



THE USAGE OF MALAY FOOD TERMINOLOGIES AMONG FOOD SERVICE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Each ethnic group has a distinctive traditional technique and method in preparing its cuisine. The techniques and methods have been preserved for generations. The usage of Malay cuisine terminologies among family members is one of the unique customs still intact and used in daily life. However, the use of food terminologies among the younger generations remains a gap that needs serious attention. Thus, this research investigates the usage of food terminologies among students majoring in a Diploma in Food Service (Halal Practice) at a higher institution. An experiment was designed whereby all lecturers were required to use Malay food terminologies on students to enhance teaching. Malay food terminology phrases are associated with various food names such as ingredients, utensils, cooking methods, and meal preparation. These findings revealed that students majoring in Diploma in Foodservice (Halal Practice) understood food terminologies in Malay cuisine very well. The result was satisfactory because the lecturers used Malay food terminologies repeatedly during the cookery classes and laboratory work. This teaching culture practice helped to strengthen and improve students' understanding and usage of Malay food terminologies besides sustaining the language culture. Infusing the usage of Malay food terminologies through academic classes could be maintained for future generations. Older family members should encourage and take part in home cooking with younger family members to preserve the traditional Malay cuisine culture. Additionally, this traditional culture could encourage family bonding.

Keywords: Malay food terminologies, Malay community.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental instrument for communication. This includes symbols and codes that can be used to store, retrieve, shape, and transmit information, (Kim, 2003). Language is a medium for illustrating people's cultural, spiritual, and intellectual life. It also serves as a medium for the expression and exchange of cultural ideas from one generation to another (Li, Hong, Zheng, & Chua, 2010). The language uses its vocabulary to describe and transmit the exact meanings of things (Carey, 1992). The usage of language in the Malay community culture portrays a unique cultural identity (Kassim, 2008). Furthermore, cultural evolution is experienced through language that forms the ethnic civilization identity. Malay culture through language also experiences the formation and transmission of cultural civilization. One such evolution is through language such as Malay food terminologies. This provides evidence that Malaysia's native Malays too have developed very rich food

terminologies and food preparation terminologies over many generations.

There are various Malay food names which have been used by older generation in their daily cooking and ritual in traditional feasts (Sharif et.al, 2008). For instance, the terms "*racik*" and "*mayang*," which can be categorized as cutting techniques, literally mean, "thinly sliced." A rolling pin is referred as a "*torak*" in cooking. In addition, Yoshino (2010) stated that Malay ancestors gave words like *penderam*, *serabe*, *lompat tikam*, *seri muka*, and many more to the Malay dishes.

However, over time, the terms were slowly lost due to the lack of use among the younger generations. These terminologies will become extinct and no longer be used or understood by anyone after the demise of the older generation. This issue has been a great concern among the senior members of the Malay community to sustain Malay culture. Various efforts to maintain and preserve the language are becoming more difficult due to the impact of globalization

and modernisation (Mufwene, 2002). The younger generation, whether they are professional or not in the field of culinary, are also affected by these issues. As such, this research paper would like to understand the level of usage of Malay food terminologies, a) Malay cultural food preparation, b) Malay cultural cooking method and c) Malay cultural food names. Students majoring in Diploma in Foodservice (Halal Practice) at higher institutions were selected as samples for teaching experiments. The objectives of the research are stated below.

- I. The level of usage of Malay food terminologies during Malay food preparation.
- II. The level of usage of Malay food terminologies on the Malay cooking method.
- III. The level of usage of Malay food terminologies among Malay food names.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Food Terminologies

Food serves as a link between individuals and their culture, heritage, identity, sustainability, cross-cultural interactions, and power (Wenyang, 2008). According to Rearick (2009), food has a structure and meaning that is connected to each person's sentiments and views about interpersonal relationships as well as their own identity through the use of its many terminologies (Nagaral, 2009). Understanding the terms used to describe various aspects of the food industry is crucial and pertinent for individuals to link to the world of the culinary industry (Cook, 2010). Therefore, without the use of culinary terminologies, cooking secrets, techniques, and talents may not be passed down through the generations and cultural continuity may not exist (Lowinsky, 1992). On contrary, the terminology surrounding food might not be static but instead continues to evolve due to changes caused by cultural shifts and how people use the terminology (Matt, 2010).

2.2. Food Preparation and Methods of Cooking

Food terms with specific meanings are strongly related to preparations, culinary techniques, tools, dining manners, or other topics (Al Tamini, 2011). An examination of prior research on cooking terms reveals that there is a wealth of information available, such as that provided by Lévi-Strauss (2013), who proposed the culinary triangle to symbolize the three main cooking phrases namely roasted, smoked, and boiling.

The Chinese and Japanese languages have a variety of terms for food preparation (Li, Hong, Zheng, & Chua, 2010). Knowing the terms for cutting food is crucial for *sashimi* cooks. One common example is *ryou-ri*, which refers to exquisite and attractive cuts of food items for *sashimi*. The Japanese language has several terms to describe their culinary methods. Examples are '*komu*', which means to prepare anything diligently for a very long time, and '*hanmusinisiru*', which means half steam. These terminologies will change depending on the ingredients used and the cooking methods.

Food terminologies evolve from common history associated with the production of the food. They are affected by names of places, noble people, and special occasions (Kulenkampff,

2008). Foods sometimes are named after specific people in their honor, such as the inventor of the food (Binns, 2003). One example could be attributed to Caesar Cardini who unintentionally created the Caesar salad because of food shortage at his San Diego restaurant.

2.3. Malay Food Terminologies

The Malays are the biggest ethnic group in Malaysia. They have their own terminology for cuisine, such as terminologies for preparation, cooking techniques, and food names (Omar, 2004). Over many generations, Malay food terminologies have evolved because of cultural assimilation through inheritance (Mohamed et al., 2010). This happens during regular cooking activities and traditional events (Kassim, 2008).

Spices, herbs, and roots are regular ingredients used to prepare Malay cuisine. Malay dried spices that are commonly used are *jintan putih* (cumin), *jintan manis* (fennel), *Kayu manis* (cinnamon), and *ketumbar* (coriander). Fresh herbs such as *serai* (lemon grass), *pandan* (screwpine), *daun limau purut* (kaffir lime leaves), and *kesum* (polygonum or laksa leaf) are frequently used in the Malay cooking.

Terminologies for Malay cooking preparation method such as *tanak*, *celur*, *reneh*, *sangai*, *racik*, *tumis*, *salai*, *layur*, and *siang Mayang* are commonly used well-known Malay terms. Additionally, Leong et al. (2009) stated that food names are important in Malay food terminology, with food names such as *Buah Melaka*, *lompat tikam*, *badak berendam*, *tahi itik*, *cekmekekolek*, *serabe*, *beriani gam*, *cakar ayam*, *nasi dagang*, and many more. These are all part of the most famous and unique Malay culinary names. In addition to that, some traditional household appliances, such as the mills and pestle and mortars known as *lesung batu*, *batu giling*, and *batu boh*, are still used to grind spices and pastes. Similarly, in the present era, *landas* (wooden boards), *torak* (rolling pins), and *papan penorak* (pastry boards) are still accepted as necessary kitchen items (Kamaruddin et al, 2010)

2.4. Usage of terminologies

Cabré (2003) categorized the factors that affect the use of terminologies as follows:

- i. words of languages: some terms may have a problematic structure, meaning they do not fit into the wording system of a language;
- ii. associated terms: if a phrase is already well-known, it is unlikely that a new term will be utilized, and finally;
- iii. frequency of use: A term won't be well-known if it is so particular that very few people use it.

It is crucial to practise and use the phrases and terminology constantly as this would prevent these phrases from being forgotten. It is known that in certain cases, there is a situation where terminology coined by minority groups has been historically marginalized in their own countries (Theophano, 2002). As such, it is pertinent that the more food terminologies and associated terminology are learned and discussed, the easier it will be to speak with other people

about them and utilize them in everyday speech, according to Agbo (2009). Based on the above discussions, this framework (figure 1) is forwarded for investigation.

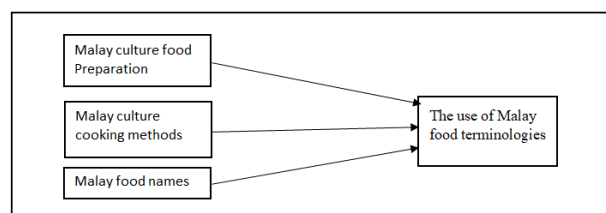


Figure 1: Framework of Malay Food Terminologies by Zahari, Alam, Abdullah, Azman, I., Kutut, & Suhaimi, (2012)

3.0.METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire utilised in this study was adopted and adapted from Zahari, Alam, Abdullah, Azman, Kutut, & Suhaimi, (2012). It has five major sections which are Section A: demographics, Section B: Malay Food preparation terminologies, section C: Malay Cooking Method terminologies, section D: Malay Food Name terminologies, and section E: the Usage of Malay Food Terminologies. This instrument utilised a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = extremely poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, and 5 = Very

Good. The reliability and validity of the items were checked and confirmed through a pilot study. The instrument is consistent and stable with the investigation. The result of the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was reliable as the following: Section A $\alpha = 0.86$; Section B $\alpha = 0.90$; Section C $\alpha = 0.90$ and Section D $\alpha = 0.86$. A total of 91 usable questionnaires were obtained from 187 students majoring in Diploma in Food Service (Halal Practice). These students had gone through the foundation subjects which were 1) Basic Eastern and Western cookery and 2) theory of food. In both subjects, the students were taught basic cooking terminologies.

4.0.FINDINGS

Demographic Profiles

Descriptive analysis has been used to analyze quantitative data. Table 1 displays the mean score and standard deviation of respondents between variables. Most respondents aged from 21 – 25 years old ($n = 49, 53.8\%$), the second highest age range was from 18 – 20 years old ($n = 32, 35.2\%$) and the age group with the lowest number of respondents was 26 – 30 years old ($n = 10, 11\%$). 65.9 % ($n = 60$) of respondents were females compared to 34.1% of ($n = 31$) males.

Table 1: Mean scores in survey

Items	SD	M
Malay food preparation terminologies		
B1. My knowledge of Malay food preparation terminologies in general	.883	4.27
B2. My understanding of Malay kitchen equipment terminologies.	.839	4.31
B3. My understanding of Malay cooking ingredient terminologies	.883	4.27
B4. My understanding of Malay cutting method terminologies.	.885	4.20
B5. My understanding of the term landas.	1.040	4.09
B6. My understanding of the term tungku.	.930	4.32
B7. My understanding of the term empat sekawan.	.780	4.52
B8. My understanding of the term racik.	.972	4.21
B9. My understanding of the method of mayang.	.984	4.18
Malay cooking methods terminologies		
C1. My knowledge of Malay cooking method terminologies in general	.883	4.23
C2. My understanding of Malay dry-heat cooking method terminologies.	.913	4.21
C3. My understanding of Malay moist-heat cooking method terminologies.	.926	4.18
C4. My understanding of Malay combination cooking method terminologies	.897	4.20
C5. My understanding of the method of sangai	.874	4.35
C6. My understanding of the method of tumis.	.806	4.56
C7. My understanding of the method of lengat.	1.043	3.96
C8. My understanding of the method of reneh.	.888	4.36
Malay food terminologies		
D1. My understanding of Malay food terminologies in general.	.806	4.34
D2. My understanding of Malay food terminology is created from a special event or incident.	.892	4.12

D2. My understanding of Malay food terminology is created from a special event or incident.	.938	4.14
D3. My understanding of Malay food terminology is derived from people's names or titles	.936	4.03
D4. My understanding of the food terminology Nasi Dagang	.831	4.27
D5. My understanding of food is terminology Nasi Beriani Gam.	.864	4.14
D6. My understanding of food is terminology rendang tok.	.872	4.20
D7. My understanding of food terminology Cek Mek Molek.	.994	4.11

The usage of Malay food terminologies

E1. Level of usage of Malay food terminologies in general	.787	4.32
E2. Level of usage of Malay food terminologies during my culinary studies or exposure.	.954	4.15
E3. Level of usage of Malay food terminologies in recipes and menu writing.	.929	4.12
E4. The use of Malay food terminologies among my working colleagues	.870	4.10
E5. The use of Malay food preparation terminologies during my daily cooking activities.	.861	4.24
E6. The use of Malay cooking method terminologies in my daily cooking activities.	.917	4.22
E7. The use of Malay food names terminologies in my daily cooking activities.	.857	4.27

$n = 91$

Objective 1:

The level of usage of Malay food terminologies during Malay cultural food preparation.

The result showed that the mean score on the levels of usage of Malay food preparation terminologies was $M= 4.2625$, $SD=.75623$. On the other hand, the correlation between these variables was $r= .814^{**}$. This proved that the students had good knowledge about the rich and unique Malay culture pertaining to the food preparation, cooking techniques, or food name terminologies. They were certain that it was possible to discover the secret culinary methods, recipes, and terminologies of the Malay culture. The students believed that it was crucial for them to learn and regularly use Malay food terminologies to preserve the rich Malay cuisine heritage. With that in mind, they believe that it was crucial to educate and apply Malay food terminologies in real life by learning from the older generation.

Although most of the students who participated in the previous section's analysis agreed that the language had a wealth of terms for food preparation, the findings of this section showed different aspects. It showed that the students had a broad knowledge and grasp of the terms used in Malay food preparation, Malay kitchen equipment, Malay cooking ingredients, and Malay cooking ingredients. It was clear that they had a basic understanding of terms used in Malay cooking, such as *landas* (a board for cutting food), *tungku* (equipment to use on *empat sekawan*), *racik* (chopped), *mayang* (thin slicing), and *siang* (process of cleaning the and cutting food, especially vegetable and fish).

Objective 2:

The level of usage of Malay food terminologies on the Malay cultural cooking method.

The results showed that the mean score on *the level of usage of Malay cooking methods* was $M= 4.2555$, $SD= .78238$, while the correlation between these variables was $r= .837^{**}$. Although the Malay culture is loaded with many terminologies related to the cooking methods, the students showed good understanding of the general terminologies. Their knowledge about the cooking terms, such as *sangai* (meal, primarily dried spices, fried without oil), *lengai* (cooking rice or food with vapor or steam), and *reneh* (using a small amount of oil or fat in a shallow pan), further corroborated these findings. These terms were understood by the students as they had used these terminologies with their respective lecturers.

Objective 3:

The level of usage of Malay food terminologies among Malay cultural food names.

The results showed that the overall mean score on the *level of usage of Malay food names among students of Diploma in Food at the Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah* was $M=4.1703$, $SD=.74524$, while the correlation between these variables was $r= .852^{**}$. This proved that *the respondents* had a broad knowledge of Malay food name terminologies, which was consistent with earlier research. However, they lacked a solid grasp of how these Malay dishes got their names such as whether the food names were given to honour individuals, titles, or significant occasions or incidents. Despite these, the average scores showed that the terms *Nasi Dagang*, *Beriani Gam*, *Badak Berendam*, and *Cek Mek Molek* were well understood. This was probably because the respondents were aware of the names of the foods.

5.0.CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research has proven that it is crucial to maintain the Malay food terminology among students majoring in food

services. These students are expected to help to practise and maintain the richness of the Malay culture, customs, and Malay food terminology.

Additionally, many people worry that the development of processed foods, which expands the choices of new components and items for Malay food, is making people less eager to understand and utilize traditional Malay culinary terminology. The fact that youngsters no longer rely on their abilities and knowledge in the kitchen to prepare meals is one of the reasons why traditional Malay cuisine terminologies are being forgotten and ignored.

In this regard, the only approach to ensure knowledge about Malay culinary terminology and its related information is preserved and conserved is to make efforts to pass down it from one generation to another without fail. In simple words, every mother should start encouraging her children to help her in the kitchen, with initiatives such as the introduction of the names of the foods, ingredients, and methods to prepare meals, as well as teaching them how to prepare meals, especially when they leave home for higher education, getting married, or work. This is one way to ensure the rich Malay heritage especially the food terminologies along with the traditional dishes can be preserved. All these can be accomplished by teaching younger people the terms used in the food industry and by involving them in cooking activities at religious and cultural gatherings.

Therefore, it is expected that initiatives to improve knowledge of Malay food terminologies, particularly among students, will increase utilization and consumption in daily cooking activities. In addition to the above assertions with the appropriate authorities, both the public and commercial sectors should work collectively to spread knowledge about the significance of preserving the Malay culture, language, and cuisine through the media and food events. The younger generation should be encouraged to learn and respect terminology related to Malay cuisine, language, and tradition. Additionally, efforts to enhance and increase the usage of traditional Malay culinary terminology in Malay recipe books should be doubled so that future generations would have a reliable source of information.

In conclusion, the knowledge of Malay cuisine terminology is considered crucial and pertinent, particularly among the younger generation. This is because these individuals will be more likely to understand and use Malay food terminologies in their daily lives and they are expected to maintain and sustain the usage of these terminologies in future. Additionally, by preserving and using the Malay food terminologies, we can create a platform for the Malay language as one of the languages used in the culinary industry.

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