

Pahang food terminologies: Young generations' understanding and usage

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Khairunnisa Mohamad Abdullah¹

Faridah Hanim Ismail¹

Norol Hamiza Zamzuri²

Saidatul Afzan Abdul Aziz¹

Rosmaliza Muhamad*¹

¹Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, MALAYSIA

²Faculty of Business Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, MALAYSIA

*rosmaliza35@uitm.edu.my

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Abstract

This paper empirically examines the level of understanding of Pahang food names terminologies and its influence on the usage among the young Malay generation with the age range of between 18 to 30 years old. A causal research design using a quantitative through cross-sectional approach was used for data collection. The results revealed that majority of the respondents have a relatively little understanding and usage of the terminologies. Relevant authorities either public or private sector should undertake actions and efforts to improve the understanding and the usage of the terminologies especially among the young generation besides preserving the Pahang foods, language and heritage at the same time.

Keywords:

Pahang Food names; Food Terminologies; Traditional Food; Food Language

1 Introduction

Language is a primary vehicle of communication that reflects individuality, explaining and conveying culture (Jiang, 2000). It is like an anthropomorphic creature that survival and existence are based on communicative activities and attitudes of their speakers (Lazear, 1997). According to Li, Hong, Zheng, & Chua (2010), language is more than simply a tool for communication but an alive entity transmitting a heritage and witness to the past and it truly signifies the local tradition. Change of reigns, relocation, lifestyle and other facets of history and culture are all documented and mirrored in the language. In fact, seeing the language is part of the culture, maintaining language means maintaining the culture divergence (Ko, 2010). In other words, the purpose of preserving the language is to conserve the values and diversity of culture tradition behind them.

In the realm of culinary setting, Pahang as one of the largest states in Malaysia owns abundant and treasured food terminologies that represent one of the language features formed and practice since a long time ago (Lee, 2010). Nevertheless, according to Li, et, al. (2010), the main intimidation to the Pahang food language is the modernizes society and culture that diminish the practices of the past. The splendidly diverse ancestral traditions and the intergenerational knowledge that is rooted in them are all gradually being lost. As stated by Jiang (2000), Pahang food terminologies are decreasing, the number of speakers has reduced, and the occurrence of usage has been weakening in the past few years especially among the new generation. To date, the previous study on the Malay foods terminologies discovered low understanding and usage among young Malay Culinarian (Zahari, Abdullah, Azman, Kutut, & Suhaimi, 2012). However, not much research has been done so far in the community of Pahang in particular. Thus, with the highlighted issues and the study gaps, this research aims to investigate the level of understanding and its impact on the usage of Pahang food names terminologies among the young generation.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Food Language and terminologies

Food is a language with a structure and meaning that through its own words, it is related to individual feelings and beliefs about human relations as well as one's own identity (Collu, 1991), whereas Mills (2007) posited that food language is articulated through its various terminologies. According to Fitriasia D., Sibarani R., Mulyadi, and Ritonga M. U., (2018), food can be communicated through language to know how it is made, what ingredients are used in a cuisine, how a name of a cuisine is formed and how food can be a symbol to make social bonding in commonality. Besides, Collu (1991) mentioned that terminology of foods can be parted into daily cooking activities and special occasion cooking. This is emulated in a varied series of language contexts which many of terminologies are directly linked to the method that food is served in different cuisine and such field of linguistics can be used to explore the connection between food and language.

According to Burenhult & Levinson (2008), the value of food communication depends on all part of a system which is all significant indifference including the preparation techniques, food consumption, food appearance, eating environments and sensory awareness. Meanwhile, Theophano (2002) added that considering that food creates such an abundant and multifaceted cultural structure, it is anticipated that its terminology is also filled with cultural significance. Matt (2010) asserted that each country, state and ethnicity commonly possesses its own unique terminologies and vocabulary which are restricted to their own culinary traditions. Without food terminologies, cooking techniques, tips, and skills may not be conveyed and cooking knowledge and secrets may not be learned especially among the young generation. Meanwhile, Cook (2010) mentioned that; as terminologies of food are used to describe its various food processes and technique, thus people of a particular community need to understand, especially those individuals who are involved in the culinary field. It is important to use the right terminologies of food as the terminologies are the consistent way to converse and understand the preparations, techniques and cooking methods (Zhifang, 2002). Matt (2010) also stressed that those terminologies would be continuously developing and expanding consistently with the social changes in how people understand and practice the terminologies. Without understanding and practices of the terminologies, the cultural continuation will not exist and people may not acquire the knowledge of cooking through the generations (Lowinsky, 1992).

2.2 Pahang Traditional Foods names

Most of the creations of traditional food names have their own origins and history behind it (Zahari, 2012). According to Kulenkampff (2008), many of food names terminologies were named after people or special events, names of places, ingredients used to common history related to the preparation of the food itself. In line with that, every state in Malaysia has traditions of its own pride (Abdullah, 2013). There is no exception of Pahang state which has varieties of traditional dishes which named after particular causes and origin. According to Raji (2017), different districts have different signature foods, which can be described as Pahang traditional cuisine. The foods have many identical characteristics with other Malay foods and also popular with many of their seafood dishes.

River fish or freshwater fish such as *silver catfish (ikan patin)*, *talapia* and *lampam* fish are commonly cooked with *tempoyak* (fermented durian) or *asam rom* (processed rubber tree fruits) which are typically available in Pahang especially in the regions such as Kuala Lipis, Temerloh and Jerantut. Nair (2016) mentioned that, like other Asian cultures, the staple food of Pahang is rice, which is usually served with *singgang* or *gulai* (a dish with gravy), *sambal* and *ulam* condiments. Besides, Wendy (2012) stated one of the famous dish is the famous *Gulai Tempoyak Patin* which is made of fermented durian gravy (*tempoyak*) cooked with soft and juicy silver catfish (*ikan patin*). *Gulai asam rong* (made of processed rubber tree fruits with slightly sour and bitter taste gravy) and *gulai patin asam rebus* (a spicy and sour gravy dish, almost like *gulai tempoyak patin* but more thinner gravy) are other distinguished, famous Pahang *gulai*. While in town, Khor (2016)

noted *daging opor* and *daging pechok* are more popular and unique on its own. The well-known *Sambal hitam* is very famous in districts of Jerantut, Kuala Lipis and Raub. This unique food is made from *belimbing buluh* (small starfruit) and anchovies as the main ingredients. This traditional food is said to be produced only by skilled people due to the relatively complicated production process.

Furthermore, according to Pahang State Museum, *Nasi Kebuli* is a traditional food of the Pahang community especially in Kuala Lipis district, and it was recorded at the Kuala Lipis Heritage Museum as one of the Pahang heritage Foods. It is believed that this dish was invented for royalty in 1944 and made of white rice cooked with coconut oil mixed with chicken, raisins, mutton or lamb, spices and herbs to give it an aromatic smell. Other popular Pahang food names include *gulai masam ayam*, *sambal kulat sisir*, *paceri nenas*, *pais ikan patin*, just to name a few. Besides, there are also abundant Pahang desserts names that have been established as the signature desserts of Pahang namely *puding diraja* (Royal Pudding), *kuih badak kubang*, *kuih pena*, *kuih mahbob*, *dodol kukus* and many other desserts that are named after variety of occurrence, appearance of the food, the method of preparation, ingredients used and other factors (Husin, 2010).

2.3 Usage of food terminologies

According to Lum (2005), terminologies are structured set of concepts and their designations include the terms, graphical symbols, codes, and units, in a particular subject field. However, besides being well structured standardised terms and concepts, terminological collections may be inventive, unclear, unstructured conceptual of linguistic information. On the other hand, Burenhult & Levinson (2008) stated that, terminologies make the expansion and transmission of culture doable as well as promoting the continuity of societies, and also the effective functioning and management of the group. He also added the heritage of society is the reflection of the language they use, as a result of what people value things and do through their language terminologies. The terminologies that people practice in their everyday lives can describe the main aspects of their psychological and social domains (Ahlam, 2010). How people use terminologies will determine the information about themselves, their society, the surrounding environments and specifies their sex, age, social status, and motives. Furthermore, Theophano (2002) pointed out that continuously practising and conversing the terminologies and language are vital to protect these terms from being vanished. It is also particularly important for the terminologies created by minority society who have been gradually demoted due to the expansion of modern age.

Abdullah (2013) examined the usage of Malay food preparation terminologies among young culinarian. The study revealed that majority of the young culinarian has a slightly poor understanding of Malay food preparation terminologies in terms of equipment, ingredients and cutting methods terminologies. Thus, most likely due to low understanding of the Malay food terminologies, it is not surprising that they use only a few Malay food preparation terminologies during their daily cooking activities. This is

supported by Agbo (2001) that the poor understanding and knowledge pertaining to food terminologies will result in few usages of the terminologies.

3 Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to identify the level of understanding and usage of Traditional Pahang food names terminologies among the new generation; therefore, a quantitative research approach is considered to be the most appropriate method to be used. Based on actual experience, the information required for this study was obtained through a self-administered questionnaire with the young generation aged between 18 to 30 years old. Since each state has its own food terminologies and dialects and due to the huge number of young people in the country, only those who live within the Pahang state were chosen as a sample. Although they may be familiar with the food names since they live in Pahang, they probably do not understand the meaning, preparation or the origin of the food names. In terms of the questionnaire, the majority of the items in the survey are modified from the previous research that stays on the topic and some adjustments are made to the questions to attain the study's objectives.

Section A deals with the demographic information of the samples, including age, gender, marital status and education. The independent variable which is the Pahang food names terminology was examined in Section B. In this part, respondents have been asked few questions with regards to the respondents' general and specific understanding on how Pahang food are named after special events, people or title, the appearance of the food or the way food is prepared. Meanwhile, Section C is specifically created to measure the usage of Pahang food names terminologies. Respondents were required to interpret their views on the scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 was used to interpret all the data collected. Prior to embarking on the survey, the researcher personally delivered the questionnaires to the participants. The participants were also to be given information through the information sheet attached to the questionnaire itself. During the process of data screening, only 201 were useful respond. Formulation of frequencies, mean score, percentage and standard deviations were used to report the data of the study variables based on the descriptive statistical analyses. Then, the standard multiple regression was used in determining how much variance in the level of usage was explained by the understanding of Pahang food names terminologies among the respondents.

4 Findings

4.1 The Level of Understanding of Pahang Food Names Terminologies among Young Generation.

The level of understanding of Pahang food names terminologies among young generation was analysed using descriptive analysis. Table 1 reports the mean score of the importance of sensory quality on culinarian' food preparation and consumption.

Table 1: Mean score of the Important of Sensory Quality on Culinarian' Food Preparation and Consumption.

Item No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	My understanding of many traditional Pahang food names in general	2.85	.901
2.	My understanding of the meaning of traditional Pahang food names	2.44	.939
3.	My understanding of the history of traditional Pahang food names	2.36	1.025
4.	My understanding of traditional Pahang food named <i>nasi kebuli</i>	3.05	.994
5.	My understanding of traditional Pahang food named <i>gulai kemahang</i>	2.37	.836
6.	My understanding of traditional Pahang food named <i>gulai asam rom</i>	2.63	.904
7.	My understanding of traditional Pahang food named <i>sambal kulat sisir</i>	2.54	.890
8.	My understanding of traditional Pahang dessert named <i>pepena</i>	2.30	1.017
9.	My understanding on traditional Pahang dessert named <i>badak kubang</i>	2.22	.917
10.	My understanding of traditional Pahang dessert named <i>mahbob</i>	2.33	.925

Scale: 1=Very poor, 2=Poor, 3=Fair, 4=Good, 5=Very good

Results show that most of the respondents have a slightly fair understanding of Pahang food names terminologies in general with only (M=2.85, item 1) of the mean score. Majority of the respondents also have a somewhat poor understanding of the meaning of traditional Pahang food names (M2.44, item 2) and the history of Pahang food names (M=2.36, item 3). This can be seen from the given example of Pahang food name terminologies which show relatively fair understanding on the terms *nasi kebuli* (M=3.05, item 4), *gulai asam rom* (M=2.65, item 6) and *sambal kulat sisir* (M=2.54, item 7). Nonetheless, they have a poor understanding on Pahang food names such as *gulai kemahang* (M=2.37, item 5), *kuih pepena* (M=2.30, item 8), *badak kubang* (M=2.22, item

9) and *mahbob* (M=2.33, item 10). Next, Table 2 reports the total overall mean score for the level of understanding of Malay food names terminologies.

Table 2: Total overall mean score for the level of understanding of Malay food names terminologies.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Understanding of Traditional Pahang Food Names	2.51	0.677

The total mean score for the level of understanding of traditional Pahang food names terminologies was further analysed and the results are exhibited in Table 4.2. From that, it shows that the young generation has fair understanding of Pahang food names terminologies (M=2.51) among the young generation.

Next, standard multiple regression was further analyzed in terms of the relationship between the understanding of Pahang Traditional Food Names and the level of usage among the young generation. Table 3 reports the regression analysis output on the relationship between the understanding of traditional Pahang food names and the usage among the young generation.

Table 3: The Relationship between the Understanding of Traditional Pahang Food Names and the Usage among Young Generation.

Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)
	Usage of Traditional Pahang Food Names Terminologies
Beta Coefficients and Significance Levels	
Food Names	.26 ***
R ²	.19
F-Change	52.25***

The beta value under standardized coefficient was evaluated in comparing the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent. The result shows that the understanding of Pahang food names was able to clarify only 19 per cent ($p < .001$) of the variance in the usage of the food names. By looking at the beta value, it is predictable that the understanding of Pahang food names ($\beta = .26$, $p = 0.00$) has a relatively weak influence on the usage of the Pahang food names terminologies among the young generation. This result is further supported by Zahari (2012) claiming that; when fewer people understand the food terminologies, the less those terminologies will be used in their daily cooking activities.

5 Conclusion

The summary of the previous section specifies that conserving the Pahang food language is ultimately vital, as it can help to protect and preserve the Pahang food language, tradition, and culture altogether. However, there is decreasing awareness among the young generation on the importance of Traditional Pahang food terminologies. This is most likely due to the growth of other foreign food culture such as western, Korean and Japanese. Besides, owing to the rapid development of modernised foods that escalates the assortments of new food products and ingredients for traditional food lead to lessening the interest to learn and practice traditional Pahang food terminologies. Therefore, the most effective way of conserving Pahang food terminologies and knowledge is by conveying it from generation to generation. This can be done through exposing and encourage the youngsters to help in the kitchen, get them to familiarize with the name of the ingredients, equipment, and the food preparation.

Furthermore, the responsible authorities, both in the public and private sectors must initiate the efforts to develop the awareness and convey the information on the importance of conserving and maintaining the Pahang traditional foods, heritage, and language. This can be done by promoting Traditional Pahang foods via social media and organizing Traditional Pahang food events or festivals regularly. Such efforts would at least expose and encourage the young generations to better understand and value Pahang traditional foods. Also, these terminologies should be documented either in online and offline recipe books so that they can be used as future references for the next generation. To sum up, it is very crucial especially for the young generation to appreciate, understand, and practice the Pahang food terminologies for heritage continuation and people will acquire the knowledge of traditional cooking through the generations in the future.

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