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PROXEMICS ON BUSINESS NEGOTIATION: WHAT AMERICANS SHOULD BE AWARE OF VIETNAMESE NEGOTIATION SITE SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Vietnam has joined the globalization trend to make itself an inviting market for foreign investment. However, working with foreigners and expanding business abroad can be a risky venture. The diversity among business cultures frequently leads to confusion, misunderstandings, and failures in cross-cultural endeavors. There is hence a need to study business negotiation in a cross-cultural setting. Among the investing countries, America has always been on top of the list, with a strong strategic partnership for years and billions of U.S. dollars in registered invested capital. Many studies have been conducted to understand this important partner, yet none of them so far have addressed nonverbal communication during negotiations between Vietnamese and American businesses. This paper examines through reviewing related studies on the proxemics within a traditional Vietnamese company, specifically the choice of negotiation site (e.g. location) and the room arrangement of that site to see how American people perceive them and how they affect the negotiation process.

Keywords: America, business negotiation, nonverbal communication, proxemics, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is an increasingly popular term to describe the boost of interactions and integration among people, corporations and governments from different countries. Many nations have adopted policies to open their economies both domestically and internationally, to support free-market economic systems, and highlight their productive potentials to create more opportunities for international trade and investment.

Vietnam is also joining this trend to make itself an inviting, emerging market to attract trade, foreign direct investment, international technology transfer, and job placements. As a result, Vietnam successfully took itself into the top 50 countries in terms of globalization worldwide, according to a 2011 globalization report published by Ernst & Young and the UK Economist Intelligence Unit ("VN's globalization," 2011) and had received considerable inflows of foreign capital. More and more companies and businesspeople have considered Vietnam a promising option.

However, working with foreigners and expanding business abroad can be a risky venture. When business executives from all over the world gather in face-to-face meetings to establish joint ventures or negotiate contracts, communication problems may arise. Different cultures with different rules can hinder the business process in the most unexpected ways. The diversity among business cultures frequently leads to confusion, misunderstandings, and failures in cross-cultural endeavors. There is hence a need to study business negotiation in a cross-cultural setting.

Among the investing countries, America has always been on top of the list, with strong strategic partnerships for years and more than ten billion U.S. dollars in 2012's registered invested capital (Burghardt, 2012; Vietnam Report, n.d.). Numerous studies have been conducted to understand this important partner, yet none of them thus far have addressed nonverbal communication during negotiations between Vietnamese and American businesses.

In Vietnamese business today, there are two main streams of values and communication. The first follows traditional ways, established thousands of years ago. It operates in a typical East Asian cultural sphere, collectivistic and heavily influenced by Confucianism, where companies are hierarchically structured, highly organized and formal (Reischauer, 1974). The second stream follows Westernized ways and is favored by younger generations. It sees a shift of values to individualism, emphasizing image, competition, and consumerism (Ashwill & Diep, 2004). The adoption of each stream influences how a company organizes and conducts its business. Within this paper, the author is interested in identifying how proxemics, one important subclass of nonverbal communication, affects negotiation in a traditional company, and how American people perceive it. This paper thus aims to understand what Vietnamese and American businesspeople should be aware of regarding the proxemics within a traditional Vietnamese company, specifically the choice of negotiation site (e.g. location) and the room arrangement of that site.

Traditionally, Vietnamese people prefer to hold meetings in their own territory, which can be their offices or familiar locations. An office is usually set up strategically to facilitate the negotiation process. Vietnamese people utilize *fengshui* in their room settings, and/or place significance in negotiating in the 'home turf'. Such arrangements make them more confident and help them work more effectively (Zing, 2013). Moreover, because members of different cultures often have very different standards, they use the accepted forms of etiquette and protocol of the society in which they live and work (DuPont, 1997).

Vietnamese people tend to arrange meetings in an intimate area, where visitors are treated as welcomed guests. However, the room is usually set up so that there are distinctive differences between the host's seat and the guests', which allow the host to seem more in control of the situation than the guests.

Business negotiation

Business negotiation is a crucial leadership and management skill, needed in a wide range of business contexts, and is highly essential to the implementation of business strategies (Ghauri, 2003). Business negotiation can include, but not be limited to, deal-making, employment, management talks, contract signing and issue solving. Business negotiation involves a large portion of problem solving, where both or all parties try to find a mutual understanding and willingness to work together and arrive at a solution to a common problem (Ghauri, 2003). Therefore, business negotiation is more than just a discussion; it contains true understanding and persuading as parts of the negotiating process.

Both intra-cultural and inter-cultural business negotiations involve representatives from different organizations working together to reach an agreement or to find an agreeable solution. However, intercultural negotiations face more difficulties in arriving at such conclusions or reaching such a solution. As Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2013) mentioned, culture plays a critical role when it comes to negotiation. Representatives from different cultures hold differing cultural values, have contrasting decision-making processes, and have incongruent perceptions of nonverbal behaviors.

Success in the international business arena requires that one knows and understands the basic features of negotiation, as well as the value differences in all involved cultures.

Proxemics

Proxemics is a more abstract part of nonverbal communication. Hall (1966) was one of the first people to study people's spatial needs and perceptions, and coined the word "proxemics" as "the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" (p.1). His research into this field has led to new understanding about our relationships with others.

Even though it was conceptualised almost six decades ago, proxemics is often overlooked by both communication scholars and negotiators. It has, nevertheless, a subconscious contribution to the tone and mood of negotiations, and influences negotiators' preferences and decisions (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). It is hard to analyze how people perceive these subtle cues, since most people do not actively voice their opinions about settings, nor do they recognize that the setting has an impact on their negotiation process. What makes it even harder to study proxemics cross-culturally is that different cultures have different ways to set up environments, preferences and interpretations of these cues. Hence negotiators who understand the differences and utilize them to their advantage are more likely to achieve their goals in business negotiation than those who neglect the proxemics elements.

Location

As discussed by Bottom (2003), a classic example of how undermining the importance of location failed a negotiation was the Treaty of Versailles, which was one of the peace treaties signed by the Allied victors at the end of World War I. The negotiation ended the state of war with Germany. This negotiation was organized in France, in a city that had recently been under siege by the Germans. Later this site was deemed to be a crucial error in ruining the negotiation. French public opinion was negative, which led to a wave of angry people arriving outside the negotiation site, which acutely disturbed both negotiating parties. The location made the negotiators nervous and exhausted, which eventually contributed to the 'lose-lose' outcome of the treaty.

Site selection is considered a critical element that influences both negotiating parties. The example underscores the importance of location and site selection strategy. Particularly, site selection can affect the ability to achieve communication goals, the psychological climate, space and time availability, information flow, agenda setting, and communication channels (Knapp & Hall, 2001; Mayfield, Mayfield, Martin, & Herbig, 1998). Negotiators should be conscious of its impact and choose the site that serves the purpose and desired mood.

Neutral territory

Typically, people distinctively think that they would be more comfortable in their own territory and less comfortable in the opponent's turf. Therefore, when looking for a more agreeable site for both parties, Western negotiators tend to prefer a neutral setting to prevent any favorable conditions the host may have (Mayfield et al., 1998; Spoelstra & Pienarr, 1999). A neutral site has high psychological significance for both parties because neither side owns it or is overly acquainted with it, and would have an upper hand even before the real negotiation starts. A neutral site can also assist conflict avoidance and make it more convenient and culturally sensitive for both parties. Nonetheless, even though a neutral site is agreeable, it is not a favorable option for American negotiators. Chu and colleagues, in their 2005 study on silent messages in negotiation, found that

fewer than 40% of negotiators surveyed felt confident when negotiating outside their own territory (Chu, Strong, Ma, & Greene, 2005).

Nowadays, with the increasing use of electronic communications, neutral territory can also mean a virtual territory. Instead of physical meetings, more and more companies are adopting teleconferencing, videoconferencing, emails, or phone communication. Vietnam's companies also follow this trend and hold some of their meetings virtually. This innovative way of communication can save negotiators from the psychological stress of working in an unfamiliar zone, and also from the time and efforts of traveling. Moreover, research has shown that electronic communication can create a more favorable environment for decision making (Mayfield et al., 1998), save travel time and expenses when the two parties live far apart (Rothwell, 2012). However, virtual communication requires more time than face-to-face to develop positive social relationships, which can affect the decision quality (Rothwell, 2012). Additionally, virtual territory and electronic communication may not work as well cross-culturally. Many countries, including Vietnam, are high context cultures that have a more indirect style of communication that is heavily based on context and nonverbal cues (Ashwill & Diep, 2004). Without seeing each other face-to-face, it is very hard to read between the lines and avoid ambiguity. Therefore, electronic communication between Vietnamese and American should be used only when a certain level of trust and understanding has already been established, or to set the stage before the final decision-making meeting is held at a physical site.

Own territory

Negotiating in one's own territory is the option that most American people desire as a choice in negotiation site. Chu and colleagues (2005) pointed out that 69% of negotiators believe that the party that designates the negotiation site has an advantage in negotiations, and 71% find it more comfortable to negotiate in their own turf.

The hosting party can benefit in their own territory from both internal and external factors. Internally, the host has control over the location and protocol, which leads to less psychological stress, more dominance behaviors, and less likelihood to conform than visitors (Altman, 1975; Mayfield et al., 1998). Externally, the ability to arrange the meeting and adapt to the other parties' needs can help elevate the host's image and enhance the relationship, thus encouraging the other party to be less pushy and to more easily accept the host's proposition (Benoliel, 2011). Nevertheless, while the hosting party receives a dual advantage negotiating on their own turf, inviting the other party to their place is not always possible, especially with Vietnamese business people, who mostly prefer meeting at their own place.

Other's territory

Vietnamese business people usually invite their partners to the office to do negotiations, not only because they realize the aforementioned benefits of being host, but also because this is part of the culture. Vietnamese people usually enjoy showing their hospitality, building relationship, and seeking rapport, even in business. In Vietnam, success in business is based not only on skills, experience, and values, but also on who one knows. Relationships precede everything. Vietnamese people may not do business with someone they do not know thoroughly (Ashwill & Diep, 2004), which is why doing business in Vietnam is less like an American mindset of a partnership, but more of a friendship. While going to an American company seems too strict, formal and uncomfortable for most Vietnamese, inviting Americans to their own place is a way to welcome the expats, help the parties to get to know each other, and slow down the Western business pace. Even though the environment may be too relaxed for Americans, it is when the

Vietnamese people get their first ideas about their potential partners, and those ideas can influence the negotiation outcomes.

Coming into another's territory poses difficulties for many, including Americans. It has been researched that more than half of negotiators feel a greater challenge when negotiating in the other side's turf (Chu et al., 2005). However, Mayfield and her colleagues (1998) argued that there are certain advantages of being a guest. First of all, the overall hospitality of the host can give the guests warm sentiments and lessen frustration. Moreover, just as the Vietnamese want to know more about the guests, it may be necessary for the Americans to get a firsthand view of the host company's facilities, personnel and capabilities, to see if they meet expectations and are able to reach the business goals. Lastly, visiting the other's turf may show the guest's concern and interest, as the host can save time, money, and work in a more comfortable environment.

Physical arrangement

As the location has an important impact on the quality and outcome for a negotiation, so does the physical arrangement at the site. An example of such an arrangement was described by Benoliel (2011) through Charlie Chaplin's movie *The Great Dictator*. In one scene, Mussolini was invited to see Hitler, and Mussolini was arranged to enter through an end door that was far from Hitler's desk. Mussolini had to walk through the enormous room, feeling small in this great space. In addition, Mussolini's chair was specially made so that it was extremely low compared to that of Hitler, making him look up to the latter. Both of the tactics were designed to belittle Mussolini and empower the Führer, giving Hitler an initial advantage for the meeting.

Many studies have been done to explore the effect of physical settings on communication and social interaction. Rubin and Brown (1975) noted that the physical arrangement can influence the psychological climate of social interaction, as well as set the degree of formality and tension for the participants. Knapp and Hall (2001) also argued that people both influence and are influenced by the environment. The surroundings have the ability to produce feelings and alter people's perceptions.

Hall (1966) categorized the dimensions of physical arrangement in the environment as (1) fixed-feature space, and (2) semi-fixed-feature space. The first category refers to space organized by established boundaries, such as rooms or closed spaces. The fixed-feature space acts on people's preferences on spatial zone and distance with others during social interactions. The second category of semi-fixed-feature space refers to the arrangement of tables and chairs. Within the scope of business negotiation, this category refers to the seating arrangement and furniture arrangement at the negotiation site. Both of these categories have a profound impact on communication behaviors (Knapp & Hall, 2001).

Space and distance

People have certain patterns in deciding their comfortable distance when they interact, and this distance varies according to the person's background, culture, social norms, and the nature of the social interaction. Moving too close is considered invading a person's expected zone distance, which can result in extreme discomfort, and negative thoughts and feelings, which will not serve any party's interests (Hall, 1966).

Hall (1966) identified four types of distances, which are intimate, personal, social, and public. Among them, a business negotiation, as with many other business communication processes, would fall into the social zone. The zone measurements are not fixed from country to country, but as mentioned by Hall (1966), are culturally conditioned. Hall grouped countries in which people tend to stand closer, touch more, and

exhibit more physically intimate behaviors into high-contact cultures. In contrast, low-contact cultures are those in which people interact more indirectly and enjoy a wider distance between them. America has been found to be a moderate-contact culture, where the distance preference is to a lesser degree, while many Asian countries, especially East Asian countries, are low-contact cultures (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 2012).

For American people, social distance is defined as a bubble of four to 12 feet around the communicators. In its far phase, which happens in communication with people one does not know well, the distance is from seven to 12 feet. Physical barriers, such as tables and other furniture, are used to make people keep this distance. On the other hand, the close phase, which happens in communication with acquaintances, only has the distance of four to seven feet. The interaction in this phase tends to be less formal (Hall, 1966).

On the other hand, not many studies were done on Vietnamese people's social distances. Bui (2009) and Le (2009) each conducted a survey on a small scale, with 30 and 50 Vietnamese respondents respectively, to understand the conversational distance between businesspeople during negotiations. The data from their studies showed that most Vietnamese people enjoy the distance of four to seven feet when meeting business acquaintances. The results held true regardless of the parties' gender (i.e. if it was a same-sex or cross-sex encounter). Their findings indicated that even though Vietnam is an Asian country, it has a moderate-contact culture, and the distance preference during business negotiations is very similar to that of American people.

Seating arrangement

Pease (1981) stated that strategic positioning in relation to other people is an effective way to get cooperation. The default arrangement can have an effect on the position chosen (Knapp & Hall, 1978), and how one party chooses to position him or herself can reveal his or her perception and attitude to the other party (Pease, 1981). In 2005, Chu, Strong, Ma and Greene conducted a survey of nonverbal communication in business negotiations with more than 80 participants from many countries, including Americans whose first language is English. All of the participants had previous negotiation experience. In accordance with previous studies, Chu and his colleagues found that 75% of the respondents replied that seating arrangement should get more attention from negotiators, as they deemed it important for a satisfactory negotiation.

Several factors were found to have influence on seating arrangements, proximity, bodily orientation and the nature of the relationship (Sommer, 1965). While proximity and bodily orientation are conditioned by the intuitive, aforementioned distance preference, the nature of the relationship is related to one's perception of other people. Sommer (1965) conducted naturalistic observation and conducted questionnaire study of seating preference. He found that a cooperative relationship or a competitive relationship would make people choose seats differently. Sommer's research found that in cooperative relationships, side-by-side seating was preferred, while in competitive relationships, face-to-face seating was used, with a larger distance between parties. Sommer argued that oppositional seating might induce less conversation and reflect a desire to obtain more information about the other competitive party, rather than a wish to form a friendly relationship. Lewicki and Litterer (1985), in their book *Negotiation*, also supported Sommer's findings and concluded that the more competitive the parties were, the greater physical distance from one another was observed. They also stated that competitive parties were more likely to place tables or other furniture as barriers between them to prevent each other from invading their territories.

As described by Pease (1981), there are four basic seating positions in an office environment with a standard rectangular desk. In each of the arrangement, A represents

the host, or whoever arrives at the site first, and B represents the visiting party, or whoever arrives later. When sitting at other desk shapes (i.e. round or oval desks), the observed distance preferences stay almost proportionate to those with a rectangular desks (Knapp & Hall, 2011). Therefore, we can generalize the seating positions from the ones described below.

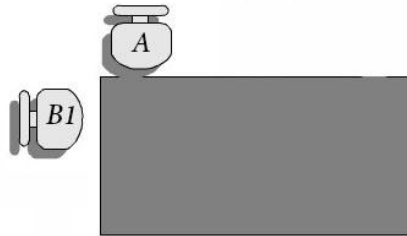


Figure 1: The corner position

Figure 1 shows a corner position seating arrangement. As Pease (1981) stated, communicators choose this arrangement to create a friendly and casual atmosphere, thus increasing the chance of a favorable negotiation. In Knapp and Hall (2001)'s observation of American seating behaviors in a task-oriented situation, this position is the second-most favorite position for conversations, with only 4% behind the opposite (face-to-face) position.

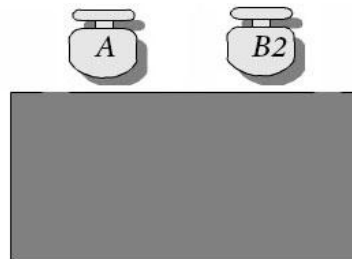


Figure 2: The cooperative position

Figure 2 shows the cooperative position, which is often known as “siding with the opposition.” Knapp and Hall (2001) observed that this arrangement is the most preferred position for people who work on the same task, when the desire for cooperation elicits a side-by-side choice. Pease (1981) agreed that this position would work two people who are mutually oriented and have similar points of view. The close distance between the two parties makes it easy for them to share information and documents during meeting. It is a strategic arrangement for presenting ideas and having them accepted. Nonetheless, this arrangement may not work if A and B are not already acquaintances, because it causes B to invade A's territory, and can cause B to develop a negative feeling toward A.

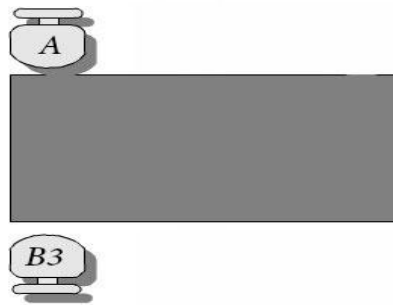


Figure 3: The competitive/defensive position

Figure 3 shows the competitive/defensive position. This position is the one most observed for both conversational and competitive tasks in Knapp and Hall's (2001) research. It is the dominant choice for competing parties. Pease (1981) explained that sitting across the table creates a defensive, competitive atmosphere because the table acts as the solid barrier between the parties. When sitting in this position, each party subconsciously divides themselves into two equal territories, which makes them stand firmer on their points of view and reduces the chance of a successful negotiation. Furthermore, if this position is not situated at a neutral location, the visiting party may have a significant psychological disadvantage (Pease, 1981; Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). It would make B think that A deliberately took the "power" seat and reserved a distance to sit directly across from them to show A as more superior.

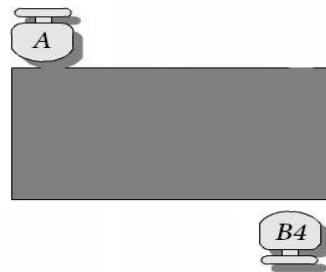


Figure 4: The independent position

Figure 4 shows the independent position. This is the position taken when both parties lack interest in each other and do not wish to interact (Pease, 1981; Knapp & Hall, 2001). It occurs, for example, when two strangers take seats at a table in a library. Naturally, this position should be avoided when an open discussion is needed.

Many studies found that a choosing position is not done intuitively, but negotiators actively pick specific seats to show their status to the other party. Knapp and Hall (2001) observed that leaders and dominant personalities were more likely to choose seats to reinforce their status. This claim was agreed by Anderson (1993) when he stated that leaders tend to take more space, so that they appear to be in charge. Additionally, Johnson (1993) said that negotiators intentionally pick the "power" positions, such as a delegated seat, head of table, or back against a wall to make them feel more confident. Power position is different from the chairperson position, when the role of the chairperson is understood or implied among the meeting participants, and the seat is reserved for that person to facilitate the meeting flow. The power seating position, on the hand, is taken by

an individual who wants to wield personal power. This power seating position was described by Pease (1981) to have the ability to raise status and power through the seat's size, height and location. He concluded that the higher the back of the chair, the greater the status of the person is perceived. As royal members choose to have a higher back on their chairs, the subjects regard their statuses as higher as well.

Another common power play is related to the chair height; its impact is emphasized even more in the competitive position. If the host's seat is adjusted to have maximum height compared to the visitor's, the host can put the visitor at a subconscious disadvantage, as mentioned previously in the example of the movie *The Great Dictator*. The chair power play gives rise to an impactful seating arrangement strategy to create a certain atmosphere in the office (Pease, 1981).

In addition to the chair positioning, it is also noteworthy that the shape of desk at the negotiation site also has an impact on the negotiation process. Even though a rectangular desk is usually used at meetings, Chu and colleagues (2005) found that a round table actually facilitates a meeting.

While some research has been conducted on seating arrangements in the United States and many other countries, including Asian countries, such as China and Japan, little research has been done on how Vietnamese people make seating arrangements. However, many recommended practices mostly based on *fengshui* principles, have been forwarded to Vietnamese business people, showing them how to make the best out of a negotiation. As a result, a number of companies actually practice these *fengshui* principles. At the early stage of any business advancement, there are usually informal meetings, which Vietnamese people use to get acquainted to their potential partners. At these occasions, small round tables such as that in Figure 5 are often used to reduce the distance and to make everyone seem equal (XZone, 2012).



Figure 5: Round table for initial, informal meetings

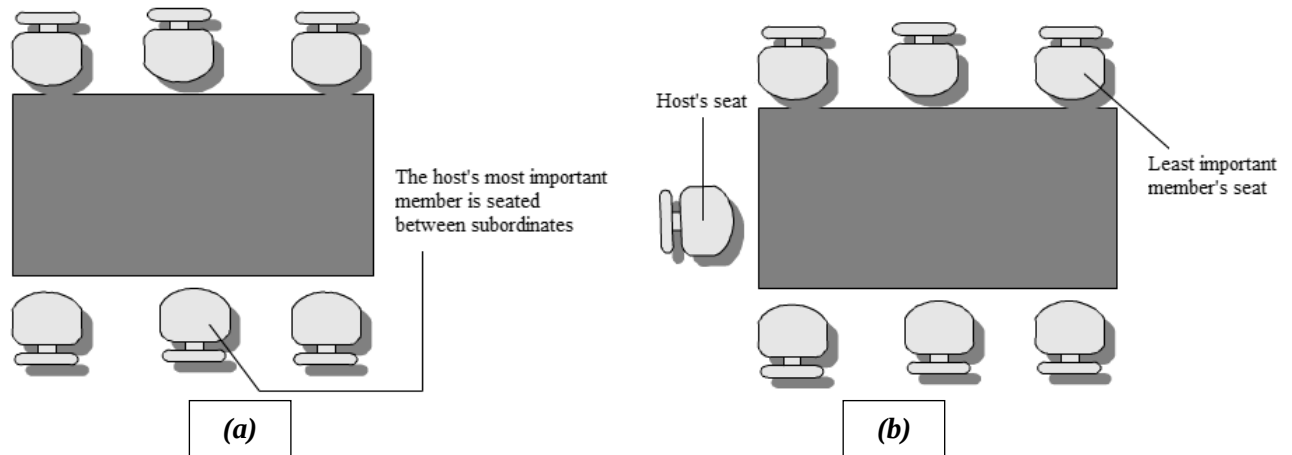


Figure 6: Seating arrangement for official meetings

During official meetings in Vietnam where major decisions are to be made, it is suggested that a rectangular desk be used (XZone, 2012), as illustrated in Figures 6a and 6b. Figure 6a shows the seating arrangement where the host party is taking one side of the table, and leaving the other side for the visiting party. The host's most important member is seated in the middle, with the support of subordinates coming from both sides. All seats in the 6a arrangement are identical, the only distinction being that the hosting party faces the entrance, while the visiting party members have their backs against the entrance. Figure 6b also shows the seating where each party takes one side of the table, but the host's most important member takes the head-of-table seat. In this case, the host's seat is advised by many *fengshui* practitioners to be bigger and higher, with a higher back and armrests, and most preferably facing the entrance and against the wall (Too, 2006).

Application to Vietnam-America business negotiation

Location

Research has shown that most Americans prefer negotiating in their own territory, have less preference for negotiating in a neutral territory, and have least preference for negotiating in the other's territory. They find a greater challenge when negotiating outside their own territory, and that makes them less confident delivering their viewpoint (Chu et al., 2005). However, they usually not only find themselves doing business in another country, but also outside their home office. As Vietnamese people traditionally invite expats to come to their offices to meet, negotiate, and get acquainted, American businesspeople have to practice negotiation in the opponent's territory. The aforementioned psychological pressure, in addition to the tiredness of traveling, and the stress of communicating and adapting to another culture, can make the negotiation process undesirable for American people. Moreover, a Vietnamese host seems to have a greater advantage even before the negotiation starts. Not only do they have the ability to arrange the meeting that increases their strength, they can also show their hospitality, thus gaining the American's appreciation, as well. Altogether, the situation makes the Americans feel less comfortable and makes it more difficult for them to counter the host's viewpoint as a visiting party.

Nevertheless, instead of emphasizing the host's "power" to sway the visitors to comply, the Vietnamese people use the opportunity to get to know each other and, hopefully, create a long-lasting relationship. Even though the relationship building seems foreign in a business setting, especially to American people, Americans can nonetheless

enjoy the hospitality, feel welcomed in the new country, and have an opportunity to lessen the frustrations. Moreover, as Mayfield and colleagues (1998) mentioned, if negotiators actively inspect the host's facilities, personnel and capabilities, the negotiators can see if the host's business meets expectations, and can gain initial knowledge of the potential partner.

With the discussed points, we see that while the negotiation site at the other party's turf can make it uncomfortable for American negotiators at first, the hospitality of Vietnamese people can induce warm sentiments. Furthermore, if the Americans know how to utilize this chance to learn more about the other party, and to build a strong network for future business opportunities, the location can be to their advantage. Therefore, this paper concludes that the American negotiators indeed find it agreeable to meet in the locations that the Vietnamese partners choose.

Physical arrangement

As for the space and distance dimension, it has been shown through much research that the social distance of American people is the same as that of the Vietnamese (Hall, 1966; Bui, 2009; Le, 2009). Since how that person sets up the surrounding space, designs the room and working area reflects a person's social distance preference, it is most likely that the Vietnamese room spatial setting is very close to the American style. Therefore, it can be inferred that the spatial expectations during business negotiations of the two parties are somewhat the same, and the fixed-feature space (the room setting) of a Vietnamese location is acceptable to American people.

On the other hand, there are two types of meeting occasions that call for different seating arrangements in a typical Vietnamese negotiation process, as described by XZone (2012). The first type is an informal meeting, which is used for both parties to get to know each other. In this case, the social space is reduced significantly since the tables are usually small with a number of seats around as in Figure 5 shown previously. The purpose is to create a cozy, friendly atmosphere, which would ease any business tension and bring forth a relationship initiation. The round table choice seems to serve the purpose with Americans, as shown by Chu et al.'s (2005) research that most people prefer round desks at meetings, as they believe it creates a better overall environment. However, the small size of the table can be problematic. It forces people to stay closer together, at a less than a preferable social distance. American people may expect this closeness in a later stage of their partnership, when business is in progress and they understand the others better. Hence, Americans may find this approach to be a bit strange, and the physical closeness may be deemed as an invasion of personal space, which can cause discomfort and negative sentiments toward the Vietnamese party. Moreover, since all of the seats are identical with equal heights, a dominant person does not have the option to select a preferred seat and will have to comply with the host's arrangement. These issues may not be problematic if both parties know each other well, during the early meetings, if the American people have dominant personalities, or if they are not culturally-sensitive. Otherwise, they may form a bad impression which can eventually impact the negotiation outcomes.

During the later stage of business negotiation, when a formal, decision-making meeting is called for, a rectangular table with bigger, heavier chairs is often used, as illustrated in Figure 6a and 6b. In both cases, there are prearranged positions for the two parties. As mentioned earlier, this lack of choice for seating can cause a dominant American to develop unfavorable feelings toward the host. Furthermore, this arrangement puts negotiators in the competitive position. Pease (1981) concluded that this position make the two parties more conscious of their arguments and more likely to reject the

other's, thus reducing the chance of a successful negotiation. Another flaw of this arrangement is that the Americans have to work in the opponent's territory, which would put them at a remarkable psychological disadvantage and give the hosts an upper hand (Pease, 1981; Lewicki & Litterer, 1985). In the Figure 6b situation, the host's seat also adds to this psychological pressure. The host's seat is advised to be bigger, higher, and placed at a better positioning than every other chair (Too, 2006); it is perceived by Americans as a type of power play to put other people at a subconsciously lower level (Pease, 1981). This lining up, on one hand, gives clear superiority to the host, emphasizes his ideas and may sway the outcome to his favor. On the other hand, it may give the visitors the idea that the hosts are not sincere enough to make a fair negotiation, as they deliberately empower themselves and may appear to belittle the visiting party. Altogether, it can be concluded that the Vietnamese seating arrangement (semi-fixed-feature space) may hinder a successful negotiation outcome with the Americans.

Between the two physical arrangements, the Vietnamese fixed-feature space is acceptable to the Americans, while the semi-fixed-feature space is proven to be less than favorable. The author thus concludes that Americans find the overall physical arrangement in a Vietnamese location less than preferable for a successful negotiation.

Limitations and suggestions

This study is subject to an apparent limitation in that it is based upon a literature review. Much of the referenced work is from more than ten years ago, which makes its validity to the present arguable. Moreover, the literature for Vietnamese setting and preferences is slight, including very few academic research studies. The two Vietnamese studies referred in this paper had relatively small samples, which make them harder to be generalized to the bigger Vietnamese population. However, despite the limitation, this study sheds light on the importance of proxemics in business negotiation, and how Americans perceive the traditional Vietnamese settings. It can help Vietnamese businesspeople to consciously arrange their places to meet the other party's expectations, and facilitate a better outcome for the negotiation.

This research does, however, set the stage for empirical research in which data can be collected from the business worlds of both the Americans and Vietnamese to test the older research results and update academic information for Vietnamese settings. Future research can administer surveys to Vietnamese and American businesspeople who have experience in negotiation to understand their perceptions and preferences of proxemics in negotiations. Research can also survey American businesspeople who do negotiation in their homeland and those who negotiate in Vietnam to see if there is any clear difference in the perceptions of proxemics or outcomes of the meetings. The study needs to enhance its validity and generalizability, and to make a more meaningful implication to business practitioners.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen that even though not everyone realizes the importance of proxemics on negotiations, the negotiation location and physical arrangement may have a direct impact on how Americans and Vietnamese assess their potential business partners and how the negotiation outcome turns out. This review found that the American negotiators find it agreeable to meet in the locations that the Vietnamese partners choose. While the negotiation site at the other party's territory can make it somewhat uncomfortable for Americans, the hospitality of Vietnamese people can induce warm sentiments, and Americans can use this chance to learn more about the capability of their partners. It is

also concluded that American people regard the overall physical arrangement in a Vietnamese location as less than preferable for a successful negotiation.

More research is needed, however, to gather data from the real world of both American and Vietnamese businesspeople to fully understand the role of proxemics in business negotiations, to improve the validity and generalizability, and thus overcome the shortcomings of this present study. Since more and more American businesses are investing in Vietnam, it is crucial for American and Vietnamese businesspeople to make the best out of the negotiation process, and to benefit both economies.

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INFLUENCE OF ANCIENT CHINESE *LI* CULTURE ON MODERN CHINESE POLITENESS PRINCIPLES

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ABSTRACT

Chinese politeness has a long native proto-scientific research history in comparison with many other languages. The origin of modern Chinese politeness principles derive from ancient times and have evolved from the past. Although parts of ancient polite languages have disappeared, the principles have not yet vanished. We argue that current Chinese politeness and historical Chinese politeness are in essence very similar. Although there are new polite expressions used, there is continuity between historical Chinese politeness and modern Chinese politeness. This paper elaborates the notion of *li* 礼 (rites) at five levels and compares the difference between Chinese *li* 礼 (rites) and western culture. It also explores the origin of modern Chinese politeness strategies mainly self-denigration/other-elevation, attitudinal warmth, and refinement. By illustrating examples from Confucian Classics, the paper shows that modern Chinese politeness strategies are in line with historical Chinese politeness strategies and that the modern phase has inherited from the essence of *li* 礼 (rites) of the historical phase.

Keywords: Confucianism, culture, historical Chinese politeness, *li*, modern Chinese politeness

INTRODUCTION

Modern Chinese politeness principles have been influenced by contemporary interpersonal communication, etiquette, folk customs, and traditions of modern society. Globalization and frequent international communication across nations have also caused modern Chinese politeness principles to be affected by foreign rites and customs. The origin of modern Chinese politeness principles, however, derives from ancient times and has evolved from the past. Although parts of ancient polite languages have disappeared, the principles have not yet vanished. When investigating modern Chinese polite languages carefully, the researchers find that many principles are in line with those in ancient times.

Before examining the origin of modern Chinese politeness principles and discussing the relationship between the past and the modern, it would be helpful to understand what is meant by modern Chinese. Due to the specialty and complexity of Chinese history, China is widely-accepted to incorporate four periods, i.e. ancient China (before 1840, the Opium War), modern China (between 1840 to 1919), modern China (between 1919 to 1949), and contemporary China (after 1949 until now). Chinese is the language for Han nationality and modern language is the language used by modern Han nationality. Modern Chinese contains various dialects as well as the nation's common language. The following definition is given by Huang and Liao (2002):

(1) 现代汉民族共同语，就是以北京语音为标准音，以北方话为基础方言，以典范的现代白话文著作作为语法规范的普通话。
(Modern Han nationality common language is Mandarin Chinese, regarding Beijing pronunciation as standard pronunciation, northern dialect as primary dialect, modern model writings in the vernacular as grammar norms.)

Accordingly, modern Chinese in this paper refers to Mandarin Chinese spoken after 1919.

ORIGIN OF CHINESE POLITENESS PRINCIPLES

The most approximate Chinese equivalent to the English word “politeness” is *limao* 礼貌, which morphemically means “polite appearance” (Gu, 1990). *Limao* 礼貌 is derived from the old Chinese word *li* 礼, the notion of which is formulated by Confucius or Kongzi 孔子 (551 B. C. - 479 B. C.). The native or first-order traditional Chinese expression for “politeness”, *li* 礼, is one of the basic ethical values in Confucian. Whilst the notion of *li*, originally meaning “religious rites”, covers various forms of social behavior such as “rite”, “social conduct”, “gift” and so on (cf. Gou, 2002; Ciyuan, 1998: 1241 for an etymological definition), it also means “proper linguistic behavior” (Pan & Kadar, 2011).

Confucianism

To have a better understanding of the notion of *li*, it may be helpful to briefly explain Confucianism. Confucianism is a state and social philosophy that was founded by Confucius and became the dominant ideology of China during the Han dynasty (206 B. C.-220 A. D.). Confucianism is a “state ideology” in that, along with determining the norms of social interpersonal behavior in different domains of personal life, it aims to provide a social model by which a country, originally the Chinese empire, can be ruled (Kadar & Mills, 2011). Kadar and Mills (2011) point out that this social model is based on a strict patriarchal hierarchy. In later times, during the Song dynasty (960-1279), Confucianism was “reformed” by the so-called Neo-Confucian movement, the leading figure of which was Zhuxi 朱熹 (1130-1200). In practice, this meant the merging of Confucian ideology with elements of Buddhism and Taoism (Tu, 1976).

Thus, after Confucianism – or more precisely, the amalgamation of Confucian philosophy and some other philosophical traditions – was adopted as the official state philosophy of China during the Han dynasty, proper linguistic behavior became a subject of scholarly interest. Ancient Chinese defined many of the concepts of polite behavior at the dawn of the written history. For example, some of the Confucian classics such as *Lunyu* 论语 (*The Analects*) and *Liji* 礼记 (*The Books of Rites*) include various passages that deal with norms of linguistic etiquette (Pan & Kadar, 2011).

Li 礼 (rites)

Many of the treatises did not focus on linguistic politeness per se; instead they explored the importance of *li* 礼 (rites). What is *li* 礼 (rites) and why is it important? This section elaborates the notion of *li* 礼 (rites) and gives a detailed explanation of its ethical value. *li* 礼 (rites) has a rich and varied connotation and no one can sum it up in a word. Qianxuan, a well-known Chinese scholar said that the range of *li* 礼 (rites) is wider and goes even farther than that of culture, and to study *li* 礼 (rites) equals to study ancient

Chinese cultural history. Chinese *li* 礼 (rites) is regarded as a general name for Confucian culture system (Peng, 2013).

Li 礼 (rites) as a symbol that differentiates humans from animals

Peng (2013) explains that humans share common ground with animals as humans are born out of animals; however humans possess distinct properties from animals. What differentiates humans from animals is a question people often think of. Peng (2013) argues that the basic difference between humans and animals is not languages, but *li* 礼 (rites). One of the testimonies is that because animals do not have wedding ceremony, father and son stag share one sex spouse. Differently, humans know that close relatives (such as father and son) cannot get married and *li* 礼 (rites) for marriage is formulated accordingly.

Li 礼 (rites) as a sign to distinguish the civilized and savage

As a higher mark level, *li* 礼 (rites) makes a distinction between individuals, clans, and nations. The classic *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn*), written by Confucius, was believed by Confucius to be read and learned for all ages. Han Yu suggested that *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn*) talked about the difference between the Han nationalities and minorities, that is *li* 礼 (rites). At that time, nations who were inferior in culture were trying to attack central plains. During this process, some vassals couldn't keep their own established advanced culture and were assimilated by corrupt customs. On the contrary, some minorities chose the Han culture and were assimilated by it. Han Yu argued that the intrinsic quality in the troubled time was the struggle between the civilized and savage, individuals showing *li* 礼 (rites) and without showing *li* 礼 (rites).

Li 礼 (rites) as law of nature in human society

It is natural and reasonable that universe lives forever and law of nature cannot change. Confucius values nature's restless vitality and creativity. When humans want to live along with nature, they must conform to natural rules and imitate natural laws. In the same vein, law of running a country and law of cultivating one's moral character must go along with law of nature as well. Confucianism holds that *li* 礼 (rites) reflects law of nature and should be used by human society. When formulating and designing *li* 礼 (rites), Confucianism follows the example of nature and accords with natural law in all respects. Consequently, it has obtained metaphysical basis.

Li 礼 (rites) as the principle for all activities of society

Confucianism believes that what people do should conform to the requirement of *de* 德 (virtue) and reflect the standard of *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *yi* 义 (justice), *wen* 文 (gentleness), *xing* 行 (competence), *zhong* 忠 (loyalty) and *xin* 信 (trust). A set of rules also called *li* 礼 (rites) is formulated according to the requirement of *de* 德 (virtue). Confucianism points out that ethics and morals could be summed up into a series of norms which become the most reasonable principles for social activities. Being just empty and hollow nouns, morals and benevolence could not get verified without standard deeds and behaviors.

Being used to correct social lives and habits, teachings and instructions could not avoid inattentive and unsatisfactory without standard behaviors. Truth and falsehood could not be distinguished from each other without behavior norms as basis. Royal ranks, military management, office taking and orders execution would lose its prestige and not

be trusted and obeyed without certain principles. Special sacrifice or regular worship for ghosts and gods would lack its sincerity and serious spirit without following proper ceremonies. In a word, *li* 礼 (rites) serves to measure rights and wrongs and is the foundation for every matter.

Li 礼 (rites) as ways for interpersonal communication

Li 礼 (rites) is very important for people to establish a good interpersonal relationship in society. *Li* 礼 (rites) sets up various rules for human communication, such as how to address, how to stand, how to welcome and see off, and how to fete. It would be helpful to shorten the distance between interlocutors, obtain other's understanding and facilitate better communication when obeying the basic requirements of *li* 礼 (rites). Therefore, *li* 礼 (rites) plays a crucial role in creating a genial atmosphere in communicative activities.

Needless to say, one shows his or her fine breeding, demeanor and glamour if his or her behavior conforms to the norms of *li* 礼 (rites). *Li* 礼 (rites) displays individual's level of respect toward others and cognition of society. In this way, individual's learning, accomplishment and value could be accepted and respected by society as well. *Li* 礼 (rites) will bring not only communicative and cooperative trust in public but also harmony and success for interpersonal communication. Various relationships including relationships between schoolmates, colleagues, tutor-student, employer-employee, partners and rivals are necessary to be dealt with according to norms of *li* 礼 (rites). Many news reports point out recently that whether interpersonal relationship is handled appropriately or not can directly or indirectly influence an individual's mental and physical health, working conditions and career development. *Li* 礼 (rites) is therefore one of the important means to establish good interpersonal relationships.

In daily life, people control the yardstick of communication with others obeying various norms of *li* 礼 (rites). On the contrary, without such norms of *li* 礼 (rites) people may feel at a loss in interpersonal communication or even be considered a breath of etiquette. The reason for a tense interpersonal relationship is mainly attributed to neglecting *li* 礼 (rites). Without knowing how important *li* 礼 (rites) is and how to respect others as well as how to cultivate one's communicative ability will probably lead to incompatibility and conflict with others. An individual with no quality, sincerity and modesty is surely not welcoming. The famous saying “读万卷书，行万里路” (Dong, 2011) does not simply mean to exaggerate the endless power of knowledge, but to explain that one has to learn to be a good man in the process of seeking knowledge.

As we know, humans cannot live without society. An individual is accepted by public basically for his or her civilized speech and behavior. Laying stress on *li* 礼 (rites) becomes an unchangeable theme in interpersonal communication. Refined and courteous behavior makes self feel like a stranded fish put back into water in interpersonal communication. Conversely, inappropriate and rude habits exert a serious discount on self-image.

Through reading ancient classics, the researchers found that Confucianism's discussion on *li* 礼 (rites)'s concept and function include these five levels in different contexts. The concept of *li* 礼 (rites) and proper linguistic behavior were important notions in Confucianism because it was believed that it is a key factor in the maintenance of the patriarchal hierarchy and, consequently, social stability (Kadar & Mills, 2011). It is thus not surprising that the Confucian perception of politeness influenced the development of linguistic and other forms of behavior in China and even in other East Asia regions (Kadar & Mills, 2011). To have a better understanding of *li* 礼 (rites), it might be helpful

to give a comparison between these two notions, Chinese *li* 礼 (rites) and western culture. Therefore, the following part will explain the core concept of *li* 礼 (rites) rooted in Chinese traditional culture and analyze the differences between Chinese culture and western culture.

***Li* 礼 (rites) and culture**

Qian Mu, a great Chinese master of historiography notes that *li* 礼 (rites) is the core of Chinese traditional culture when commenting on the characteristics of Chinese culture and the difference between Chinese and western cultures Deng (1998) points out that Chinese culture is developed through centuries by Chinese scholars who possess world property. Different from European literati, Chinese scholars share a common culture no matter where they come from. Western literature views culture as related to regions and customs, and languages in different regions symbolize different cultures. Chinese culture however is universal and only customs and dialects represent a certain region. To comprehend this distinction we need first to comprehend the concept of *li* 礼 (rites).

Based on Qian's understanding, it can be summarized that *li* 礼 (rites) is the total of behavior principles and norms, formulated by the influence of historical tradition and customs, widely accepted and obeyed by people, and aims at establishing harmonious relationship. It incorporates two aspects. The first aspect is politeness, which are the general forms of regularities generated from the need for both personal inner emotions and communication. The second aspect is rites as stable system containing either loose or strict orders related to the level of groups and nations. People not only share common politeness principles but also conform to particular rites based on different status. In a word, *li* 礼 (rites) is the ritual norms in communication between individuals, social classes and nations. Such ritual norms are supported by personal inner emotions and in return they portray inner emotions.

Li 礼 (rites) serves as the norm of all customs and behaviors in the whole Chinese world and marks the specialty of China. There is no equivalent of *li* 礼 (rites) in western language. Since the concept of *li* 礼 (rites) does not exist in western language, western cultures are distinguished by customs (Deng, 1998). It seems that culture equals the total of various customs and habits in various regions. In contrast, the customs in different places of China could differ dramatically. For example, the custom of Dangkou village is not similar with that of Rongxiang village, both of which belong to Wuxi county in Jiangsu province. However, *li* 礼 (rites) is the same no matter where you are. As a norm for a family, *li* 礼 (rites) runs all the household duties and outside affairs such as life, marriage and death. Identically, as a norm for government, *li* 礼 (rites) manages every domestic and foreign affair including the relationship between government and citizen, conscription, signing contracts and succession to the throne.

Another concept in Chinese culture is *zu* 族 (clan), which does not exist in western culture either (Deng, 1998). Qian explains that the meaning of *jiazu* 家族 (clan) is much broader than that of *jiating* 家庭 (family). Norms of social relations extend through clan from family members to relatives. Only when *li* 礼 (rites) is obeyed by both husband's and wife's family's relatives is clan significant. That is to say, clan comes into being when *li* 礼 (rites) extends. When *li* 礼 (rites) extends further, nation is formed; *li* 礼 (rites) then sets up social norms for the whole country. When *li* 礼 (rites) contradicts with social practice, what should be changed is not *li* 礼 (rites) but the local custom or economy (Deng, 1998).

As a cultural property, *li*礼 (rites) contains vitality for culture development. The fact that Chinese culture has been taking a cardinal position and developing a school of its own since ancient world has much to do with *li*礼 (rites). One of the vitalities of *li*礼 (rites) is that it pays attention to personal communication and advocates reality and actual life. Before West Zhou dynasty, *li*礼 (rites) possessed the quality of being mysterious as it stressed revering Heavens and modeling ancestors. However, after West Zhou dynasty, its state of mystery was gradually restrained and the quality of being ethical became essential. *Li*礼 (rites) renders great services when Chinese culture develops into worldly culture of advocating reality.

Another aspect of accelerating the development of Chinese culture is that *li*礼 (rites) unifies common aspiration of the people and builds up solid “cultural Great Wall”, i.e. a sort of spirit of resisting aggression and maintaining morale. As explained above, *li*礼 (rites) distinguishes the Han nationality from other nations. One of the reasons is that the name of the Han nationality reflects the meaning of *li*礼 (rites). The word *huaxia*华夏 (beauty and big), another name for the Han nationality, stems from *li*礼 (rites) because *hua*华 means that China is famous for beautiful dress and personal adornment; *xia*夏 means for great ceremony and propriety. That is to say, *hua*华 (beauty) and *xia*夏 (big) is cohesive with *li*礼 (rites). *Li*礼 (rites) makes use of its own essential factor to cast the “common mental quality” of the Han nationality. This “cultural Great Wall” plays an important role in resisting aggression and maintaining popular morale. For example, after invading central plains, Qing dynasty promulgated a decree of “having one’s hair cut” which violated the customs of the Han dynasty. The Han army and people asserted “head can be cut, hair cannot be cut”. There was a popular habit and saying in Jiao dong region: “Don’t have your hair cut in lunar January, otherwise, your uncle will die”. Behind the habit contains a very strong national ideology.

Taking advantage of superior natural environment, the Han nationality took the lead in developing *li*礼 (rites) culture and became much advanced in culture than the surrounding minorities. *li*礼 (rites) culture was admired and looked up by minorities who managed, by various means and channels, to import it to enrich their own culture. Meanwhile, the rulers of the Han nationality carried out a cultural communication policy “*yixiahuayi*”以夏化夷 (to use *li*礼 (rites) culture to influence and assimilate other cultures) which shortened their course of development. In short, *li*礼 (rites) culture accelerates the cultural progress of minorities to the utmost.

The influence of *li*礼 (rites) on Chinese culture reflects not only in the past but also in modern time. Many modern Chinese politeness principles keep considerable relationship with *li*礼 (rites). But how does modern politeness principles reflect the concept of *li*礼 (rites)? The following section may give answers to this question.

MODERN CHINESE POLITENESS PRINCIPLES

Ancient Chinese notion of *li*礼 (rites) is all-embracing and covers a wide range. Many modern Chinese politeness principles are evolved and developed from the notion of *li*礼 (rites). This part takes three modern politeness principles as examples to show their close relationship between *li*礼 (rites) culture and modern politeness principles.

Denigration oneself and elevating others

Many Confucian Classics demonstrate, the most important component of linguistic politeness is that one has to denigrate oneself (*zibei* 自卑) and elevate one's interlocutor (*zunren* 尊人). Bourdieu (1977) suggests that adherence to this form of behavior is essential in order to gain "social capital", according to the traditional Confucian thinking; for example, the following citation (2) is taken from the *Book of Rites* (Wang, 2011):

- (2) 是故君子不自大其事，不自尚其功，以求处情。过行弗率，以求处厚。
彰人之善而美人之功，以求下贤。是故君子虽自卑，而民敬尊之。
(礼记/表记)

'Accordingly, the superior man does not elevate himself in his doings or overvalue his own merit, hence seeking the truth. He does not aim to make extraordinary actions, but instead seeks to occupy himself only with what is substantial. He displays prominently the good qualities of others, and celebrates their merits, and underestimates his own wisdom. Although thus the superior man denigrates himself, the people will respect and honour him.' (*Book of Rites, Biaoji*)

- (3) 夫礼者，自卑而尊人。(礼记/曲礼上)

'*Li* means the denigration of the self and the elevation of the other.' (*Book of Rites, Quli*, Part I)

The above excerpt (3) demonstrates that elevation/denigration was so important a notion that Confucius, the founder of Confucianism and the alleged compiler of the *Book of Rites*, himself equated it with the concept of *li* 礼 (rites).

According to Pan and Kadar (2011), as denigration and elevation was associated with *li* 礼 (rites), it became the most significant means of proper linguistic communication. This twofold concept manifested itself in discourse through a large number of honorifics, as well as other forms (cf. Kadar, 2007). The most important honorifics were denigrating and elevating terms of address for ancient Chinese people. For example, the term *bifu* 鄙夫 lit. "your humble servant" (i.e. "this worthless person") denigrates the speaker and *gaojun* 高君 (high lord) elevates the speech partner, while *yudi* 愚弟 lit. "stupid brother" (i.e. "worthless brother") denigrates the speaker's brother and *lingxiong* 令兄 lit. "your gentleman brother" (i.e. "venerable brother") elevates the addressee's brother.

Chinese addressing system is rather complicated by influence of social structure, traditional ethics, blood and *zu* 族 (clan) relations. Chinese are accustomed to asymmetrical terms of address which is power-oriented and a sign of vertical social relations. In China, a child can not call his or her parents by name or a student call his or her teacher. Otherwise, they would be regarded as impolite, ill-bred and no manners. Chinese generally like to call family members and relatives by terms of blood relations, friends and strangers by terms of relatives. For example, a person calls a male of his or her grandparents generation Grandpa, a female Grandma; Bobo 伯伯 (uncle) for a male of his or her parents' generation, dama 大妈 (aunt) or aunt for a female; dage 大哥 (brother) for a male of his or her generation, dajie 大姐 (sister) for a female.

In formal situations, people like comparatively to be called by their rank. All levels of administrative ranks from nation's chairman to group leader can be used as terms of address, such as Liubuzhang 刘部长 (Minister Liu), Getingzhang 葛厅长 (Officer Ge),

Zhaozhuren赵主任 (Director Zhao), Likezhang李科长 (Section Chief Li). Such terms of address show respect for the addressee and pay great attention to their status as well.

Other than terms of address to express denigration and elevation, there are sophisticated historical forms such as denigrating and elevating verbal forms, that is, verbs that denigrate the speaker's action and elevate that of the addressee. For example, *baiye*拜谒 (visiting a superior with prostration) refers to the speaker's visit to the addressee, and *shangguang*赏光 (offering one's brightness) refers to the addressee's visit to the speaker. In addition to verbal forms, there are other lexical tools that could express elevating/denigrating meaning in certain contexts, even though they do not have such a lexical meaning. A typical example of such lexical items is the class of idiomatic expressions: for example, *xiaopin-wangchou*效颦忘丑 (attempting to imitate one's style [akin to the ugly woman who mimicked the beautiful lady's behaviour forgetting about the fact that she is displeasing to the eye]) expresses self-denigration in deferential contexts (Pan & Kadar, 2011).

Apart from verbal forms, denigrating and elevating phrases and sentences frequently appear in formal occasions. It becomes habitual to say some polite expressions or formulas in articles or lectures. For example, Chinese scholars always say the following words at the end of a lecture at international conference,

(4) 本人学识能力有限，文中所谈定有不妥之处，
望诸位多多批评正。

(For a limited knowledge and ability, my lecture definitely contains
something inappropriate. Kindly give me your advice.)

The ancient scholar Xunzi荀子 (Wang, 1988) says “shangxiayouli, zhangyouyouxu”上下有礼，长幼有序 (the higher is polite to the lower, and vice versa; be in proper order between the senior and the junior). Educated by the traditional concept of *li*礼 (rites), Chinese lay great stress on self status and the usage of language. There are quite distinctive role languages for the higher saying to the lower and the lower saying to the higher separately in interpersonal communication. On one hand, the language spoken by the higher to the lower display features of dominance and order and there is no use of terms of address. For instance,

Close the door.

Wash your hands.

Distribute the documents.

On the other hand, the language spoken by the lower to the higher show features of being dominated, adding respectable terms of address, sounding mild, such as,

Please sign here, Director

Could I ask you a question, Miss Li?

Could you please spare some time to think over my housing problem, Chief?

Similarly, asking about age is quite an art. For example,

(5) 爷爷，请问您今年高寿？

(May I ask how old are you, Grandpa?)

- (6) 小朋友，你多大了？
(Little girl, how old are you?)

The above forms of denigration and elevation are applied in practically every interpersonal relationship that necessitates facework or politic behavior in interpersonal communication in modern Chinese. Kadar and Mills (2011) argue that many of the common stereotypical features and norms of current Chinese politeness behavior, most typically the preference for denigration of the self, the elevation of the other and other forms of honorific communication such as addressee beautification as well as the hierarchical ritual nature of interactions can be attributed at least in part to this common Confucian “heritage”.

Attitudinal warmth

An important aspect of Chinese communication is the demonstration of emotive “warmth” (温情 *wenqing*) when politely interacting with others (Pan & Kadar, 2011). In Confucian culture and tradition, almost all of the rites and polite languages have strict rules on linguistic forms, and more importantly, are formed based on human emotions. One cannot be “merely” polite without being involved in emotive discourse. Zhai’s recent studies (1994, 2006) demonstrate that “real” emotions behind politeness are considered as a similarly important phenomenon in mainland China. This interrelationship between emotions and politeness can be well observed since the earliest times in China; for example, the classical treatise *Lunyu* 论语 (Yang, 1980) notes the following words on this issue:

- (7) 子曰：“人而不仁，如礼何？人而不仁，如乐何？”（“八佾篇第三”）
“Confucius said, ‘What’s the significance of external *li* and happiness without real emotions?’” (*Bayipian, part III*)

- (8) “为礼不敬，临丧不哀，吾何以观之哉？”（“八佾篇第三”）
“What on earth is the meaning of politeness without emotions and attending funerals without feeling sad?” (*Bayipian, part III*)

Interestingly, Pan and Kadar (2011) in recent studies point out that in the Chinese sociocultural context the lack of “warmth” often presupposes the lack of politeness, and vice versa. In other words, emotionless and thus “insincere” politeness is traditionally treated as unsuccessful communication, since the notion of sincerity has always been important in Chinese communication (cf. Gu, 1990). Therefore, politeness with emotions is one of the most important strategies among ancient Chinese *li* 礼 (rites) culture which also extends to modern times. The following blog describes the experience of a Hong Kong traveler in Paris:

- (9) 巴黎人的礼貌并不表示他们的人情味，他们多礼的后面你体会不到温情...
‘The politeness of the people of Paris lacks all emotions, behind their great politeness you cannot feel attitudinal warmth...’

Refinement

Refinement is another indispensable principle in historical culture. Since pre-Qin era refined language forms were advocated and use of foul language forms was banned;

people were encouraged to use more euphemisms and less direct language forms. A good example to conform to this principle is terms of address as discussed above, especially respectable terms of address which are all regarded as refined language forms and euphemisms. See the following example taken from *Lunyu* 论语 (Yang, 1980) which demonstrates the importance of refinement:

(10) 质胜文则野，文胜质则史。文质彬彬，然后君子。

‘One with more simpleness than literaries is rather rude, one with more literaries than simpleness is rather impractical. One with proper combination with simpleness and literaries can be called a gentleman.’

Mild and outflanking expressions also represent traditional spirit of *li* 礼 (rites). Ancient classic *Zhouyi* 周易 (The Book of Changes) (Zhou, 2013) states,

(11) 地势坤，君子以厚德载物。

(Earth is thick, broad and extensive, loaded up with all things; following the example of earth, man should possess a virtue of broadness and generosity.)

The spirit is through time developed into a broader sense. One should forgive, give face to other, not care much about other’s fault, and not harm other by words or deeds. People always hear remarks like the following,

(12) 进步是明显的，但是...

(Progress is obvious, but...)

(13) 工作做得非常出色，希望今后...

. (Your work is well-done, hope that later...)

Here the speaker likes to use mild expressions to point out hearer’s shortcomings in communication. The speaker first approves hearer’s achievements and merits by long paragraphs, then use “but” to indicate inadequate and questioning points. Or on the basis of approving achievements by long paragraphs, the speaker puts forward “hope” to encourage the hearer to overcome shortcomings.

Gu (1992) holds that a person who is vulgar and full of filthy speeches would be rebuked as an “impolite” person “without education”; but if a person always speaks elegantly, he will be considered as an “urbane” and “cultured” person. By speaking refined languages and euphemisms, one can easily be accepted and can achieve communication goals. Although direct language use can tell the essence of the problem, it may cause the counterpart to lose face so that the problem may not be solved and communication may fail.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, modern Chinese politeness principles are in line with ancient *li* culture. Many aspects of contemporary politeness concepts can find their origin from Confucianism and classical treatises in the past. In order to explore and explain Chinese polite behavior, it is a good attempt to do a historical overview of Confucianism and ancient *li* culture.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY IN K. S. MANIAM'S *RATNAMUNI*

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ABSTRACT

In his fiction, the Malaysian-Indian author, K. S. Maniam depicts the identity and culture of Malaysian-Indian. This is shaped with a collection of materials that are vital to keep the trace of ancestral identification marks, of retaining the status of being Indian, even though the land they live in is not India. In the new land the Indian community invests its new narrative of existence with a power structure to support the Diasporic Indian "self". In Maniam's reconstruction of the Indian immigrant experience in Malaysia, there are the difficulties that the community faced when trying to recreate this world. Maniam depicts the rites of the complicated cultural issues in a Diasporic Indian community. In his reconstruction of the Indian immigrant experience of Malaya, One can see these previously peripheral characters as the agents of the Diasporic identity that the present day Malaysian-Indian has inherited. The passage of such identity formation, however, is demonstrated to be filled with the many snares of both colonial and postcolonial experiences. The present study examines Maniam's short story, *Ratnamuni*, from a Diaspora perspective. This study shows the way in which Maniam symbolically depicts the culture of a nation in Diaspora.

Keywords: culture, Diaspora, identity, Malaysian-Indian, spirituality

INTRODUCTION

The history of Malaysia, its development from colonialism to post-colonialism, and its movement towards multiculturalism are all important in appreciating not only the nation at a particular period of time of its development, but also the psyche of its individuals and its authors. Obviously, this reconstruction can never be wholly and inclusively a smooth and balanced affair, especially where the issues of gender, culture, race and identity are considered. Yet, the key element is that the power of narrativity in the hands of postcolonial writers allows for the reinsertion of the subaltern into written history.

By looking back at history, one can find that Malaysian literature develops in its own root that Malay language has been used as a medium in writing. Malay writers, particularly, have talked about issues on patriotisms and nation building. However, the emergence of Malaysian writers from other races began and rose together with the development and modernization in Malaysia. Malaysia literature in English has developed over fifty years which is after the country independence.

Concerning the Malaysian writers that come from different races, their literary works are also varied and touch the important multicultural issues ranging from broad questions of identity such as sense of home/homelessness, gender, language, multiculturalism and Diasporic perspective.

Multiculturalism is a challenging issue in contemporary Malaysia. Indeed, multiculturalism as a political and socio-cultural issue is discussed at various levels of community and in different areas of study. According to Hall and Gay (2003):

Multiculturalism - a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to chicano/a fiction - has become the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterize contemporary *Kulturkritik* (p. 55).

In a multicultural community, the authors are responsible to the nation. In this relation, literary authors find themselves responsible to social heterogeneity, and such issues as culture, identity, history, language and gender, as “the management of diversity and difference through the bureaucratic mantra of race, class and gender encouraged the divisive rhetoric of being more marginal, more oppressed” (Mercer, 1992b, p. 33; as cited in Hall & Gay 2003, p. 97). Thus, issues of identity, race and culture require more attention in a multicultural society.

Subramaniam Krishnan (K. S. Maniam) the Malaysian-Indian writer illustrated such issues of identity, culture, and race in his fiction. Maniam was born in 1942. He is Hindu, Tamil and he was born in Kedah. Maniam's parents worked as rubber- tappers and while they were working, Maniam perceived the lifestyle of Tamils in Malaysia. He studied in Malaysia and worked as pupil- teacher for a few months before leaving for India where he studied medicine for a short while then he moved to England to study teacher education. After obtaining his certificate, he returned back to Malaysia and taught in different schools. He completed his BA in Arts/ English and continued his master in English Literature. He started his career in 1979 as a lecturer at the University of Malaya and was retired in 1997. He is a prolific writer and has many short stories, novels and plays.

According to Naipaul, Maniam knows what it is “to be Indian in a non-Indian world” (Naipaul, 1984, p. 42). Though Maniam writes mainly of the Malaysian-Indian community, the borders of his imagination, if one follows its footprints closely, do not move towards that ethnic community alone. Instead, at every juncture, they edge out of the environments of that communal world into the territory inhabited by the other communities sharing that same soil.

In his fiction, Maniam, depicts the identity and culture of Malaysian-Indian. This is shaped with a collection of materials that are vital to keep the trace of ancestral identification marks, of retaining the status of being Indian even though the land they live in is not India. In the new land the Indian community invests its new narrative of existence with a power structure to support the overseas Indian “self”. In Maniam’s reconstruction of the Indian immigrant experience in Malaysia, there are the difficulties that the community faced when trying to recreate this world. When one tries only to build on what was left in the past without any connection with the present, that world becomes only a shadow of what is beyond one’s reach. For most of the Indian community, it was impossible to return to India. They could never afford it. Reconstituting its image in a foreign land proved rather difficult as well. While many Diasporic Indian writers focus on the ways in which India was replicated in the foreign land, Maniam attempts to depict characters deeply committed to creating a new narrative of existence that embraced the world that they lived in.

Maniam depicts the rites of the complicated cultural issues in Diasporic Indian community. In his reconstruction of the Indian immigrant experience of Malaya, one can see these previously peripheral characters as the agents of the Diasporic identity that the present day Malaysian-Indian has inherited. The passage of such identity formation, however, is demonstrated to be filled with the many snares of both colonial and postcolonial experiences. Maniam shows the immigrant community struggling with the feat of keeping side of their Indian self and how they develop to engage with the spaces of the new land. He concerns the idea that communal memory is the most significant tool of restitution as it becomes the medium through which the lost narrative of the subaltern is reinstated in the present.

Maniam's literature is often presented through the view-point of Malaysian-Indian characters whose consciousness of their present is continually formed by their recognition of an Indian immigrant past. Often the narrative space is one where echoes of ancestral figures and voices constantly slip in and out of its terrain. As Maniam in his novel *In a Far Country* asserts:

As far as I can recall there had been only one great adventure in his life—his escape from India to Malaysia. There were times when he muttered and mumbled during his toddy-soaked carelessness, and it was through these moments of indiscretion that his story came through to me. Thinking back I realise that that was how he tried to pull himself out of his limp helplessness. The faint, flickering light and the night silence created shadows and echoes that could have been of another man and another place. The place was another country, India: the time, another era that comes though me in a strange way. Can memories be inherited? Can repetition make actual the past? (Maniam, 1984, p. 1)

In fact, Maniam depicts Diaspora and its effects on the characters who emigrated from India to Malaysia. Through his fiction, Maniam shows the nostalgia for the past and his land. The present study investigates Maniam's *Ratnamuni* from a Diaspora view-point. This study aims to show Maniam's concern of Diaspora through his symbolic depiction of culture.

Ratnamuni: A glimpse

Wicks (2002) argues that Maniam's novels show Indians who live in Malaysia, but think of what it could be if they were in their lands, and what it is now in reality. Maniam is usually regarded as a realistic writer and flashbacks and dreams are typical in his text. In his first short story, *Ratnamuni*, selected from a collection named *Sensuous Horizons: The Stories and the Plays*, he uses interior dramatic monologue to narrate the story and such "narrative strategies as memory and story- telling" negotiate the sense of Diaspora (Nyman, 2009, p.109). In *Ratnamuni*, Maniam depicts interior lives of the characters who deal with their past and their relationships. He narrates the story of individuals in Diaspora. *Ratnamuni* is a story about a poor worker, Muniandy, who emigrates from India to Malaysia. He reveals the expectation, the depression, the shame and the predictable violence of his life. A tragic story has happened in his life, where he killed a man and this tragedy has pulled him out of an expression which makes his life plunge into darkness. At first, when Muniandy comes to Malaysia he only brings a beggar bundle with him, and at the end of the story when he surrenders himself to the police, he really becomes a beggar when he does not own anything with him. He is under depression when he does not understand why his wife killed herself. He remembers the time when his wife

had regretted before her death. Although Muniandy is a person with many bad habits, he still has the spiritual power through *uduku*, a special drum used by Hindus for their spiritual use. Muniandy begins the story with the following words:

Repot-kepot ayah. I cannot tell straight. This Bedong I stay all my life I did not come straight. When I was coming here – nothing. Only her – the *uduku*. That man in Madras wearing the uniform asks .e. What is this, man? Everybody carrying big boxes and things, you only a beggar's bundle?" I said, "The Lord Siva danced and made the world". (Maniam, 1984, p. 1)

Maniam reveals the awareness of spiritual experience in Diaspora. The references to the spiritual beliefs in Hindu religion, to his motherland and the way Muniandy worshiped God indicates his nostalgic mood for his past.

Symbolic presentation of culture in Diaspora

Diaspora originated from a Greek word meaning scattering and dispersion. For the first time Diaspora was mentioned in the Old Testament which examined Judaic history and the way Jews who have been in exile and away from their land Israel in biblical times (Chand, 2009). According to Jim Clifford, "Diaspora is a signifier not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local" (as cited in Hall & Gay, 2003, p.92). Furthermore, Hall and Gay observe Diaspora "as a distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement". That is, Diaspora emphasizes the historically spatial fluidity and intentionality" (2003, p. 92)

Moreover, Diaspora can be related to the dispersion of people, culture and language from the place they are originated to the new place. For example, the Indians who moved from India to Malaysia in search of employment and other opportunities are considered as Diaspora. These people, who migrated to a new country, either willingly or by force, can create their new home, although they feel nostalgic towards the past that they had and their willingness to return to their own countries; therefore, their "subjectivity is formed in constant dialogue between the present reality and the baggage of the past" (Clammer, 2002, p. 23). Those who migrate to new lands change their culture and language according to the new land or try to keep all their traditional backgrounds. As a result of their migration, in Diasporic texts, the reader can follow the haunting presence of the mother land and feel the anguish of personal losses in characters. As the current article discusses, Muniandy moved from India to Malaya but he is unsatisfied with his situation. He laments the loss of his homeland and the relationships he had had with people of his own land. According to Eric Michaels "people's access to knowledge is determined in part by the places - of conception, birth, death and residence - from and by which they speak, for one is always speaking for and from a specific geography of such places. That is, subjectivity describes the points of attachment from which one experiences the world" (as cited in Hall & Gay, 101). Muniandy has no experience of the new land and all his knowledge is rooted in his mother land. In fact, Maniam depicts what it means to be Indian without being in India. He shows the difficulties the Indians go through when they are in a foreign country. Maniam chooses a Malaysian-Indian character who always looks backwards to his past. In fact, this dreaming of the past is a way to escape the harsh reality which "is continually being transformed and power enacted" (Hall & Gay, p.99).

Muniandy compares himself to Hanuman, the Simian featured god of the epic *Ramayana*. He talks of his first employment in the new land as a:

boat-rower ... carrying the men, women, children- strangers from one coast to the other coast in a gliding boat. The light making lines on the water. The people going from one darkness to another darkness. I am Hanuman the rowing monkey for them. (Maniam, 1984, p. 1)

Maniam symbolically shows the taboo of crossing of the dark waters that wash away all traces and all links with the ancestral land. However, Muniandy puts himself at the centre of this journey as a spiritual leader. This role concerns his only possession, the *uduku*, which Lord Siva holds in his hands as he dances. In *Fiction into Fact, Fact into Fiction: A Personal Reflection* (1987), Maniam argues that “*uduku* is capable, when played by a person in a state of ritual purity, of sending the player into trance and so reveal knowledge that is otherwise not usually available” (1987, p.220). In *Ratnamuni*, Muniandy has such a visionary power. By playing the *uduku*, he goes into a trance-like state and extracts information of an ethereal kind.

However, he is angry with the new region he entered and his anger is reflected in the way he pronounces the word “Ma- la- ya”. He remembers the time when he just arrived in the land and he had nothing except the *uduku* (Maniam, 1984). He remembers the first person who saw him laughed at his religious ideas as the religious backgrounds are different: “The Lord Siva danced and made the world. The man was laughing in the corner of his mouth” (Maniam, 1984, p. 7). The man laughed not only at his *uduku* but also his religious beliefs, but for Muniandy the *uduku* is symbol of his cultural background and whenever he plays it, he remembers his past and his land.

Nothing could satisfy him in this land and all the time he has a sense of nostalgia and remembers how he lived in his own country. As Clammer observed “the migrant can never have the same relationship to the land as can the native” (2002, p. 24). Muniandy cannot appreciate the nature as he feels detached from it.

Muniandy is very observant as he comes from another background and every movement and sound is strange to him. It is the cultural shock to him as he is not used to the situation yet. He should adapt himself with the new changes and have "negotiation of new understanding of reality", but he is not successful to absorb the new changes (Clammer, 2002, p.16). Besides the cultural differences, he also faces the religious differences. He can hear sounds from his *uduku* as if God talks to him.

In Malaya, Muniandy considers himself as “unwanted” (Maniam, 1984) as his language, culture, religion and his understanding of life are different. He finds himself as ‘other’. According to Hall (1990), “imposed selves which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common make us see and experience ourselves as other” (pp. 224-393). Such an idea of cultural identity is significant in all the post-colonial struggles having reshaped the world. Muniandy feels isolated and unwanted as he does not have anything in common with other people around him.

Maniam shows that history is not without its problems and he presents the harsher realities of life in the colonial plantation. He depicts the suicide of Muniandy’s wife, which in turn leads him to escape his predicament by turning to the destructive power of toddy. His life does indeed pursue the sequence of Lord Siva’s dance. It is after all as much creative as it is destructive. However, this time the conviction he had at the very beginning is lost:

When at last I think I have reached I must start again ... I won’t start again, I want to go back to the water. To be a line in the river that dances and is broken. I want to break and heal without knowing. I drink toddy in the evening. (Maniam, 1984, p. 7)

Through such self-imposed oblivion, he violates the law from the cosmic dancer to the dwarf of ignorance that is trampled in the sequence of the dance itself. He becomes a comical person; 'the big monkey dancer' that children began to make fun of, instead of the revered Hanuman mentioned to earlier.

Yet the sequence of ignorance does not last long. In what is now a style of Maniam's creative interpolation, cultural thought is transferred into the body of narrative. Muniandy understands that he has been charmed by *mayam* or illusion and that this has kept him from the true knowledge of his wife's suicide: "I am also part of the dance ... knowing I am only a dancer. I have to create so I can be destroyed to enter a greater creation" (Maniam, 1984, p. 13). Like Siva Nataraja, he must trample the dwarf of ignorance to release a higher consciousness of his identity in the new country. He becomes, symbolically, the *uduku* that he owns "My skin is ready to be drummed on" (Maniam, 1984, p. 17).

Consequently, the truth behind his wife's suicide is revealed. He discovers that she was raped by their neighbor, Muthiah. This revelation tramples in turn his ignorance of the actual predicament of his wife:

When my wife bent over me in the mornings I didn't listen to her words. The voice charmed a mayam over my ears. I was too happy to see the custom from the Big Country still used in my house. Now the suffering didn't come behind the truth. All the saying that had gone past a deaf ear was heard again. There was pain and contempt in them. (Maniam, 1984, p. 17)

Maniam in *Ratnamuni* draws explicitly from the resources of his Diasporic experience to fashion alternative cultural and historical politics. Although Maniam reveals the anguish and anxiety of this community as its members cling desperately to old, ancestral rituals, he does not present the Indians as a lost race, doomed to a life of futile mimicry on an alien land.

CONCLUSION

Diaspora refers to people's movement from one place to a new land, and it has its own historical background of the movements of the Jews for the first time. Although Diaspora is a border-crossing issue, it is also related to racial and cultural issues. As the people move to a new area, they may have some problems with mingling with other people, cultures and races. They consider their homeland as their true home and the place to which they finally will return. This paper examined *Ratnamuni* in the light of Diaspora and the way Muniandy as the main character of the novel deals with some problems when he moved to the new land. Thus, the presence of the Indian Diaspora in Malaysia is based on the formation of an identity through movement from an ancient tradition to a new land. The overarching theme of Maniam's work of fiction from the discussion is remarkably located within the debate of home and belonging. It pursues thus that at the heart of this discourse one often finds the attendant referent of residence, the physical house itself. Furthermore, Maniam's *Ratnamuni* represents the concern of the people who struggle for a better understanding of their culture, race and sense of self in Diaspora.

Consequently, it is necessary to understand the features of cultural changes in Diasporic region and the reflections of local people to this bewildering range of forces, pressures and influences. Thus, the comparative, region-wide study of culture is

significant to understanding of identity and its construction and transformation in a new culture and region.

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LANGUAGE USE BY FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES IN THE RAIL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Language choice and use maintain that speakers select a particular language in relation to a particular context and purpose. Based on Fishman's (1972) domain analysis theory, this study investigates the language use and perception of frontline employees in the workplace by focusing on their spoken language to customers. A set of questionnaires was distributed to the frontline employees of four major rail transportation services in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The respondents of the study comprised 106 frontline employees at ticketing counters and customer service information counters. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted on a sample of the respondents. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the survey data. The findings show that most of the respondents used both Malay and English in carrying out their daily work. The respondents also perceived that English and learning other languages are important in their daily job scope.

Keywords: domain analysis, frontline employees, language choice, language use, rail industry, workplace communication

INTRODUCTION

The English language as a lingua franca undoubtedly plays a significant role in multicultural and multilingual Malaysia. Not only is it perceived as a means of obtaining knowledge, it also has significant roles for economic and social advancement. Kamisah (2007) states that more than one language is used in the day-to-day operations due to the linguistically diverse workforce in organizations. This is attested to by concerns that have been raised in several studies on the subject of language use and choice within the Malaysian multilingual setting (Nair-Venugopal, 2000; Jariah, 2003; Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, 2005; Rafik-Galea, & Fernandez, 2005; Md. Mostafizar Rahman, 2007; Qian, 2009; Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Leo & Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, 2013). Most of these studies have concentrated on language use and choice either in the personal, educational or in the private workplace domain.

In relation to communication, many sectors in the hospitality industry recognize the value of good communication and its importance to the industry (Chan, 1998). In their study of communication in the service industry, Sparks and Callan (1992, p. 215) emphasized that "it is important in the service industry to establish and build a relationship with customers and that the difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction for customers in a service encounter is information". Crosling and Ward (2002) viewed oral communication as an important aspect in the workplace, and pointed out that workers require effective skills in the workplace domain if they are to be successful in their careers. Indeed, several researchers have pointed out that communication and social interaction are the means for achieving occupational activity, and enable employees to learn and acquire new skills. In any organisation, it is important

to train employees, managers, and executives in communication skills so that they can communicate effectively. It is essential for employees to have the ability to communicate during service encounters, since interactions with staff are vital in determining customer satisfaction (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994).

However, far too little attention has been given to frontline employees' language use and choice especially in the transportation industry. Previous studies have focused more on service quality rather than aspects of language used by the employees. Concerns have been raised by several researchers on the positive displays and friendliness of the service provider in order to enhance the service and interaction quality (Grandey, Fisk, Matilla, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Tsai & Huang, 2002; Gronroos, 1990; Czepiel & Solomon, 1985). Apart from that, it is also important to look at frontline rail employees' attitude and motivation towards learning English. Gardner and Lambert (1959, p.272) hypothesized that "a strong motivation to learn a second language is followed by a desire to be accepted as a member of the new linguistic community."

This study also attempts to determine the perceptions of frontline rail employees towards communication in English. Language attitudes, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), refer to language learners' perceptions of the second language (L2), and its speakers, as well as the sociocultural and pragmatic values associated with the L2. Furthermore, success in language learning depends on learners' attitudes towards the linguistic cultural community of the target language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). As a result, this can provide a better understanding and solutions for motivating the employees' language learning especially in using English during service encounters.

Recognizing the importance in meeting customers' needs, it is crucial to acknowledge that language plays an extremely important role in frontline employees' duty, as good performance during service encounters will contribute to excellent service and certainly attract more customers, and at the same time, give a good reputation to the service industry concerned. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to investigate the language choice and use of selected frontline rail employees. The paper seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the language proficiency skills level of the frontliners?
2. What are the frontline rail employees' preferred languages when communicating with the customers?
3. What are the frontline rail employees' perceptions on the use of English language for communication?
4. What are the frontline rail employees' perceptions on English language learning and their motivations for this?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Domain analysis

This study draws on the theory of *domain* developed by Fishman (1972). Although Fishman's theory is quite dated, investigating domain of language use has facilitated a number of worthwhile contributions to the understanding of bilingualism and language choice and use. The question "who speaks what language to whom and when" is asked by Fishman (1972) at the beginning of his analysis of communication in a speech community. He popularized the term "domain" to generalize not only describing individual social situations but also how language use differs from one situation to another. Certain domains appear to be "more resistant to displacement than others (e.g., the family domain in comparison to the occupational domain) across the multilingual

settings characterized by urbanization and economic developments, regardless of whether between groups or within group where comparisons are involved” (Fishman, 1964).

The major domains described by Fishman are family, friendship, education, employment, and religion. The languages used in these “domains” depend on the individuals, their relationships, and topics under certain settings. To give a simplified example, a husband and wife (participants) talking about domestic affairs (topic) at home (setting) constitutes a ‘family’ domain and would require the use of a special language or language variety which would differ from the ‘work’ domain. In other words, there are certain social structures where the use of one language is more appropriate than another (Fasold, 1984). The theory asserts that speakers’ choices of interaction provide a dynamic connection between the language code, speaker’s goals, and the participant’s roles in specific situations.

Greenfield (1972) was among the first to implement domain analysis in his study of the Puerto Rican community in New York City. It was revealed that in New York City’s Puerto Rican community, Spanish was regularly used in the more ‘intimate’ domains such as ‘family’ and ‘friendship’, while English was the normal choice in domains where a status difference between participants was involved, such as ‘religion’, ‘education’ and ‘employment’. In the same vein, Platt’s (1975) research in Singapore revealed that Mandarin, Malay and the various Indian languages are classified as having a high status occurring generally in the domains of education, media, government and except for Malay in the religious domain.

Similarly, Leo and Ain Nadzimah Abdullah (2013) integrated Fishman’s theory in their study of the dominant language choice of Tamil Christian youths in Malaysia based on their patterns of language choice and use in the domains of family, friendship, and religion; and the underlying factors that govern their language choice patterns in the selected domains. The findings of the study indicate that the respondents chose and used English, Tamil, and bahasa Malaysia in selected domains. The English language was predominantly used in all three domains as a result of the influence of these particular domains; the speakers’ verbal repertoires and those of their addressees; their attitude towards a language and its speakers; motivation; and also their sense of solidarity and social identity.

It is obvious that, Fishman’s notion of language domain represents an attempt to provide socio-cultural organization and socio-cultural context for considerations of variance of language choice and use in multilingual settings.

Language choice and use in the workplace

This section discusses related studies done on the importance of English, the need for other languages apart from English, and language choice and use of frontline employees.

The importance of English

Numerous studies have attempted to discuss the importance of language and communication in various workplaces (for example, Maher & Rokosz, 1992; Li So-Mui & Mead, 2000; Al-Khatib, 2005; Kaur & Clarke, 2009; Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). The principle role of English as the lingua franca at the workplace is without contention. Hafizoah Kassim and Fatimah Ali (2010) examined the oral communication skills needed by engineers and the communicative events where English would be required by the industry. The results showed that generally, the most frequent communication in which English was required was with colleagues from the international branches of the organization and other offices. In addition, Kaur and Clarke (2009) believed that Human Resource personnel needed to improve their English language skills

and abilities if they wished to function more effectively in their daily tasks at their workplaces. They found that the English language skills of the Human Resource staff in two American multinational electronics companies did not match the requirements of the English language skills required in order to function well at their workplace. Similarly, workers in the business professional line also regarded proficiency in English as vital for their work especially when dealing in international interaction (Kankaaranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). They also reported on accommodation practices; for instance, when speaking with a fluent non-native speaker, or a native speaker, they fully exploited their English skills, but will simplify their language if the partner's skills were limited.

Similarly, Briguglio (2003) findings on the use of English as a global language in multinational companies in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong illustrates that companies such as Seacargo International in Kuala Lumpur, see both spoken and written English as being important, especially for surveyors, to perform their work effectively. Face to face communication was regarded as highly crucial, however, priority was given to written communication, particularly in the context of the study. Correspondingly, Ting (2002) examined support staff's need to use English in a principally dominant ethnic Malay organization and how they dealt with the English language demands of the workplace. The results show that the support staff faced difficulties when communicating in English with the public. In another Malaysian study, local varieties of Malaysian English were used in a cement manufacturing company and a finance company (Nair-Venugopal, 2000). Her study revealed how Malaysian English appeared as the unmarked choice in such contexts while Malay functions as a marked code in regards to tacit organizational policy that did not encourage its use. Another similar study by Morais (1994) showed that Malaysians from different ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds used English alongside Malay in a business setting as well as in other domains.

Apart from business and financial organisations, English is equally important in the hospitality and tourism industry. According to Al-Khatib (2005), travel agency workers showed a strong tendency towards using English due to the fact that English serves a variety of functions in the tourism industry.

The need for other languages apart from English

Up till now, English is still a common language used for worldwide communication, but in recent times more people are beginning to be interested in studying other international languages such as Chinese, Japanese or even other European languages (Thitthongkam & Walsh, 2010). Thitthongkam and Walsh (2010) addressed the importance of acquiring foreign languages in tour company business in Thailand. They reported that it is a need for a tour company to prepare their staff with a third language skill: Chinese, Japanese, and French. Speaking only English is not enough in managing the tour company as there are international tourists who cannot speak English or Thai. In other words, a key to success in running a tour business is the ability to communicate with tourists using their own languages. In recent years, people have started to realize that English alone is not sufficient to initiate and consolidate contacts with overseas business firms. This is because, in the past, British managers did not consider it necessary for their employees to learn foreign languages due to the status of their mother tongue as an international business language (Long, 2005).

Long (2005) states that companies might consider putting forward the need for a wide range of foreign languages to be known by the companies' employees, especially those who believe that a company's linguistic adaptation to its clients will positively optimize the company's profits. This supports Hagen's (1993) notion that transactions in companies are frequently conducted in a mixture of several languages at the micro-level.

According to Holden (1989), linguistic adaptation is more often pursued with countries which have high involvement in international business activities like manufacturers and purchasers of finished goods and/or providers of services. Davidson (1992), and Leslie and Russell (2006) assert that businesses cannot afford to be arrogant towards learning foreign languages. A number of scholars believe that having some languages in common is a pre-requisite for such communication, in order to be able to converse with visitors in their own language is important, particularly when problems arise. Furthermore, this will influence the visitors' future destination selection and spending.

Language choice and use of frontline employees

Most studies on frontline employees have looked at the managerial and administrative level and lower on their language use and communication during service encounters.

Mohd Noor (2008) highlights that conversing in English is a requirement at the front office in the hospitality industry especially when communicating with customers or guests. Her study reveals that students who join the hospitality industry are expected to be amicable and approachable with the guests and customers. Similarly, Blue and Harun's (2003) research on reception counters of four hotels in Southampton stressed on the language of hotel encounters as a professional skill, which needed to be developed through service training. The results indicated that proficiency in hospitality language is important in improving communication skills and should therefore be included in hospitality management programs to raise awareness on cross-cultural communication.

Apart from hospitality language, politeness is equally crucial, especially in the openings and closings of front counter staff of six Malaysian government hospitals (Kuang, Maya, Lau, & Ang, 2011). All this is surely done towards the objective of fulfilling customer satisfaction as part of staff responsibility (Mohamed Ali, 2010). Furthermore, formality with less small talk seems to be the norm in the interaction between patients and receptionists in the health setting (Hewitt, 2006; Mohandas, 2012). Likewise, Rafik-Galea, Wan Irham, and Baharuddin (2012) investigated language use and communication strategies employed by the library front desk staff and international students of a university. The findings of their study showed that English was the preferred language of communication between counter staff and international students and there were instances where international students switched from English to Malay to thank the librarian at the Reader's Advisory Desk.

METHODOLOGY

The current study investigated the language choice and use of English for communication of 106 frontline rail employees from four main rail transportation companies in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The study used a survey method to gather quantitative data whereby a questionnaire was administered to the rail frontline employees. The questionnaire adopted in this study was based on previous work of language use, functions and attitudes (Rafik-Galea, Afida, & Wong, 2010). A pilot study was carried out on 10 staff, randomly chosen from all four rail companies to determine the feasibility of the questionnaire. Its function was mainly to pre-test the particular research instrument. Modifications were then made to the questionnaire based on the respondents' constructive comments in the pilot study. The study utilized a purposive sampling method which allowed the researcher to deliberately select individuals, groups, and settings belonging to a specific group in order to maximize understanding of the research objectives (Onwuegbuzie & Collin, 2007). In this study, the subjects were not linguistically homogeneous; all were from different cultural backgrounds and comprised of male and female employees. Four main stations

were selected using purposive sampling for this study as the research sites. They were KTMB (Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad & KTM Komuter), ERL (Ekspress Rail Transit including KLIA Express & KLIA Transit), RapidKL (Kelana Jaya Line & Ampang Line) and Semasa Sentral. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study also incorporated a structured interview, which consisted of 12 items and which were constructed based on the questionnaire. The main purpose was to obtain additional information from the subjects on language use as well as their perceptions, views and attitudes towards their language use. Apart from that, to ensure an ethical research, both the questionnaire and the interview questions were reviewed by the rail companies' Human Resource Departments and permission was obtained to carry out the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profiles of the respondents

The analysis shows that the majority of the respondents are Malays (87.7%), followed by Indians (8.5%), others (2.8%) and Chinese (0.9%). In terms of level of education, the analysis revealed that the majority of the respondents are SPM (equivalent to O level) school leavers. The findings showed that the employees from the KTMB and RapidKL stations were mainly SPM holders unlike the employees of the ERL and Semasa Sentral station who were mainly diploma and degree holders (Sharija Shaharuddin, 2014).

Language proficiency skills across rail companies

The overall findings relating to language proficiency revealed that 66% of the respondents claimed that they had excellent proficiency skills in reading in Malay and 26.4% of the respondents claimed that they were good at reading in Malay. Most of the respondents from all the four companies reported having excellent proficiency skills in reading in Malay, that is, Semasa Sentral (70.0%), ERL (68.4%), KTMB's (68.4%), RapidKL (55.5%). However, with regard to English reading proficiency, the respondents only perceived themselves as good (45.3%) and fair (26.4%). Across stations, RapidKL has the highest number of respondents who rated themselves as good (85%), followed by Semasa Sentral (50%) and ERL (50%). In contrast, most of the KTMB's respondents (45%) claimed that they were only fairly proficient in reading English. Since the majority of the respondents are Malays (87.7%) with Malay as a possible mother tongue, this naturally corresponds to the fact that one tends to be more competent in one's own native language (Lee, 2005) and that the respondents may have employed the Malay language (L1) more in their daily activities rather than using English (L2).

With regard to proficiency in written Malay, majority of the respondents from all four companies reported themselves as excellent (65.1%) which is expected since it is the L1 of the respondents, i.e. RapidKL (71.1%), Semasa Sentral (70%), KTMB (65%) and ERL (57.9%). In contrast, a small number of the respondents (12.3%) considered themselves to be excellent in written English. This is because most of the respondents perceived themselves as good, that is, ERL (55.3%), RapidKL (47.4), Semasa Sentral (40%), and fair, that is, i.e. KTMB (55%). Again, this may suggest a strong tendency in using Malay in the day-to-day operations of the employees compared to English.

Next, majority of the respondents (65.1%) from the four stations rated themselves as excellent in Malay speaking skills, i.e. RapidKL (73.7%), Semasa Sentral (70%), ERL (60.5%), KTM (55%). However, most of the respondents (47.2%) believed that they spoke English fairly well. and only 13.2% thought they were excellent, that is, KTMB (fair = 70%), Semasa Sentral (fair = 40%), Rapid KL (fair = 71%), but the employees at ERL (44.7%) claimed that they had good English speaking skills.

Finally for listening, most of the of the respondents (69.8%) perceived themselves as having excellent listening skills in the Malay language, that is, Semasa Sentral (80%), RapidKL (76.3%), ERL (65.8%), KTM (60%). This is in striking contrast to the small percentage (17%) of the respondents who reported themselves as excellent in listening in English. This is because most of them considered themselves as fair (KTM = 60%; RapidKL=47.4%) and good (Semasa Sentral=50%; ERL=44.7%).

In summary, for all the four language proficiency skills, all the employees from the four stations had excellent proficiency in Malay compared to English. For English, respondents from ERL perceived themselves as good in all skills, while respondents from KTMB and Rapid KL mainly believed they were fair across all skills. In addition, Semasa Sentral employees perceived themselves as having good proficiency in reading, writing and listening but fair in speaking skills.

Based on the results of the study, the respondents appear to have excellent proficiency in Malay compared to English language as they will use the language that they are most comfortable with in dealing with Malaysian customers. This is supported by past studies which have highlighted the influence that language proficiency has on the language choice and use of a person (Leo & Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, 2013; Yeh, Chan, & Cheng, 2004; Coulmas, 2005; Hakuta, 1991; Wallwork, 1981). However, if customers were to speak in English, the language choice switches to the same language as the customer's to suit the linguistic situation, of which can be seen in the next finding.

Patterns of language choice and use

In terms of the patterns of language use across the stations, our findings show that the main languages used with customers at majority of the stations is Malay. Employees at the following stations, KTMB (85%), RapidKL (87%), Semasa Sentral (60%) reported that they used more Malay than English. Only 21% of the employees at the ERL station indicated that they used Malay with their customers. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Main language used with customers

Language	ERL (%) (n=38)	KTMB (%) (n=20)	RAPIDKL (%) (n=38)	SEMASA SENTRAL (%) (n=10)	TOTAL (%) (n=106)
Malay	21.0	85.0	87.0	60.0	60.3
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Tamil	0	0	0	0	0
English	79.0	15.0	13.0	40.0	39.7

The results in Table 1 is not all that surprising considering that majority of the respondents are Malay. Overall, a total of 60.3% respondents preferred Malay as the main language spoken to customers compared to the use of English (39.7%). The staff members who were interviewed felt that that they tended to use the language based on what was preferred by the customers. In contrast, English was highly used by the ERL frontliners (79%) whereas other stations, (RapidKL, Semasa Sentral) preferred Malay when talking to the customers. This was probably due to the type of commuters using the ERL, whereby according to an ERL spokesperson, English is an important language to cater to the international customers as it is the train that connects the city to its

international airport. However, this does not in any way imply that Malay language is less important, since Malay can be used if preferred by the local customers. For instance, the staff would code switch to Malay if this happens to be the initial language used by the customers. Apart from that, code switching is also important for purposes of elicitation, clarification and emphasis (Fatimah, 2007). According to one respondent interviewed, “We cannot expect customers to understand one ‘bahasa’ (language). Sometimes we must express and explain in another language too”.

The results on which language was used in relation to a particular customer’s ethnicity revealed that 98.1% of the respondents across all four rail companies used the Malay language with Malay customers. However, respondents tended to use English slightly more (79.2%) rather than Malay language (68.8%) when they interacted with Chinese customers. The respondents also reported using less Malay language (65.0%) compared to English (73.5%) when dealing with Indian customers. Moreover, English was also chosen by 81.1% of the respondents compared to other languages when talking to Arab, English, Japanese and French customers. One of the interviewed respondents said, “Mostly I use English, however I still use Malay when talking to Malaysians if they approached in Malay.” Another of the staff stated that “Yes, we need more than one language since our customers come from different parts of the world...and English is priority”. This finding resonates with Al-Khatib (2005) who claimed that English serves a variety of functions and mostly in the tourism industry.

Conversely, the results on the use of other languages besides Malay and English in customer interactions revealed that the respondents completely acknowledged the need to acquire a third language for their profession. The respondents stated that it will be an added advantage to master more than two languages as well as to maintain good relationship with the respective customers. For instance, most of them believed that the ability to speak Mandarin and Japanese might be very useful in their profession. This finding echoes the study by Thitthongkam and Walsh (2010) which reported the necessity for frontliners to learn another foreign language or a third language in order to better serve the customers. They claimed that English alone was not enough as there are international tourists who do not speak English. They believed that acquiring a third language helps to improve the quality of the tourism industry and creates good impression for the industry.

Respondents also reported difficulties in dealing with customers who did not use English during service encounters, and instead spoke in their respective native languages. Because of such incidents, they felt that it was necessary to learn some basic phrases of those foreign languages as this might help improve their communication with the customers, especially the foreigners. One respondent said, “We need to speak more than one language because we are the main service in this industry which encounters many passengers from all around the world.” The importance of competence in a foreign language has been raised by researchers in tourism communication whereby it can lead to successful communication between visitors and the locals, and serve as a pull factor for repeated visits by tourists (Leslie, Russell, & Govan, 2004; Chan, Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, & Rafik-Galea, 2012).

Frontliners’ perceptions on English language learning and the use of English language for communication

This study also sought to establish the frontline employees’ perceptions towards English language learning in order to see their motivation towards learning a second language. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3 and represent an overall results based on all

the frontliners responses. In this discussion we do not distinguish the frontliners by their respective stations. Only the overall results are presented instead.

Table 2. Perceptions towards English (n=106)

Question	Yes	No	Total
Q1: Do you think your current English language competency is adequate for you to perform well in front of customers?	72 (68%)	34 (32%)	106 (100%)
Q2: Are you concerned that you will be at a disadvantage if you lack the ability to speak English?	96 (91%)	10 (9%)	106 (100%)
Q3: Have you ever taken any English courses?	38 (36%)	68 (64%)	106 (100%)
Q4: Do you expect that you will need to participate in language training for you to perform well towards the customers?	93 (88%)	13 (12%)	106 (100%)
Q5: Are you taking action to improve your speaking skills?	87 (82%)	19 (18%)	106 (100%)

More than a half of the respondents (68%) surveyed agreed that their current English language competency is adequate to perform well in front of customers thus suggesting that they have no problems interacting in English with customers. However, 32% believed that they are unable to perform well. Schlesinger and Heskett (1991) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) point out that interaction between service employee and the customer is important for the organization in the long and short run and for good interaction to occur, service employees must be able to speak well and with confidence. Furthermore, 91% of the respondents believed that they were highly disadvantaged if they lacked the ability to speak English, whereas only 9% of the respondents said 'No'. Hence suggesting that being competent in English is important in the service industry. Interestingly, 64% of the respondents claimed that they have not taken any English courses, however a fair percentage of the respondents claimed to have previously taken English courses. A large majority of the respondents (88%) indicated that they needed to participate in language training to perform well in English in their interaction with customers. Moreover, 82% of the respondents claimed that they were taking action to improve their speaking whereas only 18% of the respondents said that they were not involved in any language training. Thus, confirming Horn's (1995) claims that training in oral communication skills is considered more important among service personnel compared to technical training.

For Questions 6 to 16, respondents had to answer using a Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (See Table 3). Question 6 illustrates that 57.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that speaking English is an advantage while only 3.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed to that statement. Most of the respondents (53.7% and 28.3% respectively) maintained that they liked speaking in English as highlighted in question 7. This finding is supported by Mohd Noor (2008) whose study noted that English is indeed a requirement at the front office in the hospitality industry when communicating with customers. Furthermore, 50.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that 'English offers advantages in seeking good opportunities'. Most of the respondents believed that they would not be able to get a job without knowledge of English as seen in

Question 9. Interestingly, more than 50% of the respondents maintained that ‘one should be able to speak English to be admitted to a public post.’ Thus, suggesting that English is an important language in the public sector (Sharija Shaharuddin, 2014).

Table 3: Perception towards English for Communication

Question	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	No comment (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Total (%) (n=106)
Q6: Speaking English is an advantage.	3.7	3.7	0	34.9	57.5	100
Q7: I like speaking English.	1.8	4.7	11.3	53.7	28.3	100
Q8: English offers advantages in seeking good job opportunities.	0.9	4.7	0	43.3	50.9	100
Q9: Without the knowledge of English I could not get a job.	2.8	20.7	15.0	33.9	27.3	100
Q10: To be admitted to a public post, one should be able to speak English.	5.6	2.8	6.6	50.9	33.9	100
Q11: When I use English, it is most often with foreigners, not with local people.	9.4	19.8	11.3	40.5	18.8	100
Q12: I find it difficult to choose the right words when I communicate.	2.8	18.8	13.2	60.3	4.7	100
Q13: I find grammar difficult to handle in formal communication with customers.	2.8	15.0	17.9	52.8	11.3	100
Q14: Communication becomes difficult because of different accents/ pronunciation of words.	1.8	13.2	10.3	63.2	11.3	100
Q15: My communication skills are influenced by my cultural background.	2.8	14.1	18.8	50.9	13.2	100
Q16: I am not confident enough when communicating in English.	7.5	31.1	16.0	42.4	2.8	100

The results reveal that a total of 40.5% of the respondents claimed that they used English most often with foreigners, and not with the local people. However, 19.8% of

them disagreed. This suggests that Malay is used a lot more frequently by the respondents when communicating with the locals. As for Q12, 60.3% of the respondents agreed that they found it difficult to choose the right words when communicating with customers and 52.8% agreed that grammar was difficult to handle when communicating with customers. For Q14, the analysis demonstrate that 63.2% agreed and 13.2% disagreed that communication becomes difficult due to different accents and pronunciation of words. With regard to Q15 (My communication skills are influenced by my cultural background), 50.9% believed this to be so. Only 2.8% strongly disagreed. Interestingly, less than 50% of the respondents perceived themselves as being confident when communicating in English (Sharija Shaharuddin, 2014).

Overall, the findings show that majority of the respondents believed that it is still important to continue to learn English due to the nature of their profession. It was found that, some of the rail frontline employees had problems in grammar and difficulties in choosing the right words in English when communicating with their customers. Furthermore, they believed that their communication skills were being influenced by their cultural background. Apart from that, they also realized the importance of English as a tool to build up and upgrade their career in seeking better job opportunities. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the rail frontline employees had more difficulties in English, often with foreigners. However, most of them seemed to be confident enough when communicating in English even though they were aware of the weaknesses they had. This clearly indicated that most of the rail frontline employees were motivated in learning and using English especially in upgrading their skills and upholding their quality of work.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly show that Malay is the preferred language used at the workplace by the rail employees. However, a majority of the respondents agreed that English is used more frequently in their communication with foreign customers rather than with locals. Respondents from the ERL station reported that English is used most frequently with foreigners in their service encounters. This is not surprising as this station is the mainline to and from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Apart from that, a majority of the respondents agreed that there is a need to acquire more than two languages in their profession. They revealed that it is also important to acknowledge other languages as well as apart from Malay and English in any service encounter interactions and in ensuring better relations with the respective customers. From the interview conducted, most of the respondents believed that the ability to speak other languages like Japanese and Mandarin could promote the organization to a higher level.

This therefore indicates that rail frontline employees' language use is most of the time influenced by three main factors; participants, purpose of the speech and the situations derived from domains of language use by Joshua Fishman (1972). It suggests the fact that rail frontline employees will not only use language that is governed by any given setting or situation, but also considers the role relationship between participants and the purpose of the speech in conveying their message.

Finally, this study is limited to the community of the rail frontline employees in Kuala Lumpur. It looked at the language aspects of this speech community which is one of the important features of the service component in serving the customers in this industry. The findings raised several concerns indicating the need for upgrading rail frontline employees' workplace communication mainly with the customers. First and foremost, it should therefore, be a top priority in service organizations to provide rail frontline employees with generic skills of being able to use language competently

especially English. The analysis on language use however, suggests that organizations of this nature should constantly organize more training courses and better approaches in strengthening the employee's language proficiency and use in the English language including other foreign languages for a variety of communicative contexts.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND ADVANTAGES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the characteristics and advantages of interpersonal communication (IPC) among local and international students of a Malaysian public university. A quantitative survey with 220 local and international students was conducted as the main data collection method for this study, and the qualitative interviews were done to enrich the data. The findings of the study showed adequate opportunities for both local and international students to be involved in IPC with their peers from other cultures and countries. About 80% of the participants reported that they experienced some interactions with students from different nationalities during their stay and study at the university. They gained some new cultural information throughout this process, and also learned how to interact with other people. The results confirmed that interactions among local and international students had positive effects on their personal and academic lives, and enabled them to have more collaborative activities at the university campus. The qualitative findings of this study support the quantitative results and confirmed that IPC among students was beneficial for their social and academic lives. Findings of this study may encourage university students to have more interactions with students from different social and cultural backgrounds in collegiate environments.

Keywords: collaborative activities, cultural norms, intergroup interactions, interpersonal communication, Malaysian universities

INTRODUCTION

Communication and interactions have played a vital role in enabling humans and nations to share their knowledge, information and values. The real transporter of social relations and culture is communication (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). From all aspects of communication, interpersonal communication (IPC) is essential for modern life. Interpersonal communication (IPC) is the way that individuals communicate with others through spoken and non-spoken messages while the maximized attendance of the communicators is required (Dawson, 2008; Crowell, 2011). Direct or face-to-face interaction is the main model of IPC among people. As argued by Marr (2009), a considerable model for most interpersonal interactions is spoken communication, and interpersonal competence is the real notion of communication (Katz, 2004). IPC among people from different cultures and nationalities may be considered as one of the main potential aspects to share their values, findings, and their knowledge. When students leave their own traditional life styles to join the colorful and multicultural environments of universities for their post-secondary education, they may also find the opportunities to have some new social experiences. At the same time, interpersonal communication

among university students from different nationalities may help them to gain more knowledge and also learn to deal with a multicultural environment after their graduation. As pointed out by Lin (2011), communication enables individuals to learn more, understand one another, and to succeed in modern societies.

A university is the first location for many people to achieve their personal aims and experience different kinds of interactions in their life (Wade, 2008). Norton (2010) also asserted that academic environment is the place in which students not just grow and mature in their classes, but also find themselves being involved in the new views and ideas outside of their classrooms. This issue is more important for international students in the host countries, and they have to pay attention on the positive effects of the modern multicultural academic environment. Actually, students who ignore daily interpersonal interactions in collegiate contexts may lose some fruitful opportunities. According to Izumi (2010), Japanese students of American universities had little interaction with people from other cultures and nationalities. Japanese students in the United States, instead of dealing with those from different cultures in the multi-cultural environment of American universities, struggled to keep to their own social and cultural norms.

During the students' stay and study at the university, their level of social skills may have direct effects on their interactions with their peers from different social backgrounds. Multinational and multidisciplinary teamwork illustrates a rising trend of professional settings as organizations become progressively global (Popov, Noroozi, Barret, Biemans, Teasley, Slof, & Mulder, 2014). As argued by Lusting and Koester (2006), the skill to interact in different intercultural backgrounds is an ever more significant ability of both common and personal lives. IPC is also a key factor for students of higher education institutions to build their capacity, and have better opportunities for collaborative learning. As asserted by Aidoo (2012), in academic settings, interpersonal relations or understanding at university may improve individual and professional lives of students. Interactions among students from different countries and different cultures may enable them to share their knowledge, information, and experiences. In the modern era of social life, IPC skill is an essential requirement for all educated people. In the 21st century, all educational and business-related works give high value to educated people who are skilled in IPC. Therefore, communications and gatherings of students at the university may develop the required skills when students cooperate with people of diverse backgrounds (Aidoo, 2012; Crowell, 2011; House, 2004).

Although some researchers (e.g. Aidoo, 2012; Bryant, 2012; Gao, 2011; Izumi, 2010) have studied interpersonal interactions among local and international students in the host countries, their findings are mostly related to countries such as the United States which are different in terms of cultures, religions and environments from Malaysia and most other Asian countries. Therefore, the major goal of this study was to describe the characteristics of IPC among local and international students of a Malaysian public university, namely University Malaysia Pahang (UMP). This study also aimed to assess the effects of IPC among local and international students of UMP on their social and academic lives.

THEORETICAL DIRECTION OF THE STUDY

Allport (1954)'s Contact Theory was used as the theoretical direction of this study. The Contact Theory, which is one of the leading theories on communication and social relations, was developed and introduced by Allport (1954, as cited in Aidoo, 2012). According to the theory, the process of communication begins with sheer contact that leads to competition which then paves the way for accommodation, and as a final step,

reaches assimilation. The contact will bring positive outcomes under four conditions: 1) Equivalent rank in the situation, 2) Shared interests or aims, 3) Intergroup collaboration, and 4) Formal support (law, authorities, traditions or environment).

According to Aidoo (2012), the Contact Theory became famous among strategy makers since 1950s as the means to support cultural integration efforts among American people especially when the Supreme Court of the United States highlighted the benefits and importance of interracial-contact in its famous decision on integration (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954 as cited in Aidoo, 2012). The Contact Theory became essential in providing the foundations for useful plans of improving intergroup communication for more than five decades (Aidoo, 2012). By considering the proposed steps of the Contact Theory, it would become clear that this theory can be applied to a study on IPC in the academic environment. Besides Allport (1954), Pettigrew (1998) had also introduced three new conditions for the Contact Theory to ease the ways for intergroup contacts to reach the ideal state of contacts. The first proposed condition is the existence of a de-categorized and individualized situation, where anxiety and threats may distinguish actions and contacts of the individuals. The second is the effects of primary contacts among individuals on a noticeable categorization which may increase the positive attitudes among groups. Finally, the third condition is individual contacts and intergroup contacts through positive attitudes that lead to the achievement of re-categorization perception. Based on the Pettigrew's (1998) introduced conditions, intergroup contacts begin by interactions among individuals and their interactions and relations increase positive assumption and understanding among members of different groups, and these actions and assumptions ease the ways for the establishment of the new categories and intergroup relations. Besides the proposed steps by Allport (1954), these proposed steps may be applicable in a collegiate environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study had 220 participants ($M = 55.8$, $SD = 6.36$) from both local and international students of University Malaysia Pahang (UMP), with 110 Malaysians ($M = 45.63$, $SD = 6.16$) and 110 international students ($M = 41.75$, $SD = 6.66$). From all participants, 147 of them ($M = 42.91$, $SD = 6.60$) were male and 73 were female ($M = 45.27$, $SD = 6.63$). From the said sampling population, 141 of them were undergraduates, and 79 postgraduates (Master and PhD). All the 220 students participated in the quantitative survey based on their consent, and 12 of them were interviewed (i.e. 6 local and 6 international). Local students of this study were from almost all ethnicities and various states of the country, and foreign participants were from 16 different countries mostly from Asia with different social and cultural backgrounds. Table 1 illustrates the frequencies of international participants based on their countries. All of the interviewees of this study were chosen based on their personal consent. An interview invitation was added at the end of the quantitative questionnaire. During the quantitative data collection, 43 students left their information to be interviewed, but when researcher asked them, only 12 of them agreed to be interviewed.

Table 1. Number of international participants by countries

Country	Number	Country	Number
China	18	Libya	6
Indonesia	13	Nigeria	5
Iraq	13	Sudan	4
Yemen	13	Algeria	1
Afghanistan	10	Canada	1
Pakistan	9	Egypt	1
India	8	Iran	1
Bangladesh	6	Somalia	1

Research design and procedures

An embedded design of mixed methods was applied to conduct this study. In the embedded design, the researcher chose a primary method to collect the main data set from a larger number of participants, and then collect the second set of data to embed and nest it into the primary data set to collect further information. As asserted by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), the emended design is of mixed method research in which the secondary data set provides the supportive role for the primary data. It is a good option when researchers decide to embed the qualitative data into the quantitative data set. The main method for this study was the quantitative survey, and the qualitative interviews were done to enrich the data and embedded into the quantitative findings. The quantitative data were collected through direct distribution of the questionnaire, and the interviews were done individually and audio-taped. As asserted by Light (2001), individual interviews offer special richness and depth. The purpose of this study was to evaluate IPC among local and international students of a Malaysian public university, and the research scheme required the involvement of enough participants from both local and international students to represent the whole population of this study. Therefore, the survey research through convenience sampling was conducted. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005), the aim of the sampling is to have the participants that represent the population and to generalize their responses to the said population.

Instruments

The main instrument for the quantitative method of this study was the quantitative questionnaire. The items for the quantitative questionnaire were adapted from the questionnaires of previous works by Aidoo (2012), Gao (2011) and Izumi (2010). The instrument was checked and revised through a pilot study and the Cronbach alpha rating for the instrument was .705. All items of the quantitative questionnaire were prepared based on the Likert scale. Rensis Likert had introduced a five-category scale to assess attitudes (Tucker-Seeley, 2008), and according to Barnhill (2010), the Likert scale has been widely used by researchers. Moreover, an interview protocol which included 12 open-ended questions was designed for the qualitative interview.

Data analysis procedure

The quantitative data were analysed by using the SPSS software. The descriptive, reliability, independent-samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used as the main tests to analyze the quantitative data. The descriptive test was applied to find out the frequencies and percentages of demographic information, and the level of agreement and disagreement of students with the items. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) asserted that generally results of a survey are stated in the descriptive mode, but other analyses and opportunities may also be applicable to serve the aim of the study. For the qualitative section of this

study, all interviews were analyzed separately and the results are reported under the themes and sub-themes based on the structure of research design and answers of the participants.

RESULTS

The quantitative and qualitative data of this study were analyzed separately, the quantitative data was assessed through SPSS, and the data from the qualitative interviews were analyzed by themes that emerged from the interviewees, answers to the interview questions.

Quantitative results

A reliability test was conducted to test the reliability of the data, and the Cronbach alpha rating for the quantitative data was .781. The descriptive test was conducted to find-out the demographic frequencies and percentages, and also to find out the mean and standard deviation scores of sub-categories under the demographic variables. The sample size for the quantitative investigation included 220 participants from both Malaysian and international students of UMP (110 local and 110 international). From all 110 Malaysian participants, 82 of them were Malay-Malaysians, 18 Chinese-Malaysians, and 8 of them were Indian-Malaysians. On the other hand, all the 110 international participants of this study came from 16 different countries. Table 3 illustrates the numbers of international participants by countries.

Characteristics, competence and factors affecting IPC

According to the descriptive results from all the participants of this study, 80.5% of them already experienced some daily or at least many times weekly interactions with students from different cultures and nationalities, and 69.1% of them were able to understand most parts of the messages and conversations when talking with students of different nationalities. At the same time, the main purposes for almost half of both local and international participants of this study were academic and social purposes as reported by 47.7% of the participants. Moreover, from all 220 participants, 188 of them agreed that their daily IPC helps them to have more collaborative learning and activities at the university. Almost all participants ($n = 207$) reported that they felt happy when interacting with students from different nationalities. The vast majority of participants (78.2%) accepted that they interacted with their classmates regardless of their countries and ethnicities, and 82.8% of them accepted that there were enough opportunities at UMP campus to have daily interactions with students from different cultures and nationalities. From the 220 participants, 197 of them also accepted that their interactions with their peers from other countries at the UMP campus was very useful for their private and public lives, and 83.1% of them agreed that they learned many social skills through their interactions with local and international students during their stay and study at the university.

The independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of IPC characteristics of Malaysian to international participants of this study. A significant difference was found as $T(218) = 4.398$, $P < .01$; also the mean score of Malaysian participants was higher ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .62$) from that of international students ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .59$). The same test was applied to compare the level of IPC competence between Malaysian and international participants, but no significant difference was found ($T[218] = 1.033$, $p > .05$). The mean score for Malaysian was $M = 1.94$, $SD = .42$ and for international participants $M = 1.88$, $SD = .04$. Factors that affected IPC between

Malaysian and international participants were also compared through independent-sample t-test and a significant difference was found ($T [218] = 2.876, P < .05$). The mean score of Malaysian participants was also higher ($M = 2.18, SD = .46$) than that of the international participants ($M = 2.35, SD = .45$).

At the same time, an independent-sample t-test was applied to compare the mean scores of IPC characteristics of male to female participants and no significant difference was found ($T [218] = -1.313, p > .05$). The mean score for male was $M = 2.28, SD = .63$, and for female $M = 2.39, SD = .63$. The same test was conducted to compare the mean score of male to female participants for IPC competence and no significant difference was found ($T [218] = -.470, p > .05$). The mean for male is $M = 1.90, SD = .42$ and for female $M = 1.92, SD = .39$. The same test was conducted to compare the factors that affect IPC between male and female participants of this study and a significant difference was found ($T [218] = 3.142, P < .05$). The mean score of male ($M = 2.33, SD = .46$) was higher than for female participants ($M = 2.13, SD = .44$).

Qualitative results

The qualitative investigation had 12 interviewees. From the 12 participants, 6 of them were local and 6 were international students of UMP. From the Malaysian interviewees, 3 were Malay-Malaysian, 2 Indian-Malaysian, and 1 Chinese-Malaysian, and also 3 of them were male and 3 others female. International participants were from 6 different countries, one participant per country, and from different parts of the world with different social and cultural backgrounds. The countries of international participants were: Afghanistan, India, Algeria, China, Yemen, and Nigeria, and all of them were male students. The interviews were conducted by following an interview protocol which included 12 open-ended questions. The interview questions focussed on the characteristics and advantages of interpersonal interactions among university students from the different nationalities.

In the qualitative results, the participants are mentioned as MPX (X for number of the participant) for Malaysian participants and IPX for international students. For example, participant MP1 means Malaysian participant number 1. Both local and international participants of this study were coded as 1) MP1, a Master's Malay-Malaysian student, 2) MP2, a degree Malay-Malaysian student, 3) MP3, a degree Indian-Malaysian student, 4) MP4, a degree Indian-Malaysian student, 5) MP5, a degree Malay-Malaysian student, and 6) MP6, a senior degree Chinese-Malaysian student. The international interviewees were: 1) IP1, a Master's student from Afghanistan, 2) IP2, a PhD student from India, 3) IP3, a PhD student from Algeria, 4) IP4, a senior degree student from China, 5) IP5, a degree student from Yemen, and 6) IP6, a Master's students from Nigeria.

Personal communication characteristics

According to the answers of all local and international interviewees, all of them reported that they have experienced some direct and face-to-face interpersonal communication with people of different countries, and they were willing to have and continue their daily interactions with them as well. Almost all of them accepted that they understood most parts of the messages during their interactions, and they wanted to increase the level of their IPC. They also believed that their interactions at the university campus with different people had positive effects on their personal and academic lives. For example, IP2 said that, "I have a good level of interaction with international and Malaysian students and it helps me a lot during my stay and study [at the university]." MP1 also asserted that, "I am a postgraduate student and live with international students; therefore, I have daily interactions with them, especially with Arab students when I speak Arabic."

Moreover, IP1 said that, “My personal involvement in interpersonal communication with UMP students, especially local students, is good and it helps me to gain some good and beneficial information from them.” In addition, IP3 said that, “Interpersonal communication among Malaysian and international students of UMP is sometimes good and sometimes not good, I mean if you interact with postgraduate students, it is good, but with undergraduate students, still not good.” This point of view shows that the level of education has effects on the process of IPC among local and international students of UMP.

Most of participants were willing to have interactions with students of different cultures and nationalities. As IP4 said, “I want to have daily interpersonal communication with either Malaysian or international students of UMP, and talk with any person from any country to know their culture.” And MP1 told that, “I become happy when interact with international students and also when talking with them, I understand most of their messages. I have to increase the level of my interpersonal communication with international students and I will try to have some friends from them.” Based on their personal views, all interviewees were willing to have and continue daily interactions with other students, and learn the social and cultural norms of different people through their IPC.

Statements of participants also illustrated their daily IPC with different people had positive effects on their personal and academic lives. For example, as IP4 asserted, “My involvement in IPC helped me too much, at first when I came, I had many problems, I wasn’t able to go to Kuantan city or ask a question from a lecturer or classmate, but my interactions with local students helped me to solve these problems.” And his statement was supported by IP2 who said, “My communications with local students helped me a lot, when I learn few words from their language from them, it helps me when I go for shopping, and also in the offices I can ask them anything that I want.” In addition, “Interactions with international students help me to learn some new things and have good effects on my life,” as pointed out by MP4.

Social and personal aspects of IPC

Almost all interviews agreed that they learned some new and useful cultural information and communicative skills from their IPC with students from different social and cultural backgrounds at the UMP campus. As MP4 said, “My interactions with international students help me to learn about their cultures.” In addition, MP5 pointed out, “As we have different ideas and cultures, therefore, my communication with international students will help me to learn more things about their cultures, and also I can improve my English language by talking with them.” Their views were also supported by IP1 who said, “I want and can learn something about culture of Malaysians and their environment.” Based on the last statement, becoming aware about the host environment was also among the important issues for some of the international participants of this study.

Academic aspects of IPC

The majority of the interviewees stated that during their stay and study at UMP, their daily IPC helped them to have some collaborative learning at the university campus, and solve their university-related issues easily. They also emphasized on the widening of such team works among all university students through daily interactions. As an example, IP2 said that “During my daily studies, I interact with many Malaysian and international students in the lab and other areas and it helps me a lot. We also exchange our experiences, help one another and our communication is good for us.” His statement was supported by IP3 who said, “We do have some collaborative activities with some

Malaysian students. Mostly our interpersonal communication with Malaysian students solves our university related problems.” In addition, IP6 said, “I have enough collaborative works with my Malaysian classmates and also I learned many things from them.” Their points of views illustrate that daily interactions among local and international students of UMP had positive effects on their academic life.

Factors affecting the process of IPC

Almost all interviewees mentioned the lack of English language proficiency as a main factor that had negative effects on the process of IPC among local and international students of UMP. About half of them also mentioned some personal characteristics such as being shy as a negative factor on IPC among students. However, almost all of participants mentioned that their cultural and traditional norms, co-ethnicity and religion had positive effects on the process of their interactions with students of different nationalities, or at least did not affect this process negatively. Some participants accepted that their personal characteristics and being shy had negative effects on their interactions with other people. For example, MP2 said, “My personal characteristics and shy prevent me to interact with different people.” And her statement was supported by another female interviewee, who said, “My personal characteristics affect my communication and mostly I shy to interact with others”.

All interviewees accepted that their different cultural and traditional norms had no negative effect on their daily interactions. As IP2 stated, “Religion and other factors do not affect the communication process.” His statement was supported by IP4 who said, “Different cultures are not a problem to have communications, but we have to know the limitations, as I am a non-Muslim, have to know about Muslims.” Their statements showed that the existence of people of different cultures at the university campus encouraged both local and international students to interact so as to gain information on different cultures and social norms.

All of the Malaysian and international participants who had friends of their own co-ethnicities at the UMP campus said that the presence of their co-ethnic people on campus helped them to have more interactions with students of other ethnicities. For example, IP2 said, “My ethnicity and race relation with my co-ethnic Malaysian students have positive effects on my communication with Malaysian students, and it attracts me to have more communication with other Malaysian students, rather than people of my own ethnicity.” IP2 added, “The more I interact with my co-ethnic group, the more I interact with other groups as well”. MP3 also said that, “I have my Indian co-ethnic people among international students but it [their presence] affects my communication positively and helps me to have more communication with other international students.” Along the same line, IP4 told that, “Local Chinese-Malaysians help me to understand the messages, language and have more communication with other Malaysian students of UMP.” The presence of students from their ethnicity at UMP helped both local and international students to have more interactions with other students. Therefore, co-ethnicity had positive effects on the process of IPC among local and international students of UMP.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to describe the characteristics of interpersonal communication among local and international students of a Malaysia public university, namely University Malaysia Pahang (UMP). The effects of interpersonal communication among the mentioned students on their social and academic lives were also analysed. Results of this study confirmed that the vast majority of participants of this study experienced some

interactions with students from different cultures and nationalities, and almost all of them reported that their daily interactions had positive effects on their social and academic lives. The helpful impact from their contacts with students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds encouraged both local and international students of UMP to have further interactions with their peers from different countries and cultures. As argued by Cohen, Wildschut and Insko (2010), task-related interactions among students are more effective. Participants of this study also focused on the task-oriented setting of communication, as positive effects of their contacts with their peers from other nationalities on their social and academic lives encouraged them to be involved in more interactions. According to the responses of the participants, their daily interactions helped them to gain some new social skills, cultural information, and also more collaborative activities on campus. As argued by Wade (2008), the main results of the presence of different people at the college environment will be the increase of skills on interaction with people of different races, age categories and different backgrounds, and also it will bring colourful and diversified professional employees. These findings also support Norton's (2010) assertion that the collegiate environment is the location in which the abilities of students do not just develop in their classrooms, but also they would be involved in a new environment with the new ideas and notions outside of their classrooms.

The findings of this study also confirmed the existence of a potential willingness among UMP students toward increasing the level and quality of their interactions with students from different cultures and countries. The results also affirmed that all opportunities at the UMP campus were available for most local and international students to have interactions with students from other cultures, ethnicities and countries. The above mentioned findings are supported by Wade (2008), who asserted that university time is important for students to gain their personal aims, and it is also the first environment for them to experience different kinds of interactions in their life.

Based on the quantitative results, some differences on the level of communication competence between local and international, and male and female participants of this study were found. The results showed that Malaysian participants of this study had a higher mean score than that of the international ones, with M/SD of 45.63/6.16 and 41.75/6.66 respectively. Based on the findings, female participants of this study (M/SD of 45.27/6.63) also had a higher mean score than that of the male participants with M/SD of 42.91/6.60. It is arguable that the main reason that enabled Malaysian participants to have high degree of M/SD was the Malaysian-predominant situation at UMP. In other words, when the number of Malaysian students of UMP is much higher than international students, they may have more self-reliance, and they may be more relaxed in the environment because they are in their own country.

This study also found that different cultural and social backgrounds of UMP students had positive effects on the process of their interactions. Findings of this study on effects of different cultural norms and co-ethnicity among local and international students of UMP on their interactions are completely different from findings of some previous researchers, who conducted similar studies. For example, Izumi (2010), based on the results of her study on interactions of Japanese students with their American counterparts in some of the American universities argued that Japanese students who were in the American institutions struggled with cultural changes and cross-cultural practices [of the United States multicultural environment] to keep their own cultural originality without the consideration of the difficulty of doing that and their low communicative skills. According to her assertions, Japanese students in the U.S., instead of coping with different cultures in the multi-cultural environment of the United States and increasing

their intercultural communication competence, they struggled to keep their own cultural and communicative norms (Izumi, 2010). Findings of this study are completely different from the communicative attitudes of Japanese students in the U.S. as pointed out by Izumi (2010), as almost all participants of this study were willing to interact with people from different cultures and countries to learn some new cultural and social skills. The results of this study also confirmed that cultural diversities and presence of students from different nationalities had positive effects on their daily interactions at the university campus.

Furthermore, findings of this study were supported by the proposed conditions of the Contact Theory. First of all, all participants of this study were local and international students of UMP, and when all of them were university students then they were at the same rank altogether. Based on the results of both quantitative and qualitative data, almost all participants of this research project were willing to have some IPC, and they were aware that their daily interaction would help them to learn some new cultural information and communicative skills. Also, all of them wanted to increase and develop the level and quality of their daily interactions. Therefore, it is clear that all participants of this study had the same interests and aims.

Results of the qualitative interviews found that the majority of both local and international participants of this study had some collaborative activities and university related team-works at the UMP campus, and their daily interaction paved the ways for them to have such opportunities. Thus, these findings support the third pre-condition of the Contact Theory. The existence of enough communication opportunities and presence of international students from different countries at the UMP campus, as well as the university's plans to increase the number of foreign students are positive steps to establish the aims of the fourth proposed step of the Contact Theory.

According to the quantitative findings of this study, the vast majority (80.4%) of the participants of this study had some daily IPC, and almost all of them (94%) said that they became happy when they interacted with students from different cultural and geographical backgrounds. Furthermore, 81.3% of the participants accepted that their daily IPCs were useful on their private and public lives, and 83.1% of them affirmed that they learned many communicative skills and cultural information from their daily interactions with people of different cultures and countries.

Based on the results, their shared interests and personal willingness toward the development of their social skills and cultural information encouraged both local and international students of UMP to have more interactions with students from different cultural and social backgrounds. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data also confirmed the positive impacts of interpersonal communication among students from different cultures and countries on their social and academic lives.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

Future researchers can evaluate the effects of daily interactions among local and foreign students on the process of internationalization, and establishment of global networks of higher education. Positive effects of cultural and social norms of host organisations on daily lives of international students can be an interesting investigation for the future researchers as well. Future research can also evaluate effects of interactions among local and international students of higher education institutions in the host country on mutual understanding of different nations and strengthening of social relations among them.

This study evaluated the effects of interpersonal communication among local and international students of a Malaysian public University, UMP, on their social and academic lives. Findings of this study confirmed that there were enough opportunities at

the UMP campus for students from different cultures and nationalities to be involved in IPC. Based on the results, both local and international participants of this study reported that they experienced some interactions with students from different social and cultural backgrounds during their stay and study at the university campus. Results of this study also demonstrated that interactions among university students were very useful for their academic and personal lives; as they gained some new cultural information, and also learned how to communicate with people of different cultures and societies. In addition, good opportunities at the university campus, personal willingness of students to be involved in IPC, their eagerness to gain new cultural information, and positive effects of their interactions on their personal and academic lives were among the main factors that influenced the process of IPC among the local and foreign students. Findings of this study may encourage university students to be involved in IPC with their peers, and may also be helpful for the management of Malaysian public universities to place emphasis on interactions among students.

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EFL STUDENTS' USES OF *UM* AS FILLERS IN CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the filled pause *um* used by the English Department students of the State Islamic University of Malang during their oral presentations in the classroom. A filled pause such as *um* is a linguistic expression used to signal hesitation in its immediate context, with the primary function of bringing the listener's attention to a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context. In achieving the purpose of the study, a total of twenty five oral presentations in English based on different topics were collected and analysed. By using Clark and Tree's (2002) framework on the use of *um*, the study shows that the filled pause of *um* played different roles based on the speaker's thoughts on feelings of uncertainty. Furthermore, it is also used in almost all positions of utterances, and each of which brings specific meanings. An *um* is used at the initial position of an utterance to show readiness to open a new sentence, topic, or point of a presentation, to express awkwardness, and to show respect to others. In the middle of an utterance, it is used to detect a problem, to struggle, to find upcoming words, and to restart a conversation. Finally, in the final position of the utterance, it is used as a result of agnosia and to close a presentation. Future research could make use of the findings from the present study to examine the use of filled pauses based on different characteristics among speakers to find out other different functions of filled pauses especially in EFL classroom presentations.

Keywords: classroom, filled pause, oral presentation, *um*

INTRODUCTION

In conversation, it is normal for people to use hesitation strategies, a pause or delay in performing an action or while engaging in an action. Hesitation may indicate fear, reluctance, uncertainty, or faltering, as in a speech (Tree, 1999). Tree argues that some examples of hesitations are *umm*, *well*, *I mean*, *you know*, and *okay*. The use of hesitation in the EFL classroom context has been very widely explored. The use of *okay* and *alright* have been previously studied in the classroom of foreign students by Filipi and Wales (2003). They highlighted that *right* indicates a display of less involvement than *alright* in its use of a response token, indicating that *right* is a more neutral marker (Gardner, 2001). The word *okay* was used to perform a wide range of functions, even though it was associated with topic continuance. The findings of the research showed that the word *alright* functioned as a sentence to begin a conversation or for giving instructions for an activity, while *right* is applied more restrictively or used as a connector in a conversation (Filipi & Wales, 2003).

Rieger (2003) conducted a study on the use of hesitations in the EFL classroom. The research was on the use of hesitation strategies among intermediate learners of German as a second or foreign language when they participated in oral L2 tests. The research found that beginners tend to leave their hesitation pauses unfilled thus making their speech highly disfluent, while advanced L2 speakers, who are similar to native speakers, use a variety of fillers. Intermediate learners hesitate mainly for two reasons: to search for a German word or structure, or to think about the content of their utterance. Some participants use a variety of strategies to signal to the addressee that they are hesitating, while other participants leave their hesitation pauses unfilled.

Schegloff (2010) extended the study of *um* in the social interaction context which is usually attributed to trouble in the speech production process. Through the conversation analytic investigation, he found that what is done and understood in the use of *um* depends not only on the composition and position, but also on turn-taking, action sequence and the context of talk.

Other research investigating the use of *um* was conducted by Acton (2011). He investigated social variation in the use of *um* and *uh* in the United States. This corpus study shows that “*um* is gaining currency relative to *uh*; that is, there is a linguistic change in progress whereby the use of *um* relative to *uh* is on the rise” (p.1). It is also argued that comprehensive understanding of “the dynamics of gender and filler usage” urges us to examine “the meanings and associations of *um* and *uh* and of speakers’ stances, objectives, in relation to their social world” (p.1).

Furthermore, Corley and Hartsuikers (2011) suggest that “speech understanding can sometimes benefit from the presence of filled pauses (*uh*, *um*, and the like), and that words following such filled pauses are recognised more quickly” (p.1). Furthermore it is found that “natural delays such as fillers need not be seen as ‘signals’ to explain the benefits they have on the listeners’ ability to recognise and respond to the words which follow them” (p.1).

Due to the numerous studies dealing with the hesitation phenomena in the context of second language development, Rose (2013) created a cross linguistic corpus of hesitation phenomena in second language proficiency development to investigate the influence of speech patterns of first and second language speakers. The findings of the study show that “the silent pause rate and duration as well as other hesitation phenomena correlate with first language performance while the speech rate does not. The result shows that the corpus may be a useful reference for researchers who wish to investigate the correspondence between first and second language speeches, particularly dealing with the use of hesitation phenomena” (p.1). Hesitation is no longer divided into its utterances, but is broken down into long silent pauses (not including the short pauses associated with breathing, articulation, or junctures), filled pauses (*uh/um* in English), repairs, repeats, false starts, and lengthening.

Based on the corpus, a research study concerning filled pauses was conducted by Belz and Klapi (2013). The study argued that “pauses in spoken language indicate hesitations. Filler type (*uh* versus *um*) is believed to signal a minor or major speech delay in L1”...The results suggest that “filler type in German is not used to indicate the length of the following delay” (p.1). It is also revealed that “Advanced learners seem to have adopted this pattern of use, but cannot overcome their hesitations as fast as native speakers, probably due to their less automatised speech production” (p.1).

Another recent study was conducted by Laserna, Seih and Pennebaker (2014). They found that “filled pauses were used at comparable rates across gender and age. Discourse markers, however, were more common among women, younger participants, and more

conscientious people. These findings suggest that filler word use can be considered a potential social and personality marker" (p.1)

Based on the above rationale, the present study examines the intended meaning of *um* and its implication as used by EFL students in several presentations in the English classroom. The research investigates the function and occurrence of *um*, seen from different locations of a sentence. Therefore, the research study is carried out to answer the following questions:

1. What is the intended meaning of *um* used by the EFL students in their classroom presentations in English?
2. How are the occurrences of *um* used by the EFL students in classroom presentations in English?

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive qualitative study based on Clark and Tree's (2002) theoretical and analytical frameworks. The consideration of using Clark and Tree (2002) is that EFL classroom presentations in some way have the dimension of spontaneous speech in which Clark and Tree (2002) investigated. A total of twenty five oral presentations was collected from a class consisting of fourth and sixth-semester students, studying in an Islamic university in East Java, Indonesia. To collect the students' presentations, a Sony handycam DCR-SR68 having 5.1 surround sound recording was used. This electronic instrument has ample storage and a mega zoom lens. The electronic device was used to capture good quality pictures as well as to pick up clear speeches. The advantages of using this video recorder were that it did not disturb the learning process, and it could be used for other classroom activities if needed. The students' presentations were collected over a period of two months starting from April 1st up to May 30th.

Once the oral presentations were video-recorded, the researcher examined the utterance of *um* in the presentations. The sentences containing the filled pause *um* were then transcribed.

To understand the intended meaning of *um*, the analytical framework by Clark and Tree (2002) was applied. *Uh* and *um* have long been called filled pauses instead of silent pauses (see Goldman-Eisler, 1968; Maclay & Osgood, 1959). The unstated assumption is that they are pauses (not words) that are filled with a sound (not silence). Yet it has long been recognized that *uh* and *um* are not on par with silent pauses. In one view, they are symptoms of certain problems in speaking. In a second view, they are non-linguistic signals for dealing with certain problems in speaking. However in a third view, they are linguistic signals – in particular, words of English. If *uh* and *um* are words, as we will argue, it is misleading to call them filled pauses. To be neutral and yet retain a bit of their history, we will call them fillers (Clark & Tree, 2002, p.75). For example, *uh* gives the evidence that "at the moment when trouble is detected, the source of the trouble is still actual or quite recent. But otherwise, [uh] doesn't seem to mean anything. It is a symptom." (Levelt, 1989, p. 484; see also Mahl, 1987; O'Donnell & Todd, 1991). When speakers detect trouble in speaking, they often produce an utterance other than *uh* and *um* (Levelt, 1989). If they do, the appearance of *uh* and *um* must be conditional on other factors. For example, if the speaker pauses long enough to receive the cue of his own silence, he will produce some kind of signal ([m, er], or perhaps a repetition of the immediately preceding unit) which says, in effect, "I'm still in control – don't interrupt me" (Maclay & Osgood, 1959, p.41).

Um and *uh* are often inserted as signs to correct a wrong utterance, and are commonly followed by a joke, an apologetic statement or an explanation of the problem.

These are also known as collateral signals. *Uh* and *um* in collateral signals belong to collateral interjections. The use of *um* and *uh* as interjections are similar, implying current emotions, states of knowledge, surprise, and requesting attention (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1972, p.413)

Furthermore, it is also described by Smith and Clark (1993), that *uh* and *um* indicate that there is a delay of speaking – *uh* indicates a brief delay, while *um* indicates a longer one. Short delay can be stated as around 1-2 seconds, whereas long delay is 2- 5 seconds. The inferences to this are that a speaker may need several times from stopping to begin talking again. Commonly, after a lengthening occurs, a speaker often pauses and thinks of the upcoming words.

Furthermore, the framework of Clark and Tree (2002) was used to understand how the intended meaning of *um* is planned. It is argued that “speakers plan utterances in three main stages: they conceptualize a message, formulate the appropriate linguistic expressions, and articulate them” (Levelt, 1989, cited in Clark & Tree, 2002, p. 80). Most theories of production predict that the planning of creating an *um* can be divided into three locations of occurrence: (1) at the boundary (front), (2) after the first word (ignoring *uh* and *um*), and (3) later (Clark & Tree, 2002, p.22).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Um and its intended meaning

In relation to the theory of Clark and Tree (2002), the first result from the analysis showed that the use of *um* is caused by a difficulty experienced by the speaker, and *um* is used as an interjection, or to correct a mistake. Clark and Tree (2002) mentioned that there are specific causes to the three views on the use of *um*. This study found that such causes were due to the process of speaker’s thinking and their feeling of uncertainty in speaking.

Excerpt from Presentation on 24/05/13

1	AH	I just wanna ask one question↑ Can you give the:
2		eh(.) can you go to the sli-
3		no no yak, no, up one-.↑Yeah. Can you give the
4		examples of the:= lexical conditioning in
5		English cuzlike(.) the examples ↑you gave us isn't
6		English right
7	DR	Oh yeah sure. Um (...) so(...) Yeah um (..), [so]
8		
9	JK	[so](..) you know like leaves ↑
10		When leaf is pluralize <u>heh</u> heh. I mean being
11		plural, it is hhv right ↑not f right
12		Like this(.) like(...) like this . This f, becomes v
13		and add s here. Yeah? =
14		yeah? Okay. Ya- so(..) leave is one example in
15		English.

Excerpt from Presentation on 15/04/13

16	MF	So: I guess that um(..) the title is only one man who-
17		who had no eyes
18		Because the eyes is not <u>eyes</u> like <u>this</u> but is actually
19		<u>heart</u> . So: that's why it's not blind, but the evilness.
20	ET	o(h)ka:y, and how can you <u>actually</u> be sure about it?
21		Like I mean(..), not all people who is blind(.) have no
22		heart? [right]↑
23	MF	[Um(...)] yeah(...)
24	ET	so: blind is? People with no heart ↑
25	MF	Um(...) yeah well, maybe not all: Bu:t um(..) we(.) we
26		sometime hear the(.) of the word ↑ your hear is
27		<u>blind!</u> Right? So(..) It's the kind we hear ever(h)y day.
28		In here, <u>blind</u> is the heart, a:nd not the eyes.

The filled pauses *um* above function as help for speakers to advance the topic (Tottie, 2011). As seen from Clark and Tree (2002), the data above display that the speaker understood what he was about to say. However, the speaker experienced a problem in what he was about to say next. The speaker's upcoming word was hard to utter, and was still in a process to be stated. In this case, the speaker was momentarily unable to produce the required word or phrase, hence *um* was used to buy time for thinking. This may also happen as a result of an emotional reaction of nervousness or stress. It is also argued that second language learners often resort to using *um* as they have difficulties in making an oral presentation in English.

Furthermore, in relation to the second view of the role of *um* as an interjection by Clark and Tree (2002), the occurrence of *um* found in the data above is due to a surprising event. The surprising event found here is different from that in Clark and Tree (2002) that was more about disturbance experienced by the speaker while speaking. In this condition, however, the speaker was surprised by a sudden question which may be hard to answer. Thus, the speaker uttered *um* as an expression of thinking about the audience's question. The speaker also used a pause after the filled pause, indicating that more time was needed to think about the upcoming words.

Excerpt from Presentation on 03/05/13

29	MS	How can you notice that um(..) which word
30		change to I mean from time to
31		time or: um(..) era ↓(.) and which [doesn't]
32	IL	[Hehheh] um(...)
33		hehheh you kno:wwe're
34		not really sure <u>about</u> it↑ bu::t >we can speak
35		English good↓right<hehheh

In the following example, the amount of the delay of the *um* utterance is manifested as an insert in the filled pause. In this case, the inserts are treated as signs, similar to Clark and Tree's study (2002). These sign can be commonly found in between laughter, sighs and tongue clicks, which are also utterances (DuBois, 1974; Tree & Schrock, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987; Schourup, 1982). As shown in the data above, filled pause *um* is followed

by laughter (hehheh), which was also an insert. It implies that the speaker's intention is to enumerate the time allotment of delay to create an answer. However, to fill the process of thinking, the speaker conceived a joke towards the question, and answers it with a joke. This performance is found not only in the second language learner's presentation, but in most student presentations because they were unable to answer questions. In another word, when students are unable to continue talking while speaking in public, they tend to say foolish things for not being able to answer questions in social situations. The result of this study shows that EFL students tend to lengthen the pauses in order to think of a right answer.

Planning the utterance *um*

Um can occur at three locations of an utterance.

1. At the boundary

Excerpt from Presentation on 22/ 05/ 13

36	KR	Um(..) During the past era ↓ it might still be impossible to have the same, the same rights for men and women. Um(..) this happen for(..) several years. However, now it's not like that for the rule ↓ anymore
37	LA	Um(..) yes, <u>especially</u> if you see it ↑ in the first page it shows it well.

Excerpt from Presentation on 02/05/13

38	JK	Good morning every one ↓ good morning to Mrs.
39		Backhaus ↑ a:nd good
40		afternoon to my beloved ↑ friends. Um(..) we would
41		like to start our presentation
42		um(..) £OHYA£ this is Richard, here is ↓ Stephanie ↑
43		a:nd we have Rozi there.
44		Now I would like to invite Richard to open the
45		presentation
46	RS	Good morning ↓ everyone Um(..) the first thing I
47		wanna sa:y is, well before coming ↑
48		in to my >presentation<, I wanna ask a question.

Excerpt from Presentation on 25/04/13

49	LN	All <u>right</u> now for the reading part ↑ it <u>will</u> be
50		expla:ined by: Inez.
51	IC	Um(..) okay gu:ys, no:w I will explain a:bout the:
52		after reading part

Excerpt from Presentation on 02/05/13

53	TR	Um(..) if looking this <u>picture</u> , well, since we(.) ↓
54		since we haven't read(.) so: >we
55		can just say< that the <u>man</u> is looking to: the lady's
56		necklace

Excerpt from Presentation B on 02/05/13

57	PS	Now, I ask question.Ok[ay?]
58	AUD	[okay]
59	PS	How do pronunciation from? Um(..) first of all we(.) ↑
60		are going to <u>present</u> ↓ the articulation above the larynx. Here
61		we have a diagram that is oral, nasal, um(..) cavity

Excerpt from Presentation on 31/05/13

62	LK	Um(..) in the previous presentation ↑ we know (.)
63		about the: correlation <u>between</u>
64		morphology and phonology. Now we will discuss
65		<u>about</u> morphology and syntax,
66		which will be presented by: Hikmah.
67	HK	Well ↓ on the correlation between the: two ↓
68		actually just(.) can be seen from the
69		definition itself <u>actually</u> .

As Clark and Tree (2002) mentioned, the place of occurrence are divided into three locations: (1) at the boundary (front), (2) after the first word (usually ignoring uh and um), and (3) later. In the first analysis, it is seen that the *um* is uttered in front of a speech. The *um* in the beginning of the speech was followed by a delay for about 2 - 4 seconds. Different from Clark and Tree (2002) who argue that the first occurrence of *um* may just be because of a delay or disfluency, this research discovered that when the speaker uses *um* in the beginning of the speech, it is because the speaker is ready to begin the presentation.

If it arises in the first sentence, but occurs in the middle of a presentation, it implies that the speaker is showing awareness to the audience that the speaker is moving to the next sentence or point. The delay only represents that the speaker is ready to begin, to move to a new point, or a new topic. This condition is consistent when the use of *um* applied by the students in their presentations (Clark and Tree, 2002)

Excerpt from Presentation on 25/04/13

69	TW	So so glottal stop is is like(.) this is the example. ↓ When we:
70		have got here: ↑ and
71		we plus it with you: we don't read <u>got you:</u> ↑ but, we say
72		[gotcha], [yeah] yeah hehheh <u>gotcha</u>
73	UD	[gotcha] [hehheh]
74	NM	Um (..) but <u>sorry:</u> , but um(..) isn't it(.) isn't glottal stop
75		like when you paten,
76		hehheh, um (..) I mean, when you say <u>letter:</u> you say
77		*leker*? So, you don't
78		<u>pronounce</u> the /t/ part. I think it's it's(.) yeah

Another process on the occurrence of *um* can be seen from the first utterance for the EFL students' presentation is the feeling of awkwardness. The feeling of awkwardness may also refer to the feeling of hesitation. In Indonesia, the feeling of hesitation is a

feeling of respect or embarrassment from fear to respect a person of higher status (Wolff & Poedjosoedarmo, 1982) to show politeness shown especially in Javanese culture. Therefore, when the presenters utter *um* to open the speech, they are waiting for the teacher to sit down and prepare to hear the presentation. Another example of showing respect is shown below:

Excerpt from Presentation on 03/04/13

79	LA	My first question is how much should I get paid?↓
80	UK	Um (..) in our case ↑we usually give depending on
81		the hour.
82	LA	Oh- okay, thank you thank you <u>very</u> ↑
83		much. So: if I work fo:r three hours-, I will:
84		just times it right?
85	UK	Indeed.

Excerpt from Presentation on 26/04/13

86	US	So: this one is the head and this here- is the:
87		depend [ent]
88	RA	[Um] (..) excuse me but isn't that supposed to be 56
89		vice versa?
90	US	Oh yeah↑*yeah*, sorry we say wrongly hehheh.
91		It's vice versa. So, this is the:dependantand

This question uses *um* to open a sentence. However, in this case, the speaker uses *um* as a symbol of showing respect to others. As explained by Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness may be the symbol of solidarity. It has an intended meaning to answer a question respectfully, or in a polite way. Fung (2009) commented that it is best to show politeness and use indirectness when someone mentions salary.

Excerpt from Presentation on 18/04/13

92	HS	Excuse me, but I think that your explanation just
93		then weren't really correlating with my question.
94		Sorry, but err, you know.
95	EN	Um (..) really? I didn't know that. And (..) what ↓
96		makes you think that?
97	HS	<u>Well</u> : there are several points ↓that doesn't match
98		the textbook

In this case, the speaker disagreed with the statement of the question. This is viewed from the expression of the speaker's gestures. The gestures change from before and after hearing the questioner utterances. One of the eyebrows is lifted up for a while showing a kind of grin. The way the speaker pronounced *um* was very low, and the speaker seemed very shocked, that was different from the way the speaker uttered *um* the first time, as in the thinking process. Perhaps no profession has uttered more *ums* than the legal

profession. Such words are a clear indication that the speaker's style is halting and uncertain. Filled pauses are employed to signal doubt or uncertainty or to fill a pause when the speakers are hesitant in speaking (Clark & Tree, 2002). From the analysis above, it may be stated that the speaker applied gesture in the process of creating the utterance *um*.

2. In the middle of a sentence:

Excerpt from Presentation on 18/04/13

99	ZN	Uh(...) this is um(..) the diachronic part for um(..)
100		language development. If you
101		can see from here to here is um(..) diachronic
102		part.
103		Diachronic is um(..) well:
104	KR	Well ↑ diachronic is: when something is
105		happening in over time.

Excerpt from Presentation on 31/05/13

106	ES	I will discuss of um(..) about the: um(..)
107		differences ↓ and the: similarities
108		between syntax and morphology ↑ itself
109		Syntax is um(..) firstly(.) I will introduce to thee
110		definition before um(..) going to
111		the: similarities of syntax and *morphology ↑ itself-

Excerpt from Presentation on 05/04/13

112	IS	So: derivational morpheme also use to ↓ derive ↑
113		some other um(..) grammatical
114		Um(..) grammatical types o:f the stem
115	AUD	So: is it- the same as free morpheme?
116	IS	*Yeah* um(..) no-

Excerpt from Presentation on 18/04/13

117	PB	So now ↓ we: analyse word ↑ into um(..) its ↑
118		original word a:nd its uh(.) what is it
119		[yeah] affixes.
120	AUD	[affixes]

However, it is also proposed that when *um* is uttered in the middle of a speech; the speaker detected a problem with what to say (Levelt, 1983, 1989). This statement is found from the research in which a person is confused of what to say, because of a guilty feeling in a presentation.

Excerpt from Presentation on 15/04/13

121	JK	Good morning every one ↑ good morning to Mrs.
122		Backhaus a:nd good ↑
123		afternoon to my beloved friends.Um(..) we would
124		like to start our presentation
125		um(..) £OHYA£ this is Richard, here is
126		Stephanie a:nd we have Rozi there ↓

Excerpt from Presentation on 30/05/13

127	GL	Alright um(..) I'll talk more about <u>why</u> ↑
128		generative approach happen. Um(..)
129		but firstly, I would introduce ↑ oh ↓ I mean define
130		the generative approach itself.

In this case, the presenter applied a restart after a filled pause. Sometimes a speaker will utter a few words and then suddenly return to the beginning and say the same words (Clark & Tree, 2002). A restart usually occurs when the speaker unintentionally forgets to deliver some of the things which are supposed to be delivered. Therefore, once the speaker remembers, they use the filled pause *um* as an indication that the speaker is going to repeat something which he/she may have forgotten to state (Corley & Steward, 2008).

Excerpt from Presentation on 05/04/13

131	FN	Well(.) um(..) this <u>semester</u> I take calculus and
132		chemistry.
133	JK	Why?
134	FN	Well(.) um(..) I can enjoy the chemistry. You
		know: ↑ it's um(..) it's challenging

Excerpt from Presentation on 01/04/13

135	SK	>Do you give up everything in order to get ↓
136		happiness<o:r do you do
137		Anything what I mean is um(..) like-like how do
138		you <u>reach</u> ↓ your own
139		happiness?
140	AUD	No::
141	SK	<u>E:xactly</u> . You see- um(..) people have their own
142		<u>way</u> of the definition of ↑
143		happiness ↑ Let see(.) um(..) you(.) yup What is
144		happiness?

The conditions where *um* is used in the above indicates some trouble experienced by the speaker. However, the only difference is that these sentences are followed by hesitation such as *well*, *I mean*, or *so*. Adell, Bonafonte and Escuredo (2007) stated that “filled pauses can be inserted, for example, in between the two utterances of a repetition.

A filled pause may appear before or after entire speech acts, or words, but tends to occur at significant grammatical locations" (p.2).

3. In the last sentence

Excerpt from Presentation on 11/04/13		
145	BM	Um(..) first of all we are going to present the
146		articulation above the larynx here ↑
147		we have a diagram that is oral, nasal, um(..)cavity
148	TR	As we all know that the sound produce ↑ because
149		of um(..) contractions.

When *um* is uttered in the last sentence, which is also mentioned by Clark and Tree (2002), it is usually used as an indication to point out an object. A study by Arnold, Maria, and Tanenhaus (2003) found that the speaker experiences difficulty in referring to something or describing an unusual shape rather than an everyday object (e.g., an apple) in which they have an object agnosia. However, a different interpretation can be applied when *um* is used in the second language learners presentation (see below).

Excerpt from Presentation on 10/04/13		
150	IK	Well(.) actually my ↑previous job: I was working ↓
151		on a call centre. So um(..) yeah
152	DR	O(h)kay a:nd why do you quit from it?
153	IK	Well(.) <u>actually</u> , Iam not okay with working <u>too</u>
154		late and in THERE- <u>late</u> is okay.
155		So: it doesn't suit me.

Excerpt from Presentation on 30/05/13		
156	NM	Well(.) we think that this is all: frovm our
157		presentation, so: um(..) thank you >and
158		have a good day<

Clark and Tree (2002) did not mention what may be the cause of the occurrence of *um* in the last sentence. This study, however, shows that *um* does not mean anything - it is just a delay to fill the gap before closing a sentence. For second language learners especially in Indonesia (Fung, 2009), this often occurs.

CONCLUSION

From the research conducted, it may be concluded that the use of *um* is due to a trouble or problem that is detected by the speaker who uses it as an interjection or to correct a mistake (Clark & Tree, 2002). It is used during the process of the speaker's thinking and their feeling of uncertainty in speaking. Furthermore, the occurrences of the utterance *um* that are mostly applied by L2 speakers have different meanings depending on where the *um* occurs in the utterance. When *um* is uttered at the beginning of a speech or to open a speech for about 2 - 4 seconds, it may be interpreted as (1) readiness to begin a new sentence, topic, point or presentations; (2) exposing awkwardness, and (3) respectfulness.

These were found in the students' presentations, or when there is a cultural aspect interfering.

When *um* is uttered in the middle of a speech, the speaker seemed to experience a problem of what to say, or having an uncertainty feeling in a presentation. These are commonly marked by the presenter trying a restart after a filled pause. Furthermore, when *um* is uttered in the middle of the speech, it is commonly followed by other hesitations such as *well*, *I mean*, or *so*.

In contrast with the two places of location described above, when *um* is uttered in the last sentence, the speaker is having difficulties in referring to something or in describing, for example, an unusual shape rather than an everyday object (e.g., an apple), in which they have an object agnosia (Arnold et al., 2003). However, when *um* is applied in an L2 learner's presentation, it has a different interpretation; it indicates a delay in filling in the gap before closing a sentence. This use of *um* is quite common among EFL learners in Indonesia (Fung, 2009).

The results of the present study are different from those previous related of Schegloff (2010) and Corley and Hartsuiker (2011), who found that the cause to the occurrence of *um* are dependent on age and gender. This research however demonstrated that *um* also occurs due to wanting to "keep the floor" or create an understanding with the audience, despite the fact that they might be of different ages or genders. Therefore, this research shows that the occurrence of *um* as fillers, which is commonly shown as a delay of speech, has its own interpretation, and not just natural delays, as found by Corley and Hartsuiker (2011).

However, it should be noted that this research was conducted under time constraints (within two months). Future research should allow a longer time for both data collection and analysis to produce more reliable results and more convincing findings.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Glossary

The transcription glossary is based on the system developed by Jefferson (2004) and it is used in the majority of conversation and analytic publication.

WHY DOES WHAT

- 1,2 All lines are numbered so that they are easily can be referred in the context.
- A: Name of the speaker or is usually abbreviated.
- A? When the name of the speaker is unclear, it is followed by question mark.

TIMING

- (.)(1.5) A pause is usually indicated by a dot inside a bracket.
- = It shows when a talk is in a continuance without any gaps or stops in it.
- He[llo]
[Hi] Square brackets indicates an overlapping talk among people
- >text< Arrow brackets which points towards the text indicates that a person's pace of talking is fast.
- >>text<< Double arrow brackets which points towards the text indicates that a person's pace of talking is extremely fast
- <text> Arrow brackets which move out from the text indicates that a person is talking at a slow pace

DOUBTS AND COMMENTS

- (What) It cannot be heard whether "what" is being heard or not
- () It cannot be heard what is being said

SOUNDS

- So- A dash indicates that there is sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound
- Hh Indicating that the speaker is breathing
- Heh heh Laughter is often written down less than it sounds
- *yeah* It indicates that the words in between are pronounced in a creaky voice
- £smile£ Pound signs indicates that the words pronounced are followed by a smile

INTONATIONS, STRESS, VOLUMES

- Emphasis Underlining indicates speaker emphasis
- High↑ Arrow pointing upward indicates a rising intonational shift
- Low↓ Arrow pointing downward indicates a falling intonational shift
- LOUD Capital letters indicate a high volume

PUNCTUATION INDICATES INTONATIONS APPROXIMATELY IN THE FOLLOWING WAY

- . Falls to low
- ? Raise to high
- ; Fall to mid low
- , Continuing or maybe slightly upward

A COMPARISON OF THEME THETA ROLES IN ENGLISH AND SINDHI

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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to analyse the differences and similarities between theme theta roles in Sindhi and English language. This study focuses and establishes the argument structure of Sindhi, and its comparison to English. The study aims to answer the research question: What are the argument structures of theme theta roles in Sindhi verbs? It also examines the argument structure of the Sindhi verbs and investigates how theme theta roles are assigned by the verbs. The data come from natural/oral conversation of Sindhi language based on two interviews with two Sindhi native speakers. Each verb phrase in the data is therefore examined and studied in detail in terms of argument/thematic structure in order to analyse the theme theta roles in Sindhi language, and their importance and position in sentences. The data have been analysed and discussed based on the Carnie's theoretical framework (thematic relations and theta roles). Each verb phrase has been analysed according to the Carnie's analytical framework. Towards the end, the study found that the Sindhi language has Theme Theta Role which is almost similar to that of English in terms of placement, function and importance. However, the only difference between them is that Sindhi theme theta roles can be placed at initial, middle and also at the end of sentences in Spoken Sindhi. Theme theta roles in Sindhi are more prominent than English ones.

Keywords: argument structure, English, Sindhi, syntax, theta roles, theme theta roles

INTRODUCTION

Languages can be the same in their basic purpose of sharing and transferring meaning, but all of them have different structure. Structure (syntax) differentiates one language from other languages. The structure of the English language is, for example, different from Sindhi language; they can be similar in the purpose of sharing and transferring meaning, but they can never be similar in terms of structure. The structure of the English language is subject, verb and object (SVO); while the structure of the Sindhi language is subject, object and verb (SOV). Each language has its own features (morphological, phonological, semantic and syntactic) which make them unique.

Sindhi language is one of the richest languages of the world in terms morphosemantic and syntactic features (Fahmida, 2012). The Sindhi language has three different written scripts with same pronunciation and vocabulary: (1) Arabic-Sindhi script used in the Sindh Province of Pakistan, (2) the Devanagiri script used in India, and (3) the Roman script which is used in internet, mobile, tabs, etc. (Jatly, 2012; Tarachandani, 2011).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are a number of books on Sindhi grammar, Sindhi morphology, phonology, parts of speech and Sindhi language, but very little work on Sindhi semantics and syntax (structure). No proper work has been done on Sindhi syntax (Pitafi, S., 2009; Fahmida, 2011). On one hand, Sindhi language is known as the oldest and major language of India and Pakistan in general and Sindh province in particular. On the other hand, its major part which is syntax (structure) has been ignored or left behind all this while. We can find lot of work on Sindhi grammar in general, but less or no work on syntax in particular. Past writers like Stack (1849 & 2011), Ernest (2011), Munshi (1925), Qaleech (2006) and Adwani (1926) have generally argued about morphology; grammar and parts of speech of Sindhi language. None of them and their followers has written about syntax of Sindhi language; either it had been ignored or these are the modern terms in language and at that time these were not well known to the writers/linguists. However, it is still being ignored by the present day writers (Fahmida, 2009; Rahman & Bhatti, 2009; Pitafi, 2010; Jokhio, 2012a & 2012b). The aim of this study is to analyse Sindhi verb phrase in terms of Theme thematic relations and compare it to English.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The current study tries to answer the research question: What are the argument structures of theme theta roles in Sindhi verbs? The objective of the study is to establish the argument structure of Sindhi verbs with regards to the theme thematic relations/theta roles. It aims to see the structure of object arguments in Sindhi sentences, and also to analyse themes and their relation with other syntactic and semantic elements in sentences.

RELATED LITERATURE ABOUT SINDHI VERBS

Verbs play a very vital role in a sentence; they show an action of a sentence. Verbs show what the subject and object are doing in the sentence. Verbs are called body of sentence (Jokhio, 2012a). Jokhio (2012a) defines Sindhi verb that anything which tells or shows something, any action, state or condition of someone in the sentence that is called a verb. Jokhio (2012b) divides the Sindhi verbs into two types; main verbs and to be or auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are further divided into regular and irregular verbs and auxiliary verbs, which are further divided into free auxiliaries and linking auxiliaries. However, Qaleech (2006) says the Sindhi verbs have been derived from imperative form. He argues that Sindhi imperatives are Sindhi nouns but they do the function of verb and hence many other verb forms are derived from the imperative that is why they are called base forms in the Sindhi language. He further says Nominative, accusative and state cases of noun are also derived from the imperatives. Adwani (1926) defines irregular verbs are those whose objects do not come/link directly in the sentences. Qaleech (2006) observes the Sindhi language has compound verbs which are made up two or three verbs together as a verb phrase in a sentence. He says compound verbs are created with the addition of suffixes in the main verbs of a sentence. He argues that compound verbs are those verbs which are used together in a sentence.

Sindhi verbs have been divided into intransitive verbs and transitive verbs, and these are further classified into sub parts (Arshad, 1986; Allana, 2010; Chano, 2011; Sindhi, 2010; Jokhio, 2012a, 2012b, & 2012c; Khoso, 2005; Qaleech, 2006; Rashidi, 2007).

Thematic relations

Willits, D'Mello, Duran and Olney (2007) argues that verbs and arguments go together. According to them, linguistic experience is insufficient for learning the proper roles for verbs, but they can also be learnt through the conceptual relation between events, actions and objects. On the other hand, Jackendoff (1983) says that some verbs assign only theta role to their arguments, others assign two roles to the same argument, some other verbs assign three theta roles to the same argument, and there are some verbs which do not assign any theta roles at all. Dowty (1991), however, gives the concept of Thematic Proto-Roles (Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient features of the arguments). One should see the properties of the arguments before assigning the theta role. According to the Argument Selection Principle, an Agent has to be the subject of the sentence and patient should be the object of the sentence.

Bierwisch (2006) studies the thematic roles and their universal, particular and idiosyncratic aspects. He says arguments are placed hierarchically in different languages. Theta roles are assigned according to the structure of expressions and theta roles can also be content based. His hierarchy of the theta roles is: Agent > Recipient > Experiencer/Goal > Instrument > Patient/Theme > Place. William (1987), however, argues that there are three species of theta role assignment namely internal theta role assignment, external theta role assignment and predication. External arguments are subjects, internal arguments are objects and predication is the action in the sentence. He introduces the concept of Implicit Arguments which are not assigned any theta roles in the sentence.

Rappaport and Levin (2007), on the other hand, studies the thematic hierarchies and argues that thematic hierarchy is a ranking of a set of semantic roles. They argue that there are problems in the thematic hierarchies, because it is not universal; different writers give different hierarchies.

- a. Agt> Th/Pat> G/S/L (Baker, 1997)
- b. Agt> Exp> Th (Belletti & Rizzi, 1988)
- c. Agt> Ben> Rec/Exp> Inst> Th/Pat> L (Bresnan & Kanerva, 1988)
- d. Agt> Pat> Rec> Ben>Inst> L> Temp> (Dik, 1978)
- e. Agt> Exp> Inst> Pat> G/S/L> Time (Fillmore 1971)
- f. Agt> Dat/Ben> Pat> L> Inst/Assoc> Mann (Givon 1984)
- g. Act> Pat/Ben> Th> G/S/L> Ben (Jackendoff 1990)
- h. Agt> Eff> Exp> L>Th> Pat (Van Valin 1990)

It can be seen that all of the above writers/linguists propose different hierarchy of the theta roles. The prominence of theta roles differs from language to language. According to Dowty (1991), semantic elements help realize the arguments and assign the theta roles to them accordingly. He rejects Fillmore's well-known subject selection paradigm. He concludes that each thematic hierarchy is worthy as it contributes to the knowledge regarding theta roles and their hierarchy/prominence. However, Lehmann (2005) argues that semantic roles are studied and analysed at three levels namely participant roles, thematic roles and syntactic relation. Lehmann says theta roles are assigned according to the situation and structure of the expression. He concludes that participants/arguments cannot be analysed alone; they have relation with other parts as well, and they can bear one or more than one relations.

Wechsler (2005) argues thematic structure is partial representation of meaning which consists of thematic/semantic relation with its participants/arguments. Thematic structure is basically a bridge or an interface between semantics and syntax. He says these semantic roles can be traced back in the works of Panini (Sanskrit grammarian and

linguist). Like Panini's sematic roles, Fillmore's (1968 & 1977) 'deep cases' are basis for thematic roles in modern linguistics. Regarding the hierarchy of roles, Fillmore (1968) says, "If there is an A, it becomes the subject; otherwise if there is an I, it becomes the object; otherwise the subject is O."

One argument can have more than one theta roles (Jackendoff, 1990). Agents are not arguments of verbs; they are external arguments (Davis, 2009; Dowty, 1991; Grimshaw, 1990; Jackendoff, 1987; Williams, 1987; William, 1995; Harley, 2013; Luuk, 2009; Marantz, 2013 & Hackl, 2013)

Dowty (1990) also claims that one argument can have more than one theta roles. However, two arguments cannot have same theta role. Dowty's main purpose is to lay some methodological groundwork for studying thematic roles, to propose a new account of theta roles, and to invent and explore the new theories of thematic roles. He then proposes a Thematic Proto-Role Theory based on prototypes; features of roles to realize arguments through proto-roles-entailments; proto-agent properties and proto-patient properties. He defines that thematic role is a set of entailments of a group of predicates with respect to one of the arguments of each. It is the proto-roles and argument selection principle which help us in identifying the thematic roles and their hierarchy/prominence. He concludes that roles are not discrete but prototypes characterized by verbal entailments; arguments can be Agents or Patients depending on their verbal entailments.

Baker (1996) studies the thematic relations and the syntactic structure. He argues there are external and internal arguments in an expression. English language takes Agents as subjects and Patients as objects; and subjects are higher than objects. English has some verbs which take only one argument, others take two arguments, and there are some verbs like 'give' which take three arguments. Baker gives the thematic hierarchy proposed by Larson (1988, as cited in Baker 1996, p. 382)

Agent > Theme > Goal > Obliques (manner, location, time, ...)

However, Baker suggests creating a new thematic hierarchy which has universal approach to all languages. Baker says Theme theta role is higher than Goal theta role, and thus he rejects Grimshaw's (1990) theory of thematic hierarchy where she places Theme lower than Goal. he concludes that thematic roles are semantic roles, while aspectual roles are completing events of the verbs.

Carnie's thematic relation and theta roles

According to Carnie (2006), Theta-role (θ -role) is a bundle of thematic relations associated with a particular argument. For example the verb phrase in the following sentence has three arguments and five thematic relations associated with them: agent, theme, recipient, source, and goal.

Alyssa kept her syntax book.

It shows that *Alyssa* is doing an action of keeping *her syntax book*; where *Alyssa* is an agent and *her syntax book* is a theme. *Alyssa* does an action of keeping, while *her syntax book* undergoes an action of being kept. Theme of the sentence is '*her syntax book*' which undergoes an action of the sentence (Carnie, 2006). Thus, in this way there are two arguments in the above sentence having agent and theme theta roles.

According to his Theta-Criterion Theory each argument is assigned one and only one theta-role and each theta-role is assigned to one and only one argument.

Carnie (2006) defines theta role as a semantic relation between the argument and the predicate (verb phrase). Through verb we come to know what relations they have, and also how arguments are related to the predicate in the sentence.

Radford (2009) defines that the theta-roles are used to describe the semantic roles played by arguments in the sentences. This definition can be illustrated in the following examples:

- [The police] arrested [him]
 (Agent) (Theme)

In this example the argument (noun phrase) ‘the police’ plays the role of an agent who is doing an action of arresting ‘him’. The second argument ‘him’ plays the role of theme which undergoes an action of being arrested by the police.

One way of encoding selectional restrictions is through the use of what are called *thematic relations*. These are particular semantic terms that are used to describe the role that the argument plays with respect to the argument. Theta roles are the names of the participant roles associated with a predicate: the predicate may be a verb, an adjective, a preposition, or a noun. The participant is usually said to be an argument of the predicate. This section describes some common thematic relations (this list is by no means exhaustive, and the particular definitions are not universally accepted (Carnie, 2006)).

The initiator or doer of an action is called the **agent**. In the following sentences, *Ryan* and *Michael* are agents. Agents are most frequently subjects, but they can also appear in other position.

- a) *Ryan* hit Andrew.
- b) *Michael* accidentally broke the glass. (Carnie, 2006, p. 222)

Arguments that feel or perceive events are called **experiencers**.

Experiencers can appear in a number of argument positions including subject and object.

Entities that undergo actions, are moved, experienced or perceived are called **themes**.

The entity towards which motion takes place is called a **goal**.

There is a special kind of goal called **recipient**. Recipients only occur with verbs that denote a change of possession:

- The opposite of a goal is the **source**.
- The place where the action occurs is called the **location**.
- The object with which an action is performed is called the **instrument**.
- Finally, the one for whose benefit an event took place is called the **beneficiary**.

METHODOLOGY

This research work is a qualitative research (Creswell, 2013, Neuman, 2006 & Kumar, 2011); it tries to explore the verbs and types of verbs in the Sindhi language. It will be explored to see the place/position, importance, function and relation of Theme theta roles in Sindhi sentences. It will be seen how Themes are placed and used in sentences.

Research design

The research design used in this research work is exploratory and descriptive and it uses qualitative method (Creswell, 2013; Kumar, 2011; Neuman, 2006). The natural Sindhi language (spoken/oral form) has been selected to study nature and function of the Sindhi verbs.

Data collection

The research methodology comprises two parts; data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Kumar, 2011; Neuman, 2006). The current study analyses verb phrases in the Sindhi language. The data for the study come from the native Sindhi speakers who have Sindhi as their first language or mother tongue. The data have been collected through two informal interviews. Interviews have been taken from the two native Sindhi speakers. The researcher asked them questions informally regarding their different things in order to make them confident enough to speak more freely and frankly about their lives in a natural way. The questions were regarding their personal lives, education (from primary to university life), their current position and status, their family, their present life, previous life and future goals and intentions. The participants were given free atmosphere to speak freely in a natural way as if they were talking to each other without being noticed and recorded. There were two interviews and each interview was taken separately. The 1st interview comprising of 864 sentences was conducted in 56 minutes and 49 seconds; while, the 2nd interview consisting of 815 sentences was conducted in 45 minutes and 09 seconds.

Data analysis

The data has been analysed with the help of Carnie's theoretical framework (Carnie, 2006), which is also used as analytical framework in the current study. It has been tried to explore the Agent thematic relations in Sindhi language. It has been seen how Sindhi verbs take Agent theta roles in sentence. The argument structure of the Sindhi verbs has been established in order to see the theta-roles with verbs in Sindhi language.

ANALYSIS OF THEME THEMATIC RELATIONS IN SINDHI

Thematic relations relate situation to their participants; they show relation between participants and situations, and they are interface between syntax and semantics (Davis, 2009). Besides, Dowty (1990) also claims that one argument can have more than one theta roles. However, two arguments cannot have same theta role. Dowty's main purpose is to lay some methodological groundwork for studying thematic roles, to propose a new account of theta roles, and to invent and explore the new theories of thematic roles. According to Carnie (2006), entities that undergo actions, are moved, experienced or perceived are called **themes**. Let us analyse Theme thematic relations in the following Sindhi examples.

Table 1. Theme thematic relations in Sindhi example

Sentence (1): مان توهان جي ٻولي رڪارڊ ڪندس.		
S. NO/ coding	Sentence Description	Sentence
N11	Arabic script	مان توهان جي ٻولي رڪارڊ ڪندس.
	Roman script	Maan tahan ji boli record kandus.
	Transliteration	Maan=I; tahan=you; ji=of; boli=language; record; kandus=do will.
	Translation	I will record your language.
	Syntactic Analysis	(Subject: مان=maan=I, Object: توهان جي ٻولي=tahanji boli=your language, Verb: رڪارڊ ڪندس=record kandus=will record)

The verb phrase ‘رڪارڊ ڪندس=record kandus=will record’ of the sentence (1) is a transitive verb and it has two arguments to discuss about. The first argument ‘مان=maan=I’ is a personal pronoun used at the place of proper noun (a person) and it has capability to do an action in the sentence. This argument is agent of the sentence which performs an action of recording somebody’s (your) language in the future time. Thus, it can be said that this argument is an agent having the agent theta relation in the sentence. The other argument ‘توهان جي ٻولي=tahan ji boli=your language’ is an object of the sentence which undergoes an action of being recorded in the future. This is the argument that will undergo an action of the sentence (it will be recorded by the subject). This is the argument which is focus or theme of the sentence. Thus, it can be said that it is theme having theme theta role in the sentence. The external argument (subject) does an action (of recording) on the argument ‘your language’. Therefore, it can be argued that this argument is the theme having theme theta role in the sentence.

Table 2. Theme thematic relations in Sindhi example

Sentence (2): هڪڙو توهان کي خواب آيو.		
S. NO/ coding	Sentence Description	Sentence
M159	Arabic script	هڪڙو توهان کي خواب آيو.
	Roman script	Hikro tahan khy khuwab ayo.
	Transliteration	Hikro=one; tahan=you; khy=have; khuwab=dream; ayo=came.
	Translation	You saw a dream.
	Syntactic Analysis	(Subject: توهان کي=tawhankhy=you/you have, Object: خواب=khuwab=dream, Verb Phrase: آيو=ayyo=came/saw, Adjective Phrase: هڪڙو=hikro=a/one)

The verb phrase ‘آيو=ayyo=came/saw’ of the sentence (2) has two arguments. This verb can be used as transitively as well as intransitively, because some Sindhi verbs can be used transitively as well as intransitively (Jokhio, 2012b). In this sentence, it is used as a transitive verb having two arguments (subject and object). The arguments are noun phrases (NPs), which are: ‘توهان=tawhan=you’ and ‘خواب=khuwab=dream’. The first argument ‘توهان=tawhan=you’ is second person singular and it has capability to do an action in the sentence. This argument either does an action (agent) or sometimes gets benefit (beneficiary) in a sentence. It is normally used either as a subject (Agent) which performs an action or as an indirect object which gets benefit in Sindhi. None of the case is here; it neither does an action nor gets benefit in the sentence, but it experiences something which we cannot see (he sees a dream). In this case thus, it can be said that this

argument has the experiencer theta role in the sentence. The second argument ‘خواب=*khuwab*=dream’ is an abstract noun which cannot do anything on its own; but to be seen by any other argument (a person). This is the argument that undergoes the action (being seen) of the sentence. This is the theme or focus of the sentence; it is an object of the sentence, because it undergoes an action of the sentence (it is being seen/experienced by someone). Therefore, it can be said that it is object or theme having theme thematic relation in the sentence.

Table 3. Theme thematic relations in Sindhi example

Sentence (3): تقریباً اسان جي 9 بجي ماني وغيره تيار ٿي ويندي آهي		
Coding	Description	Sentence
N117	Arabic script	تقریباً اسان جي 9 بجي ماني وغيره تيار ٿي ويندي آهي.
	Roman script	Taqreeban assan ji 9 baje mani wagera tayar thee weendi aahy.
	Transliteration	Taqreeban=almost; assan=we; ji=of; 9 baje=9 pm; mani=meal; wagera=etc.; tayar=ready; thee=be; weendi=will go; aahy= is.
	Translation	Our dinner gets ready almost around 9 pm.
	Syntactic Analysis	(Subject: zero subject, Object: اسان جي ماني وغيره = <i>assan ji maani wagera</i> =our dinner etc, Verb Phrase: تيار ٿي ويندي آهي= <i>tayar tee weendiaahy</i> =gets ready, Adverbial Phrase: تقریباً 9 بجي= <i>taqreeban 9 baje</i> =almost 9:00pm)

The verb phrase of the sentence (3) is ‘تيار ٿي ويندي آهي=*tayar tee weendi aahy*=gets ready’. It is spoken in passive voice and it has only one argument ‘اسان جي ماني وغيره =*assan ji maani wagera*=our dinner etc.’ to discuss about. This argument is third person singular and has a feminine gender in Sindhi. It does not have any quality to perform an action in a sentence, because it is an inanimate object. It is simply talking about ‘our dinner’ which gets ready by 9:00 pm, but it is not known who cooks the dinner; it may be the subject which is hidden in the sentence or it may be somebody else. This argument does not perform any function in the sentence. Therefore, it can be said that it is not the subject or Agent of the sentence. However, this is the argument which is being talked about by the speaker (second person) in the sentence. It is the one which undergoes an action (getting ready) of the sentence. It does not do action rather it undergoes the action (of being cooked) of the sentence. Thus, it can be said that this argument is object or theme with theme thematic relation and accusative case in the sentence.

Table 4. Theme thematic relations in Sindhi example

Sentence (4): توهان مونکي ٽائيم ڏنو		
S. NO/ coding	Sentence Description	Sentence
N17	Arabic script	توهان مونکي ٽائيم ڏنو.
	Roman script	Tahan mokhy time dino.
	Transliteration	Tahan=you; mokhy=me/I; time;dino=gave.
	Translation	You gave me the time.
	Syntactic Analysis	(Subject: توهان= <i>tawhan</i> =you, Object: ٽائيم=time, Indirect Object: مونکي= <i>monkhy</i> =me, Verb Phrase: ڏنو= <i>dino</i> =gave)

The verb phrase ‘ڏنو=*dino*=gave’ in the sentence (4) has three arguments to discuss about. The arguments are: ‘توهان=*tawhan*=you’, ‘مونکي=*monkhy*=me’ and ‘ٽائيم=time’.

The first argument ‘توهان=*tawhan*=you’ is a second person pronoun which is used at the place of a proper noun (a person). This argument has capability to do any action in the sentence, because it is used for humans and humans are capable of doing actions. This is the argument which is doing the action of giving ‘ٿاڻيم=*time*=time’ to the argument ‘me’ in the sentence. Thus, it can be said that it is an external argument which is doing an action of giving time to somebody in the sentence, and it has an agent theta role. The argument which undergoes an action (being given) of the sentence is ‘ٿاڻيم=*time*’. It is the internal argument or direct object which undergoes an action of the sentence. It is an object or a theme of the sentence (4). Therefore, it can be said that it is direct object or theme of the sentence with the theme thematic relation in the sentence. This argument has an accusative case in the sentence, because it is direct object of the sentence. The argument which receives the ‘time’ from the subject or the agent is the second argument ‘مونڪي=*monkhy*=me’. The subject (you) is doing an action of giving time, object (time) undergoes an action of the sentence (being given) and the indirect object ‘me’ is recipient of the time in the sentence.

Table 5. Theme thematic realtions in Sindhi example

اي ميل ڪئي ٿن مونڪي: Sentence (5)		
S. NO/ coding	Sentence Description	Sentence
N525	Arabic script	اي ميل ڪئي ٿن مونڪي.
	Roman script	Email kai thun monkhy.
	Transliteration	Email; kai=did; thun=they/them; monkhy=I.
	Translation	They sent me an email.
	Syntactic	(Subject: (they) hidden, Object: اي ميل=email, Indirect
	Analysis	Object: مونڪي= <i>monkhy</i> =me, Verb Phrase: ڪئي ٿن= <i>kai than</i> =did/sent)

The verb phrase ‘ڪئي ٿن=*kai than*=did/sent’ in the sentence (5) takes two arguments to discuss about. The first argument is ‘اي ميل=email’, it is a common noun which can be used for any emails. It is a direct object with an accusative case in the sentence. It does not have an animate quality to do something; it does not do action in the sentence. However, it can be sent to someone or it can be received by someone; meaning that it cannot do action but it can undergo an action of a sentence (being sent/received). Same is the case in this sentence; it does not do an action, but undergoes the action (of receiving) of the sentence. Hence, it can be said that this argument is an internal argument or direct object or theme of the verbal group, and it has theme thematic relation in the sentence. The second argument ‘مونڪي=*monkhy*=me’ is indirect object having a dative case, because it shows possession of something (an email). It does not do action in the sentence too, but it is the one which receives an email from the hidden subject in the sentence. Therefore, it can be said that it is recipient of email and it has recipient theta role in the sentence.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the above sentences shows that Sindhi language has same pattern of using Theme theta roles like that of English. Themes are used as internal arguments or objects in English and Sindhi. These thematic relations are usually attached to the verbal group of sentences that is why they are known as internal arguments. Both languages use theme thematic relations as their objects. Themes are placed at the end of the sentences in English (SVO), while Sindhi places them at middle position in sentences (SOV). The placement/position of themes can be seen in the English examples: “The arrow hit *Ben*”

and “The syntactician hates *phonology*” (Carnie, 2006). *Ben* and *Phonology* are theme and are placed at final position in the sentences. Their places can be changed in case of passive sentences where themes/objects normally occupy place of subjects and vice versa. The analysis of the data shows that Sindhi has different pattern of placing themes at middle positions in written as well as spoken form of the language (Allana, 2010).

However, analysis shows that there are some places where spoken Sindhi language does not follow the placement/position rules for themes; meaning that spoken Sindhi places its themes at middle, final and even at the initial position in sentences. Sometimes, it places adverbs before themes which should be placed before verbs in Sindhi. Sometimes, spoken Sindhi places themes at the end of sentences which must not be placed in written Sindhi, and sometimes spoken Sindhi places its themes at the initial position of sentences which is violation of placement of themes (objects) according to the standard Sindhi sentence structure (Allana, 2010). However, the interesting finding of the analysis is that this violation of placement of themes in spoken Sindhi does not affect the structure and the meaning of the sentences.

The function of themes in English is to undergo an action in sentences. Likely, it can be seen in the examples “The arrow hit *Ben*” and “The syntactician hates *phonology*”; where *Ben* is going through an action of ‘hitting’ by the arrow and ‘*Phonology*’ is going through an action of ‘hating’ by syntacticians in the sentences. Analysis of the data shows that themes in Sindhi also do same function in sentences, which can be seen in the above examples.

Like English, themes are also important in Sindhi language. In Sindhi, the nature of the verbs shows the nature of agents and themes in sentences; meaning that action verbs usually take animate agents and themes (humans particularly) to show action in sentences. Directly or indirectly, themes are linked to agents in Sindhi. Sindhi language mostly uses action verbs to show any actions; thus, it takes active agents and themes to show complete action in sentences. Sindhi verbs are either transitive or intransitive (Adwani, 1926 & Qaleech, 2006), they take agents in both cases and themes with only transitive verbs. In addition, the analysis shows that themes are second most prominent and frequent thematic relations in Sindhi language.

CONCLUSION

The number of theta roles differs from language to language; every language has certain number of theta roles and thematic relations which are assigned to their arguments in sentences. This study tried to analyse theta roles particularly focusing theme thematic relations in spoken Sindhi language. The data have been analysed with the help of the theoretical framework proposed by Carnie (2006). It has been found in the data that the Sindhi language has all the theta roles which are proposed by Carnie. Sindhi language has almost same (seen in the data) theta roles what we have in English language. It has been found that Sindhi uses themes like English does; the only difference between them is the placement of themes in sentences. The verbs of the Sindhi language are mostly action verbs which need an agent to do an action and a theme to undergo an action in sentences. An agent needs mostly a theme to undergo its action in a sentence. It has been seen that like agents themes are also active in Sindhi language. The analysis of the data shows that themes are placed at middle position in sentences. The rule is to place themes (objects) at middle position in sentence (SOV). The data come from spoken Sindhi which shows that mostly it follows the rule for placement of themes in written Sindhi. However, there are certain places where spoken Sindhi violates such rules; it places themes at middle, at final and sometimes at initial position in sentences. Interestingly, it has been seen that these

violations in spoken Sindhi do not affect structure or meaning of sentences at all. In addition, it has been found that theme thematic relations are second highest in terms of prominence and frequency in Sindhi language.

CONTRIBUTION

The primary aim of this study was to apply the Theta Theory on the Sindhi language verbs using the framework proposed by Carnie (2006). This study has successfully applied the theory on the verbs of the Sindhi language. In Sindhi, thematic roles are not yet analysed and investigated using the theory. Thus, this study serves as a preliminary in the area; it gives way for conducting similar research in future. The same research can be replicated in the syntax of other languages in the world.

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES OF FIVE TOP UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate integrity policies of five top public universities in Malaysia. To collect the data relevant policies as well as any other related information about plagiarism management processes were retrieved and downloaded from the university websites. Then the policies were coded and analyzed based on Australian university integrity policies of five core elements of exemplar. The results indicated that policies of Universities A, B, and D are easy to locate and access. Universities A, B, and C apply both punitive and educative approaches to address plagiarism. They also provide a clear outline of the responsibility for academic integrity which must be borne by the students and the staff of the universities. The study highlights the exemplar of five core elements in Malaysian university integrity policies and may serve as reference for universities interested in developing a holistic integrity policy.

Keywords: core elements, integrity policy, plagiarism, Malaysia, university

INTRODUCTION

To develop academic integrity, the awareness, commitment, and contribution of faculty members, students, and administrators are required. Faculty members have more direct contact with students; thus, they have more opportunities to educate students about academic dishonesty and to detect academic integrity violations (Bleeker, 2007). Academics at institutions in New Zealand and Finland respect the importance of academic integrity but they do not agree with the nature of academic integrity, how it should be taught, who is responsible for teaching it, and how to handle cases of academic misconduct. Teachers are not sure about existing integrity policies and their roles in the system of integrity policies (Löfström, Trotman, Furnari, & Shephard, 2014).

In some institutions, there are no standard policies pertaining to academic integrity; therefore, individual faculty members may decide to deal with students' breaches of academic integrity in a way that they deem right. In contrast, some other institutions apply very developed and efficient systems such as student-run honour codes which reduce academic dishonesty among students (Drinan & Gallant, 2008). In addition, peer influences limit the effect of institutions on cheating. To reduce dishonesty and cheating, administrators should control the peer influences when creating new policies. Students should be involved in developing honour codes but many institutions does not provide opportunity for students to participate in the development of honour codes (Teodorescu & Andrei, 2009).

The range of academic integrity systems needs to be comprehended to increase the awareness and effectiveness of staff's challenge with plagiarism (Drinan & Gallant, 2008). In addition, an efficient institutional policy must explicitly identify the responsibilities of

students, faculty members, and administrators. The academic integrity policy should also remind the students of their obligation in the development of academic honesty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). The difficulties that students face in academic writing and the lack of properly established integrity policies may lead to plagiarism among students.

To develop academic integrity, the incidents of plagiarism and the prevention methods should be identified (Thurmond, 2010). Unfortunately, plagiarism is a reality in most colleges and universities, and students may plagiarize intentionally or unintentionally. This problem requires instructors to decide how to manage the situation. Some may simply ignore the problem and pretend that no plagiarism exists (Insley, 2011). In actual fact, plagiarism among students is a complex issue and there is no one single response for it. Therefore, this study argues for two main approaches to deter plagiarism: university integrity policies and pedagogical strategies.

For this study, university integrity policies refer to measures by institutions within a university to provide students with information regarding the concept of plagiarism and the related policies of plagiarism deterrence. On the other hand, pedagogical strategies refer to instructional techniques that help students to understand plagiarism. It is believed that the integration of university integrity policies and pedagogical strategies can effectively deter plagiarism (Cahyono, 2005). The following section describes integrity policies and pedagogical strategies that can be used to improve academic integrity among students.

University integrity policies

University integrity policies provide students with details on how to avoid plagiarism and develop academic integrity in the academic context. Yakovchuk, Badge and Scott (2012) emphasize that students and staff need to be educated about plagiarism and focus on academic honesty. The staff establishes the academic rules which are written in a way to educate and guide students. Moreover, information and supporting materials need to be provided for the staff and students to seek advice on plagiarism prevention. Furthermore, an institutional strategy needs to be broadly applied to ensure a precise and accessible record of offenses and processes.

Bretag, Mahmud, Wallace, Walker, James, Green, East, McGowan, Partridge (2011) identified five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy, namely: access, approach, responsibility, detail, and support. All elements had the same priority. The researchers found that some Australian universities use a mixed approach of both educative and punitive methods. However, the researchers argued against the mixed approach, and their five core elements of exemplary policy call for a consistent educative approach which is stated all through the policy and in practice. In addition, the majority of academic integrity policies do not provide a clear outline of responsibility for academic integrity. Their finding may help universities to create an understanding and commitment to academic integrity standards (Bretag et al., 2011).

The results of comparing these five core elements with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) guidelines in the UK indicate that an exemplary policy needs to provide a consistent message throughout the whole policy to indicate a systemic responsibility to academic integrity. Six of the 39 Australian universities (15%) had policies where the relevant information was difficult to locate. While the HEA recommends the inclusion of clear statements about the importance of academic honesty in a university integrity policy, simple statements are just not enough to illustrate the five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy.

Furthermore, Bretag et al. (2011) found that eight of the universities (21%) assigned the responsibility for academic integrity to only the students. Only one university

specifically explicated that everyone was responsible for academic integrity. In addition, 22 (or 56%) of the Australian universities did not refer to confidentiality as academic breaches in the policies. Only 15 (38%) clearly stated that records of academic transgressions should be kept confidential. The researchers concerned added that staff may be unwilling to report a possible breach, and students may worry about the confidentiality of academic integrity (AI) reports. Moreover, support needs to be included in the policy, and it is an essential element of the policy (Bretag et al., 2011).

Related to the researches on Australian university integrity policies, East (2009) found that Australian universities take an integrated approach in handling plagiarism and developing academic integrity with a clearly written policy; however, the universities do not take any responsibility in implementing the policy in the teaching and learning processes. Academic integrity needs to be included in the curriculum, and student awareness needs to be assessed in order for teachers to identify the deficiencies in students' learning. The staff members who deal with student plagiarism and academic misconduct should be trained so that they are able to make decisions independently. To enhance academic integrity, some Australian universities have taken a comprehensive approach which involves education, detection, and an explicit outline of responsibility. These universities not only set time aside for academic staff to deal with suspected instances of academic misconduct, they also provide support for staff as academic integrity officers (East, 2009).

Generally, Australian university policies consider plagiarism a common offence, and the intention of the student is the key criterion in determining the severity of response for any specific plagiarism incident. Therefore, institutional integrity policies should describe minor and unintentional plagiarism as an offence that leads to undesirable consequences for teaching and learning (Grigg, 2010), and plagiarism is a pedagogical issue that influences student learning (O'Regan, 2006). Plagiarism as a crime requires punishment and plagiarism due to ignorance needs education. The suspected student can defend his/her plagiaristic behaviour. If the claims are supported, the appropriate form of penalty will be applied. However, the Australian policies do not clearly define the essential nature of plagiarism and the student's role.

According to the integrity policy of Australian universities, plagiarism may be the result of a lack of skills in academic writing, and the universities should provide a learning environment that encourages the development of academic skills. This is an educational process rather than a punishment approach. Faculty staff should provide appropriate resources and feedback to help students practice and learn the necessary academic conventions. The students are responsible to get help if they are unsure of appropriate source attribution. In addition, the Australian policies do not address which sources should be acknowledged. In fact, the policy refers to plagiarism as any unattributed paraphrased materials or work without appropriate acknowledgment. The policies also clearly state that all forms of plagiarism are unacceptable (O'Regan, 2006).

As an example, the integrity policy of Swinburne University in Australia includes clear and consistent processes for dealing with suspected plagiarism, student guides, descriptions of plagiarism, a focus on assessment, and proactive and strategic use of available student support services. The university takes a holistic and strategic approach to deal with plagiarism. To improve integrity, it teaches and supports students about plagiarism prevention and educates staff about assessment design as well as the constant application of appropriate processes and consequences. Formative assessments are also used to teach students how and why to avoid plagiarism (Devlin, 2006).

The university recommends that a hard copy of a student guide on plagiarism avoidance be given to all new students. Members of the academic staff give specific

assignment-related descriptions of plagiarism to students and the university provides workshops for academic staff that focus on reducing plagiarism with the use of other strategies. Practical use of language and academic skills is also recommended. A website for both staff and students is provided that includes a clear definition of plagiarism, emphasizing the need for them to take responsibility for their learning, starting work early, and managing their time well. The university policy provides frequent question-and-answer, workshops and updated web pages about referencing, useful resources, links and reading materials (Devlin, 2006).

A holistic approach to plagiarism is also supported by Macdonald and Carroll (2006). The approach emphasizes developing good intellectual and academic practice instead of detection and punishment. For instance, formative assessments and assignments are applied by the teacher to modify teaching strategies and to develop learning achievement.

Due to inconsistencies in decision-making about plagiarism at Oxford Brookes University, Carroll and Appleton (2005) argue that there is a need to have an effective system for education and supporting staff who make decisions about plagiarism. On the other hand, Park (2004) commended that the integrity policy at Lancaster University reflects transparency, ownership, responsibility, academic integrity, compatibility with the institution's academic culture, and it focuses on prevention, deterrence, and development of students' skills. These elements reinforce academic integrity and need to be practically integrated and monitored in teaching and learning processes to ensure that academic integrity is effectively implemented.

Referring to the integrity policies of America, Australia and the UK, Sutherland-Smith (2011) found that some of these universities deal with plagiarism by reviewing university plagiarism policies and practices. Detailed responses include reviews of the disciplinary procedures, guidelines to academic staff to maintain academic standards, providing more final exams, decreasing assignment work, and investigating best teaching measures which are designed to pedagogically decrease plagiarism. Oral and written assessments are used and academic integrity materials are also taught in courses. Furthermore, the academic staff is required to address academic integrity issues in all courses to increase the students' awareness of plagiarism. Accessible information about academic honesty are also provided on the university websites for both students and staff. Workshops on academic writing, library information and increasing punishments also help to assist the development of academic integrity.

In agreement with the integrity policies of Australian universities, Stover and Kelly (2005) argue that the policy of Maryland University in the USA clearly defines plagiarism and provides specific procedures for students, faculty and staff members to follow. It also details the penalties for plagiarism. The university also educates students and faculty about plagiarism identification and deterrence. Although the university integrity policies potentially contribute to the awareness of plagiarism among university students, the endeavour to prevent plagiarism is improved by the implementation of pedagogical strategies.

Pedagogical strategies

The detection of plagiarism and following punitive measures against students' plagiarism is highly time-consuming for academics. Academic integrity is a crucial characteristic and ignoring the plagiarism issue in students' work is not an ethical decision for students or academics to make. In other words, instructors can either take a reactive and punitive approach to plagiarism or attempt to proactively deal with the issue through education (Volkov, Volkov, Tedford, & Branch, 2011).

Belter and du Pré (2009) suggest that a considerable proportion of plagiarism is due to insufficient knowledge of proper quotation and citation. An online self-instruction module on academic integrity successfully reduced the occurrence of plagiarism in a written assignment by university students. To teach students not to plagiarize, Chao, Wilhelm, and Neureuther (2009) examined several pedagogical approaches for reducing plagiarism. The findings indicated that the lack of knowledge of proper citations and paraphrasing was a primary reason that some students inadvertently plagiarize. Students who received instructions on avoiding plagiarism were less likely to plagiarize.

To prevent plagiarism by applying the pedagogical approach, Vardi (2012) suggests to conduct tutorials on critical thinking and writing that support students to write in their own words and follow appropriate writing conventions and rules. The approach addresses the integration of thought and sources by strategically using citation for writing critically about the topic, discussing, analyzing, and arguing about the topic. It also shows students how to use different forms of citation to develop their viewpoints.

Another recommended pedagogical strategy is by using feedback. Students, with given guidance, can use a text-matching system such as *Turnitin* to submit draft assignments and view immediate feedback on the originality reports produced by the system on their assignments. Rolfe (2011) found that although this approach did not reduce plagiarism caused by improper citation, the staff and students viewed this approach positively due to its contribution to the students' writing development. Pecorari (2003) similarly indicates that patchwork writing is a prevalent strategy used by novice writers, and the study recommends that university policies implement this approach with new students from the start rather than address patchwork as an act of plagiarism. Patchwork, as a process of writing, helps beginners to learn and develop their academic writing.

Based on the above review and in view of the importance of university integrity policies in plagiarism prevention, this study aims to examine the integrity policies on plagiarism detection and prevention in five top Malaysian universities.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach to analyze the content of integrity policies and identify the important themes and categories in five top universities in Malaysia.

Participants

To investigate university integrity policies in Malaysia, five universities were chosen. Due to the big number of universities in the country, the policies on plagiarism from all the universities in Malaysia could not be included. Only the policies of universities which are considered to be the top public research universities were reviewed. Universities were chosen on the basis of their ranking as recognized top public institutions of higher education (PIHE) in Malaysia. In general, academically established universities are used as a reference for quality development in other universities. Therefore, the examination of integrity policies at prominent universities will help to provide a more complete and efficient integrity policies which can be developed and applied by all other universities.

For the data collection, the websites of the top research universities were identified and examined in order to retrieve relevant integrity policies as well as any other related information about plagiarism management processes and penalties. The documents were then downloaded, analyzed and coded. In order to avoid any legal complication that might have a slightest chance to arise, it is necessary to keep the universities anonymous.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analytical framework used by this study is based on five core elements of exemplar of Australian university integrity policies of (see Figure 1). This model was used in this study because it is the most comprehensive that can highlight the essential and effective elements to improve academic integrity in Malaysian universities. The five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policies are Access, Approach, Responsibility, Detail, and Support (Bretag et al., 2011).

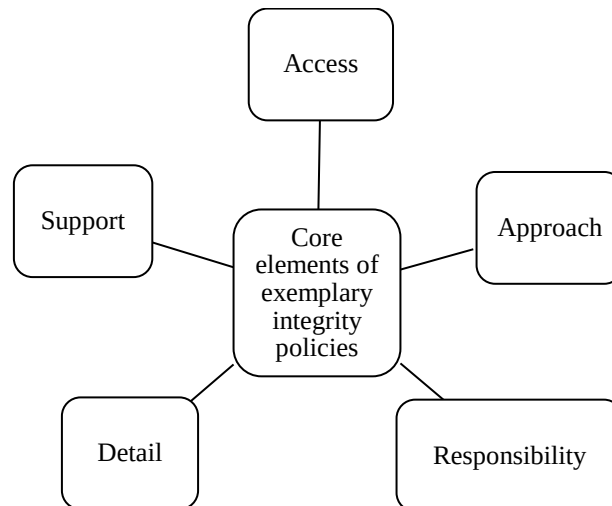


Figure 1. Core elements of exemplary academic integrity policies

The five core elements are explained as follows:

- 1) Access
The policy is accessible, easy to locate, read and download. The language of the policy is well written, clear and comprehensible to staff and students. In addition, logical headings and relevant links or resources are provided in the policy. This element is the most important one since should the policy not be accessible, it may not be efficiently employed in academia.
- 2) Approach
Academic integrity is viewed as an educative, punitive or mixed process to safeguard a university's reputation and to develop integrity. This aspect needs to be applied on all the elements of the policies.
- 3) Responsibility
The policy provides a clear outline of responsibilities for institution, academic staff and students.
- 4) Detail
The policy describes the details of a variety of academic integrity misconducts and explains the levels of severity of academic integrity violations. The policies also provide the contextual factors related to the breaches. The identification of breaches, a list of consequences (penalties), the details on keeping records and the confidentiality of academic integrity breaches should be presented.

5) Support

The policy provides procedures, resources, modules, training and seminars to educate staff and students and develop their understanding of the implementation of the policy. Proactive measures and practical strategies inform students about academic writing and referencing rules to prevent academic integrity breaches in writing (Bretag et al., 2011).

In analyzing the related integrity policies, a content analysis was applied to identify and code the themes in the university integrity policies based on model of Bretag et al. (2011). In the content analysis, the text is individually interpreted by means of a systematic process of coding and identification of themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Moreover, it emphasizes distinctive themes, which indicate the obvious or hidden meanings, themes and patterns underlying particular phenomenon, texts or concepts.

In this study, the content of university academic integrity policies was analyzed to identify the important themes or categories. Based on the core elements of an exemplary academic integrity policy, the documents were coded and the relevant characteristics of the documents were categorized under each element of exemplar. Then, the themes were interpreted to examine the existing policies and highlight the crucial effective aspects of the integrity policies in Malaysian universities (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the content analysis, the results of the five top Malaysian universities are presented individually as follows. Due to research ethics, the name of each university is kept anonymous by replacing it with a letter.

University A

In terms of access to the policy, the plagiarism policy of this university is compiled into two downloadable handbooks, one for students on how to avoid plagiarism and another for staff on how to deal with cases of plagiarism. The two handbooks are easy to locate and read from the university website. They are also clear, concise, easily understood and downloadable for both staff and students. The language is comprehensible and well written. The policy was found by surfing the university website. Different sections of the policy have logical headings related to the content. In addition, additional resources are provided to introduce the details of the policy to students.

The approach that the policy adopts on academic integrity includes both punitive and educative strategies to prevent plagiarism. Academic staff members conduct writing courses, provide examples of proper citations, introduce plagiarism and its consequences to inform and educate students about plagiarism. They also mete out appropriate punishments such as assigning zero marks, imposing fines and giving warnings for various forms of plagiarism.

With regard to the subject of responsibility for the effective implementation of the policy, University A clearly mentions that both academic staff and students are responsible. The staff members provide education and writing courses to help students in plagiarism prevention, and students are responsible for acquiring knowledge related to plagiarism and being aware of the consequences of plagiaristic behavior.

In terms of details of penalties and misconduct, the policy provides detailed descriptions of a range of actions that constitute plagiarism. The concept of plagiarism, various classifications, and instances of plagiarism related to referencing issues are listed. The levels of plagiarism and details of processes with a clear list of objective outcomes

and penalties are outlined. Methods to identify plagiarism in students' work (such as using *Turnitin*, doing Google search, questioning students about their work, referring to original source) are provided. However, details on reporting, recording and confidentiality of reported plagiarism are not stated in the policy.

On the support offered by the policy to both staff and students, the university provides clear statements regarding the implementation of the policy. Workshop, seminars, and modules are crucial support for policy implementation and improve the understanding of the staff and students about the policy. Such supporting measures help the staff to educate students about academic writing and referencing conventions in a practical manner to prevent academic integrity breaches. The policy refers to proactive measures, including conducting courses on academic writing, referencing skills, introduction of plagiarism and examples of citation techniques.

University B

In terms of access to the policy, it is easy to locate, download, print, and also read the policy from the university website. Since the policy is written in Malay, the language may not be comprehensible to all students and staff. The headings are logical and the policy can be retrieved by doing a simple search on the university website. There are no relevant links or resources presented in the policy to help with providing further information about the academic integrity.

With regard to the approach used to counter the problem of plagiarism, both educative and punitive elements are included in the policy. The policy provides education, creates awareness, and applies some forms of punishment to deal with the related academic misconduct, and to maintain the university reputation. In terms of responsibility, University B specifically states the roles of both students and staff in developing academic integrity.

The details of the policy delineate how the policy is enacted in practice. The processes are detailed with a clear outline of objective outcomes. Detailed descriptions of a range of academic integrity breaches and the levels or classifications of severity of plagiarism offences are provided. Contextual factors relevant to academic integrity breach decisions are outlined. The website provides details of how breaches are identified (for example, through detection software) and the details of aims, explanations and the use of the detection tool are clearly stated. The steps taken to deal with suspected plagiarism cases are also described in detail. Furthermore, the reporting, recording, and strict confidentiality of academic integrity breaches are explained.

In terms of the support provided as a crucial element for the enactment of the policy, the university provides the education process by focusing on plagiarism prevention and detection in the writing process. The policy includes proactive measures such as workshops, seminars, academic integrity courses, guidebooks, website, and a detection tool to prevent plagiarism. The university also provides services to facilitate the writing process such as access to detection software and consultative service. With these practical support resources, the policy is expected to be effectively implemented to promote academic integrity.

University C

With regard to access to the plagiarism policy, it was not easy to find it. The language of the policy is presented in the Malay language; therefore, not all students and staff of the university find it easy to read, understand and effectively implement the policy because as in University B, this university recruits foreign staff and students who do not usually read Malay. However, the policy is easy to download and print. The description of the policy

is too brief and general, and not written concisely. In addition, there are no relevant links or resources for further information on the policy.

In terms of approach, both punitive and educative strategies are used. The details of punitive measures applied to students are explicitly stated, but the educative or proactive approach is just explained briefly. The policy emphasizes that the university needs to provide opportunities for students to acquire writing skills and lecturers need to educate students, give training and focus on proper referencing and acknowledgment techniques. The responsibilities to be borne by students and staff to prevent plagiarism are clearly outlined in the policy.

With regard to the details of the policy, the definition of academic integrity breaches is not comprehensive and the severity levels as well as classifications of the breaches are not included in the policy. It is mentioned that lecturers should check all papers to detect plagiarism by using anti-plagiarism software. The consequences and penalties of breach of ethics and integrity in publishing are clearly stated for both lecturers and students. However, the policy lacks discussion on issues in relation to reporting, recording and the confidentiality of integrity breaches.

Finally, in terms of support provided by the university, the policy does not discuss various proactive measures to prevent plagiarism. It simply focuses on opportunities that need to be provided for students to acquire knowledge of citation and referencing skills to deter different forms of academic misconduct. The university also mentions using anti-plagiarism software as one of the proactive measures to detect the occurrence of plagiarism.

University D

Regarding access to the integrity policy of this university, it is easy to locate and access by searching the university website. However, it is not very comprehensive and concise. The approach of the policy toward plagiarism is to use a punitive approach. The university views plagiarism as a form of theft; therefore, students will fail or be dismissed for plagiarism in their thesis. The responsibilities to be borne by students and staff to prevent plagiarism are not included in the policy.

With regard to the details of the policy, the university clearly describes all forms of academic integrity breaches, including plagiarism. Failing the thesis and dismissal from the university are mentioned as the only penalties for proven plagiarism in a thesis. There are no extensive details on reporting, recording, confidentiality and consequences of the breaches of academic integrity. However, plagiarism-checking programmes, such as *Turnitin*, are widely used to detect plagiarism. In terms of support, the university policy does not provide resources, modules or seminars to educate students and staff about effective implementation of the policy.

University E

In terms of access to the integrity policy of University E, there are no logical headings assigned to various sections of the policy. The policy is briefly explained in the students' regulation book which is in printed form and not downloadable or accessible from the website. The policy does not provide any relevant links for more information on academic integrity and plagiarism. With regard to the approach of the policy, the university applies punitive strategies to prevent plagiarism. Furthermore, the responsibilities of staff and students are not included in the policy. In terms of details, the policy only provides the various descriptions of students' plagiarism. The classification of different academic integrity violations and also detection software are also not mentioned in the policy. The consequences of plagiarism are stated very briefly. There is no information given on

reporting, recording, and keeping the confidentiality of academic integrity breaches. In addition, support or any sources of information on the prevention of plagiarism are not offered to the students and staff.

Table 1. Summary of university integrity policies

University	Access	Approach	Responsibility	Details	Support
A	√	Punitive and educative	Staff and students	√	√
B	√	Punitive and educative	Staff and students	√	√
C	-	Punitive and educative	Staff and students	some extent	some extent
D	√	Punitive	-	some extent	-
E	-	Punitive	-	some extent	-

The element of access needs to be valued just as much as the others. The policy may not exist if it is not easily accessible to all academic staff and students. The present study found that the academic integrity policies of Universities C and E are difficult to locate, access or download from the respective websites. This finding study is similar to that of Bretag et al. (2011) who reported that six Australian universities (15%) had policies which were not easy to locate in terms of finding the relevant information. In this study, the policies of Universities A, B, and D had the best exemplar of access that would enable students and staff to easily read and understand the integrity policy.

In relation to access, the approach to plagiarism prevention is also a crucial element of an exemplary policy because it influences both the language and content of the whole policy. The results of this study showed that Universities A, B, and C apply both punitive and educative approaches to deal with plagiarism. Although the finding of the present study agrees with what other researchers found about some Australian universities in the use of a “mixed approach” of both educative and punitive approaches, they regarded the mixed approach to be a problem and not useful in dealing with academic integrity breaches (Bretag et al., 2011). Contrary to what this study found about Malaysian university policies, the researchers argued against the mixed approach. The “five core elements of exemplary policy” calls for a consistent educative approach which is stated upfront and all through the policy and in practice (Bretag et al., 2011). On the other hand, the approach used in three Malaysian universities in this study is consistent with institutional policy at Lancaster University in the UK that emphasized the educative and punitive procedures to detect and prevent plagiarism by students (Park, 2004).

The findings of the present study, in terms of the approach of the policy to plagiarism, are different from the results of other researches which focused on pedagogical strategies or a proactive approach including educating the students and staff to prevent plagiarism in universities (Chao et al., 2009; Fischer & Zigmond, 2011; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; O'Regan, 2006; Sutherland-Smith, 2010; Volkov et al., 2011; Yakovchuk et al., 2012). O'Regan (2006) mentioned that an Australian university policy discussed plagiarism as a pedagogical issue which has an effect on student learning. In contrast, Blum (2009) and O'Regan (2006) explained that to deal with plagiarism as a crime, institutional rules need to be enforced and punishment is necessary. In the present study, the exemplars of approach are found in Universities A, B and C

which included both educative and punitive strategies for plagiarism prevention in the policy.

Another essential core element of an exemplary integrity policy is responsibility. The analysis of the Malaysian university policies here indicated that Universities A, B and C clearly outlined all relevant stakeholders' responsibilities for academic integrity. The universities included the responsibilities of both students and staff members. This is consistent with Park's (2004) findings that Lancaster University clearly defined plagiarism and highlighted the roles of participants in dealing with plagiarism. Devlin (2006) also stated that Swinburne University provided a website for both staff and students, including a clear definition of plagiarism, and the need for them to take responsibility for their learning.

The result of this study is in contrast with what Gallant and Kalichman (2011) and Bretag et al. (2011) reported about the element of responsibility in integrity policies. They iterated that the responsibility for the development of integrity includes people from social contexts which are beyond the academic institution, such as parents, friends, and colleagues. Bretag et al. (2011) study found only one university which considered everyone responsible, and some universities (21% of those investigated) listed student responsibility in maintaining academic integrity. The finding of this study is different from that of O'Regan (2006) in that the student's role is often unclear in the language of plagiarism policies of the Australian university. East (2009) also concluded that in spite of a clearly written policy, the university in that study did not take any responsibility for implementing the policy as part of teaching and learning. In the present study, Universities A, B, and C have the best exemplar in terms of responsibility. The policies present the roles of staff and students to academic integrity.

In terms of details of the policy in this study, only Universities A and B clearly describe the levels of plagiarism and details of processes with a clear list of objective outcomes and penalties. This finding is different from Bretag et al.'s study (2011) which found that some Australian universities introduced their policies with a clear purpose. Many Australian universities provide detailed information on the consequences of students' academic integrity breaches but they do not provide clear explanations about the necessity of these details to stakeholders.

Furthermore, Devlin (2006) found that Swinburne University more clearly defines its plagiarism prevention policy as well as relates it to prevent any intention to deceive on the part of its staff and students. The holistic approach promoted at Swinburne University includes a clear policy, consistent processes for dealing with suspected plagiarism, student guides, and descriptions of plagiarism. The findings by Stover and Kelly (2005) likewise supported the policy of Maryland University which also clearly defines plagiarism, provides specific procedures for students, faculty and staff to follow, and it includes details of the penalties for plagiarism.

The results of the present study in relation to the policies of Universities A and B concur with what Sutherland-Smith (2010) reported about the integrity policies of several universities in North America, Australia and the UK. The findings of Sutherland-Smith (2010) indicated the presence of detailed responses, including disciplinary processes, and directions to academic staff to keep and maintain academic integrity standards. In the same light, O'Regan (2006) also stated that an Australian university policy refers to plagiarism as a simple phenomenon and presents any works that are without appropriate attribution or paraphrasing sentences or whole paragraphs without due acknowledgement as plagiarism. The policy also clearly states that all forms of plagiarism are unacceptable and it describes the nature of various forms of plagiarism. The results of this study on plagiarism policies in Malaysian universities are also in line with Grigg's (2010) study

which reported that the policy of Australian universities consider plagiarism as a common offence and student intention determines the severity of response for any specific plagiarism incident.

One point worth noting is that University B in this study explicitly states the details of reporting, recording, and the confidentiality of academic transgressions. Similarly, the academic integrity policy of the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2011) also lacks details on the confidentiality of recorded academic integrity breaches. In addition, this finding supports Bretag et al.'s (2011) study which indicated that the policies in 22 (or 56%) of the 39 Australian universities researched do not mention confidentiality in keeping the record of academic integrity breaches. Only 15 universities (38%) clearly state the confidentiality of integrity breaches records. The details of confidentiality and the recording of academic dishonesty should be included in a university's integrity policy since both staff and students are worried about academic integrity breaches being reported by future lecturers. In this study, the policies of Universities A and B had the best exemplars in terms of detail and offer the definitions and outcomes of academic integrity transgressions.

In addition, Universities A and B present practical support for plagiarism prevention in their policies. They mention workshops, seminars, and modules as consultative services to facilitate writing and anti-plagiarism software to check on plagiarism. Along the same line, University C mentions proactive measures such as anti-plagiarism software to detect and prevent plagiarism. However, the policies of Universities D and E do not include any information on the element of support.

Consistent with the findings regarding Malaysian university integrity policies, Devlin (2006) found that Swinburne University's policy on plagiarism provides proactive measures (workshops for academic staff) to support academic integrity. The practical use of language and academic skills is also suggested and a website with a clear definition of plagiarism for both staff and students is provided as well.

On top of the above, Devlin (2006) stated that a plagiarism project at Swinburne University of Technology located in Melbourne, Australia recommends assessment, proactive use of available services, student education, ongoing student support, formative assessment, the constant application of appropriate processes and consequences to help students avoid plagiarism. Similar to the findings of Sutherland-Smith (2010) that the university policies of America, Australia and the UK respond to plagiarism by increasing accessible information on academic honesty on the website for both students and staff, the present study found Universities A and B to have the best exemplar of support. They provide practical strategies to increase the staff and student awareness and understanding of plagiarism.

CONCLUSION

In general, Universities A and B are both strong in terms of all the five mentioned core elements. University C needs to improve the accessibility of its policy, details of academic integrity breaches, and practical support resources to inform staff and students about plagiarism prevention. University D needs to develop proactive strategies to educate students on plagiarism. The details of plagiarism consequences and range of academic integrity breaches should be clearly stated in the policy. Finally, it is suggested that the integrity policy of University E be improved in terms of the five core elements of an exemplary integrity policy.

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