

**Toyohashi University of Technology,
Institute for Global Network Innovation in Technology
Education
News from Penang
(Vol.9 2016/3/3)**



English in Malaysia

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When I was a new teacher I had an opportunity to teach an exchange student individually. I talked with my student a lot. She spoke Malay and English and she was also able to speak Japanese through her study in Japan. One day I said to her “I envy you because you speak a couple of languages,” then she said “We have a history that make us use English.” I was struck by her words. They have an inevitable reason that they speak English.

Since we got to Penang on Jan. 17th, I sometimes spoke English at restaurants and shops. I figured out that all of Malay don't speak English and English is the second or the third language for them so they sometimes made grammatical mistakes. This fact made me feel at ease to speak English. In New York speaking English is a complete away game for me. But in Penang it is an away game for both of us, so I could speak English without getting nervous. At first I couldn't catch their English with Malay accent. Actually I couldn't understand the Indian accent throughout staying in Penang.

The last two weeks of my stay in Penang, I worked in USM and had two 120 minute lectures. Teachers and students in USM warmly welcomed me. When I opened the door of my room, some staffs talked to me “Oh, are you a new staff?” and made me a cup of tea.

I talked a lot with Prof. Chew who arranged my lecture. He said to me “Do you have any problems to have lectures?” I said “No. The biggest problem is my English.” “Your English is good. There is no problem. I can understand what you want to say. We can communicate now.”

Prof. Chew talked me about Malay Education. They have Malay school, Chinese school and Indian school as primary school. Each school gives classes in each language. Moreover there are primary schools whose classes are held in English. Children go one of them with their choice. But the classes in the secondary schools are held in English. Children are sometimes confused. It is difficult. He said that Japanese were lucky to have all classes in Japanese. Actually the education system has been changing and is more complicated. ²Malaysia had been under England occupation and many Chinese abroad moved to there. As a result of the history Malaysia became multiethnic, and English had been the national language for long time. After 1970, Malay became the National language and the classroom language was changed from English to Malay. I heard that younger people are comparatively not as good at English as elder people. In higher education such as universities the classes are conducted in English. But some teachers do in Malay because of their poor English. Their English is based on the long history.

USM students listened to my lectures with earnestly. Having lectures is different from one-to-one conversation; I have to speak most of the class time. It is still very challenging for me. But a student said, “Some teachers are not good at speaking English. So

² “Educational Policies and Education System in Malaysia”, Yumiko Kanegae, http://sucra.saitama-u.ac.jp/modules/xoonips/download.php/KYO-KJ00000054458.pdf?file_id=20513

no problem,” and a teacher said, “It was an honour to have you in the School of Educational Studies, USM and thank you very much for your kind contribution of two lectures that really enriched my students' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and its application in real life!”

In Penang, I learned not only English skill but more fabulous and precious thing “tolerance”, it is the most important for globalization.



With USM students

Life and Training in Malaysia

Hideaki Yanagisawa, National Institute of Technology, Tokuyama College

When the training period in Malaysia is finished, the one-year program, Long-Term Faculty Development Program for nurturing global education and research abilities, will be completed.

In this report, I would like to talk about my life in Malaysia, activity in Politeknik Seberang Perai (PSP) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Life in Malaysia

We stayed at RECSAM International House for 5 weeks. RECSAM is an accommodation for a foreigner who comes to Penang for training. You can use Wi-Fi in your room however the speed is slow. In my sense, the room is ,,,.

There is a cafeteria near the accommodation. I often went to the cafeteria for dinner from Monday to Thursday. I sometimes went to a food court in a shopping center for dinner on weekends, because the cafeteria was closed.

We stayed at a hotel near USM engineering campus for last two weeks. The distance from the hotel to USM engineering campus is not far. However the distance from the gate of USM engineering campus to the room, which we stay at is a little bit far.

Therefore, we took a taxi every day.

The hotel does not have a washing machine. However there is coin-operated laundry near the hotel. There also is a convenience store near the hotel.

Activity in PSP

I gave students two lectures. The first one was assembly language and the second one was single-cycle processor. And I attended consultation classes.

I could not prepare teaching materials well because I did not know what students had learned. After I gave students the first lecture, I was able to know it (Photo 1).

Consultation classes are a class in which students



Photo 1: Instruction Set Architecture (Assembly Language)

explained something they made. Each group consisted of two or three students. I regretted that I could not give students a good advice.

Activity in USM

After meeting with USM professors, I was assigned to two lectures in the Microprocessor Architecture class. The first lecture was introduction to Intel 8085 processor and the second lecture was basics of assembly language. It was impossible to make teaching materials within one week. Therefore I used teaching materials, which a professor prepared.

After I gave first lecture, I received a lot of comment such as voice was not clear. Therefore I spoke slowly and loudly as much as I could during second lecture. As the result, I did not receive the comments related to English (Photo 2).



Photo 2: Microprocessor Architecture

I attended Microprocessor Lab and IC Design classes. These classes are related to the subjects, which I teach. I had a good time because I was able to learn how to teach the subjects in English.

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