

The Role of Multilingualism in Enhancing Tourism Sector in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Multilingualism is the use of two or more languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. The diversity of languages and cultures is regarded as a good thing that ought to be embraced at all time. Every language preserves its distinctive uniqueness and value. All languages are equally adequate as means of manifestation for their users. However, language and culture diversity often lead to language barriers and miscommunications which eventually has become challenges encountered by tourists in tourism sector. The act of mastering several languages might be a help to reduce the chances of having a miscommunication. Nevertheless, multilingualism seems to be inactively put into practice by the shopkeepers in the East Coast of Malaysia, specifically in Kuala Terengganu – a district located in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia. This study is carried out to ascertain whether or not multilingualism is practiced in Kuala Terengganu as well as to analyse the role of multilingualism in facilitating the tourist. A set of questionnaire has been designed and distributed to the shopkeepers at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu. Some tourists were also interviewed to shed light on the real challenges faced by the tourists and the local in tourism sector when they deal in business or shopping. This study reveals the significant role played by multilingualism in having a successful business, especially in tourism sector. Some recommendations are also forwarded to improve the quality of business in general and to improve the competence in multilingualism in particular.

Keywords: Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, Multilingualism, Tourism, Tourist

1. INTRODUCTION

The East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Malaysia iAdvisory Seminar held in Singapore on the 09th April 2014 has listed tourism as one out of five economic clusters that are going to be benefited from the investment of MYR 97 billion by the year 2020 (ECER, 2014). The noteworthy investment has shown the significance of the tourism industry as one of the avenues to foster East Coast Malaysia's economic growth. Extensive efforts have been taken by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia such as the development of one-stop tourist centre at Malaysia Tourism Centre (MaTiC) to attract more tourist as well as to make them feel comfortable during their stay.

Trading or shopping is one of the favourite activities while travelling. Eventually, shopkeepers have the significant roles to create a good first impression as well as to spark the momentum for the tourists to stay. As suggested by Friess (2013), the spirit of hospitality is one of the factors influencing the stay of the tourists. Effective communication is one of the elements that might be affecting tourist wellbeing. Therefore, the tourism industry has to be staffed by multilingual and multicultural employees to respond fruitfully to international tourism demand (Jafari and Way, 1994). This study will explore the role of multilingualism in facilitating tourists at retail stores located in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

Language continues to be a barrier to international tourists in many countries including Malaysia. Tourists from non-English countries face a language barrier in Malaysia and this barrier affects their experiences in the country (Rogerson and Visser, 2007). Measuring and understanding this challenge is the reason for this study to go into how the tourism industry; specified in the scope of shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu use language skills like to sell and serve tourists from all over the world.

Thus, this study is carried out to examine the role of multilingualism in facilitating tourists while trading at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu. Besides, this study will explore the strategies and techniques used by the shopkeepers to enhance effective communication and avert miscommunications. This paper will contribute on the ways to overcome language barriers in order to assist the tourists in fulfilling their needs as well as to improve the efficiency of the shopkeepers in term of communication to sell their merchandises.

The objective of this study is to explore the communication between the shopkeepers and the tourists at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu. Besides, this study aims to generate new insights in suggesting ways to overcome the language barriers faced by the retailers and the tourists. This research is directed by a central question on: how do shopkeepers communicate with tourists to achieve their aim? The aim here is to sell things. The main question is then guided by three sub-questions as follow:

1. Do the shopkeepers practice multilingualism in order to communicate with tourists?
2. What are the complications encountered by the shopkeepers during shopping or trading?
3. How do shopkeepers overcome the language barrier when communicating with tourists?

This research is done on the role of multilingualism in facilitating tourist while trading in Kuala Terengganu which is the administrative capital, royal capital and the main economic centre of Terengganu, Malaysia. Kuala Terengganu is located about 440 kilometres northeast of Kuala Lumpur on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The city is situated at the estuary of Terengganu River, facing the South China Sea. The research involved the participation of 150 respondents which are the shopkeepers at some identified venues in Kuala Terengganu; namely, Kampung Cina, Pasar Payang and Dataran Austin. They came from various backgrounds and type of businesses. The respondents, who were between the ages of 17 to 63 years old, were randomly selected at the research area. The primary data collected through questionnaire were distributed manually in November this year.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism

Tourism has become a progressively significant industry in Malaysia as it has gradually and committedly played its part in contributing extensively in Malaysia's economic growth through employment and foreign exchange to name a few. According to Malaysia Tourism Statistic by Tourism Malaysia, 27.44 millions of visitors arrived and 72.0 billion receipts (MYR) was spent in 2014 alone while 25.7 million arrivals and 69.1 billion receipts (MYR) spent in 2015 (Tourism Malaysia, n.d.). This is one of the impact of prior tourism strategy implemented by Malaysian government whom decided to establish Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) through the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board Act 1992 and nowadays commonly known as Tourism Malaysia focusing in promoting Malaysian tourism domestically as well as internationally.

However, communication skills and language ability play weighty roles in ensuring tourists' comfort and welfare. Effective communication system are crucial to the success of organization in the hospitality and tourism industry as it is impossible to assess the needs of the consumers without having the feedback from the customers (Essay UK, 2015) and surroundings as well as with the absence of the ability to converse efficiently. Tourists are often tied down by the shackles of language barriers. Even though it takes both side's initiative to overcome this issue, whoever takes the step will benefits from it. Therefore, to enhance profitability and engaging as well as fulfilling the tourists' needs at the same time, shopkeepers at least should not feel burdened to take the first step; having in mind about where the step may well leads.

2.2 Multilingualism

Multilingualism has long been of concern to researchers such as Weinreich (1953) and Vildomec (1963) and for the most part research has been concentrated on sociolinguistics studies while few on psycholinguistic studies have been conducted in the field lately (Ramsay 1980; Nation and McLaughlin 1986; Klein 1995). This review is also focusing on the sociolinguistic studies under the scope of tourism industry. According to Linguistic Society of America (2012) define multilingualism as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function, at some level, in more than one language. The key to this definition is the act of mastering or simply practising more than one language.

According to Mansor, Arinie and Ahmad (2011), people in tourism industry that supply tourism services or as intermediaries in the distribution channel, our task is to communicate a message to potential tourist. Through explicit communication, language is used in as an attempt to enhance a common understanding between the sender and receiver message without ignoring the role of nonverbal means, such as gestures and facials expressions. He further elaborated on the infrastructure which in his opinion has to precede the superstructure and has to be adequate to serve the needs of the residents as well of tourists. It is a condition of all the activities in tourism, and any repercussions of its inadequacy have been readily illustrated on access roads to tourist destinations generally, as well as by such difficulties experienced at the destinations themselves.

Pace (2015) emphasized that the world has contracted to a global village and exposure to various languages is a powerful equipment to reach the ladder of success in

different areas like business, education, travel and research. In fact, the process of learning foreign languages is today to be considered in the light of new societal requirements to education and personality development. She further added that being in the world of work including tourism industry, language skills are becoming increasingly important in organisations and businesses which want to remain competitive on an international level. Foreign language skills are an integral component in the provision of a high standard of service in the tourism industry, with many researchers and educators (Horng & Lu, 2006; Lafrenz, 1991; Wenyuh, 2012) highlighting the link between excellence in tourism services and excellent language skills.

While Duchêne (2009) added that linguistic diversity is a source of benefit and multilingual skills are seen as commodities. According to Pace (2015), knowing how to use a language in specific circumstances and purposes gives people a very strong bargaining power which is a precious skills to both the tourism provider as well as the traveller. Multilingualism is crucial in ensuring a business survives disruptive innovations in a highly competitive industry thus being able to communicate and trade in multiple languages around the globe opens more doors to international travel ventures where B2Bs can inter-connect on a large scale (Lily, 2015). Lily further added that hotel and restaurant owners, travel agents, tour operators and tourist guides, all require content in multiple languages to serve their customer's needs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research will be shaped through the lens of a case study. According to Labaree (2016), a case study refers to both a method of analysis and a specific research design for examining a problem, both of which are used in most circumstances to generalize across populations. Therefore, this research will explore the role of multilingualism practiced by shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu. Even though not each and every shopkeeper in Kuala Terengganu will be involved, the area targeted for this research do represent a significant say to be generalized. He further stated that a case study research paper examines a person, place, event, phenomenon, or other type of subject of analysis in order to extrapolate key themes and results that help predict future trends, illuminate previously hidden issues that can be applied to practice, and/or provide a means for understanding an important research problem with greater clarity (Labaree, 2016). Thus, this research will take Languages and Communication; specifically the role of multilingualism practices among the shopkeepers as the subject of analysis. Labaree (2016) further elaborated that a case study paper usually examines a single subject of analysis, but case study papers can also be designed as a comparative investigation that shows relationships between two or among more than two subjects. The methods used to study a case can rest within a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method investigative paradigm (Labaree, 2016).

This research will be focusing on a phenomena or cultural activities. According to Labaree (2016), phenomenon refers to a fact, occurrence, or circumstance that can be studied or observed but with the cause or explanation to be in question. In the social and behavioural sciences, the case usually focuses on human interaction within a complex physical, social, economic, cultural, or political system (Labaree, 2016). Thus, this case will focus on the way or style of the shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu communicate towards the tourists in daily trading activities. A case study of a phenomenon most often

encompasses an in-depth analysis of a cause and effect that is grounded in an interactive relationship between people and their environment in some way. This can be seen through the study of the communication or interaction between the shopkeepers and the tourists at the identified venues in Kuala Terengganu.

The research design in this survey is mix method; combining both quantitative and qualitative study. According to Creswell (2003), mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds. Mixed methods research is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analysing, and integrating (or mixing) quantitative and qualitative research (and data) in a single study or a longitudinal program of inquiry (Caroline, Brightwater Group Research Centre, & Senior Lecturer of Notre Dame University, 2009). The purpose of this form of research is that both qualitative and quantitative research, in combination, provide a better understanding of a research problem or issue than either research approach alone. This study will use Sequential Explanatory as one of the mixed method design strategies, characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data. The purpose is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study (Biddix, 2012)

3.2 Data Generation Method

Questionnaires and semi structured interviews will be used as the research instrument on exploring the communication between the shopkeepers and the tourists. The questionnaire consisted of 35 questions which are divided into three sections. The three sections in the questionnaires are Section A which consists of Demographic questions, Section B: Language Practice and Section C: Challenges Faced by the Shopkeepers during Trading. Section A consists of five demographic questions, which requires the respondents to tick and fill in the blanks. Next, Section B involves 25 questions with a combination of partially guided and open ended question, so does in Section C, but only involves five questions. The questionnaire will be distributed to 80% of shopkeepers from the total number of shopkeepers in identified research areas.

Semi structured interview will also be done to obtain information from the tourists. A few questions like (1) Do they practice multilingualism in order to communicate while travelling? (2) What are the complications encountered by them during trading? and (3) how do they overcome the language barrier when communicating?.

3.3 Research Procedure

The questionnaires have been distributed in the second week of November 2016 from 10.00 a.m till 09.00 p.m at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu; Kampung Cina, Pasar Payang and Dataran Austin. The time limit allocated for the respondents to answer the questionnaire is 20 minutes and 150 sets of questions have been distributed. The questionnaires have been returned with 100% percent rate of return at the end of the session as I wait the respondents to answer them on the spot. As for the interview, it has been conducted in the second week of November 2016 from 09.00 a.m to 09.00 p.m at the identified venues; Kampung Cina and Pasar Payang. The time taken for each interview was about 15 minutes and 13 numbers of tourist from various background has been targeted for the interview.

3.4 Data Analysis

The points from the interview session was listed, while the data collected from the questionnaire is tabulated and both is categorized into possible themes or categories. The data is then interpreted and analysed.

4. INDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The study involved 150 shopkeepers and assistants which covers various types of business including food and beverage business, travelling souvenirs, traditional weapons, health and beauty boutiques, local handcrafts, traditional fashion (*batik*) as well as modern clothing. The short interviews also targeted 38 shopkeepers from the respondent list and 13 tourists.

4.2 Demographic Data of the Respondents

In order to interpret and discuss the language practices among the shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu, it is crucial to understand the demographic background and some general information of the respondents; the shopkeepers in identified areas; Pasar Payang, Dataran Austin and Kampung Cina in Kuala Terengganu.

General Information	Number (n = 150)	
Gender		
Male	87	58 %
Female	63	42 %
Age		
Below 20 years old	6	4 %
21 – 25 years old	21	14 %
26 – 30 years old	29	19.34 %
31 – 35 years old	24	16 %
36 – 40 years old	33	22 %
41 – 45 years old	12	8 %
46 – 50 years old	8	5.34 %
Above 50 years old	17	11.34 %
Nationality		
Malaysian	146	97.34 %
Others	4	2.67 %
Duration of experience in business		
Below 5 years	9	6 %
05 - 10 years	24	16 %
11 – 15 years	18	12 %
16 – 20 years	44	29.34 %
21 – 25 years	36	24 %
26 – 30 years	12	8 %
More than 30 years	7	4.67 %
Education level		
Primary School	0	0 %
Secondary School	39	26 %
High/ Vocational Certificate	87	58 %
Bachelor/ Master Degree	24	16 %

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 01: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 01 shows the majority of the shopkeepers and assistants who serves as the respondents for this study were male (87 people or 58%) and the most of the respondents age ranged from 36 years old to 40 years old (33 people or 22%). Even though there were quite a large number of female shopkeepers in the identified places, they unfortunately quite reluctant to be the respondents of this study due to tight schedule and unfulfilled tasks. However, the differences was not so significant and will not critically affect the interpretation of the data collected.

As we can see from the table, there were least shopkeepers aged below 20 as in these ages, those people were just graduated from high school and looking forward furthering their studies at the higher level. Even the small number recorded were among those who were working part-time. As for the respondents aged ranged from 21 to 30 years old were among those who were employed and some of them were family-related to the owner of the businesses while the respondents aged 30 years old and above were mostly among the owners themselves.

Nearly all the respondents except for four shopkeepers (2.67%) were locals. The four Indonesian shopkeepers served in food and beverages business as well as traditional fashion retailers. However, according to the owners, their employment were not affected by language practices but due to lower cost of employment instead.

Most of the shopkeepers targeted in this study have an average of 10 to 25 years of experiences in handling business trade. In a short survey during the questionnaire distribution, they expressed their concerns on the complications related to language practices in order to serve tourists well, was not so serious as compared to trading and promotional skills.

A significant number of respondents (58%) have a high (college) level of vocational certificate and (16%) of the shopkeepers; mostly among the owners themselves, managed to own bachelor and master degree in various field especially in business. This figure proved that the respondents might not have crucial impediments in language practices while trading with the customers.

4.3 Language Practices by the Shopkeepers

Based on the questionnaires distributed, there are few elements than can help us in understanding the language practices by the shopkeepers in identified places in Kuala Terengganu.

Language Practices	Number (n=150)	
Shopkeepers speak more than one language (multilingual)	132	88 %
Shopkeepers opinion on the usefulness of the multilingual skill		
Useful	51	34 %
Neutral	27	18 %
Somewhat useless	72	48 %
Mother tongue of the shopkeepers		
Malay Dialects	115	76.67 %
Chinese Dialects	29	19.34 %
Tamil	6	4 %
Shopkeepers use mother language to communicate with tourists		
Malay Dialects	89	77.4 %
Chinese Dialects	11	37.94 %
Tamil	0	0 %
Languages used to serve tourists		
English	129	86 %
Malay	147	98 %
Mandarin	13	8.67 %
Japanese	2	1.34 %

Table 2: Language Practices by the Shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu

Table 02: Language Practices by the Shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu

There was a significant number of the respondents; 132 out of 150 people (88%) who speak more than one language but only 34% from the survey agreed that multilingual skill is useful. Other 18% stands neutral on the practicality and conveniences of the multilingual skill and 72 out of 150 respondents (48%) a noteworthy figure; nearly half of them consider the ability to master few languages is somewhat useless in their daily trading activities.

In the short interview done, the respondents who believe that multilingual skill is somewhat useless, were asked to clarify the reasons that made them felt that way. They said even though it has been reported that there were increment in the number of tourists in Kuala Terengganu, the statistical figure of foreign tourists paled into insignificance beside the visits of local tourists from other regions all over Malaysia. Therefore, Malay Language; the National Language which served as the main means of communication in Malaysia, was said to be well adequate in order to meet the needs of communication while trading.

As stated in the previous section, the shopkeepers were nearly 98% locals thus the mother tongue recorded among the shopkeepers were Malay dialects, Chinese dialects and Tamil language. A considerable number; 89 out of 115 (76.67%) Malay-speaking shopkeepers used their mother tongue in daily business trading while not even half of 29 Chinese-speaking shopkeepers (37.94%) used their mother tongue while trading. None of the shopkeepers whom Tamil language were their mother tongue used it to communicate with the tourists.

Based on the data collected from these identified 150 shopkeepers, there were four languages listed, used by them to serve the tourists; English, Malay, Mandarin and Japanese. Only 2 out of 150 respondents claim to master Japanese language and use it to serve tourists from Japan. There were a great number of shopkeepers (86%) who used English to serve foreign tourists. They believed that English language is efficient enough to

carter the needs of the tourists from all over the world as it is known to be a universal language used worldwide. In addition, according to them, the tourists from France, Germany, Vietnam and some other non-English speaking countries do use English while travelling. However, an enormous figure of 147 out of 150 shopkeepers (98%) used the national language; Malay language to serve the tourists regardless of their background. This happens because the said that most of their customers consisted of local tourists and they rarely come across foreign tourists as compared to the locals tourists. This supported by the figure of 12% of the monolingual respondents who believed that multilingual skill is not a need and they can survive well in business, here in Kuala Terengganu with the ability of mastering only one language which most of them agreed; the Malay language.

Information on Multilingual Employee	Number (n=150)	
Number of multilingual employees		
Three	4	2.67 %
Two	36	24 %
One	83	55.34 %
None	27	18 %
Shopkeepers feel they have enough multilingual employees to fulfil tourists demands	141	94 %
Multilingual employees whom employed permanently	81	54 %
Employees employed due to foreign language ability	26	17.34 %
Ways organisation helps employees learn foreign language		
The organisation provides no help	150	100 %
Organisations that have language policy	0	0 %

Table 3: Information on Multilingual Employees Employed by the Organisation

Table 03: Information on Multilingual Employees Employed by the Organisation

Table 03 shows that the highest percentage (55.34%); slightly more than half of the respondents has one multilingual employee and some (18%) did not even have any multilingual employee. However, most of them (94%) be certain that they have enough multilingual employees to fulfil the tourists' needs and demands. They stated that the number of employees depended on the physical needs of the business and it did not affected by the multilingual skill of the employees. The very same reason was used to explain their certainty in having enough multilingual employees is there were considerable and manageable demands of foreign tourists need to be served.

Even though there were a significant number (54%) of the respondents were permanently employed, according to the owners in the short interviews, the permanent employment was not due to their multilingual skill but other qualities instead. There was only a small number (17.34%) of shopkeepers were hired due to their foreign language ability.

The questionnaire distributed asked on ways the organisations help the employees to learn or improve their foreign language ability and provided few options on the ways to do so; (i) The organisation provides no help, (ii) The organisation provides rewards/incentives, (iii) The organisation provides in-house foreign language training, (iv) The organisation provides after work foreign language training and (v) Others; to record an open ended responses. Surprisingly, all 100% of the respondents agreed that the organisation provides no help for the employees to learn foreign language. Besides, they further added that they was no significance of doing so as there were nearly no demands or

needs to do so. It is predictable, with this perception, none (0%) of the organisations stressed on having language policy thus there were eight questions regarding language policy left unanswered.

The questionnaire distributed consist of three open ended questions on tourists' reaction regarding the availability of a translator in the business. All respondents responded positively where they claimed that there was no problems or complaints with the absence of translator in the business. Besides, they said that it is normal for the tourists to bring a brief guide translation book that have enough vocabularies need to be used while trading. Furthermore, the shopkeepers shared that foreign tourists always come in group with a presence of their own translator or a tourist guide which will help them while shopping thus the shopkeepers believed that it is not a need for them to be prepared with such facilities or services as they survived well without doing so.

4.4 Challenges Faced by the Shopkeepers during Trading

Challenges	Number (n=150)	
Shopkeepers cannot understand the accent of foreign tourists	31	20.67 %
Foreign tourists speak so fast that shopkeepers cannot catch up their words	78	52 %
Shopkeepers cannot understand some words that foreign tourists speak	94	62.67 %
Shopkeepers don't have enough vocabulary knowledge to communicate with foreign tourists	86	57.34 %
Shopkeepers are afraid that foreign tourists cannot understand their pronunciation	57	38 %
Shopkeepers cannot use their sentences correctly for communicating with foreign tourists	143	95.33 %
Shopkeepers' accent isn't good enough to speak with foreign tourists	95	63.33 %
Shopkeepers cannot read other language documents provided by foreign tourists	62	41.33 %
Shopkeepers received complaints from tourists about language barrier	16	10.67 %

Table 4: Challenges Faced by the Shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu during Trading

Table 04: Challenges Faced by the Shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu during Trading

There were various challenges admitted, faced by the shopkeepers in communicating with the tourists despite of their claim that was no problems nor complaints with the absence of translator or multilingual people in the business.

Table 04 shows that most frequent (95.33%) complications were the incompetence in using full sentences correctly in order to communicate with foreign tourists. The short interviews found that the shopkeepers only use few simple vocabularies that they felt enough to deliver the message they needed to, alongside with non-verbal cues and demos. They explained the messages through sensory experiences by making the tourists tasted the food, touched or put on the clothes as well as listened to the beautiful sounds of traditional musical instruments; depending on types of business they run.

More than half of the respondents (57.34%) said that they lack of vocabulary knowledge to communicate with foreign tourists thus they choose to learn specific yet simple vocabularies to be used while trading. They use terms like *good quality, cheap, low price, only here, traditional, culture, identity* and other words which most of them were the adjectives used to describe the products they were selling. This impediment was related to the figure (62.67%) of the respondents who cannot understand some words used by the foreign tourists due to low vocabulary knowledge.

There were also impediments in understanding the accent of foreign tourists as well as catching up with the pace of their talking; 20.67% and 52% of the shopkeepers respectively. There were 38% of the respondents who were afraid that tourists were not able to understand their pronunciation as they might be pronouncing the words wrongly. I believe that the shopkeepers should at least take some efforts to learn the correct pronunciation and not worry about it anymore. 63.33% of the respondents felt that their accent is not good enough to communicate with the tourists but I believe that accent is not a crucial element in delivering the message as long as the pronunciation is right and clear.

From the interview, the shopkeepers informed that there were few occurrences where the tourists were not able to use English language at all, neither Malay Language nor any other language that the shopkeepers and the tourists have in common. From some of the shopkeepers' experiences, there was tourists from Arabic countries and some from German as well as Vietnam where there were times when these tourists showed some documents in their own language without pictures and hope that the shopkeepers might understand them. Unfortunately, the shopkeepers failed to do so. The shopkeepers stressed that these occurrences happen so rarely (41.33%) and most of the shopkeepers never encounter with these kind of challenges.

Only 16 out of 150 shopkeepers (10.67%) ever received complaints or frustrations from tourists about language barriers. According to the respondents, they feel that these challenges were minor issues and they were survivable. They were certain that these complications will not critically or negatively affect their business.

4.5 Tourists Opinion on Multilingualism

During data generation, 13 numbers of tourist from various background has been targeted for the interview.

Demographic Data of the Tourists	
Country Origin	Number of tourists
Japanese	1
Vietnam	2
China	2
Germany	2
Arabic	1
Finland	1
Australia	4

Table 5: Demographic Data of Interviewed Participants (Tourists)

Table 05: Demographic Data of Interviewed Participants (Tourists)

The interview was aimed to answer these questions; (1) Do they practice multilingualism in order to communicate while travelling?, (2) what are the complications encountered by them during trading? and (3) how do they overcome the language barrier when communicating?.

Among the tourists interviewed, 8 out of 13 participants practice multilingualism in order to communicate while travelling. They stated that multilingual skill is a crucial skill when travelling. They learn specific languages of the country they were about to visit and master at least important vocabularies to communicate. The other 4 participants were among those who had English language as their mother tongue and stated that it is adequate enough to use only English when travelling as it is used widely worldwide. There were also one participant who was a monolingual tourists who depended on their multilingual travelling partner to fulfil his needs during travelling.

There were some complications encountered by these tourists during trading due to the incompetence of both side; the shopkeepers and themselves. They said that they have troubles communicating other features of the product except for the price. For example, they sometimes what to know how the product was made, the functions of the product and the material (for clothing) and ingredients (for food) used. They rarely have the problem to buy the merchandises but to learn about the culture while trading is somewhat impossible unless they met with an adequate multilingual shopkeeper.

Same goes with the shopkeepers, these tourists overcome the language barrier when communicating by using non-verbal cues to deliver the message. They act out the message with the aids of body languages alongside with the utterances of simple terms or words in order to make the other party understands them.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has explored the role of multilingualism among the shopkeepers in identified places in Kuala Terengganu. The primary data were collected through the short interviews and questionnaires distributed to 150 shopkeepers as well as 13 tourists in Pasar Payar, Kampung Cina and Dataran Austin.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of multilingualism in facilitating tourists while trading at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu. Besides, this study has explored the strategies and techniques used by the shopkeepers to enhance effective communication and avert miscommunications. This paper is hoped to contribute on the ways to overcome language barriers in order to assist the tourists in fulfilling their needs as well as to improvise the efficiency of the shopkeepers in term of communication to sell their merchandises.

Returning to the research questions stated at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that 88% out of 150 shopkeepers in Kuala Terengganu practice multilingualism in order to communicate with tourists.

The findings of this study suggest that in general, the complications encountered by the shopkeepers during trading are hardly admitted of their incompetence in using more than one language efficiently. This include the worrisome in lacking of vocabularies and incorrect pronunciations.

The results of this study showed that the shopkeepers overcome the language barrier when communicating with by using non-verbal cues to deliver the message. They act out the message with the aids of body languages while using simple adjectives to explain the features of the product they were trying to sell.

This study reveals the perceptions of the shopkeepers on the importance of mastering multilingual skill. The shopkeepers perceived it as insignificance as they feel that the language challenges were minor and survivable. They were certain that these complications will not critically or negatively affect their business. In addition, they believed

that there is no crucial need in mastering many languages as the figure of foreign tourists paled into insignificance beside the visits of local tourists from other regions all over Malaysia. Therefore, Malay Language; the National Language which served as the main means of communication in Malaysia, was said to be well adequate in order to meet the needs of communication while trading.

The research is limited in several ways. First, the questionnaire needs to be translated into commonly-used language by the locals to get their cooperation. Second, most of the shopkeepers were too busy to entertain the needs of this study thus interviews are done instead questionnaire distributions on some shopkeepers whom prefer talking while still managed to finish their tasks.

This research can be improved by getting more insights from more tourists and should be done in the month of higher visits from the tourists; November is in the monsoon season explained the decrement of the number of the tourists. The shopkeepers are advised to put more efforts in their multilingual skill instead of having a satisfaction on current level with a perception that there is no demands to do so.

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