



UNIVERSITI MALAYA

SULAM Project :
Rewild UM
(Greening Urban Spaces
& Biodiversity)
TIX2020

Group Tutorial: 7

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Group F

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INTRODUCTION

The title of our project is Rewild UM (Greening Urban Spaces & Biodiversity). The objective of our project is to spread environmental awareness among Universiti Malaya (UM) students. This is done through an online campaign in two languages; Standard English and Standard Malay. In light of the long-term benefits for the trees, we also want to raise awareness on the best ways to preserve their natural environment. We collaborated with Free Tree Society in order to achieve the second objective.

The lack of environmental awareness among university students is the reason why the target community is UM students. Since social media active users are mostly young adults, university students' age group which is 19 - 28, is the optimal target. Besides, UM is located in an urban area where there is not much greenery, thus it is relevant to choose the students.

We realised the lack of environmental awareness among university students stems from the lack of knowledge about the trees. Therefore, we take the initiative by explaining about the trees in Standard Malay as it is the official language and Standard English because it is learnt as a second language in schools. Correspondingly, we included international students in UM since they are not proficient in Malay Language. Meanwhile, the online talk is conducted by using colloquial Manglish (Malay English).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept that we chose is the Language Choice in Multilingual Communities, which is the speakers' attitude, age and language. To achieve the objectives, we need to look into the target community first.

The target community is Universiti Malaya students. Since Malaysia is a multilingual country, the language choice is particularly distinct among the students. The Standard Language (SL) in Malaysia is Standard Malay Language. That is the reason we share the information about native plants in Standard Malay. We also created the English version because it is the Lingua Franca (LF) in Malaysia. Meanwhile, we also used Colloquial Manglish during the talk we had with the Free Tree Society because of its casual setting, and it is commonly used by the students. The advantage of using the variety is the high solidarity between the speakers and listeners, and bridging academic gaps (Mohd et al., 2020). By bridging the academic gaps, students will not feel burdened by the new information.

The age group of the target community also affected the language choice. There are age-graded patterns, prominently during the talk. The campaign that we did is formal thus it is not as notable. We also use 'older' grammar as we want to be more professional although it is through social media, where it is mostly used in casual settings. On the other hand, there was also slang used during the talk. The affixes '*kan*' and '*lah*' which are commonly used in Malay are also used. Based on Accommodation Theory, the talk implemented Speech Convergence (SC). The panellist converges Standard English to Colloquial Manglish in order to attract the attention of the students, and to help the students understand the message clearly. This is a way to signal that the speaker is on the same wavelength with the students, by simplifying the vocabulary and explaining the complicated terms.

The language choice during the talk is influenced by the panellist's language attitude. Since it is an educational talk, usually the language usage would be formal. However, the panellist's used colloquial language which changed the atmosphere of the talk. Consequently, the talk proceeded in a very casual manner. This language attitude helps increase the effectiveness of the program.

IMPLEMENTATION / METHODOLOGY

The implementation of our projects are conducted in relation to the linguistics theory, to ensure the objectives were achieved. Firstly, we shared information about Malaysian native plants by posting on Instagram using both English and Malay language as the medium of transmission. Most UM students are proficient in either one of the languages. By using both languages, it can improve their understanding. International students can also understand the content by reading the English version. Instagram is used as the platform as we're targeting UM students and most of them are youths or young adults. Generally, they are more active on social media such as Instagram compared to any other online platform. Besides that, Instagram interface is direct and simple, which makes it easy for users to navigate and read our posts. Our Instagram page is named "@RewildUM", reflecting both the environmental effort and our targeted community.

Next, to achieve our second objective, we held an online talk with an experienced environment advocate. The speaker, Rina Omar, is part of the Free Tree Society leadership team, which aims to raise awareness to save our environment. The online talk was also casual as the speaker uses Manglish to simplify the vocabulary and to explain the complicated terms, which makes the content easier to understand. The online talk was also held by using Zoom as the platform. Participants did not need to show up physically, which makes it more convenient for the hosts and the participants. Using Zoom also allows for a smoother Q&A session, as participants can send their questions straightaway in the chat box without having to 'wait for their turn'. After the talk ended, we shared a Google Form for the participants to provide feedback and comments regarding the talk.

ACHIEVEMENT / IMPACT

This project managed to attract more than 10 followers on Instagram for the online campaign. We also received 24 participants who joined our online talk from the target community. We popularised the knowledge of identifying the native plants in Malaysia through Instagram in Standard English and Standard Malay. From that, the followers of our Instagram account managed to expand their knowledge about native plants in Malaysia. There are some followers who liked every post we uploaded which showed their concern about the endangered plants, and learned ways to conserve them at the same time. There were also likes from non-followers, and this proves that our online campaign managed to reach a wide range of social media users, not only the target community.

In the online talk, the panellist allowed participants to ask questions regarding planting, environmental issues and natural disasters after the 40-minute talk ended. The participants took this chance to ease their curiosity regarding the said topics by asking various questions. It can be seen that they have begun to care about the environment from the attitude that they show in which they participated in the Q&A session actively.

We distributed a feedback form to all participants and 10 participants had responded. We asked whether they could understand the online talk clearly with the language used, and all of them responded that they were able to comprehend the message without needing language aids from outside parties, i.e, dictionary and Google Translate. The community mentioned that the talk was enjoyable because of the language usage by both the panellist and the co-host, which is from our team. We also received a testimonial video which stated the same sentiment about the program. Additionally, in the testimonial video, the respondent stated that she learned a lot about environmental issues through the project. These feedbacks proved that our project has helped to create a change towards the target community about environmental awareness.

REFLECTION

When proposing the idea and selecting the community, we thought that it would be easy to conduct an online talk with the community among Universiti Malaya's students. However, as we started contacting the Free Tree Society Organisation, and moved towards the next step, we realised that it is more than just making an Instagram post, and conducting an environment talk. Since we were using both Malay and English in our posts on Instagram, we found it quite difficult to translate the original posts of the native plant in Malaysia from English to Malay because of the scientific terms used to describe the characteristics of the tree. Since there are some complicated biological terms that we could not explain from the original English post, we studied and did some research by going through a few websites of native plants in Malaysia. From there, we wrote down and translated the information of the native plants in accordance with our understanding with the hope that our community can gain some knowledge from our posts.

Next, we were afraid we could not attract our targeted community as the topic on environment is quite unfamiliar among UM students. So we planned a lucky draw and created a colourful poster to be distributed along with the registration form. Last but not least, we did not achieve the expected number of participants for the online talk and received less than 10 feedback from our community. To overcome this, we still distribute the registration form one hour before the talk begins. However, we believe that we can obtain more participants if we plan and distribute the registration form earlier.

As the organiser, we learn to appreciate nature by starting to view our environment differently. The 40 minutes of online talk made us realise that it is not difficult to protect our environment. Some of the natural disasters mentioned in the talk such as flood, and landslide are the consequences of the environmental issues that we ignored. From a language aspect, we noticed that language plays a major part in maintaining the ecosystem. For example, the panellist used speech convergence as in Manglish throughout the talk to be on the same wavelength as the students. Using Standard Language when there are visual aids is more effective because viewers can digest the information more easily. Meanwhile, using colloquial Manglish is easier to comprehend during the talk due to the lack of visual aid and avoid using jargon because jargon is used to impress, rather than to inform.

Especially in our Instagram posts as the users come from a variety of backgrounds. These help the communities to understand our content more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we successfully conducted our SULAM project and managed to achieve our objectives; spreading awareness about native plants among UM students, and the ways to maintain a healthy habitat for the trees, we would like to conduct a larger scale of environment talk to the same community. As we received some positive feedback from the community, we believe that we can hold more extensive environmental awareness programs if we are given other opportunities in the future. Personally, we are grateful that the talk went well with no delay and all the participants actively participated in the Q&A session. Instead of just emphasising native plants on our Instagram postings, we would also like to cover more on environmental issues in detail. From the collaboration we did, we believe that the community can be helped further if they personally joined the volunteering program organised by Free Tree Society. The community will have the opportunity to learn about the native plants hands-on, while helping to maintain the ecosystem at the same time. Indeed, language plays an important role for messages to reach people. Based on the reactions and feedback form answered by the participants, we believe that this talk was well received and understandable by our community. Finally, throughout this project, as the organiser, we gained a wide range of knowledge, from the tropical plants, environmental issues to the experience of managing a program.

References:

Mohd, Nor hasni Yaakob, & Azura Abdul Razak. (2020). *MALAYSIAN ENGLISH: CAN OR NOT?* ResearchGate.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344739568_MALAYSIAN_ENGLISH_CAN_OR_NOT

Environmental Talks. (2019, October 10). Free Tree Society.

<https://freetreesociety.org/index.php/climate-reality/>

WORK TASKS

Name	Work Task
Nurhusnina Adibah binti Tasmono	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Purchasing lucky draw gifts.- Proofreading/translating Instagram posts.
Nur Farah Ain binti Adnan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Handling the collaboration with Free Tree Society.- Host online talk.- Create Instagram posts.
Nurfarzana binti Mohamad Noor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collect informations for Instagram post- Create google forms for registration and feedback.
Tan Jing Ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create the poster template.- Manage the Instagram post.- Promote the project to the social media
Sivaneyaselvi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conclusion