

## *Original Paper*

# Vietnamese Youth Embraces English for Communication: A Case Study in Phu Quoc Island

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### ***Abstract***

*Rapid changes on the way people travel the world have impacted countries around the globe. In South East Asia for example, with the rapid expansion of visit-a-country campaign exercises, it had affected the lives of people in many different ways. Tourism industry, for example, flourishes in manifolds. It indirectly changes the socioeconomic status of people of various echelons. Vietnam is no exception. The ease of communication has been identified as one of the key factors that attract tourists to places of choice. The issue is now whether Vietnamese, especially their youths are entirely ready to embrace this new wave of transformation. Therefore, the right moves have to be identified so that the number of tourists will multiple in the thousands if not millions. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation is to explore Vietnamese youths' acceptance to learning the English language for communication, especially those encircling tourists' spots with the right forms of communication to welcome the inflow of visitors around their communities. A qualitative design was used in this investigation employing semi-structured interviews, observations, and series of workshop sessions. The findings revealed that without proper curriculum instructions in school, although with passion and motivation, the youth will not be equipped as much as expected. Suggestions for future direction of this investigation are outlined.*

**Keywords**

*communicative English, training of the trainers, English for tourism, employability, communication for tourism, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)*

**1. Introduction**

Tourism is an industry pertinent in bringing about gross national income for most if not all the nations around the globe. Various measures are taken in optimizing the coming of tourists or in increasing the intention of visits towards any tourist destination. Conventional and/or unconventional approaches have been mobilised in tandem to one nation's aspirations in getting potential tourists to visit. One of the many important measures paramount to attracting vacationists is the medium of communication used at the target destinations. In line with the rapid changes in information and communication technology, the communication and travel platforms have changed dramatically too. This investigation led by a group of Malaysian researchers with the help of a Vietnamese guide, was made possible by a grant awarded by National Council on Higher Education Malaysia to investigate the extent to which English language can be the language of communication skills amongst selected youths in Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam for tourism purposes.

**1.1 Context of the Study**

Vietnam, with his colourful history; a nation torn with war; governed by several foreign colonisers, provides colossal avenues for tourists to experience a country rich with cultural history, first hand. Some of the developing strategies for Vietnam's tourism include diversification of Vietnam's products which meet the demand of the international tourist market. Thus, Vietnam's history is in itself is their heirloom which will capture the international market if systematically disseminated. Phu Quoc Island, together with other identified tourists hotspots, are picking up on the number of tourists over the last decade. This is in line with the target of the Tourism Ministry to ensure Phu Quoc Island stands tall with the likes of Ko Samet and Ko Samui in Thailand, Tioman and Langkawi Islands in Malaysia, and Bali in Indonesia. Substantial gains will be obtained by Vietnam's tourism industry when the island of Phu Quoc is fully developed as an off-shore holiday resort in that it must be conceived as a comprehensive and integrated investment project with a long-term planning.

**1.2 Statement of Problem**

Over the last few decades, Vietnam has evolved from a view of an aftermath of massive destruction, torn by international and civil wars, to a place of great interest, thanks to the ingenious publicity and commercials by the Vietnamese government. People from around the world flocked by the millions to see for themselves the ruins of wars and how Vietnamese had stood the test of time despite the great sufferings of her people. With the comings of tourists from all around the globe who speak different languages and of different cultural backgrounds, the question of whether Vietnamese are ready to embrace these changes in a short period of time looms. Since Vietnam was colonised by French, the elders could still communicate in French albeit some degree of difficulties. The youth, generally speak

Vietnamese or the regional dialects. Thus, English or Mandarin as the most spoken language of the world is important to the tourism industry. English for this matter is only taught as a foreign language in selected schools and institutions (which are mostly run by private sectors and costly). To cater for the needs of the tourism industry, the ability to speak English language is paramount. However, the chances of getting reasonably good speakers are quite challenging.

### *1.3 Purpose of Investigation*

Hence the main objectives of the study are to examine the extent to which English language for tourism contributes to the economy of the locals. In the same vein, it seeks to identify and evaluate the demand for English language for tourism in general. In addition, this investigation focuses to identify the traits of potential trainers for the purpose of fulfilling the supply and demand for the English language for Tourism in selected tourist spots. Finally it is aimed at identifying a conceptual and theoretical model of English for Tourism that can be replicated by others in promoting local tourism.

### *1.4 Significance of the Study*

The opening of new Institute of Higher Learning throughout Malaysia, created more opportunities for tertiary education. With the rapid increase in the number of graduates produced each year, possessing generic employability soft and hard skills is crucial to ensure that graduates are able to secure employment, progress in their career and retain their employment in an organisation. With this initial research in tourism in Vietnam, it is hoped that the National Committee on Youth of Vietnam (NCYV) and the Ministry of Education, Vietnam will be able to have participants exchange or send participants to study in Malaysia, with the assistance of the Malaysian experts in various areas.

### *1.5 Limitations of the Study*

A number of limitations to the methods were identified:

- 1). The sample size was relatively small. This was a possible limitation. However, qualitative investigation provides rich data which can compensate for the relatively small sample.
- 2). In the group interviews, the researchers were aware that the more “vocal” participants tended to dominate the discussions and might have prevented the more reserved participants from contributing. Therefore, as far as possible, the researchers encouraged all the participants to participate but this was balanced against not wanting to silence those who obviously had a lot to contribute.
- 3). There was a time limitation in the short period (4 meetings) over which observations and interviews could be carried out. It is possible that a different time in the tourism calendar year might have produced different results.
- 4). Limitation of time also meant the scope of this investigation was narrower in that a wider scope of English language for Tourism could be explored (looking at more outdoor activities) to determine aspects that could be used to construct participants ability to communicate in the English language.
- 5). The social relationship in the research process between the researchers and the respondents formed insider and outsider positions. The issue of the researchers being Malaysian might have affected the

responses given by the respondents as some questions could be considered ethnically sensitive by the participants

## **2. Material and Methods**

Qualitative design fits the conceptual model of this investigation in that it aspires to obtain in-depth, personal experience about the participants and their experiences.

### *2.1 Sampling Procedure*

This study employed 3 phases of data collection procedures.

*Phase one:* Piloting the semi-structured interviews. 3 respondents the researchers selected for this purpose.

*Phase two:* Main data collection. 30 youths who had agreed to participate in this study, who came from different industries around Phu Quoc Island. Semi-structured interviews the researchers carried out with 6 individual participants from different industries and group interviews with 4 groups of participants consisting of 5-6 respondents each. Non participant observation was also executed to examine participants' motivation in learning and using the English language with co-workers and also tourists.

*Phase 3:* 4 x 2-day workshops the researchers carried out with the intention of equipping participants with necessary communicative skills by 2 experienced trainers from Malaysia.

#### *2.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews*

A semi-structured interview, Bryman (2004) maintains, is where the researcher has a list of questions or a fairly specific topic to cover, often referred to as an "interview guide", but the interviewee has a great deal of freedom in how to respond. Patton (2002) names this type of interview as the Interview Guide Approach where the topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance in outline form. The interviewers then decide the sequence and wording of questions through the course of the interview.

#### *2.1.2 Group Interviews*

In group interviews, individuals respond to others' views and this is a better way to get reluctant or rather shy participants to speak up and be more confident in the presence of people with whom they are familiar. In the context of this study, the participants were relatively relaxed being amongst their acquaintances and this enabled them to respond to the issues discussed in a more stress-free environment. The average number of participants in the group interviews was around 6 participants and this gave ample opportunity for everyone to give their opinion and feedback on the matter being discussed. Group interviews were mainly conducted after an observed lesson. These discussions the researchers intended to generate in-depth information about what they felt about living in Phu Quoc Island.

#### *2.1.3 Non-Participant Observation*

The researchers conducted non-participant observations on the practical aspects of the respondents' communicative English skills to identify the challenges they may face and provide feedback as to the

next step that could be taken to for further improvements. The unique feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather “live” data from naturally occurring social situations. The researchers conducted two phases of observations during the data collection period. One session was observation of participants’ interactions during the workshops. It was to enable us to see their enthusiasm and effort in communicating with other participants from the activities planned. The second phase was the observations undertaken during their presentations and also outdoor activities.

#### 2.1.4 Respondents

The research participants in this study were divided into two categories: firstly, the research participants selected in the pilot study and secondly, those selected for the actual data collection process. The pilot study involved two different phases. Phase one was carried out to pilot interview questions with 30 participants who came from different industries around Phu Quoc Island. They were selected by their employers based of the information given by Dr. Tham our contact person in Vietnam. This enabled us to anticipate the problems (if any) of these instruments. The participants selected were in the age range of 17-22. The second phase was the actual participants. 15 participants were from the pilot study phase and the rest were new additions to the group.

**Table 1. Description of Participants**

	Individual	Group Interviews
Pilot	3 (QT, NG and TF)	Nil
Main	6 ( FF, VTT, NTH, QQ, THY, VG)	4 groups (G1, G2, G3 and G4)
Workshop		30

There were 30 participants during the first training. The participants’ ages varied from 18 to 56 years old from various organizations such as People’s Committee, Youth Union, Centre for Culture and Tourism, Hoa Binh Tourism, Long Beach Resort and the Phu Quoc Economic Management Division. Despite the wide age gap among some participants, it did not result to any disruption of the class sessions and activities. Participants were observed to be participative throughout all the sessions. However, participants with lower proficiency level were more reserved and less participative as compared to participants with higher proficiency level. Additionally, a class representative was elected as the main liaison to assist the instructors in classroom management, class activities and monitoring of participants attendance. A group leader was elected from each organization as the representative of the organization. The main role of the group leader is to assist the instructors in monitoring of participants’ attendance and communication purposes.

One main issue was participants’ attendance. At the beginning of the session, 21 out of 30 participants were selected based on the proficiency test and interview. However, by the end of day two, only 14

participants attended the last session. Several reasons for the absence of the participants were noted as follows:

- a. Missing in action (MIA)
- b. Work related problems
- c. Family related problems
- d. Health related problems

#### 2.1.5 Grouping of the Participants

To promote collaboration amongst the participants, they were put in a mix group that consisted of people of various organizations. In addition, from the short interview session conducted with the participants, it was found that some are of the lower level of proficiency; therefore, the participants' language proficiency was another major consideration in the groupings. However, the groups consisted of a mixed level of proficiency.

#### 2.1.6 Workshops

Workshops and training were conducted for the participants in order to provide input. A series of workshops were tailor-made to fulfill the needs of the youths English communication skills for the purpose of tourism. 4 meetings which spanned 8 days were conducted during which communicative activities were planned and executed. Participants were exposed to varieties of communicative skills for tourism purposes.

#### 2.1.7 Module

A 42-hour module was prepared prior to the training. The module was aimed at enhancing participants' communicative English proficiency towards promoting tourism in their locality through fun filled language activities and games. Several key topics specifically chosen to achieve the aim of the module includes:

- Interesting places
- Food and cuisine
- Culture and festivals
- Travels, Accommodation and Safety Issues
- Showing Directions
- Training of trainers

The language proficiency level of the module was set at the Pre-intermediate and Intermediate levels.

The initial module was prepared and focused on describing and discussing different parts of Vietnam. However, after the first session of the first visit, the module was revised to focus on Phu Quoc Island only as the learners' interest, motivation and grasp of knowledge were inclined to Phu Quoc Island. Also, the level of language was lowered to pre-intermediate level as many have limited control of the language.

### 2.1.8 Class Activities

Throughout the class sessions, fun language games and activities were incorporated. These included songs, quizzes, outdoor activities, role-playing, energizers and gamification activities. These activities incorporated were not only to enhance participants' English communicative proficiency but they were also aimed at giving participants an enjoyable language learning experience which would motivate them to follow the course until the very end. The hands-on activities that were given were aimed at encouraging individual involvement as well as both pair work and group participations. These were delivered using the power-point images, videos, and worksheets based on the modules prepared. Many of the activities involved group work, and participants were often encouraged to actively give their responses individually and as a whole group presentation.

Participants were also given a short training on the English pronunciation as this is one major segment that needs improvement, and participants seemed to take a keen interest in this area. This was later followed by further pronunciation practice via games (Chinese Whispers, Tongue Twisters), minimal pairs, long and short sounds, similar words, etc. The main focus of the pronunciation practice was to get the participants to pronounce the words that are related to their industry and the important words related to the island correctly. Introducing and describing local popular places, presenting and discussing the local cultures, customs and celebrations, as well as demonstrating the preparation of traditional local dishes were part of the main highlights of the module to encourage communication in English and practicing their roles as future trainers. In doing the activities, participants seemed to be extremely motivated in talking about Phu Quoc Island rather than about Vietnam in general. As a result, the earlier prepared activities were modified to emphasise on describing and talking about places of interest in Phu Quoc Island.

## 3. Analyses, Discussion and Summary

Based on the qualitative data extracted from the semi-structured interviews and group interviews, several themes were identified. These themes are grouped together as the responses from the semi-structured interviews and group interviews were almost similar.

### 3.1 *The Coming of Tourists to Phu Quoc Island*

According to the Phu Quoc Island guide, the island was once a secret backpacker retreat and now has become one of Asia's premier vacation destination albeit maintaining its wild tropical island. It is not hard to see why many tourists are boasting of the splendid natural beauty and untouched remote beaches of this spectacular tropical island. As mentioned by THY in one of the interviews, Phu Quoc is becoming a very popular tourist destination. She added, we become busy nowadays...more...than last year...and last year (previous years) (THY: 34). This statement was confirmed by NTH and FF who added that the coming of tourists in Phu Quoc has given a lot of employment opportunities for the locals. This employment enables them to improve the quality of their lives, much more than before.

They added that now they could afford to have other “gadgets” apart from the basic necessities such as mobile phone, television, other electrical equipment which made life easier for them.

Another element that seems beneficial to the locals is that many people who had left for greener pastures made their way back to Phu Quoc to either start their own businesses or to start working on projects that are abundance in this tiny island. QQ has this to say: “My neighbour went to work at Ho Chi Minh City. Now he is back to start a business. He said that Phu Quoc is better now than before..: (QQ, 67). It is a confirmation that Phu Quoc is becoming the hub of tourists’ destination thus giving a lot of positive vibes for businesses to flourish notably by the locals.

According to Vietnam travel and tourism economic impact 2019, the government anticipated that the employment rate will increase steadily as the tourism industry flourishes. The authority in the Phu Quoc Island has taken some drastic initiatives to bring Phu Quoc to the world by promoting the island to tourism exhibitions. This was mentioned by several respondents in response to the question of whether Phu Quoc is known outside Vietnam.

### *3.2 Communication amongst the Locals and the Tourists*

Since tourism industry has become a critical revenue for Phu Quoc Island in particular and seeing tourists from around the world flocking the island, communication in a language that is mutually understood by both parties is vital. There is no statistic thus far as to identify the most number of tourists from a particular country in Phu Quoc. However, according to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, in 2015 alone, Tourism industry brought in more than 133million USD for Vietnam. The most number of tourists from Asia are from China, Korea and Hong Kong, while Americans made the most number of tourists outside Asia (<http://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/english/index.php/items/10260>). On the other hand, Russia charted the most number of tourists from Europe.

From the information given above, one can imagine the need to communicate effectively as to ensure intended messages are conveyed. Thus, communication between and among locals and tourists from different corners of the world is inevitable. The industry that perhaps the most directly involved in the arrival of tourists is the hotel industry as it is a service-based industry. Not only should this industry entice travelers to stay on their longest, it also has the responsibility to ensure visitors achieve maximum satisfaction during their stay. This in turn will influence tourists to come back for a second or third time to this destination provided the services that obtained are excellent.

In light of this matter, two respondents who are working in the hotel industry, from the individual interviews and one from the group interview had similar views. VG said: “It’s very important for me to communicate with tourists because I work at the reception. I deal with them everyday...I want them to be comfort..emmm... comfortable” (VG: 47).

Concurring with VG, NTT said that it is important for her to speak well in English as she wants visitors to be happy staying at the resort she is currently working. She added: “If I can speak well, I will make them (visitors) happy. If they are happy, they will come back...” (NTT: 24). NTT also mentioned that



she was chosen to be at the front desk because she is able to communicate in English better than the rest of her colleagues. She added that she wanted her superior to be happy with her performance too. This goes to show that the ability to communicate effectively with visitors and tourists is considered most important not just for the hotel operators but their staff had similar views too. The justification for this may have been a security for their job. If tourists were to flow, their job is partly secured. Thus, it will provide them with the important means to survive in that it gives them the financial stability. Being stable financially is important for the people in the island as they feel that moving to the city such as Ho Chi Minh will be more stressful.

### *3.3 The Importance of the English Language*

Inherent to communication is a mutual language that can be understood by people who are communicating. Although from the statistics mentioned earlier that the most number of tourists to Phu Quoc is from China, the respondents emphasized in their interviews that English is the most important means of communication used in the island. According to SQT, English is preferred by tourists and also the locals. She added: “I worked with a tourist information centre on this island. I wished ... aaa...I can speak more fluent in English ...many tourist[s] speak the language. One day I will go to class to take English... to speak better. This language is so important...I want my son to learn English when he go [goes to] school” (SQT, 76). In addition, NTT expressed her opinion on the importance of English language. She said: English is so important...hmm many people..try to speak it here...but of course with our Vietnamese style..hemmmm...(chuckles)...and many wrong...(mistakes) (NTT: 102)

SQT has a vision that the English language should be learned by people on the island as the language has grown in its popularity. She also wanted her daughter to learn the language, perhaps to be better than her. NTT on the other hand claimed that many of her friends and other people on the island are trying to speak in English, although not grammatically correct but they understood what they were trying to say.

This substantiates the argument of how English language has become one of the more important languages not only in the island but in Vietnam in general, as well as in South East Asia. This point is also emphasized by The Guardian in one of its featured article entitled English as an Asian Language. It mentioned: “In East and Southeast Asia English plays a major role in the region as a lingua franca of the political elite and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is also used as a lingua franca between professionals and the business community”. (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2000/nov/23/tefl.guardianweekly>)

As Honna argues, “as the spread of English progresses, English is bound to reflect a diversity of disparate cultures. Importantly, non-native speakers are taking advantage of this additional language and are exploring new dimensions of English usage, phonetically, lexically, syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically. Since no language is used to its fullest extent by its native speakers, there is always much room left for non-native speakers to exploit it in their unique ways” (Honna, 2005).

Thus, it is not uncommon to hear the mixture of the English language with the local dialect to be spoken widely in Vietnam. This is similar to Manglish in Malaysian, Singlish in Singapore or Panglish in general. The role of the English language should be appropriately considered in the recruitment of hotel personnel. The emphasis on English language proficiency should be based on the nature of job. For the staff members who are in direct contact with guests most of the time, qualities such as “courtesy” and “pleasant disposition” should be given higher priority than language proficiency. An equal stress would only hinder the recruitment process and consequently, affect the quality of service provided by a hotel as it would have difficulty employing sufficient number of staff. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of the English language must be widely used in line with the professions and the aspirations of the government. It means that prioritizing certain languages than the others could be one of the many ways in which the industry can be developed further (Ravantharanathe & Syaharom Abdullah, 2007).

#### *3.4 Confidence in Communicating in the English Language*

Most of the respondents had expressed their angst and apprehension in speaking English with tourists. They also said that they had to translate the language first in Vietnamese than to the English language. Thus, it can be said that the participants are less confident in using the language. However, due to their nature of job, they had to use it although they realized that they made a lot of mistakes. VG has got this to say:

I know my English is bad..sometimes I don't understand what I am saying...but I have to try..many tourist asked me many times..( for clarification). I just carry on speaking..hahah (VG: 66).

It can be said that although most of them realized that their spoken English language was weak, they kept on going as they needed to convey information to the tourists. This shows that they have the confidence in communicating albeit the mistakes and the weak grasp of the language. The researchers posed a question to respondents on whether they are willing to train other people to speak the language when they are done with this programme. Most of them had immediate answer to the question which is “NO”. When probed further of the reason, they gave similar response that is their English language is weak and they, themselves need to learn the language further. NTT said that perhaps in future she can teach the language if she has improved on her English language provided there are more avenues to learn the language.

#### *3.5 Benefits of the Course to Participants*

During the group and individual interviews, the researchers have asked the participants some feedbacks on the workshops and classes that were conducted. By and large most of the participants have expressed their gratitude on the availability of such workshop for them. Most importantly, many of them mentioned that these classes were conducted free of charge, which they were grateful. Some of them also said that this was the first time that they had attended such workshops and classes which are very much related to their job scope. Group 1 and 2 mentioned similar ideas in that they hoped that there will be more classes like this to help them cope with the demands of English language in their

line of duty. While, the gist of discussion with Group 3 and 4 was that they felt a bit overwhelmed by the language that were used by the trainers. The generally believed that their language was very poor in that they could use limited words. However, all of them agreed that this workshop had actually given them more opportunities to use the language in a natural setting. By this they meant that they got to learn English outside the confined of a classroom.

### *3.6 Participants' Motivation*

The participants mentioned that the workshops had boosted their motivation in learning English. Although previously they had the intention to learning the language, due to work commitment, time and financial constraints, they had to forget the idea. They expressed hope that this workshop would be extended or be held consistently in the future. Throughout the trainings, participants were seen to have given their full commitment and cooperation in making the class enjoyable and fun. They also initiated a barbeque dinner for the whole class and also the trainers to express their gratitude.

### *3.7 Attitudes towards the Programme*

The investigation of this study had been planned as such that the input presented to the participants is within their cognitive ability, and perhaps one or two instances, where the trainers felt that they could go beyond, a more advance input was given. Generally, the participants showed positive and encouraging attitudes towards learning the English language. Positive attitude has been said to lead to the exhibition of positive behavior toward studying. THY and QQ insisted that they were very interested to learn the language long before this project was introduced to them. QQ for example said: I wanted to find English Language course before, but it is too expensive and I have to go to Ho Chi Min city...that is not possible (QQ 78). On the other hand THY asserted that she started to learn English at work. She said: I love the language more and more because I use it every day with guests and customers. Now in this workshop I can get more information... (THY: 45). The positive attitudes towards the language exhibited by the two respondents include emotional and behavioral attitudes. Conversely, cognitive attitude would include their ability to produce grammatically correct sentences and structures, once a new input is given to them. The respondents had proven they possessed cognitive attitude when they successfully completed tasks that were given to them correctly.

Although there were one or two respondents who did not show enthusiasm towards the training, we cannot generalise that they have negative attitude towards learning the English language. The trainers understood that the participants were under a lot of constraints coming to the training sessions. Hence the barriers have become challenges to the participants in that it distracted them from getting the most out of the trainings. On the other hand, the trainers themselves felt that commitment of some of the participants was the main challenge.

### *3.8 The Influence of Other Major Languages and Their Challenges*

A great number of the Vietnamese older generation could still converse in French although the language has lost its gravity in the society. The younger generation is more interested in other European languages including Spanish, Italian and English. Chinese languages including Mandarin have gained

popularity over the years. Apart from having Chinese community in some parts of Vietnam, Vietnamese are eager to learn the language for business purposes as well as getting thousands of Chinese tourists coming into Vietnam. Other than that, Russian, Czech, German, and Polish are also spoken by certain quarter of the people depending on the sectors they are in. Hence, with a multitude interests in different languages, Vietnamese have to make choice of which of these languages could help them economically and also in education. Although French has greater importance due to its colonialization, English has become the second most important European language in Vietnam due to communication and business ventures. All these factors about foreign languages' influence in Vietnam has become another major challenge for the participants and trainers to entice more youths to join the project.

#### **4. Discussions of Findings**

##### *4.1 Class Project and Virtual Connection*

The class project on a short video to promote Phu Quoc did not materialise as there was a lack in area of expertise in video editing as well as facilities and equipment to support it. Time was another factor-participants were occupied with their work, so they did not have much time to work on their project.

A Facebook group was set up, and participants were able to post some of their work online during the class session. However, due to limited broadband and *wifi* coverage in their homes, access to Facebook is a major drawback. Additionally, very few of the participants own a Facebook account; many still do not own smartphones. Although it is imperative to use technology as support to their language learning, the trainers made do with the lack of it. Although it is not the main hindrance to the participants' ability to contribute to the teaching and learning, with the availability of technology, the outcome of the project would undeniably make a lot of difference.

##### *4.2 Participants' English Language Proficiency Level*

Their proficiency differed greatly depending on the type of jobs they were currently holding. Those in the hotel line were relatively more proficient than those currently working at offices or helping out their families in small trade industries. Generally the participants felt that their English language was still very weak and that they needed more formal training to master the language. With the activities carried out with them to expose them to more language skills, they are hopeful that similar programme could be conducted in the future so that they could be more proficient in the language.

Participants were put in groups to discuss about how the English language could change their lives. Some of the responses given through group discussion include:

- They would be able to get better jobs in local and international companies.
- They can work at big cities in Ho Chi Minh city.
- They can be travel guide which pays more than working in an organization or hotels.
- They can travel the world themselves if they have the means.
- Their children would also be able to learn the language with their help.

- They can start their own small tourist guide companies.
- They will be able to communicate with a wider selection of people and with this they will be able to find better work opportunities which in turn will bring in more money for them.

In sum, with the ability to speak the English language, the participants hoped that it will not only help them to get better opportunities, they were also optimistic that their status of living could also increase; thus provide them with a better future for their families.

#### *4.3 English Language Help to Contribute to the Well-Being of the Locals*

The use of English language is relatively new in Vietnam. Vietnamese language was influenced by Chinese characters as it was under the dominance of China from the 2nd century BC. However, this situation changed when Vietnam was invaded by French in the late 19th century (www.alsintl.com).

Learning a new language is not as easy as it seemed to be, especially when the target language is not used in the community. Over the past decades, many language centres were set up to teach Vietnamese the languages of the tourists. With that very limited ability in speaking the language, it had helped many people especially service providers, to gain more income for their family and for their children's education. Although, not much can be said of the relationship between the successes of an English language speaker with their well-being, it is enough to maintain that with extra language, it can bring extra income.

#### *4.4 Traits and Characteristics of Being Potential Trainers*

Although most of the participants admitted to not having the confidence to teach others the English language at the point of investigation, some portrayed potentials of being good language learners. The traits that could be identified based on the communication with the participants as well as their participations in the workshops. Some of the attributes include:

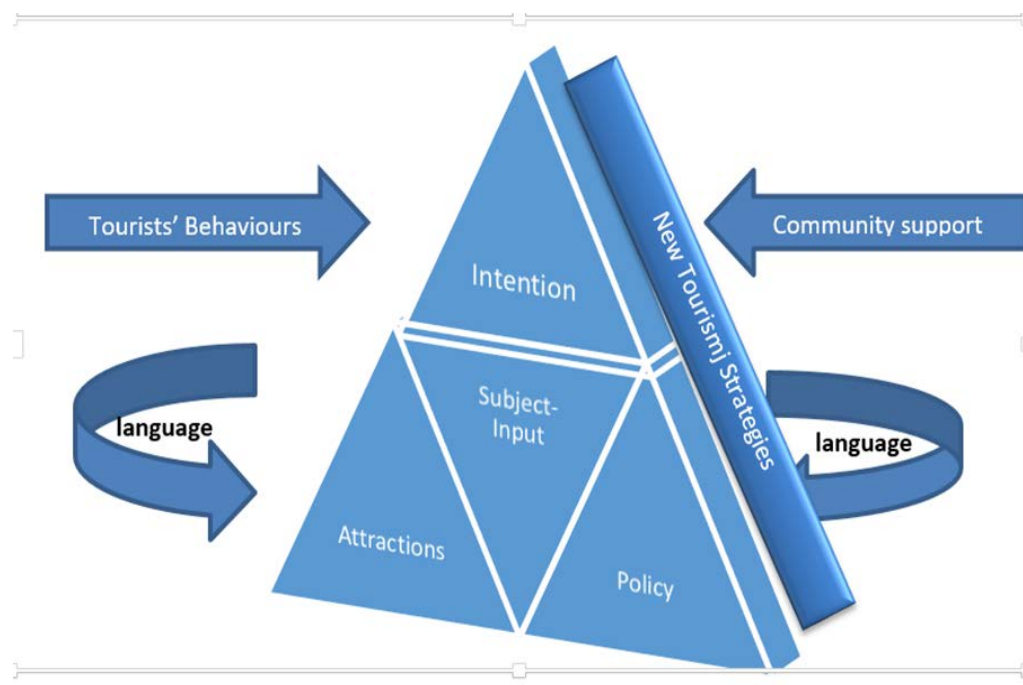
- Being actively involved in the programme (activities and discussions).
- Inquisitive. 2-3 participants constantly asked about the language and the grammar rules.
- Making comparison. One participant (VTT) specifically made comparisons between English language and the Vietnamese language. For example in the English language, the sentence: How do you do can be asking about the well-being of the person spoken to, and can also be a simple greeting. However, it is not that straight forward in Vietnamese as considerations have to be made in that the speaker has to know whether it is male or female he/she is speaking to, an older or younger person or whether the person spoken to has any relationship with the speaker. Another simple example according to VTT is the greeting Hello. She said in Vietnamese to say hello is not as easy as does the English language. Cháo-Hello (in general) but will sound rude if used inappropriately. Cháo-Anh (used with older male), Cháo Chi (older female), Cháo-em (younger than the speaker) etc.
- Awareness of the challenges ahead of them in learning a language foreign to them. Several participants expressed their concerns of the difficulties they might face in learning the English language but were determine to get as much knowledge as possible in the workshop designed specifically for them.

- Willingness to share the information they obtained with the others; i.e., Family members, colleagues and others.

The attributes mentioned above were outstanding in several participants, which means that these are potentials trainers for the English language Training of the Trainers programme.

From the data, analysis of the data and the discussions above, the researchers have agreed that the SPAIN Model can be applied in using the English language for the purpose of training potential trainers. Figure 1 below represents the model.

#### The SPINAL Model



**Figure 1. The SPINAL Model: English Language for Tourism: Training the Trainers**

The SPINAL model is derived from the essential features mentioned from the data obtained from the respondents.

**S** (Subject of the study and the input (data collected from them)). Their attitudes, motivation, characteristics, attributes were taken into consideration in determining the type of potential respondents to be future trainers.

**P** represents policy. The policy on tourism of a country is a determining factor of the flow of tourists at certain destinations. Vietnam, over the last two decades had diversified its approach towards the tourism sector. Vietnam is best known as “boat people” country, due to the history of refugees fleeing at the time of wars. This image is firmly erected in people’s memory, despite this happened almost few decades ago. It is only when people has stepped foot to Vietnam then they see the big changes in the country. This is not enough. It is about time for Vietnam to come up with a new position that says

something about the New Vietnam of the new century (Ng Bee Chin, 2008). Thus, it is vital that the policy on tourism meets the national agenda of the country in which to change the perceptions of the world about Vietnam.

**I** Intention here involves the intention of potential tourists and also the intention of the host country which provides facilities to tourists. In the case of the current study, the intention of service providers of the host country is examined through interviews with the respondents of the investigation.

**N** Stands for New Tourism Strategies. This is the backbone of the industry. It aspires to look into the latest way in attracting tourists coming to Phu Quoc. According to the respondents, the authority will highlight ways in which the society can help in contributing their ideas and energy into making Phu Quoc a preferred holiday destination.

**A** Attraction here goes to mean places of interest in Vietnam and for the purpose of this investigation, specific places that has potential to attract the most people are identified. Apart from the beach and activities related to it, other relevant exercises are key to the coming of tourists in this part of Vietnam.

**L** The highlight of this study is the English language that is used as a tool to communicate between potential tourists and the service providers and its community.

## 5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to establish an investigation into findings out the extent to which youths in Phu Quoc Island is open to change in terms of the English language for communication. The aim was to explore how the workshops could be facilitated through the myriad of communicative activities, specifically catered for industry in Phu Quoc Island. In guiding the study, three main research questions were engineered and strengthened with participants' perceptions on the issues investigated.

The practical aspect of the contribution of this study lies within the participants' beliefs in the potentials of their island-Phu Quoc as the next biggest tourist destination in South East Asia. Regardless of respondents' inclinations towards certain skills in the English for communicative purposes or components of this language, it is vital that they are able to grasp and understand the messages embedded in them. Understanding these embedded skills enables the participants to appreciate "others", especially the tourists around them. It is also a life skill and has an intrinsic value for them, that of learning to use language -any language as the medium for any subject- as their own tool, but best illustrated in their ability to express themselves clearly albeit much difficulties at the beginning.

The most appropriate "homebase" for all Vietnamese in the "making" and "transforming" Phu Quoc island is their ability to understand and be open to "the other" is a skill underpinning all personal, social, business, professional and political relationships throughout life. Learning and language learning is too valuable to be treated just for subject content, to get through the subject, pass the exam and move on. English for communication could be the subject to evoke a sense of togetherness and appreciation of others and "otherness" around them. Their hands-on experiences communicating with tourists could help the participants in their real life and help them to build a stronger foundation for their families

economically, and also will prepare them to integrate themselves into the world of tourism, which according to them is part of their lives.

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