

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the present study and discusses their implications. More specifically, this last chapter shows relationship between the analysis of the obtained data and the literature of the study. It also bears an account of how the present research has accomplished the research objectives and addressed the research questions. This study conducted a research into the communication difficulties faced by newly arrived foreign waiters in Malaysia due to their limited English proficiency. Specifically, this research intended to study two issues: firstly, the strategies foreign waiters employ to communicate due to the lack of proficiency in the target second language; secondly, the methods they adopted to obtain adequate proficiency in the target language while at work.

The objective of this study was to accomplish a set of goals: Firstly, to determine the communication difficulties foreign waiters face upon arrival in Malaysia. Secondly, to identify the communicative strategies the foreign waiters used to compensate for their low language proficiency within the first month of their arrival in Malaysia. Thirdly, to describe methods foreign waiters use to acquire sufficient proficiency in the target second language in the absence of formal ESL instruction.

For the purpose of identifying the English language issues among the foreign waiters in Malaysia, the research scope was narrowed down to the food service sector. In addition, due to the limitations of this study the number of the participants was kept small, three

only. As the objectives and the type of questions suggest, carrying out this research was practical in nature and required real time observations and interviews.

As stated in the literature review, the theoretical framework of this study is drawn from Jaafar (2006), Burt (2003), Maynard (1998), Dornyei (1995) and Tarone (1980). Moreover, among these, Jaafar (2006) was helpful in designing the framework of the practical observations too. The larger body of the literature review included various definitions and categorizations of the communication strategies to help best understand their significance and function e.g., Tarone (1978 and 1981), Dornyei (1995), Jaafar (2006). Communication strategies are generally understood to be alternative ways of communication or conscious tactics to help the interlocutors involved in the communication overcome breakdowns and problems on the way of reaching a communicative goal. Limited knowledge of the language used as the medium of communication could cause such breakdowns. Problems in communication could impair meaning and consequently understanding.

Communication strategies are mostly used when the interlocutors do not share the structures of meaning. As such, the main function of communication strategies is to fill in the probable gaps in the course of communication and help the interlocutors to mutually derive at a mutually understood meaning. This study used two techniques to gather data – the interview and the observation techniques.

In the same way a set of questions were formulated to be addressed through the course of the present research. In the following each one of the three research questions, which the present study set out to answer, are repeated with answers given to them according to the findings of this research:

**5.1 Research Question1:** What are the communication difficulties faced by foreign waiters who have limited English proficiency upon arrival in Malaysia?

For the purpose of this study some statistics were taken from the Malaysian governmental organization to have a better understanding of the presence of the foreign workers in Malaysia as well as understanding more about their backgrounds. Also, David (2007) was significant as to understand what the language varieties are in Malaysia and what languages are more frequent here. According to the findings communication difficulties included: problems communicating with airport officials; getting a transport; finding a place to stay; finding a job; travelling around the city, etc.

Obviously such problems show that waiters and workers in general with low or no proficiency in English will face certain problems upon arrival on Malaysian soil. In a context like Kuala Lumpur, speaking English is common. Moreover, a lot of tourists flood Malaysia annually and this unique quality calls for a working knowledge of English to survive in Kuala Lumpur, unless one is fluent in Bahasa Melayu.

**5.2 Research Question2:** How do the foreign waiters who have limited proficiency in English communicate on the job?

Analysis of the data from the interview sessions and the observation sessions revealed that the participants were indeed using several communicative strategies, some more frequently than others, even though they were unaware that they were doing so. The participants were using the communication strategies almost anytime they were facing problems in conveying their meaning over. The participants frequently used communication strategies

as they were managing to keep on their activities and hold their jobs despite the problems they had in their medium of communication: English language.

Here, grouping communication strategies under some umbrella terms helped in determining the most frequently used strategies as the participants performed their duties. The observations revealed that towards the end of the observation sessions the participants were generally cutting down on using some communication strategies (e.g., appealing for help). This could be due to the participants' improvement in English as the results of the second interview and the scores the participants got bear proof of it.

Analysis of the data obtained from the observation sessions showed an increase in participants' use of English over time. Based on the analysis it could be concluded that with the pass of time, in the last observation sessions, participants were obviously talking more in English on their job despite their continuous mistakes. Moreover, according to the analysis of the data in Chapter Four, participants were using hedging strategies and asking for meaning strategy; in other words, results of the last two observation sessions reported strategies 1 and 4 (see Appendix 2) as the most frequent ones. At the same time, strategies 2 and 3 were less frequent in the last two observation sessions. (e.g., the order of the most frequent strategies by all the subjects in the last two sessions: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> observation sessions (1, 4, 2, 3). Generally speaking, a simple count and calculation of the results of the observation sessions showed the order of the most frequent strategies as the following: 1, 2, 3, 4. That is, throughout all the observation sessions hedging strategies and body language strategy were the most frequent ones.

**5.3 Research Question3:** What methods do the foreign waiters employ to acquire further competency in the English language without accessibility to commercial language learning programs?

In line with this finding, the analysis of the data obtained from the second interview reports on the subjects' improvement in English. In other words, compared with the first interview scores that specified the participants' level of English speaking proficiency at band 1, the second interview scores showed that participants had generally improved in their English language proficiency at different rates: P1(from 1 to 2); P2(from 2 to 3); P3(from 1 to 2). The evaluation tool used was the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics strategy. This finding justifies why the participants were using more English over the course of time and were less frequently using some of the identified strategies (i.e., code switching and asking for help).

However, the fact that almost all of the communication events in the restaurant where the observations was carried out were in English should not be neglected. That the participants had improved their English was because of their exposure to the English language while on the job and without any formal ESL instructions. This finding heavily rests upon the precepts of the social interactionist theory, which emphasizes the environment, and the milieu within which language acquisition takes place. The general view about the social interactionist theory in this study was taken from the following studies: Fletcher and Miller (2005) and Maynard (1998).

The context in the present study was a restaurant with no resources to teach English therein. However, we could say that by way of exposure to English language in their workplace, participants could pick up the words and expressions related to their job and most

frequently used in that restaurant. The fact that subjects, according to the findings, could better facilitate their communicative goals with newly learned words and expressions (e.g., “unfortunately finished”; “having here?”; “hold on please”) despite the problems they had with the English grammar is in accordance with the theoretical basis of the social interactionist theory that prioritizes learning of vocabulary among the language components in the learning process.

Some general solutions regarding problems and issues in English language acquisition among foreign waiters are discussed here. Burt (2003) suggests some solutions with regard to issues in the act of acquiring English among the foreign waiters. From these solutions, providing opportunities to use English on the job is most related to this study. Pierce (2001 as reported in Burt, 2003) suggests that at the workplace one of the skills waiters have to demonstrate is an assured level of oral proficiency and English literacy.

However, there are different ways to encourage waiters to use English on the job that do not involve formal evaluation of skills: employers could visit English classes to get more awareness of the issues their employers have with their English proficiency on the job. Burt (2003) suggests that employers can hold discussions during breaks among non-native English speakers and native speakers on the job in English. As no classes are held for the waiters observed in this study, one possible solution for providing opportunities to use English on the job might be encouraging other waiters with better English proficiency to converse more with waiters with low proficiency.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for future Research:**

1. This research addressed English language issues among foreign waiters in the food industry, future researches could be conducted in other sectors where foreign waiters are employed in Malaysia.
2. Future researches could look for any possibility of learning Malay as a second language by the foreign waiters in places where almost most of the communication events are carried out in Malay.