



# One Belt One Road Initiative: Benefits the Malay Archipelago Logistic and Culture

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**Abstract:** This article aims to identify the importance of linguistic culture and logistic aspects and its relevance to One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative in the Malay Archipelago. The objective of the writing focuses on three aspects, which are, linguistics and logistics as business generator, linguistics and logistics as a diplomatic channel and ultimately linguistics and logistics as a medium of humanitarian mission during natural disaster. This study applies qualitative approaches through close reading techniques based on previous findings in several journals that examined logistic and linguistic aspects. The scope of the research is based on the impact of OBOR inspired by The Great Wall of China to the countries in the Malay Archipelago especially Malaysia, Indonesia and its surroundings. The findings suggest that OBOR initiative will open countless business and employment opportunities, strengthen regional diplomatic ties and play a role in facilitating humanitarian missions. However, these elements will not be effective if linguistics and logistics are not systematically and consistently applied. It is hoped that this writing would be a reference for language researchers, logistics experts and business people, especially those who are looking at the prospects of OBOR initiatives in the Malay Archipelago.

**Keywords:** OBOR, Malay archipelago, linguistics, logistics

## 1. Introduction

Generally, it is realized that the Great Wall of China is actively expanding its relationship with other countries in the effort to rebuild the greatness of the 21st century One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR). Sternberg, Ahern & McConnell (2017) emphasizes the world's first \$1 trillion infrastructure project has captivated global attention for its boldness, breadth, and transformative potential.

This endeavor will undoubtedly drive the economic growth of developing countries, especially countries in the Malay Archipelago including Malaysia, Indonesia and the neighboring countries. However, do we realize that linguistics and logistics aspects play an important role in the success of OBOR initiative? In short, linguistics plays a role in the aspect of linguistic study while logistics is directed to flow management source from original location to user or buyer location.

There are three main objectives of this article. First, to identify relationship of linguistics and logistics as a business generator. Second, to justify the relevance of linguistic and logistic aspects as a diplomatic channel and finally to suggest that linguistics and logistics aspects can be a medium for regional humanitarian mission during natural disaster.

This writing is expected to be a source of reference to language experts, logistics experts as well as local and foreign investors on OBOR initiative and benefits to linguistics and logistics aspects. Conjointly, this study also provides some simple and clear infographics regarding the practice of linguistic aspects and concerns about humanitarian logistics and halal logistics among the population in the Malay Archipelago.



**Fig. 1 - The routes of One Belt One Road initiative and the geographical coverage of Malay Archipelago**  
 (Source: Desenvolvido Com. <http://www.kustermachado.adv.br/belt-and-road-initiative-uma-visao-geral-sobre-nossa-missao-na-china/>)

## 2. Literature Review

A holistic study found that lack of previous studies were looking conjointly at both aspects of linguistics and logistics. However, there are some studies spotted to examine the logistical or linguistic aspects and the relevance with OBOR initiative. For instance, the study titled Analysis of Logistics Service Supply Chain for One Belt One Road initiative of China, which was written by Liu, Zhang, Chen, Zhuo & Miao (2017).

The writing focuses on supply chain coordination issues arising from OBOR initiative. The researcher applies Theoretic Game method to evaluate the performance of the supply chain with time adjustment aspect. The Liu, et al. (2017) study has brought advantages to the coordination aspect of the supply chain systematically from the implementation of OBOR initiative. It can be concluded that this study focuses on aspects of the efficient method of supply chain and does not involve any study of the linguistic aspect.

Next, there is a study entitled Study on China's Languages' Status Planning for "the Belt and Road Initiative": Proposing the Ecology-of-Language Paradigm. This article is written by Yan (2018) from the College of International Studies, Southwest University, Chongqing, China. The idea of this writing focuses on the importance of ecological paradigm of the language, specifically Chinese for OBOR initiatives. Yan stressed that the minority language of Chinese society should not be neglected and need to be adjusted as best they can to cope with OBOR initiative. This is important to avoid language ecology crisis. The research by Yan (2018) brought the similar idea as this article's view on the importance of the Malay language in the Malay Archipelago from the aspects of business, diplomatic and security missions, and at the same time take advantage of OBOR initiatives for business, diplomatic and humanitarian logistics mission prospects.

Meanwhile, an academic article entitled "One Belt One Road (OBOR) and Malaysia: A Long Term Geo-Political Perspective" were written by Embong, Evers & Ramli (2017). The article discusses the benefits of OBOR initiative led by China, specifically to the industry of ports and railways. In the meantime, the study has found that property development also becomes more vibrant and progressive due to the implementation of OBOR initiative. However on other aspects, the article affirms that there is a geo-political effect due to the dependence on Chinese investors such as in property ownership, condominiums and acquisitions of property rights. In summary, this writing has gone through both the positive and negative aspects based on the impact of OBOR initiative against Malaysia with the exception to any other Malay Archipelago regions.

Basically, the reason why linguistics and logistics aspects play such an important role in OBOR is because the medium of communication is a fundamental process in the pursuit of a logistics business. Linguistics mediums are an important factor in driving logistics growth and, at the same time, a driving factor in OBOR's progress. According to Mokhtar Mohamad, Suhaimee Saahar @ Saabar Haliza Hasan, Ahmad Faisal Mohd Fiah and Antashah Mohd Nor (2014),

to make sure logistics industry together with supply chain management comply with the needs of current trend in the industry, they need complete system and one of the system is the communication system. Effective communication system is one of the crucial elements in making a smooth operations in logistics industry.

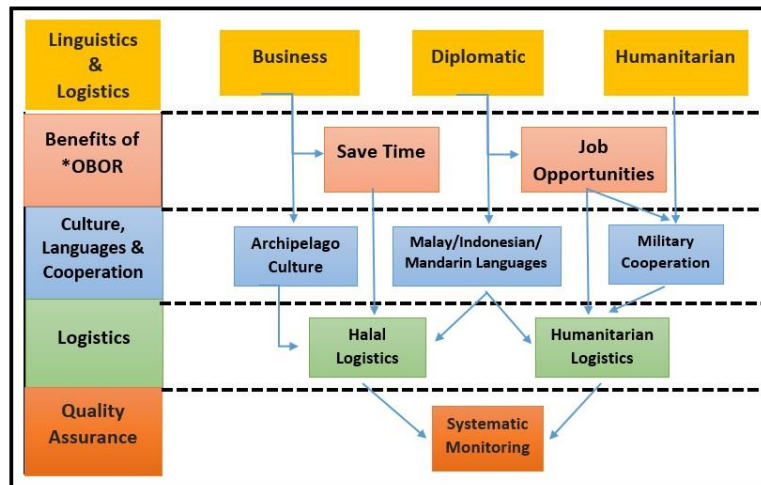
The views by Mokhtar Muhammad above are in line with the studies done by Long, Carlo, Fraser & Grasman (2010). Their research found that strong communication skills are essential for global innovation. Supply chain courses should include opportunities to practise communication skills as well as discussions of current global issues.

Meanwhile, based on Fierke & Alfonso’s (2010) article, a question has emerged is focused on the implications of this ontological shift toward the Chinese ‘Silk Road’ proposal. The authors delineated three dimensions as part of a reflection on this context: first, language use can be considered as a form of measurement to cultivate and transform reality; second, language use is a symbol of entanglement; and third, leaders play a part in ‘collapsing wave functions’ around certain potentials. While some of the themes arising from the discussion are congruent with many other arguments about the roles of language, the quantum angle explicates the ‘physical’ dimensions of language use, underscoring the multiple layers of meaning within which the OBOR is embedded and its relational ontology.

Based on the following studies, it is clear that linguistics and logistics play important and interrelated roles. However, some issues must also be identified in future studies as OBOR involves a chain of countries in the world that includes various types of languages and logistics policies as well.

### 3. Methodology

This study applies qualitative approaches through close reading techniques based on previous findings in several journals that examined logistic and linguistic aspects. The study focuses on three parts. First, linguistics and logistics as business generator through OBOR initiative. Secondly, linguistics and logistics as diplomatic channel through OBOR initiative, and lastly linguistics and logistics as a medium of humanitarian mission through OBOR initiative. The following is a framework for the writing of this article:



**Fig. 2 - Framework for the relationship between the linguistics and logistics in the context of One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) (Source: by authors)**

Linguistic and logistic aspects play an important role in the effort to expand OBOR initiatives, especially in the Malay Archipelago. Both aspects cannot be taken for granted, knowing the reality of linguistics aspect being adopted in the cultural clusters of local communities while logistics aspect is the key to the spread of OBOR initiatives worldwide.

## 4. Results and Discussion

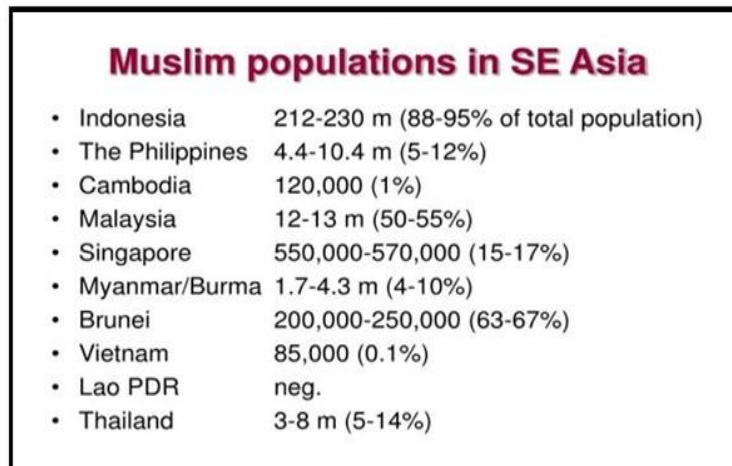
### 4.1 Linguistics and Logistics as Business Generator Through OBOR Initiative

One of OBOR initiatives is to perform in generating business through open market. The positive impact of this initiative is that logistics costs can be minimized from a short OBOR network that saves time. Dealers have the dual option of delivering supply via landline, which involves the train or through ship as the maritime transport. Both of these logistics methods have advantages and disadvantages. However, with good management, deficits can be minimized, and profits can be generated much higher rather than conventional logistics methods that take a relatively longer time of processing. With reference to Yii, Bee, Cheam, Chong and Lee (2018), by adopting the Chongqing–Xinjiang–Europe

International Railway, the shipment time for goods was reduced compared to maritime transport route. Thus, the OBOR initiative can lower transport costs and improve the world’s welfare.

OBOR initiative also create employment opportunities for local people. Subsequently, this will indirectly improve the economy of the affected country. For instance - Indonesia, where it owns a massive source of energy following the population of the country as far as in 2017, a total of 262 million people. This energy source can be fully utilized to develop OBOR initiatives in the applicable region. According to Nalbantoglu (2017), the main effects of the OBOR initiative are defined as reduction of transactional costs, securitization of energy resources, increasing urbanization, employment opportunities for white collar and blue collar workers, promotion of exports and finally transparency.

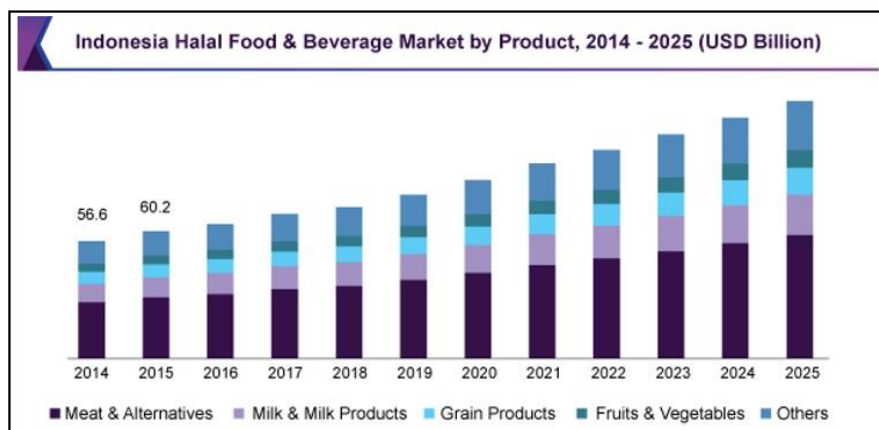
On the other hand, when it comes to Malay Archipelago, some issues shall be taken into account by investors and traders, be it in particular from mainland China or Malaysia. Here, halal logistics aspect is crucial because the demand of halal market in the Malay Archipelago is notably high, reaching more than 250 million users. Halal logistics means the management process flow of goods through a chain that complies with halal standards.



**Fig. 3 - Muslim populations in Southeast Asia, 2016**  
(Source: Hevison, 2016)

Halal status and halal logo are definitely important in this case, and the aspect of hygiene shall be regarded as a priority. There is no use if we have efficient OBOR management that can save time and cost but the quality of the item itself is not taken into account. Therefore, traders should take note of their product thoroughly in order to be able to penetrate the international market through OBOR network in the Malay Archipelago region. Sun and Hun acknowledges that the China’s food processing industry is quite well developed. Therefore, so long as it makes economic sense, the China side could consider transferring parts of the processing stages and techniques to places of origin in Malaysia. This could not only create local jobs, but also raise both the quantity and quality of the products (Sun & Han, 2016).

According to Jaafar, Omar, Osman & Faisal (2013) the market of halal products has received much attention worldwide. Therefore, the demand for halal products is increasing tremendously not only from Muslim countries but also non-Muslim countries.



**Fig. 4 - Indonesia halal foods & beverages market by product, 2014 – 2025 (USD Billion)**  
(Source: Grand View Research, Inc. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/halal-food-market>)

While for linguistic aspects, traders must be wise enough to understand the will of the user or the employee. It should be Malay and Indonesian language to be the official language of the two countries. From there, the implementation of OBOR initiative will become much easier when traders understand the culture and lifestyle practiced around this Malay Archipelago. Doole & Lowe (1999) mention that cultural differences and especially language differences have a significant impact on the way a product may be marketed, its brand name, and the advertising campaign chosen.

Perhaps the product you want to market through the OBOR network to the Malay Archipelago territory can use local language in the event of high and encouraging demand. This is because, not all Malaysians and Indonesians understand Mandarin. Hence, the use of local language, which is Malay or Indonesian language is an effective strategy for winning the hearts of the users.

## 4.2 Linguistics and Logistics as Diplomatic Channel Through OBOR Initiative

The diplomatic aspect is considered as part and parcel for every country. Countries that are practicing door shutter policy and not practicing diplomatic basis will usually be marginalized and worse by economic sanctions by big countries. Based on the OBOR initiative, all of Malay Archipelago areas are welcoming this proposal and willing to cooperate with China. For example, the setting up of the ASEAN-China Innovation Center to be established in Bali, Indonesia. The focus of the establishment of this center is to support international joint ventures of OBOR in the area of research and development of regional innovation. Lee (2014) points out that Sino-Malaysia relations have embarked on a track of comprehensive, steady and fast development in recent years and the bilateral relationship is taking the lead compared with China's relations with other ASEAN countries.

Diplomatic relationship is supposed to reduce pirate's activity in the South China Sea and Sulawesi Sea by conducting more aggressive and periodic patrolling and monitoring. Military training can also be conducted on a regular basis together with diplomatic relations, where it can assure a better security for the maritime areas from the threat of pirates who often trying to hijack commercial ships and boats of deep-sea fishermen. Haiquan (2017) claims the OBOR initiative not only deepens regional economic cooperation, but also faces a huge security risk. Maintaining secure access is an important consideration in the implementation of the OBOR initiative, which will make sure the sea channel stays open rather than cut off.

In addition to Haiquan (2007), Bing (2015) further explains, the exchange of military students is an important platform for exercising military "soft power". 37 Malaysian military students who attend courses in China are exposed to, and to a certain degree socialized into, the practices and norms that China wishes to convey to them. One Malaysian officer who went through one of the training courses in China conveyed to the author that he felt the Chinese favourably differentiated him from other foreign students so as to highlight the positive state of Malaysia-China relations.

Meanwhile, the linguistics aspect should also be taken into consideration for establishing diplomatic relationships among countries or continent. Today, English is widely recognized as an international language and lingual language on almost all aspects. Anyhow, it is possible that the establishment of the Chinese - Malay Archipelago Region will encourage the equal learning of Malay / Indonesian language and at the same time Mandarin is also taught to the people of Malay Archipelago. This win-win situation can somehow reduce the dependence on English language and this will strengthen the OBOR initiative - expanding diplomatic relations in addition to exchanging languages.

Based on Khee's (2008) observation, Malaysia is a country with a significant composition of the Chinese ascendant, has some language and cultural advantages in luring investment interests from China. The domestic Chinese ethnic group who shares similar life principles have been seen successful in dealing with the economics of the country with heavy dependence on the belief of some of the elements like endurance, thrift and clout creation of the CEC, a shared concept among the Chinese worldwide.

This situation is not seen as a big problem as there are countries in the Archipelago where the people are also Chinese. For example, in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia. Both countries have a diverse population that consists of Malays, Chinese and Indians. Only Indonesia is practicing the concept of one nation that is known as "The Nation of Indonesia", while Malaysia practices the concept of different racial identities. The interesting part is that Chinese culture is practiced in both countries and thus, it is an added value for the Chinese state government to establish diplomatic relations with these countries due to cultural, language and customary similarities.

## 4.3 Linguistics and Logistics as a Medium of Humanitarian Mission Through OBOR Initiative

It is generally known that China is often hit by catastrophe and natural disaster. Based on hundreds of catastrophic events in China every year, their most committed rescue team, known as "Blue Sky Rescue", is intensively skilled and trained with various challenges and tests. Hence, here comes the opportunity of the rescue team of the Malay Archipelago to study the humanitarian logistics aspect and exchange ideas with rescue teams from the Great Wall country. According to Miwa Hirono (2018), the Blue Sky Rescue has assisted disaster-affected people in the Philippines (2013), Myanmar (2014) and Nepal (2015), and is now seeking to expand its operations to other humanitarian contexts.

The aspects of humanitarian logistics such as response time, disaster management and squad training should be carried out periodically. Several policies must be regulated parallel to current needs and practicality to be enforced. Based on the OBOR initiative, it is hoped that the assistance channeled to disaster victims can be done with more systematic management, following the more open, organized and precise land and sea networks.

Drawing on years of experiences accumulated in disaster management, China has established the current natural disaster management mechanism in handling disaster prevention, mitigation and relief for all levels of government, from central to local. Whenever severe disasters occur, at the central Government level, the National Committee for Disaster Reduction, the Office of State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, the State Council Headquarters for Earthquake Mitigation and Relief, and the State Headquarters for Forest Fire Control are coordinated by the National Coordination Office for Disaster Mitigation and Relief. On the contrary, at the county level, provincial and municipal governments are held accountable to deal with disaster emergencies by relying on their own comprehensive coordination mechanisms, and the establishment of specific offices. These efforts are mainly made to cope with major public emergency events. (Islam, Kamaruddin, Ahmad, Jan & Anuar, 2016).

In short, humanitarian logistics is a branch of logistics focusing on the delivery of relief goods during the happening of natural disasters to affected areas or victims of natural disasters. Indeed, the task of managing situation after a natural disaster is not something which is simple, but with the exchange of views and thoughts from different countries, we can at least come with new ideas that are thoughtful and beneficial.

For example, the colossal earthquakes in Palu, Indonesia last three years had killed 2000 lives. It was reported that the tragedy is affected by the late arrival of aid and the victims were short of safe drinking water. All these elements are necessary to be considered hand in hand with the cooperation of the Indonesian and Chinese authorities in terms of rescue training. This is one of the social services through the network of OBOR initiatives in addition to expanding the business wing to the Malay Archipelago region.

According to Xu, Gaillard, Yang & Velasquez (2017), the China government considers that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) capacity building is essential to ensure smooth implementation of the OBOR initiative. The National Comprehensive Disaster Prevention and Reduction Plan (2016-2020), issued by the General Office of the State Council on 13 January 2017, states that it is necessary to take into account domestic and international resources for DRR in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. It entails cooperation with the other countries, relevant United Nations agencies and regional organizations to carry out wide-ranging DRR activities.

Through linguistic aspects, it is seen as a vital need for the rescue team to master some languages such as English, Mandarin or Tamil. This is due to the fact that the demography of the Malay Archipelago is made up of various races. For instance, Malaysia, where four major ethnic groups live together, namely Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. Hence, the rescue aspect will be more efficient if rescuers are able to converse well in some languages. From that advantage, they can communicate and understand requests for help when any emergency occurs.

Makoni, S.B. (2017) stated that both police and members of the local communities in Cape Town felt that language learning is important for police to be able to carry out their professional duties. Meanwhile, police were much more interested in learning the language varieties and multilingual practices.

The appearance of OBOR initiative slightly opens the thinking paradigm where the mastery of many languages is also important for expanding diplomatic relations and this close relationship will also facilitate rescue mission especially during joint training between the two countries. Based on the resolution of OBOR initiative as well, it is no wonder that Beijing Foreign University agrees to establish the Malay Language Department in their campus and the average student can communicate in Malay language fluently.

The Malay Studies Chair is an honorary academic position formed by both governments to concede the roles that Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) has had in establishing and expanding Malay Studies programs in the republic since 1961. The first Malay Studies Chair of the Malaysian government in China was Datuk Dr. Awang Sariyan, who was elected to the chair in 2008. Among other responsibilities, the chair is responsible for introducing new fields to Malay Studies including language, literature, culture, and so on. Another significant duty of the chair is also to improve academic programs at both degree and postgraduate levels, conduct research and publications, organize seminars, and assist the establishment and fortification of Malay studies or other language programs in higher education institutions for the Chinese government (Dar, 2016).

The responsibility of the Malay Chinese Studies Chair has become the base and successfully expanded the spread of Malay language throughout China as in Peking University, Communications University and Guan Xi University of Nationalities. In addition, the Malay Studies Chair was also established at Leiden University, Netherlands; Ohio University, USA; Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea. This establishment has a role to develop the Malay language throughout the world (Mansor, Syed Azmy & Yusoff, 2018).

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of OBOR initiatives can be divided to three aspects; business, diplomatic and humanitarian mission. These three aspects shall be guided by two approaches namely linguistics and logistics. If these two approaches are approved and best adopted, hence the OBOR initiative will find the point of a cultural equality and all the ideas and views of governments, as well as Chinese investors will be generously acknowledged.

It is known that the Malay Archipelago supports the OBOR initiative development effort. However, as explained earlier, it is crucial to consider some aspects, which include linguistics culture, a lifestyle understanding through the practice of halal logistics, and social work cooperation based on human logistics approach shall nonetheless be taken into consideration.

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