

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS AND  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) ACHIEVEMENT AMONG  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
STATUS, GENDER AND ETHNIC GROUPS: A CASE STUDY**

**BODJIT KAUR A/P RAM SINGH**

**UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS**

**2005**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS AND  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) ACHIEVEMENT AMONG  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
STATUS, GENDER AND ETHNIC GROUPS: A CASE STUDY**

**BODJIT KAUR A/P RAM SINGH**

**PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT  
MASTER OF EDUCATION (TESL)**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS**

**2005**

## **DECLARATION**

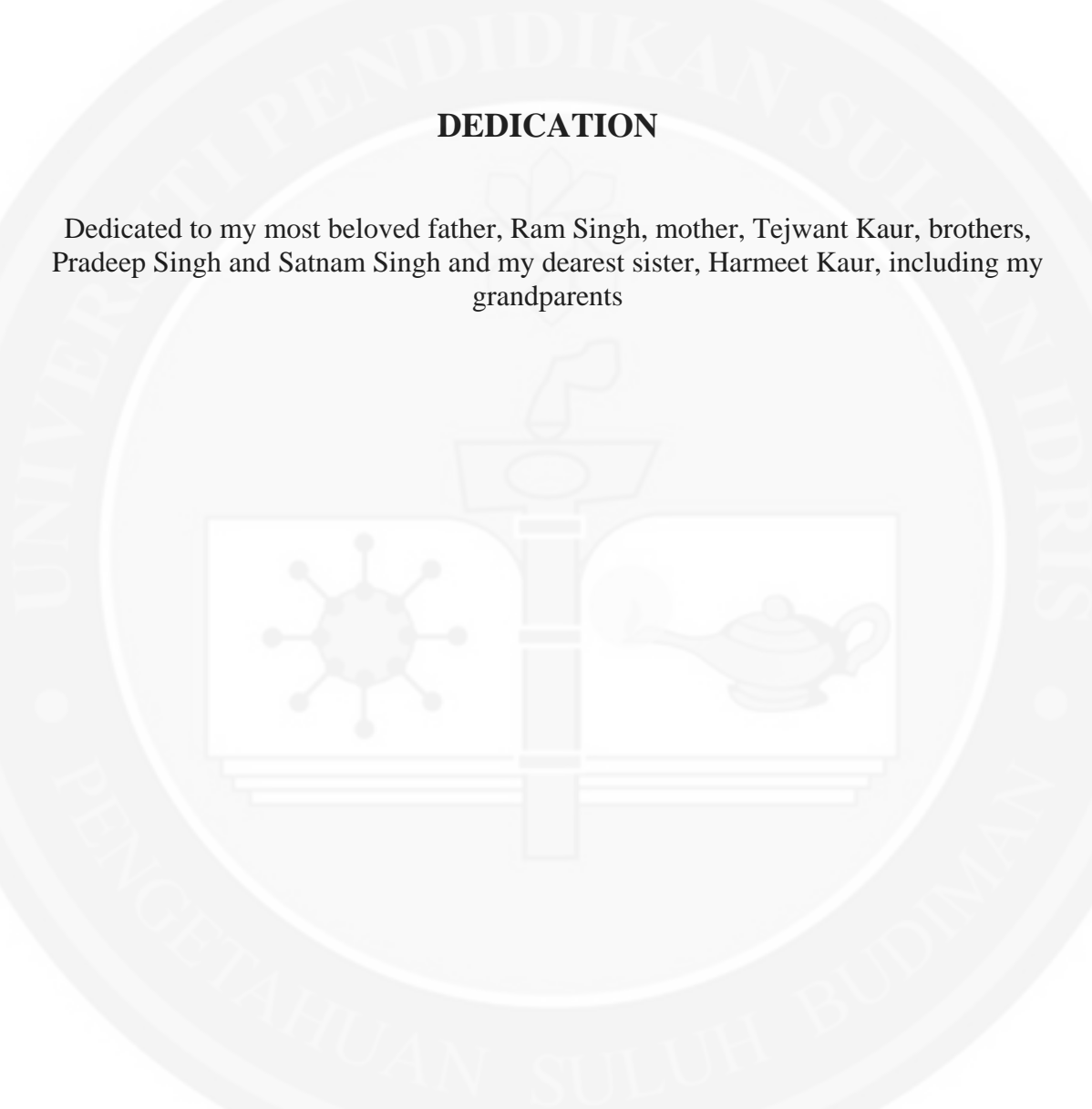
I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

20 October 2005

Bodjit Kaur a/p Ram Singh  
2003-00975

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my most beloved father, Ram Singh, mother, Tejwant Kaur, brothers, Pradeep Singh and Satnam Singh and my dearest sister, Harmeet Kaur, including my grandparents



## **Acknowledgements**

There are several people who are instrumental in the completion of this project paper that I specially wish to acknowledge. My special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Nor Azmi b. Mostafa for his support, guidance, thorough feedback, suggestions, advice and keen interest in my research. My heartiest gratitude to the Senior Assistant, En. Maznoh b. Lemon and students of Sekolah Menengah Seri Setia, Teluk Intan, The Principal, Mr. Ho Kum Weng and students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Horley Methodist, Teluk Intan and The Principal, Puan Hj. Normah bt. Muhammad, the Senior Assistant, Cik Hj. Aishah bt. Razali and students of Sekolah Menengah Sultan Abdullah, Chenderong Balai for their cooperation and participation in this research. My special thanks to everyone who has helped me made this research a success. Above all, I must acknowledge GOD for the inspiration I have drawn in the process of writing this project paper. Thank you.

## ABSTRACT

This case study investigated the relationship between classroom instructions, socio-economic status, and English as a second language (ESL) achievement among selected upper secondary school students from different socio-economic status, gender and ethnic groups in the district of Teluk Intan, Perak. It utilized a survey research design with emphasis on the correlational method of analysis. Based on the findings of this study, the results indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the academic performance between male and female students. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of students learning English from different gender groups. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant relationship between the students perception of the effectiveness of classroom instructions and their academic performance in learning English. In addition, there is no statistically relationship between the students socio-economic status and no significant difference in the academic performance of students learning English among different ethnic groups. As a result, teachers should emphasize on cooperative and collaborative learning, whereby students are given an opportunity to mix with different genders and ethnics. Moreover, lower socio-economic students can have an opportunity to mix with the higher socio-economic students to exchange ideas regarding learning English as a second language.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian kes ini mengkaji hubungan di antara proses pengajaran di dalam kelas dengan guru, kedudukan sosio-ekonomi dan kecemerlangan dalam Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di kalangan pelajar-pelajar sekolah menengah yang dipilih dari kedudukan sosio-ekonomi, jantina dan kumpulan etnik yang berbeza di Teluk Intan, Perak. Tambahan pula, kajian ini berdasarkan kepada kaedah tinjauan yang menekankan kaedah analisis korelasi. Berdasarkan kepada hasil kajian ini, ia menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam skor min pencapaian pelajar-pelajar lelaki dan perempuan. Oleh itu, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam pencapaian pelajar-pelajar yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris daripada kumpulan jantina yang berbeza. Walaubagaimanapun, tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara hubungan tentang persepsi pelajar-pelajar terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran dan pembelajaran di dalam kelas dan kecemerlangan akademik dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Justeru itu, tidak terdapat hubungan yang signifikan di antara kedudukan sosio-ekonomi pelajar dan tidak ada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kecemerlangan akademik pelajar-pelajar dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di antara kumpulan etnik yang berbeza. Oleh itu, guru-guru perlu menekankan pembelajaran secara berkumpulan, di mana pelajar-pelajar diberi peluang untuk bergaul dengan jantina dan etnik yang berbeza. Lantaran itu, pelajar-pelajar dengan kedudukan sosio-ekonomi yang rendah juga perlu diberi peluang untuk bergaul dengan pelajar-pelajar dari kedudukan sosio-ekonomi yang tinggi untuk bertukar-tukar pendapat tentang pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Need for the Study	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study	4
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Research Hypotheses	4
1.6 Definition of Terms	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0 Introduction	8
2.1 The English Language in Malaysia	8
2.2 Conceptions of Learning & Teaching	10
2.3 Factors Affecting Second Language Learning	13
2.3.1 Social Factors	15
2.3.2 Spolsky's Model	18
2.4 Social Context of Language Teaching and Learning	21
2.4.1 Socio-economic Status	22
2.4.2 Gender	25
2.4.3 Ethnicity	28
2.5 Factors Affecting Second Language Teaching	30
2.5.1 Teacher Beliefs	39
2.5.2 Teacher Knowledge/Skills	46



2.5.2.1 Content Knowledge	46
2.5.2.2 Pedagogical Knowledge	47
2.5.3 Teaching Styles	51

### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction	55
3.1 Research Design	55
3.1.1 Conceptual Model	56
3.2 Samples and Sampling Procedures	56
3.3 Instrumentation	58
3.3.1 Hollingshead's Two-Factor Index of Social Position	59
3.3.2 Classroom Instructions Questionnaire	62
3.4 Pilot Study	64
3.5 Data Collection Procedures	65
3.6 Data Analysis Procedures	66
3.7 Limitations	68

### CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction	69
4.2 Results	69
4.2.1 Gender	69
4.2.2 Ethnicity	70
4.2.3 Academic Performance	71
4.2.4 Socio-economic Status (SES)	71
4.2.5 Classroom Instructions	72
4.2.6 Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Classroom Instructions and Their Academic Performance in Learning English	77
4.2.7 Students' Socio-economic Status (SES) and Their Academic Performance in Learning English	79
4.2.8 Academic Performance of Students Learning English from Different Gender Groups	80
4.2.9 Academic Performance of Students Learning English from Different Ethnic Groups	81

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	83
5.2	Conclusions	84
5.3	Discussion	86
5.4	Recommendations	96
5.5	Recommendations for Further Research	97

REFERENCES	99
------------	----

## APPENDICES

- A. Letters of Approval
- B. Questionnaire
- C. Pilot Test Data Analysis Results
- D. Research Data Analysis Results

## LIST OF TABLES

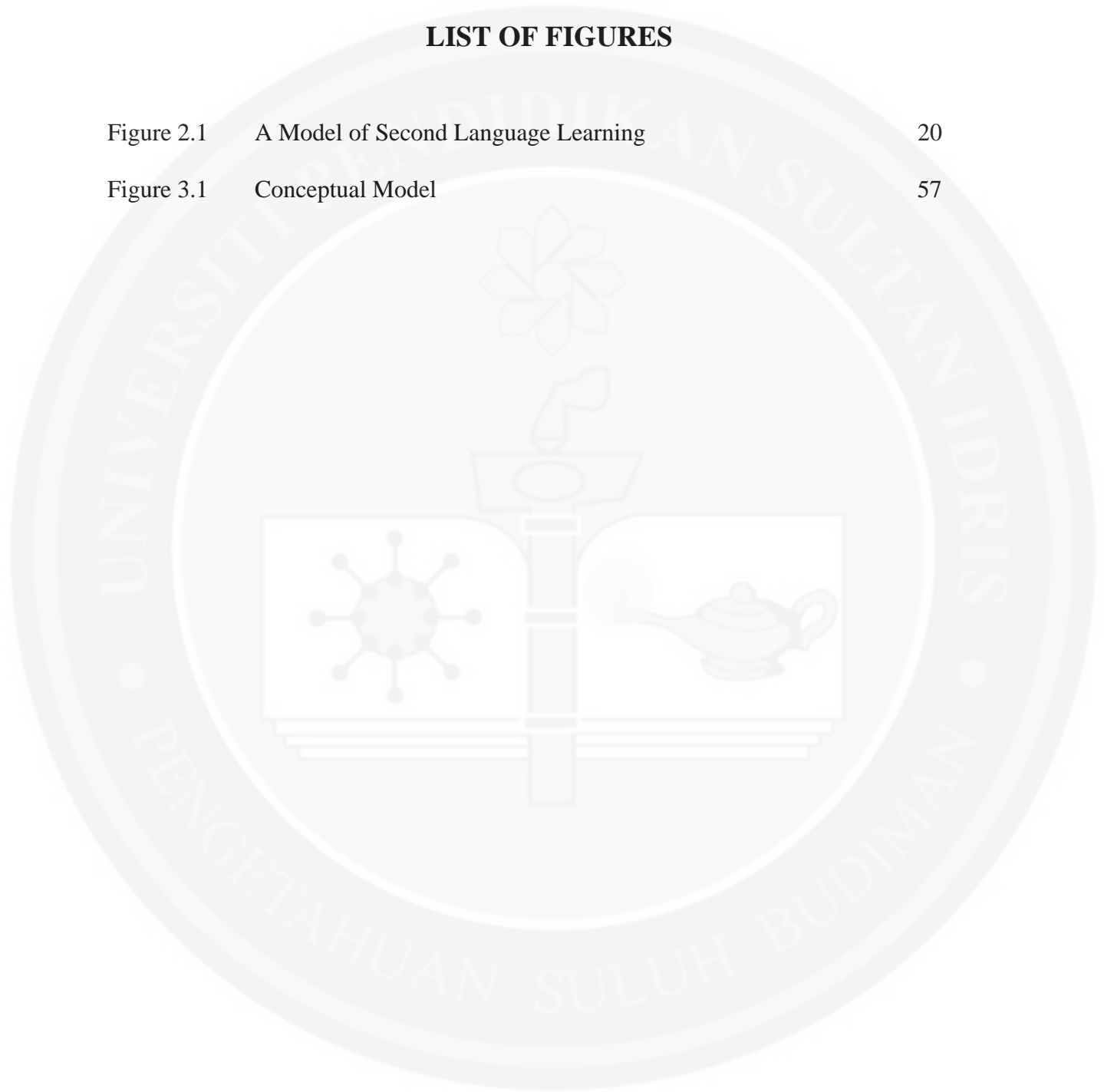
Table 3.1	Reliability Analysis	65
Table 4.1	Gender Groups	70
Table 4.2	Ethnic Groups	70
Table 4.3	Academic Performance in Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) English Paper	71
Table 4.4	Socio-economic Status (SES)	72
Table 4.5	Classroom Instructions (Speech)	73
Table 4.6	Classroom Instructions (Classroom Management)	73
Table 4.7	Classroom Instructions (Presentation Organization/Clarity)	74
Table 4.8	Classroom Instructions (Questioning Skills)	74
Table 4.9	Classroom Instructions (Assignments/Exams)	75
Table 4.10	Classroom Instructions (Teacher Evaluation)	75
Table 4.11	Classroom Instructions (Group Interaction/Discussion)	76
Table 4.12	Classroom Instructions (Developing Students/Class Rapport)	76
Table 4.13	Classroom Instructions (Materials)	77
Table 4.14	Relationship Between Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Classroom Instructions with Their Academic Performance in Learning English	78
Table 4.15	Relationship Between Students Socio-economic Status and Their Academic Performance in Learning English	79
Table 4.16	PMR English Grades Between Male and Female Students	80

Table 4.17      Difference Between the Academic Performance from  
Different Ethnic Groups



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	A Model of Second Language Learning	20
Figure 3.1	Conceptual Model	57



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

English is taught as a second language (ESL) in all the primary and secondary schools around Malaysia. Learning English is important not only for being proficient in English itself but also learning Science and Mathematics since the implementation of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English. On the other hand, students' weaknesses in English will consequently decrease their success in Science and Mathematics.

The mastery of English is a means by which a student responds to his experiences through improved thinking and communication skills besides a sign of one's intellectual development. In other words, the acquisition of English could contribute to the knowledge, understanding and skills of students in order to prepare them for the real world in the future.

According to Rosli Talif (1995), to accomplish these goals, the responsibilities of teachers could include helping all students become literate and capable of functioning in

an increasingly complex society. In other words, students must be able to communicate and prepared for the real complex world in the future to compete with established people in the society. Furthermore, teachers are also responsible to direct them to read and view materials appropriate to their abilities and interests. It is important to choose materials, which can arouse students' interest towards language and according to their levels. In contrast, encouraging them to exchange ideas, listen perceptively and discuss vigorously is one of the teacher's responsibility. This can be achieved by doing group work or cooperative learning in order for the students to communicate among themselves and exchange ideas. Furthermore, teachers should be able to urge them to write freely and without any compulsion. This is in order to help them with their writing skills since it is the most challenging skill compared to other skills such as listening, speaking and reading skills. Lastly, we as teachers can help them expand their interests and reach their fullest potential through learning. In short, teachers are facilitators, who are able to help develop students' talent and interest in order for their success in the future.

Basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are regularly emphasized in the use of English and they are viewed as a lifelong process. These language skills are likely to be developed from the early stages of language learning. They enable students to engage in fluent and effective communication as well as to analyze information.

### **1.1 Need for the Study**

This study aimed to determine the relationships between each of the four variables,

which were classroom instructions, socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender with the performance of secondary school students in learning English as a second language. This study could be helpful among educators to help students to learn English as a second language. Besides that, teachers could plan their classroom instructions based on the students' level, which are advanced, intermediate or low level.

Furthermore, the findings of this study could be able to assist educators and teachers, including parents, to use the right approach in facilitating students in learning English.

Finally, this study could serve as a ground for other researchers to embark on further investigation into other factors that influence ESL students in learning English as a second language, which can benefit our students in the future.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In schools nowadays, English is a core subject that every student learns during primary and secondary school. With the implementation of Science and Mathematics in English, English is taken into consideration by students as a second important language. Hence, students' performance in English is definitely based on many influencing factors. They include gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and classroom instructions. So, it is important for the researcher to investigate the relationship between these factors with English as a second language (ESL) achievement among students.



### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationships among various factors, which included classroom instructions, socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender with students' academic performance in English.

### 1.4 Research Questions

The following are the research questions formulated for this study:

- (i) Is there a relationship between the students' perception of the effectiveness of classroom instructions with their academic performance in learning English?
- (ii) Is there a relationship between the students' socio-economic status and their academic performance in learning English?
- (iii) Is there a difference between the academic performance of students' learning English from different gender groups?
- (iv) Is there a difference between the academic performance of students learning English from different ethnic groups?

### 1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses formulated based on the research questions:

**H<sub>01</sub>** There is no statistically significant relationship between the students' perception of the effectiveness of classroom instructions and their academic performance in learning English.

**H<sub>a1</sub>** There is a statistically significant relationship between the students' perception of the effectiveness of classroom instructions and their academic performance in learning English.

**H<sub>o2</sub>** There is no statistically significant relationship between the students' socio-economic status and their academic performance.

**H<sub>a2</sub>** There is a statistically significant relationship between the students' socio-economic status and their academic performance.

**H<sub>o3</sub>** There is no statistically significant difference in the academic performance of students learning English from different gender groups.

**H<sub>a3</sub>** There is a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of students learning English from different gender groups.

**H<sub>o4</sub>** There are no statistically significant differences in the academic performance of students learning English among different ethnic groups.

**H<sub>a4</sub>** There are statistically significant differences in the academic performance of students' learning English among different ethnic groups.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

### (i) Socio-economic status

An individual's socioeconomic status or social class is typically determined by means of a composite measure that takes account of income, level of education and

occupation. It is customary to distinguish four groups, which are lower class, working class, lower middle class and upper middle class (Ellis, 1997).

(ii) Ethnicity

According to Millroy (1990), ethnicity can reasonably be described as an individual's sense of belonging to a distinctive group whose members share a common history and culture.

(iii) Gender

Gender places the emphasis on the social construction of ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Ellis, 1997).

(iv) Classroom instruction

Learning takes place in a closed physical room called a classroom (Splosky, 1990). According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (1990:650), instruction is *a process of teaching and knowledge or teaching given*. Instruction is viewed as an attempt to intervene directly in the language learning process by teaching specific properties of the L2 (Ellis, 1997). Thus, classroom instruction is a process of teaching done by the teacher in the classroom.

(v) English as Second Language (ESL)

A situation in which English is not the mother tongue of the speakers but is still considered as important and is used regularly, especially in business transactions (Rosli Talif, 1995).

(vi) Achievement

According to Davies & Pearse (2000), achievement is defined as reaching the objectives of a lesson, unit/course. An achievement test is intended to evaluate this. On the other hand, learning is entirely the learner's achievement, whereby it is part of the learner's personal development (Bowen & Marks, 1994).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this section, the researcher discusses the relevant literature pertaining to the proposed study. The focus of the study is to identify the relationships among various factors, which include classroom instructions, socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender with students' academic performance in English among selected upper secondary school students.

#### **2.1 The English Language in Malaysia**

According to Asmah Haji Omar (1992, 1975), the status and position of English during the colonial period was as a language of government, administration and commerce. So, knowledge of English and English as medium of education were crucial to career development and social mobility. In short, English was the language of power. After independence, as stated by Benson (1990) (cited in Ganakumaran Subramaniam, 2003),

English lost its position both as the language administration and of education. Bahasa Melayu replaced English in almost every formal aspect although the transition between the institutionalization of Malay and its complete domination of administration and education took ten years. The Language Act of 1967 relegated English from an alternate, official language to a second language. From 1970, English was phased out as a medium of instruction in all public schools. By the early 1980s, the process had reached the institutions of higher education (Lowenberg, 1991).

Today, English is a compulsory second language in primary and secondary schools. In institutions of higher education, the lack of resource materials in Malay retains English as a crucial reference language. In spite of a general decline in the quality of English, it still remains important as a language of business especially in private sectors, social interaction, which are mainly non-Malays and Malay elite intellectuals and socialites and an international language in the country.

Over the last decade, however, the economic boom, together with factors related to globalization and the age of Internet, has reasserted the significance of English. With the belief that English can no longer pose a threat to national unity and dis-entrench the position of the Malay language, Malaysia's administrators have shown a change of heart and decisiveness in not only stating the significance of possessing a working knowledge of English, but also in actively promoting it. Moves towards "reestablishing English" (Asmah Haji Omar, 1992) have culminated in policies to allow the use of English for the

teaching of scientific and technological subjects (Ramayah & Menon, 1994). The change in priorities towards English is decided by factors such as the vision to make Malaysia a significant player in world economy by the year 2020; the vision to make Malaysia the centre for regional education, the plan to create a multi-media super corridor and the development of a knowledge-based economy (Asmah Haji Omar, 1994), (cited in Ganakumaran & Malachi, 2003).

Hence, the new millennium brought greater impetus to the teaching and learning of English. In the year 2000, literature was included as a tested component in the Malaysian secondary school ESL syllabus. From the year 2003, the medium of instruction for mathematics and science at all levels of the Malaysian education system was to be converted to English in stages (Ganakumaran & Malachi, 2003).

## **2.2 Conceptions of Learning & Teaching**

Based on the qualitative view, learning involves meaning, understanding and a way of interpreting the world. Based on the constructivist view of learning, students make up their own meanings from their experiences. In contrast, teaching is the facilitation of learning. The teacher interacts with the learner in line with the qualitative conception that learning involves the active construction of meaning by the student (Biggs, J & Watkins, D, 1995).

Teaching is a complex process and a very personal activity, which can be conceptualized in a number of different ways, whereby individual teachers bring to

teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching. Traditionally, language teaching has been described in terms of what teachers do. For instance, in terms of the actions and behaviors, which teachers carry out in the classroom and the effects of these on learners.

In trying to understand how teachers deal with these dimensions of teaching, it is necessary to examine the beliefs and thinking processes, which underlie teachers' classroom actions. This view of teaching involves a cognitive, an affective and a behavioral dimension (Clark and Peterson, 1986; Lynch, 1989).

In contrast, when learners and teachers meet for the first time, they may bring with them different expectations concerning not only the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a particular course and how it will be learned (Brindley, 1984).

Brindley's observation draws attention to the fact that both teachers and learners bring experience to the classroom that influences their perceptions in subtle ways.

Hence, Brindley (1984) points out that teacher, who favor a “learner-centered” view of learning, such as that, which underlies many current methodologies in language teaching would probably describe learning consists of acquiring organizing principles through encountering experience. On the other hand, the teacher is a resource person, who provides language input for the learner to work on. Pararell to this, language data is to be found everywhere, in the community and in the media as well as in textbooks. So, it is the role of the teacher to assist learners to become self-directed by providing access to