

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the communication difficulties foreign waiters with low English proficiency face upon arrival in Malaysia. For achieving this goal, three newly arrived foreign waiters employed in the food service industry (as waiters) in Kuala Lumpur were selected as participants, based on a pre-determined set of criteria. The study began with definitions of the notion of communication strategies and the explication of some relevant language learning theories in order to understand (1) how foreign waiters with little proficiency in the target, second language perform communication acts and (2) how they manage to improve their proficiency in the target language over a short period of time in the absence of formal ESL instruction. From information gathered through on-the-job observations and informal interviews, the most frequent communication strategies used to compensate for the lack of proficiency in the target language and participants' reports on the methods they used to quickly improve their proficiency in the target language were identified. The result was then explicated based on the communication and language acquisition theory/theories discussed in the literature review. The principal conclusion of this study is that the participants continually employed communication strategies such as code-switching, body language (gestures, facial expressions and hand waving), hedging strategies and overgeneralizations to overcome communication difficulties. In addition, it was observed that the participants' speaking proficiency have improved steadily over the four months and this improvement was consistent with the precepts of the social interaction theory which emphasizes that language acquisition can be optimized when there is relevant context and conducive environments within which the language acquisition takes place.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk mengkaji masalah komunikasi yang di hadapai pekerja asing yang tidak mempunyai kemahiran bahasa Inggeris atau mempunyai tahap kemahiran yang rendah ketika mula-mula sampai ke Malaysia. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, tiga orang pekerja asing yang baru sahaja tiba di Malaysia dan terus bertugas dalam industri perkhidmatan makanan (pelayan restoran) di Kuala Lumpur telah dipilih sebagai peserta berdasarkan satu set kriteria yang telah ditentukan terlebih dahulu. Kajian ini bermula dengan definisi masalah komunikasi dan penerangan tentang beberapa teori pembelajaran bahasa yang berkaitan untuk memahami (1) bagaimana pekerja asing yang mempunyai kemahiran yang rendah dalam bahasa sasaran menjalankan perlakuan komunikasi dan (2) bagaimana tanpa pengajaran formal Bahasa Inggeirs sebagai Bahasa Kedua, mereka mampu mempertingkatkan kemahiran mereka dalam bahasa sasaran dalam tempoh yang singkat. Dari maklumat yang dikumpul melalui pemerhatian ketika bertugas dan temubual tidak formal, strategi komunikasi yang paling kerap digunakan bagi membantu komunikasi dalam bahasa sasaran dan laporan peserta kajian berkaitan metod yang digunakan untuk mempertingkatkan kemahiran dalam bahasa sasaran dengan cepat telah dikenalpasti. Dapatan ini kemudian dirumus berdasarkan teori komunikasi dan pemerolehan bahasa yang telah dibincangkan dalam kajian perpustakaan. Rumusan utama kajian ini mendapati para peserta sentiasa menggunakan strategi komunikasi seperti pertukaran kod, bahasa bukan verbal (*gestures*, ekspresi muka, dan pergerakan tangan), serta strategi *hedging* bagi mengatasi masalah dan halangan dalam berkomunikasi. Selain dari itu, tahap kemahiran pertuturan para peserta juga didapati telah meningkat dalam tempoh empat bulan dan peningkatan ini didapati konsisten dengan idea teori interaksi sosial yang menekankan

bahawa pemerolehan bahasa boleh dioptimalkan apabila ada konteks yang relevan dan suasana yang bersesuaian di dalam mana proses pemerolehan bahasa itu berlaku.

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