UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

LANGUAGE USE AND CHOICE IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

SAREEN KAUR BHAR

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By

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Chairman: Associate Professor Shameem Rafik- Galea, PhD
Faculty : Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

How organisations cope and manage language matters in the workplace is largely absent from research literature. This is because language and communication has been a surprisingly neglected subject of research in the agricultural workplace domain as it is an area often overlooked by organisations in Malaysia and throughout the world. Addressing this gap, language practices of three selected agricultural organisations from Malaysia are investigated. More specifically, this study investigates to what extent English and other languages are used within the communicative practices in the workplace of these organisations and the underlying factors that govern language choice. Furthermore, the study explores the dominant role of English and other languages in the communicative practices of the selected agricultural based companies. Three complementary theoretical frameworks are used to examine language use and choice in the agricultural workplace domain which are, Fishman's (1972) concept of who speaks what language to whom, Transactional Process Model (Adler and Towne, 1999), and Giles and Coupland's (1991) communication accommodation theory are used to examine and explore the complex and dynamic language practices of the managers and employees in these organisations. Data were collected using the quantitative approach by using questionnaire. To support the quantitative findings, a qualitative approach based on interviews, observation and document and website analysis were also used. The results show that there is a flexibility where both employers and employees typically will use a language that works best for a given situation and always in the best interest of the organisation. The employers and employees highly value the role of English as the lingua franca in the agricultural business domain as it plays a critical and dynamic part related to career mobility and progression. Lastly, implications for the study indicate that language practices in the agricultural industry are contrary to the Malaysian language policy.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

PENGGUNAAN DAN PEMILIHAN BAHASA DI DALAM ORGANISASI PERTANIAN TERPILIH DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

SAREEN KAUR BHAR

Februari 2016

Pengerusi: Associate Profesor Shameem Rafik- Galea, PhD
Fakulti: Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Kajian serta literatur tentang cara sesebuah organisasi menangani isu-isu berkaitan dengan bahasa di tempat kerja adalah masih terhad. Ini berlaku kerana topik yang berkaitan dengan bahasa serta komunikasi sering diabaikan dalam penyelidikan yang tertumpu kepada tempat kerja di bawah sektor pertanian. Sebenarnya, topik ini telah ditepikan bukan sahaja oleh organisasi di Malaysia, malah oleh organisasi-organisasi serata dunia. Bagi mengisi kekurangan maklumat atau literatur dalam aspek ini, tiga organisasi pertanian di Malaysia telah dipilih untuk mengkaji amalan komunikasi mereka, khususnya dalam meneliti sejauh manakah penggunaan bahasa Inggeris atau bahasa-bahasa lain dalam komunikasi di tempat kerja mereka serta faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan/penggunaan bahasa tersebut. Di samping itu, kajian ini turut mengkaji penggunaan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa utama serta penggunaan bahasa bahasa lain dalam amalan komukasi tiga syarikat pertanian yang dipilih. 3 kerangka teori yang digunakan dalam meneliti penggunaan dan pemilihan bahasa di bawah domain tempat kerja sektor pertanian adalah dari Fishman (1972); Model Proses Transaksi (Adler dan Towne, 1999); serta Teori Akomodasi Komunikasi (Giles and Coupland, 1991). Kerangka theori ini dapat membantu dalam kajian dan penerokaan penggunaan bahasa yang komplex dan dinamik oleh pengurus dan kakitangan-kakitangannya di dalam organisasi-organisasi tersebut. Data dikumpul secara kuantitatif melalui kajian soal selidik. Bagi mengukuhkan penemuan kuantitatif, kaedah kualitatif turut digunakan iaitu melalui temuduga, pemerhatian dan analysis dokumen/ laman web. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pekerja sering menggunakan bahasa secara fleksibel, mengikut situasi komunikasi pada masa itu. Di samping itu, penggunaan bahasa adalah untuk memelihara kepentingan dan kebaikan organisasi tersebut. Majikan dan kakitangan organisasi juga mementingkan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa perantara dalam domain perniagaan pertanian kerana ia merupakan aspek yang kritikal serta dinamik dalam peningkatan dan mobiliti kerjaya. Akhirnya, implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa amalan bahasa dalam industri pertanian adalah bercanggah dengan polisi bahasa di Malaysia.

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This is perhaps the easiest part of the thesis for me to write and also the happiest as it marks the end of a long, painful and agonising journey. After all these years, I have got quite a list of people to whom I would like to say thank you. It would be easy to name all of them but it would be impossible to thank them enough I must say.

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To my son, Aamen, all I can say is I am sorry to have put you through this and it would take my whole lifetime to express my love for you. I know I have spent countless hours and days and nights working on the thesis than I did with you. The good news is that, it's finally over.

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my father and late mother. Both of you taught me perseverance and prepared me to face life's challenges with faith and humility just as you did. My mum's spiritual presence and my dad's quiet gentle strength are enough to drive me to achieve the goals I have set in life. I miss you Mummy!

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 18 February 2016 to conduct the final examination of Sareen Kaur Bhar on her thesis entitled ("Title of Thesis") in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the (insert the name of relevant degree).

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Date: 20 June 2016

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Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:

- this thesis is my original work;
- quotations, illustrations and citations have been duly referenced;
- this thesis has not been submitted previously or concurrently for any other degree at any other institutions;
- intellectual property from the thesis and copyright of thesis are fully-owned by Universiti Putra Malaysia, as according to the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Research) Rules 2012;
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This is to confirm that:

- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Communication and language are essential elements in any organisation and are also critical to the success of the organisation. This is because organisations need to be able to control, organise, manage and coordinate their employees, and these activities require an appropriate level of communication in order to ensure optimal performance within an organisation. There is also increasing substantiation that organisations which practice good communication strategies tend to achieve higher levels of success, whilst others are unable to (Argenti and Forman, 2002; Clampitt and Downs, 1993; Tourish, 1997; Tourish and Hargie, 2004). Due this factor, business communication has become an increasingly important field of study all over the world as organisations find it of high interest to their employees (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2004; Evans, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008; Varner & Beamer, 2005).

In the last few decades, many countries have embraced globalisation and with that the dimensions of the workplace has undergone drastic changes. Soros (2002, p. 1) views globalisation as "the development of global financial markets, the growth of transnational corporations, and their increasing domination over national economies." One of the consequences of globalisation is that the domestic workplace has now become more versatile and diverse as it deals with foreign recruitment, mergers and international partnerships which add to the language diversity experienced by employees working in most organisations throughout the world (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Furthermore, Friedman (2005, p. 10) states that we are now in Globalisation 3.0 which is "shrinking the world from a size small to a size tiny and flattening the playing field at the same time." In keeping with the same sentiment, Herbig and Kramer (1991, p. 19) point out that,

> The world is growing smaller every day. If you are not attempting to sell your products overseas, you are surely being exposed to and competing against foreign made products. The growth of multinational business, the increasing interdependence of economies, the tremendous quantity of technology transfer, the world-wide communications capabilities and the frequent international exchanges have all created the need to understand better and interact with those from foreign cultures.

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Feely and Harzing (2003) state that the problem becomes worse when the number of languages co-existing within a corporation increases and suggest that the most obvious solution would be to introduce a single corporate language, namely English so that managers are able to improve their ability to coordinate and control international activities. By introducing a company language, it could be helpful to both internal and external communication activities. This is because it gives a common language for all members of the organisation and offers easy access to official information channels. However, there are also differing views on this as Tange and Lauring (2009) observe that there are possible limitations on corporate language policies that are implemented in multilingual organisations.

Proliferation of globalisation activities has placed language into a more pivotal role among all the countries including the various industries. Facing the challenges of globalisation, Malaysia like any other developing country, has to compete aggressively for foreign investment which is crucial for the development of the nation and its economic growth. Clearly, efficient communication is a crucial factor towards achieving this. Thus, identifying the preferred language of choice in the workplace and the role it plays will clearly help the organisations to achieve their goals

There is a need to study how Malaysian organisations deal with language diversity at the workplace and what are the concerns faced by these entities because if people are unable to understand each other it is impossible for any type of teamwork or alliance to be formed in an organisation. Previous studies on language use within multinational companies have identified that multilingualism could cause a "difficult managerial situation with great implications for cross-cultural communication" (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch, 1999b).

1.2 The Agricultural Industry in Malaysia

Some background of the agricultural industry is necessary to understand the complexities and the importance of the linguistic practices used in the agricultural work domain. In the Ninth Malaysia Plan, agricultural based business and entrepreneurship became a key area where the government's intention is to focus its effort on developing the country's agricultural sector (Shaffril, Asmuni, and Ismail, 2010). In a recent article Jala (2013) who is the CEO of Pemandu in the Prime Minister's Department observes that the agricultural sector is not only attractive and income generating but it has been designated as one of the key engines of growth or National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) and makes a significant impact on the economy of Malaysia.

According to Wong (2007), the production in the Malaysian agricultural sector is dominated by palm oil, rubber and forestry products. Other major agricultural production includes rice, poultry, fruits and vegetables (Warr, Rodriguez and Penm, 2008). The National Key Economic Area Report clearly states that the overall agriculture sector is broad, covering " crops such as oil palm and rubber, food and cash crops (also known as agro-food, food that is produced by agriculture) such as paddy and livestock/poultry, and specialty products such as edible bird's nests and herbs" as can be seen in Figure 1. In the context of this study, three agricultural organisations have been chosen from three diverse sectors which are from the palm oil, poultry and an organisation which produces fertiliser for crops. These organisations are also termed as agricultural related organisations.
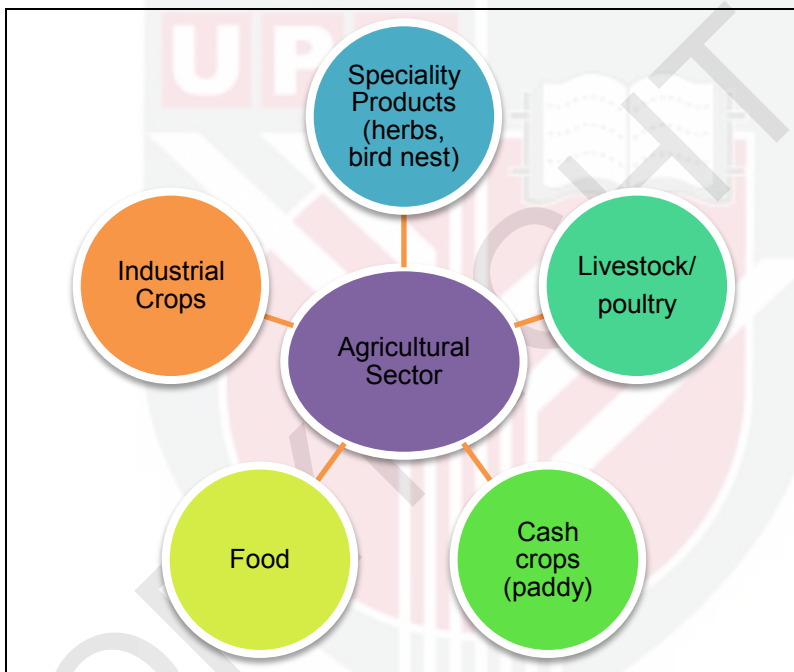
Figure 1 Malaysian Agricultural Sectors

In a drive to develop this sector as Malaysia's third machine of economic growth, the Government is providing various forms of support and schemes in encouraging investments. Moreover, the agriculture sector in Malaysia plays a major role in the country's economic development as it also operates as employment provider, export earner, provider of raw materials and food supplier (Hassan, Shaffril, Azril, Abu Hassan, and D'Silva, 2009) Launched on 25 September, 2020, the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), formulated as part of Malaysia's National Transformation Programme states that,

"The agriculture sector plays an important role in Malaysia's economic development – providing rural employment, uplifting rural incomes and ensuring national food security. Traditionally labelled the poor man's sector, the face of agriculture is slowly changing. Entrepreneurial farmers in diverse businesses from swiftlet nest ranching to large-scale paddy farming have been able to move in to Malaysia's top 20 per cent income group.

(Taken from: (Ministry of Agriculture -Malaysia, 2010)

In line with this, the Ministry of Agriculture has introduced many initiatives to promote agriculture with a vision that by 2010, Malaysia will become a major food producer and net exporter of food in the world. To ensure we meet this target it is essential that the language needs of these Malaysian agricultural companies are assessed through the identification of how language is used and what challenges are encountered in the agricultural workplace. It is important to note that the agricultural industry in Malaysia employs both local and foreign workers to overcome the labour shortage is what plagues the industry.

Indeed, due to globalisation and the rapidly changing economic environment it can be concluded that the role and value of linguistic skills in the agricultural industry needs to be studied as it plays a crucial role in businesses. This is because it is almost impossible to find a job advertisement without a clear mention of excellent communication skills in both oral and written communication skills (Mary Ellen Guffey & Loewy, 2010). Ariffin (2007) asserts that there is more than one language that is used in the daily operations of an organisation because of the increasing diversity of employees in the workplace. This is attested to by the studies that have investigated language use and choice in the workplace domain for example; manufacturing (Le Vasan, 1994), electronic firms (Anie, 1998), commercial sector (Maros, 2000) banking and finance industry (Venugopal, 2000); (Abdullah and Talif, 2001), cargo inspection and testing company (Briguglio, 2005a), public organisations (Ariffin, 2007), legal profession (Abdullah, 2008); (Richard Powell and Hashim, 2011), car assembly plant (Morais, 1998) and agricultural and agricultural related organisations (Rafik-Galea, Mohamad, Salleh, and Wong, 2010). However, there is a lack of empirical research and findings in the agricultural industry except for Rafik-Galea et al. (2010) where the study mainly investigates language use and choice in the agricultural and agricultural related organisations while Redza et al., (2014) looks at communication management in the fertilizer market.

Clearly, there is a dearth of studies which have empirically explored language use and choice in the agricultural industry and hence, this study endeavours to

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fill this gap by identifying the role and use of language in the plantation, poultry and fertiliser sectors which are all subsections of the agricultural industry.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study which investigates language use and choice in the agricultural workplace domain falls under the umbrella of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study has implications on ESP because it examines language practices, and the role and value of English in the agricultural industry. It also determines the language skills needed by employees in their various job functions. The findings obtained will help in the planning and designing of courses suitable for professional practice.

In addition, the globalised nature of economic activities and ever escalating economic based migration around the world has brought about the need to study the use of language in organisations. Language plays an integral role in the business world in which employees are increasingly responsible in integrating and sharing information and knowledge to enhance productivity and profitability of the organisation. As such, there is a very real need for employees to be proficient in the international lingua franca, the English language, so that they can perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

The agriculture sector in Malaysia is dependent on migrant workers because of the labour shortage that plagues this industry. These migrant workers are from source countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and India (Tunon and Baruah, 2012) and this produces linguistically diverse employees, a phenomenon which is also faced by most organisations in this part of the world. As most of the migrant workers become part of the Malaysian workforce, organisations are faced with increasing multilingual communication issues across all hierarchical layers throughout the organisation. This has caused a significant implication over the use of a corporate language throughout the organisation. The failure of the corporate language role as a single standardised language for organisation efficiency and control has created diverse problems to organisations and very little research has been conducted in these areas (Kingsley, 2010)

Employees who are not proficient in the primary language of communication in the workplace are clearly disadvantaged and this creates a barrier in the workplace. Language barrier can cause conflict, frustration misunderstanding and anger. In extreme cases, it can also lead to workplace accidents which can harm employees. Instructional tasks may not be carried out effectively by employees due to the language barrier. Employees who are proficient

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speakers may find it very difficult to explain workplace matters like ideas and procedures to employees who are not fluent in the primary language as in the case of the agricultural workplace which employs migrant works from diverse ethnicities and nationalities.

Feely and Harzing (2003) argue that multinationals may face problems when the number of languages co-existing within a corporation increases and suggest the introduction of a corporate language to improve communication internally and externally. Marschan, Welch, and Welch (1997) have also noted that organisations need to make sure that language is not forgotten or ignored in the workplace and in fact it should be viewed in a strategic context. Thus, it is hoped that the study will be able to help us understand the language practices in the three organisations chosen for this study.

Additionally, the research on language use in organisations shows that most of these studies have been conducted in Europe and a significant amount of these studies has also been conducted in corporate organisations located in the Nordic countries (Andersen and Rasmussen, 2004; Lønsmann, 2011; Millar and Jensen, 2009; Sørensen, 2005) with the researchers particularly from Finland being the most prolific (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002; Lehtonen and Karjalainen, 2008; Leppänen and Nikula, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2009).

In Malaysia however, research on the use of English in the corporate settings has been given very little attention. Additionally, much of the research that has been conducted in Malaysia in the area of language use and choice within the workplace domain falls into several interlocking disciplines namely those which are related to English for Specific Purposes (Anie, 1998; Kassim and Ali, 2010), business communication (S Rafik-Galea et al., 2010; Shahruddin, Ali, and Rafik-Galea, 2015) those which deal with the strategic use of language use and choice and the reasons for language choice (Abdullah, 2008; Anie, 1998; Ariffin, 2007; Morais, 1998; Venugopal, 2000) and business discourse study on email (Habil & Shameem, 2010).

In a review of research by (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, 2003) the scholars highlight that Asian researchers (East and Southeast Asia) in the area of business communication publish their work as isolated researchers and these studies are mainly concentrated in Hong Kong. Evans (2010) reiterates this as he argues that within the Outer circle territories, where the regions have been under the colonial rule for a period of time, Hong Kong has been the most prolific in this area of research for the last 20 years. The industries investigated in Hong Kong are accountancy (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006), aviation (Bilbow, 2002), banking (Chew, 2005), construction (Evans, 1999a, 1999b), engineering (Qian, 2005), law (Bhatia and Candlin, 1998), manufacturing (Briguglio,

2005a), merchandising (Florence Li and Mead, 2000) and surveying (Cheng and Mok, 2008).

By drawing on this information, it can clearly be seen that the area of language use and choice within the agricultural domain in Malaysia, particularly, is under researched. Thus, the present study will provide a more detailed analysis by exploring the complexity of language use and choice in the three sectors involved in this study.

In addition, the scarcity of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research also contributes to the lack of understanding surrounding the role and practices of language and communication in organisations such as that of the agriculture sector. Accordingly, this research responds to calls on language use and choice in organisations such as the agricultural sector, contributing to the gap of understanding the role and problems of the use of English for Specific purposes in this sector.

Harzing, Köster, and Magner (2011) posit that language barrier slows down and increases the cost of decision-making and operations in organisations. Similarly, poor communication can cause low feedback, absenteeism, employee burnout or stress, and higher staff turnover (Pettit, Goris, & Vaught, 1997). Previous studies have shown that the quality of communication has many implications towards organisations because it has an effect on critical organisational outcomes such as commitment (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990; Varona, 1996), employee motivation (Chiang & Jang, 2008), job performance (Pincus, 1986; Tsai, Chen, & Cheng, 2009), job satisfaction (Pettit et al., 1997; Pincus, 1986) and productivity (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). Collectively, all these studies point out the negative consequences of language and communication barriers in the workplace. Indeed, more needs to be known about the corporate language of the agricultural sector including that of the other sectors as previous studies have not specifically focused on what are the linguistic practices of organisations in Malaysia in particular the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the ethnic language of the migrant workers plays a 'hidden' role in vertical and horizontal communication in organisations. This present study will examine how factors such as translation, level of education, and socio-cultural issues impact and contribute to the understanding and dissemination of information and knowledge among the migrant workers and among all employees across all hierarchical levels in the organisation. There is a need to investigate this hidden role which actually helps the success of communication in the organisations especially among English-limited subordinates. The lack of research in linguistically diverse workplaces testifies the need and importance

of research into the areas for language use and choice in an increasing global and multilingual world.

This study adopts a broader approach, encompassing the domain of business communication, ESP and sociolinguistics (reasons for language choice and language management) to provide a better understanding on language use and choice in the workplace domain. By examining the language use and choice within these three domains, we can better understand the language use and choice phenomenon in the agricultural organisations, an industry which has been given very little attention in Malaysia. This would be done by identifying the various communication channels and the factors that influence language use and choice at the workplace. In addition, the study will also investigate the role and value of English in these three organisations. These are important components in the investigation because it provides a clear picture of the communication landscape in these three agricultural organisations. With the findings organisations will be able to manage their business in a more effective way as language is central to the workplace.

The gaps identified above lay the foundation for the following objectives:

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate the language use and choice in selected agricultural based companies in Malaysia. The study intends to examine to what extent English and other languages are used within the communicative practices in the workplaces of these organisations. The underlying factors that govern language choice will also be analysed. In addition, the study explores the role of English and other languages in the communicative practices of the selected agricultural based organizations. The specific objectives for the study are :

a) to investigate the extent to which English and other languages are used by employees in the various communication channels.

b) to identify the factors that govern language choice among the employees in the selected agricultural organisations

c) to identify the employees' perception towards the importance of English in the agricultural workplaces.

d) to determine the role and value of English in the selected agricultural organisation

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e) to develop a language needs model for the agricultural sector

1.5 Research Questions

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is English or other languages used in the different communicative events in the selected agricultural workplaces?

2. What are the factors that govern language choice in the selected agricultural organisations?

3. How do employees perceive the role of English in the selected agricultural organisations?

4. What is the role and value of English in the selected agricultural organisations?

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations

The study focuses on the investigation of language use and choice in selected agricultural organisations through the use of a questionnaire, interviews, observation, document and website analysis.

Gaining access to organisations was an extremely challenging task as the gatekeepers approached by the researcher were not very encouraging. They were not very communicative and many follow ups in terms of phone calls, emails and visits had to be conducted before they agreed to take part in this research. One gatekeeper took more than three weeks to reply to the researcher's emails and only after many telephone calls were made was he agreeable to the study. The next step after getting the agreement was to set up appointments to discuss the matter further which again took a long time. Every step forward in gaining access was a challenge in terms of time.

Another limitation faced by the researcher was that the organisations also laid out their terms and conditions regarding the number of questionnaires and interviewers to be used in data collection process. The organisations requested that only 80 to 100 questionnaires be sent to them and the gatekeepers did warn the researcher that there would be difficulties in getting employees to

participate. The researcher's request to interview three members from every hierarchical level was also a complex process. The researcher basically had no control over the people chosen for the interviews.

The researcher also encountered problems when wanting to return to conduct member checks for further validation within the organisation. All three organisations were very discouraging as they did not respond to the requests made by the researcher via phone calls, emails and even text messages for member checks and to get more respondents also proved to be very challenging.

Initially, the researcher was going to conduct an ethnography study of the organisations, however due to the constraints and boundaries imposed by the gatekeepers the idea had to be abandoned.

The small number of samples decreases the generalizability of the findings as these three organisations are not representative of the whole population of the Malaysian agricultural organisations. However, the value of this study lies in providing a thick description pertaining to the area of language use and choice in selected agricultural organisations and provides insights into the role and value of English

The study does not examine the micro level of language analysis but only the macro aspect of language use and choice. In addition, it also does not study the relationship between the headquarters and subsidiary intercommunication link. Thus, these aspects will not be described in this study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The goal of this study is to research language use and choice practices in the agricultural workplace domain. Thus, it is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding on the role of English, Bahasa Malaysia and other languages in this industry taking onto consideration that both language and the communication process do not exist in a vacuum. Thus by studying language use and language choice of the users, the complex reality of the agricultural industry will be reflected.

Studying language use and choice in a multilingual organisation is important because it will provide important insights into the complex and dynamic nature of language in the workplace domain. An understanding of the practices, patterns and trends will provide organisations a better perspective on the use of the corporate language and thus help them to re-evaluate their language and training policies as well as the implications in their organisations. It will also help them to make informed decisions with regards to language matters in the workplace domain.

Moreover, this study would be helpful in identifying the needs of the agricultural industry as the inability of our local graduates to communicate effectively at the workplace has been a cause of concern for decades. The question that arises is do we need employees who are highly proficient in English in the agricultural industry? This is because employers have raised their concerns about the poor soft skills especially communication skills among the graduates. Phang (2006) reports that there about 45 000 college graduates who were unemployed due to a poor command of the English language. This has led to employers refusing to hire local graduates to work for them as most of the jobs entailed them using English.

Based on the researcher's personal experience when working with an international bank, most of the graduates were rejected during the interview because they had a poor command of the language although they had the necessary academic qualifications. This goes to show that employers recruit employees who have a good command of the language because the nature of the job requires employees to interact with clients who are abroad. Thus, if the student graduates with a poor command of the language, job prospects are limited and this explains the high number of graduates who are unemployed in the country. This also suggests that English as an international language is important to ensure the economic development of the country. Moreover, the agricultural industry is undergoing rapid transformation into a modern, dynamic and competitive sector (http://www.moa.gov.my/visi-misi) and this would entail a highly competitive workforce sector in order to realize this vision. Thus, this study will provide some insight into these issues and the predicament that the nation is facing in all industries.

By identifying the language use and choice trends, the findings would help language planners and policy makers to develop the syllabus in colleges and universities on which skills to be taught to students so that they are able to work effectively at the workplace and the different job markets. Thus these institutions will be able to align their practice to rhetoric to ensure students have the relevant language skills so that they would be ready for the workforce as the language needs vary from organisation to organisation. It will also help

to establish a match between the communication skills which are needed in organisations and the preparation of graduates for the workforce.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Within the scope of this study, the important key terms as used in this study are defined as the following:

Language Use

For this research, the term language use refers to the use of language in communicative events such as reading, telephone conversation, writing minutes, emails and letters.

Language Choice

The term language choice can also be defined as language preference, code, variety that is used by speakers in a specific language contact situation. According to (Ting, 2001, p. xvi) t is "the choice of language or a dialect over another in an interaction." For the purpose of this study the term 'language choice' is used to refer to choices made between languages in the workplace domain.

Workplace Domain

The term domain is derived from (Fishman, 1971) where there are several variables that determine domains. These variables may include the role relations between the participants, the context of interaction and the topics under discussion. The domain concept is powerful in helping to explain language use and choice patterns in the workplace.

Other Languages

The term other languages refers to any other language either than English is being used. It could be Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, Tamil or any other ethnic languages of the migrant workers.

1.9 Overview of Thesis

Chapter 1 describes the background of the study which explains the gap in the research on language use. This chapter also presents the statement of the problem, the purpose and the significance of the study, as well as the research questions that serve as a guide to the investigation of the problem. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical perspectives and a review of the literature. The review of the related literature is provided by a thorough investigation into languages and communication within organisations. Previous literature and research are discussed and the main points identified in the following chapter. Chapter 3 describes the research design and the methodology of the study including the constraints faced. The subjects and instruments used are presented in this section. It also explains the need to use interviews and questionnaires to collect data. Chapter 4 describes the findings and analysis of the employee's language use and choice in the agricultural workplace domain. Chapter 5 highlights the conclusion and contributions of the study. It ends with suggestions for further research.

1.10 Summary

The above sections in this chapter provide an overview of the whole study. It consists of the background section where the role of language in organisations is explicated. Moreover, this chapter identifies the gaps which were observed in prior work and establishes the need for this study to be conducted. The chapter is followed by elaborating on research objectives and research questions that have been raised and have been used to address the issues. Finally, the contributions of this study are also identified.

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