

ENGLISH LANGUAGE USE AMONG EFL LEARNERS IN SUNWAY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of an investigation into patterns of English language use among English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Sunway University College, Malaysia. A sample of 47 respondents participated in this survey. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires. The results indicate that the respondents use English in both their social and academic domains. The findings also reveal that the EFL learners in this private institution are more inclined towards instrumental goals—passing examinations and future career developments—in their learning of English. The implications of this research are discussed.

Key words: EFL learners, language use, training preferences.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) today takes place in a wide variety of contexts: in private and public institutions, with learners coming from different language backgrounds. Every EFL classroom is influenced by various contextual factors. These include the role of English in the society, linguistic and cultural attitudes toward EFL, the educational institution itself and the students' background.

In Malaysia, English is used to access the vast amount of information currently available in English and also to contribute to this knowledge base. As far as government policy is concerned, English is viewed as vital for the nation's growth. Although it may not be the medium of instruction in public universities, accessing key information in a great variety of fields is often dependent on having reading ability in English. McKay (2002) points out that the widespread use of English in a variety of political and intellectual areas makes it imperative for any country wishing to access the global community for economic development to have access to it.

Educational institutions in Malaysia have always focused on promoting the quality of English language programmes for their respective students to enhance their ability to communicate fluently in English. A better understanding of language learners can have a beneficial effect on the process of attempting to help them in learning English as a foreign language. Examining learners' patterns of language use, attitudes and training preferences will enable us to cater for their needs and to foster proficiency in the EFL class.