



**A MULTIFACTORIAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SME
BUSINESS COMPANY NAMING IN MALAYSIA**

**NOR HANIZA BINTI HASAN
DR. SOO KUM YOKE
ROHANI BINTI JANGGA**

27 APRIL 2015

**A MULTIFACTORIAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SME BUSINESS COMPANY
NAMING IN MALAYSIA**

Nor Haniza Hasan¹ , Carolyn Soo Kum Yoke² , Rohani Jangga³

Academy of Language Studies^{1,2}

Faculty of Business and Management³

Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor

Abstract

The choice of choosing the right company name is very much like the choice of choosing the right name for a product, as the branding can have a lasting effect on customers' choice of goods. Small and Medium enterprises in Malaysia are also affected by the multicultural and multilingual background of this country. This study aims to identify these sociolinguistic factors that can lend to SME business owners' choice of Business Company naming and whether this complies with the SSM (Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia) company registration acts. The effects of using the English language as the medium of communicating their business operations instead of other languages will also be an interesting factor to consider. As such, a selected number of SME operators (N=21) were requested to participate in a survey and interview. The results of the study indicated that there is indeed a diversity of factors that contribute to business naming and they are mostly skewed towards influence from family and background of the business owners. The mismatch of linguistic accuracy is partly due to cultural aspects and therefore it is recommended that a set of guidelines in business naming is prepared so that language distortion is not promoted and image of linguistic competency is not tarnished.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, SMEs, Business Company Naming, linguistic competency

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Business today has witnessed the supremacy of English worldwide and the socio-cultural threat it imposes in the form of linguistic imperialism to business naming practices is therefore widespread. The use of English is seen as a gimmick to influence consumers and to gain their confidence in the choice of company name. Moreover, the impact of colonisation has brought about the misconception that usage of English is viewed as better status and higher class. This image is foreseen to be able to boost business. This study intends to investigate the causes and effects of using English in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. Malaysia is a multicultural and multilingual country and therefore, it would be interesting to examine the choice of language in business naming by SME operators.

1.1 Background

Generally, SME businesses in Malaysia tend to incorporate some elements of English words in naming their business. This widespread or dominance of English has become a socio-cultural threat whereby using English seems to give a sense of superiority and added advantage. After 58 years of independence, there are still business proprietors using English in business naming giving the impression that Malaysians are still shadowed by British rulership. However, this situation should not dampened the use of English for business naming and transactions.

1.2 Purpose

The objectives of this study are to:

1.2.1 identify the factors which influence the use of English in business naming.

1.2.2 examine the effects of using English in business naming on socio-cultural norms and business revenue.

1.3 Research questions

In determining whether the dominance of the use of English could pose a threat to the socio-cultural norms of the community or whether it could increase business profitability, this study focuses on two research questions:

1.3.1 What are the factors which influence the use of English in business naming?

1.3.2 Does the use of English in business naming affect the socio-cultural norms and business revenue?

1.4 Significance of study

This study is significant as a quality measurement for registration of business names. Proprietors have been found to overlook the importance of providing business names that are linguistically correct as well as socially and culturally assimilated to the geographical region. Thus, the accreditation of business naming in English according to the standards of the linguistic, social and cultural aspects should be imposed.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study only involves thirty SME operators (N=21) from the Segamat town area. The results therefore should be applicable to the District of Segamat but may not necessarily represent all businesses in Malaysia.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language in business

Sociolinguistics is a broader placement of language use in contexts, focusing on the relationship between language use and society. Language is used in all aspects of society such as in communication, education and business. In the field of marketing, developing a business or product name is heavily affected by sociolinguistic considerations and marketing. This means that naming decision for a brand demands active participation of sociolinguistic factors and market dynamics which are compatible to be used in that particular situation (Mansour, 2013; Selvi, 2007).

In marketing, brand naming is by all means an application of language symbols that have been shaped by societal factors such as beliefs, values, constraints, and prescriptive rules. Brand name scholars propose that the brand name system consists of three basic components namely the marketing component, the legal component, and the linguistic component (Nithat, 2011).

Linguistic forms or components are used to express symbolic values which are often determined by the symbol's functional roles, as well as by the sociolinguistic resources that natives rely on as references. Symbols are considered vehicles for cultural conceptions of social reality because symbols are 'tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed