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12-13 June 2015

The Innovation Building, Walailak University
Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand

Proceedings

● Languages in Diverse Contexts:
Pedagogy and Creativity

●

SYMPOSIUM
of
International
Languages & Knowledge



SYMPOSIUM OF INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES & KNOWLEDGE
UNITY through Diversity 2015



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SYMPOSIUM OF INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES & KNOWLEDGE 2015

**“Languages in Diverse Contexts:
Pedagogy and Creativity”**

June 12 – 13, 2015

Walailak University, Thailand

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The Use of Melayu Language by Employees of Tourism Workplaces in Sikao District

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Abstract

A large influx of Melayu speaking tourists had predisposed tourism workplaces in Thailand to face a new trend and raised awareness on the importance of Melayu language in tourism and hospitality industry. Sikao, the northwestern district located in Trang province, seemed to have been the same and given language barriers to cater to Melayu speaking tourists' needs. This paper aimed to study the use of Melayu language by employees of tourism workplaces located in Sikao district and to explore the present needs of the employees and the problems they encountered in their work. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as research tools attempted to obtain information based on the objectives. The participants consisted of employees from 3 registered tourism sectors; restaurants, tour companies, and accommodations located in Sikao. The data obtained were statistically analyzed. Findings indicated that Melayu language skills in the tourism workplaces were prominent and relative to the working functions. The finding of the research shows that for the development of employees' skillfulness and maintaining tourists' satisfaction, Melayu language should be emphasized and promoted as an asset by the tourism workplaces. Among the four skills Melayu speaking skill was required by the employees the most, followed by vocabulary skill.

Keywords - tourism workplaces; Melayu language; needs analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years, among the entire international tourist arrivals in ASEAN region, Malaysia is topped the chart of contributing more than one million visitors coming to Thailand. Though, the number of Malaysian arrivals have been decreased from 3,041,097 visitors in 2013 to 2,644,052 visitors in 2014, representing a decrease of -13.06 (Department of Tourism, 2015), but it still has the largest number of international tourists among the ASEAN countries. The increasing number of Malaysian visitors has brought tourism workplaces in Thailand the challenges and raised awareness of the importance of Melayu in the industry. English is regarded as the sole official working language of ASEAN, though, the majority of the population in the region using Melayu as their first language, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia. Some countries use Melayu as their national language. As a result, Melayu has been considered as another foreign language which is necessary for the development of tourism and

establishment of tourism benefits to Thailand. As a southern province located in the Andaman sea coastal area, Trang has increased the number of visitors. The number of international arrivals visiting Trang is up to 29.79 percent. All of these internal visitors are from Sweden and Malaysia (OSM Andaman, 2013)². The most attractive destination of Trang is located in Sikao area-Pakmeng and Chaomai beach. (Manageronline, 2015). Under the TAT's campaign of '12 cities... You Can't Say No', Malaysia is among the tourism market that Trang is targeting in a major promotion. (Thansettakij, 2015).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Rise of LSP and Needs Analysis

Since tourism has played an important role worldwide foreign languages have been accepted as 'a basic prerequisite for successful communication in the tourism industry' (Sindik & Božinović, 2013). English is considered to be one of the most important means of communication. But tourists will feel at home in another

foreign country if they can communicate in their mother tongue (Sinha, 2001). In Malaysia, Arabic language is necessarily promoted to encounter the language barriers to cater to Arab needs. The Deputy Tourism Minister of Malaysia has launched a programme which provides Arabic speaking students and skilful trainees in the tourism industry. The Arabic language and translation for the West Asian tourists became commercialized and important among both hotel management and tourists (Che Mat et al., 2009). Satisfying communicative needs of definite speakers, the development of Languages for Special Purposes (LSP) has emerged (Nekvapil, 2006); and been functioned with "the special discourse used in specific settings by people sharing common purposes" (Garrido, et al., 2010); for groups of students, to whom the syllabus, tasks and methodology are especially tailored into their interests and needs (Laborda, 2011).

B. *Language Need Analysis*

Richards, (2001) defines needs analysis as the procedures used to collect information about the needs of learners. Needs analysis has a vital role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course, whether it is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or general English course. However, the theory also has been widely applied in linguistic fields (Johnson, 1989). Karababa & Karagül (2013) studied the needs analysis of Turkish as a foreign language.

West, (1994 cited in Aunruen, 2005) presents 5 types of framework of needs analysis: 1) Target-situation analysis; 2) Deficiency analysis; 3) Strategy analysis; 4) Means analysis; and 5) Language audits.

Alharby (2005) studied the English language communicative needs of health professionals in the Riyadh area. Within 4 parts of the questionnaires, Alharby applies a Likert-type scale, requiring respondents to rank its four levels. Nunan & Lamb (1996, cited in Aunruen, 2005) designed questionnaires as instruments for needs analysis of different types of learner needs. The first instrument is for a survey of general learner needs; the second: respondents' opinions of the uses of English; the third: personal learning methodology of learners; the fourth: respondents' opinions of learning other foreign languages, and indicate their attitude towards different statements; and the last instrument is about the combination of all the four instruments above.

Allwright (1982 cited in West, 1994) calls the approach of deficiency analysis as 'analysis of learners' deficiencies or lacks. The approach is included by (1) an inventory of potential target needs expressed in terms of

activities, and (2) a scale that is used for the priority that should be given to each activity (West, 1994). Chang, (2013) uses structured interviews and network-based interviews asking about what the students lack in learning English. Anon Chaiyasuriya (2009) studies the use of English by employees in the petroleum and petrochemical industry in the East of Thailand. The results of the research are that among the four skills used by employees, reading skill is used the most, followed by listening skill, writing skill and speaking skill respectively. In his study of the needs and development of English skills in the automotive industry, Songporn Thachareonsakd et, al. (2004 cited in Anon Chaiyasuriya, 2009) found that among the four skills, listening and speaking were usually used for dialogue with customers and colleagues. English reading skills were used for reading purchasing orders, news papers, journals, manuals, emails. Writing skills were used for typing names of auto parts, letters, and e-mails. In her study of needs analysis of English for travel agents in Chiangmai, Ravisuda Aunruen, (2005) categorized English skills and functions into eight categories; listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, pronunciation, vocabulary in tourism and grammar and expressions (p.19). The English language was perceived as important for the travel agents, to communicate with the clients. The speaking skill was the used mostly. Listening, writing, and reading were as the lowest needed. Also the problems they faced most were the speaking skill, followed by grammar and appropriate expressions, listening and translation. And they hardly encountered problems in vocabulary in tourism and reading skills (Abstract).

As we can see, almost studies conducted by several researchers are about the applications of needs analysis and English language. As one of the promotions for the development of Trang's tourism, Melayu language, considered as an important feature for communication and needs to be trained to tourism employees, the researcher thus undertook a study on this topic. The objectives of the research were to study the types of tourism workplaces located in Sikao district that require using Melayu in their daily operation, and study the characteristics of Melayu skills needed in daily operations of the tourism workplaces.

III. METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was 289 employees working in 3 different types of tourism workplaces located in Sikao categorized as; 1) hotel and accommodation, 2) restaurant, and 3) tour company. The researcher used sample random sampling and the

application of Taro Yamane's formula. So there were 168 respondents.

Questionnaires and semi-structure interviews were used as research tools. The questionnaires were conducted to seek respondents' opinions by the use of five-Likert's scales (Alharby, 2005). The semi-structure interviews were used to obtain information from 3 representatives of the workplaces by using purposive sampling. The respondents' answers were discussed and analyzed to support the results of the questionnaires. The data collected from the questionnaires was statistically computed by the use of analysis software.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results revealed that the majority of employees working in tourism workplaces located in Siakao district were female (64.2 %), whereas 35.1 % were male. Most of their ages were between 26-35 years old (34.4%). Most of the respondents (52.3 %) were diploma holders, and had worked less than 1 year (41.1%). With regards to the types of tourism workplaces, most of the respondents (42.4%) were working in restaurants. More than one-third of respondents' positions (25.8%) owned their own business. Most of the workplaces were not using Melayu with the clients (72.2%). For them Melayu was unnecessary for the service of the business (57.6%). However, there were clients using Melayu for about 1-2 days a week (55.6%). And most of the employees of the tourism workplaces were not able to speak Melayu with the clients (60.3%).

The results showed the respondents' needs of using Melayu; in which the overall skills of listening (the total mean) was in average level of requirement (2.62). They needed to listen to clients' conversation (2.64), and tourism information (2.67). In addition, they had less need to listen to conversations of the colleagues (2.52), radio, television, film and the Internet (2.55), to the presentation (2.38), and to telephone conversations (2.54).

The respondents needed to speak Melayu in their routine jobs at average level ($x=2.74$). They needed to speak Melayu for having Melayu conversations with the clients (2.76), providing tourism information (2.75); information about accommodation (2.69), food (2.73), transportation (2.65), routes and directions (2.68), and finance (2.61). The respondents also needed to have adequate Melayu speaking skills for negotiations (2.64), and on-phone conversation (2.49), respectively

The study also revealed that the respondents needed the Melayu reading skill in average level (2.67). The reading

skill they needed would be used for reading tourism documents written in Melayu (2.66), news / internet (2.59), brochures (2.61), menu for clients (2.66), Melayu textbook (2.68), and e-mail (2.36), as the lowest.

As shown from the total mean (2.41), the need of Melayu writing skills was in low level. However, the average level of the writing was shown in writing menu (2.56), schedules (2.56), and tourism itinerary (2.59). Writing skills for business letter (2.23), fax cover (2.13), and advertisement (2.35) were lowest.

As seen from the total mean, the overall Melayu vocabulary skills for daily works were required by the respondents, the employees in the tourism workplaces located in Sikao at the average level (2.75). The respondents needed the Melayu vocabulary regarding tourism (2.73), news (2.55), transportation (2.55), services (2.77), traditions and cultures (2.62), food (2.85), and routes and directions (2.77), respectively.

The problems of respondents in using Melayu were 2.93 indicating an average level. They assumed that the problems they faced most was in speaking (2.99), in listening (3.02), in reading (2.99), in writing (3.04), and in using Melayu vocabulary (2.99).

The completion of the study shows that most of the respondents (employees) were female and working in the tourism workplaces for less than a year. Among 3 types of the tourism workplaces, the respondents were employees working in the restaurants. Though, most of the respondents were diploma holders, they owned their own business. Using Melayu in the workplaces was unnecessary, opposed to Arabic used in the tourism industry (Che Mat, et al., 2009); however, Melayu was as 'something new' to acquire. The employees' lack of Melayu skills was to remind their perceptions that Melayu as important asset to perform the job.

Melayu speaking and vocabulary skill were needed the most, followed by reading, listening and writing, respectively. Not just English that is important in tourism (Sinha, 2001); Melayu as another foreign language for the respondents, was a tool for preparation of development, and as fundamental part of successful communication in tourism (Sindik & Božinović, 2013); but not as particularly important as that in Turkish (see Karababa & Karagül, 2013).

Compared to needs of English language studied by Anon Chaiyasuriya (2009; Songporn Thachareonsakd et al., 2004;), Melayu needed by the employees was different because both studies found that English reading skill was the most needed in the petroleum and petrochemical

industry. However, it was the same result as of Anuran's. Speaking is as most essential skill for good communication.

Applied the 'deficiency analysis', the study found that the respondents' most difficult skills of Melayu was writing and listening. This result was different compared to Anunruen, (2005)'s finding; that English speaking skill was the problem of tourism agents. While they were talking, they seemed to be strictly observed for grammatical accuracy- biggest problem. With the application of Arabic alphabets called Jawi, Melayu was still viewed as 'strange foreign language' or as 'Islamic language'. Though some respondents realized that Melayu is written by Roman letters as English, but they did not comprehend Melayu vocabulary. Listening is another language skill the respondents encountered the difficulties.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper aimed to investigate the use of Melayu language by employees working in 3 different types of tourism workplaces located in Sikao; restaurants, tour companies, and accommodations. The paper also explored the present needs of the employees and the problems they encountered in their works.

The employees of tourism workspaces required Melayu language. The findings indicated that Melayu speaking and vocabulary skills were topped highly essential. However, these two skills were used accordingly to their work functions. The problems the employees encountered the most were Melayu writing skill and listening skill, respectively.

Considering the different types of the tourism workplaces, the needs of Melayu language would be different. Then to study the different requirement of Melayu skills in different types of the workplace is the researchers' further research.

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