

SELF-PERCEIVED COMPETENCE OF FRIDAY PRAYER CONGREGATION: A CASE STUDY OF A MOSQUE IN THE STATE OF KEDAH, MALAYSIA.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the self-perceived competence of a specific group of people during Friday prayer congregation of a Mosque in the city of Sungai Petani, Kedah state Malaysia. The majority of the Muslims in Malaysia are the Malays whose mother tongue is also the official language of Malaysia; the Malay language. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the linguistic repertoire of the congregation and to examine the language(s) used in the delivery process of Friday sermons. Data were collected using questionnaire surveys and audio recordings of Friday sermons. Quantitative and qualitative analysis were employed in analysing the data. The findings revealed that a majority of the congregation were Malays who are competent in the Malay language, while the delivery of Friday sermon was conducted in Malay and the liturgical language Arabic for the sermon to be valid based of five (5) principles of a sermon.

Keywords: self-perceived competence, sermon, Friday prayers, khutbah

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CURRENT LANGUAGE SITUATION IN MALAYSIA

It is common for the people to speak at least two or more languages in a multilingual and multicultural nation like Malaysia. There are various ethnic groups in Malaysia, and the three major groups are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The Malay language was declared as the sole national language, and official language in 1957 and English was the second most important language (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993). Majority of the Malays speak the Malay language as mother tongue while the Chinese and Indians speak different dialects based on their social groups.

In Malaysia, Malays practice Islam as their religion. While they speak Malay in their daily communication, the Arabic language is required in performing religious activities such as to pray five times a day and also to perform Friday prayer (Wan Mat, 1995). However, the Arabic language is still regarded as a foreign language. The Arabic language was never introduced in national schools until 1977 (Aliffi Ali, 2014). It was only taught in religious schools and Pondok. The introduction of teaching the Arabic language began in 1977 where the language was only taught in religious schools and Pondok (Aliffi Ali,

2014). The Arabic language was only introduced in national schools in 1998 (Aliffi Ali, 2014). The language is taught as a foreign language up until the present time (Wan Mat, 1995).

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the linguistic repertoire of the congregation, and it also examined the delivery of Friday sermon (khutbah) focusing on the language(s) used in the delivery process.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

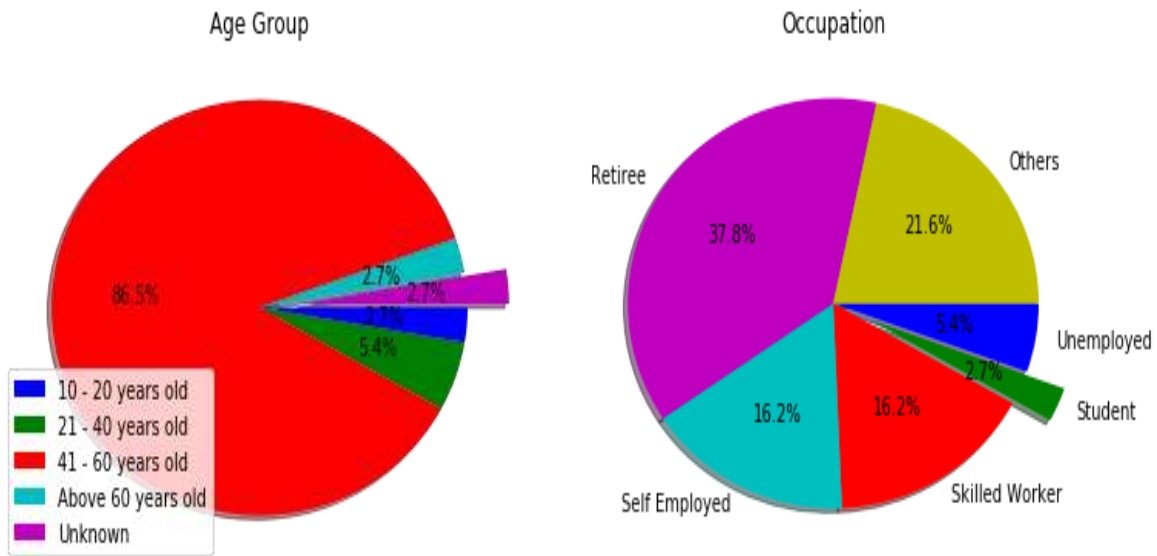
The current paper is part of a more extensive study on language choice in Friday sermons. Questionnaire survey and audio recording of Friday sermon were two types of instruments used to collect data. Quantitative and qualitative analysis were employed in analysing the data. The qualitative data were drawn from a series of Friday congregational prayer sermons in a mosque located in the town of Sungai Petani, Kedah Malaysia. This mosque was chosen because of the diverse ethnicities of the congregation.

The quantitative data were collected from the Muslim respondents who attended the Friday prayer at the said mosque. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected were analysed using R and Python open source software to identify the languages used to deliver the Friday congregational prayer sermons, and to profile the linguistic repertoire of the congregation. The qualitative approach was carried out by recording the Friday sermon (*Khutbah*) at Andalusia Mosque at Bandar Laguna Merbok such that the recorded version was transcribed and analysed. Also, 40 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents after they had performed their Friday prayer. Out of the 40 questionnaires distributed, only 37 were returned and could be used for analysis which resulted in a 92.5% response rate. Based on the response taken from the distributed questionnaire, most of the respondent's age was between 41 to 60 years old (about 84.49% of the total response), and most of the respondents were retiree (about 37.84% out of the total response). The complete distributions are shown both in Table 1 and Figure 1 as shown below.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile (N = 37)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	10 – 20 years old	1	2.70
	21 – 40 years old	2	5.41
	41 – 60 years old	32	86.49
	Above 60 years old	1	2.70
	Unknown	1	2.70
Occupation	Unemployed	2	5.41
	Student	1	2.70
	Skilled Worker	6	16.22
	Self Employed	6	16.22
	Retiree	14	37.84

Figure 1 Distribution of Respondents' Age Group and Occupation



3. FINDINGS

The findings reveal that the majority of the congregation were competent in the Malay language while the delivery of the Friday sermon was conducted in both Malay and Arabic. The results are portrayed in Table 2 through Table 6 and represented in bar plots (Figure 2 through Figure 6). Both Table 2 and Table 3 together with Figure 2 and Figure 3 represent the result from the qualitative analysis obtained from the transcription of two Friday sermon taken at two different dates delivered at Andalusia Mosque, Bandar Laguna Merbok. The result reveals that for both dates, the Malay language was the dominant language used during the first Khutbah, while in the second Khutbah was entirely presented in Arabic. However, for the overall Khutbah (Khutbah 1 and Khutbah 2), the Malay language was the dominant language used in the Friday sermon, basically due to the first Khutbah was much longer than the second Khutbah.

Table 2: *Khutbah – Syawal Dirai, Ramadhan Dihayati*

	Arabic	Malay	Total
Khutbah 1	188 (15.58%)	1019 (84.42%)	1207
Khutbah 2	231 (100%)	0 (0%)	231
Total	419 (29.14%)	1019 (70.86%)	1438

Note: bold values and percentage represent dominant language used

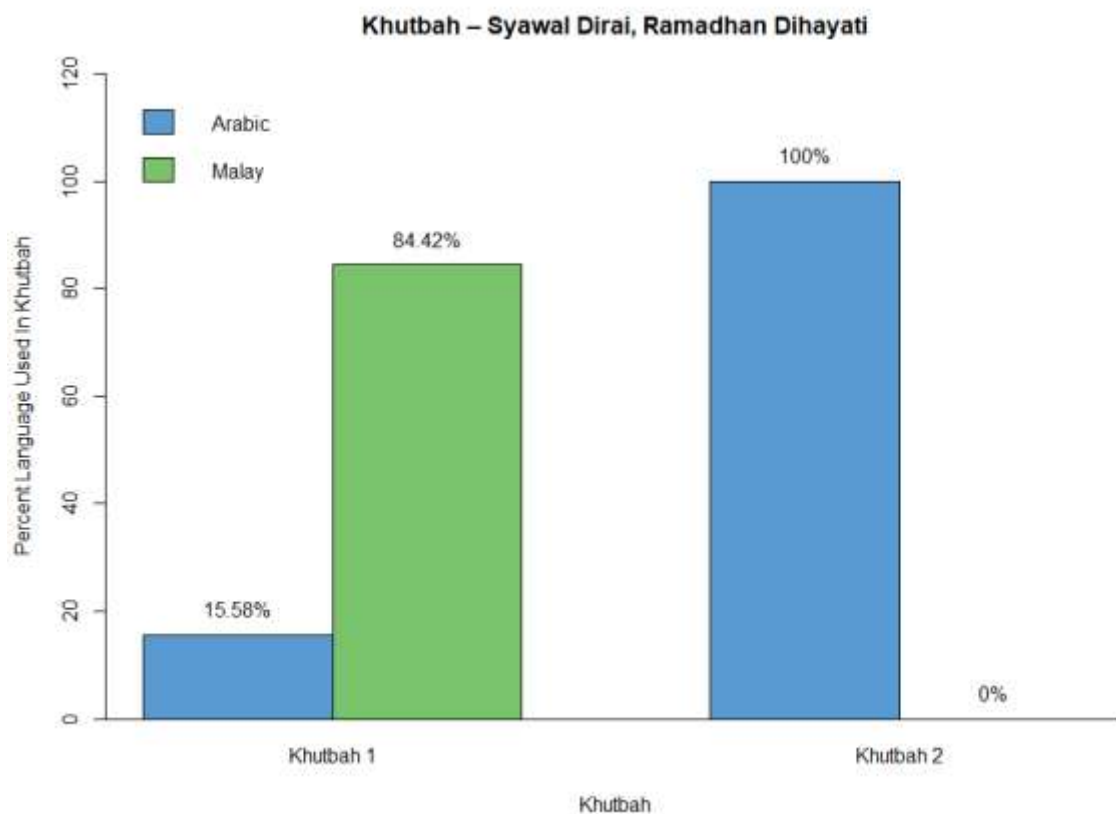


Figure 2 Bar plot on Percent Language Used in Khutbah “Syawal Dirai, Ramadhan Dihayati”

Table 3: *Khutbah – Hormati Yang Tua, Sayangi Yang Muda*

	Arabic	Malay	Total
Khutbah 1	236 (22.29%)	823 (77.71%)	1059
Khutbah 2	231 (100%)	0 (0%)	231
Total	467 (36.20%)	823 (63.80%)	1290

Note: bold values and percentage indicating the dominant language used

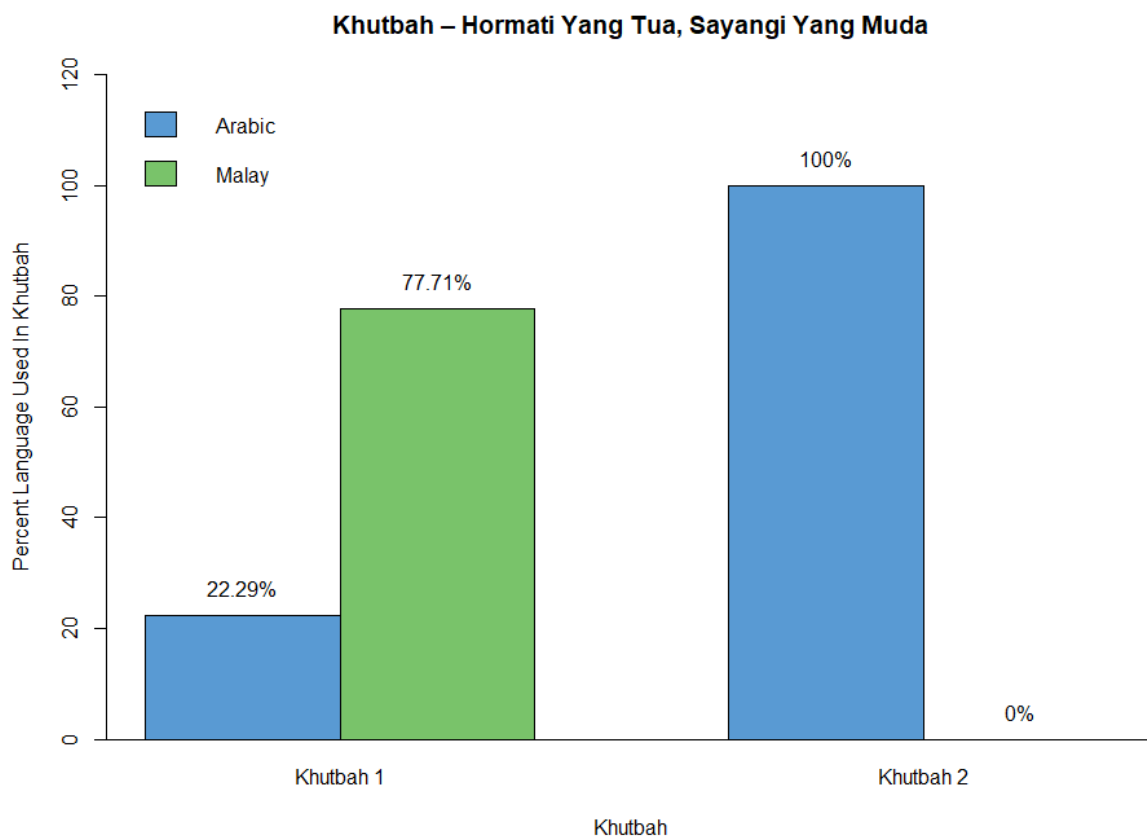


Figure 3 Bar plot on Percent Language Used in Khutbah “Hormati Yang Tua, Sayangi Yang Muda”

Table 4 through Table 6 together with Figure 4 through Figure 6 respectively summarized the responses obtained about the competencies on Malay, English, and Arabic language among the respondents. Based on the summarized results, it can be seen that most of the respondents were considered to be proficient in both Malay and English, but less proficient in the Arabic language. However, about the overall understanding of the delivered Friday sermon, the majority of the respondent responded that they understand what was delivered to them. About 83.8% of the respondents said that they understand the content that was delivered in both Malay and Arabic language. Furthermore, 91.9% of the respondents confirmed that they understand the contents that were delivered in the Malay language only, and 67.6% stated that they understand the contents that were delivered in Arabic language only. This result is presented in Table 7.

Table 4: Perceived Competency in the Malay Language

	Proficient (%)	Moderate (%)	Not Proficient (%)
Listening	93.3	3.3	3.3
Speaking	93.3	3.3	3.3
Reading	90.0	6.7	3.3
Writing	90.0	6.7	3.3

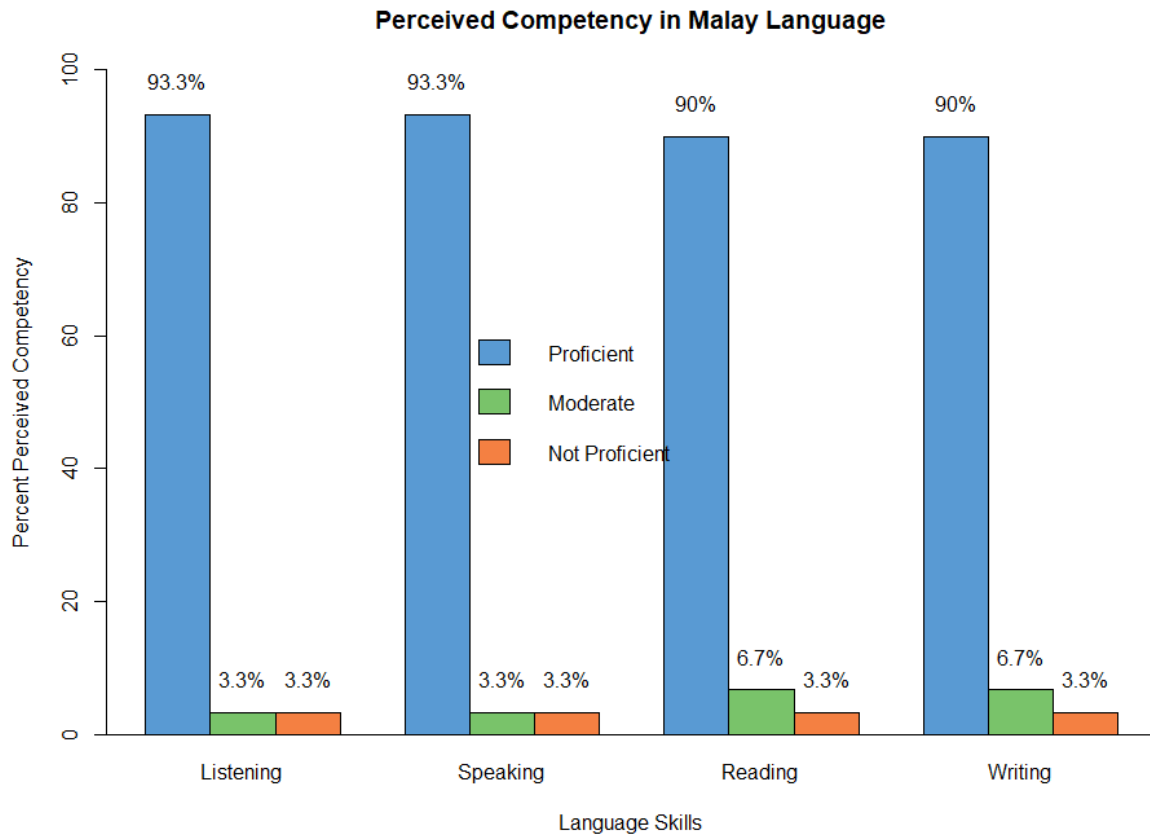


Figure 4 Bar plot on perceived competency in the Malay language among the respondents

Table 5: Perceived Competency in English

	Proficient (%)	Moderate (%)	Not Proficient (%)
Listening	55.2	44.8	-
Speaking	48.3	48.3	3.4
Reading	55.2	41.4	3.4
Writing	51.7	41.4	6.9

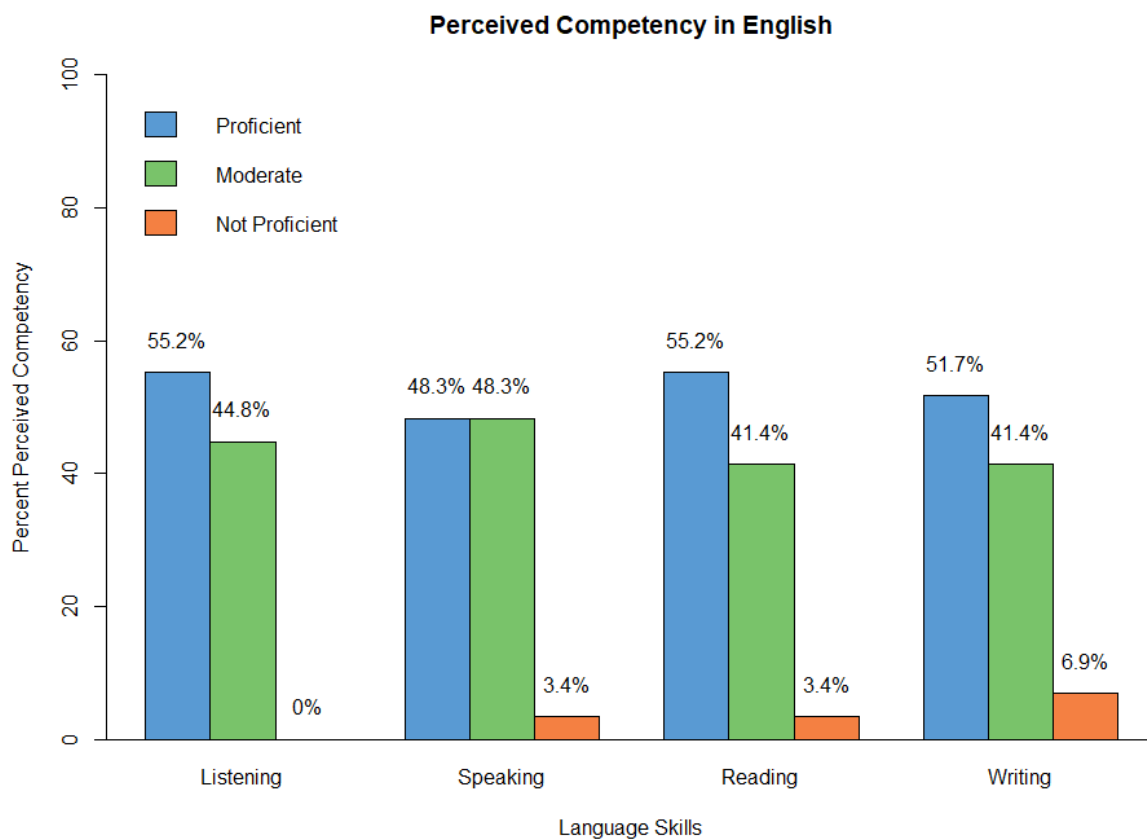


Figure 5 Bar plot on perceived competency in English among the respondents
 Table 6: Perceived Competency in the Arabic Language

	Proficient (%)	Moderate (%)	Not Proficient (%)
Listening	11.1	25.9	63
Speaking	7.4	18.5	74.4
Reading	11.1	25.9	63
Writing	-	33.3	66.7

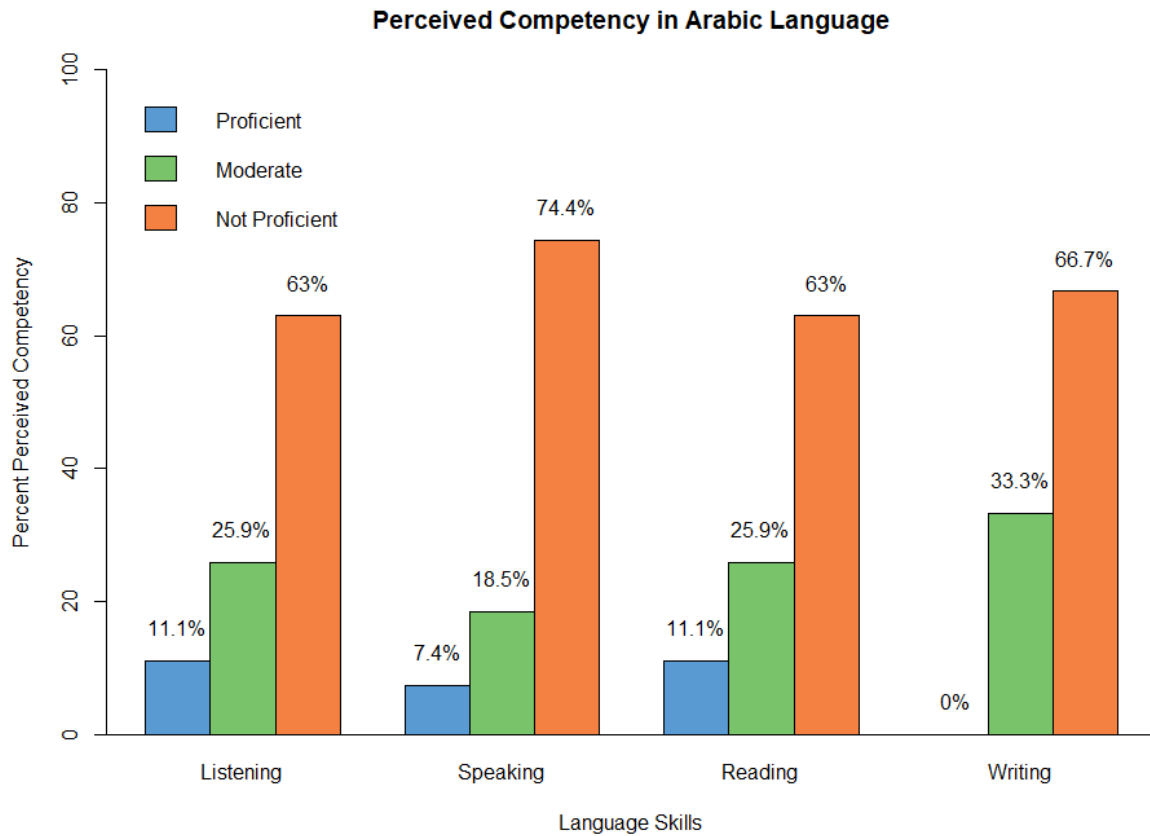


Figure 6 Bar plot on perceived competency in the Arabic language among the respondents

Table 7: Perceived understanding of khutbah delivery

Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand all khutbah content in Malay and Arabic	83.8%	16.2%
2. I understand the khutbah that was delivered in Malay	91.9%	8.1%
3. I do not understand the khutbah that was delivered in Arabic	67.6%	32.4%

In the last open-ended question, the respondents provided suggestions for delivery of the Friday sermon. Two respondents suggested that the Arabic part of the sermon should be translated into the Malay language. Next, the delivery of sermon should be in other languages as well. The respondents also suggested that the sermons were displayed on a multimedia screen and the last suggestion was to provide a summary of the sermon.

The respondents further explained that they understood the delivery of the sermon in the Malay language only (4 responses) while one (1) respondent stated that he understood the sermon delivered both in Arabic and Malay language.

4. DISCUSSION

The association of the Islamic faith and the Arabic language. The Malays are found to be less competent in the Arabic language despite having to use Arabic in their daily prayers. Memorization of Quranic phrases which are in Arabic is adequate for a person to perform his or her daily prayer. According to Nur Hidayah Hussain and Maharam Mamat (2018), the Arabic language was then used as a means to deliver the teachings of Islam. The use of local language (Malay) and Arabic in delivering the sermon is similar to that of Kouega and Baimada (2012) who discovered that Fulfulde was used in Cameroon.

There is the disparity in the Arabic proficiency of the congregation. While the majority of the congregation had low proficiency, there was a small group who understood Arabic. The result of the study stated that the congregation were more proficient in the Malay language rather than the Arabic language.

It is compulsory that the five principles of the sermon to be delivered in the Arabic language which is praise to Allah (SWT), Selawat to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), advice to taqwa, read at least one verse from the Holy Quran, and recite the prayer (dua) for every Muslim. Choice of language was determined by the liturgical language (Arabic) for the sermon to be valid based on five (5) principles of sermon and Malay was used as most of the congregation were Malays

Therefore, to assist in the understanding of the sermon for the congregation, the following measures are suggested:

- 1) Enhancing the Arabic proficiency of the congregation.
- 2) Provide a Malay translation of the Arabic part of the sermon which can be done through providing handouts.
- 3) Multimedia is used to show the content of sermon including its translation in the Malay language.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this study can contribute to 1) understanding of how the Friday sermon is delivered and the languages used. Informed decisions can be made based on the understanding of the perceived proficiency of the congregation. Therefore, strategies to aid understanding of the Friday sermon should be employed. It is important because a full understanding of the Friday sermon is important

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