PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE IN SHOP SIGNS
IN MALAYSIAN TOWNS

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian subsidiaries of the Local Council by-laws (Undang-undang kecil Majlis Perbandaran) and the National Language Act (Akta Bahasa Kebangsaan) stipulate that Bahasa Malaysia (BM) must be used for the public signboards and road names. However, the use of foreign words and phrases, especially English, for the local name places such as residential areas, streets and shops has become a very common practice in this country. This paper examines the language use in store fronts of four town centres in Malaysia. The analysis indicates that English is the preferred language for the store signs in larger cities while those in the smaller and provincial towns are in favour of 1) Bahasa Malaysia (BM), 2) a mixture of BM and English, or 3) a mixture of these two and another native language. The findings show that the language chosen for the store signs is related to the type of the township, store location, and the targeted customers. The analysis also reveals that the store signs in the larger cities portray sophisticated language use in terms of English or foreign names, foreign loanwords and language play. On the other hand, the store signs in the smaller towns contain simple BM, English, or a native language.

Keywords: shop signs, language use, unilingual, bilingual, multilingual.

INTRODUCTION:

The Malaysian subsidiaries of the Local Council by-laws (Undang-undang kecil Majlis Perbandaran) and the National Language Act (Akta Bahasa Kebangsaan) stipulate that Bahasa Malaysia (BM) must be used for the public signboards and road names. English words are only allowed if they are not too prominent as compared to BM. However, it is an observable fact that such language policy has not been fully adhered to in this country. The use of foreign words and phrases for the local name places such as residential areas, streets and shops has become a very common practice. This suggests that languages are no longer belonging to the domains of nationalism and culture. Languages are now moving into the domains of global communication, global business and personal freedoms. Thus, despite the language policy, other languages besides BM are chosen and used in these domains.

This paper specifically examines the language use in commercial store/shop signs or store/shop fronts in the Malaysian towns. It is hoped that this paper will contribute toward the understanding of the use and roles of different languages in both the business establishments and advertisements.

LANGUAGE USE IN SHOP SIGNS – AN OVERVIEW:

There has always been a wide interest on language use in the business domain. Of late, language use in store/shop signs has caught the attention of linguists. The pragmatic of language use in this sphere provides a very rich context for language research. For example, a study on shop signs the use and roles of different languages in the business establishment in Bhubaneswar, India found that there are unilingual signs of English, Hindi, Bengali and Oriya; bilingual signs of English and Hindi, and English and Oriya; trilingual signs of Oriya, Hindi and English. Other varieties of language use include acronyms, such as NALCO for 'National Aluminium Company, Anugul'; old English, such as 'Ye Olde Shoppe'; and hybrid forms, such as 'Pratidin News' (Sunwani, 2005). The analysis reveals that English is the dominant language of the shop signs in Bhubaneswar as the shop owners claimed that it is a trendy language and has all the positive values. On the other hand, the combination of English and Hindi in the shop signs is to lure the growing population of Hindi-knowing speakers in the city and its neighbours. It is also found that in more conservative places, Oriya is the preferred language.

Along the same line, another study looked into the escalating use of English in Turkish shop signs (Selvi, 2007). It was found that English dominates the window displays and exterior signs of many business entities in the country. The data reveal high occurrence of English in sectors such as personal care, restaurants and cafés and stores selling information system goods. However, business entities selling durable consumer goods, pharmacies, auto galleries, gas stations, car repairers, driving schools, bookstores and publishing houses do not use English at all in the shop fronts. Based on the interviews with shop owners in Turkey, it was found that they use English because of the interesting sounds, its ability to generate commercial outcomes, personal and competitive reasons. As pointed out by the shop owners, using foreign names symbolises modernity and gives more commercial advantage to their businesses. Apart from that, the use of English enables to attract more foreign customers who do not understand Arabic (Selvi, 2007).

Meanwhile, a survey on store signs on four major streets in Baku town, Azerbaijan revealed that there is evidence of language shift from Azeri and Russian to multiple language use of Turkish, French, Italian and English in the store signs after Azerbaijan gained its independence (Saadikhova & Abadi, 2000). The analysis shows the use of unilingual, bilingual and multilingual signs of these languages with English as the dominant choice. This suggests that after the independence, Azerbaijan citizens are more than willing to embrace the international community, especially the west. The analysis also reveals the types of establishment using certain languages. While English is used in about 40% of the surveyed shops as the primary store name, Italian is used for clothing stores, antiquary and souvenirs shops. French is used for shops that sell items associated with women and romanticism like perfume and wedding dresses. In addition, Turkish is mainly related to women's clothing.

In the same vein, comparative study of language use in the shops signs between larger cities and provincial towns in Europe: London and Nuneaton (UK), Vienna and Leoben (Austria), Trieste and Pordenone (Italy) and Ljubljana and Kranj (Slovenia) found the use of unilingual and bi- or multilingual shop signs in all the surveyed towns but at varying degree (Schlick, 2004). The shop signs in the provincial towns tend to be unilingual with the local language as the main choice. Similar to previous studies, shop signs in larger cities contain more than one language. The study also shows that English is the main preferred language after the local language. Other languages include French, Italian and German. The types of business that adopt foreign languages in the signs are fashion, jewelry, electronic, money, cosmetics and food. Other styles include hybrid forms like 'Last-Minute-Urlaub l'tur', and minimised forms such as 'bonmarché'.

Such findings indicate that language has moved into the domains of global communication in the business

sphere. However, the writers have not been able to find any published studies that examine such language use in the Malaysian context. Thus, the present study intends to fill the gap by looking at the shops signs in Malaysian towns to understand the language choice and use and the underlying motivations.

THE STUDY:

The objective of this study is to find out on the differing patterns of language use and choice in store front advertisements in four different types of township – metropolitan city, big town, small town and provincial town. This is a descriptive study, employing a textual analysis on the language use and choice in shop/store signs involving 200 shop/store signs that were randomly selected from four town centres in Malaysia namely Kuala Lumpur, Bandar Raya Melaka, Cheng and Bandar Jengka which represent metropolitan city, big, small and provincial towns respectively.

DESCRIPTION OF TOWNS AND RESEARCH AREAS:
KUALA LUMPUR:

Kuala Lumpur is the heartbeat of Malaysia. Located midway along the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers, it is the largest city in Malaysia with extensive and modern transportation network possessing a population of over one and a half million people drawn from all of Malaysia's many ethnic groups. Kuala Lumpur population consists of three main ethnic groups, namely the Chinese 43%, the Malays 38%, the Indians 10%, non-citizens 8% and others 1% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012) It is also important to here that apart from these ethnic groups, there are an increasing 'others' and 'non-citizens' groups which make up 9% of the city population. The research area for this metropolitan city covered the main shopping street along the Bukit Bintang area as it is considered as the heart of the city.

BANDAR RAYA MELAKA:

Bandar Raya Melaka is the capital state of Melaka which is also dubbed as Malaysia's Historical City. It is located in the district of Central Melaka where almost all the interesting and historical sites are. The population of Bandar Raya Melaka is a polyglot of races comprising Malays, Chinese, Indians, and descendants of the Portuguese and the Baba-Nyonya (Chinese strait) community who have adopted much of the Malay culture into theirs. From the total number of 369,222 of its population, majority of them are Malays followed by Chinese, Indians, Baba-Nyonya community, descendants of Portuguese and other races (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). The research area for this big city covered the main shopping street in the Banda Hilir area as it is the main concentration area for both the locals and tourists.

CHENG:

Cheng is a small town in the state of Melaka located about 20 minutes' drive from the capital state of Melaka, Bandar Raya Melaka. It is a rapidly developing small town with booming business and housing area. Majority of the town people are Chinese followed by Malays, Indians and other races. Most retail store operators in Cheng are Chinese. The research area for this small town focused on the main shopping street in town centre as most shops are located in this area.

BANDAR JENGKA:

Bandar Jengka is the regional centre of the triangle Jengka which is the largest FELDA (Federal Land Delevopment Authority) settlement in Malaysia. It is located in the east coast state of Pahang in Peninsular Malaysia, about 170 miles north-east of Kuala Lumpur. The large population settled in the Jengka Triangle generates a need for specialised administrative, medical, educational, commercial, and industrial services. Thus, this town is developed as a 'town centre' for the scattered population of the Jengka schemes. 95% of the populations in Bandar Jengka are Malays. The dominant socio-economic group is the settlers. Other important groups that contribute toward the development of this area include retailers, college and university staff and students, and administrative and industrial employees. The research area for this provincial town concentrated on the main shopping in the town centre as most business establishments are located in the vicinity.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:

A total number of fifty shop front advertisements from each town were collected. These were later categorised and analysed based on a framework developed and adapted from previous studies on types of language use in

shop signs. The corpus was analysed using the adopted and adapted version of model of uni-, bi-, multilingual store signboards and the respective language used (Sunwani, 2005). The following table summarises the framework for analysis.

Table 1: Framework for Analysis

Patterns of Language Use	Language	Examples
Unilingual - only a single language is used	BM (romanised)	Kedai Menjual Alat Pendidikan & Permainan
	BM (Arabic transliteration)	Kedai Pakaian فكايان كدي
	English	World of Babies
	Vernacular	Jin Bao Dao Restaurant 新寶島小食館
Bilingual • combining two languages in the same sentence • writing the main sign in one language, followed by its translation in another language	BM & English	Butik Terminal Jeans
	Bahasa Malaysia & Vernacular	Kedai Perabot Soon Lee 順利傢 ▪
	Vernacular & English	San Shu Gong Restaurant 三叔公餐館
Trilingual / Multilingual -three or more languages are used	BM, Vernacular & English	Era Kedai Kerinting Rambut dan Persolekan 美世紀專業美容美髮 *Unisex Beauty Centre* *and Cosmetic Trading* Dev's Pet Shop *Kedai Haiwan Kesayangan* தேவ் பெற ஷாப் 寵物店
Other Varieties		
Acronym		HOJB Crystals for Living
Hybrid Form		Beau Monde Fashion
Old English		D-Bag Shoppe
Net-Lingo		Ready 2 Suit
Phonological device		Shiok Novelties

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

The analysis on the language use in the store/shop signs reports the frequency of the language use according to the types described in the framework. It also attempts to justify the patterns of language use by examining the pragmatic underlying such use.

KUALA LUMPUR:

The analysis of the data reveals that language use in the shop signs in a metropolitan city like Kuala Lumpur is quite dynamic. Language use does not seem to favour certain a certain language. Table 2 below shows the patterns of language use in the shop signs of the metropolitan city, Kuala Lumpur.

Table 2: Patterns of Language Use in Shop Signs in Kuala Lumpur

Language Pattern	Language	Number of Shops
Unilanguage	BM	4 (8%)
	English	5 (10%)
Bilingual	BM & English	9 (18%)
	English & Chinese	5 (10%)
	BM & Chinese	4 (8%)
Other Varieties	Acronym	6 (12%)
	SMS	6 (12%)
	Foreign word	3 (6%)
	Old English	2 (4%)
	Language Play	3 (6%)
	Hybrid	3 (6%)

As can be seen from the table, shop signs in unilanguage are only found in BM or English. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that all Malaysians should be able to understand either one of the languages (if not both) because of the status of the former as the national language of the country and the latter as the second most important language. However, as shown in the table, shop owners do not seem to favour the use of a single language for their shop signs as only 9 (18%) of them use unilanguage for their store signs. It is also found that all of the signs that use BM are shops that sell merchandise related to the Malay culture, or shops that have the Malays as their target customers. Examples of the signs are: *Restoran Syed, Pemborong dan Peruncit Aksesori Wanita Isyqal, Koleksi Batik Fezanim* and *Imej Anggun.*

On the other hand, shops that favour English for their shop signs are those that offer modern and concepts that are imported from abroad as their trade. Examples of these are: *Big Brown Bag, Kelrina House of Fashion, Business World Services, Cityspec Opticals, Thai Fusion Steamboat, Rushai Handmade Leather Specialist, First Lady* and *AZ Jewelry*. Similar to other studies (Selvi, 2007; Sunwani, 2005), the choice of English shop fronts is to give a touch of modernity, trendiness and added commercial value.

18 (36%) of the shop signs examined are bilingual. This can be understood as the shop owners may want to capture a wider audience for their businesses. The use of both languages in the shop signs is giving signals to potential customers that the businesses do not only cater for certain ethnic groups only. Thus, by putting up signs such as *Kedai Roti & Kek Bee/Bee's Bakery Cake* and *Stan Communication Services/Kedai Alat Komunikasi,* 沙央迷你市場 /*Sayang Mini Market, Furniture and Electrical* 家具和电器 may be more appealing to other ethnic groups and foreigners than if they were to be written in one language only. It could also be assumed that the urban business community embraces global marketing concept (Selvi, 2007; Saadikhova & Abadi, 2000)

The analysis also shows that other varieties of language constitute the most of the language use in the shop signs in Kuala Lumpur, i.e 23 (46%). The use of acronym (e.g. *MINT Boutique, Kedai Menjual Pakaian OPTIMO, KWK Communications),* Net-Lingo (e.g Kedai Sukan EM-2), foreign word (e.g. *Waikiki Café*), *Old English* (e.g *Nadia Beauty Shoppe*), language play (e.g. *Butik Cheeria, Foto Zzoom, Kedai Kasut Foot-in, Butik Nano-nano Sdn. Bhd.*), hybrid language (e.g. *N Flair Boutique, Dreamz Boutique*) for the shop signs is an indication of the types of business on offer. Such trendy, modern and vibrant language use implies the merchandise on sale and the types of customers they are targeting at.

BANDAR RAYA MELAKA:

The analysis reveals that English (46%) dominates the language use in the shop signs in this big town. It seems that English is the main choice among the owners as nearly half of the shops examined use this language. There is evidence of other languages used such as BM, Chinese and English. However, the number of shops choosing these languages is far less compared to English. Table 3 below summarises the analysis of the findings:

Table 3: Patterns of Language Use in Shop Signs in Bandar Raya Melaka

Language Pattern	Language	Number of Shops
Unilanguage	English	23 (46%)
	BM	5 (10%)
	Chinese	1 (2%)
Bilingual	BM & English	8 (16%)
	English & BM	1 (2%)
	Chinese & English	1 (2%)
	Japanese & English	2 (4%)
Other Varieties	Phonological device	1 (2%)
	Acronym	2 (4%)
	Trendsetter	1 (2%)
	Hybrid	1 (2%)
	Old English	2 (4%)
	Net-Lingo	2 (4%)

As can be seen from the table, English tops the list of the language used. Though it was mentioned earlier that the largest ethnic group in Bandaraya Melaka are the Malays, it is found that most of the shop owners prefer to use English to advertise their products or services. Known as the tourist hub for the domestic as well as international tourists, it is, therefore, a smart business strategy to use English for its global intelligibility to reach out to the mass consumer population in the city which echoes earlier findings (Selvi, 2007). Thus, the signs *Bread Story by Jun* and *Athletes World* sound more appealing to the multiracial and multinational consumers compared to any language that belongs to a particular ethnic group. In addition, English is used to advertise products of the contemporary world like baby products in 'World of Babies', health food in *Seoul Garden*, and state-of-the-art home furniture in *Home Sweet Home Décor*. This can give a touch of modernisation and globalisation to the products sold. Similarly, traders in Turkey regarded the use of English and foreign names could enhance the commercial values of their products or services (Selvi, 2007).

Another favourable language choice among the shop owners in the city is the mixture of BM and English (18%). This is due the large presence of Singaporean and Indonesian tourists who have both languages in their repertoire. Bandar Raya Melaka is a favourite tourist spot among Singaporeans and Indonesians for its easy accessibility and lucrative places of interests. It is also a shopping haven for them where fashion, accessories and household items are up-to-date. Thus, most shop owners make a choice to use BM and English to advertise their products and services to give it a touch of elegance to the local products such as *Pesona Anggun Marketing*, *Kedai Kosmetik Skin Food*, *Butik Lifestyle Fashion* and *Kedai Koleksi Verse Cane*.

BM ranks third (10%) among the languages used in this city's store signs. It is interesting to note that BM is mostly used to advertise merchandise whose clients are most likely to be Malays. For instance, *Pusat Rawatan Al-Mansur* sells traditional medicine used mostly by the Malays; and *Seem Noor Batek* sells batik designed fabric, the preferred material to make baju kurung the traditional costume of the Malays. It is also interesting to note that these shop signs also use the Arabic transliteration which can normally be read by most Malays in this country. Thus, it can be concluded that BM is the preferred choice when the target consumers are the Malays.

Other foreign languages used such as *Harajuku Fashion Concepts* and *Beau Monde for the Fashionable* suggest the influence of globalisation and sophistication. In addition, the use of old English such as *D-Bag Shoppe* indicates the modern taste of revival. What is more, the use of phonological device *Shiok Novelties* (coming from the sound 'syok' which means 'good feeling' in BM) and language play *Seoul Garden* (which can mean both a Korean restaurant and food for the soul) illustrates the language competence of the shop owners. Additionally, the use of *VK4U* and *Ready 2 Suit* is evidence that the net-lingo has crept into the business vocabulary.

CHENG:

The analysis of the language use and choice for the shop fronts in Cheng, Melaka shows that it mainly attributes to the type of merchandise, and secondly, to the prospective clients the shops are targeting at. Table 4 below gives an idea on the analysis of language choice and use for the shop fronts in Cheng, Melaka.

Table 4: Patterns of Language Use in Shop Signs in Cheng

Language Pattern	Language	Number of Shops
Unilanguage	Bahasa Melayu	6 (12%)
	English	5 (10%)
Bilingual	Bahasa Melayu & Chinese	7 (14%)
	English & Chinese	5 (10%)
	Malay & English	12 (24%)
Trilingual / Multilingual	Bahasa Melayu, Vernacular & English	14 (28%)
Other Varieties	Acronym	1 (2%)

The data reveal that 14 (28%) shop fronts out of 50 in Cheng, Melaka are Trilingual/Multilingual. For instance, 10 (20%) shop fronts contain trilingual such as:

Example 1:	**Example 2:**	**Example 3:**
Pusat Hawa Dingin Kereta	Satay Friend Kedai Makanan dan Minuman	Pusat Cuci Kereta Maju Jaya
汽车空气电导率中心		成功的汽车雪洗
New Tai Kong Air-Cool Centre	沙爹食品和饮料店的朋友	Maju Jaya Snow Wash

Meanwhile, 3 (6%) contain multilingual signs: BM & English and 2 vernaculars. For instance:

Example 1:	**Example 2:**	**Example 3:**
KK Sukhti Enterprise	Dev's Pet Shop	Keshmani Enterprise
Kedai Bunga dan Buah-buahan KK	Kedai Haiwan Kesayangan Dev	Kedai Gunting Rambut
Sukhti 企 业 株 式 会 社	的宠物店	Keshmani 理发店
க சுக்ஹ்டி என்டேர்ப்ரிசே	தேவ்'ச பெற ஷாப்	கேஷ்மணி என்டேர்ப்ரிசே

Only 1 (2%) shop uses BM & Chinese & Tamil. An example of this is
Restoran OSIB

OSIB 餐厅
ஒசிப் ரேச்டுரன்ட்

The next dominant language used is the combination of BM & English which makes up 12 (24%) of the data like *Wellcome Auto Sdn. Bhd*, *Restoran Tomyam Seafood*, *Always and Success Auto Sdn. Bhd.*, *Restoran Barkat Roti John Asli dan Ayam Golek John Bread* and *Roasted Chicken Roti John yang Asli Original John Bread*, *Sight Care Optical Kedai Cermin Mata*, *PC Roofing Menjual dan Memasang Awning* and *Servis Tangki Kereta Air Water Kim Radiator Service*.

Meanwhile, BM & Chinese are used in 7 (14%) shop fronts such as *Restoran Jin Bao Dao* 新寶島小食館, *Klinik Cheng* 成˙所, *Pusat Perabot Impiana* 恩披阿那家具中心, 6 (12%) BM like *Perabot Jati & Antik*, *Farmasi Hijrah Sdn Bhd*, and *Kedai Akuarium dan Binatang Kesayangan*, *Restoran Nasi Kandar Pinang Besar*, and *MC Pusat Dobi Menara Cekal*. 5 (10%) of the shop signs use total English such as *Wash Cusion and Car Antibacteria Servis*, *MC Eng Teck Engineering*, *Fotile Mexx Interior Design Kitchen Expert*, *Jaz-Mart* and *Letchumanan Hairdressing Saloon*. Another 5 (10%) shop signs are in English & Chinese such as *Lio Auto*

Trading 廖氏汽·　·易, *Pang Bongsai Landscaping* ·盆景园林·化, *Foo Zhou Enterprise* 企·富周, *Ika Fungshui Interior Design* 伊嘉·水室内·计, *Tian Bee Hair Dressing Centre* 田蜂美·中心. Only 1 (2%) shop is found to use an Acronym in its signs, that is, *SD Photo*.

Although the majority of the population in Cheng are Chinese, interestingly most shop signs are trilingual/multilingual. Such language choice might be due to the wide acceptance of other vernaculars apart from the national language, BM and the second important language in Malaysia, English. BM could be said to act as the bridge between ethnic groups in the town as everybody understands it and English is used for its commercial value of promoting the products or services to foreign tourists who might happen to travel to the town since it is near to the big city, Bandaraya Melaka which is one of the popular tourist spots.

BANDAR JENGKA:

The analysis reveals that the preferred language for the shop signs in this provincial town is BM. However, the data also illustrate that English has exerted its influence due to the mobility of the people and the ardent influence of globalisation and technology in this country. The following table shows the analysis of the findings.

Table 5: Patterns of Language Use in Shop Signs in Bandar Jengka

Language Pattern	Language	Number of Shops
Unilanguage	BM	27 (54%)
	English	5 (10%)
Bilingual	BM & English	12 (24%)
Other Varieties	Acronym & BM	1 (2%)
	Acronym & English	2 (4%)
	Acronym & BM/ English	2 (4%)
	Phonological Device	1 (2%)

Table 5 clearly shows that the dominant language use is BM (54%), followed by the mixture of BM and English (245), and English (10%). The analysis reveals that such language use phenomenon is due to a number of reasons: 1) the location and population of the town; 2) ownership of the shops; and 3) the types of merchandise sold.

As described earlier, the main population of the town is the Malays. Both the owners and the customers are of this race. Thus, it could be understood why BM is the favoured language for the shop signs. This is heightened by the fact that the majority of the socio-economic group here are the settlers whose linguistic knowledge is assumed as limited to monolingual BM. In addition, being located in a remote area, the town hardly receives people from outside Bandar Jengka as their customers. BM is, thus, a natural choice among the shop owners.

Although BM is clearly a favourable choice among the shop owners, the types of merchandise or services offered can be a factor for another choice of language besides BM. The data clearly reveal that the shop signs that contain English only or a combination of English and BM are those that are related to Information Technology (IT), Technical or Engineering, and modern life. This can be due to 1) the unavailability of the words in BM, and 2) the English words are readily understood by the public compared to the BM equivalents. For example, most of the English words found attached to the shop signs are 'enterprise' and 'trading'. It seems that the owners prefer to maintain these English words as the BM equivalents are lengthy. Sometimes the English words are more readily available in the public's linguistic repertoire than the BM ones. Thus, a shop owner may prefer to put up his shop sign as *Dan Motor Spare Part* rather than 'Alat Ganti Motor Dan', or *Fizziq Frozen* rather than 'Kedai Dingin Beku Fizziq'. In addition, a shop owner may choose to use English for the shop sign to connect to modern life. This is reflected in the businesses involving fashion and designs. The shop owners prefer the name *Saz Collection* as opposed to 'Koleksi Saz' as the word 'collection' may portray modernity and globalisation.

The data also reveal an interesting finding. It is found that more than half of the shop signs contain a person's name such as *Kedai Kain Hj Anuwar* (Haji Anuwar's Fabric Store), *Kedai Emas Kak Nor* (Kak Nor's Jewellery Shop) and *Pasaraya Sakan Milik Haji Umar*, (Sakan Supermarket Owned by Haji Umar) or a family corporation such as *Syarikat Hj Ibrahim dan Anak Beranak* (Hj Ibrahim and Sons' Company) and *Samerin*

Bersaudara (Samerin Bros). This could be due to the nature and customs of living in a conservative area where the personal relationships and kinship are very important. It is the custom of the Malays to buy merchandise from their relatives or friends rather than strangers. Thus, putting the names in the shop signs can be a way of informing the kin of the existence of their shops.

Another reason for the inclusion of name could be related to the skills and merchandise that the owners are well-known for. Thus, by putting their names in the shop signs such as *Sabri Siling Kapur* (Sabri's Plaster Ceiling), *Azmi Hashim Pusat Servis Radiator* (Azmi Hashim's Radiator Service) and *Siti Khamsah Mahadi Keropok Terengganu* (Siti Khamsah Mahadi's Terengganu Fish Crackers), the shop owners are actually advertising their skills or merchandise against other competitors in the same product category.

CONCLUSION:

The language use in the shop signs provides a very rich context for language research. The present study has shown that business cannot afford to exclude themselves from their potential customers. Language can communicate important messages to customers the products or services being offered. Thus, as discussed, shop owners choose a certain language(s) for their shop signs for certain pragmatic reasons. The language use may have an effect on the customers as it can formulate their opinion about that particular store and can influence their decisions on where to shop.

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