

**RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH AMONG
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN
MALAYSIA**

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**RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH AMONG
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN
MALAYSIA**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xiv
List of Abbreviations	xvi
Abstrak	xvii
Abstract	xviii
CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.11 History of the CCs in New Zealand, Australia and the USA	2
1.12 History of the CCs in Malaysia	5
1.13 The CC students	11
1.14 Aims, programmes and syllabuses	14

1.2	Problem statement	20
1.3	Objectives	27
1.4	Research questions	39
1.5	Rationale of the study	30
1.6	Significance of the study	32
1.7	Limitations	33
1.8	Operational definitions	34
1.9	Summary	36
 CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW		37
2.0	Introduction	37
2.1	The theoretical background	37
2.1.1	Linguistic competence.....	38
2.1.2	Communicative competence.....	39
2.1.3	Craig’s seven traditions of communication theory.....	42
2.1.4	The Big Five Personality Traits (BFPT) and the Eysenck’s PEN Model.....	45
2.2	The nature of spoken English.....	47

2.2.1	Malaysian speakers of English.....	50
2.2.2	Teaching and learning of spoken English.....	51
2.3	Reluctance to speak.....	57
2.3.1	Studies on reluctance to speak from abroad.....	58
2.3.2	Studies on reluctance to speak within Malaysia.....	63
2.4	The theoretical framework.....	64
2.5	The conceptual framework.....	65
2.5.1	The variables.....	66
2.6	Summary	86
 CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		88
3.0	Introduction	88
3.1	The research design	88
3.2	The research framework.....	93
3.3	The sampling of respondents.....	94
3.3.1	Respondents for pre-pilot.....	96
3.3.2	Respondents for pilot study.....	97

3.3.3	Respondents for the main study.....	98
3.4	The pre-pilot and the pilot study.....	101
3.5	The instruments	105
3.5.1	Personal Report on Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)	106
3.5.2	The Shyness Scale	108
3.5.3	Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale (SES)	109
3.6	The main study.....	110
3.7	The research matrix	111
3.8	Data collection	114
3.9	Data analysis	115
3.10	Summary	118
 CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH FINDINGS		120
4.0	Introduction	120
4.1	Demographic information of respondents	120
4.2	The findings for RQ1.....	122
4.2.1	Communication apprehension in the Mother tongue.....	123

4.2.2	Communication apprehension in the English Language	125
4.2.3	Shyness	129
4.2.4	Self-esteem	131
4.3	The findings for RQ2	132
4.3.1	The mean for CA in the Mother tongue.....	132
4.3.2	The mean for CA in the English Language.....	133
4.3.3	The mean for self-esteem	133
4.3.4	The mean for shyness	134
4.3.5	A recap	134
4.4	The findings for RQ3	135
4.5	The findings for RQ4	137
4.5.1	CA in the Mother tongue between males and females.....	137
4.5.2	CA in English between males and females.....	138
4.5.3	Shyness between males and females	139
4.5.4	Self-esteem between males and females.....	141
4.6	The findings for RQ5	142
4.6.1	Vocabulary	144
4.6.2	Pronunciation	145

4.6.3	Sentence structure and grammar	145
4.6.4	Confidence	147
4.6.5	Communication apprehension	147
4.6.6	Shyness	149
4.7	The findings for RQ6	150
4.7.1	The similarities in all groups	152
4.7.2	The similarities between Group A and Group B	152
4.7.3	The differences	156
4.8	Summary	161
 CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION		162
5.0	Introduction	162
5.1	The summary of major findings	162
5.1.1	RQ1: The mean levels of the variables	163
5.1.2	RQ2: The mean level according to courses studied	163
5.1.3	RQ3: The correlations among the variables	165
5.1.4	RQ4: The differences between gender	166
5.1.5	RQ5: The reasons for being a reluctant English speaker.....	166

5.1.6	RQ6: The characteristics of English reluctant speakers	167
5.2	Discussion of findings	168
5.2.1	RQ1: Reluctance to speak by CA, shyness and self-esteem	168
5.2.2	RQ2: Reluctance to speak by courses studied	171
5.2.3	RQ3: Reluctance to speak and the relationship among variables	174
5.2.4	RQ4: Reluctance to speak by gender	175
5.2.5	RQ5: The reasons for being reluctant English speakers	177
5.2.6	RQ6: The profile of a reluctant English speaker	180
5.3	Pedagogical implications and recommendations	183
5.4	Research recommendations	184
5.5	Policy recommendations	185
5.6	Conclusion	187
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	188

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Kenyataan Mudah: Maklumat Kajian

Appendix 2: Demographic information

Appendix 3: Questionnaire 1: PRCA-24 Bahasa Ibunda

Appendix 4: Questionnaire 2: PRCA-24 Bahasa Inggeris

Appendix 5: Shyness Scale translated from Cheek and Melchior (1985)

Appendix 6: Self-esteem Scale translated from Rosenberg (1965)

Appendix 7: The PRCA-24 from McCroskey (1982)

Appendix 8: The The Shyness Scale from Cheek and Melchior (1990)

Appendix 9: The Self-esteem Scale form Rosenberg (1965)

Appendix 10: The Semi-structured Interview

Appendix 11: Meta-self-consciousness and Shyness

LIST OF PUBLICATION

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1.1	The Chronology of Management Changes for the Community Colleges	6
Table 1.2	The expansion of the Community Colleges	8
Table 1.3	The birth location of some of the Community Colleges	9
Table 1.4	The English for Communication Topics Taught in Community Colleges by Semester until 2011	15
Table 1.5	The aims and objectives.....	27
Table 2.1	Simplified Hymes’s SPEAKING grid.....	41
Table 2.2	The Seven Traditions of Communication Theory	42
Table 2.3	The big five trait domains	45
Table 2.4	Similarities between reluctance, reticence and unwillingness ..	58
Table 2.5	Symptoms of Shyness by Henderson and Zimbardo (2008)	76
Table 2.6	Types and levels of self-esteem (Mruk, 2003)	81
Table 2.7	Traits and behaviours of high and low self-esteem individual ..	82
Table 3.1	The CCs selected.....	95
Table 3.2	The respondents for pre-pilot.....	97
Table 3.3	The respondents for pilot study.....	98
Table 3.4	Full-Time Certificate Courses offered by the 7 Northern Territory Community Colleges (Jabatan Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, 2009)	99
Table 3.5	The respondents for the main study	100
Table 3.6	Sub-scores calculations	107

Table 3.7	The research matrix	112
Table 3.8	The reliability measures of the pilot study.....	116
Table 4.1	The distribution of respondents	121
Table 4.2	Disrtibution of gender across courses.....	122
Table 4.3	Distribution level of CA in the Mother tongue	123
Table 4.4	Max, min and mean scores in the four subsets of CA in the Mother tongue	124
Table 4.5	Distribution of level of CA in English	126
Table 4.6	Max, min and mean scores in the four subsets of CA in English	127
Table 4.7	The cut off levels used	130
Table 4.8	Distribution of the level of shyness	130
Table 4.9	Distribution of the level of self-esteem	131
Table 4.10	Variables according to courses and gender	132
Table 4.11	The correlation matrix	136
Table 4.12	CA in the Mother tongue by gender	138
Table 4.13	The t-test results for CA in the Mother tongue	138
Table 4.14	CA in English by gender	139
Table 4.15	The t-test results for CA in English	139
Table 4.16	Shyness by gender	139
Table 4.17	The t-test results for shyness	140
Table 4.18	Self-esteem by gender	141

Table 4.19	The t-test results for self-esteem	141
Table 4.20	The demography of the interviewed respondents	150
Table 4.21	The similarities between Group A, B and C	152
Table 4.22	The similarities between Group A and B	153
Table 4.23	The differences between Group A, B and C	156
Table 4.24	The reluctant English speakers and the 12 themes	160

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1	Changes of the Community College in Malaysia	7
Figure 1.2	The structure of the NMC: National Modular Certificate (Jabatan Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti, 2010).	18
Figure 2.1	The Chomsky-Schutzenberger Hiererchy.....	38
Figure 2.2	The four components of communicative competence	40
Figure 2.3	Eysenck’s PEN Model	46
Figure 2.4	Overlapping components of the spoken language	48
Figure 2.5	English language speakers in Malaysia	51
Figure 2.6	Willingness to Communicate Model (MacIntyre et al., 1998).....	60
Figure 2.7	Theoretical framework.....	65
Figure 2.8	The conceptual framework	66
Figure 2.9	Communication apprehension continuum (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998, p.43)	67
Figure 3.1	The mixed methods research design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010)	90
Figure 3.2	The research design	92
Figure 3.3	The research framework	94
Figure 3.4	The three groups of reluctant English speakers	111
Figure 4.1	The PRCA-24 subset comparison	128
Figure 4.2	Overall means for variables by courses	135

Figure 5.1	A typical reluctant English speaker from the CC	180
Figure 5.2	Reluctance reduction strategy	181
Figure 5.3	Self-initiated success cycle	182

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Arau Community College
BBCC	Bayan Baru Community College
BDCC	Bandar Darulaman Community College
BPKK	Community College Administrative Unit
CC	Community Colleges
DLP	Dual Language Programme
HIP	Highly Immersive Programme
JPKK	Learning Department of Community Colleges
KCC	Kuantan Community College
k-economy	Knowledge economy
KLCC	Kuala Langat Community College
LCC	Langkawai Community College
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of High Education
PADU	Performance and Delivery Unit
PEMANDU	Performance Management and Delivery Unit
SPCC	Sungai Petani Community College
JPT	Higher Learning Department
SPPKK	Polytechnic and Community Colleges Administrative Sector
TICC	Teluk Intan Community College

KEENGGANAN BERTUTUR DI DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS DI KALANGAN PELAJAR KOLEJ KOMUNITI DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggeris digunakan dengan meluas di sektor industri. Maka adalah penting bagi pelajar vokasional dan teknikal untuk mahir dalam perbualan Bahasa Inggeris supaya berdaya saing meraih peluang perkerjaan di dalam mahupun di luar negara. Malangnya ramai pelajar ini enggan bertutur di dalam Bahasa Inggeris di dalam kelas. Kajian kaedah campuran ini menitikberatkan tahap dan korelasi keresahan berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Ibunda dan Bahasa Inggeris, rasa malu dan jatidiri pelajar. Tahap keengganan bertutur turut dianalisa mengikut kursus dan jantina serta ciri tipikal seseorang yang enggan bertutur. Persampelan terancang telah mengenalpasti 370 pelajar yang mengikuti pengajian di tujuh Kolej Komuniti di dalam sembilan jurusan berbeza dari Utara Malaysia. Keputusan analisa kuantitatif menunjukkan bahawa mereka mempunyai tahap keresahan komunikasi yang rendah dalam Bahasa Ibunda, tahap yang tinggi dalam Bahasa Inggeris, tahap yang tinggi untuk perasaan malu dan sederhana tinggi untuk jatidiri. Tiga korelasi dijumpai iaitu keresahan berkomunikasi di dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan Bahasa Ibunda, antara keresahan berkomunikasi di dalam Bahasa Inggris dan rasa malu, serta antara keresahan berkomunikasi di dalam Bahasa Ibunda dan rasa malu. Perempuan didapati sederhana malu berbanding lelaki. Dapatan kualitatif susulan menunjukkan pelajar yang enggan bertutur di dalam Bahasa Inggeris merasai tahap keresahan berkomunikasi yang tinggi di dalam Bahasa Inggeris, sederhana malu, lemah didalam Bahasa Inggeris peringkat SPM, mendapat pendedahan yang kurang terhadap bahasa Inggeris di luar persekolahan, mengelakkan diri di dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris, tidak mempunyai motivasi untuk mendapatkan bantuan untuk Bahasa Inggeris dan tidak mengulangkaji Bahasa Inggeris selepas sesi persekolahan. Ciri tipikal mereka yang enggan bertutur di dalam Bahasa Inggeris ialah tahap keresahan berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan tahap malu yang tinggi serta tahap perbendaharaan kata dan sokongan dari rumah yang rendah.

RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

English is extensively used in industries. Therefore it is vital for our vocational and technology based students to be proficient in spoken English for a better local and international employment prospect. However many of the students were reluctant to speak in English in class. The mixed method study was concerned about the levels and correlations of communication apprehension perceived by the reluctant students in the Mother tongue and English, shyness and self-esteem. The respective levels were also measured according to courses and gender followed by a general description of a typical reluctant student. The purposive sampling was used to obtain 370 students who were studying in seven Community Colleges in nine different technical courses in the North of Malaysia. Quantitative analysis result obtained showed low level of CA in the Mother tongue, high level of CA in English, high level of shyness and moderately high self-esteem. The three correlations found were between CA in English and CA in the Mother tongue, between CA in English and shyness and between CA in the Mother tongue and shyness. The females were moderately shy compared to males. The consecutive qualitative results obtained showed that the reluctant English speakers experienced high level of CA in English Language, moderately shy, scored poorly in English at SPM level, had insufficient exposure to English outside schooling environment, practice avoidance in English classes, not motivated to seek assistance for English and did not study English after school. The typical reluctant English speaker tends to experience high levels of CA in English and shyness with low vocabulary and low support from their home.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Cambridge University (2013) baseline study on 5.2 million Malaysian students from 10,000 schools identified their weakest skill in English is speaking and although the students wanted to improve their English, many did not accredit its actual worth. Hence this study aims to follow up on this weakest skill by studying Community College students who are reluctant to speak in English. These students are priceless assets to the country's economy and growth that cannot be left unaided in their struggle for fluency in speaking this lingua franca. To set the scene for this study, this chapter shall present some background information on the history of the CCs in New Zealand, Australia and the USA which resemble the CCs in Malaysia. This is ensued by the history of the CCs in Malaysia and their students, aims, programmes and the English syllabuses taught. This is succeeded by the usual sequence of the problem statement, objectives, research questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations and the operational definitions of key terms. Last but not least is the summary.

1.1 Background of the study

The understanding of the origin, the development and the type of students training at the CCs in Malaysia is necessary to the background of the study. Equally important is an understanding of the aim for the implementation of the CCs and the means to achieve the aims via the curriculum designed. However, before embarking on that, it would be interesting to relate the history and impact of earlier CCs in other countries

that implemented its concept and methodology.

1.1.1 History of the CCs in New Zealand, Australia and the USA

There are a lot of CCs all over the world that are similar in aims and operations. The CCs most similar to Malaysia are the ones in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Among the oldest known CCs in New Zealand is Hagley Community College (1858) in New Zealand, TAFE Colleges (1970s) in Australia and Joliet Junior College (1901) in the USA.

The Hagley Community College in Christchurch, New Zealand was founded in 1858. It is mainly a non-integrated secondary school for pupils aged 9 to 13 and senior college that has produced over 92% qualified students that furthered their studies in universities (Hagley, 2009). Their students were encouraged to express themselves and are not required to wear a uniform. In 2015 it had 2300 pupils (Law, 2012). Hagley also offered specialist programmes such as Dance Company, Writer's Institute, School of Cuisine and Early Childhood Education (Hagley, 2012) as tertiary pathways with links to the industry to benefit their students in terms of career and experience. They also offer part-time programmes as well as night classes known as After 3 for adult education on a friendly first name basis relationship with lecturers (Hagley, 2017). It is very similar to the casual no uniform atmosphere and friendly lecturer-students culture at the Malaysian CCs. In Malaysia the main focus is on students aged 18 and above with occasional visits for short 1-3 days courses from the primary school pupils and the community members.

TAFE stands for Technical and Further Education. It is the largest vocational and technical training sector in Australia with more than 500,000 enrolments and over 1000 courses (TAFE, 2017). It started in the 1833 as Sydney Mechanics School of Arts (ibid) and progressed rapidly. It was originally funded by the states and made more positive impact from the 1970s when government funding started in 1883 (ibid). The 21st century TAFE offers industry-relevant skill and theoretical study options not only for locals but international students as well (Bentley, 2017). Their courses are available as a full-time, part-time, online, on campus, or of campus ranging from certificates to diploma and bachelor degrees (ibid). TAFE is similar albeit older and much larger than the Malaysian CCs that offer certificates and a few diplomas.

Initially, the CCs in USA are known as Junior Colleges. In 1901, the oldest CC named Joliet Junior College was founded in Illinois, USA by J. Stanley Brown and William Rainey Harper (Joliet Junior College, 2009). Harper wanted to solve the problem of overcrowded classes and underprepared students in universities. Brown saw the high competition level and high cost faced by students to enroll in universities. Both wanted to solve the problems and both agreed that ‘freshman and sophomore college courses could be taught outside the university’ (Phillippe & Patton, 2000, p.4). Agreements were made where students who had successfully completed their education at Joliet Junior College were given credit transfers by university professors. The college is the oldest and is still thriving today making the Community College 115 years old in the year 2015.

The CCs increased to a whopping 1,600 community colleges all over the United States in 2007. According to Philippe and Patton (2000), the CCs in USA had

succeeded by providing educational institutions that offer a large variety of courses in accordance with the community's needs. Most of all the CCs provide affordable courses in small classes that are located within 30 minutes distance from their students. Philippe and Patton (2000) found that in one year (1996 to 1997) the CCs in America had provided services to 9.1 million undergraduates in credit courses and 5 million undergraduates in non-credit courses that accounted for more than 50% of the American undergraduates. According to them, in the past 100 years the CCs in America had educated more than 100 million students (Ibid). Among the courses offered are Business, Management, Marketing and its related Support Services, Accounting, Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations, Computer Information, Engineering, Agriculture, Education, Languages and Linguistics, Recreation and Leisure Fitness, as well as Theology and many more (American Association of Community Colleges, 2010).

According to Schuck and Larson (2003) the students attending the CCs in USA had a variety of disadvantages such as being a dropout before turning 18 years old or came from a minority group with a lot of personal problems. Some were unfamiliar with the education system practiced because they left education for too long and some were new to the USA. Sometimes English was not their first language or second language. Despite that, Schuck and Larsen (2003) reported that in 2004, 6% of the CC students in USA attained Elementary Level, 9% some High School, 32% High School, 17% some college, 8% Associate, 18% Bachelor, 7% Master, 2% Professional and 1% Doctorate (AACC, 2010 as cited in Philippe & Patton, 2000). Age wise, 4% of the CC students were under 18 years old, 32% aged between 18 to 22 years old, 46% were 25 years or older, and 32% were 30 years old or older. Hence majority of

78% were over 25 years old. This is different from the age group of the CC students in Malaysia as will be detailed next.

1.1.2 History of the CCs in Malaysia

The American CC's approach in making education accessible to all and providing opportunity for up-skilling and re-skilling for their community had successfully reduced unemployment in USA (Philippe & Patton, 2000). This concept is very similar to the Malaysian situation. According to data from SPKK (1998) and JPKK (2012) in *Buku Pelan Perneriksaan Kolej Komuniti*, Malaysia started the CC education programme in the year 2000 following the tabling of Memorandum No. 398/2225/00 on the 5th July 2000. The Board of Ministers considered the proposal by the Minister of Education, on the development concept and implementation of Community Colleges in each parliamentary district.

The CCs in Malaysia started operation in 2001. They had quite a colourful history from their inception under the Ministry of Education (MOE) until the management shifted to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) until 2012 and reverted again to the Ministry of Education in 2013 and back again under MOE in 2014. It has gone through changes of 'management ownership', rebranding, and transformation as depicted in Table 1.1 on The Chronology of Management Changes for the Community Colleges.

Table 1.1

The Chronology of management changes for the Community Colleges

Date / Year	Development
2001 – February 2004	CC managed by Ministry of Education (MOE) under Technical Education Department. Offers Technical Certificates, and Lifelong Learning
March 2004	CCs and Polytechnics managed by MOHE. Offers Technical Diploma, Certificates and Lifelong Learning
2007	CCs Rebranding ceremony
2009	CCs split with Polytechnics Strong emphasis on Lifelong Learning Ceased to offer Diploma Programmes

Adapted from *Jabatan Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti* 2009

Following the parliamentary memorandum announcement in 2000, the CCs were born in 2001 and managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) under the Department of Technical Education and *Bahagian Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti* or *BPKK* (Community College Administrative Unit) from 2001 to February 2004. They offered Certificate Level and Lifelong Learning programmes. From March 2004, the CCs joined the polytechnics which were managed by the Ministry of Higher Education under the *Sektor Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti* or *SPPKK* (Polytechnics and Community Colleges Administrative Sector) offering Diplomas, Certificates and Lifelong Learning in technical programmes. The change was solemnized in a rebranding ceremony held in 2007. Two years later in 2009, the CCs were separated from the Polytechnics. They still come under the MOHE but are managed by the *Jabatan Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti* or *JPKK* (Learning Department of Community Colleges and *Bahagian Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti* or *BPKK* (Community Colleges Administrative Unit).

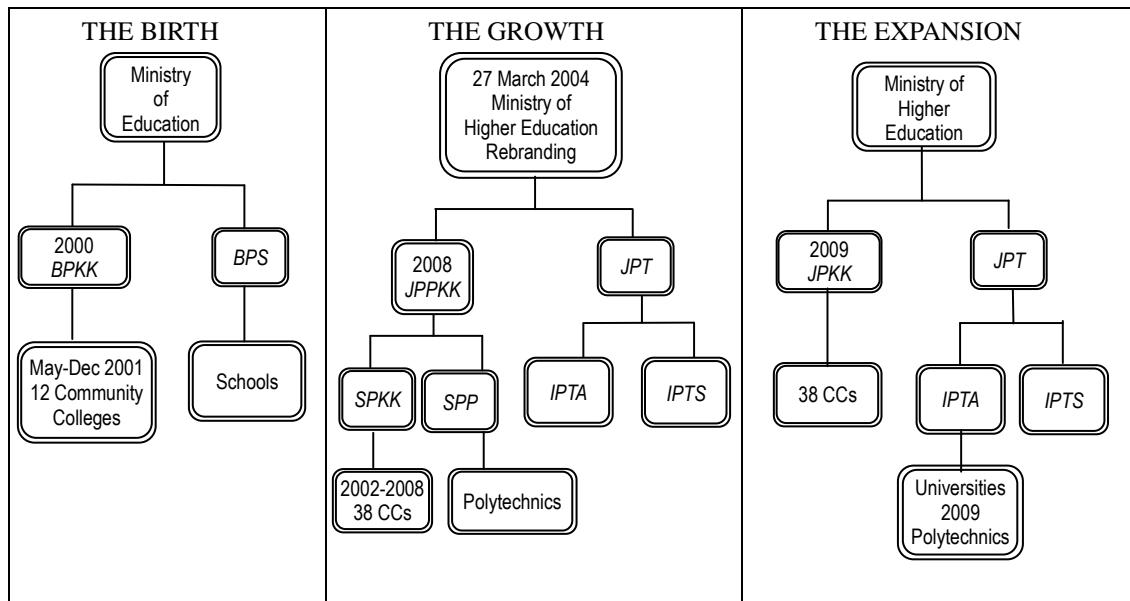


Figure 1.1: Changes of the Community College in Malaysia

The CCs in Malaysia are very dynamic. The changes, progress and growth occurred within months. Figure 1.1 shows the three stages of progress in the history of the CCs in Malaysia beginning with the birth of the CCs under the Ministry of Education to its growth to become a higher learning institution under the Ministry of Higher Education. The CCs mushroomed in quantity and size in just 10 years from 12 to 37 colleges all over Malaysia. The expansion necessitate the management of the CCs to be upgraded from being jointly managed by a Polytechnic and Community College Administrative Department to stand alone and become a Community College Administrative Department with two Ministers, one heading MOE and another heading MOHE. In 2013 the Malaysian government merged all educational systems under MOE with only one Minister of Education. MOHE ceased to exist. Hence the CCs and Polytechnics were managed again by the Higher Education Department with two sectors namely the Sector of CCs and the Sector of Polytechnics. The changes did not deter the growth of the CCs. More CCs were introduced that by 2012 there were

81 CCs (JPKK 2012), by 2015 there were 91 colleges all over Malaysia (Malaysia Quality Assurance 2015) and by 2017 there were 94 colleges (JPKK 2017).

The expansion of the CCs as shown in Table 1.2 reveals the 12 CCs established in 2001 under the Technical Education Department of the Ministry of Education. There are 10 CCs in Peninsular Malaysia and 2 CCs in Sabah and Sarawak. They are managed by the MOE under the Department of Technical Education. They share the same ministry as the Technical Schools in Malaysia which is why some CCs started their operation by sharing the building and facilities in the Technical Schools. This is true for Arau Community College (ACC), Langkawi Community College (LCC), Sungai Petani Community College (SPCC), Bayan Baru Community College (BBCC) and Teluk Intan Community College (TICC).

Table 1.2
The expansion of the Community Colleges

Date / Year	Development
5 July 2000	Memorandum No. 398/2225/00 Cabinet approved to establish one CC in each parliamentary constituency in Malaysia
2001	12 Pioneer CCs established in Malaysia under Ministry of Education Emphasis on Certificate Level & Short Courses
15 May 2001	The first group of CCs in Sabah and Sarawak: 1. Kolej Komuniti Tawau, Sabah 2. Kolej Komuniti Kuching, Sarawak
16 May 2001	The first group of CCs in Peninsular Malaysia 3. Kolej Komuniti Arau, Perlis 4. Kolej Komuniti Bandar Darulaman, Kedah 5. Kolej Komuniti Kepala Batas, Pulau Pinang 6. Kolej Komuniti Jempol, Negeri Sembilan 7. Kolej Komuniti Bukit Beruang, Melaka 8. Kolej Komuniti Segamat, Johor 9. Kolej Komuniti Kuantan, Pahang
1 June 2001	10. Kolej Komuniti Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu
4 December 2001	11. Kolej Komuniti Teluk Intan, Perak 12. Kolej Komuniti Sabak Bernam, Selangor
2002-2007	25 CCs added (Total 37 CCs)

Cont. Table 1.2

2008	2 CCs added (Total 39 CCs)
2010	31 CCs added (Total 70 CCs)
2012	10 CCs added (Total 81 CCs)
2015	21 CCs added (Total 91 CCs)
2017	3 CCs added (Total 94 CCs)

Adapted from *Sektor Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti 2009-2017*.

There are other colleges that started their operation in a secondary school such as Kuala Langat Community College (KLCC). Some operated in polytechnics such as Bandar Darulaman Community College (BDCC) and Kuantan Community College (KCC). This is shown in Table 1.3 on the birth location of some of the Community Colleges.

Table 1.3
The birth location of some of the Community Colleges

Community Colleges	Initial Venue
Arau Community College (ACC)	Arau Technical School
Langkawi Community College (LCC)	Langkawi Technical School
Sungai Petani Community College (SPCC)	Sungai Petani Technical School (I) and (II)
Bayan Baru Community College (SPCC)	Bayan Baru Technical School
Teluk Intan Community College (TICC)	Seri Manjung Technical School
Kuala Langat Community College (KLCC)	Bandar Banting Secondary School
Bandar Darulaman Community College (BDCC)	Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah Polytechnic
Kuantan Community College (KCC)	Sultan Ahmad Shah Polytechnic

On 27 March 2004, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) was established with two departments; the *Jabatan Pengajian Tinggi* or *JPT* (Higher Learning Department) and the *Jabatan Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti* or

JPPKK (Polytechnics and Community Colleges Administrative Department). This event marked the close link between Community Colleges and Polytechnics since the *JPPKK* manages two sectors known as the *Sektor Pengajian Kolej Komuniti* or *SPKK* (Community College Learning Sector) and *Sektor Pengajian Politeknik* or *SPP* (Polytechnics Education Sector). It also marked the shift of patronage for the CCs from MOE to MOHE which is followed by a rebranding event on 2 February 2007 officiated by Dato' Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was the Prime Minister of Malaysia then (Utusan Online, 2007). The CCs management label changed to *SPKK* from *BPKK*. At the same time, the 9th Malaysia Plan encouraged the CCs to grow bigger with RM457 million edifice budget that multiplied the number of CCs to 35 units by 2007 (Utusan Online, 2007).

On 16 September 2009, the Polytechnics were promoted as part of the *JPT* which put them at par with the local universities. Hence the CCs remained under MOHE but separated from the Polytechnics. The CCs are managed by the *Jabatan Pengajian Kolej Komuniti-JPKK* (Community College Education Department) instead of the *Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti-JPPKK* (Polytechnics and the Community Colleges Education Department). Previously, *JPKK* has changed its name three times; as *Jabatan Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti-JPPKK*, *Sektor Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti-SPKK* and *Bahagian Pengajian Kolej Komuniti-BPKK*.

The mission of the CCs is to provide dynamic and quality education to all in the community that prepares them for employment and improve their socio-economic status. The plan is to tap into the potentials of post secondary school leavers and

produce excellence among them through education and training. The aim is for the CCs from the year 2010 onwards to become the 'hub of lifelong learning' that is 'effective and efficient' (Kamarudin Kasim, 2007). This could mark the expansion stage of the CCs.

1.1.3 The CC students

The students are learning technical skills at a certificate level. They are part of the 'scientific and progressive' citizens' programme that should ensure Malaysia becomes a developed country by the year 2020 (Mahathir Mohamad, 1991). The journey is long and winding but it is pertinent that Malaysians are prepared to achieve this by strengthening its 'human capital' and 'knowledge economy' (K-economy). Malaysia needs high educational level and employment growth for its citizens. She has targeted a large scale production of semi-skilled workers for industries or self-employment via one of her certified semi-skilled worker generators; the Community Colleges (CCs).

Employment prospects for the Community College (CC) students lie in the semi-skilled zone where there were 88,819 vacancies for Malaysian non-degree holders in November 2008 (Ministry of Human Resources, 2009). Despite such vacancies, only 37,469 Malaysian non-degree holders were employed, 6,268 self-employed and 45,043 were unemployed (Ministry of Human Resources, 2009). Sadly the vacancy status has dwindled to 24,959 by September 2016 (Ministry of Human Resources, 2017).

At the CCs the students are taught core technical skills and general knowledge including English for Communication for two semesters that emphasizes spoken

English communication. As English is the key language to knowledge, the CC students' fluency and clarity in communicating in it should increase their employment opportunity.

The CCs offer an alternative route for over 18 years old Malaysian students who wish to further their studies after taking their *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)* examination. The students are not the *crème de la crème* as initially they are the students who do not qualify for further studies in the local universities or the polytechnics. They could not afford to bear the fees and costs of private higher institutions. The student enrolment is made up of Malays, Chinese, Indians and many other multiethnic Malaysians. The total enrolment by 31st March 2009 was 43,476 where 25,466 were Certificate holders and 301 were Diploma holders (*JPKK, 2009*). According to the *JPKK's* data there were 7,120 female and 9,815 male CC students in July 2008. In the year 2010 alone the enrolment reached 17,814 students. By 2012, 44,496 students graduated with CC Certificates, 1,139 with WBL Diplomas, 30,318 with National Modular Certificates and 1,000,646 with Short Course Certificates (*Jabatan Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti, 2012*)

The initial minimum entry requirement for the CC students is only a pass in Malay Language at *SPM* level. Hence the first batch of students was those that passed Malay Language at 40% and above or Grade P8. Grade P9 at 0% to 39% score is considered a Fail. The majority of the first batch of CC students passed their Malay Language at P8 and scored P9 in all or the majority of the other subjects (Science, Mathematics, English, Islamic Studies, History and Geography) in secondary school. Almost all of them failed their English.

As the CCs flourished, the certificate level entry requirements to the CCs were increased to (i) Malaysian citizen and (ii) holder of Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) or its equivalent (JPPKK, 2009). The entry levels for Work Based Learning (WBL) Diploma are as follows.

(i) A minimum CGPA of 3.0 and above

(ii) A CGPA between 2.5 to 2.9 with a one year working experience or

(iii) A CGPA between 2.0 to 2.4 and a minimum of two years working experience (Jabatan Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, 2009). This

helped to ensure the new generation of students possessed a stronger academic background.

Despite the low entry level or *SPM* qualification, these students were exceptionally interested in hands-on skills. Their low performance in *SPM* and better performance in technical skills at certificate level was a sign that they are not too keen on academic work that requires reading but were more interested in hands on technical and creative skills as well as learning by personal experience. Their strong interest in technical and creative skills had probably launched them to be successful semi skilled technical workforce for Malaysia. The first three batches of certificate holders that graduated in 2002, 2003 and 2004 are now either working successfully in various industries mainly in Malaysia and some abroad such as in Singapore and England. Some have stayed on to pursue their WBL-Diploma in the Community Colleges or in the Polytechnics in Malaysia.

English is not the language spoken by the community college students. Although English is known as the second language in Malaysia, the students in the

CCs were not ESL speakers. In reality, English was a foreign language (EFL) to all of the CC students who mainly used their mother tongue to communicate. This factor is a strong employment disadvantage for the students.

1.1.4 Aims, programmes and syllabuses

The 8th Malaysia Plan ensured the first batch of 12 Community Colleges started their operation in 2001, and by the 9th Malaysia Plan in January 2008, there were 39 CCs throughout Malaysia. In 2015 there are 91 CCs. The aim in 2008 was to promote vocational and technical education to school leavers with lower academic achievements, to encourage lifelong learning to the local community and to encourage the process of up-skilling and re-skilling of workers in industries as means to achieve knowledge community that is competitive for employment (Sektor Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti, 1998).

These aims were meant to complement the government's target to achieve world class k-economy (knowledge economy) and lifelong learning from the 8th Malaysia Plan (*Rancangan Malaysia Ke-8, RMK8*) to the 9th Malaysia Plan (*Rancangan Malaysia Ke-9, RMK9*). By March 2004, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) had replaced the Ministry of Education as the patron of the CCs. The aims of the CCs remained the same but with a stronger emphasis on lifelong learning since the Malaysian cabinet declared the CCs as a Lifelong Learning Hub in 2004 (*Jabatan Pengurusan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, 2012*).

The Certificate Programmes offered at the CCs from the year 2000 are realized via standardized Modules issued by the *JPPKK* to ensure standardized delivery of

skills and knowledge throughout the colleges. A new flexible Modular Programme offered from 2010 will gradually replace the Certificate Programme. Both programmes emphasized vocational hands-on expertise and lifelong learning with some emphasis on theory.

With regard to English, the students are exposed to English for Communication for one year at the certificate level and an additional 6 months for the diploma level. The syllabuses were coded as SPA103 for Semester One, SPA203 for Semester Two and SPA603 for Semester 3 for Work Based Learning (WBL) Diploma. The topics specified in the MOHE syllabus for SPA 103 were Greetings, Introductions, Likes, Dislikes and Preferences, and Polite Expressions. The topics for SPA203 were Descriptions of People and Objects, Instructions, Telephone Skills and Enquiries and the topics for SPA603 were Reading Skills, Meetings, Formal Correspondences and Job Seeking Skills. The English for Communication topics taught in the Community Colleges by Semester are presented in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.4
The English for Communication Topics Taught in Community Colleges by Semester until 2011

ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION		
SPA 103 Semester 1 (Certificate)	SPA 203 Semester 2 (Certificate)	SPA 603 Semester 3 (WBL Diploma)
Greetings	Descriptions of People and Objects	Reading Skills
Introductions	Instructions	Meetings
Likes, Dislikes and Preferences	Telephone Skills	Formal Correspondences
Polite Expressions	Enquiries	Job Seeking Skills

The general teaching and learning objectives for Unit 1 of the SPA103 Module was to teach the students how to use appropriate language for greetings, thanking,

expressing appreciation, taking leave and farewell in formal and informal situations. The general teaching and learning objectives for Unit 2 was to teach the students to introduce themselves and others in formal and informal situations and in online communication. Unit 3 teaches how to express and understands phrases and social conversations regarding likes, dislikes and preferences. Polite Expressions were taught in Unit 4 towards the end of the First Semester. The general objective of this unit is to ensure students are able to use appropriate and polite expressions such as seeking assistance, expressing ideas and disagreements, extending and declining invitations and apologies.

Units 5 to 8 were taught in the Second Semester. The general teaching and learning objectives for Unit 5 was aimed to encourage the students to use grammatically correct language forms to describe and compare people and objects. The general teaching and learning objectives for Unit 6 were on understanding and giving polite instructions and warnings whereas the general teaching and learning objectives for Telephone Skills in Unit 7 is to teach the students to use grammatically correct language forms to perform various communication purposes over the telephone. This covers self introductions, making reservations and seeking clarifications. Finally Unit 8 teaches students how to produce and understand spoken and written enquiries.

The WBL-Diploma offered in the CCs is only one year old in 2010 and therefore is without an established Module. There are 4 units in the Syllabus. Firstly, the syllabus for the WBL-Diploma requires that the students are able to use English in Unit 1: Reading Skills where they must be able to understand the international

phonetics transcriptions and be able to use the dictionary to understand word meaning, synonym and antonym as well as proper pronunciation. Unit 2 in the syllabus on Meetings requires the CC students to be able to understand and conduct meetings as well as to write minutes of meetings properly in English. Unit 3 is on Formal Correspondences where the students are exposed and trained to write proper formal correspondences related to their future employment purposes. Finally the last topic in the syllabus is Unit 4: Job Seeking Skills. Here the students are taught to choose jobs related to their skills and qualifications and to actually prepare their own curriculum vitae and job application and cover letters.

The latest advancement in the CCs is the Modular Programme that commenced July 2010. This programme targets to provide students with *Sijil Modular Kebangsaan (SMK)* or the National Modular Certificate (NMC). It offers three levels of flexible and intensive technical courses with high enrolment mobility. The highest level is known as the SMK and the second level is known as the Learning Area (LA) and the lowest level is known as the Learning and Practice (LnP). Students could begin their studies at any of the SMK, LA or LnP levels. A student who successfully studied a set of LnPs will be awarded with one LA. A student who successfully completed a set of LA will be awarded with one SMK. A student that successfully completes a set of SMK will be awarded with *Sijil Kolej Komuniti (SKK)* or the Community College Certificate. The structure of the three levels could be seen in Figure 1.2 showing the duration of each SMK as a 3, 4 or 6 months course. After the completion of a module the students are given a module completion certificate. At this stage the students are allowed to continue their studies immediately or to exit the CC to work or further their studies elsewhere and to return to the CC to resume their

studies at a later and more convenient date. This is known as the open entry and open exit Modular system. Once the students have completed the set of module they could graduate with a full CC Certificate.

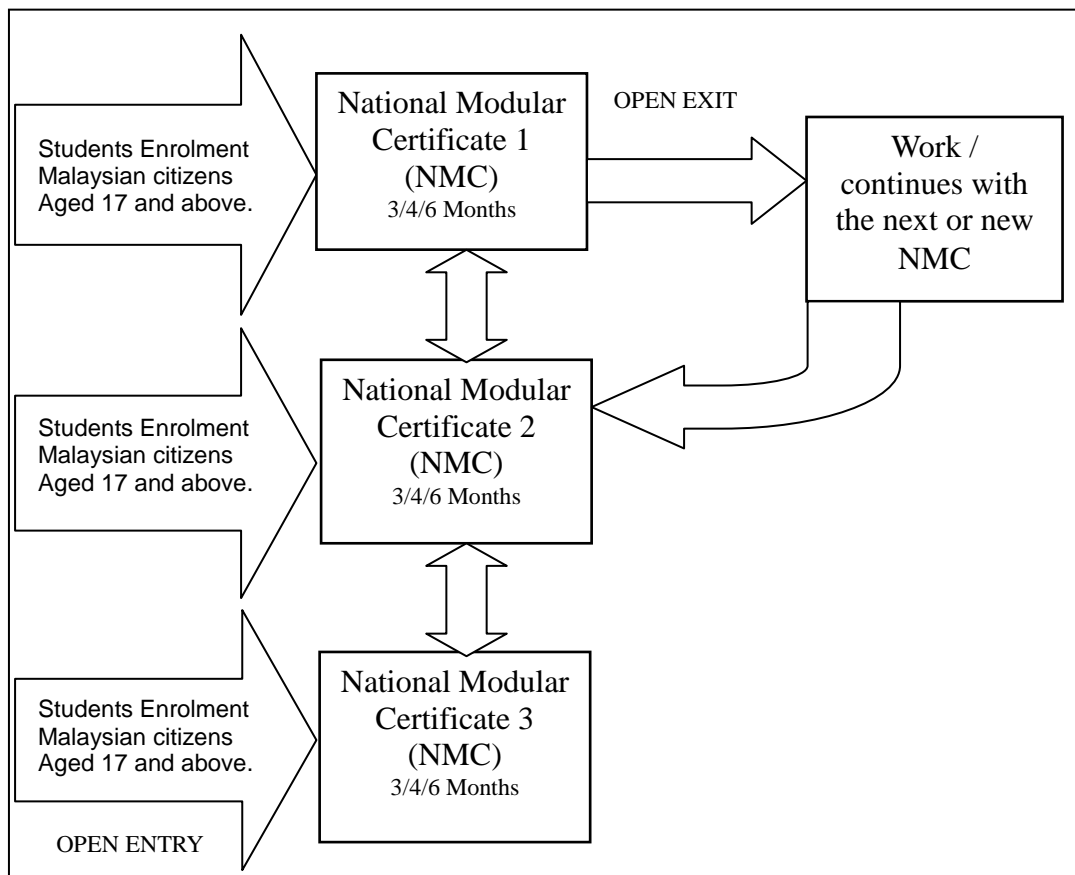


Figure 1.2: The structure of the NMC: National Modular Certificate (Jabatan Pengurusan Kolej Komuniti, 2010)

The Modular Programme was targeted to assist the students’ spoken English by embedding English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in certain LAs. In January 2010 nine syllabuses for ESP were developed. These were English for Hotel Operations, English for Culinary, English for Tour Guides, English for Air Conditioning and Cooling Services, English for Light Vehicle Services, English for Building Maintenance, English for Boat Maintenance and Repair, English for Electrical Installation and English for Aquaculture. The lexical content of these syllabuses

should be specific to its various programmes but the communicative language forms and functions targeted are identical to the syllabus of the English for Communication Modules for Semester 1 and Semester 2. The present study could not employ any observations of students' performance or perceptions in classes that are using this ESP Module for English because its implementation is very recent, lacks consistency and similarity throughout the colleges in Malaysia. Moreover, although the syllabuses are ready as reference and guide, the ESP Module was not yet published or available by 1st February 2011, the time this study began data collection. It is too new to be accessible as a valid study.

Reverting to the teaching and learning of English Language in the CCs, the emphasis is consistently on spoken English that prepares the students for the job-market. These are taught by 316 TESL qualified lecturers (*JPPKK*, 2009) in the 56 colleges (38 CCs and 18 Branch CCs). In addition, from the year 2008 all the core technical subjects should gradually be taught in English as consistent with the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science in English in primary and secondary schools. A committee was established and a series of the Teaching and Learning of Science, Mathematics and Technical subjects in English (TLSMTE or *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains, Matematik dan Teknikal dalam Inggeris-PPSMTI*) courses were conducted to accomplish this (Politeknik Kota Bharu, 2009).

Following a rebranding of the Community College and Polytechnics, TLSMTE/*PPSMTI* practiced from 2006-2007 was replaced with English Enhancement Programme (EEP) by the Training and Career Unit (TCU or *Bahagian Latihan dan Kerjaya* (BLK), MOHE in 2008 (*BLK*, 2009). Unfortunately from

personal observation, this transition is not smooth enough and it was not well implemented in the CCs, as most of the young technical lecturers were not proficient in English to date and lessons are still conducted in Malay with sporadic use of English vocabulary. The only document that remains in English is the Industrial Training Report written by the CC students.

The poor transition to English medium could be partly due to the fact that the lecturers too are graduates from a Malay medium education system who did not have strong English Language background. The Cambridge Baseline Study (2013) too graded the majority English Language subject teachers at below C1 ability where C2 should be the best English competency band for teachers. Furthermore the lecturers' education and employment history did not emphasize speaking skills. In addition, the withdrawal of the *PPSMTI* programme in July 2009 in all primary and secondary schools forced all teaching and learning of Science, Mathematics and Technical subjects in Primary and Secondary government schools to revert to the Malay Language by the year 2012. In National Type schools it reverted to the main vernacular languages of Tamil and Chinese. This move had a negative an effect on the English proficiency as well as confidence to speak in English among the young Malaysian students. The CCs students who already have problems in spoken English will also be affected.

1.2 Problem statement

The problems that will be elaborated upon below are on these 3 aspects:

(a) Students are reluctant to speak in class making it tough to make them improve their speaking skills. It is a wonder if they are experiencing CA in English and in the

mother tongue.

(b) Both genders appear shy and reluctant to speak but it varies from one class to another. Students in an all girl class doing Beauty and Hairstyling appeared most reluctant to participate in class.

(c) Students must pass Communicative English 1 and 2 but many are failing or scored borderline pass. It is a wonder how their self-esteem rank with their low performance in English.

It is challenging to make students who are reluctant to speak, speak out loud in class. The ability to speak English has been dwindling for the past 30 years. Thirty years ago Wang (1987) claimed that spoken English in Malaysian society was “used less and less intranationally but more and more internationally” (ibid p.17). Now in 2017, the majority of 94% Form 6 students and 98% Form 5 students in Malaysian schools scored B2 and below in CEFR English test (UCLES, 2014) and their weakest skill is speaking in English (Cambridge Baseline, 2013). Post schooling, some of the students furthered their tertiary studies in the CCs. Consequently the CC enrolment consists of students with the weakest spoken English skill from school (Lim, 1994, Fauziah Hassan & Nita Fauzee Selamat, 2002) as those who enrolled barely passed or failed their English altogether. At the CCs these students suddenly faced English classes with the sole focus on speaking skill (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2002). From the researcher’s observation as a CC English teacher for eight years, many appeared reluctant to speak in English during their 3 hour per week class thus preventing urgently needed practice and speaking skill improvement. Their communication apprehension might be really high when they had to speak in a foreign language. There is also a possibility that they are reluctant to speak even in

their mother tongue. Thus both the CA in English and the mother tongue are worth measuring and comparing with each other.

The CC students especially students in an all girls class appeared exceedingly shy when required to speak in class. This is not a Malaysian only dilemma. Previous studies by Richmond and McCroskey (1985) found shyness as a major outcome of noncommunication. Gender too is viable for the study as the less favoured gender tend to be more reluctant to speak during class (Martinez & Llinas, (2015). In some studies females were found to be more shy (Zimbardo, 1977 in Sam Bashoh, 2013). In others it was the males (Cheek, 1998). Some found no significant difference on the level of shyness between gender (Bashoh, 2013). The shyness and communication apprehension experienced might differ according to gender and from one course to another as the CCs offer co-education in many different courses of study.

It is also a fact that the CC students must pass their Communicative English syllabuses in order to attain their Certificate. Being aware of their weakness in spoken English could affect their self-esteem. After all low self-esteem (Burgoon, 1976) and high communication apprehension (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998) made people more reluctant to speak. It is worth inspecting if similar correlation between shyness and self-esteem exist within the CC students in Malaysia.

It is logical therefore to hypothesize the CC college students who barely passed or mostly failed English at SPM to experience high level of CA, high level of shyness and low self-esteem. Furthermore since EFL competence and motivation are fairly common and thoroughly researched areas, the researcher found that the area of

communication apprehension, shyness and self-esteem among the gender and the courses they majored in have not yet been studied in the CC setting in Malaysia.

There are various studies on the causes of reluctance to speak in other countries such as Saudi Arabia (Arafat Hamouda, 2013), Ireland (Shanahan, 2013), Ethiopia (Amogne & Yigzaw, 2013), Iran (Nasser Rashidi et.al (2011), Puerto Rico (McCroskey et al., 1985), Malaysian teacher trainees in Malaysia (Norlidar Ab. Hamid & Azlina Murad Sani, 2009), Turkey (Cetinkaya, 2005), USA (Jung & McCroskey, 2004), Japan (McCroskey et al., 1985) and Chinese in New Zealand (Mak & White (1996). There were no studies specifically for the CC students in Malaysia.

Moreover the literature review in Chapter 2 found no other study that compare the level of communication apprehension, shyness and self-esteem across a number of courses. This study on the CC students is geared specifically to understand whether there are significant differences between them and whether students from one course are more inclined towards CA, shyness or self-esteem than those from other courses. There could be a possibility that the students in different courses perceived their CA in Mt, CA in English, shyness and self-esteem differently. The nine courses in the present study were Bakery, Fashion, Business, Beauty and Hair, Food Quality, Computer Systems, Architecture, Manufacturing and Animation. A similar study by Kho (2015) compared engineering and commerce polytechnic students in Kuching. He found lack of practice as the cause of their inability to perform well in English Oral Presentations and that the engineering students preferred to focus more on their core subjects rather than to practice their English. It is worth understanding if the

scenario is the same among the CC students.

Should the scenario be the same, measures should be taken to curb their reluctance to speak in English or many CC students will graduate with minimal ability to speak in English. The students must understand the consequence where weak students faced delayed graduations for 6 months to a year for not passing assessments for spoken English. The impact will be costly to Malaysia if the majority of our graduates from the CCs specifically and from the other higher learning institutions in Malaysia cannot speak in English. Our nation will not be able to achieve the desired Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for k-economy with skilled technical and vocational workers that are knowledgeable, creative and innovative by 2020 and beyond if our graduates cannot communicate in English in social situations and at work. It will be futile for our graduates to compete globally vis a vis local employment too are at risk of being taken over by foreign labour. It is therefore vital for us to identify the root of the problem by understanding why the CC students were reluctant to speak in English and who they are. These could enable educators to predict and to design specific syllabuses and lessons that target the problematic areas that are preventing students from speaking in English.

The study is relevant as Malaysian students are weakest at speaking in English. Lim (1994) found 84.1% Malaysian students ranging from year 1 to tertiary level were unable to speak in English and 50% of these students claimed to be weakest in speaking skills. They claimed it was due to the lack of practice. Almost all of the 58 ESL lower secondary school teachers interviewed by Fauziah Hassan and Nita Fauzee Selamat (2002) agreed that their students were weakest in speaking. Their study