Schools (SAR) in the national standardized examinations (MOE, 2012). Although there are a small number of Agama Rakyat School (SAR) students with commendable performance in the subject, but in whole, the performance is declining when compared to other schools. Among the goals of this research is to get some insights on how the language is taught and how well the teachers possess technological, pedagogical and content /subject matter knowledge on the teaching of the subject.

1.2   The History of the Malaysian Religious Schools

Currently, there are different types of religious schools in Malaysia, each with a different name such as the Sekolah Rendah Islam (SRI), Sekolah Menengah Islam (SMI), Maahad Tahfiz, Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR), Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA), Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) and Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri (SMAN). These schools are categorized differently based on the governing bodies which manage them.

The history of education in the Southeast Asia started with the Islamic education whereby the young citizens were taught on how to worship God, studying Al Quran and reciting the daily prayers. The lessons were conducted at the houses of the priest or teachers. The priests or teachers were the very well-known Islamic scholars came from Arabia, Persia and India who came to trade along with spreading of Islam (Haron Din & Sobri Solomon, 1988).

Later, when their houses became too crowded, the community had come out with an idea of building small huts surrounding the teachers' houses which soon acted as the first established 'Pondok' religious institutions in Peninsular Malaysia. The subjects offered were solely on religious studies with no academic subjects taught at all to the learners (Nabir Abdullah, 1982). Some of the students who completed their studies in the Pondok schools were sent to some higher Islamic institutions in the Middle East countries. When they returned, they tried to reform and upgrade the 'Pondok' schools education

system by extending the curriculum and integrating few academic subjects perceived as important in the spreading of Islam such as Mathematics, Arabic and Geography. The schools' infrastructures were also improvised and as a result, a more formal institution employing a more formal education system was formed called the 'Madrasah' school.

During the British colonization, the British education system was introduced and it underwent rapid development with the establishment of many British Schools by the Christian missionaries. Not only that, the colonials also took over some of the Islamic schools by giving full assistance provided with one condition; the Islamic school must agree to integrate the academic subjects into their educational system besides the religious instructions. However, the Islamic studies and Quranic reading were excluded from the official school schedule and were taught in the afternoon in the same building (Nabir Abdullah, 1982).

Upon independence, the National Education Act was launched. Aware of the society's needs which placed the highest need on religion, the Islamic studies subjects were infused back into education system of the National School. Meanwhile, the private Pondok and Madrasah schools began to become less well received due to improper system of administration and lack of infrastructure. It was said that although the schools integrate both Islamic and academic subjects, they emphasized more on the Islamic studies with less attention given to the academic components.

Therefore the Ministry of Education took a serious effort in refurbish the private Islamic school system so that their academic curriculum could be in line with the current national education policy. The effort began to take place with the acquisition of the eleven SAR schools to become the Sekolah Menegah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA). The number has then increased from 11 schools to 56 schools to date (MOE, 2012). Another serious effort taken was the establishment of the Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) in 2006. The Ministry of Education established a new scheme which offers a range of assistance to the SAR schools such as trained teachers, teaching facilities, textbooks, scholarships and infrastructure development but does not interfere with the school management (MOE, 2012).

The remaining Islamic schools which do not accept the offer made by the Ministry of education remain as the private SAR schools which are operated and managed by the nongovernmental organizations. However these schools are required to integrate the academic curriculum which is provided by the National Education System. This is to allow the students to sit for the national standardized examinations such as PMR, SPM and STPM. However, all these religious schools, except SMKA are required to register under the respective Perak State Islamic Religious Department for the purpose of channeling assistance.

The above events in sequence were the starting point to the foundation of different types of religious schools in our country. Based on a study made by the Advisory Board for the Coordination of Islamic Education or Lembaga Penyelaras dan Pendidikan Agama

Islam (LEPAI, 1998) as cited in Ahmad Kilani (2003), in general there are three types of Religious Schools in Malaysia:

i.   The Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) which are solely managed by the Ministry of Education.

ii. The Sekolah Agama Negeri (SAN), managed by the State Department of Religious Affairs.

iii. The Private Agama Rakyat Schools (SAR) and which are operated and managed by the non-governmental organizations which are responsible for the management, financial breakthrough, curriculum development and others.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

Lately, the society in Malaysia has raised the issue of the moderate performance of the English language subject in the private SAR secondary schools, within the national standardized examinations framework. Although it cannot be denied that there is a small minority of SAR school students who have been able to show a competitive performance in the subject, in whole, the English language performance of these SAR school students is declining when compared to other religious schools in the Malaysian national education system (Nurulhayati & Airil Haimi, (2011).

Table 1.1 shows the SPM English language result analysis of 9 private SAR secondary schools in Perak from 2009 to 2015. The result analysis was provided by the Examination Unit of Perak State Religious Department (see Appendix 1-9).

Table 1.1

The results of English subject in the SPM examination from year 2009 until 2015 from 9 SAR Secondary Schools in Perak.

SAR	Year	N	A	B	C	D	E	Pass	%	Fail	%
1	2009	7	0	0	1	1	2	4	57	3	43
	2010	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	25	3	75
	2011	12	0	0	2	1	1	4	33	8	67
	2012	9	0	1	0	3	1	5	79	4	21
	2013	18	0	0	1	4	3	8	44	10	56
	2014	22	0	5	5	8	2	20	90	2	10
	2015	18	0	0	2	3	2	7	39	11	61
2	2009	35	1	1	2	9	14	27	82	8	24
	2010	31	0	0	2	11	7	20	65	11	36
	2011	32	0	0	1	12	5	18	56	14	44
	2012	24	0	0	0	3	10	13	41	9	41
	2013	22	0	0	0	3	10	13	41	9	41
	2014	29	0	0	12	3	4	19	66	10	34
	2015	47	0	2	2	10	11	25	53	22	47
3	2009	22	0	0	0	4	5	9	41	13	59
	2010	20	0	0	0	1	6	7	35	13	65
	2011	26	0	0	1	0	4	5	19	21	81
	2012	29	0	0	0	1	2	3	10	26	90
	2013	52	0	1	0	3	9	13	25	39	75
	2014	31	0	0	0	0	6	6	19	26	81
	2015	54	0	0	1	4	9	14	26	40	60
4	2009	86	5	20	37	21	3	86	100	0	0.0
	2010	69	12	25	17	11	4	69	100	0	0.0
	2011	71	19	21	16	14	1	71	100	0	0.0
	2012	74	7	20	29	16	2	74	100	0	0.0
	2013	71	19	21	16	14	1	71	100	0	0.0
	2014	SABK									
	2015	SABK									

(Continued)

Table 1.1 *(Continued)*

SAR	Year	N	A	B	C	D	E	Pass	%	Fail	%
					Grade						
5	2009	41	4	3	6	13	13	39	95	2	4.9
	2010	44	5	10	13	12	3	43	98	1	2.3
	2011	41	7	12	2	11	6	38	93	3	7.3
	2012	69	12	25	17	11	4	69	100	0	0.0
	2013	74	7	20	29	16	2	74	100	0	0.0
	2014	38	11	10	7	4	3	35	92	3	8
	2015	43	6	11	4	13	7	41	95	2	5
6	2009	17	0	0	1	4	3	8	47	9	54
	2010	41	0	1	2	7	12	22	54	19	47
	2011	38	0	0	6	3	7	16	42	22	58
	2012	35	0	6	6	10	10	32	91	3	9
	2013	36	0	0	9	13	10	33	92	8	8
	2014	49	0	0	1	5	15	21	44	28	56
	2015	39	6	5	5	10	6	32	82	7	18
7	2009	39	0	2	4	10	10	26	67	13	33
	2010	24	1	1	2	2	9	15	63	9	38
	2011	49	1	9	9	15	4	38	78	11	22
	2012	49	1	3	7	12	13	36	74	13	27
	2013	53	0	0	4	15	18	37	70	16	30
	2014	53	0	0	4	6	22	32	60	21	40
	2015	58	1	5	8	15	16	45	78	13	22
8	2009	28	0	1	5	10	8	24	86	4	14
	2010	50	3	3	14	24	3	47	94	3	6
	2011	53	1	3	9	18	9	40	76	13	25
	2012	45	2	4	5	18	11	40	89	5	11
	2013	49	2	11	10	21	5	49	100	0	0
	2014	SABK									
	2015	SABK									

(Continued)

Table 1.1 *(Continued)*

| SAR | Year | N | Grade | | | | | Pass | % | Fail | % |
			A	B	C	D	E				
9	2012	24	0	3	4	5	7	19	79	5	21
	2013	30	0	4	6	9	8	27	90	3	10
	2014	30	1	3	4	11	8	27	90	3	10
	2015	39	2	4	9	13	6	34	87	5	13

N=Number of students

In analyzing the students' performance based on the data, a grading system for all SPM subject prepared by the Malaysian Examination Board was used (Appendix 10). The summary of scoring interpretation can be seen in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

Malaysian Examination Board Grading System

No	Grade	Marks	Level
1	A+	90-100	Cemerlang tertinggi
2	A	80-89	Cemerlang tinggi
3	A-	70-79	Cemerlang
4	B+	65-69	Kepujian tertinggi
5	B	60-64	Kepujian tinggi
6	C+	55-59	Kepujian atas
7	C	50-54	Kepujian
8	D	45-49	Lulus atas
9	E	40-44	Lulus
10	G	1-39	Gagal

Source: Gred Pemarkahan Bagi Subjek-subjek SPM www.bumigemilang.com/gred-permarkahan-bagi-subjek-subjek-spm/

In order to compare the SPM English language performance of the 9 private SAR secondary schools to the government (SMKA) and government related religious schools (SABK) in Perak, the researcher emailed the person in charge at the examination unit of Perak State Education Department requesting for the SPM English language result analysis for the year 2013 to 2015 (See Appendix 1-9). Table 1.3 summarizes the analysis.

Table 1.3

The percentage of the students who passed and failed in SPM English language examination from SAR, SABK and SMKA schools in Perak from year 2013-2015.

No	Year	SAR			SABK			SMKA		
		N	Pass	Fail	N	Pass	Fail	N	Pass	Fail
1	2013	405	80	20	1121	90	10	312	100	0
2	2014	252	63	37	1143	90	10	343	100	0
3	2015	298	66	34	1214	91	9	371	100	0

N= Number of students

Based on the grading system, the SPM English results of all the religious schools in the years of 2013 to 2015 were compared. It appears that the performance of the school students in the SPM English language examination at 9 SAR secondary schools in Perak was overall declining.

In 2013, 20% of the SAR students failed compared to 10% from the SABK. This was followed by 36% of the SAR students failed in 2014 compared to only 10% failures from SBAK. Finally, in 2015, 32% of the SAR students failed compared to only 9% failures from SABK. On the other hand there were no failures recorded from SMKA students in those three consecutive years, respectively.

In making deeper analysis, the researcher then compared the percentage of the grade 'A' with the minimal grade (D & E) scorers from all the schools from 2013 to 2015. Table 1.4 summarizes the analysis.

In 2013, only 7% from the SAR students obtained A compared to 25% from the SMKA students. On the other hand 40% from the SAR students obtained the minimal grade D+E compared to only 4% from the SMKA. SABK recorded 3% for the grade A scorers and 35% for the minimal grade (D+E) scorers.

In 2014, only 5% from the SAR students obtained A compared 23% from the SMKA. On the other hand, 42% from the SAR students obtained minimal grade D+E, compared to only 3% from the SMKA. SABK recorded 2% for the grade A scorers and 60% for the minimal grade (D+E) scorers.

Meanwhile in 2015, only 6% of the SAR secondary school students scored 'A' compared to 43% from the SMKA schools. 38% from the SAR students obtained D+E while only 7% recorded from AMKA. SABK schools on the other hand recorded a lower

percentage which is 3% who scored A and 57% scored D+E.

Table 1.4

The result analysis of SPM English language performance in SAR, SABK and SMKA schools in Perak based on the grade 'A' and minimal grades (D+E) scorers from year 2013-2015.

		SAR			SABK			SMKA		
N	Year	N	A %	D-E %	N	A %	D-E %	N	A %	D-E %
1	2013	405	12	40	1121	3	35	312	25	4
2	2014	252	5	42	1143	2	60	343	23	3
3	2015	298	6	38	1124	3	57	371	43	7

N= Number of students

1.4 Leading Factors

Several factors have been reported leading to the overall decline in the students' performance. According to Nor Raudhah *et.al* (2013), the management of the private SAR schools in Malaysia is facing a lot of major problems. Among the problems identified are first, the limited financial resources which lead to the school development problem. Without the initiative of the school to obtain financial resources other than from the students' fees, the schools cannot provide better school infrastructure for the students.