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Journal Publication Office
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
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Publisher

The UPM Press
Universiti Putra Malaysia
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: +603 8946 8855, 8946 8854
Fax: +603 8941 6172
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HOW DO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH PROCESS SELF REPAIR AND IMPROVE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND EXPLICITNESS IN F2F CONVERSATION: A CASE STUDY

**Isai Amutan Krishnan¹, Selva Jothi Ramalingam², Hee Sio Ching³ and
Elantamil Maruthai⁴**

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur
e-mail: amuthan.isai@gmail.com¹; selvajothi29@gmail.com²; ansiehee@hotmail.com³;
elantamil@um.edu.my⁴

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the evidence of self-repair and analyses the practices of self-repair in naturally occurring conversations in an institution of higher learning between eight students whose mother tongues were not English. The aim of this study is to increase non-native English speakers' attention to both language and the medium's comprehensibility. This study utilized a qualitative method (Creswell, 2014), and content analysis was used to analyse the data. Audio-recorded face-to-face conversations were obtained from eight postgraduate students from one of the public universities in Kuala Lumpur. The data were transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) transcription notation symbols. The data were analysed based on self-repair strategies, which were the lexical, morphological, syntactic, pragmatic, and explicitness strategies (Mauranen, 2006). The findings show the occurrence of self-repair participants applied in enhancing their language fluency to improve their language proficiency and increase the level of explicitness of their language production. The findings further reveal the ways that non-native speakers of English use to improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and able to communicate with others in daily life.

Keywords: language proficiency, non-native speakers of English, self-repair, explicitness strategies

INTRODUCTION

English language is used internationally, and at least a quarter of the population can speak English well (Crystal, 2003). The beauty of using English language widely is that this encourages non-natives to speak English (Crystal, 2003). In terms of sociolinguistic studies in relation to the conversational, self-repair strategies focusing mainly on repetitions.

Repetitions of one or several lexical items are considered part of self-repair organisation when their function is to gain linguistic and/or cognitive planning time for the speaker. In conversations, English-German bilinguals use repetitions as self-repair strategies differently depending on the language they speak. They repeat more pronoun-verb combinations, more personal pronouns, and more prepositions in English than in German, and they recycle more demonstrative pronouns in German than in English. These differences are explained by structural differences in English and German, demonstrating that the structure of a particular language shapes the repair strategies of language users because it creates opportunities for recycling, and thus, that repetition as a self-repair strategy is an orderly phenomenon.

Therefore, the present study has mainly focused on how ESL and EFL postgraduate students employ self-repair to help them arrive at better clarity and proficiency and be explicit in face-to-face conversations. The study explores how self-repair facilitates English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign Language (EFL) learners to improve their language proficiency and be more explicit in enhancing comprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were more than 11,000 postgraduate students in the public institution involved in this study, and 3,500 were international students who came from various countries. Some of the international students are from countries such as Nigeria where people have already acquired English as a nativised second language (Meierkord, 2009) and are able to use the language in quite a number of domains, while there are some students from other countries such as China where English is spoken as a foreign language and can't be practiced except in exclusive events such as at international conferences. These ESL and EFL students came from various backgrounds of nationality, culture, and mother tongue and had different English language proficiency (hereafter, proficiency). Proficiency, based on the study by MacSwan and Pray (2005), is embodied in the following five facets: (a) the pronunciation (phonology), (b) the meanings of words (semantics), (c) the form and structure of words (morphology), (d) the arrangement of words grammatically (syntax), and (e) how language is used in a particular context (pragmatics (Watterson, 2008).

Generally, in Malaysia, English is used when students want to interact with each other in order to achieve their goals in a conversation. This may also lead to some other issues in these conversations when the non-native students want to interact with each other to achieve some goals in conversations which may lead to some problems in the conversations. In line with that, there are findings which show that speakers have recourse to repair which may help speakers and auditors who are from different language and cultural backgrounds. Among the four varieties of repair sequences (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008), self-repair is a predominant one compared to other-repair (Schegloff, Emanuel, Jefferson, Gail, Sacks, & Harvey, 1990) in helping speakers with their language proficiency and improvement in the level of explicitness.

Self-repair as an effective strategy is commonly used. (Mauranen, 2006). It is a "self-righting mechanism" which deals with "problems in speaking, hearing and understanding" (Schegloff et al., 1990, p.24) which occur repetitively. When linguistic or cultural differences influence the understanding involved in a conversation (Mauranen, 2006; Wong, 2000), the participants want to repair or correct in order to achieve mutual understanding (Kurhila, 2003; Wagner, Johannes, Gardner, and Rod, 2004). It was found that, when non-native speakers have problems producing or the auditors have problems hearing and/or perceive with difficulty (Sacks, 1987), the occurrence of repair initiated by the speaker can be observed. The research done by Mauranen (2006) and Kaur (2009) found that even if the speakers do not make any mistake in their speech, they will repair to pre-empt a problem (Kaur, 2009). Repairing can help achieve clarification and conciseness.

Conversation analysis as a sociolinguistic approach to studying conversation (Cameron, 2001; Chatwin, 2004; Li, 2002) is used in this study to measure conversation production in an attempt at finding ways to raise explicitness and express clarity (Kaur, 2009). When looking at conversation, conversation analysis is utilized to describe the details of participants' speech production. From their study, it was found that the

awareness of and attitudes toward what the participants have repaired in the conversation by themselves (Hellermann, 2009).

The practices of self-repair can be divided into two categories based on the purposes of analysis (Kaur, 2009). The first category of correction can be identified as a result of the language errors or mistakes which usually happen immediately after the source of trouble is noticed by the speaker. Correction involves the replacement of an error or mistake with a correction. This correcting was found to be included in repair occurring regularly in people's conversations in research conducted by Schegloff et al. (1990). Self-correction, compared with other-correction, happens more frequently (Kaur, 2009). This analysis targeted five linguistic aspects, as mentioned above in the introduction (pronunciation, meaning, structure and grammatical arrangement of words, and the sensible usage of the language). There are several self-repair methods which have been used in various research to address the patterns of conversational behaviour in interaction involving non-native English speakers.

Interestingly, Mauranen (2007) conducted a study on how EFL speakers avoid misinterpretation in situations and establish self-repair. This is commonly done effectively as self-repair consisting of numerous practices. Mauranen's study focused on the speaker's performance in rearticulating the content in relation to word choice and grammar of the preceding conversation. While retelling is a communal practice and can be described as an effort on the narrator's part to make conversation more comprehensible, Mauranen admits that such observations of self-repairs are not often greatly unambiguous in their efforts to sheltered their comprehension. Therefore, less attention is given to using these five strategies in daily conversations. From this study, we would be able see how one repairs the conversation in different settings.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Eight voluntary students participated in this study. They agreed to participate in this study with a few terms and conditions which were names should not be mentioned and the conversations based on tasks should not be of more than five minutes' duration as they had limited time. As this time constraint could impose limits on data collection, a task was set for the present study that could at least partially contribute in a significant manner.

The eight sample subjects consisted of seven international postgraduate students and one local student. Among the eight participants, two were Chinese females who had taught oral English for more than one year and able to speak Mandarin as Mandarin is their first language, another was a Chinese female whose native language was Cantonese and had accepted undergraduate schooling in English in Malaysia, one was a Nigerian male who had been to countries where English was used as the first language several times and spoke fluent English though his mother tongue was Fula. The rest included one Iranian male who stayed in Canada for three years when he was a teenager and also had adequate knowledge on how to communicate in English to make himself understood, one Sudanese male who had lived in different countries in which English was the only medium for him to communicate for 10 years and was also good at using English as a communication tool, one female from Thailand who had an English language training course for two months before she started pursuing her master's degree which focused more on meaning than form in her speech. And lastly, the only local (Malay) female who did not have many chances to speak in English was shy to communicate with others in English. Except the Nigerian man and Malay female who used English as a second

language, the rest were EFL learners. Since the majority of the participants were from Asian countries, the profile table gives a clear identification of their English proficiency levels based on IELTS and MUET. Based on Table 1 (see appendix A), four out of eight of the subjects had above average English proficiency, and the rest had below average. The benefit of having a mixture of levels in English proficiency gives the case study wider coverage on self-repair in different adults with different proficiencies (e.g., beginner, intermediate and advanced). Table 1 provides background information of the participants. Appendix B provides the band description for MUET (Malaysian University English Test) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System). MUET and IELTS bands determine their language proficiency and provide a basic understanding of their language proficiency in relation to this study.

Instruments

Recorded conversations were used to for the study. A total of eight students' conversations were audio-taped and transcribed based on transcription notation symbols which was developed by Jefferson (2004), see appendix C.

Data Collection Procedure

This study was conducted in one of the higher learning institutions in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The eight participants were chosen randomly based on volunteerism from the campus at different times, and consent was obtained from the participants even though they had volunteered themselves. They were paired first, and each of the four pairs were invited in turns to a closed room in the main library where a short conversation was conducted for four to five minutes. They were taught how to use the recorder and were left alone in the room so that they would not be influenced, or feel nervous in front of the researcher. This was done to ensure the reliability of the data as based on face-to-face (F2F) instructions by Li (2002). A digital recorder was used to record the conversation as it was easy to be controlled by the participants themselves. The conversation was between five and seven minutes for each pair. Li (2002) further noted that for task-based research role play and impromptu conversation, the conversation excerpts should be extracted accurately according to the theoretical framework, even one excerpt could be accurate for analysis. Therefore, for the present study, only selected experts from the conversations were chosen based on the five strategies. For each strategy, one example excerpt was used for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study used a qualitative methodology and content analysis (Creswell, 2014). Coding was done on the transcribed data to identify the five self-repair strategies (lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, and explicitness strategies) (Mauranen, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses presented based on the five self-repair strategies encompass the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, explicitness strategies (Mauranen, 2006).

Lexical Aspect

Excerpt 1:

W: the girls are always..hmm. The mount of girls...the quantitative girls a higher surfaced boys. So it will happen ...it will result in one condition...

L: what is the biggest problem you think you are taking (0.2) the linguistic course as you...you are learning English before? Have you had background knowledge about the linguist linguistic course< in during your degree?

W: wow>

The above two examples were drawn from the conversation between W and L. W talked about the number of college girls and boys and was trying to tell L that the number of girls surpassed the number of boys. She used the wrong word “surfaced” without realising that. She changed the word “happen” to “result in” once she perceived the logical relation between the things she mentioned before and the statement she was going to make. W was talking about the things that happened before while she did not pay much attention to that. This was not the only instance of something like this, though. The second one was found in L’s talk. She changed the word “in” to the more precise and appropriate word ‘during’ so that the other interlocutor could understand her better. These lexical replacements often happened during a little disruption or even no pause. It could also have resulted from a slip of the tongue. Lexical items omitted in a former utterance may be inserted into the speech the moment the speaker realises a source of trouble (Kaur, 2009).

A: because of I take the course ... English course at the um said before the university admit me to st...to be student here.

An inserted “be” into the phrase “admit somebody to do something” as soon as she started to produce the noun “student.” This could also have been an unconscious mistake which could be corrected. Improper lexical items were replaced by the speaker with more suitable ones.

Morphological aspect

Morphological correction comes up in a conversation in which the participants concentrated more on meaning rather than the language itself. The inflection of words is likely to be obscured, the verb tenses are easily misused, the singular or plural forms of nouns could be neglected.

Excerpt 2:

D: so you are a teaching... You are teacher... You are a teacher?

S: yeah. Yeah. I taught. I taught after my graduation. I teach. I mean I taught and before before I came here for masters.

D: people have one kids, two kid...ah. Kid and two kids and that’s all.

On one hand, there were many grammatical mistakes in the form or structure of words being taught. I observed in student’s conversation practitioners’ interaction. The words rarely trigger problems for comprehending others (Wagner, Johannes, Gardner, & Rod, 2004), hence it is understandable that the majority of them are ignored or left

uncorrected. On the other hand, speakers attempt to correct those inaccurate forms whenever and wherever they become conscious of them. Undoubtedly, accuracy increases when these types of mistake are avoided, while the level of fluency will possibly be decreased. As we can see from the above excerpts, the utterances were broken because of corrections. Therefore, how to balance the two criteria in daily conversation needs to be further discussed.

From syntactic aspect

The words being modified, the arrangement of words being revised and the clause types being reorganized are all included in the correction of syntax, according to research conducted by Kaur (2011). Nevertheless, the example I have extracted from my data is only about arranging the words. The example is as follows:

Except 3:

Y: you think he...do you think he is naughty?

From pragmatic aspect

Corrections determined by changes in meaning can also be observed in face-to-face conversation between two people. This may be marked by some words of negation like “no” or “not.”

Except 4:

A: I brought some candies. No. No candies for kids. I would play with him.

This example was extracted from C and A's conversation about C's three-year-old son. A wanted to visit C and look after his son. She might have realised that eating too much sugar is harmful to kids and then she made another suggestion. She said that too fast, so it might have just been a slip of tongue as usually people use candy to show kindness to a kid.

Explicitness strategies

Repair occurs when there is a mistake or an error in the speech, and it also has an effect on speakers' language production in which there is no error (Kurhila, 2003). Kaur's (2009) study agrees with the present study in that this type of repair could help students with their explicitness and clarity. Speakers may express themselves more clearly, and it turns out that they could be more easily understood by others. Based on the research done by Kaur (2009), there were three out of five strategies: (a) the replacement of a general term with a specific term (Kurhila, 2003), (b) the insertion of a qualified word or words regardless of when and where it occurs, and (c) the change of a pronoun to the specific words or objects. The aim of this part is to explore the three strategies in sample data taken from this research and to determine whether language proficiency has a significant influence on the preference of strategies the participants use or not. The findings of this present research are as follows:

Except 6:

L: after that. This cou... Ah. This major accepted me.

Y: does the trip help?

C: um. Pardon?

Y: does the trip help? Help. Does the field trip help (3) in like uh hum getting a better idea idea about you know major programs?

Among the four examples, the first is about the change of words. L used “major” after she tried to use “course,” which might have been for precision so that her partner W would understand her better about what happened when she applied for TESOL while being enrolled as a MESL student. This is because postgraduate students in the institution often use the word “major” to refer to the particular field they study. “Course” is more about a series of lessons or lectures in a particular field. Therefore, “course” is more suitable and explicit here. The second sample shows the additional word inserted before the key word “help.” Y was inquiring on the advantages of a field trip which she and her partner C had already talked about. C did not get the word “help” because of Y’s strong accent. Therefore, Y added “field” to clarify her question. Furthermore, she explained her view of the question and finally made C understand what she was trying to say.

Excerpt 7:

L: you you can... girls can speak English good. As I see.

W: I don’t like it. Really. I don’t like linguistics.

Pronouns here were exchanged with the particular pronoun. To be specific, L said “you” to refer to W herself, but she replaced this pronoun with “girls.” It is quite common in China that there are more female English language learners than males and it is usually the case that female Chinese learners reach higher levels of language proficiency than male ones (Kaur, 2009). Thus, she wanted to make this conclusion of the phenomenon, which was confirmed by L herself after the conversation. The last one was from W, who did not like linguistics. L asked her about her schooling in college. She said, “I don’t like it,” and emphasised this statement with the adverb “really.” She expressed her opinion on linguistics clearly by replacing the pronoun with the noun “linguistics” and said once more, “I don’t like linguistics.” There are two more strategies identified in Kaur’s (2009) study which were not explored in this study, owing to limitations.

Apart from the five self-repair strategies mentioned above, one strategy could be added that emerged from the data, which is in relation to the phonological aspect of language proficiency. As can be seen in Excerpt 8, below, the participants replaced a mispronounced word with the correct version:

Excerpt 8:

(1) L: what is the biggest problem you think you are taking (0.2) the linguistic course as you...you are learning English before? Have you had background knowledge about the linguist linguistic course< in ...during your degree?

W: wow>

(2) L: also a place for you to **cialcial**... Social communication?

In the first example, L wanted to ask W about whether W had taken a course in her undergraduate education or not. She immediately replaced “linguistic” with “linguist” when she was aware of the source of trouble. After that, L continued her talk. In the second example, the mispronounced word “cialcial” was replaced with the correct one. Phonological mistakes can happen because of a slip of the tongue or when a speaker

suddenly forgets a word. In this case with L, it could have been due to the influence of accuracy in oral production once she tried to use long and complex sentences to express herself. This type of mistake might affect the understanding of the auditor as it is usually concerned with meaning.

Therefore, language proficiency in relation to phonological aspects could be added to the significance of the study. This study may also offer a contribution to repair strategies research by examining the use of repair strategies in non-native English speakers. As per the study findings of this study, the study raises the need for elementary ESL researchers in the field. More attention should be given to the ESL curriculum, which would assist non-native English speakers in developing more repair strategies in managing communication breakdown. Apart from that, this study also supports the need to re-examine ESL materials and lessons, which would assist non-native English speakers to develop their repair strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the conversation of adult non-native speakers of English in order to improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and are able to understand others in daily life. Also, the study examined the repair strategies that these non-native English speakers used to deal with communication breakdown in their daily conversations. Specific repair strategies such as lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, and explicitness strategies were covered.

As mention above, this study attempted to explore the ways that non-native speakers of English improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and are able to understand others in daily life. On the basis of the findings of this study, it is suggested that EFL or ESL students' own awareness of the self-repair happening to them unconsciously helps them with their language learning and mutual communication.

Using conversation analysis as a method to analyse the fine-detailed information of English output produced naturally between speakers whose mother tongues are not English, this study tried to "uncover the participants' own interpretations" (Hellermann, 2009). In other words, we tried to reveal the participants underlying understanding. According to the results of this study, methods of achieving language proficiency could be classified into five categories. These are self-repair of pronunciation, the meaning of words, the form of terms, the morphological structure of words, and the practical uses of the language. Further, the explicitness strategies that the participants of this study used in their conversation were limited. They were the replacement of specific words with narrowed-down meanings of general words, the adding of a word or words which could influence the meaning and qualify the language production to strengthen mutual understanding between the interlocutors and abandoning the pronoun by replacing it with a specific noun in an utterance to enable the listeners to grasp the speakers' points.

Fastidious speakers are more likely to have endless chances for correction (Brouwer et al., 2004). The present study can be further conducted on speakers who are fastidious, so that there might be more data found about correction and the ways to address problems in language learning and communication can be probed.

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Appendix A-Table 1-Background Information of the Participants

Code	Ethnicity	Mother tongue	Language proficiency	Role of English
L	Chinese	Cantonese	MUET 4	EFL
W	Chinese	Mandarin	IELTS band 6	EFL
S	Nigerian	Fula	-	ESL
D	Malay	Malay	IELTS	ESL
M	Iranian	Persian	IELTS band 7	EFL
A	Thai	Thai	IELTS band 6.5	EFL
Y	Chinese	Mandarin	IELTS band 7	EFL
C	Sudanese	Arabic	-	EFL

Appendix B-Band Descriptions for MUET and IELTS

Band Descriptions for MUET

19 Description of Aggregated Scores

AGGREGATED SCORE	BAND	USER	COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY	COMPREHENSION	TASK PERFORMANCE
260 – 300	6	Highly proficient user	Very fluent; highly appropriate use of language; hardly any grammatical error	Very good understanding of language and context	Very high ability to function in the language
220 – 259	5	Proficient user	Fluent; appropriate use of language; few grammatical errors	Good understanding of language and context	High ability to function in the language
180 – 219	4	Satisfactory user	Generally fluent; generally appropriate use of language; some grammatical errors	Satisfactory understanding of language and context	Satisfactory ability to function in the language
140 – 179	3	Modest user	Fairly fluent; fairly appropriate use of language; many grammatical errors	Fair understanding of language and context	Fair ability to function in the language
100 – 139	2	Limited user	Not fluent; inappropriate use of language; very frequent grammatical errors	Limited understanding of language and context	Limited ability to function in the language
Below 100	1	Very limited user	Hardly able to use the language	Very limited understanding of language and context	Very limited ability to function in the language

Band Description for IELTS

Bandscore	Skill level	Description
Band 9	Expert user	You have a full operational command of the language. Your use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and you show complete understanding.
Band 8	Very good user	You have a fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. You may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. You handle complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7	Good user	You have an operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally you handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
Band 6	Competent user	Generally you have an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. You can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
Band 5	Modest user	You have a partial command of the language, and cope with overall meaning in most situations, although you are likely to make many mistakes. You should be able to handle basic communication in your own field.
Band 4	Limited user	Your basic competence is limited to familiar situations. You frequently show problems in understanding and expression. You are not able to use complex language.
Band 3	Extremely limited user	You convey and understand only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
Band 2	Intermittent user	You have great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1	Non-user	You have no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
Band 0	Did not attempt the test	You did not answer the questions.

Appendix C-Transcription Notation Symbols

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech. e.g. A : Hey what is it / yes see there B : Hey what is it / I got to
=	Equal Sign	Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance. e.g. : A : If you wish to work here, you must work hard B: = must work hard
(# of seconds)	Timed Pause	A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech.
...	Longer Pause	Indicates a longer pause.
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.
. or ↓	Period or Down Arrow	Indicates falling pitch.
? or ↑	Question Mark or Up Arrow	Indicates rising pitch.
,	Comma	Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation.
-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.
<u>underline</u>	Underlined text	Indicates the speaker is emphasising or stressing the speech.
:::	Colon(s)	Indicates prolongation of an utterance.
(?)	Question Mark	Indicates unintelligible speech, difficult to understand, poorly articulated and enunciated.
()	Bracket	Indicates a description of the context. e.g.: (laughs)

Source: *Jefferson (2004). Transcription Notation Symbols*

LANGUAGE CHOICE OF IRANIAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS RESIDING IN MALAYSIA

Narjes Karimi Maryamabadi¹ and SeyedehSima Sadatmir²

*Department of English, Faculty of Modern Language and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400, UPM Serdang, Selangor.
e-mail: narges_186@yahoo.com¹ ; simastmr@gmail.com²*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the language choice of Iranian postgraduate students in a public university in Malaysia, and its relation to gender. The study uses Fishman's (1972) "who speaks what language to whom and when", model of domain analysis to determine their language choice and use. Results of this study indicate that language choice and use are domain specific. They use different languages in different domains. In the family domain, Persian is almost the only language they use, as family is an intimate domain. In formal domains such as education, English is the language, which is used in most of the situations, as medium of the instruction in the University is English. As for the media domain, writing and reading domains, students use English and Persian in different situations. The contribution of gender to language choice was also examined. In general, no significant difference was found between male and female in language choice and use except for some domains in which males used English more than females.

Keywords: Language choice, gender, domain analysis, English, mother tongue

INTRODUCTION

The study of language choice is a complex issue and so are the factors that affect language choice. There are issues that may concern multilingualism, language shift and maintenance, and use of language linked to ethnicity, gender, age and identity.

In multilingual societies, there is always a question of language choice, and domains play an important role in choosing the language in connection with domains. In these communities, which exhibit within-group multilingualism rather than between group multilingualism, a single population switches between two or more languages or varieties of the same language. As stated by Gumperz (1962), mastery of the mother tongue and other languages or varieties creates the linguistic repertoire of that speech community. This is a crucial factor, since members of different speech communities can communicate with each other using any of the codes they know. It is obvious that the choice of language made in multilingual communities or networks is not random (Fishman, 1972).

Schmidt-Rohr (1932) was the first person who proposed the concept of "dominance configuration", which reveals the language choice status in different domains of behavior (Fishman, 1965). Domains within which the first or second language is used play a very important role in language maintenance and shift (Clyne, 1982; Fishman, 2000). Domains of language use should be considered an interactional situation in which socio-cultural, socio-linguistic and linguistic factors are involved (Fishman, 1972).

The current study is interested in the effects of language use and choice in various domains, in relation to gender. Bilinguals usually use the languages unconsciously and are not aware of the factors behind their choices. This is part of being bilingual:

Proper use of the language indicates that only one of the available languages or varieties will be used by a particular interlocutor or speaker in a special situation on a particular topic. Language choices within such multilingual groups are far from random. (Fishman, 1972, p. 437).

Considering these issues, the study sets out to examine how a specific group of Iranian speakers of English as a foreign language, function in a Malaysian linguistic landscape which would necessitate them to exercise language choice.

IRANIANS LIVING IN MALAYSIA

Large communities of Iranians are living in Malaysia especially as postgraduate university students in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) which is considered as one of the top universities in the country. For the Iranians, Persian, an Indo-European language, is their mother tongue. It is the official language of Iran. Many other languages are also spoken in Iran such as Balochi (Indo-European), Armenian (Indo-European), Turkmen (Turkic), Arabic (Semitic) and Assyrian (Semitic). However, only 10% of the Iranian population can speak these languages (Jahani, 2004).

When the Iranians enroll as UPM postgraduate students, they have to enroll in English classes if they do not meet the criterion grade for English set by the university, which is at least 6.0 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). In addition, they also have to learn *Bahasa Malaysia* (BM), which is the national language of Malaysia. However, *Bahasa Malaysia* is not really a language that they need to master at a level similar to English, as English is often the language used as a medium of instruction in postgraduate studies. Some background information is provided in the next section to give insights into the linguistic situation that the Iranians students are in.

THE MALAYSIAN LINGUISTIC SITUATION

Historically, the Portuguese were the first European language to appear in Malaya (before the formation of Malaysia), followed by Dutch and English which also came to this country by way of colonization. It was at that time when Chinese and Indians also set foot in Malaysia and brought along with them, the Chinese and Indian languages to this country. As a result, Malaysia became a multilingual and multicultural country (Rahman, 2007).

After Malaysia gained its independence in 1957, the learning of English was downplayed but its role continued to grow not only as a means of international and socio-political communication but also as a global means to communicate and exchange knowledge. Against such a background, Malaysia can be categorized as diglossic or polyglossic (Platt & Weber, 1980).

Bahasa Melayu (BM) was confirmed after independence as the national and official language in Malaysia and English became a subject that is taken alongside with other subjects in school. However, English language education was impacted by remarkable changes by the mid-1990s when it was felt necessary to reemphasize the learning of English. Thus, the government decided at that point of time to use English as the medium of instruction for scientific and technological subjects (Ridge, 2004) in school and in the university. English is relatively entrenched as the medium of instruction for a dominant number of courses for postgraduate studies.

Many Iranian students are studying in Malaysian universities and colleges as they are attracted to the courses offered and also to a country which has a large Muslim population as many of the Iranians are Muslims. With such a large presence, there are

language implications as they form a speech community with their own language characteristics, including language choice. This new social and cultural phenomenon has motivated the researcher to make a formal investigation into the patterns of language choice in order to obtain insights in a language situation that is unique in the context of mobility, which inevitably happens as the world gets to be much more easily explored. Studies of this nature will add to the repertoire of studies that seek to understand such language phenomena, which deal with language choice in society. It also helps to develop a comprehensive approach to account for language choice. Language choice as a social and cultural phenomenon cannot be studied without considering the social context in which the language occurs. In this study, the focus is on language choice in a multitude of domains. These domains can relate to interaction with peers, friends, family, etc. In addition, it would be of interest to identify the factors that influence their choice of language in a certain situation or with different interlocutors. Having these questions in mind, this research seeks to determine patterns of the language choice of Iranian students in UPM and their attitude towards the languages used.

THE STUDY

The investigation proceeds along the line of “domain of language use”. The theoretical orientation can be traced to Fishman’s model on domain analysis (1965). By domain, we refer to the contextualized area of communication such as home, friendship, education etc. as these domains bring about insights to language choice. Context and role relation can affect the domain. In a bilingual community, a specific context or topic is handled through the use of a specific language because that topic belongs to a domain in which that language is dominant in the community.

For effective data collection, both quantitative and qualitative techniques, questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview was used. With the combination of two approaches, more data was obtained which helped to have a more accurate evaluation. The questionnaire reported participant language choice and use

The interview provided answers as to why the use English or Persian in different domains. The questionnaire survey of this research aims to obtain information from Iranian students in UPM towards the choice of their homeland language use as well as English in different domains. The Questionnaire survey is suitable for empirical studies and is easily quantifiable. If the instructions, wording and order of questions are standard, results will be uniform which provides results that are more valid. In addition the feeling of anonymity helps respondents to express their true feelings more easily (Wood & Kerr, 2010).

In this questionnaire, close-ended questions were used in which the Likert scaling method is employed. For the purpose of statistical analysis, numbers were assigned to each anchor. Using the self-administered questionnaire, respondents completed the questions on their own. The researcher who referred to the previous studies prepared the questionnaire and the questions were modified according to the objectives of this research. There is a detailed instruction on how to answer the questions using the descriptors. In addition, the aim of the research was briefly explained.

The Likert scale engages a range of answers from agreement to disagreement (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In this study it was decided that the range of responses would not include the choice of a neutral or unable to decide answer as the premise is that there must be a language choice in the act of communication.

The agree and disagree responses were coded numerically so the scale score provided could be averaged out for representation of the subject’s attitude. Agreeing or

disagreeing with items has direct relation with the subject's attitude. For example a subject who highly favored an item will be given a high positive score (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

To have a better understanding of numerical responses, a semi-structured interview was conducted (Gillham, 2008). What was central to in-depth interviews, regardless of how the data was emerging, was that they provided qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in term of their own frames of reference. In so doing, the method enabled the interviewer to maximize her understanding of the respondent's point of view. Live, immediate and face-to-face interaction will clarify the misunderstanding and hesitation (Gillham, 2008).

In this study, each interview lasted about 15 to 20 minutes. The questions of the interview aimed to gather data on their language choice and the reason for using certain language in different domains and different people and their attitude towards English and Persian. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed for further analysis.

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

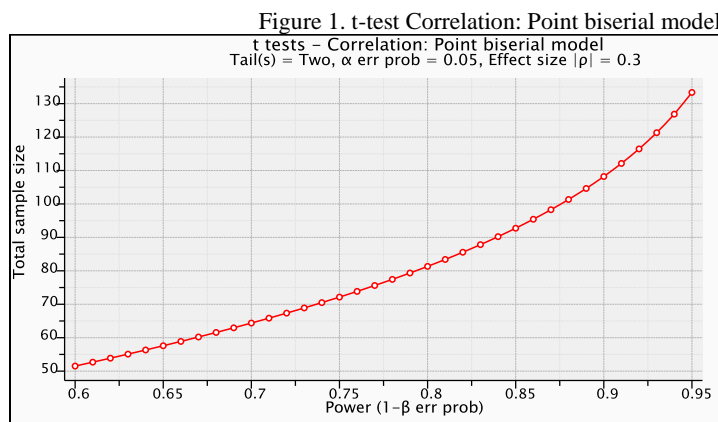
G-Power software was used to determine sample size. G*Power 3 provides power analysis for test statistics following t, F, χ^2 , or standard normal distributions (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

The results of using g-power analysis are as follows:

t-tests -Correlation: Point biserial model

Analysis A

Input:	Tail(s)	= Two
	Effect size $ \rho $	= 0.3medium
	α err prob	= 0.05
	Power (1- β err prob)	= 0.95
Output:	Non centrality parameter δ	= 3.6404323
	Critical t	= 1.9780988
	Df	= 132
	Total sample size	= 134
	Actual power	= 0.9509217



From the results, the total sample size selected was 134, which became the base figure for the researcher to consider in the determination of the actual number of questionnaires to be distributed. The researcher sent out 200 copies and 151 questionnaires were returned. This number satisfied the base figure of 134 as a representative sampling.

The selection of students for the survey was based on stratified random sampling so as to include male and female. Questionnaires were distributed equally between male and female. To study peoples' language choice they should have enough knowledge and contact with the language to be studied. Thus, the length of the study is an important criterion which demonstrates whether or not they have enough knowledge of the language being studied (English). To satisfy this criterion only those students who have been studying at UPM for at least a year were chosen.

Questionnaires were distributed to the Iranian postgraduate students who were studying at UPM for at least a year by the researchers in person. Since the researcher herself is an Iranian postgraduate student studying in UPM, physical identification method was used to identify the respondents; she could distinguish other Iranian students by their appearance so this was a suitable method. After identifying the respondents a list was created. Respondents were asked for permission orally, and once consent was received, onsite answering proceeded followed by structured interview. Onsite answering was chosen to ensure return of the questionnaire. Onsite answering has the advantage that participants can ask about the questions they do not understand (Leones, 1988). Some did not want to return the questionnaires or did not accept to participate in the interview. Out of 200 questionnaires 151 were returned.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS20) was used to code the quantifiable data of the questionnaire. After collecting the data, they were tabulated, classified, coded and edited to be computed and analyzed. Using SPSS, values of percentage, frequency and correlation were computed (descriptive statistics). Inferential statistics of t test was also employed in the data analysis to test for significant difference.

FINDINGS

Language choice in different domains is the dependent variable in this research. Respondents' language choice in domains of reading, writing, media, environment, family and education was examined. Using a five point Likert scale with 1= only English, 2= mostly English, 3=half English half Persian, 4=Mostly Persian, 5=Only Persian, their language choice in the mentioned domains is obtained.

Patterns of Language Choice in Reading Domain

Table 1 presents students' choice of language in the reading domain. They read half in Persian and half in English with reference to magazines (31.8%) and only 3.3% responded that they read only Persian magazines. Being in an English speaking country provides them with an abundance of English materials like magazines; there are only a few Persian magazines available for them, which have commercial content. They mostly read English books (44.4%), and the lowest percentage for reading books was only in Persian (2%). Their textbooks, articles, books available in libraries and bookstores are all in English; therefore, it is normal to read English books more than Persian ones. The only Persian books available to them are the ones they brought with them from their

home country. They read news half in Persian and half in English news as the internet has decreased the language divide for this aspect of contact. Both English and Persian news are available on the internet which all of them have access to here. The percentage for only Persian or only English news is very low (1.3% and 4.6%). Also when reading weblogs, they also read in half Persian and half English (37.7%). It can be concluded that the use of English for academic reading ranked higher than reading for leisure. Both languages are favored especially in the reading of news and weblogs.

Veeramuthu et al. (2011) examined the phenomenon of language choice in the education domain among students at a private higher learning institution in Malaysia.

The results showed that the highest percentage (98.9%) choose English since there is a great availability of resources has that encourages students to use this use in the reading domain (Veeramuthu, Ng, & Ismail, 2011). This research supports the finding of this study.

Table 1: Students' language choice in reading domain in percentage

	Magazines	Books	News	Weblogs
Only English	9.9	10.6	4.6	8.6
Mostly English	25.8	44.4	22.5	26.5
Half in Persian, half in English	31.8	31.1	46.4	37.7
Mostly Persian	29.1	11.9	25.2	23.8
Only Persian	3.3	2	1.3	3.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Patterns of Language Choice and Use in Writing Domain

Table 2 presents students' choice of language in the writing domain. When writing letters Iranian students mostly use English (35.8%) to a larger extent as they reported that they seldom only use Persian (6%). The highest percentage was in the writing of emails which reported the item (half in Persian and half in English), as 40.4%. They use the English language when writing emails to their classmates, lecturers, and university authorities but when they want to write an email to their family and Iranian friends, they used Persian. When texting or posting on Facebook the item (choice of half in Persian and half in English) was also reported as a large percentage (49% for SMS and 45% Facebook).

In a study by Sinayah (2017) the language choice in Facebook communication among the Malaysian Tamil students in the university was investigated. The results revealed that mix-code was the most frequent language choice of participants of this study. 117 out of 240 comments (48.75%) were made in mix code with Tamil as the dominant language. This was followed by 101 Tamil language comments (42.08%). Since all the participants were Tamil, they only used English in 20 comments and Malay in 2 comments in a whole (Sinayah et al., 2017), this study is inline with the finding of the current study. This finding contradict the previous observation that the current Tamil generation use Malay and English more frequently than their mother tongue (Paramasivam & Farashaiyan, 2016).

Table 2: Students' language choice in writing domain in percent

	Letter	Email	SMS	Facebook
Only English	11.3	12.6	6	4.6
Mostly English	35.8	37.1	20.5	16.6
Half in Persian half in English	31.1	40.4	49	45
Mostly Persian	15.9	8.6	20.5	28.5
Only Persian	6	1.3	4	5.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Patterns of Language Choice in Family

Table 3 presents the language choice in family domain, with spouse, father, mother and grandparents. Out of 151 respondents, only 61 are married; therefore, only 61 answered the question concerning language choice in this domain. The highest percentage for the language spoken within family domain was Persian. They might sometimes speak with their spouse in English. The data confirms the trend in generational use of language. With elders, the home language was often preferred. Some of the respondents also reported speaking other languages as well (Azeri, Lori, Mazandarani, and Kurdish), when talking to their family. In examining Iranian language as a predominant home language, in other countries such as Sweden, the same result was obtained in terms of language choice in family domain (Namei, 2008). Also studies on other nationalities (Transylvanians, Malaysians, Arabs in Manchester, Armenian minority in Iran, and in Kenya) support the finding of this study saying that mother tongue is the main language spoken within the family domain (Rahman, 2007; Othman, 2006; Fereidoni, 2010; Yakub et al, 2012). The finding are in line with a study by Dweik and Qawar (2015) among Arabs of Quebec–Canada which revealed that Arabic language is used in the home domain with **family** members (Dweik & Qawar, 2015).

Table 3. Students' language choice in family domain in percent

	Spouse	Father	Mother	Grandparents
	Percentage	Valid Percent		
Only English	0	0	0	0
Mostly English	0.7	1.6	0	0
Half in Persian half in English	2.6	6.6	0	0
Mostly Persian	6.6	16.4	7.3	7.9
Only Persian	30.5	75.4	92.7	92.1

Patterns of Language Choice in Media

Table 4 presents students' language choice in the media domain. The highest percentage (37.1) was in response to watching television in terms of the choice of using half in Persian and half in English. Programs in Persian are likely difficult to obtain as only 2 % reported that they watch only Persian programs. When listening to music, the highest frequency was towards half in Persian and half in English (47%). Quite a percentage of

respondents said that they watched English movies (44.4%). Considering the data given in the table below, respondents mostly used more English than Persian in media domain. The findings of Ting and Ling (2012) also revealed that ethnic language played only a small role in media domain, while English and Bahasa had more important roles among Malaysians.

A study on language choice among Arabs of Quebec–Canada revealed that they use mix French, English and Arabic in **media** domain (Dweik & Qawar, 2015). Which is in line with the current study.

Table 4: Students' language choice in media domain in percent

	TV	Radio	Music	Movies
Only English	7.9	11.3	4.6	11.9
Mostly English	33.1	25.8	22.5	44.4
Half in Persian half in English	37.1	28.5	47	26.5
Mostly Persian	19.9	25.2	19.2	11.9
Only Persian	2	9.3	6.6	5.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Patterns of Language Choice in Education

Table 5 describes students' language choice in the education domain. In this domain, 60.3% reported that Persian and English were equally used at the university and no one reported they use only Persian. At the library and with classmates, they reported that the language choice was half in Persian and half in English with values at 44.4 and 58.3 % respectively. This shows that there is solidarity among these foreign students as they frequently interact with fellow students who are from their home country. This has social significance as it indicates a phenomenon of a 'natural' ethnic grouping in a foreign country, which would promote the use of home language.

As a pragmatic act, all the students reported that they use only the English language when communicating with their lecturers. As table five shows, English is the dominant language in the education domain and establishes the salience of the language in education which has implications for the host country as it has to adapt to the language needs of the students who form a sizeable number in the graduate program. As such, the university has to gravitate towards the use of an international language as a medium of instruction for graduate studies if it is to maintain and encourage a steady flow of foreign students into the country to enable it to develop itself as an education hub. However, it is also evident that the education domain sees a development of bilinguality which shows the spread of home language in another country which otherwise may not have experienced this language spread. Thus, migration of language becomes more entrenched as a social phenomenon, which has gained momentum in the 21st Century.

The result of this study supports the findings of other studies such as that on Puerto Rican children by Arnold, Rosado, and Penfield, (2012), and the study by Rahman (2007) on Malaysian undergraduates' patterns of language choice (Rahman, 2007). The study on Chindians living in Malaysia also showed they use English for

education domain (Mac & Zaid, 2010).

Table 5. Students' language choice in education domain in percent

	University	Library	Lecturer	Classmate
Only English	2.6	11.3	100	9.3
Mostly English	27.8	21.2	0	20.5
Half in Persian half in English	60.3	44.4	0	58.3
Mostly Persian	9.3	21.9	0	9.9
Only Persian	0	1.3	0	2

Patterns of Language Choice in Social Environment

According to Table 6, the highest percentage for the language spoken with respondents' neighbors is 34.4% (half in Persian half in English). When talking to their friends they also mostly used the languages equally (49%) and followed by mostly Persian (30.5%). In addition, when communicating with their acquaintances they use mostly Persian (53.6) and seldom use English (2.6). The study distinguishes between acquaintances and friends. Acquaintances are people that one just met and see each other often but they do not really know each other, as such, they are not exactly good friends. For example, you could just know one from work or school, but friends are considered more intimate. A friend is someone who is trusted and share many things in common and language choice with friends registered quite highly for its use in the option, half in English and half in Persian, while the option of mostly Persia registered the highest for communicating with acquaintances. The figures show that Iranian students in UPM do group together in communities where the native language can be noticeably used. This to be expected as a common language gives a sense of belonging and reduces alienation that may be caused by being uprooted from the home country. In addition, these figures also indicate that the Iranians are comfortable in the use of both languages as they mix English and Persian in this domain with only English being used by a much smaller number of Iranians. The result of this study is in line with the study done by Othman (2006) on Arab community living in Manchester. The participants of the study reported they use their mother tongue regularly when communicating with friends (Othman, 2006).

According to Dweik and Qawar (2015) the Arabs living in Quebec–Canada use English and French in **educational institutions**. Results also revealed that they mix these languages in **neighborhood**, and **friends** domain (Dweik & Qawar, 2015).

Table 6. Students' language choice in social environment domain in percent

	Neighbors	Friends	Acquaintances
Only English	19.2	2	2.6
Mostly English	22.5	6	5.3
Half in Persian half in English	34.4	49	26.5
Mostly Persian	20.5	30.5	53.6
Only Persian	3.3	12.6	11.9

Total	100	100	100
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Language Choice in Different Domains Across Gender

The difference between male and female language choice in different domains using both English and Persian language was examined. First, the domains of reading and writing were investigated and then the home domain and home domain followed.

Table 7 shows the use of language in reading domain according to gender. The Reading domain includes reading magazine, books, news and weblogs. The p value for all the sub groups is more than 0.05 indicating there is no significant difference between these sub groups and gender.

Table 7. Comparing language choice in reading domains for male and female

Domains	Gender	Mean	SD	Z	P value
Magazines	Male	2.99	1.020	-1.118	0.263
	Female	2.82	1.055		
Books	Male	2.44	0.842	-0.339	0.734
	Female	2.57	0.971		
News	Male	2.92	0.912	-0.452	0.651
	Female	3.00	0.783		
Weblogs	Male	2.83	0.891	-0.422	0.673
	Female	2.91	1.073		

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Table 8 describes the difference between sub groups of writing domain (letter, email, SMS and Facebook) and gender. There is no significant relationship between writing letters, email and SMS and gender as the p value is more than 0.05, but the p value was less than 0.05 for Facebook, thus we can say that a significant difference exists between male and female in terms of Facebook use. The mean value for males when writing in Facebook is 2.91 and for females is 3.36. Males tend to write more in English while women prefer Persian.

Table 8. Comparing language choice in writing domains for male and female

Domain	Gender	Mean	SD	Z	P value
Letter	male	2.59	0.998	-1.101	0.271
	female	2.8	1.107		
Email	male	2.37	0.896	-1.495	0.135
	female	2.61	0.84		

SMS	male	2.92	0.842	-0.426	0.670
	female	3.00	0.958		
Facebook	male	2.93	0.897	-2.548	0.011
	female	3.33	0.88		

Man-Whitney Test

Language Choice in Family Domain Across Gender

Table 9 presents the difference between male and female in the use of language in family domain. The family domain is composed of four sub groups, including talking to spouse, talking to mother, talking to father and talking to grandparents.

Of the 61 students who are married, both males and females reported they use Persian when talking to their spouse with a mean value of 4.48 for males and 4.83 for females. The p value is more than 0.05 here so there was no significant difference between gender language choices in this sub domain.

The p value for talking to the parents (mother and father) is more than 0.05, which also means there is no significant difference. Both male and female reported they use Persian when talking to their parents, while some of them (6 respondents) reported they speak other dialects and languages (Azeri, Kurdish, Mazandarni) when talking to their parents. Also with their grandparents, they use Persian and their home language (Azeri, Kurdish, and Mazandarni). P value when talking to grandparents is also more than 0.05 so there is no significant difference.

Table 9. Comparing language choice in family domains for male and female

Domain	Gender	Mean	SD	Z	P value
Spouse	male	4.50	0.861	-1.236	0.216
	female	4.81	0.402		
Father	male	4.92	0.273	-0.335	0.738
	female	4.93	0.250		
Mother	male	4.92	0.273	-0.335	0.738
	female	4.93	0.250		
Grandparents	male	4.91	0.293	-0.625	0.533
	female	4.93	0.250		

Man-Whitney Test

Language Choice in Media Domain Across Gender

Table 10 describes the difference between sub groups of media domain (watching television, listening to radio, listening music and watching movies) and gender. There is no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between media sub groups and gender except for listening to radio ($P < 0.05$). Both male and female prefer English media to Persian. Males preferred listening to radio programs in English while women mostly listened to them in

Persian. However, male prefer English media more than female. Appalraju & De Kadt in their research on Zulu speaking language choice patterns found that few female watch English programs and that they preferred Zulu speaking programs while male respondents preferred English media more (Appalraju & De Kadt, 2002).

Table 10. Comparing language choice in media domains for male and female

Domain	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Z	P value
TV	Male	2.690	0.885	-0.839	0.401
	Female	2.80	0.98		
Radio	Male	2.71	1.124	-2.712	0.007
	Female	3.20	1.143		
Music	Male	2.89	1.008	-1.442	0.149
	Female	3.12	0.848		
Movies	Male	2.55	1.056	-0.006	0.995
	Female	2.54	0.999		

Man-Whitney Test

Language Choice in Education Domain Across Gender

Table 11 demonstrates language choice in sub domains of education in male and female respondents. For the university domain, p value is less than 0.05, which means there is significant difference in language choice in university domain. Both males and females use English more than Persian but females use more Persian than English. In the library domain, p value is less than 0.05 so there is also significant difference between males and females. Males use English while female use Persian more. All the students reported that they use English when talking to their supervisors and lecturers since it is the only common language between them. The p value is 1 which shows there is no difference at all. Both males and females reported they use English more than Persian to communicate with their classmates because most of their classmates are Malaysians or foreigners and there are few Iranians. The p value for this sub domain is more than 0.05, which means there is no significant difference.

Table 11. Comparing language choice in education domains for male and female

Domain	Gender	Mean	SD	Z	P value
University	Male	2.62	0.607	-2.106	0.035
	female	2.88	0.673		
Library	Male	2.57	0.961	-2.966	0.003
	female	3.04	0.886		
Lecturer	Male	1	0	0	1
	female	1	0		
Classmate	Male	2.87	0.875	-1.640	0.101
	female	2.63	0.770		

Man-Whitney Test

Language Choice In Social Environment Domain Across Gender

Table 12 describes the environment of the students and their social contacts as per gender. There is no significant difference between male and female considering Persian or non-Persian neighborhood, home, friends and acquaintances as the p value is more than 0.05. The kind of neighborhood they choose to live includes places where there are many Iranians and they live within their community. Their close friends are also almost all Iranian and the mean value for language choice for males and females is 3.37 and 3.54 respectively. This table shows that most of the contacts and communication of the Iranian students are within the Iranian community.

Table 12. Comparing language choice in environment domains for male and female

Domain	Gender	Mean	SD	Z	P value
Neighbors	Male	2.65	1.214	-0.110	0.913
	Female	2.67	0.999		
Friends	Male	3.37	0.903	-1.609	0.108
	female	3.54	0.808		
Acquaintances	Male	3.68	0.947	-0.451	0.652
	Female	3.66	0.758		

Man-Whitney Test

Fdings also agree with David (2006) and Coulmas (1997) who gave the notion that language choice is determined by the milieu in which the speakers find themselves; by the languages that coexist in this niche and then by their needs and the typological situation of the coexisting languages and that language choice is triggered by several factors like **gender**.

CONCLUSION

Iranian Students used different languages in different degrees of realization depending on needs and social interpretations of engagement. Language practice is so interwoven choice depending on different domains of use. When reading different materials both languages are used, with English as the dominant language especially when reading books. As for the writing domain they use the English language most of the times, when texting, writing emails or letters and posting on Facebook. Concerning the family domain, except for some respondents that reported they may sometimes use English, many reported that Persian and some local dialects are the only languages used. Although Persian media is available through the internet, postgraduate Iranians prefer the English media to the Persian. In terms of the education domain, they use both languages when talking to classmates as there is a sizeable number of Iranian students studying in UPM. However, when talking to lecturers and their local or foreign classmates and friends, English is the only choice. As for the social environment domain, Iranians prefer living within Iranian community. As a result, most of their friends and neighbors are Iranian so although both languages are used, Persian is used more than English.

The difference in language choice between male and female in different domains was also investigated. The results maintained that there was hardly any significant differences between males and females in language choice with the exception in Facebook, radio,

university and library use in which Male respondents use more English than females. The study has shown language choice by a dominant group of foreigners who had come to study in a local institution in multilingual Malaysia. It affirms that English is very much an international language in education and the Iranians who are in Malaysia for at least two to three years would need to adapt and make language choices accordingly. The home language has its place especially within the family and with neighbors, and friends. It is to be expected that a community maintains its home language on foreign soil and brings with them their culture. Thus, the study gives pertinent information on a language phenomenon that has its significance for mobile societies that transcend borders.

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**MIRRORING MEN IN SOCIETY:
DYNAMICS OF IMAGES OF THE "SELF" AND "OTHER"
IN A MALAYSIAN TELEVISED SHOW**

Uma Rani A Rethina Velu¹ and Surinderpal Kaur²

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

e-mail: alum_vc@yahoo.com¹, surinder@um.edu.my²

ABSTRACT

Images are full of embedded meanings of the social world. Importantly, televised images may reflect meanings when integrated with the existing knowledge that viewers hold on to, in real life social practices. For images to establish meaning potentials with viewers, the representation of male social actors plays a crucial role in mirroring men in society. In such instances the images of social actors visually interpreted from different hierarchical positioning may either maintain or challenge one group of men over another. Visually, men's positioning can also be mirrored as the "self" or "other" through the dynamics of televised images. However, the agency given to heteronormative acts with the existence of presupposition of effeminacy is crucial to viewers of a conservative background. In Malaysia, the notion of masculinity itself is undergoing a crisis. Using content analysis jointly with both grammar of visual design and representational frameworks (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2008), this paper analyses the images of social actors in a televised show. Findings are discussed and linked together to explore the representation of masculinity through interactive scenes of the male social actors. Findings reveal that authorisation plays a significant role in mirroring the "other" through the inclusion of the "self".

Keywords: visual interpretation, masculinity, collective practices authorisation

INTRODUCTION

Any privileged practices at societal and institutional level of any form of "gendered discourses" (Sunderland, 2004, p. 21) when communicated through a televised show may bring positive or negative implications to viewers. Interestingly, it is the negative implication of televised images "reduced to a few spatial determinations, can have a rich profound sense" to its viewers (Sartre, 2004). This depends on how the images reflect sensitivity through gendered discourses based on ideas and values held by viewers of a conservative background. Furthermore, televised images may have the power to disseminate popular culture, practiced within a society as norms without much questioning by society. These norms can be "re-created or reproduced" (Berger, 1972, p. 9) as in real life social practices through the frames of television. A televised show may also have the tendency to give way to some form of assumptions. These assumptions from a gendered perspective may provide choices to society of whom to "include and exclude" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 28) in real life social practices. In such instances, masculinity can be reinforced and communicated with the viewers through the images of the male social actors. However, the images of the male social actors may "achieve different purposes" (Connell, 1995) to its viewers while co-existing with presupposition of effeminacy. These purposes may depend on how the images of the social actors depict

visually the positive “self” and the negative “other” (Wodak, 2001) through the perception of the viewers. The positive “self” of the heterosexual-heteronormative character roles may not be an issue to viewers of a conservative background such as in Malaysia, who accept the traditional gendered norms. However, the reflection of the negative “other” through the collective “self” in a Malaysian localised televised context privileging the traditional-heterosexual norms is more a concern in this study. It is also a concern when an effeminate character role, is included among the male social actors when in reality effeminacy among men is opposed due to religious and traditional beliefs and values.

At present, in Malaysia, the notion of masculinity is debated at societal and state level giving focus to the traditional norms from religious, moral and educational perspectives. Social practices, characteristics or behaviours that oppose the traditional masculine norms, especially among young men, at institutional and state level is discouraged while movies, songs and books on homosexuality are banned in Malaysia. In such scenarios, the locally produced educational televised show *Oh My English!* with the presence of a presupposed effeminate male character role reaches 10,000 secondary schools with the support of the Education Ministry to promote language learning. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine how masculinity is depicted through the images of the main male social actors in a Malaysian televised show, *Oh My English!* This objective will assist visually in the depiction of masculinity of the main male social actors co-existing with presupposition of effeminacy from a viewers’ perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia, masculinity is mainly confined to conservative, religious and cultural aspects (Mohd Muzhafar Idrus et al., 2014). These aspects are perceived within the hegemonic and traditional parameters although there are various types of ‘masculinities’ (Connell, 1995). Interestingly, Malaysian men in their mid-thirties relate the notion of masculinity to having success with women apart from being a family man (Khalaf et al., 2013). Hence, in Malaysia, masculinity is given value from a heterosexual perspective. Additionally, the traditional stereotypical masculine behaviour of dominating the family is highly preferred by young man compared to women at the university level in Malaysia (Sultana Alam, 2015). Therefore, from a Malaysian sociocultural context, even young educated men are traditionally bound to the traditional heterosexual norms of patriarchal instinct. Furthermore, media content seems to have some influence upon the values and attitude of young Malaysians of ages 18 to 24 towards issues of sexuality as well as in developing social constructs about themselves and the environment (Fauziah Ahmad et al., 2012). These young Malaysians tend to decide upon their sexual identity through the cultural insights of media content.

Due to conservative beliefs and values by both society and the state, televised shows are bound to legitimize one type of masculinity and delegitimize another despite the diversity in masculinity as a concept (Connell, 1995, 2005). The concept is based on different hierarchal social positioning of men in society. The highest level in the hierarchy is the hegemonic formation of masculinity followed by complicit and subordinate. The most honoured is hegemonic masculinity of the normative standards of heteronormative positioning of man. Hegemonic masculinity benefits from patriarchal dividend through the subordination of women. In most societies, hegemonic masculinity dominates over any other form of masculinities. Next, the complicit takes an inactive positioning within the hegemonic positioning while the subordinate form opposes the normative standards of

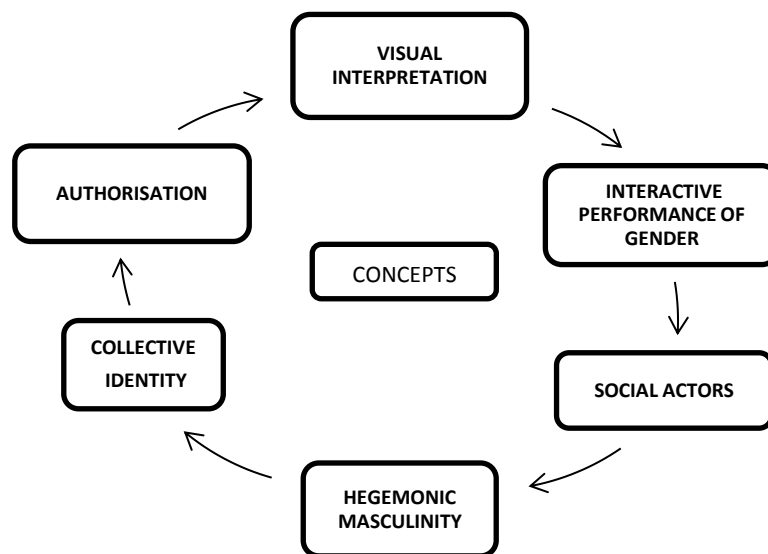
hegemonic masculinity and undergoes oppression in society. Subordination can lead to marginalisation through authority of dominance of hegemony.

The images of a televised show could either positively or negatively position men in society through the depiction of the social actors. Hence, a televised show may “provide symbolic imaginary of those as in the real world” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 138) or real life to its viewers. Viewers may take in the symbolic imaginary, assimilate it, and then take the story further (Götz and Lemish, 2008) from the fragmented frames of a televised show and relate it to the assumptions that are culturally and socially accepted or denied. However, the crucial point is, any form of reality broadcast may possibly adopt the perspective of dominant groups (van Dijk, 1995). These dominant groups may have the potential to not only arouse but shape emotions in society (Doveling, Scheve, & Konijn, 2010) in legitimizing the “self” and delegitimizing the “other”.

RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Relevant concepts play an important role in terms of visual interpretation of masculinity through the images of a televised show. Figure 1 shows the relevant concepts which are all inter-related to each other in this study.

Figure 1. Relevant Concepts



Visual Interpretation

Images in the form of non-verbal processes are communicated in different forms through a televised show to the viewers. These non-verbal processes include bodily movements, gestures, facial expression, space or positioning of the social actors depending on their role allocation. These non-verbal processes through role allocation of social actors may also reflect upon their emotion, feeling, mood, social attitude and appearance. Apart from these processes, mise-en-scene or any event or object in the background apart from the character traits and behaviour of the social actors play a crucial role in articulating meaning making as in the real world. Importantly, these non-verbal processes can operate as a representational system that includes both signs and symbols (Hall, 1997). These sign and symbols of human such as social actors, and non-human form such as mise-en-scene, can be the symbolic codes that become visually interpretive and potentially constitutive to

the viewers. Hence, the viewers as “decoders” are able to establish signs into meaningful codes of their own interpretation and understanding (Hall, 1997). Therefore, images of a televised show have the tendency to reflect on real life events through non-verbal processes or cues. Additionally, society could also be reflected through televised images where values and assumptions held by society are mirrored in the language (Lakoff, 1973) of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols could be “expressed, signalled, constituted or legitimized” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2) through a televised context. Van Leeuwen (2008) assumes that visual processes individually or together would provide rich meaning as they could go beyond to a larger discursive hidden and social agenda from the images of any form of text. Therefore, televised images visually could bring about realization towards “historical change or at times even violent change such as in iconoclasm” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 24).

Interactive Performances of Gender

Interaction plays an important role from a communicative aspect in gender. This is because gender is seen as interaction and perceived as the norms in the context of community in practice (Mills, 2002). Hence, gender is something that we do and is achieved through interaction (Kendall & Tannen, 2001). In such circumstances, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) consider masculinity as the configuration of practices which is accomplished through social interaction, within a particular social context of a particular society confined to its values and beliefs. Interaction, as Wodak and Benke (1997) posit, is seen as a form of social practice within discourse. From a social perspective, discourse is seen as a form of power and knowledge that circulates within a social field. Discourse can also be attached to strategies of domination as well as resistance (Diamond & Quinby, 1988). Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning as they constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). The existence of dominant gendered discourses when taken as truth, can be end up problematic to a particular society, depending on the social issues undergoing a crisis.

Social Actors

Social actors play an important role in representation of the social practices as in the real world. Through the performances of social actors, viewers are able to make sense of the positive “self” and the negative “other” out of themselves and of those around them in their society. Social actors convey meanings of human or non-human form or entities (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 61). Meanings through human form involve behavioural social actions while non-human form involves non-behavioural meanings embedded within social actors’ representation.

Hegemonic Masculinity

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is a concept that was popularised by Connell (1995). Deriving from Gramsci’s term of ‘hegemony’ (Gramsci, 1978), Connell used this concept for the stabilization of gender relations rather than class relations. It “relates to the complete cultural dominance of a society as a whole” (Connell, 2005, p. 78). Interestingly, Kiesling (1998, p. 71) views hegemonic masculinity as an ideology based on a hierarchy of “dominant alignment roles” in a society that honours the heteronormative norms. In such a society, men try to compete to sustain their hegemonic positioning either with ‘men over other men’ or ‘men over women’. In this way, men’s identities of their hegemonic, hierarchical or patriarchal positioning are culturally valued and approved. The support for ‘hegemonic masculinity’ discourses reproduces hegemonic gender ideologies, according

to Baker (2008), are the heteronormative practices regarded as the standard norms. Hence, hegemonic masculinity could be defined as being ‘heterosexually normative’, the most honoured way of being a ‘man’ in a particular society or culture. Hegemonic masculinity is dominant precisely because it is hegemonic and it is the only sanctioned legitimized way to be a man.

Collective Identity

Connell (1995) asserts that “men’s lives could be collective at same time turn up to be individual”. Within the collective practices of masculinity, ‘self-construction’ could be symbolically present depending on how masculinity is represented such as the “positive self” in its collective form (Wodak, 2001). However, it is the formation of the in-group or the “self” that the negative “other” comes into being. Therefore, the context where collective identity takes its shape is crucial as it has the tendency to signify the resisted or the opposed “other” within a particular community or society. Moreover, the formation of collective identity may itself assists in the formation of assumptions through social class segregation, consciously or unconsciously privileging one group over another or an individual ending up as the problematic “other”.

Authorisation

Authorisation assists in the establishment of legitimacy. According to van Leeuwen (2008), legitimation answers the “why” questions. For example, “Why should we do so?” However, authorisation is crucial from the point of who exercises the authority if any and the legitimation that occurs through its establishment. Authority then, may take its form as “personal authorisation” or “personal authority legitimation” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106). Personal authority in its undiluted form may take place through respective members of institutional status or roles such as teachers and administrators in schools. In such situation, there is no need for justification to authorisation of power exerted through their voices. Authority can also manifest through tradition exercised as social practices or customs of the norms. Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 109) explains customs or norms as ‘common sense’ naturally enforced in society without questioning. However, it all depends on how authority may take its form in a particular setting of judgement in the context where power of authorisation is exerted. However, authorisation can invoke various, or sometimes even contradictory discourses (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 121) depending on the context it is exercised.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study using content analysis of a descriptive nature places its importance on the assumption, images comprise more than one diverging systems (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Diverging systems can derive from implicit interpretations of viewers’ suggestions, connotation, ideologically colour angles or by appealing to conscious knowledge (van Leeuwen, 2008). The knowledge can be contextually and historically specific to the viewers’ social cultural background. Media’s multimodal-multimedial rich non-verbal processes when communicated between text and viewer may provide “fulfilment or illusions to forbidden pleasures” to a certain group or individuals (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 136). It is the “attitude” of addressing “agency” of who the “agent” and the “patient” (van Leeuwen, 2008) are to the viewers of either themselves or others in society, leading to

sociological reflections relating to masculinity, is crucial to this study. Therefore, van Leeuwen's two representational networks were identified as a single component framework as a tool for analysis to examine how masculinity is represented visually among the social actors in *Oh My English!*

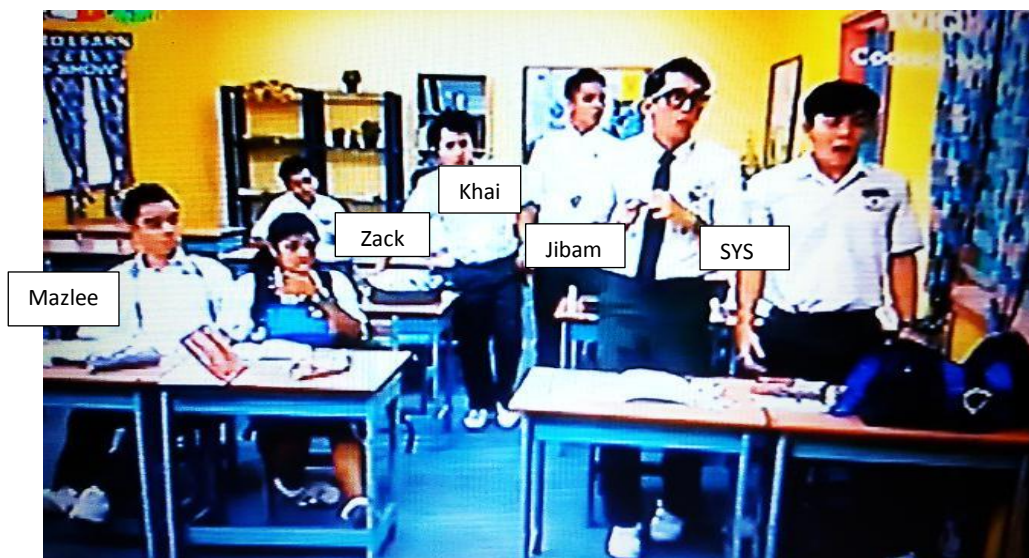
Data Source and Type

The data comes from Season 3 of the first two episodes of a local Malaysian show *Oh My English!* broadcast by a private local television network channel (TVIQ), ASTRO. Episodes 1 and 2 of Season 3 with focus on the five male social actors with permanent roles provided the source of data for this study. These first two episodes of Season 3 would have a profound sense (Sartre, 2004) on the viewers as the five character roles were introduced together for the first time. The storylines with images of camera shots with five social actors as a group of friends, all present in interactive scenes, provided the data type for this study. The data source and type with the presence of a presupposed effeminate character role among the five male social actors would help to answer the research questions proposed in this study.

Character Roles

Five social actors are depicted as sixteen year old teenage students, at secondary school classroom in Malaysia. They are, Jamil nicknamed Jibam, who is always inquisitive about girls, See Yew Soon or SYS sits next to Jibam and enjoys being with him. Khairudin or Khai who sits behind SYS and Jibam, is a perfectionist in every way. Zakaria or Zack, who always takes heed in introducing himself to the girls, is seen sitting in the next row behind Mazlee. Mazlee has no particular nickname. He sits in front of class with a female classmate. His portrayal presupposes him as effeminate in the show through his gesture, interest to be a fashion designer and with female classmates in school activities rather than his male group members. The names of each social actor are provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Names of Social Actors



Coding

For the purpose of analysis, first two episodes in Season 3 were examined for the emergence of interactive scenes communicated visually pertaining to masculinity and relevant concepts in this study. One scene in Episode 1 and two scenes in Episode 2

emerged with all five social actors interacting together. The images in the form of frames in all three scenes were coded using ‘E’ to represent episode and ‘Sc’ the scene. The three scenes were coded as E1Sc1, E2Sc1 and E2Sc2. The camera shots in order of storyline were chronologically coded in the form of frames [...] relevant to this study in terms of masculinity.

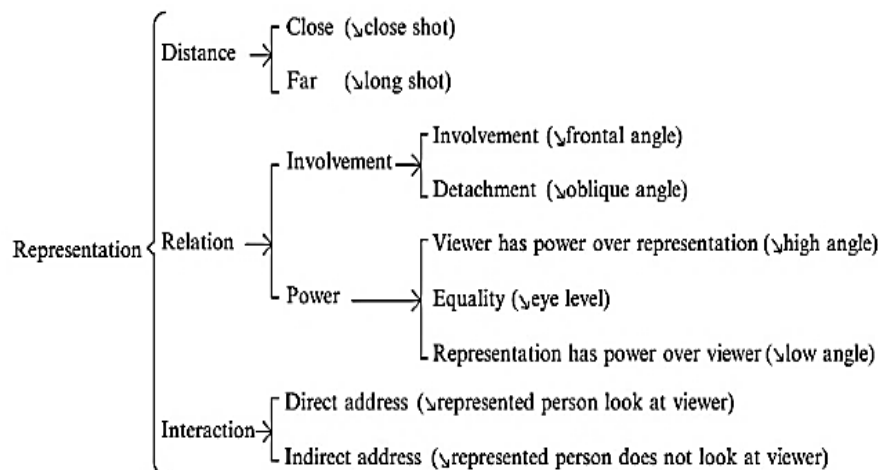
Reliability and Validity of Coding

To overcome the researcher’s subjectivity, the coding patterns of visual interpretation of three scenes were verified by four coders, two male and two female viewers of the show using Cohen’s (1960) *kappa coefficient formula*. The patterns of coding of four coders were then compared with the “similarities and differences” of the researchers agreement (Hatch, 2002, p. 155). According Landis and Koch (1977), substantial agreement for inter-coder reliability is within the range of minimum 0.61 and maximum 0.80. In this study inter-coder reliability was 0.77 indicating a substantial level of agreement between coders.

Analytical Framework

This qualitative study adapted two of van Leeuwen’s networks. The first is the Representation and Viewer Network (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141), which is a joint work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2007) on the theory of grammar of visual design. It puts focus specifically on three dimensions of images. Figure 3 shows the different dimensions of images in the network by van Leeuwen (2008).

Figure 3. Representation and Viewer Network

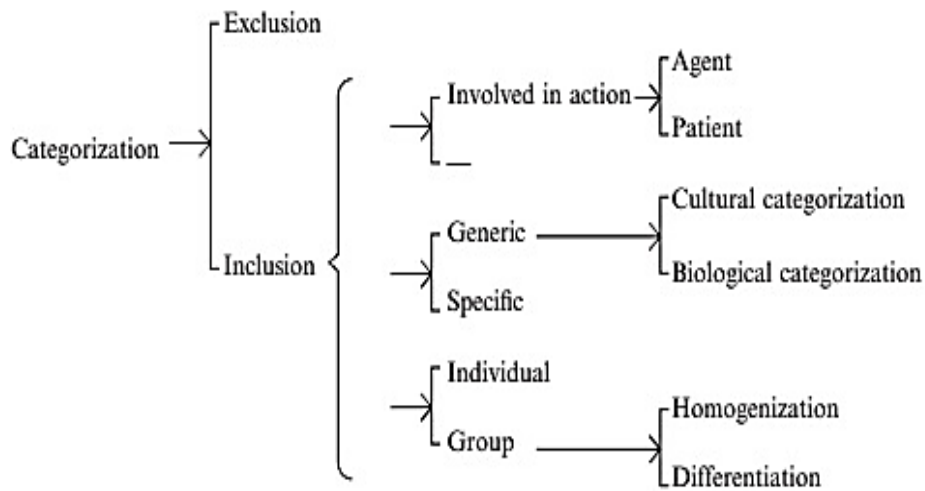


Through this network, the symbolic demand at a first phase of analysis of the images is identified from a viewer’s perspective. The three dimensions in this network between the depicted images of social actors and the viewer include *social distance*, *social relation* and *social interaction*. All three dimensions “need to be always there” in the analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141) to represent the parameters between the viewers and the social actors. *Social Distance* involves *Close Up* shots (CU) or *Long Shot* (LS), *Medium Close-Up* (MCU) or *Medium Long Shot* (MLS). *Social Relation* involves the camera angle in reference to *involvement* or *power reflected* through *frontal angle* of social actors with the viewer. Alternatively, *detachment* is through *oblique angle* while *eye-level* is equality between social actor and viewer; *low angle* means representation has power over viewer.

Social Interaction is represented through the gaze of social actor[s] with the viewer. The gaze can be of *direct address* when the represented social actor looks at the viewer and of *indirect address* when represented social actor does not look at the viewer. All these three representational mechanism of images through televised frames would be the spectacle for viewers' scrutiny. Viewers may mirror themselves as 'men in society' or of other men besides themselves through the representation of the social actors. Three possible strategies for visually representing social actors as "others" or 'not like us' are followed by the strategies of "distantiation", "disempowerment", and thus, "objects of scrutiny" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141).

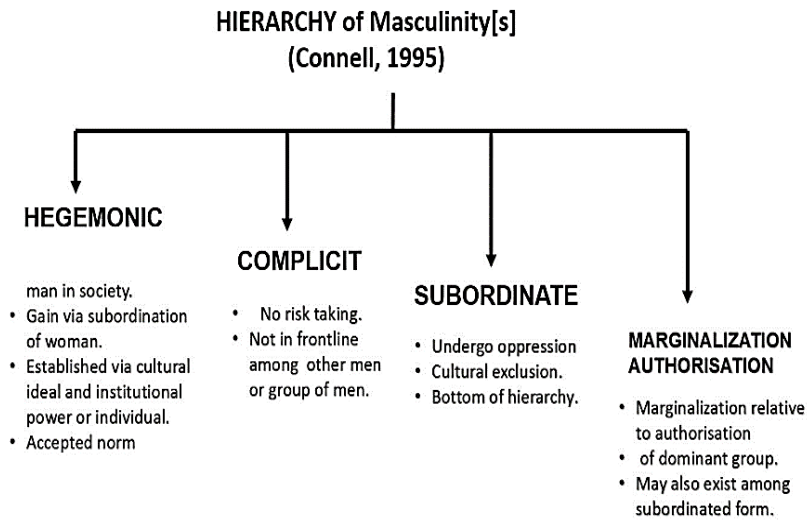
The second is the *Visual Social Actor Network* (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 136) as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Visual Social Actor Network



This network presents how actions and reactions can be represented in discourse. In this network, the choices of categorisation play an important role of the viewers' relation with the social actors represented through their actions and reactions. These relations are options of whom to exclude and include by the viewers. Exclusion are of specific person[s] not included in a represented group, society or institution. When social actors are seen included in action they could take the role of being *agent* or *patients*, *generic* or *specific* or end up as *individual* or *group*. Importantly, by linking the representation of images of social actors with the choices of categorisation would further assist in revealing the different hierarchal positioning in reference to the different hierarchical structure of masculinity (Connell, 1995, 2005) from a hegemonic viewpoint. Figure 5 provides the different hierarchical positioning.

Figure 5. Hierarchy of Masculinity



Therefore, the two networks together with the hierarchical positioning of masculinity can assist in the analysis of the images of the five main male social actors in each interactive scene of its visual interpretation.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Findings are discussed based on the visual interpretation of coded scene images, storylines events and the research question proposed in this study. The images of each scene and storylines of E1Sc1, E2Sc1 and E2Sc2 are provided in this section.

Scene Images and Storylines

Figure 6. E1Sc1 Images

Figure 6 shows the images of scene E1Sc1.

Image								
Frame	[1]	[1.1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Scene	LS	of [1]	MCU	MLS	MCU	MCU	MCU	MLS
Shot	5 in 1	5 in 1	2 in 1					

Image								
Frame	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]	[13]	[14]	[16]
Scene	LS	4 in 1	MCU	MLS	MCU	MCU	MCU	MLS
Shot	5 in 1					2 in 1	2 in 1	4 in 1

Storyline of E1Sc1

In E1Sc1, from the viewer's angle, the first frame of this scene represents the Malaysian secondary classroom. Putri, the new pretty female classmate enters the classroom on her first day at school. Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai react to Putri's arrival except Mazlee.

Figure 7 shows the images of scene E2Sc1





Image						
Frame	[1]	[3]	[5]	[7]	[9]	[11]
Shot	MCU	MCU	MCU	MLS	MLS	MLS
		2 in 1	2 in 1	4 in 1	4 in 1	4 in 1
Image						
Frame	[13]	[15]	[16]	[18]	[20]	[21]
Shot	MLS	MCU	MCU	MCU	MCU	LS
	4 in 1		2 in 1		2 in 1	5 in 1

Figure 7. E2Sc1 Images

Storyline of E2Sc1

E2Sc1 is a continuation of E1Sc1. Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai are visually seen standing together. The four make an attempt to interact with Putri. She explains the meaning of her surname. SYS, Zack and Jibam are actively involved in the interaction as it is within their interest to know Putri. However, Mazlee does not participate with his four peers who are attracted to Putri.

Figure 8 shows the images of scene E2Sc2.

Image								
Frame	[1]	[2]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]
Shot	LS	MCU	LS	MCU	MLS	LS	LS	MCU
	5 in 1		5 in 1		3 in 1	5 n 1	5 in 1	
Image								
Frame	[10]	[11]	[12]	[13]	[14]	[15]	[16]	[18]
Shot	MLS	MCU	MLS	MCU	MLS	MCU	MCU	MLS
	2 in 1	2 in 1	3 in 1				2 in 1	4 in 1
Image								
Frame	[19]	[20]	[21]	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25]	[26]
Shot	MLS	MCU	LS	MCU	MLS	MCU	MCU	MLS

Storyline of E2Sc2

In E2Sc2 the four apart from Mazlee run out to get a chair for Putri. They compete to make Putri accept the chair that they bring individually. Putri's father, an army personnel,

turns up in the classroom and demands Mazlee to give his seat to his daughter. At this moment, Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai all run to Mr Middleton, their teacher for protection. He reaches out to protect them.

Scene Analysis

E1Sc1

In E1Sc1 [1], Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai react to the arrival of the new girl in class. Individually, all four begin to rise from their seats. They are seen performing the heteronormative act though individually done yet collective through their stereotypical act of rising from their seats. Their action and reaction towards Putri without questioning reflect of common sense in a Malaysian society, men of traditional standards of heteronormative nature do look at women.

Subsequently, Jibam visualizes Putri as an angel E1Sc1 [3] in white clothes as he gazes at her. SYS visualizes Putri E1Sc1 [5] as an air stewardess. In Malaysian cultural context, an 'air stewardess' is commonly seen across culture of "local communities and practice" (McConnell-Ginet, 2003) groomed woman with grace and beauty. Zack visualizes Putri supposedly as a princess in a tiara E1Sc1 [6]. Zack's visual action and reaction with his two male peers intensify directly the stereotypical positioning of the traditional masculine act of their "fantasy figure" of Putri (Connell, 2005, p. 80). All three perform the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975), though individually yet stereotypically of heteronormative men in objectifying the opposite sex.

Although Khai joins his three heteronormative peers, he is individually distant in the performance of gaze, and takes an inactive role while assimilated as part of the group. However, he chooses to be behind his heteronormative front-liners E1Sc1 [9], [11], [16]. Khai joins Jibam, SYS and Zack, heteronormative peers to have a closer look at Putri E1Sc1 [1], [1.1]. In E1Sc1 [2], he is seen behind Jibam. Thus, from viewers' perspective, Khai is disempowered compared to Jibam through social distance and interaction with the viewers. In E1Sc1 [14], Khai is again visually disempowered compared to Zack in the forefront as Zack's social positioning with the male gaze is closer to the viewers. However, this does not suggest Khai is less of a normative heterosexual male in terms of objectifying Putri. Khai may preferably enjoy the benefit of being included while complacent within the heteronormative group that includes Jibam, Zack and SYS. Mazlee is present in the classroom however, he is visually distant from the male gaze and desire. He does not join his four peers in performing the heteronormative acts.

E2Sc1

Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai are visually empowered as a "homosocial" group (Bird, 1996) in E2Sc1 [7], [9], [11], [13] of young men enjoying the presence of Putri. Jibam, Zack and SYS are each individually empowered with the viewers, as they are seen interested in Putri as she clarifies her surname. In E2Sc1 [20], Zack laughs at SYS heterosexual desire towards Putri. Interestingly, the whole classroom community except for Mazlee, laughs with Zack E2Sc1 [21]. In E2Sc1 [7], [9], [11], [13], Khai reinforces his positioning by being behind his heteronormative front-liners and indirectly marks himself as a member of the homosocial group. Mazlee is in the classroom with his peers throughout E2Sc1; yet he is seen distant from his four peers. He neither performs the male gaze nor participates with his group of male peers.

E2Sc2

The four except for Mazlee are visually and actively involved and empowered through their action of competing with each other to satisfy Putri by offering her a chair in E2Sc2

[4] to [14]. Khai takes a different turn compared to E1Sc1 and E2Sc1 where he comes to the forefront E2Sc2 [13], [14], [18], instead of his positioning behind Jibam, SYS and Zack. He is actively involved together with his homosocial group members to satisfy Putri. In E2Sc2 [21], [22] with the emergence Mr Bujang, Putri's father, Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai seek protection behind their teacher E2Sc2 [22], [27]. The four young men presumably are guilty of their own heterosexual desires with the presence of Putri's father. The teacher, safeguards the four from Mr Bujang. At this juncture, the heteronormative acts of objectifying Putri are in a way honoured and privileged by the teacher, Mr Middleton. The students in the classroom though distant to the viewers, witness the heteronormative acts without any resistance. Additionally, Mr Bujang demands Mazlee E2Sc2 [23] to [24] to change his seat in order for his daughter to be seated. Neither, the teacher, Putri nor the classroom community safeguards Mazlee from Mr Bujang.

By applying the framework of visual frequency analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 31), it is observable that the three scenes contain a total of 50 visuals of the five main male social actors in the performance of masculinity through social interaction. Different hierarchal positioning or patterns shows significant results through the inclusion of collective stereotypical individual performance of the "self" thus indirectly pointing to the "other". However, frequencies per se may not show significant results to overall characteristics.

Table 1 shows the distribution of frequency patterns of visual interpretation in the depiction of masculinity in the three episodes.

Table 1. Visual Frequency and Result of Three Episodes

Visual Frequency and Results							
Scenes	E1S c1	E2S c1	E2S c2	Total in 3 Scene s	Depiction of Masculinit y	Percentage in 3 Scenes	Overa ll Visua l Agen cy
Total frame in analysis	16	12	22	50			
4 in 1 shots Jibam, SYS, Zack & Khai	2	4	3	9	Collective In-group- hegemonic	18 %	50%
MCU shots							
Jibam	2	1	1	4	Individual Hegemoni c	32%	
SYS	2	1	2	5			
Zack	2	2	3	7			
2 in 1 shots					Khai	Complicit y	
Khai behind Jibam (2in1)	1	0	0	1	Backgroun ded yet Included Complicit	18%	46%

Khai behind Zack (2 in 1)	1	0	0	1	Hegemonic		
Khai behind 3 (4 in 1)	3	4	0	7			
LS, 4 in 1, 2 in 1 shots					Mazlee	Subordination	
Mazlee LS In class (5 in 1)	3	1	5	9	Backgrounded from hegemonic act Activated yet backgrounded	28%	
Mazlee with Anusha (2 in 1)	0	2	1	3			
Mazlee with Mr Bujang	0	0	2	2			

DISCUSSION

Heteronormative-hegemonic Discourses

Jibam, SYS, Zack and Khai's performances consciously or unconsciously may point to the discourse of collective heterosexual-heteronormative (Warner, 1991) positioning of masculinity. The four may represent visually the stereotypical man of the norms naturally attracted to woman. They may signify the men of the privileged hegemonic masses, of the traditional and patriarchal standards. These standards are not only within the sociocultural beliefs and traditions but also among men themselves as a homosocial group (Bird, 1996). Thus, all four visually stand as a dominant group of men privileged with legitimate positioning (Siti Zanariah, 2011) in the classroom community. In doing so, they represent not as individual man as Jibam, SYS, Zack or Khai; instead, the four are assimilated and categorised as a collective group or the positive "self" of hegemonic masculinity (Wodak, 2001). This hegemonic group is culturally accepted by the Malaysian society as the 'man' in society. However, the collective identity formation through the "self" consciously reflects upon the problematic "other" that is Mazlee.

Complicit Masculinity

Khai, however, takes two forms within the masculine hierarchal structure based on the discourses of hegemonic and complicit masculinity. Men like Khai, being complacent do not subordinate others as they join the dominant group and represent as a member of that dominant group confined to traditional standards. While doing so he sustains membership of hegemonic dominance as in-group member. Khai may articulate at one time complicit and yet hegemonic or hegemonic without undergoing complicity. It all depends on how he prefers to position himself, depending on his performance with his heteronormative peers. Thus, his positioning is fluid within the hierarchical classification. At times he is complicit within the hegemonic and at times completely hegemonic.

Subordination through Presupposed Effeminacy

Mazlee's character role that is predetermined with presupposition of effeminacy in the show is seen opposed to the hegemonic masculine traits. Thus, his positioning naturally opposes to the norms visually undergoes subordination. Mazlee could be seen arguably "expelled from the circle of legitimacy" from hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. 79). This may reflect him as positioned outside the legitimate form of maleness or "other" who opposes the normative standards. Due to his own effeminacy, Mazlee may be marked "deviant" (Connell, 2005, p. 83) and ignored by either other men or those with authority within the classroom context.

Authorisation of Collective Identity Formation

In these three scenes, authorisation is established in three ways.

- i. through the opposite sex, Putri
- ii. the teacher Mr Middleton and paternal figure, Mr Bujang
- iii. the classroom community made up of male and female students

Neither, Putri, her father and the teacher nor the classroom community resist the heteronormative performances of Jibam, SYS, Khai or Zack. All three interactively establish the collective practices of hegemonic masculinity through "authority of 'conformity'". Conformity, to a condition according to van Leeuwen, is considered as "this is what every man does and all women naturally accept in society" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106). Additionally, the teacher and paternal figure consensus of "personal authority" allow authorisation without resistance through "positional and traditional family" status (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106). Furthermore, the consensus to the collective hegemonic in-group formation takes place within the classroom community, does not object to the heteronormative act of men in objectifying Putri. Hence, various agents of society authorise the collective identity formation of hegemonic masculinity. The authorisation allows men who are privileged to act upon their 'manly' instinct through "authority of tradition" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106). Thus, Putri, her father and the teacher, and society assumingly maintain the heteronormative positive "self" (Wodak, 2001) to "exercise their rights" (Connell, 2005, p. 83) in a society that upholds the traditional norms without any form of resistance. Importantly, it is authorisation and establishment of the legitimized collective hegemonic "self" of the male four members that Mazlee reflects as the negative "other".

CONCLUSION

In *Oh My English!* Season 3 of the first interactive scenes, marginalisation take place through authorisation in the presence of hegemonic dominance with subordination and effeminacy present together. Visually the collective formation of hegemonic dominance is dynamically activated and rationalised through four out of five main social actors. At this instance, subordination of Mazlee as the "other" is established. Agency given through authorisation in various ways of the collective formation embraces and honours hegemonic dominance. Thus, Mazlee becomes the "mark of control, oppression, and subjugation" (Swain, 2006) reflecting upon marginalisation within the classroom context. This study is significant to its viewers as it reflects on the assumption, young male teenagers at school are prone to segregation of different class structures in terms of masculinity. No matter what class or character traits they display in variation of their masculinity, they should be reflected as agents of hegemonic "masses" (Duggan, 2002). Secondly, the "negative cultural connotation by not presenting those who in reality are present" (van Leeuwen, 2008) should not be ignored. Mazlee though present is not

included in the stereotypical hegemonic acts, however, mirrored as the “other” perhaps due to cultural mobilisation. Thirdly, authorisation played a significant role in sustaining and maintaining hegemonic masculinity. This reflects on the assumption that society and institution play a significant role, consciously or unconsciously in legitimising or delegitimising young men of their gendered social positioning. The legitimisation takes shape in accordance to hegemonic ‘manly’ acts safeguarded through perhaps not only cultural but political mobilisation.

From media’s perspective, “it has been typical to utilize disparaging minorities and thereby perpetuate myths concerning their existence” (Eschholz, Bufkin, & Long, 2002, p. 300). In *Oh My English!* masculinity is either mirrored as the “self” or the “other”. However, the notion of masculinity can be fluid and “not fixed” (Connell, 2005, 76) as masculinity of any hierarchal positioning can undergo change in the context it is represented. More studies of male social actors in Malaysian televised shows could bring about a shift in the understanding of the notion of masculinity from a Malaysian gendered media perspective. Televised images can either naturalise and maintain, or challenge the notion of hegemonic masculinity through the interplay of its images to its viewers. It all depends on how men are allowed to be mirrored in a particular context and society where masculinity is at its dynamics undergoing a crisis.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE VITALITY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

How Soo Ying¹, Ain Nadzimah Abdullah² and Helen Tan³

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

e-mail: hsooying89@gmail.com¹, ain@upm.edu.my², helen@upm.edu.my³

ABSTRACT

In this multilingual milieu, Malaysians in their early age are given choices to use particular language in the various domains of usage. As such, it is rather common to have Malaysians speaking at least two if not more languages. Bringing the attention to English language, despite its status as the second most important language in the nation and is commonly known as the second language, English is gradually slanted towards a foreign language more than a second language (Platt & Weber, 1980; Nunan, 2003). Thus, it is of interest to examine the vitality of languages at the primary level of education as indicative of an early stage of language vitality. Although studies of language vitality are often linked to minority and indigenous languages, language vitality in the present study has broadened to encompass the main languages in the nation. Qualitative methodological approach was employed. Interviews were conducted with primary school teachers to obtain insights on the vitality issues. The study identified possible higher vitality of English language when students become older. It is seen that there are many folds of the vitality of English language and that it cannot be measured by scale alone. It is found that social milieu (in the sense of urban area versus rural area), socio-economic background and language policies contribute to the differences in the experience of the English language among students and thus influencing the vitality of the language.

Keywords: Language vitality, English language, Vitality perception, Teachers' interviews

INTRODUCTION

In tracing vitality, reference is often made to seminar findings made in the 1960s and 1970s. Among them is Stewart (1962, as cited in Bell, 1976) who defined vitality as "whether or not the language possesses a living community of native speakers ... A language may lose its vitality as its L1 community dies out" (p. 148). According to Stewart (1962), a language is guaranteed its vitality as long as it has speakers who use the language as their first language. A strong L1 community intrinsically establishes strong vitality of a language. Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) meanwhile constructed three indicators dealing with status, demography and institutional support which are the basis of another type of vitality which is known as Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV). EV refers to that "which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (p. 308). A group that has little or no vitality would cause its members to shift to using another language. Both definitions of vitality from Stewart (1962) and Giles et al. (1977) imply that the speaker is an important factor in determining the vitality of a language. The United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003 declared that a language without speakers has low or no vitality and this situation will cause it to die. In short, Language Vitality (LV) is the ability of a language to live and survive. In order for a language to do so, its speech

community has to ensure maintenance and sustainability; otherwise, in the long run, language shift could occur, resulting in a language being in danger of extinction. Karan (2000), however, sees vitality as “motivations and opportunity – a language uses motivations and opportunity to learn and use the language” (p. 71). In other words, there is a wider interpretation of the term ‘vitality’.

The Theory of Vitality is in dire need of new directions. Although EV or Group Vitality (GV) has been the highlight and precedent of many research studies, it is contended that the Theory of Vitality has advanced very little during the last 30 years (Yagmur & Ehala, 2011) since its inception, except for few extensions of the notion, such as Age Vitality (Giles, Kutchukhides, Yagmur, & Noels, 2003) and vitality as a belief system (Allard & Landry, 1986). Moreover, with the language vitality assessment proposed by the UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (UNESCO, 2003), many studies have concentrated on indigenous and minority languages in order to examine the survival and endangerment of these languages with the idea that they should be preserved. Vitality should become more encompassing, involving not only the indigenous or minority languages.

Van Der Avoird, Broeder, and Extra (2001) and Plüddemann, Braam, Broeder, and Extra (2004) concentrated on linguistic experiences in their investigations. The study of Van Der Avoird et al. included language monopoly, language proficiency, language choice, language dominance and language preference as determinants. Plüddemann et al., meanwhile, emphasized home languages, language repertoire, language choice, language proficiency, language dominance and language preference, language subjects, and content subjects as vitality indices. These studies built on the earlier concept of vitality, with an intention to loosen “the potentially problematic link between language on the one hand, and ethnic group and culture, on the other” (Plüddemann et al., 2004, p. 38). Different socio-cultural settings produced different outcomes in such a way that a proposed framework may not be appropriate for a particular context. Therefore, instead of focusing on exterior elements such as the material, the speaker, and the support, the indicators for vitality assessment should concentrate on the intrinsic structure of a language used in the community so that the instrument captures information that is more representative of a language's strength or weakness in relation to its main role in people's interaction.

In the Malaysian multilingual society where Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil are the main languages spoken, undoubtedly, these languages are ‘safe’ according to the definition given by Krauss (2007). Safe languages are those taught as compulsory subjects or used as a medium of instruction in primary schools, are learned as mother tongue by children, have the support of the government and have speakers around the world. English is recognized as an international language and is used in Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Note: Inner Circle countries are where English is native language, Outer Circle countries use English as a second language, while Expanding Circle nations use English as a foreign language). Vitality should be interpreted distinctively in line with the languages that are used by the majority. In other words, vitality is given a new interpretation as to how a major language is faring in terms of its current use. Vitality in the present study, is a construal of strength evaluation of English relative to the other languages that coexist in the same linguistic sphere where there is ongoing interaction in the use of first, second or third language.

Malaysian students are either bilingual or multilingual because they are taught many languages since young. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 2013 there were a total of 5,233,286 preschool, primary school and secondary school students in this country. Of that total, 2,743,237 were primary school students. As primary schoolers are the biggest group of students in Malaysia, the Report on Education Reform

and Process of Consultation suggests that the government invest in them by raising the standard of English among primary students rather than concentrating on secondary school or university students (ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM & KITA-UKM, 2012). This means the foundations of vitality should be built at an early age and become entrenched in their life. As vitality is mouldable (Abrams, Barker, & Giles, 2009), rectifications could be carried out to improve the vitality of English if it was found to be low at primary school level.

Related to the issue of language vitality is the question of language choice. In other words, it is human agency that determines a language's vibrancy in daily experiences of linguistic contexts. Within the ecology of multilingual Malaysia, the use of languages is seen as a 'competition' to establish importance or status. The most significant current attention is the "shared reality" behind the use of the four main Malaysian languages (i.e. English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil). In this sense, this vitality study attempts to establish the importance and status of the English language in relation to the other languages.

Research questions

This study aims to use the various vitality indicators: language use, language preference, language dominance, language choice, language attitude and motivation and language proficiency to investigate the vitality of the English language among other languages in Malaysia. The following question will be asked during investigation work:

- 1) How do teachers perceive English language vitality among primary school students?

METHODOLOGY

Research design and instrument

The research utilizes a design that employs qualitative method which involves interview sessions with primary school teachers to seek their opinions regarding the vitality of English language among their students. The research instrument consists of a semi-structured interview protocol which was formulated to guide the researchers in carrying out the interview with the teachers. The construction of the instrument was guided by language vitality indicators laid out by previous studies (Van Der Avoird, Broeder, & Extra, 2001; Pluddemann, Braam, Broeder, Extra, & October, 2004; and UNESCO Report, 2003). The indicators used are:

- 1) Language Preference
- 2) Language Dominance
- 3) Language Use
- 4) Language Choice
- 5) Language Attitude and Motivation
- 6) Language Proficiency

These vitality indicators serve to capture the language situation within the speech community and to encapsulate language experience among students.

Sample

For the purpose of understanding the overall strength (vitality) of English language vis-a-vis other languages in the primary schools in Selangor state, teachers who taught English were selected for interview. They are considered as language experts who have knowledge about the language and are experienced in teaching language to primary school students.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 18 teachers for the purpose of getting their views on the vitality of the English language. They were chosen based on recommendation from their respective school authorities. These teachers have between 3 and 30 years of experience teaching English at the primary level. Before the interview was conducted, the teachers were briefed on the concept of language vitality that was being studied.

Sample Selection of School Teachers

	English teacher		
	National	National-type Chinese	National-type Tamil
Total	8	4	6

Semi-Structured Interview

The interviews were conducted in compliance with the interview protocol. There were 11 broad-based open-ended questions to give additional insight into the issues at hand. The questions were constructed around the concerns of the vitality indices. English was focused on as the study forefronts the language in comparison with the other languages. The questions were:

1. Do you think the country provides a good environment to learn or speak English? Please elaborate.
2. Do you think the primary school system provides a good environment to learn or speak English?
3. Does the school provide opportunities to strengthen English language use?
4. Should English be the main language used in school? Please elaborate.
5. Is English a language that students prefer? Please give examples.
6. Is English the language they are best at?
7. How frequently do students use English compared to other languages? Please elaborate.
8. What is their attitude and motivation in learning English?
9. Do you think students' language proficiency will affect the use of the English language in Malaysia in relation to other languages?
10. Based on the existing environment, are you able to predict the future of the English language in relation to the other languages in this country? (Do you think English will continue or will it cease to be one of the main languages in Malaysia?)
11. Is English strong or weak when compared to other languages used in Malaysia?

The audio-recordings from the interviews were converted into an mp3 format that was suitable for the application with the NVivo 10 (30 days trial) software. The software allows the audio recordings to be played at the desired speech thus enabling the researcher to transcribe the interviews into text, add time codes and duration as well as to

label the clips. After transcribing the interviews, the transcriptions were coded according to the themes and aligned with the vitality indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews conducted with the national and national-type English language teachers revealed that the vitality of English language among the students was dependent on a host of factors. Among the significant threads that emerged were government policies, the social background, and the urban-rural setting.

Factors Influencing the Vitality

Government Policies

The teachers reported that the government had implemented a number of English language programs for teachers such as English courses in short and long durations and programs using native foreign speakers in collaboration with The British Council and Cambridge University to remedy their language proficiency and teaching methods.

The government had also provided sufficient programs for the students. One of the programs, according to National Primary School (NPS) English teacher 2, is “*MBMMBI programme whereby for level 1, you have to conduct activities based on the both languages, English and Malay.*” NILAM activity had also been implemented to ensure “*these children have to read a book, an English book a day.*” TPS 6 said that the students were given encouragement and opportunity to acquire the English language through the English camp for weeks and months. NPS 3 also added that the English textbook syllabus was emphasized by the ministry with the purpose to strengthen the position of the language in the country and to accelerate the level of English language proficiency among students. They commented that these programs catered for an improved environment for the students to gain exposure to the language.

Interview Excerpts:

[NPS 3] I think the country provides a good environment for learners to learn or speak. Even like the English syllabus is something they emphasize on because there are ongoing programs and syllabus... that...they try to renew the syllabus every 10 years to make the English learning better and to make the students to be more proficient in English.

Nevertheless, while the teachers noted the positive steps taken by the authorities, concerns were expressed over the manner of handling the fundamental issues of implementation of the actions taken. A core issue is the perception that English is still neglected compared to the vernacular languages and Malay in the schools. National Primary School English teacher 2 (NPS 2) believed that to overcome the problem, the responsible agencies had to implement more drastic measures such as imposing a compulsory pass of the English language as an examination subject in school and also to make it a criterion for university entry. Barbour (2010) stated that the role of a language in the educational system would dictate the attitudes expressed towards the language. Thus, through rigorous and firm language policy and implementation, students would have alarming awareness on the importance of the language:

“But we should enhance the usage of English in schools ... and make it a compulsory thing ... like entry for university for [as] a subject for entry and for qualification, those days it was like if you don't pass, it's fine, you still get the certification, but now they should make it

compulsory that in order to get the full certification, English is one of the requirements. In that way, the pupils will make it a point to study the language and use the language." – NPS 2

When asked about how English and Malay language are posited in terms of their importance, given that in reality the former is vital in international platform whereas the latter is a significant language in the national standing, TPS 4 stated that the mastery in English language is vital, but "*you cannot deny having Malay language in Malaysia.*" NPS 4 provided the example of MBMMBI (To Uphold Malay language and To Strengthen English Language) as a policy that renders focus on two languages and indicated that "*we have to go side by side but the main language is still Malay language.*" Another teacher (TPS 2) also expressed the difficulty of vernacular schools to allocate balanced attention to three languages (English, Tamil and Malay language) which very likely caused negligence of the English language as priority was given to Malay language as the national language and to the mother tongue used as the medium of instruction. Although emphasis should be given to Malay language as the national language, the English language, according to the teacher (NPS 2), should be given more attention:

Interview Excerpts:

[TPS 2] In case of my school, Tamil vernacular school, we don't actually give more importance on English because the first priority goes for Tamil and the second one goes for Malay because that is the only subject they have to pass in order to go to Form One. So English is kind of neglected and being used in terms of Science subject and English. ... I think we are giving not a good environment but more into a below good as they have to focus on strengthening Tamil language and also we have to focus on Malay language of course and we have to conduct activities for these languages and then if there is any spare time then we would think about English.

[NPS 2] We have to follow what is the philosophy of the country, you know, okay, whereby Malay is supposed to be the main language but we have accepted the fact that English is very important in communication basis, especially when you want to interact with other countries. So even though it's second language, it should be on par with Malay, Bahasa Melayu.

Based on the findings, government language policies that are carried out in various forms are crucial to impact the vitality of a language. In general, it determines one's language promotion and relegation that in a way will affect the public's language perception as well as their language practice in respect of their choice and use of the language. This can be seen from the interview with TPS 2 who said that priority was given to Malay rather than the English language as the relevant authority has mandated that Malay is a must-pass subject before students are allowed to proceed to higher level (Form 1). The top-down language policy is, thus, a key component in the choice of language used in the school as the principals and teachers dutifully carry out the educational policies.

Social Background

The use of English language as well as its vitality is very much dependent on the social background of the students such as their parents' occupation as well as their home environment. The teachers emphasized that knowing English was actually a privilege for those who were from a family where English was spoken at home. NPS 1 highlighted that children whose parents are professionals and from English speaking background tended to speak English with their teachers. NPS 7 linked professionals with English speaking characteristic and added that *if they are on low level, they only speak Malay*. TPS 2 and CPS 4 (Chinese National-type Primary School English teacher 4) were also on the same

page on the matter with the former acknowledging the possibility of children with educated parents speaking English and the latter pointed to the influence in their learning because of their background. These students have an added advantage in being more proficient in the language compared to the students who did not come from a similar background.

“Those who come from the English language background family, they are very proficient compared to those who come from the BM, their mother tongue, the background of Bahasa Melayu. So they speak very limited English.” – NPS 4

“For those who are coming from good background, they have learnt English since they were born, they are using the language in the house, so they are more on English. For those who are not, they are focusing on their mother tongue.” – TPS 1

For some students, English might have been their third or fourth language and the only place to use the language was in school. Taking the circumstances into account, the teachers implied that English could be considered as a foreign language for some of the students.

“They are from a group of pupils whom they don’t speak or hear the language at home. So, it’s only in school. ... First [language] is their mother tongue ... And also they are aborigines. Asli people, they have their own mother tongue. So, here is decided that [English is] third or fourth language. It’s not even a second language. ... In Malaysia, it’s supposed to be the second language, but it’s being used as foreign language. As I said, they used Malay in school, they have their mother tongue and then they have another language which they used at home. And this is one, two, three, and then with English as fourth, so fourth is considered the foreign language.” – NPS 2

Although the students receive formal English language lessons in the school, NPS 7 said that the school did not play the sole role in contributing to the language experiences of the students. The social environment, which refers to the world outside of the school, she stressed was a more significant contributor to the students’ acquisition of the English language.

“So, it’s not the school per said, the environment outside the school also plays an important role. ... There are few who are excellent in English because they used to talk English in their home. But it’s for speaking. Maybe writing something else.” – NPS 7

The different home backgrounds affected the vitality of the language among students as many did not come from an English-speaking environment. As such, they were more familiar in using their mother tongue at home and this was further perpetuated in school. As a result, it is therefore not surprising that many of these students are weak in the English language.

Urban-Rural Setting

The next issue is the rural and urban setting which gave rise to a divided scenario in English language use. The teachers affirmed that the use of English in the rural areas was solely confined to the classroom resulting in inadequacy in its use and practice. Students in the rural areas lacked the opportunity to listen to and use the language outside of the school environment. TPS 4 observed that students from urban areas had more opportunities to practise English compared to their colleagues from rural areas where such an environment was not available. He added that *“the children need more space and*

you must be in the environment to learn the language." This is in line with the study of Azman (2006) which took note of the rural-urban division that prevents rural communities from acquiring proficiency in the English language. CPS 1 compared the environment between Banting (where he taught) and Kuala Lumpur (where he studied): *"If from places like Banting area, pupils are not encouraged to speak in English. But in KL area, they have a very good environment for learning English."* The rural-urban dichotomy is reflective of Enever and Moon (2010) that stated the extent of language exposure is impacted by the rural-urban division and cause unequal English access to the children. CPS 3 added the environment influenced the use of the language: *over here in Telok (Telok Datok), the pupils have less exposure to English-speaking community, so they speak less in English.* TPS 3 indicated that in the rural areas, English was used only in the classroom. Even within the compound of the school, the students tended to use their mother tongue:

"They only speak English in a classroom ... they come to school, they also tend to use mother tongue. So, it's not giving a sufficient time for them to use English. ... The environment makes them not to really use the language."

NPS 5 meanwhile, revealed that *"the students are not actually exposed to English. Their environment is such"* and hence, this passive environment took a toll on the acquisition of the language among the students. NPS 4 mentioned that in the rural area, *"to them, English is just merely a second language which they are forced to learn."* The finding on urban-rural division is also supported by the study of Gobel, Thang, Sidhu, Oon, and Chan (2013) which indicated that there is a competence difference in English among students in the rural-urban divide.

The interviews with teachers revealed that the status of English as second language did not reconcile with the situation in reality. Thus, students need to have a more conducive and encouraging avenue or platform to use the language for without an appropriate environment, the learning of English cannot be facilitated. When social milieus and the public arena mirror limited usage and exposure in English and orient towards the use of other languages, not only would it cause less opportunity to apply the language into real life practice, the language is also having less salience in daily linguistic experiences among language users. In other words, the moulding of the social milieu on the linguistic environment underlies the degree of vitality.

Other Concerns

Language Use

From their experiences and observations, the teachers contended that their students were reluctant to speak in English and seldom used the language. Despite all the measures to promote English language use such as organizing English Day, the students still opted to use their mother tongue. This was said by NPS 1:

"Even every Tuesday every month, for the first Tuesday in a month, we held an English day, but not all can speak English. They still speak in their mother tongue language, which is Bahasa Melayu"

Another example given by the teachers was that the students would use English in their teacher's presence but would switch to mother tongue once the teacher went away. This was confirmed by NPS 7 and TPS 5:

“As I said, Bahasa is their mother tongue, so even we do the speaking, they tend to speak in their mother tongue when we are monitoring the other group. So, maybe in front of us, they try to speak English and then when we go to another group, they start using their mother tongue.”– NPS 7

“When English teachers conduct the lesson or are with them, they speak English. If the English teachers are not with them, definitely they will start speaking [mother tongue].” – TPS 5

The teachers also observed that students would use their mother tongue instead of English for communication purposes. In other words, English only served as a means of communication with the teacher within the classroom setting. Beyond that another language (i.e. the mother tongue) would fulfil this function.

Thus, the use of English was evident only in the class rather than outside of it. Burhanudeen (2004), in her study, stated that the decision to implement English as merely an academic subject has reduced the use of the language among students compared to the time when English was the main language in school. Since that policy on English was implemented, the language is only used in the period allocated to it as a school subject. This was confirmed by CPS 2:

“The students only tend to speak English for maybe 30 minutes or 60 minutes. After that, when they are out of English class, they tend to speak their mother tongue and then they speak Bahasa.”

The introduction of the vernacular language as the medium of instruction at the primary education stage stretched the use of Mandarin and Tamil to encompass not only its usage at home, but also in school. This had the effect of reducing the use of the other languages particularly English. This was mentioned by CPS 4:

“In primary school because we have our mother tongue as medium of learning, so they will speak English less, use English less unless they are forced to. It means when we have programme, when we have visitors, foreigners whom they need to talk to or work with, so they will use the language.”

Hence, beyond the classroom setting, the students needed to be forced to use English. Without force, they would not speak the language. However, force was only applied when the teacher was present. Without the presence and force applied by the teacher, students would not speak the language. This finding is corroborated by Ali (2003) who reported that at primary level, opportunities to use English in the Malaysian school setting is limited. Language use is restricted to the classroom. Communication in English is practically non-existent among students outside the classroom. She found that despite students having the ability to read and write in English, they have problems with speaking and listening skills, which require more practice and application.

The teachers also described English as a subject that was being used for academic and examination purposes only. NPS 1 stated that *“They use only for academic purpose, for primary school, usually like that”*. This was confirmed by NPS 4: *“They only learn when they know that they have to sit for the exam. Then of course they would learn and study hard for the language itself ... also as I said we have exam on oral skills, then they use English.”* When a language was only learned for examination purposes and the element of force was present, the vitality of the language would be affected.

Instead of using English, students strongly preferred to use their mother tongue in most circumstances. It could be said that artificial reinforcement did not work well. When

the students seldom used the language and force had to be applied to make them use the language, it is justifiable to state that for these school-going children, English is regarded as a school subject rather than a common language that could be used in immediate environment or beyond though Yamat, Fisher, and Rich (2014) stated that English language learning in the context of Malaysia should be aligned with language exposure, opportunities to use the language, conducive environment, and increment in English language use. When the public space and home setting do not serve as the platform for English language practice, the school is deemed as the last ray of hope to deliver messages about the significance and relevance of English language to the students.

Language Preference

The teachers acknowledged that English was not a preferred language among their students as compared to the mother tongue. NPS 3 and TPS 4 said:

“Students prefer to communicate in their first language because it is easier for them to get, to send the message they are trying because they are not familiar with English. Even though they are Indian students, Chinese students or Malay students, they prefer to use their mother tongue.” – NPS 3

“Nobody likes to use secondary language. If possible, they like to speak in their mother tongue, or maybe Tamil or Malay where they communicate more. They express more in their mother tongue. I don't think they prefer English.” – TPS 4

Therefore, their language preference is linked to their ability to use the language and their feelings towards the language. TPS 2 stated that *“It all comes from the students' ability. If the students are comfortable with English, they prefer English; for those who have lower capability of using English, they choose not to talk in English”*. In other words, language competence plays a part in influencing their language preference; they either use a language comfortably or avoid using it. TPS 6 also did not think her students liked English and highlighted lack of vocabulary as the problem. She said that *“When comes to words and usage of words, they are out of that because most of the time they are using it in their mother tongue”*. This hints at the discomfort of using English among her students. The preference to use a language is also connected to the degree of difficulty in acquiring the language. When a language is difficult to learn and use, the students are prone to not using it. This is supported by Ting and Sussex (2012) who found that language choice is subject to language preference and proficiency.

Another teacher, on the other hand, said that some of her students prefer English as much as they prefer their mother tongue:

“Some of the children, not to say they love Tamil much, but they love English more.”

She added that although her students were excellent in English language, they still loved Tamil which was their mother tongue. A teacher (NPS 8) reported that her students were fond of learning English, however without a natural and spontaneous setting, the students found it hard to sustain their interest.

Language Proficiency

It is evident that the students had acquired a wide range of proficiency in English. As mentioned by the teachers, some are excellent in the language, whereas some are very weak.

Given the range of proficiency, this would also mean that it would be difficult to give a more objective view of English language vitality if proficiency is used as a yardstick for evaluation. Some teachers stated that the criterion for proficiency was being able to read, understand and communicate with teachers via the language. Others operationalized it in terms of listening, speaking and writing, vocabulary, pronunciation and examination results. NPS 8 states that at the primary level, the students are deemed to have reached the learning outcome if *“they are able to read, they are able to understand, and they are able to communicate with the teacher.”*

Some teachers attributed the proficiency gap of their students to the home background difference. NPS 7 said *“There are few who are excellent in English because they used to talk English in their home. But it's for speaking. Maybe writing something else.”* TPS 3 stated that *“Like educated parents, the children are quite good. So, I think the level of proficiency is severe in this role.”* TPS 6 felt that *“home background plays a big part.”* In other words, the family background plays a vital role in the students' level of proficiency in English.

An English teacher (TPS 6) gave an optimistic view that the students while encountering problems in English language usage at primary level would, however, be able to improve in the language later. This implied that at a later stage, the vitality of the English language would be higher at the post primary level when the students progressed to the national secondary schools. The use of mother tongue would be reduced to some extent and the use of other languages, including English could be more prominent. At the primary level, it was found that the schools appeared to perpetuate mother tongue use at the expense of the early learning of English which could lay the foundation for a strong subsequent development. This was explained by the English teacher as follows:

“... primary school, yes, the child will have some problem with English language. Once they come to secondary school, most of them are able to speak in English. ... Most of them are able to speak, able to understand English because they used English more for communication. In a secondary school, it's all a mixture of all three languages, so they cannot speak more of their mother tongue. They have to communicate with the other students, they have to speak in English because their bahasa is also not very strong so most of the time they used English for communication especially secondary school. From Form 1, they will start speaking more in English if you notice. Primary school, no, because it's all their kind. All the Malays in one school; Chinese, Indian in another school, so they speak their mother tongue. When they go to secondary school, all three is mixed together so they got no choice. They have to speak in English. So, it's there - no problem with it.”

Thus the debate on the viability of an ethnocentric approach versus a national concentration on the promotion of a ‘single’ national language or a language for international communication for the greater good in early language development for the society at large remains unabated. Nonetheless, data from stakeholders at the base line level will remain useful for insights into socio-linguistic views on language development in a particular multi-lingual locality and its language policy.

Language Attitude and Motivation

In the aspect of attitude, it was found that students generally had negative feelings towards the English language. Fear of using the language or fear of making mistakes was the common statement made by the teachers.

The students thought English was a difficult language as it was not their mother tongue. They were wary about using the language as they tended to make mistakes. Other negative feelings such as uncomfortableness with using the language (NPS 2; NPS 6),

indifference towards the language (NPS 4, NPS 5; CPS 1) and shyness and embarrassment to use the language (NPs 6, CPS 2). also impinged on their acquisition of English.

Interview Excerpts:

Discomfort in using the language

[NPS 2] They don't feel comfortable because they don't have the vocabulary ... sometimes they want to express themselves, they don't have enough words.

[NPS 6] They feel uncomfortable because they usually didn't use this language.

Indifference towards the language

[NPS 4] There are two groups: one group with those who are good students - they like to learn English. But for poor classes, they do not really care whether they learn or not, whether they pass, they don't really care.

[NPS 5] I think they have no interest in English. The interest is very low.

[TPS 6] If it's a good class, yes, they are very interested because they know the importance of English, they really want to learn the language, they question. If you have the weaker classes, they don't seem to be interested because they don't use the language at home.

[CPS 1] They are not very enthusiastic when it comes to learning English. They tend to over-rely on the teacher when it comes to learning English. They always wait for the teacher to explain the meaning in Chinese or in Bahasa Melayu.

[CPS 2] Attitude wise, they are not encouraging. They don't want to learn.

Embarrassed to use the language

[NPS 6] So, they feel sometimes shy and sometimes they don't have enough vocabulary to speak. That's why they didn't speak English.

[CPS 2] They are very shy. They are very shy. If they speak whether the friends will laugh at them or whether they made mistakes. They are very shy to speak in front of the friends. Although sometimes they know the words, but they are not confident to use it. So, they just tend to keep quiet.

They felt uncomfortable when using the language as lack of vocabulary restricted them from expressing themselves spontaneously. The students lacked enthusiasm and confidence in learning the language and were over-dependent on the teachers especially in terms of seeking the meaning of words. This manifests that low proficiency in the language attributed to negative attitude such as lack of confidence and awkwardness in using the language as supported by the study of Yahaya, Yahaya, Ooi, Bon, and Ismail (2010). Another teacher (TPS 6) noted that since the students were unfamiliar with the English language, they preferred to communicate in their first language or mother tongue as it enabled them to speak more naturally. However, teachers also noted that some students liked English and therefore had a positive attitude and motivation to learn the language.

There are some positive signs for the vitality of the language especially when teachers firmly acknowledged the importance of learning English. However, despite constant reminders of the importance of English, the students have yet to show a greater awareness about it. Teachers attributed the lack of awareness to their young age as the importance of the language is not yet apparent to them:

“Because they are still small, they do not really understand the importance of English language yet. Maybe if they go to tertiary education, they would be aware of the importance.” – NPS 4

“Teacher always tell them about it but since they are still young, they didn't take it up to par. For them, it is the subject. Even though we told them so many times that when you go outside, you meet other people, you need to use English. When you work soon, you need to use English. Still, because they are young, they cannot feel.” – NPS 7

“They don't realize the importance in school. Once they go to secondary school, once they face the PT3 and SPM, then only they realize its importance because in the school, they are not exposed to the outside world. They are very comfortable in their zone. 'Oh this is school. I passed or failed, I still go to the next level'. But once they finish their SPM, they realize 'Oh, outside everything is in English'. Then only they realize but that's too late already. That's why we always try to reinforce to them that English is worldwide. If you can use, control it, you can go to whole world”. – CPS 2

A teacher added that although students might realize the importance of English, they could not feel it as the language does not play a crucial element in their daily lives. English is regarded as unnecessary and they are able to survive without it.

A teacher (CPS 1) also expressed the view that students tended to isolate themselves from the language. The students, according to him, “(found) another escape route to escape English” by studying in the independent Chinese school where Mandarin is the medium of the instruction. He added “when it comes to long term, the pupils will think that ‘I learn Chinese. Next time I can go to the independent school. I don't have to learn English anymore. It is not important.’”

CONCLUSION

Vitality can be interpreted in many ways. As this study placed language preference, dominance, use, choice, attitude and motivation and proficiency as the indicators of vitality, the teachers voiced their opinions about the vitality of English language of their students in line with these indicators. One aspect noted in the interview was that social milieu (in the sense of urban versus rural), socio-economic background and language policies contributed to the differences in the experience of the English language among students and thus influenced the vitality of the language. The interviews also demonstrated a connection between individual and societal levels where environmental support and the social milieu influenced the individual establishment of the language vitality. This was supported by Van Driem (2007) who postulated that “the survival of individual languages was primarily determined by factors which had nothing to do with their intrinsic worth as a system for the articulation of human thought, but by economic, ecological and demographic factors affecting the individual language communities” (p. 303).

It seems that it is the English speaking environment that is moulded in the domains of use such as at home, in school and other social milieu would provide language contacts as well as opportunities to use the language in context; the use of the language would be maximized to some extent, thus facilitating positive attitudes, such as comfort in using the language. At the individual level, this would help to strengthen the vitality of the English language that could be transformed into the conspicuous use of the language as part of their linguistic experience. A degree of support from the responsible authorities is needed to gain a certain level of vitality. In short, if the home environment, the

immediate community and other social milieu brings high exposure of the English language and adds to it, a greater emphasis in English language in the government's policies and implementation, then the vitality of the English language will be placed in a better position.

From the interviews, it can be concluded that within the classroom, the language is merely being used under three conditions: for communication with the teacher only, for simple communication and instruction purposes, and for examination. Beyond the classroom, the students used their mother tongue and rarely used the English language. Added to that, there is a forced element in making the students use the language which hints on the notion that the language is not being used voluntarily. Nevertheless, some teachers remarked that the students had made an attempt in practicing the language. As for another vitality indicator which is language preference, the teachers observed that some of their students preferred the language, whereas some did not. The preference towards the language was linked to their ease of use with the language as teacher stated *"if the students are comfortable with the English, they prefer English."* On the other hand, not favouring the language is seen as a form of rejection towards the language which is very likely due to the low proficiency and difficulty in learning the language. The students were also found to have different English language proficiency levels. The high proficiency level at early age is due to English being their first language and spoken at home. In other instances, language proficiency is very much affected by the language practices as summed up by one of the teachers that *"it is not being used widely in their daily lives, so I don't think so."* The struggle to boost language proficiency as well as to expand the communication and practice space beyond the classroom setting for the elevation of the vitality need reconciliation of language use and proficiency. Attitude wise, 'shy', 'embarrassed', 'afraid to make mistakes', 'feeling awkward speaking the language' and 'no interest' are the gist of students' reaction towards English language though some of the students set positive attitude towards the language. Che Mat and Yunus (2014) also reported similar negative attitudes among primary school students. These negative attitudes may persist until a later age as Talif, Chan, Abdullah, Wong, Noor, & Rashid. (2010), Yahaya et al. (2011), and Kamarudin and Long (2014) in their studies, observed the presence of such negative attitudes and feelings among tertiary level students. Teachers also revealed that students were conscious of the importance of the language but were not aware of it as they felt the need for English was limited. These perceptions were captured in such an array that opportunities for linguistic contacts in English language are largely determined by prior privileges such as an English speaking environment at home or in other social milieu taking into account the ambivalence in rendering equal concentration to languages since the teachers voiced that the emphases are commonly given to the national language and mother tongue followed by English. Hence, in general, efforts to improve and elevate the vitality of English language in their early phase of the students' life or at the primary school stage are required to ensure the language vitality is on par with nation building and development. The vitality of the English language at the early phase of the schoolchildren's life may not be satisfactory yet a different picture may emerge at the later phase (secondary education) as it is predicted by the teachers that the school milieu at the later phase may act as a momentum to increase the strength of the language given that the contact network would be expanded to involve people from different races instead of solely a single race, thus driving the children to utilize their second language which in this case refers to English.

In this study, the focus is on language vitality which is an offshoot of studies on Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV) which emphasized on the vitality of a group of users and traditionally language vitality dealt with indigenous and minority languages. However,

this research has extended from these conventional notions of language vitality to cover major languages in use in a multilingual environment. In essence, it concentrates on the vitality of the English language as a second language. The research focuses on the vitality of the English language among primary Malaysian school students who are initiated to acquire the language, thus giving baseline information about early language acquisition.

Though the findings are informative, the study is not without limitations. One of the limitations is the geographical boundary of the study. This study was limited to just one state. Future research could expand the geographical confines to obtain cross-sectional results to improve on the generalizability of the results. East Malaysia could also be explored as the different ethnic make-up could give rich information on language vitality. In addition, the study was confined to the primary level. It is suggested that the vitality research be extended to secondary and tertiary level students as the data would capture linguistic practices at different stages of their life.

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CROSS-LANGUAGE TRANSFER OF MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG MALAY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Anne Benedict Nair¹ and Sridevi Srinivas²

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur

E-mail: annebene@um.edu.my¹; sridevi@um.edu.my²

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate cross-language transfer of morphological awareness among young Malay learners who are learning English as their L2 and have Malay as their L1. The study examines the relationship between morphological awareness and performance on English and Malay spelling tests. The data for the study was drawn from a sample of Malay learners aged nine and twelve from two Malaysian urban schools. A quantitative study was undertaken. The quantitative study investigated if morphological awareness in Malay can predict English Spelling Accuracy. Correlations were used to analyse the data in the study. The findings suggest that there is cross-language transfer from the L1 to the L2. Strict consistency of English roots correlated strongly with Malay word analogy ($p < .001$). Malay word analogy also correlated with Lenient consistency of English roots ($p < .01$). The correlations show that Malay word analogy does predict the spelling of English roots. This indicates that transfer is taking place across the two languages.

Keywords: cross-language transfer, L2 learners, morphological awareness, spelling accuracy

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to investigate cross-language transfer of morphological awareness among young Malay second language learners. Cross – language transfer is taken to mean the positive transfer of linguistic knowledge and skills across languages (Cazden, 1974). Morphological Awareness (MA) refers to recognizing the presence of morphemes in words (Carlisle, 1995). Awareness in the context of this study is the ability of being able to recognize the presence of linguistic knowledge and the ability to manipulate it. Second language learners would refer to learners who are learning English as a second language in Malaysian schools.

Morphemes are the smallest units of words that carry meaning. For example, the word ‘hearts’ is composed of two morphemes, the root ‘heart’ and the plural ‘-s’. Morphological knowledge includes knowledge of inflections and knowledge of derivational forms as well as knowledge of compound words, for example ‘firefighter’. Inflectional morphemes indicate the grammatical status of the words to which they are attached. For example: ‘kill’ and ‘-ed’ where the past tense inflection ‘-ed’ is added to the root ‘kill’. Derivational morphemes change the base word to create a new word which usually includes a change in grammatical category, such as the adjective ‘naughty’ to the noun ‘naughtiness’. Awareness of compound words is another aspect of morphological awareness. Morphological awareness can be measured at these three levels. For the purpose of this study only knowledge of inflections and knowledge of derivational forms will be used to measure morphological awareness. Carlisle (1995) refers to morphological awareness as the conscious ability to think about and to manipulate the forms and structure of words.

Bilingual studies have provided empirical support for the transfer of phonological, literacy and grammatical skills between the learner's first language and his second. This study would like to determine if morphological awareness could be positively transferred between two languages. The transfer of phonological awareness could not be determined by the study, as there was not enough time to administer the phonological awareness tasks as there was access to the sample classes for only one and a half weeks. The two languages that were studied are Malay and English. The sample will be taken from children who are native-speakers of Malay and who begin to learn English as a second language in school at the age of seven.

Aim and Research Questions of the Study

The aim of the study is to show that morphological awareness can be transferred across languages. The current study will examine the relationship between Malay morphological awareness tasks and English morpheme spelling tasks. It will determine whether there was transfer between morphological awareness in the first language and the spelling of morphemes in the second language. A positive correlation between the awareness tasks and the spelling tests will predict that transfer does occur.

Hence the following research question is formulated to seek answers to the aims outlined above:

Can morphological awareness in the first language facilitate the spelling of morphemes in the second language?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Cross Language Transfer of Morphological Awareness

A study conducted by Bindman (2004) showed that there was transfer of morphological awareness across languages. Since transfer does take place, the question one might ask is:

Whether there is anything in children's competence in their native language that can help them learn a second language – in particular whether they will be better learners of L2 morphology if they are more aware of morphology in their own language.
Nunes and Bryant (2009:201)

In this section, studies will be reviewed to show that children's competence in their native language can be used to facilitate performance in their second language, providing support for the present study which investigates whether morphological awareness in the L1 can facilitate performance on morphological spelling in the L2.

Bindman (2004) in her study examined relationships between performance on morpho-syntactic awareness tasks in English (L1) and Hebrew (L2) and between L2 morpho-syntactic awareness and L1 morphological spelling, in the two groups of children aged six to eleven years. The aims of the study were to explore whether grammatical awareness tasks in one language can be used for the child's other language even when the surface-level features of both languages are dissimilar.

Her findings showed that performance on the Hebrew Oral Cloze task was correlated with all three English morpho-syntactic awareness tasks although these correlations were weak (between .3 and .39; $n = 116$; $p < .001$). This showed that grammatical awareness gained in L1 (English) can be used for the L2 (Hebrew).

Castro, Nunes and Strect-Ribeiro (cited in Nunes & Bryant, 2009) carried out a study which analysed whether Portuguese children's awareness of morphology in Portuguese was a predictor of their English learning after one year of instruction. The subjects of the study were monolingual Portuguese children aged 9 to 12 years. At the beginning of the year, the children were given an assessment of their verbal ability in the form of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children translated and adapted to Portuguese. The British Picture Vocabulary Test, three morphological awareness measures in Portuguese: the sentence completion similar to the Berko test, a sentence analogy and a word analogy task were administered to the children.

The subjects of the study were given English instruction for a year. The same book and instruction method were used with all the children. At the end of the school year the children were given an oral assessment in English. The researcher scored the children's production on the variety of their vocabulary, the variety of sentence structure and morphological correctness of the sentences.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted. The aim of the analysis was to investigate whether children's scores on Portuguese morphological awareness task given at the beginning of the year would correlate significantly with their English production at the end of the year after controlling for age, general verbal ability and their previous knowledge of English words. Children's verbal ability measured in Portuguese was significantly related to their English scores (it explained 34% of the variance in the children's English scores). After controlling for the children's age and verbal ability, the partial correlations between each of the three measures of morphological awareness and the children's English scores were still significant. The researchers conclude that there is evidence that children's awareness of morphology in their native language is related to their L2 learning. The above study shows that children's awareness of morphology in their own language is a good predictor of their learning of L2 in the classroom.

Morphological transfer occurs when morphological awareness in one language can be used for the child's second language even when the surface-level features of both languages are dissimilar. Even if Malay does not have any inflectional morphemes a good grounding in Malay morphemes helps with the child's L2 learning.

METHOD

Participants of the Study

60 children participated in this study. 35 children were 9-year-olds and in their third year of primary education. 25 children were 12-year-olds and in their sixth year of primary education. The children were sampled from these age groups because a few months prior to this study samples of these same children's writing were obtained from these two groups and the kind of errors that appeared in their writing seemed to suggest that they were making these errors based on the level of phonological and morphological awareness they possessed at the time.

The group of children participating in this study were children whose first language is Malay and who were also learning English as a second language. The group of learners was sampled from two urban primary national schools in Malaysia. The children sampled from the school in Petaling Jaya generally came from lower to middle income homes. The children sampled from the school in Kuala Lumpur generally came from middle to higher income homes. This information was obtained by asking a sample of children from each school to write down the occupation of both parents.

Procedure

The sample was obtained by giving 9-year-old and 12-year-old Malay children the following tasks:

English Language Tasks

A. Spelling Tasks

- i) Morphological Spelling Tests - these tasks were based on test administered by Nunes, Bryant and Bindman (1997). See Appendix A.

Malay Language Tasks

A. Spelling Tasks

- i) Morphological Spelling Test. See Appendix B

B. Oral Morphological Awareness Task

- i) Word Analogy Task. See Appendix D
- ii) Sentence Analogy

General Testing Procedure

The testing period took one and a half weeks. During this time we met the Head Teacher as well as the class teacher of the classes that were to be tested. We then met the pupils and conducted the morphology awareness tasks. The spelling tasks were conducted by the class teachers who were native-speakers of Malay. The researchers advised each teacher that the tasks required that the teacher read the sentences in the Spelling Tests with the kind of pronunciation that they would use for normal everyday speech. The pupils were also advised that they should not copy from each other.

English Language Tasks

A. Spelling Tasks

- (i) *English Morpheme sub-test*

Rationale

The spelling test used in this study was designed to test children's ability to spell words that departed from the regular phonetic spelling of the word.

Design

The children were asked to spell a total of 33 words. The words contained in the test fell into different categories, and were chosen so that the child would not be able to spell the words using a phonological spelling alone, he would need to make use of morphological processing in order to spell the words correctly. The morpheme sub-test consisted of words that contained the following grammatical morphemes '-ed' past tense end morpheme, the 'wh-' interrogative morpheme, the '-cian' noun forming end morpheme and the '-ness' noun-forming end morpheme.

Malay Language Tasks

A. Spelling Tasks

- (i) *Malay Morpheme sub-test*

Rationale

The tests were designed to test children's ability to spell words that departed from the regular phonetic spelling of the word.

Design

The words contained in this test were chosen because they contained different grammatical morphemes. In order to spell these words correctly the child would have to draw on his awareness of morphology. This would indicate that the child is using the lexical route to spell words. The children were asked to spell a total of 12 words. Category One tested the prefix 'ber' (6 words). Category Two tested double letters (6 words). The morpheme sub-test consisted of words in the following categories:

B. Oral Malay Morphological Awareness Tasks

(i) Word Analogy Task

Rationale

This task was designed following the model of the task by Nunes, Bryant and Bindman (1997). The aim of the task was to test the child's explicit awareness of morphology in spoken language. This task involved grammatical transformations between different parts of speech.

(ii) Sentence Analogy Task

Rationale

This task was designed following the model of the task by Nunes, Bryant and Bindman (1997). The aim of the task was to test children's awareness of Malay morphology. This is done by examining how well the children are able to use verbs in their base form as well as verbs with the addition of suffixes and prefixes.

Oral English Morphological Awareness Tasks

The English awareness tasks followed the same rationale, design and procedure of the Malay awareness task.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected were computed and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Morphological Awareness in this study was measured by obtaining a score from the total number of correct items on the Word Analogy Task which is a morphological awareness task. The awareness task and the spelling tests were then subjected to the statistical procedure – Pearson Product-moment Correlation which is used for parametric statistics.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample for this study consisted of 60 bilingual Malay learners. The learners were in Year 3 in School 1 (9-years-old) and Year 6 in School 2 (12-years-old).

English Measures

English Spelling Test

(i) Morpheme sub-test

The morpheme sub-test consisted of words that contained the 'ed' past tense end morpheme, the 'wh' interrogative morpheme, the 'ian', noun-forming end morpheme and the 'ness' noun-forming end morpheme.

As the morpheme sub-test was administered only once, Spearman Brown's split-half measure of internal consistency was used to estimate the reliability of the test. The test was divided into two halves. The first half contained all the odd numbered items and the second

half contained all the even numbered items. Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the test was at an acceptable level.

The distribution of scores on the task for the 9-year-olds is shown below in Figure 1.1. All the analysis for the reliability tests were done separately because the study showed that the 12-year-old children were regarded as too old for the study as some of the scores showed ceiling effects. For the 9-year-olds, out of a total of 19 items, 8 items were included in the test. The scores were approximately normally distributed for the 9-year-olds.

Table 1.1. Kendall correlation coefficients between total English morphological spelling scores and item scores on the sub-morpheme test for the 9-year-olds

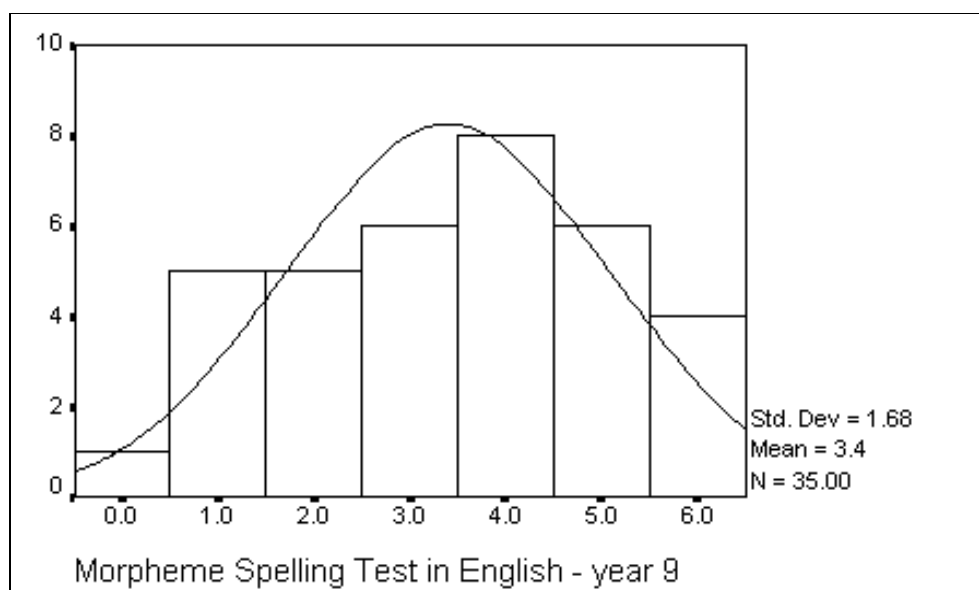
	naughtiness	where	what	when	who	why	which	magician
Total English Morphological Spelling Scores	0.3424	0.5153	0.3091	0.4374	0.4939	0.3496	0.515	0.1921
	N (33)	N (34)	N (34)	N (34)	N (33)	N (33)	N (34)	N (31)
	.029	.001	.045	.004	.002	.025	.002	.236

The past '-ed' form reached floor levels on the item-total correlational analysis. Words like 'magician' remained on the test even if the items were not significant because they increased the reliability scores.

Table 1.2. Kendall correlation coefficients between total English morphological spelling and item scores on morpheme sub-test for the 12-year-olds

Total English Morphological Spelling Scores	covered	kissed	laughed	specialness	naughtiness
	.4224	.5963	.5182	.4421	.5354
	.062	.006	.010	.034	.008

Figure 1.1



The wh- interrogative morpheme reached ceiling levels after the item-total correlation analysis.

Each word was scored for accuracy; a score of 1 was given to the correct spelling of the morpheme for each word and a score of 0 was given to incorrect spelling. A total score was obtained. An item-total correlation was obtained between the score in each item in the sub-test and the total score for the morpheme sub-test. Because the data are scored as pass-fail items, non-parametric measures of association were used. The Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficients and Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was considered more suitable as the data set was small. Based on the correlation obtained, (see Table 1.1 and Table 1.2) the items that had poor correlations were taken out of the analysis.

For the 9-year-olds the wh- interrogative morpheme words were significant, the '-ness' end morpheme words were also significant. The '-ed' past verbs items reached floor effect in the analysis. This is because the children are expected to find these words difficult to spell. In the analysis on the 12-year-olds, the wh-words reached ceiling effect.

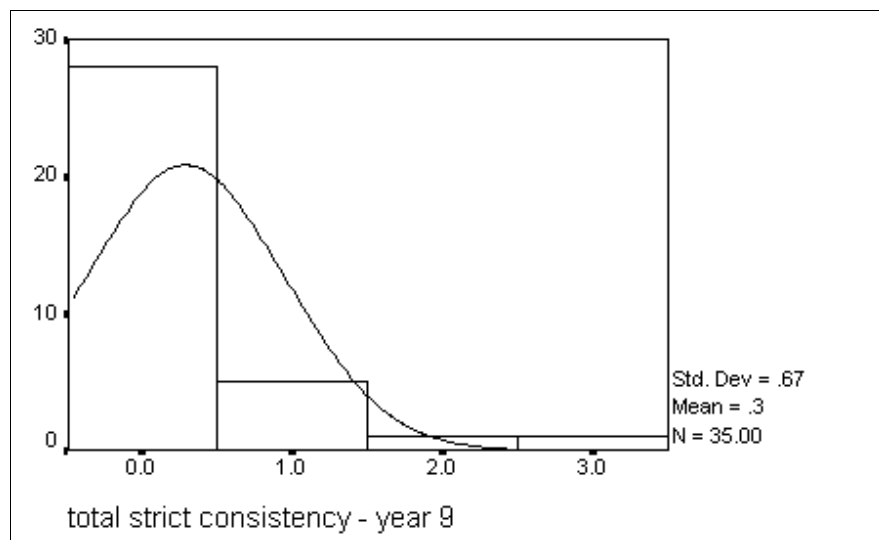
Consistency of the Stems of English Words

In this test, children were given two words that shared the same stem, for example, 'know' and 'knowledge'. Scores were given based on whether they spelled the stems of the pairs of words given to them in the same way. Two methods of scoring were used for this task, a strict scoring method and a lenient scoring method. The strict criterion gave a score of 1 if the child spelled the stems of the pair of words correctly, and in the same way. All other spelling given were scored 0.

The lenient criterion gave a score of 1 if the child spelled the word stems of the words consistently even if incorrectly although in this case the child may have spelt the words using a phonological strategy.

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the consistency test using the strict scoring method was .70 for the 9-year-olds. This is an acceptable level of reliability (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1978). The distribution of scores is shown in Figure 1.2. The scores were approximately normally distributed.

Figure 1.2



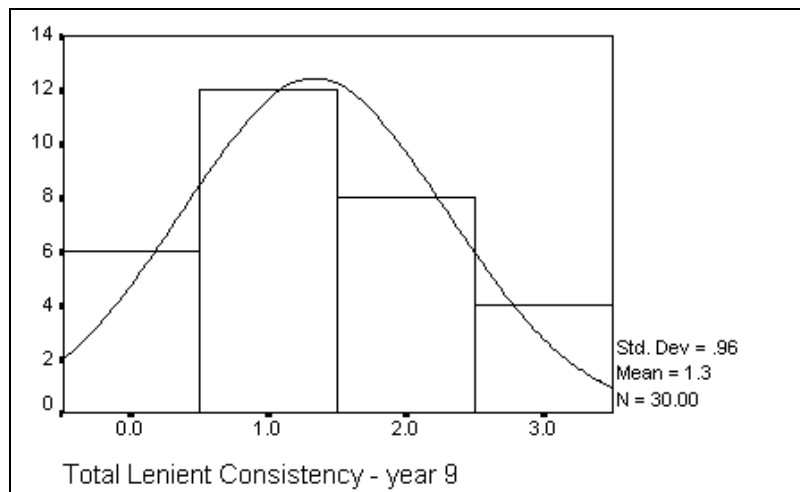
The item-total correlation analysis for the 9-year-olds were insignificant for all except three items this was because there was a floor effect for the items.

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the consistency test using the strict scoring method was .75 for the 12-year-olds. This is an acceptable level of reliability (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1978).

The scores were approximately normally distributed. The item-total correlation analysis for the 12-year-olds is as follows:

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the consistency test using the lenient criterion was .47 for the 9-year-olds. The distribution scores are shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3.



The item –total correlation analysis for the 9-year-olds is as follows:

Table 1.3 Kendall correlation coefficient between Total Consistency of English Roots and items on Consistency of English Roots sub-test – year 9 (Lenient Criterion)

	strong/strength	long/length	magic/ian
Total Consistency of English Roots (Lenient Criterion)	.4781	.4676	.2439
	.003	.005	.164

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the consistency test using the lenient criterion was .at an acceptable level of reliability (Mehrens & Lemann, 1978). A comparison of the means between the two age groups showed that scores using the strict criterion increased by school year.

Malay Measures

Malay Spelling Test

(i) Morpheme sub-test

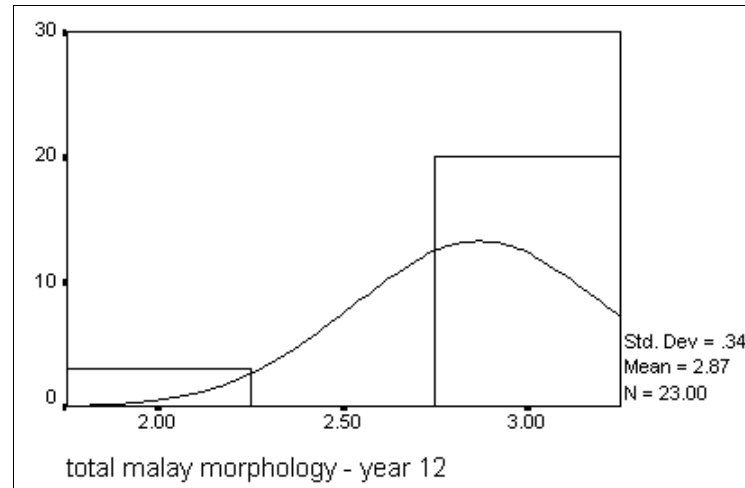
The morpheme sub-test consisted of words in the following categories:

- The prefix 'ber' + consonant where the letter 'r' is not pronounced in spoken Malay. The prefix 'ber' + vowel where the letter 'r' is pronounced and 'be' words where 'be' is part of the stem.
- The prefix 'meng + g' where the double letter 'g' occurs in words that begin with 'g'.
- The suffix 'kan' where the double letter 'k' occurs when the root word ends with the letter 'k'.

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the test was at an acceptable level.71 for the 9-year old age group.

Spearman Brown's split-half reliability for the test was .82 for the 12-year old age group. The scores were approximately normally distributed. The Malay morpheme subtest was subjected to the same analysis as the English morpheme subtest.

Figure 1.4.

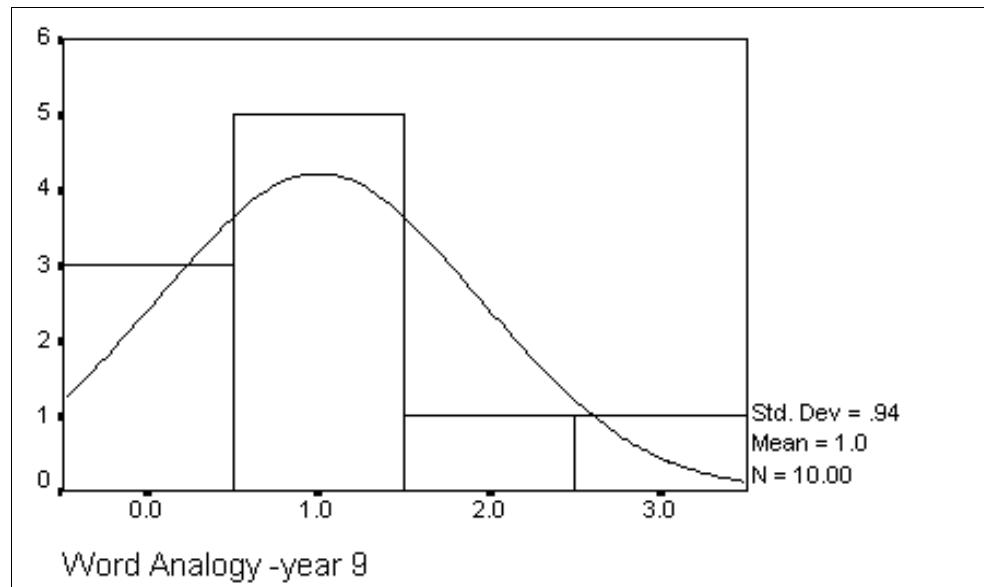


Morphological Awareness Task

(i) Malay Word Analogy Task

In this task, the children were required to carry out transformations from noun to adjective, verb to noun, and verb to infinitive form.

Figure 1.5



Out of a total of 8 items, 3 were included in the test for 9-year-olds.

Table 1.5. Kendall correlation coefficient between Total Malay Word Analogy scores and items of the Malay Word Analogy Task – year 9

	3	4	7
Total Malay Word Analogy Task	.3333	.5833	.5443
	.278	.058	.077

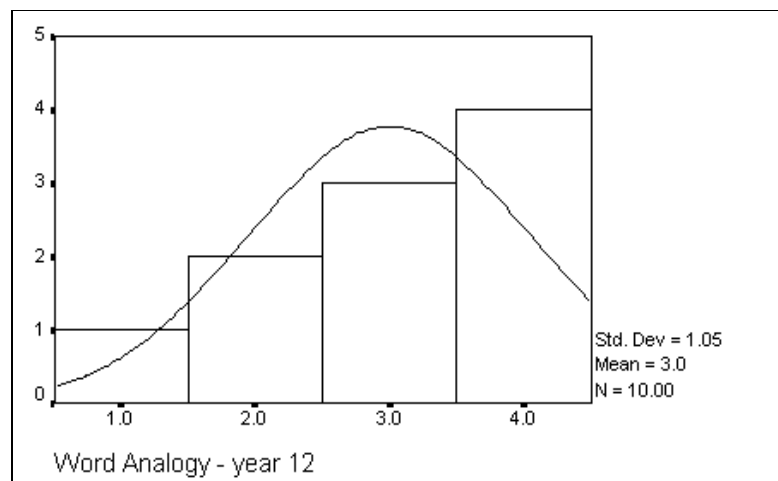
The items that were not significant, were retained in the test, as without these items the reliability could not be carried out. Spearman Brown split-half reliability for the test was at an acceptable level of reliability

Table 1.6. Kendall correlation coefficient between Total Malay Word Analogy scores and items of the Malay Word Analogy Task – year 12

	3	4	6	8
Total Malay Word Analogy	.6910	.3333	.5345	.4167
	.025	.111	.111	.175

The item total correlations for the word analogy task for the 12-year-olds were not significant but the items were retained as without them there would be too few items to calculate the reliability scores.

Figure 1.6



(ii) Malay Sentence Analogy Scores

In this task, the target words were embedded in a sentence. The transformations involved tenses, i.e. from present to past, present to present continuous, past to past perfect tense and past perfect to present continuous tense. This task was not successful as the Malay language does not carry tenses.

In order to answer the research question correlations were carried out. The results obtained can be seen in Figure 1.7

Table 1.7. A correlation between Malay morphological awareness measures and English spelling of morphemes

	1	2	3	4	5
M					
1. Sentence Analogy	1				
M					
2. Word Analogy	.4335	1			
	P = .05				
E					
3. Morpheme	-.0299	.2212	1		
Spelling	p = .912	p = .41			
E					
4. Spelling Strict	.2653	.8008 ***	.3801 **	1	
Consistency	p = .34	p < .001	p < .01		
E					
5. Spelling Lenient	.4840	.7378	-.0212	.4080	1
Consistency	p = .06	p < .01	p = .89	p < .01	

** p < .01, *** p < .001

DISCUSSION

Research Question

The current study sought to find answers to the question of can morphological awareness in the L1 facilitate the spelling of morphemes in the L2?

The findings of the study show that there is cross-language transfer between morphological awareness and morphological spelling, i.e. from the L1 → L2 Malay morphological awareness is associated with Lenient Consistency (an English spelling measure that scored the child's ability to spell words that share the same root). This

shows that children were able to use their knowledge of Malay morphological awareness to help them spell English words on a test.

Table 1.17 shows that strict consistency of English roots correlated strongly with Malay word analogy task ($p < .001$). Malay word analogy task also correlated with Lenient consistency of English roots ($p < .01$). The correlations show that Malay word analogy tasks does predict the spelling of English roots. This indicates that transfer is taking place across the two languages. This would mean that learners were using Malay Morphological Awareness to help them spell English morphemes correctly. This is a new finding as previous studies have not shown such a relationship between Malay Morphological Awareness and English Spelling.

This study shows that Malay morphological awareness is used by Malay children to help them spell English words accurately. This finding is unique to this study as previous studies have not shown this. Children who had high levels of morphological awareness in Malay seem to be able to spell English words that require lexical processing in order to spell the words accurately.

These findings add to other studies that show that transfer does take place between the L1 to the L2. Such as studies by Bindman (2004) which examined the relationship between performance on morpho-syntactic awareness tasks in English (L1) and Hebrew (L2).

This study showed that morphological awareness in one language can be used for the child's other language even when the surface-level features of both languages are dissimilar. This showed that grammatical awareness gained in L1 (English) can be used for the L2.

Castro, Nunes and Strecht-Ribeiro (cited in Nunes and Bryant, 2009) also carried out a study that showed that morphological awareness in the L1 is related to their L2 learning. This study showed that children's awareness of morphology in their own language predicts their performance in the L2.

CONCLUSION

If morphological awareness can be transferred to help Malay children spell better in English as can be seen from this study, this then can have implications for the way these subjects are taught in schools. These findings would imply that it does not matter if English is introduced into the school curriculum later than Malay. What seems to be important is to allow the children to receive a good grounding in the Malay language as this will help them later when they learn English (L2). As such it would be beneficial if educational planners would incorporate training in morpheme awareness in the school syllabus as this will help the children learn their L2 more easily.

Nunes and Bryant (2009) also found that morphological teaching can have an impact on the child's ability to read and spell in a language. The authors conclude that they are "reasonably confident that children will lose no ground in learning to read and to spell and will probably gain a great deal by being taught about morphemes" (2009:220).

It would not be surprising if an awareness of morphemes and phonemes would not only lead Malay children to be better aware of their first language i.e. the Malay language but also find that this knowledge would help them learn their second language i.e. the English language.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

English Spelling Test Session One

Listen to the teacher. You will hear a word then a sentence containing the word and finally the word again. Write down the word in the paper provided.

Instructions to the teacher : Give the children 40 seconds to write down the underlined word in the paper provided.

Session 1 :

1. gold : My granddad has a gold watch : gold
2. naughty : When I'm naughty my mum tells me off : naughty
3. left : I left the house at 9 o' clock : left
4. length : You can measure length with a ruler : length
5. who : Who is at the door ? : who
6. field : The cow was eating grass in the field : field
7. know : I know how to read : know
8. build : If you build a house with bricks, it will be strong : build
9. boat : They rowed the boat across the river : boat
10. teach : Will you teach me a new game ? : teach
11. sword : The knight killed the dragon with his sword : sword
12. sold : The shop sold pens and pencils : sold
13. heard : I heard it on the radio : heard
14. talk : You mustn't talk in the library : talk
15. slept : I slept well last night : slept
16. ground : I fell on the ground and hurt my knee : ground
17. magician : The magician pulled a rabbit out of his hat : magician 232

18. when : When will lunch be ready? : when
19. paint : I like to paint pictures : paint
20. laughed : They all laughed at the joke.: laughed
21. bird : The bird flew away : bird
22. comb : I comb my hair every morning : comb
23. sweat : In very hot weather you sweat a lot : sweat
24. belt : You wear a belt to keep your trousers up : belt
25. killed : The cat caught a bird and killed it. : killed
26. strength : She used her strength to lift the heavy box : strength
27. treasures : Aladdin's cave was full of treasures : treasures
28. iron : I iron my clothes to make them smooth : iron
29. worm : The worm wriggled in the earth : worm
30. soft : The cat's fur was very soft : soft
31. opened : She opened the door and walked in : opened
32. where : Where are you going ? : where
33. half : I cut the apple in half : half
34. why : Why did you do that ? : why
35. hearts : The Queen of Hearts baked some tarts : hearts
36. next : Next week I might go to see 'Jurassic Park ' : next
37. knot : I tied a knot in my shoelaces : knot
38. which : Which way shall we go ? : which
39. meaty : The advertisement said the dog food was meaty : meaty
40. special: My best friend is my special friend special

English Spelling Test Session Two

Listen to the teacher. You will hear a word then a sentence containing the word and finally the word again. Write down the word in the paper provided.

Instructions to the teacher : Give the children 40 seconds to write down the underlined word in the paper provided.

Session 2

1. learned : When I started school, I learned to read : learned
2. treasure : The pirates sailed the seas looking for treasure : treasure
3. sweaty : When I run about in the sun I get all sweaty : sweaty
4. except : Everyone except me went swimming : except
5. sent : I sent a letter to my friend : sent
6. lost : I lost my bat at the playground : lost
7. knowledge : My knowledge of dinosaurs is great : knowledge
8. strong : If you drink milk , you will grow up to be strong : strong
9. filled : I filled my glass with orange juice : filled
10. covered : I covered myself up with a blanket : covered
11. specialness : There was a specialness about the new girl in school : specialness
12. heart : My heart was beating fast : heart
13. meat : I went to the butcher's to buy some meat : meat
14. held : I held the money in my hand : held
15. called : I called her name out loud : called
16. what : What are you doing? : what
17. naughtiness : My little sister was full of naughtiness : naughtiness
18. dressed : I got dressed very quickly this morning : dressed 234

19. stopped : Suddenly, the rain stopped and the sun shone : stopped
20. long : The rope was very long : long
21. kissed : My grandma kissed me on the cheek : kissed
22. found : I found 50 cents in the street : found
23. magic : The magic word is abracadabra : magic
24. told : The teacher told us to be quiet : told
25. felt : I felt ill : felt
26. cold : The weather was very cold yesterday : cold

APPENDIX B

Malay Spelling Test Session One

Sila dengar dengan teliti. Anda akan mendengar sebuah perkataan, diikuti oleh sebuah ayat yang mengandungi perkataan yang tersebut. Selepas itu anda akan mendengar perkataan itu sekali lagi. Sila tulis perkataan yang anda dengar diatas kertas yang dibekalkan.

Session 1

1. besar : Rumah baru Ali adalah besar : besar
2. berikut : Berikut adalah keputusan UPSR tahun 1994 : berikut
3. berjumpa : Saya berjumpa dengan doktor apabila jatuh sakit : berjumpa
4. mahkamah : Peguam merujuk perkara itu ke mahkamah : mahkamah
5. pasaran : Pasaran terbesar bagi getah asli adalah di Amerika Syarikat : pasaran
6. tawaran : Tawaran tuan tidak dapat di terima : tawaran
7. berasal : Buah kiwi berasal dari negara New Zealand : berasal
8. gambar : Kami telah mengambil sebuah gambar keluarga : gambar
9. bermahkota...: Raja-raja yang bermahkota telah memilik Agung yang baru: bermahkota
10. berwarna : Baju baru Sofiah berwarna merah : berwarna
11. begar : Budak itu berperangai begar : begar
12. berkumpul : Murid-murid berkumpul untuk perhimpunan : berkumpul
13. saluran : Permohonan itu dibuat melalui saluran rasmi : saluran
14. kahwin : Dia sudah kahwin dan sekarang tinggal di Kuala Lumpur : kahwin
15. beransur-ansur : Hutang itu di bayar beransur-ansur : beransur-ansur
16. belum : Rumah itu belum di bina : belum

17. pelajaran : Ahmad sangat suka pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris : pelajaran
18. beraneka : Di Malaysia ada kebudayaan yang beraneka jenis : beraneka
19. gambaran : Dia memberikan gambaran yang jelas tentang peristiwa itu : gambaran
20. menggemukkan : Salmah menggemukkan anaknya dengan memberinya banyak kuih. : menggemukkan
21. bermain : Budak-budak itu suka bermain dekat sungai : bermain
22. beradik : Ahmad dan Ramli adalah adik-beradik : beradik
23. pasar: Kami pergi ke pasar pada setiap hari Rabu : pasar
24. bebas : Dia sekarang menjadi seorang yang bebas : bebas
25. beku : Daging itu beku : beku
26. dahsyat : Saya melihat kemalangan jalanraya yang dahsyat :dahsyat
27. betul : Jawapan yang diberi oleh murid itu adalah betul : betul
28. pelajar : Pelajar dari kelas 2B telah menang hadiah buku : pelajar
29. pendengaran : Pendengarannya kurang baik : pendengaran
30. bersama : Ali keluar bersama dengan Ahmad : bersama
31. berjalan : Mereka berjalan ke sekolah setiap hari : berjalan
32. berisi : Botol itu berisi dengan gula-gula : berisi
33. kepahlawanan : Kita puji Rizal kerana semangat kepahlawanannya : kepahlawanan
34. membaiki : Dia sedang membaiki keretanya : membaiki
35. memasukkan : Dia memasukkan buku itu ke dalam beg : memasukkan

APPENDIX C

Malay Spelling Test Session Two **Session 2**

Sila dengar dengan teliti. Anda akan mendengar sebuah perkataan, diikuti oleh sebuah ayat yang mengandungi perkataan yang tersebut. Selepas itu anda akan mendengar perkataan itu sekali lagi. Sila tulis perkataan yang anda dengar diatas kertas yang dibekalkan. 237

1. manis : Buah oren yang saya beli sungguh manis : manis
2. mengucapkan : Saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada murid-murid darjah enam : mengucapkan
3. menggunakan : Saya menggunakan minyak sayur-sayuran : menggunakan
4. rahsia : Apakah rahsia kejayaan kamu ? : rahsia
5. mengingatkan : Tolong mengingatkan Faizal membeli tiket-tiket : mengingatkan
6. mengangkut : Ia menolong ibu bapanya mengangkut kayu api : mengangkut
7. buku : Buku yang saya beli sangat mahal : buku
8. menggosok : Azlina menggosok baju dia setiap minggu : menggosok
9. menggantikan : Minyak menggantikan arang sebagai sumber tenaga : menggantikan
10. salur : Salur makanan di huraikan oleh cikgu : salur
11. pahlawan : Pahlawan tanah air sangat di puji : pahlawan
12. menggambarkan : Aishah menggambarkan suasana yang meriah di kenduri : menggambarkan
13. menceritakan : Siti menceritakan bagaimana dia telah nampak satu kemalangan : menceritakan
14. mengejar : Kucing gemar mengejar tikus : mengejar
15. tidak : Saya tidak akan membeli baju dari kedai itu : tidak
16. ikan : Kami boleh menangkap ikan dari sungai itu : ikan
17. mendahsyatkan : Keadaan yang sebenarnya sangat mendahsyatkan hatinya : mendahsyatkan
18. pejabat : Pejabat saya adalah di Kuala Lumpur : pejabat
19. menaikkan : Pekedai itu menaikkan harga barang-barangnya : menaikkan
20. kecil : Adik kecil saya suka makan gula-gula : kecil
21. menghijaukan : Kami menyokong 'Rancangan Menhijaukan Bumi : menghijaukan
22. mahkota : Mahkota negeri telah menyistiharkan hari cuti umum : mahkota

23. mengghaibkan : Ali mengghaibkan diri selepas tindakan mahkamah : mengghaibkan
24. menunjukkan : Jadual itu menunjukkan keuntungan bersih bagi tahun 1990 :
menunjukkan
25. membalikkan : Dia membalikkan buku itu ke perpustakaan : membalikkan
26. mendudukkan : Hartini mendudukkan anak patungnya di atas kerusi : mendudukkan
27. mengkahwinkan : Akhir tahun ini, ia hendak mengahwinkan anaknya :
mengahwinkan
28. bermahkamah : Bandar itu tidak bermahkamah : bermahkamah
29. menerangkan : Cikgu menerangkan peraturan peperiksaan kepada murid-murid :
menerangkan
30. tawar : Dia menuang air teh tawar dari teko : tawar
31. mendengar : Saya mendengar orang mengetuk pintu : mendengar

APPENDIX D

Malay Word Analogy Task

1. kebun : pekebun

(garden) (gardener)

(Noun) (Noun)

nasihat : _____ Answer : penasihat

(advice) (an adviser)

(Noun) (Noun)

2. bukit : berbukit

(hill) : (hilly)

(Noun) (Adjective)

Kecantikan : _____ Answer : cantik

(beauty) (beautiful)

(Noun) (Adjective)

3. tinggal : meninggalkan

(lives) (leaves)

(Verb) (Verb)

jalan : _____ Answer : menjalankan

(walk) (drives)

(Verb) (Verb)

4. main : permainan

(play) (game)

(Verb) (Noun)

nilai : _____ Answer : penilaian

(assess) (assessment)

(Verb) (Noun)

5. warna : mewarnakan

(colour) (to colour)

(Noun) (Verb)

gambar : _____ Answer : menggambarkan

(picture) (to depict)

(Noun) (Verb)

6. pukul : memukul

(beat) (to beat)

(Verb) (Infinitive Form)

_____ : menjahit Answer : jahit

(to sew) (sew)

(Infinitive Form) (Verb)

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN MALE WRITINGS: A STUDY OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *WIZARD OF THE CROW*

Nasir Umar Muhammad

Department of English and Linguistics, Federal University Dutse, Nigeria

e-mail: umarmuhammadnasir@yahoo.com

Shamaila Dhodi

Department of English and Literature, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

e-mail: shamailadodhy@yahoo.com

Dauda Saidu

Department of English, Federal College of Education, Kano, Nigeria

e-mail: saidudauda770@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Identity refers to the sense that someone has of who he is and what he stands for – the question of self. Identity raises questions like; who am I? What makes the I what it is? Am I something given or something made? Is the I conceived at the individual or social level. Jary and Jary, (1991) important sources of identity are ethnicity, culture, nationality, sexuality, gender and class. Although it is individuals who project identity, the concept also relates to the social group to which the individual belongs and with which he identifies. Issues of gender and sexuality in contemporary African Writing have generated a lot of controversy especially supporting African Feminist Movements by Male African Writers. This paper seeks to discuss issues of identity construction from gender and sexuality perspectives through an African Male writer's point of view. Ngugi, in *Wizard of the Crow*, attempts to transcend the sexual allegory and hence to resolve the problem of gender and identity in ways that run counter to the biases embedded in the contemporary African Male literary tradition. A magnum opus, *Wizard of the Crow*, demonstrates Ngugi's portrayal of women characters in search of identity at a critical stage of Male Writings from the African continent. The paper presents critical analysis of the author's thematic concern in trying to construct an identity for the African Woman and to deconstruct the gender codes and to go against the canon represented by a large body of African Male Writers that have given the African Woman a label of the 'Other' in the continent's literary discourse.

Keywords: Canon, Culture, Ethnicity, Gender, Other, Sexuality, Identity

INTRODUCTION

No, Woman is not our brother; through negligence and corruption, we have made her a being apart, unknown, having no weapon but her sex, which is not only perpetual war but in addition an unfair weapon—adoring or hating, but a frank companion or a being with *esprit de corps* and free masonry – of the eternal little slave's defiance.

Jules Laforge

Formation of one's identity occurs through one's identification with others in his group sharing their characteristics, values, and beings. Weinreich, (1996), defines identity as

'the totality of one's self construal, in which one construes oneself in the present, the past, and what he aspires to be in the future'. This definition allows for expressions like one's ethnic identity, which is defined as that part of the totality of one's self construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity. This study is primarily about gender identity which forms an important part of identity in literature which dictates to a significant degree how one views oneself both as a person and in relation to other people, ideas, and nature. Other aspects of identity, includes racial, religious, ethnic and occupational.

Hall (1990:12) states that identities are fluid; they are constantly being negotiated in the interaction between individual and society. The inner core of an individual (the real me) is modified in dialogue with the cultural world outside and identities which they offer. Hall (1996:43) also identifies two kinds of identity: identity as being, which offers a sense of unity and commonality and identity as becoming or a process of identification, which shows the discontinuity in our identity formation. Gramsci cited by Verney (2000:43) further describes identity as the 'consciousness of what one really is, and in knowing thyself as a product of the historical processes. For Gramsci therefore, identity marks the conjunction of our past with the social, cultural, and economic relations we live within. From the sociological perspective, all identities are constructed but the real issue is how to construct them. The construction of identity uses materials from history, geography, biology, production and reproduction institutions, collective memory, and religious relationships.

Female identity is a process and gender influences the personality development, which in turn influences writing. Ngugi's concern in literature has always been with the oppressed. An oppression that he sees as a continuation of what the colonizer has done to the African's psyche and is now repeated in form of a vicious cycle by post-colonial Governments all over Africa. To this kind of experience, Ngugi says:

Like all artists, I am interested in human relationships and their quality. This is what I explore in my work. Human relationships do not occur in a vacuum. They develop in the context of ecology, economics, politics, culture, and psyche. All these aspects of our society affect those relationships profoundly. These aspects are inseparable. They are connected with the most earthly. As an artist, you examine the interconnection of phenomena to open a window into the human soul. The material of life opens out into the spirituality of human life.

(Ngugi in an interview with M. Pozo, 2004)

In studying this Kenyan Controversial Novelist, (owing to his insistence on writing in vernacular), one has to consider his literary career spanning over a period of 40 years. Within these years, he has enriched the African literary tradition through his consistency in (re)awakening the spirit of struggle of the Africans through his novels: *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Devil on the Cross*, (1983), and *Matigari* (1986).

It is against this background that this paper attempts to critically analyze within the historical processes of gender identity construction in African Male Writings, Ngugi's thematic concern in his latest literary work of art, *Wizard of the Crow*, (Murogi wa Kagogo, 2004—2007; 2006). In line with the Gramsci's designation of identity construction which relates to historical processes in identity construction, this paper will briefly touch on the historical developments of the African woman's journey under

patriarchal dominance and the processes of becoming what the African society has made of her today.

Wizard of the Crow demonstrates Ngugi's interests in a number of ways, the major one is his fascination and insistence of writing in Gikuyu, his mother tongue, which also led to the division of the novel into six books in line with the vernacular rendition in his native language: *power Demons, Queuing Demons, Female Demons, Male Demons, Rebel Demons, and Bearded Demons*. Highly complicated scatological and olfactory references were employed to identify the ruling class; example, money is associated with stench, the smell of rotten body with one of the ministers, and excrement as the last strategy that Tajrika employed to end his imprisonment which happens much later as the novel progresses

Female identity and African male writings: historical developments

Generally speaking in discussing the female identity in African literature, situating the developments within historical context will further make the various experiences clearer and will equally make it possible to relate them to the development of the continent since the pre-colonial days.

Pre-colonial era: This era was characterized by patriarchal dominance of the African woman through relegating them to the second position in every aspect of human endeavour even in matters that directly concern them like the choice of spouse. In some extreme cases they were compelled to go through traditional rites of initiation to adulthood like female circumcision. In pre-colonial Africa, especially sub Saharan Africa, the image of the African women differs from community to community. Traditional African societies that had no contact with Islam, were recorded to have subjected women to untold hardships which led the famous Ugandan Poet Okot p' Bitek to lament poetically that status accorded to women:

Woman of Africa
Sweeper
Smearing floors and walls
With cow dung and black soil
Cook, ayah, the baby on your back
Washer of dishes,
Planting, weeding, harvesting
Store keeper, builder
Runner of errands
Cart, lorry, donkey.....
Woman of Africa
What are you not?

(See Africa in crises, p.145)

On the other hand, societies that received Islam prior to colonization, practice *purdah*, (the practice of confining women to their matrimonial homes without intermingling with people)- a practice the men claimed was purely an Islamic injunction. This is later to be reputed by various Islamic scholars. That practice also ostracizes and peripherizes the African woman from socio- economic activities, with devastating consequences to the family life in general.

In pre-colonial Africa, women suffer from the alienation of land like most other people inhabiting the continent at that time especially in Kenya (the setting of the novel under study). Women were more personally affected because the lack of land made them to be more economically dependent on men. This led to the intensification of patriarchy reinforced by Colonial Institutions. Discussing about African Women in general,

Seenarine quotes Sacks on women's labour: 'the value of women's productive labor, in producing and processing food.... established and maintained their rights in domestic and other spheres-economic, cultural, religious, social, political, etc'

One good thing though existed in this era which was demolished by the colonial masters in their many years of misadventure in the continent-the position of *The Queen Mother* found all over Africa like in Ghana, among the Akan, Egypt, in Kush, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Northern Nigeria (The great Queen Amina of Zazzau), to mention just a few. In the book of *black Africa*, Cheikh Anta Diop, discusses *Bicameralism* – a type of governance in which women formed their groups with women rulers separate from that of men. These types of groups and women assembly in West African nations such as Dahomey, and Yoruba lands in Western Nigeria, helped in the movements for the resistance against foreign invasion. African Women of the pre- colonial era therefore, have built religions, resisted invasions and raised kings and were powerful queens in their own right.

Colonial era: women's conditions further deteriorated. Since colonial forces conquered African men, the women suffered double subjugation. Owing to the Victorian concept of women, upheld by the colonialist, and blindly embraced by the African male, women were excluded from the new political and administrative system. Florence Stratton in *Contemporary Africa* If we accept that the themes that will excite the artists in Africa for a long-time to come will be:

- (a) Race
- (b) The self-consciousness that comes with a search for identity; and
- (c) politics (p.140)

Economically, women did not fare any better under the colonial system in African continent. This is because of the many British policies that neglect women in order to maximally exploit their husbands both in the farms and through petty administrative jobs. Prominent among those marginalization includes cash crop production which was encouraged by the administration to be carried out only by men. This colonial action pushes women further away from food production as the fertile part of the land becomes purely for cash crop production. Women were therefore left with a barren and areas with lesser fertility resulting in little or no yield at all throughout the year.

Post – colonial era: This era stems from independence days to the present. What supplies the raw materials for African Male Writers are experiences from the two eras as part of a body of writing known today in the global literary arena as 'Contemporary African Literature'. Here is what Achebe has to say about the duty of the artist in the post colonial era in his essay on *The Novelist as Teacher* in 1965:

Today things have changed a lot, but it would be foolish to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe..... there is an adequate revolution for me to espouse—to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement.(African Writers,p.2)

Similarly, commenting on the traumatic experiences of women of that era, Ngugi in a statement expressing his authorial intention about Wariinga, (his heroine in his prison diary *Detained*), categorically stated his reasons behind her characterization: 'Because the women are the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working class, I would create a picture of a strong determined woman with a will to resist and to struggle against the conditions of her present being. (African Writers, p.44) In an interview he gave

shortly after the publication of *Anthills*, Achebe also takes up the theme of women's oppression. His heroine, Beatrice, he suggests, provides a model of womanhood in the role she performs as the harbinger of a new social order. These authorial renditions by two famous African Male writers point to the fact that the writers consciously strived to give the African Woman a new Identity in the post colonial portrayal of her status. Just like Chielo of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the woman judge in *Wizard of the Crow* becomes a figure of uncompromising strength and assertiveness. This single portrayal of a 'woman judge' sentencing a male culprit for domestic violence signifies a new power to the African Women for equality and justice for all.

Ngugi and the female voice in *wizard of the crow*

Ngugi, in *Wizard of the Crow*, succeeds in presenting an accomplished feminist novel that had an impact not only on reshaping the presentations of female characters in African fiction, but also on improving the quality of life enjoyed by the African Woman. Nyawira, (the heroine and the central character in the novel), is equipped with composite femininity which is projected to equate any masculine strength through transformative revolutionary impulses. This heroine, in her scheme and organizational skills, is by day acting as a secretary to the chairman of Marching to Heaven, and by night, a leading figure in the underground resistance movement. She tries to recruit Kamiti, (a young, jobless graduate), into the resistance movement. Both her boss Tajirika and her ex-husband Kaniuru, compete for the nation's prime bribe taking positions, above them, the chief ministers Machokali and Sikiokuu scheme and plot, all under the great umbrella of the maximum ruler, an arbitrary, vicious, and megalomaniacal semi-deity. He like the one country he has been exploiting and oppressing all these years via one party rule, is headed towards an explosion – the one Nyawira has been fighting for. '.....the life of even the least among us should be sacred, and it will not do for any region or community to keep silent when the people of another region or community are being slaughtered' (Wizard: 207), she tells Kamiti. 'The wealth of Science, Technology, and Arts, should enrich people's lives, not enable their slaughter.' (Wizard:208). Also Nyawira rightly pointed out that the black woman is the most oppressed woman on the planet earth, hence the need for anew identity:

She is oppressed on account of her colour like all black people in the world;
she is oppressed on account of her gender like all women of the world;
she is exploited and oppressed on account of her class like all workers and
peasants in the world. (Wizard. 428)

This masculine strength enables the women to evolve a new identity. A new social identity which allows them to organize themselves and challenge all traditional and socio-economic practices that have hitherto been established by a patriarchal structure that exploits them. As pointed out succinctly by a girl who is a member of the women organization,

Our motto is simple: A new army for a new Aburiria, not with the gun
guiding politics but a politics of unity guiding the gun, to protect laws
for social justice. These weapons are to protect our right to political struggle
and not a substitute for political struggle. (Wizard, 759)

Identity and gender codification in *wizard of the crow*

Identity construction is sometimes shifted to the site of the collective domain, with gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity and class forming the 'holy trinity' of the discursive field (Appiah and Gates 1995:1)

Ngugi's concern has been primarily that of dealing with the crises of Identity within gender/sexuality. A collective consciousness is created with powers of super ordination and a feeling of togetherness which ultimately gave females a strong voice of their own. This collective consciousness is achieved through a mass grass root mobilization. Nyawira, is the chairperson of the 'Central Committee of the Movement for the Voice of the People' and commander in chief of Aburirian People's Resistance. And she does not palter in her resolve to educate and enlighten the masses about their mission of liberating them from the domination of the illegitimate and brutal regime of the maximum ruler. ... 'There will surely come a day when we shall make it impossible for these armed ogres to go about their work of terror without suffering consequences. We shall then fight on our terrain, which is the people; who must know and believe that we aim only to defend them and protect their right to a better life. (Wizard, 759) The movement was equally well coordinated which enables the women to beat the tight security measures enforced by the maximum ruler. The central theme of the Novel revolves around creating a mass awareness for both cultural and political struggle of the women in order to ensure a free and just society. The women were equally highly disciplined which is needed for the success of a difficult struggle such as theirs. This discipline they exhibit right from the inception of the movement assists them in dismantling the gender codes imposed on them by the society. It also serves as a weapon for fighting back especially in some cases where they were thoroughly abused by their husbands in form of beatings. One of those who take pride in beating his wife is Tajrika. Vinjinia, his wife suffered seriously in his hands.

Since beating his wife, Tajrika, felt better, but whenever the images of the dancing women come to his mind and he imagined the lifestyle which Vinjinia had indulged during his incarceration, he would still feel a sudden resurgence of anger. Ironically, this resurgence, and the intense focus on Vinjinia's misdeeds served to deflect his mind from dwelling on what had happened to him during police custody. (Wizard, 432)

Tajrika suffered grave consequences for this domestic abuse. He was parade in the women's court. He was given 'as many blows' as he gave his wife, (an eye for an eye justice), and the (woman) warned, '...if you ever appear before us again, you will not leave here with your penis dangling between your legs' (439). The woman judge was described as doing 'a little war jig while brandishing her weapon'-a machete which symbolizes phallus. Ngugi consciously empowered women in *Wizard of the Crow* by giving them an intellectual and political space to prove themselves. This is achieved by presenting them as excellent political organizers through forming an identity based on sisterhood which perpetually disrupts the ruler's political agenda and white elephant project of 'Marching to Heaven Tower' (a gigantic project he wishes to accomplish with loans from Foreign Banks) It is in response to this concern of the sisterhood organizing themselves and retaliating on any husband that beats his wife that the bankers who supposedly wanted to finance the marching to heaven project raised some concern in one of their meetings with the maximum ruler:

We have been sent to you because you had intimated that there was new information you wanted the Bank to take into consideration. But before we come to that, we have in our hands two reports concerning the present state in your country and the Bank has a few questions regarding them. The first concerns your women. We have heard that Aburirian women have started beating up men. In our

view this is taking women's liberation too literally and too far. Female violence to counter male violence, and it poses a serious threat to family values, which as we know them today, are the very foundation of a stable social environment. (Wizard, 499)

This serious issue of husbands' beatings through what the women called 'peoples courts', played a significant role in sending a clear message to the international community that these women have become a powerful force to reckon with and the maximum ruler is not to be trusted since he could not control the women. This international recognition is all the women have been craving for as it will further portray the extent of the ruler's weakness at home on one hand and on the other gave them a political status that will compel the ruler to give them a listening ear and a proper position in the social strata of the Aburirian society.

Intellectually, the female characters excelled through establishing structures that ensures not only their survival as individuals under a dictatorial regime, but their organizations with massive support and followers not only in the cities but in the villages as well, all in a country under a dictatorial regime where forming any associations attracts the penalty of death. To perfect their efficiency, they even plant a seed of discord and dissention in the Ruler's family by confusing him to assume that one of his sons is feeding the women with information about his wife's woes and tribulations which led to their intervention and putting to shame the maximum security he assumed he has around his palace. The women's boldness to interfere in both the state and his domestic affairs baffled him and gave the ruler sleepless nights:

It is said that time heals, but for the Ruler time seem to deepen the pain even with his imminent departure for the USA, he still squirmed with horror at the thought of what the women had done to him. He could not understand why they had taken up Rachael's cause and, although he will never whisper it to anybody, that was what really hurt. They had intruded in his private business, something that no one had ever done before. Male authority at home was absolute, and this is the one belief shared by despots and democrats alike, colonialists and anti colonialists, men and women and leaders of all established faiths. How dare these women question that which was so clearly ordained in Heaven and on Earth? The most miserable beggar in Aburiria was now more secure as the king of his home than he as the husband of his home and country. How and when did they get to Rachael? He would ask himself time and again. His nerves tingles at a suspicion that kept on haunting him: had one of his beloved sons acted as the go-between for Rachael and the Women? But which of the four sons would dare so heinous an act of filial disobedience and male betrayal?..... (Wizard, 262)

New identity, hope and the triumph of the womenfolk

Women in *Wizard of the Crow*, have, owing to their resilience and pliability, developed a new identity, which gave birth to hope for a better future. This is shown in their successful revolt against patriarchal authority where they emerged triumphant and victorious after conquering all the hurdles and snags imposed on them with a view to breaking them to the point of submission. Ngugi, deliberately gave them an unquestionable ability for genuine political leadership as demonstrated by Nyawira to organize and govern successfully, a powerful, all female association which gave them a new Identity, hope and confidence in themselves.

The success of the novel itself resides in the ultimate triumph of the womenfolk to make the 'Free Republic of Aburiria' ungovernable to the maximum ruler and give women a new socio-economic status that is befitting and desirable. This they achieved through organizing demonstrations that eventually led to the downfall of the ruler. His

demise becomes a harbinger for a new dawn for the Kenyan Women. A victory they achieved through hard work and planning.

The entire drama created in the novel is directed at giving the women in the novel an upper hand in dealing with the men that cross their path irrespective of their status in the political equation of Aburiria. The ruler himself was put to shame when the women at a rally shouted openly and directed him to free Rachael, his wife whom he has imprisoned for years. That was why when Tajrika was lamenting his ordeals in the hands of the women, the ruler showed empathy by giving a listening ear and sharing his predicament:

'This is not a laughing matter' said the Ruler, as if he had sensed Machokali's thoughts. 'It is very serious' he added for emphasis, recalling the drama of shame at Eldares, especially the women's call to set Rachael free. Somehow these reflections made the Ruler feel closer to Tajrika as a fellow sufferer of shame at the hands of women. 'Go on Titus' he told him.

Tajrika sensed pity in the Ruler's voice, giving him the courage and strength he needed to tell the story of his misadventures. He told how the women kidnapped him and then later charged him with domestic violence before sentencing him to several strokes of the cane, and as he now came to the end of the ballad of woes, Tajrika felt overwhelmed by a sense of joy and gratitude at having shared his misery with a sympathetic audience. May His Holy Excellency live forever and ever, he sang to himself. (wizard, 526)

What is important here is not the extent of the punishment meted on Tajrika but the seeming inability of the Ruler to be of any help by coming to the rescue of his kitchen cabinet member being humiliated by some women. To this end, the women present themselves as a force to reckon with and they have sent the message loud and clear that they have stood for justice and fairness thereby becoming a thorn in the flesh of the Ruler. To this end their new found identity is guaranteed.

CONCLUSION

Ngugi in *Wizard of the Crow* succeeds in constructing a new identity for the African woman. With this new identity, comes power- a status achieved because of the organizational skills demonstrated by the women which enable them to fight a dictatorial regime, finally bringing it down thus signalling a new era for the capacity of the African Woman in both social and political affairs of the continent. Because the novel operates on both satirical and magical realist levels, it gives the reader the sense of humour and mockery employed to put the message across. Key issues addressed include but are not in any way limited to; domestic violence, patriarchal entrenchment and above all, political marginalization. Through the employment of mockery, and magical realism, the female characters are equipped with the necessary weaponry to fight back all forms of oppression. What is remarkable in this (re)presentation, is the development of the intellectual faculty of the women by the author, which enables them to plan, scheme and execute with precision.(an all women world), to the chagrin of the maximum ruler's entire cabinet. The writer, in constructing a new identity for the African Woman, demonstrates a turning power of storytelling into a weapon against totalitarianism and despotism. He equally proves beyond doubt that in the endless struggle for the emancipation of the female character against Patriarchal forces, the women writers are not alone. In essence, he proves beyond doubt that the time has passed in African Literature

when women are depicted as either Mothers (at their best) or as Prostitutes (at their worst) and daughters and wives-in between. In Nyawira, one finds Ngugi's maturity of the feminist vision—an articulate carrying out tasks with perfection and absolute secrecy as demanded by the prevailing circumstances. In this Novel, through 'The Movement for the Voice of the People', women have been shown to possess the capability of playing a decisive role in the reconstruction of a new nation. The zeal with which they brought down the dictatorial regime which guarantees them success, will still be utilized in building a new nation with women in control of their own affairs and their destiny as they deem fit. This at least is what the novel in its conclusion points to- a new Kenya, with women and men of wisdom in control of people's affairs.

woman, Eveready to confront the social, cultural and political challenges of post-colonial Africa of the 21st Century- a vision that ensures a new Identity for the African Woman, not as a mother, daughter, and or prostitute, but as a free woman with a free will to think, act and exploit her potentials to the fullest. Another interesting style utilized by the author is empowering other female characters in the story. Though Nyawira is the leader of the organization, other women in the group were presented as physically and mentally able to meet the challenge. Physically in dealing with men with stamina, mentally in carrying out tasks with perfection and absolute secrecy as demanded by the prevailing circumstances. In this Novel, through 'The Movement for the Voice of the People', women have been shown to possess the capability of playing a decisive role in the reconstruction of a new nation. The zeal with which they brought down the dictatorial regime which guarantees them success, will still be utilized in building a new nation with women in control of their own affairs and their destiny as they deem fit. This at least is what the novel in its conclusion points to- a new Kenya, with women and men of wisdom in control of people's affairs.

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COPING WITH CHILDHOOD TRAUMA: THE UNNAMED NARRATOR'S DEFENSE MECHANISMS IN NEIL GAIMAN'S *THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE* (2013)

Ong Li Yuan¹ and Arbaayah Ali Termizi^{2*}

*Department of English, Faculty of Modern Language and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.
e-mail: liyuanong1312@gmail.com¹, arbaayah@upm.edu.my²*

ABSTRACT

Neil Gaiman, a well-known British author, writes science fictions using various literary genres such as fantasy, horror and Norse mythology. Through the uses of various literary genres in his novels and short stories, Gaiman highlights the themes of childhood trauma and the character's self-identity in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). In this paper, the main protagonist's struggles in coping with adulthood are interpreted using repression and denial as his primary defense mechanisms. These psychoanalytic concepts are believed to be means of ego defense to dismiss the unnamed male character's childhood trauma. The character also undergoes repression and denial as the result of his inability to cope with his painful experiences during his childhood. In order to move on with his life, the unnamed character chooses to imagine and immerse himself into fantasy to lessen his painful experiences of the unpleasant incidents by internalizing his memories and dismiss them via repression as well denial. Hence, this paper argues that the concepts of repression and denial, as defense mechanisms, help the unnamed male character to cope with negative situations, which threatens his psychological condition during his childhood.

Keywords: Defense Mechanisms, Denial, Neil Gaiman, Psychoanalysis, Repression

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the unnamed male character's defense mechanisms in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). *The Ocean* (2013) narrates the story of a forty-three year old unnamed man who goes to Sussex to join his father's funeral procession. While he passes by a pond behind the Hempstock's old farmhouse, he experiences various uncanny flashbacks of his introverted childhood, particularly memories of his birthday, the death of his pet cat, his interest in books related to mythology, superheroes and fairy tales (Gaiman, 2013). He also recollects memories of his close friend, Lettie and the rest of the eccentric Hempstock's family members, who turn out to be immortals and treat him like their family members. After the African Opal Miner commits suicide at the end of the lane, he is haunted by dark apparitions and black crows, which control by shadowy monsters. Although Lettie saves him from the monsters, he believes one of the monsters takes on human form named Ursula Monkton, his new housekeeper. He witnesses how Ursula destroys his family and causes Lettie's death after she tries to revive him from near death experience. Although the unnamed character falls into trauma and depression, the story ends with him having an awkward reunion with the Hempstocks' family, who are already in their prime. Due to this, he forgets the pasts and moves on with his life.

Neil Gaiman intends to dedicate his novel, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013) to his current wife, Amanda Palmer, so she will know more about his childhood memories (Campbell, 2014, p. 244-245; Gaiman, 2013). Based on Joe Hill's interview

(2013), Gaiman intends to express the character's "emotional truth" using his own childhood experiences (Hill, 2013, p.10). Gaiman believes by excluding the narrator's name, it shows his significant role in the novel compare to the other 'named' characters, in *The Ocean* (Hill, 2013, p.10). In an interview by Anne Mavity, Neil Gaiman mentions that his novel consists of fragments of his childhood and how his interest in reading books creates the unnamed character's character development (Gaiman, 2014). Besides this, he has added magical elements into his novel to create a fictional setting and fictional characters, like Ursula Monkton and the Hempstock's family (Czarnowsky, 2015, p.19).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Ocean at End of the Lane (2013) receives numerous appraisals regarding the character's ability to relive past childhood memories, the gender performances of the female characters, as well as Gaiman's writing styles using literary devices such as asparadox and metaphors. Previous studies examine the psychological aspects of the main protagonist, who suffers from childhood trauma as well as the characteristics of children gothic fiction found in Gaiman's *The Ocean*. The studies show "the impotence of childhood" experienced by the unnamed main protagonist, which Gaiman expresses as "the child's sense of helplessness" (Miller, 2013, June 2013, par. 7; Gaiman, 2013). Monica Miller (2015) points out that the unnamed character suffers from psychological stress which consisted of "contradictions and unresolved trauma" in Gaiman's *The Ocean* (Miller, 2015, p. 121). These contradictions found in the novel allows the character to "recreate, relive, restore and ultimately recover from trauma" (Miller, 2015, p. 121). Based on Neil Gaiman's journal, he notes that tragedy isn't a good source of art unless the individual has recovered from the unpleasant experiences (Gaiman, *The Father's Day*, June 2009). Miller suggests that Gaiman also incorporates a fragment of his memories, especially his father's death, into *The Ocean* (2013) as a form of escapisms and therapeutic method for him to mourn for his father (Miller, 2015, p.121).

Laura-Marie von Czarnowsky (2015) points out the ecofeminist perspectives of the female characters, which are Lettie Hempstocks, Ginnie Hempstocks and Mrs. Hempstocks, in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013) via the concept of "the triple Goddess" or "a single goddess that appears in three forms" (Czarnowsky, 2015, p.19-20). Czarnowsky (2015) describes the discourse of the triple goddesses which challenges the stereotypical female sexuality based on motherhood and feminine traits of power of authority, the discourse of matriarchal household, clothes, and behaviors (Czarnowsky, 2015, p.18-20). The female Hempstocks possess the traditional womanhood who protect younger children, especially Lettie and the unnamed character, as well as nurturers who provide sense of security, healthy authority and love in the family (Czarnowsky, 2015). They portray the discourse of conventional "maternal stereotype" who are exclusive and stern in maintaining the family order (Czarnowsky, 2015, p. 20). Besides nurturing personalities, they wear "loose farm clothing" which "desexualized" the discourse of "hypersexual femininity" and "femme fatale" (Czarnowsky, 2015, pp. 20-21) However, Ursula's female portrayal, as "an evil nanny" challenges the discourse of the conventional "maternal stereotype" as she verbally abuses the unnamed character (Czarnowsky, 2015, p. 20- 23). In addition, Ursula's appealing and innocent appearances, become the epitome of "Freudian's id" as she uses her sex appeal to seduce the unnamed character's father via Laura Mulvey's concept of male gaze (Czarnowsky, 2015, p. 18, 25). The discourse of a seductive and sexualized woman evokes disgust and uncanny feelings to him as a child, especially during an incident where he finds out the affair between his father and Ursula (Czarnowsky, 2015, p. 24). The differences between female members of the Hempstock's

family and Ursula Monkton show different discourses of female roles and different relationships with the unnamed character, which contribute to eerie and weird effects to the unnamed character.

Moreover, Rebecca Long (2015) points out the uses of paradox to investigate “the primal connection between memory and identity” that forms the unnamed character’s perspectives using “the concepts of amnesia and remembrance” (Long, 2015, p. 123). The unnamed character is abused by his father and Ursula Monkton during his childhood, which contributed to the loss of “domestic intimacy” and “childhood home” (Long, 2015, p.125). Consequently, he resorts to the imagination as a means of escapisms by perceiving that he is living in a “mythic landscape”, where adults are portrayed as monstrous immoral beings and Hempstocks’ family becomes “his security of the home” (Long, 2015, p. 127-129). These traumatic experiences are part of his memories and have affected his identity as an adult (Long, 2015, p.123). When he experiences amnesia, the study identifies that Lettie’s ocean and myths become his most important memories when he intends to relive his pasts or attempts to search for his own identity as a child (Long, 2015, p.132-135).

Putri Rizka Utami (2016) points out the “traumatic experiences in the narrator’s childhood stage” via Trauma theory and Sigmund Freud’s the Stages of Development (Putri, 2016, p. xi). Based on Freudian’s stages of development, the character faces physical and emotional abandonment, which deteriorates his self-esteem as a child. Therefore, the study shows the main protagonist suffers from childhood trauma due to his sense of helplessness after witnessing the traumatic experiences. Hence, the unnamed character’s childhood experiences affect the character’s development and personality as an adult.

Based on previous studies, Alexander Helms (2016) points out that Gaiman’s literary texts highlighted the psychological aspects of a child’s fear using horror fiction. She also states that Gaiman’s *Coraline* (2002) and *The Ocean* (2013) are categorized under children gothic horror fiction as they comprise the characteristics of the children literature and gothic elements in the novel, for instance, the uses of dark apparition and crows, which haunt the male character. The study suggests *The Ocean* and *Coraline* acted as a conventional literary device of “cautionary tale”, which triggers “fear as a control mechanism” as well as to overcome “trauma and anxieties” by identifying the primary features of children literature by Maria Nikolajeva (2010) and the characteristic of the Gothic by Teressa Goddu (2000) (Helms, 2016, p.1). Helms (2006) deduces these few main characteristics of children gothic fiction frightens younger audiences so they will choose “into being good” as well as fearful of the dark side of humanity via the concept of “scariness” by Jerry Griswold (2006) (Helms, 2016, p.4; p.7-8). Drawing from Helms’ study, this novel invokes young readers to experience “horror and trauma in the safe playground of fiction, cushioned by fantastical elements, so that they are able to guard themselves against fear”, anxiety and increase their awareness of the dark side of human nature (Helm, 2016, p.8; p.19-20). Hence, Helms (2016) categorizes *The Ocean* (2013) as children gothic fiction educates younger audiences to deal with failure and regrets without heading to the “path of despair”, fear and anxieties against immoral acts (Helms, 2013, p.9). However, the present study dwells on the psychological aspects of the characters and his coping methods in forms of defense mechanisms.

Besides this, the theme of child’s disillusionment towards the adult society is highlighted in Neil Gaiman’s *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). Derek Lee (2016) states that *The Ocean* (2013) is categorized as “anti-bildungroman” literary text that undermined the unnamed male protagonist’s perception towards “generic roles of the self and society” as well as writing against the idea of “accepting one’s proper role in adult

society” (Lee, 2016, p.553). Lee points out how the unnamed character questions the adult’s morality as well as the disillusion of abiding social norms via “political fantasy” (Lee, 2016, p.553). This study shows that Neil Gaiman uses fantasy to pinpoint the importance of human morality and the “rejection of materialism’s spiritual bankruptcy, an enchanted counterforce for the human soul” (Lee, 2016, p.561-562). In addition, Lee points out that Gaiman uses fantasy to show how the male protagonist realigns his past and develops his own human ethics through “the escapism of fantasy” (Lee, 2013, p.563). Thus, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* produces disillusionment to the unnamed character due to the indulgent of fantasy which forms “parallel

Moreover, Amanda L. Bailey (2017) examines the uses of “metaphors of reading” in one of the contemporary literary texts such as Neil Gaiman’s *Ocean* (2013) via metafiction (Bailey, 2017, p. ii). She points out that the unnamed character perceives reading such as a safe place for him to overcome four situations, such as Lettie’s departure, his reflections of the pasts as an adult, painful experiences during childhood and his struggles to accept his past trauma (Bailey, 2017). Bailey points out the uses of metafiction help the readers to experience the narrator’s memories, forms a “self-protecting inventions to cover over a childhood trauma” the character attempts to escape via “hallucinogenic defense mechanism” (Bailey, 2017, p. 247). This helps the character to cope with their painful experiences and increases the reader’s knowledge of the fictional setting in *The Ocean* (2013).

Nevertheless, there are indications of repression and denial simultaneously suffered by the unnamed character. In addition, there are also indications of repression and denial to overcome his trauma while unconsciously reliving the past memories as a child. The paper aims to address the unnamed male character’s ability to cope with traumatic experiences using defense mechanisms as expounded by Sigmund Freud (1915a) and Anna Freud (1936). This also addresses how the main protagonist overcomes the unpleasant situations using Freudian defense mechanisms by showing how the unnamed male character deals with the situations during his childhood.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: FREUDIAN CONCEPTS OF REPRESSION AND DENIAL

The conceptual framework of the Freudian’s defense mechanism is applied to analyze the unnamed character’s ability to cope with his traumatic childhood experiences in Neil Gaiman’s *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). According to Sigmund Freud (1894; 1896a; 1926) and Anna Freud (1936), defense mechanisms are the psychological methods which help the patients’ “egos struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects” (Freud, 1894, p.45; 1896a, p.162; 1896b, p. 191; Freud, 1936, p.42). The unpleasant experiences develop negative emotions, which form the patients’ personalities and memories. However, Sigmund Freud (1926a) expands the concept of repression in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926a) as “the protection of the ego against the instinctual demands” (Freud, 1926a, p.77). According to Anna Freud (1936), Sigmund Freud’s concept of repression is expanded into “a “special method of defense””, which is “the protection of ego against instinctual demands” (Freud, 1936, p.42). She also introduces other defense mechanisms such as “regression, repression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, turning against the self and reversal” (Freud, 1936, p. 46). However, this paper focuses on two concepts, which are the concept of repression and denial. The diagram below shows the conceptual framework of Freudian’s defense mechanism of repression and denial to analyse the unnamed character’s ability to cope with his traumatic experiences during his childhood.

The first concept is the concept of repression based on Sigmund Freud (1914; 1915a; 1926a) and Anna Freud (1936). The concept of repression refers to “an unconscious mechanism” when the patient refuses to recognize the internal source of anxiety, such as taboo impulse. In an essay, *Repression* (1915a) by Sigmund Freud, he points out that repression happens when the patient compartmentalizes his or her thoughts and “keeping it at a distance, from the conscious” so the patient’s ego is not be disrupted by negative impulses (Freud 1915a, p.147). The unwanted id impulses are pressed down into the unconscious and prevent the unconscious thought from resurfacing back into the conscious mind (Freud, 1915a). For instance, Freud provides an example a patient, who is phobia of wolf, which was known as “The Wolf Man”. As the patient lacked his father’s affection, this triggered the patient’s negative impulses, which is fear, towards the father. However, the patient repressed his fear for his father into unconsciousness via repression and displaced his feelings into a wolf as a subject of his anxiety. Consequently, he developed a phobia of the wolf, which was actually his desire to be loved by the father or “Oedipus complex”, which indicates the desire to copulate with his father (1914, 29, 46; Freud, 1915a, p.155). Anna Freud (1936) points out that repression helps the patients to dismiss unpleasant situation through “dissociation of the ego entailed by the withdrawal of consciousness from whole tracts of instinctual and affective life” (Freud, 1936, p.50). If the patient is completely overwhelmed by the negative impulses, it leads them to neurosis (Freud, 1926a, p.163). Hence, it disrupts their rationality, especially “the integrity of the personality for good” after they fail to repress their thought into the realm of unconscious (Freud 1936, p.50).

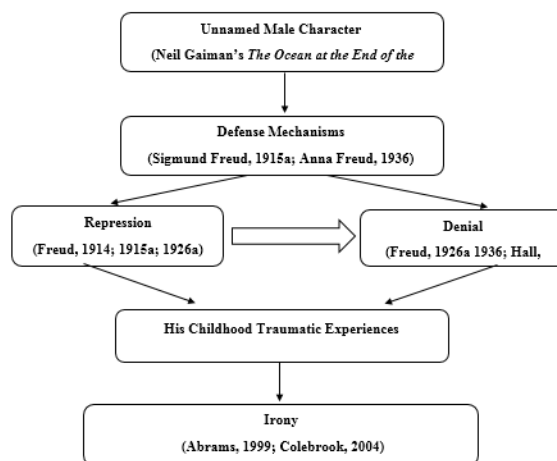
The second concept is the concept of denial, which is introduced by Anna Freud (1936) and Calvin S. Hall (1999). The concept of denial shows the patient’s refusal to acknowledge the external source of anxiety, which directly affects the patient’s internal source of anxiety (Freud, 1936, p.97). Although this concept is similar to the concept of repression, the concept of denial focuses on the external situation which previously threatens or contributes unpleasant situations to the patients. Consequently, the patient struggles with their own ego and is threatened by the negative external factor and he internalises his frustrations about the unpleasant situation by dismissing and opting not to face the source of anxiety (Freud, 1936; Hall, 1999).

There are three types of anxiety divides, which are “anxiety of conscience”, “instinctual anxiety” and “objective anxiety” (Freud, 1936, p.69; Hall, 1999, p.61-69). According to Calvin S. Hall (1999), “anxiety of conscience”, which is also known as “moral anxiety”, occurs when the patients choose to suppress their ego “which is experienced as feelings of guilt shame” after they are provoked by unpleasant experiences, such as being “punished by their parents” and “committing a crime” (Hall, 1999, p.68-69). The patients tend to repeat similar patterns of wrongdoings so they can make amends to their guilt and relieve their deep-seated fear and shame (Hall, 1999, p.69). This causes the patient to escape from reality by developing his superego using defense mechanisms (Hall, 1999). “Instinctual anxiety” or “Neurotic anxiety” refers to the patients’ fear of their own id or irrational thoughts and actions towards “instinctual object-choice” or “object of phobia” (Hall, 1999, p.64-66). Hall (1999) provides few examples like moth, mice, high spaces, crowds, open spaces, butter, and many more as objects of phobia to the patients’ unconscious mind although they do not know the source of their anxiety (Hall, 1999, p.65). The objective anxiety or known as reality anxiety, refers to the patients’ anxiety towards the actual situation, for instance, “the fear of darkness” and “infantile state of helplessness” (Hall, 1999, p.63-64). On the other hand, the reality anxiety occurs when the patients experience fear and anxiety towards “certain objects or environmental conditions” during their infancy and childhood (Hall, 1999,

p.63). For instance, Hall (1999) deduces that “heredity” causes the patient to experience converting irrational fear into reality (Hall, 1999, p.63). In order to cope with reality anxiety, the patients choose to escape from the threatening situation or dismiss the thoughts which threaten them (Hall, 1999). The patients will experience trauma or collapse if they are unable to cope or recognize the source of anxiety (Hall, 1999, p.64).

Besides this, the study intends to show the character’s traumatic experiences brought out ironic effects to the readers after feeling challenged by the unnamed character’s “determination, fixity, identity and opacity of desires and bodies” in *The Ocean* (Colebrooke, 2004, p.172). Irony is a literary device, which engages the character to speak “in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent” (Abrams, 1999, p.35). In addition, the concept of irony portrays the character’s “failure of insight, by viewing and appraising his own motives, and the motives and actions of other characters, through what the reader is intended to recognize as the distorting perspective of the narrator’s prejudices and private interest” (Abrams, 1999, p.136). Irony distorts “the immediacy and sincerity of life” and causes ambiguous statements to the character (Colebrook, 2004, p.3). Thus, the readers perceive the character as “less intelligent” and misleading via the “rhetorical artistic effects” in the literary text (Abrams, 1999, p.35).

Diagram 1: Conceptual Framework of Freudian Defense Mechanisms



ANALYSIS

This paper analyses the main character, the unnamed forty-three years old man who copes with his childhood trauma using two Freudian defense mechanisms, which are repression and denial. These two primary defense mechanisms are employed as a psychological means to alleviate the unnamed character’s “struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects” (Freud, 1894, p.45; 1896a, p.162; 1896b, p. 191; Freud, 1936, p.42). In *The Ocean* (2013), the unnamed male protagonist is an introverted and troubled character during his childhood. Based on the novel, he is described as a divorcee in his forties, who fails in his marriage, and loves to read books since young. He is also described as an artistic and deeply emotional person.

Whenever he struggles to remember his childhood memories, he feels traumatized but manages to forget the whole incidents after visiting Lettie’s family members. Putri (2016) points out a few incidents that triggers the unnamed male character to suffer from childhood trauma, such as “the death of his pet cat, the physical and emotional abuses by his father as well as being ignored by his family members” (Putri, 2016, p. xi). On the

other hand, he witnesses the affair between his father and the housekeeper, Ursula Monkton and Lettie's death" (Putri, 2016, xi). From this analysis, I intend to show how the unnamed male protagonist copes his traumatic experiences using Freudian defense mechanisms of repression and denial by Sigmund Freud (1914; 1915a; 1926a), Anna Freud (1936), and Calvin S. Hall (1999).

THE DEFENSE MECHANISM OF REPRESSION IN *THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE* (2013)

The unnamed male protagonist experiences repression as he struggles to socialize with his friends. When he relives his childhood memories, he has a "bad" seventh birthday party (Gaiman, 2013, p.8). During his birthday party, none of his friends attend his birthday party. His sister and one of her friends attend the party but he believes both of his sister and her friend are merely "observers" and do not participate any of the party games organized by his mother (Gaiman, 2013, p.9). According to Anna Freud (1936), repression helps to defend and alleviate the patient's anxiety towards the unpleasant situations (Freud, 1936, p.44). Although he is sad, the unnamed character suppresses his sad thoughts and displaces onto the Batman figure and "a boxed set of Narnia books", which makes him happy (Gaiman, 2013, p.9). From this analysis, repression affects the unnamed character's affective life when he realizes no one turns up on his birthday and becomes envious of his younger sister as her friends come to play with her. The defense mechanism of repression allows him to lie to himself that reading is safer than interacting with his school friends (Gaiman, 2013, p.9):

...Nobody came to my seventh birthday party...When it became obvious that nobody was coming, my mother lit the seven candles on cake, and I blew them out. I ate a slice of the cake, as did my little sister and one of her friends (both of them attending the party as observers, not participants) before they fled...I was sad that nobody had come to my party, but happy that I had a Batman figure, and there was a birthday present waiting to be read, a boxed set of Narnia books, which I took upstairs. I lay on the bed and lost myself in the stories. I liked that Books were safer than other people anyway (Gaiman, 2013, p.9)

From this excerpt, he experiences repression by suppressing his sadness into his unconscious thoughts. Based on the concept of repression, he chooses to lose himself in books, as they have become his love subject which helps him to dismiss the need to overcome the unwanted situation, particularly the need to take initiative in socializing with his school friends (Freud, 1936, p.47; Gaiman, 2013, p.9). Based on the concept of repression, this study highlights how the unnamed male character represses his thought by "turning away, and keeping it a distance, from the conscious" (Freud, 1915a, p.147). The analysis shows that he undergoes "self-isolation" and becomes obsessed of books as coping mechanism as well as "love objects" after he is abandoned by his school friends (Freud, 1936, p. 165). At the same time, reading becomes a deep-rooted addiction for the unnamed character, instead of a hobby, and replaces "the repressed fixation to the love object" during his childhood (Freud, 1936, p. 165). Hence, the unnamed character represses the negative experiences of having a lonely birthday party so that he can completely forget the sense of abandonment and negligence by his school friends.

Secondly, the unnamed protagonist, during his youth, undergoes repression when his cat, Fluffy, dies in a car accident (Gaiman, 2013, p.10). When he receives a new black cat named Fluffy, he transfers his affective emotions to his cat as his best friend, which he relates the cat to "Dick Whittington and his cat" and "miller's son and Puss-in-Boots" (Gaiman, 2013, p.9-10). This study depicts how the male character has seen his pet as his love subject which he is deeply attached to during his childhood. He uses the defense

mechanism of repression by transferring the bad experiences into his unconscious mind by substituting the cat as a subject of obsession during his childhood. However, the sense of attachment with the cat is cut short when the cat is knocked down by his neighbor, whom he describes as a South African Opal Miner (Gaiman, 2013, p.11, p.14). The Opal Miner tells him that he disposes its corpse and forces him to deal with the incident. So, the unnamed protagonist represses his sadness in forms of wishes as he hoped to mourn for his dead kitten but he could not express his feelings. Instead of breaking down and mourning for his pet cat, he represses his unconscious thoughts of wanting to mourn and weep for Fluffy as well as burying the cat in the garden. From this excerpt, this has become a form of repression by forgetting the past and is locked away from his conscious awareness through imagination:

...I did not want to open the box. I wanted to go off on my own. I wanted to cry for my kitten, but I could not do that if anyone else was there and watching me. I wanted to mourn. I wanted to bury my friend at the bottom of the garden, past the green-grass fairy ring, into the rhododendron bush cave, back past the heap of grass cuttings, where nobody ever went but me. (Gaiman, 2013, p.11)

He imagines that Fluffy is buried in a secret place, where it is surrounded with “fairy ring”, “rhododendron bush cave” and “grass cuttings” (Gaiman, 2013, p.11). This shows that imaginations are means of repression which helps him to prevent his painful thoughts from entering his conscious mind (Freud, 1926). Hence, this allows him to protect his ego using the defense mechanism of repression so he does not need to encounter hurtful experience and succumb into introverted life. However, the repressed memories, in forms of unconscious thoughts in later years, become conscious and triggered the main protagonist in the forms of flashbacks. This causes the character to replay his past memory without realizing the consequences of destroying “the integrity of the personality for good” (Freud, 1936, p.48-49).

Thirdly, the unnamed character is emotionally, verbally and nearly physically abused by his new housekeeper named Ursula Monkton, who is hired by his mother (*Ocean*, 2013, p.53). During his first encounter with Ursula, his reality anxiety kicks in when he realizes Ursula Monkton is not “anybody’s friend”, which is considered as an irrational thought (Halls, 1999, p. 68; Gaiman, 2013, p.53). According to the unnamed protagonist’s point of view, Ursula is known as a controlling woman, manipulator and home wrecker. Besides disliking her to an extent, he believes she’s a frightening person when he assumes she has done something to the sandwiches that will turn into worms, and causes him to have stomachache:

...I was starving. I wondered whether the sandwiches were dangerous or not. I did not know. I was scared that I would eat one and it would turn into worms in my stomach, and that would wriggle through me, colonizing my body, until they pushed out of my skin (*Ocean*, 2013, p.55)

From this excerpt, the incident has triggered both of his reality and neurotic anxiety as he believes Ursula is a threatening woman by assuming she plants harmful substance into the sandwiches. He also has irrational beliefs that the sandwiches will turn to worms which wriggle and colonize his stomach (*Ocean*, 2013, p.55). The male protagonist dislikes the fact she controls his daily activities such as walking to Lettie’s house by his own, forcing him to take evening naps and making phone calls without her permission (*Ocean*, 2013, 55-57). She has verbally abused him with disturbing warnings by saying she’s “inside” of him or call him a “little pitcher” (*Ocean*, 2013, p.56, 70):

...“I’ve been inside you,” she said. “So a word to the wise. If you tell anybody anything, they won’t believe you. And, because I’ve been inside you, I’ll know.

And I can make it so you never say anything I don't want you to say to anybody, not ever again" (*Ocean*, 2013, p. 56)

After he is threatened by Ursula, he represses his anxiety by transferring his frustration and separating his negative id impulses from his conscious mind (Freud, 1915a, p.147). Hence, this protects him from the unpleasant situation by imagining himself as "a pirate who travels by boat on the ocean" (*Ocean*, 2013, p.60). In addition, he believes that Ursula is a fictional character, a cardboard mask which takes the form of a worm emerges from his foot injury (*Ocean*, 2013, p.60). Although previous studies claims Ursula is a supernatural sexualized entity, I believe Ursula's evil and horrific portrayal is one of the unnamed character's mean of repression by disregarding her existence as a human and denies the fact that she is the main factor that contributed to the main protagonist's childhood trauma.

Moreover, Ursula has an affair with the unnamed character's father and he is the primary eye witness to the situation. When his mother is away to Africa for fund raising event, he witnesses how Ursula begins to have a closer relationship with his father. His father begins to show her around the gardens and displays friendlier gestures, such as resting his hand on her shoulder and standing too close to Ursula (*Ocean*, 2013, p.66). This worries the main protagonist as he is aware of her hypocrisy, and he calls her a monster:

...She laughed at all his jokes. I could not hear what he was saying but I could see the crooked smile he had when he knew he was saying something funny. She was standing too close to him. Sometimes he would rest his hand on her shoulder, in a friendly sort of way. It worried me that he was standing so close to her. He didn't know what she was. She was a monster, and he just thought she was a normal person, and was being nice to her... I was certain that if I did I would look up to see my father's angry face beside Ursula Monkton's, all pretty and smug...I wanted to shout down to him, to warn him that he was giving flowers to a monster, but I did not (*Ocean*, 2013, p.66-67)

Despite exposing her hypocritical behaviors, he chooses not to anger his father as he remembers his father, when angered will "shout so loudly and furiously" at him (*Ocean*, 2013, p.67). Due to his fear towards his father's anger issues, he decides to deny the fact that both of his father and Ursula are showing signs of adulterous affair. From this context, his repression and denial surges as he is unable to tell his father about Ursula because he believes every single word and his actions will anger his father. The unnamed character initially has a warm-hearted relationship with his father. Although his father is a short-tempered man, he tends to remind himself not to hit his children because his father does not believe in hitting while educating a child (*Ocean*, 2013, p.67). He represses his conscious thoughts into his unconscious mind to cope with his father's anger issues and believing his father will not hit him:

...But not that day. I was scared that he would be angry...I became terrified of him when he was angry. His face...would grow red, and he would shout, shout so loudly and furiously that it would literally, paralyze me. I would not be able to think. He never hit me. He did not believe in hitting. He would tell us how his father had hit him, how his mother had chased him with a broom...When he got angry enough to shout at me he would occasionally remind me that he did not hit me, as if to make me grateful (*Ocean*, 2013, p.67)

Due to his moral anxiety, he represses and denies his unwanted thoughts by instilling his superego, which is an image of an obedient boy, in order not to be punished for his "disobedience" and "impulsiveness" (Halls, 1999, p.69). For instance, he is aware of his father's temperament when he is scolded for eating chocolate before dinner. When Ursula

exposes him for eating chocolate in his bedroom to his parents, his father uses harsh words like “rubbish” to reprimand him:

...“I’m not the one for telling tales out of school,” said Ursula Monkton, “but someone had chocolate on his hands and face when he came down from his bedroom.” “I wish you wouldn’t eat that rubbish,” grumbled my father (*Ocean*, 2013, p.62)

In spite of knowing Ursula’s ulterior motives, he is unable to retaliate during his younger. This triggers the unnamed character to experience moral anxiety as he knows it is wrong to have chocolate before dinner. Although he manages to hide from his parents from his wrongdoings, Ursula intentionally revealed his doings to his parents in attempt to embarrass him. The embarrassment of his wrongdoings triggers him to call her “monster” or “flea” and chooses not to eat Ursula’s cooking (*Ocean*, 2013, p.70). This triggers his father’s anger and he punishes him by standing in the dark hallway (*Ocean*, 2013, p.70). Therefore, the unnamed character’s denial triggers his moral anxiety by unintentionally committing name calling and disobedience (Halls, 1999). This invites “punishment from external source to expiate guilt and secure relief” after his father drowns him in the bathtub (Halls, 1999, p. 69; *Ocean*, 2013, p.71-73). This incident traumatizes him and causes him to have constant nightmares about drowning in the bathtub. This happens when the unnamed character is haunted by strange dreams and nightmares, which consisted of his past life, his late parents and how he ends up being emotionally abused by his father after being nearly drowned in the bathtub by his own father (*Ocean*, 2013, p. 107). Despite knowing the fact that his family is in jeopardy, he chooses to deny the external factor, which is his father’s affair with Ursula Monkton. When he sees his father and the housekeeper are having physical intimacy by “the side of the big fireplace”, the unnamed character ignores the situation and escape from his house to visit Lettie Hempstock at farmhouse by the end of the lane (Gaiman, 2013, p.79):

I was not sure what was I looking at...He was hugging her from behind. Her midi skirt was hiked up around her waist. I did not know exactly what they were doing, and I did not really care, not at that moment. (Gaiman, 2013, p.79)

As he runs away from home, he realizes the affair brings such detrimental effect to his family household as his parents are “a unit” that cannot be crushed by any incident (Gaiman, 2013, p.80). Instead of mourning about the incident, he represses his feelings and transfers his focus and continues to run with “barefoot, into the rainy dark” (Gaiman, 2013, p.79):

now I was scared by what it meant that my father was kissing the neck of Ursula Monkton, that his hands had lifted her midi skirt above her waist. (Gaiman, 2013, p.80)

As a result, the affair between his father and Ursula Monkton has traumatized him as he feels that his future becomes uncertain and hazy.

Furthermore, the unnamed character almost experiences physical abuse by Ursula Monkton when he continues to resist her biddings and escapes from his bedroom. When she threatens him, he begins to experience repression by distancing away from his conscious into the unconscious by putting horrific imaginations such as “darkness with wolves and ghosts” together with Ursula’s ghostly look (Freud, 1914; 1915a; 1926a; *Ocean*, 2013, p.81).

...now my imagination filled the darkness with wolves and ghosts, to stop thinking, but I could not. And behind the wolves and the ghosts and the tree that walked, there was Ursula Monkton, telling that next time I disobeyed her it would be so much worse for me, that she would lock me in the attic (*Ocean*, 2013, p.81),

Despite of her threats, he makes his last attempt to escape from his bedroom. He encounters irrational thoughts, in forms of hallucinations of seeing Ursula floating in the air, which is described as “weightless as a balloon” and appears to be half naked (*Ocean*, 2013, p.83):

...Her pink blouse was open and unbuttoned. She wore a white bra. Her midi skirt flapped in the wind, revealing her calves (*Ocean*, 2013, p.83).

When she captures him, he is raped by Ursula as she brushes her lips on his ear and leaning her head beside him (Gaiman, 2013, p.85). He imagines Ursula is floating “in the air a few feet above” the male protagonist (Gaiman, 2013, p.84-85):

My legs gave way beneath me, and I stumbled and fell, and this time I did not get up. I felt heat on my legs, and I looked down to see a yellow stream coming from the front of my pajama trousers. I was seven years old, no longer a little child, but I was wetting myself with fear, like a baby, and there was nothing I could do about it, while Ursula Monkton hung in the air a few feet above me and watched me, dispassionately. The hunt was done. (*Ocean*, 2013, p.85)

Consequently, he suffers from sexual abuse from Ursula as he feels heat on his legs and urinated his own pajama trousers (Gaiman, 2013, p.85). Despite of denying the fact that he is raped by Ursula, he experience phobia of “spider as big as a dog” and “ghosts” which he displaces his fear of his own sexual desires towards fear of spider via repression of the conscious into the unconscious (Gaiman, 2013, p.84-85). In addition, he is also simultaneously experiencing objective anxiety as he is threatened by Ursula for not being obedient (Hall, 1999, 68-69). When he reflects into the pasts, he realizes he should have taken responsibility to eliminate Ursula from his house. Due to his inability to resist Ursula's biddings, he represses his wishes into his unconscious mind by imagining he has flushed her ““down a plug hole” or putting frogs in her bed” (Freud, 1914; 1915a; 1926a; *Ocean*, 2013, p.55):

THE DEFENSE MECHANISM OF DENIAL IN *THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE* (2013)

The unnamed character also undergoes denial as defense mechanism as he faces numerous incidents, which threatens his ego. As per se, his seventh birthday party causes him to suffer from emotional rejection as his friends do not attend his birthday party. Due to these repressed thoughts, he undergoes denial in forms of reality anxiety, which is fear of loneliness. Thus, he believes books are safer than humans. By internalizing his sadness, he transfers the negative impulse into his unconscious mind via repression in order to “nullify” his reality anxiety, particularly fear of loneliness (Hall, 1999, 64).

He chooses not to ask his friends about the reason why they are unable to attend his birthday party. The unnamed character undergoes denial by claiming that he does not have friends and they are just passersby in his school (Gaiman, 2013, p.10). Thus, this excerpt shows that he denies the fact that he is hurt by friends for not participating his seventh birthday party:

...By not asking any of the children in my class at school why they had not come to my party. I did not need to ask them. They were not my friends, after all. They were just the people I went to school with (*The Ocean*, 2013, p.10)

This causes “dissociation of the ego” and completely withdraw himself from his “consciousness from whole tract of instinctual and affective life” (Freud, 1936, p.48). He chooses to alienate himself from people by surrounding himself with books. Although he does not enjoy his life as a child, he spends most of his time reading books (Gaiman, 2013, p.13). His “dissociation of the ego” also produces irony via “the discourse of detachment”, which challenged against his identity as an introverted child (Colebrook,

2004, p.172). The character's point of view contributes to doubt and suspicion, as well as "contradictory incompleteness" to the readers, which is considered an irony to his rationalization of his lonely childhood (Colebrook, 2004, p.2).

After the death of his pet, Fluffy, he represses his sadness by immersing into imagination. When he reaches home, he cries quietly in his bedroom without telling his parents about the death of his pet cat, Fluffy (Gaiman, 2013). As he is afraid to complain to his parents about Fluffy, he chooses to nullify his fear by compromising "the internalized values", implemented by his parents and hide his guilt of not taking care his cat, which is perceived by his parents as "disobedience" and "impulsive" (Halls, 1999, p.69). At the same time, he compartmentalizes his thoughts and compromises with "the internalized values" so that he can keep the family in peace without being punished by his parents for his so-called misbehavior in forms of complaints (Halls, 1999, p.68-69; *The Ocean*, 2013, p.12).

At the same time, the repressed memory of his dead cat has becomes a form of denial for the unnamed character. His repressed memories triggers his unconscious mind and realizes the need to acknowledge his dead pet when he relives his past memories in the present state. Despite Helm's justification of Gaiman's intention of aiding the young readers to cope with the conventional mechanism of fear, the study realized that the unnamed character suffered from the inability to confront the darker side of humanity as well as the transition of growing up (Helms, 2016). The unnamed character experiences denial again as a result of overwhelmed of seeing his cat's corpse, which is identified to be an external factor to his childhood trauma. He denies the thought of opening the box as the result of internalizing his traumatic experience as well as denying his desire to bury the cat by its own "at the bottom of the garden" (*The Ocean*, 2013, p.11).

Denial allows the unnamed character to immerse into imagination by urging his ego convert to "defensive measure" (Freud, 1936, p.70; *The Ocean*, 2013, p.63). For instance, he immerses into fantasy by imagining he is burying his pet cat in a garden, which has "green-grass fairy ring, into the rhododendron bush cave, back past the heap of grass cuttings" (*The Ocean*, 2013, p.11). Based on Anna Freud (1936), the ego is attached to familiar things, especially "love objects" which the patients admire and adapt since childhood (Freud, 1936, p.69). The loss of his love object has triggered him to suffer from reality anxiety as a result of the "infantile state of helplessness" when he is a child (Hall, 1999, p.64). Even the Opal Miner has replaced a huge, ginger-stripped tomcat named Monster for him (*The Ocean*, 2013, p.11).

The unnamed character feels that he is disloyal to Fluffy, which he regards as his love subject (*Ocean*, 2013, p.12). When he realizes his cat died from the accident, he experiences unpleasant feelings as he has lost his love object (Freud, 1936, p.70). From this excerpt, there is element of irony as the sense of dissembling is rather overwhelming towards his lack of initiative to recover from his trauma towards his pet's death (Abrams, 1999, p.135). This makes him the naïve hero, who attempts to self-deceive himself through denial which is rather ironic beyond the reader's comprehension.

Furthermore, his denial towards his father's and Ursula's abusive behaviors lead him to suffer from nightmares. The incident, which he is drowned into the bathtub, causes him to have nightmares about drowning in the bathtub. This happens when the unnamed character is haunted by strange dreams and nightmares, which consisted of his past life, his late parents and how he ends up being emotionally abused by his father after being nearly drowned in the bathtub by his own father (*Ocean*, 2013, p.107). Despite knowing the fact that his family is in jeopardy, he chooses to deny his father's affair with Ursula Monkton due to his denial towards the external factors. Hence, his subconscious mind reemerges in forms of nightmare while his stay in the Hempstocks' Farmhouse:

...I had strange dreams in that house, that night. I woke myself in the darkness, and I knew only that a dream had scared me so badly that I had to wake up or die, and yet, try as I might, I could not remember what I had dreamed... I missed my father and I missed my mother, and I missed my bed in my house, only a mile or so away. I missed yesterday, before Ursula Monkton, before my father's anger, before the bathtub. I wanted that yesterday back again, and I wanted it so badly. (*Ocean*, 2013, p.107).

After Ursula is killed by the black matter, the unnamed character wakes up from a deep sleep without remembering any single memory of the housekeeper. Although he feels his memories are unknowingly wiped off, he also receives an unexpected news when his mother informs him and his sister that Ursula has quit her job due to "pressing family matters" (Gaiman, 2013, p.169). Although his sister tells the male protagonist that Ursula is fired by his mother after discovering their father's affair, he unconsciously believes that Ursula is killed by the shadowy hungry birds for years (*Ocean*, 2013). From this excerpt, there are signs of repression and denial within the unnamed character about Ursula's abusive behavior as well as her affair with his father:

...Years later, my sister, now an adult herself, confided in me that she believed that our mother had fired Ursula Monkton (whom she remembered, so fondly, as the only nice one in a sequence of grumpy childminders) because our father was having an affair with her. (*Ocean*, 2013, p.169).

Due to his traumatic experiences with Ursula, he represses the negative stimuli into his unconscious mind and denies the incident via objective anxiety by nullifying the negative situation so he can cope with his trauma (Freud, 1914; 1915a; 1926a; Freud, 1936; Halls, 1999, p.64). As a result of being overly traumatized by Ursula's and his father's physical and emotional abuses, his anger towards both of them leads to another depiction of irony, which shows how the unnamed character fails to interpret and evaluate the other characters' intentions and behavior, which the readers recognize his experiences as a "distorting perspective of the narrator's prejudices", which he chooses to relive his past traumatic memories and futile attempts of recovering from his traumatic experiences (Abrams, 1999, p.136).

CONCLUSION

Based on a close reading of Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013), it is evident that the unnamed character experiences traumatic and depressing childhood, which leads him to bury his thoughts using Freudian defense mechanism. The paper shows that the unnamed character is unable to cope with his situation during his younger time using Freudian defense mechanisms of repression and denial.

The unnamed character goes through repression by eliminating "instinctual derivatives" of despair after when he experiences loneliness, witnesses Fluffy's death, being physically and verbally abused by Ursula and his father as well as sexually abused by Ursula (Freud, 1936, p.173). Consequently, he chooses to repress these unpleasant situations into his unconscious mind. In addition, he undergoes denial after suffering from "moral anxiety", "neurotic anxiety" and "objective anxiety" towards the external factors during his childhood (Freud, 1936, p.69; Halls, 1999, pp.61-69). This causes him to forget his pasts unconsciously and re-animated his subconscious thoughts whenever he travels back to Sussex, which also depicts irony into his point of views of his past childhood. This is because he experiences a traumatic and depressing past which triggers him to repress his thoughts in order for him to forget his pasts. Hence, he experiences denial as a mean to numb his painful thoughts and attempts to disregard his thoughts via these suggested defense mechanisms.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ZIKR (REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH), HEART COHERENCE AND INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG MUSLIM POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Abdul Qahar Sarwari^{ab*}

^aFaculty of Journalism, Alberuni University of Afghanistan, Kapisa, Afghanistan.

*^bCenter for Modern Languages and Human Sciences (CMLHS), University Malaysia
Pahang (UMP), Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300 Gambang, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia.
e-mail: qaharesarwari@gmail.com*

Mohammad Nubli Abdul Wahab

*Center for Modern Languages and Human Sciences (CMLHS), University Malaysia
Pahang (UMP), Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300 Gambang, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia.
e-mail: nubli@ump.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

A good level of heart coherence is important for individuals to overcome the emotional and psychological stresses and conduct proper communication with one another. Zikr or remembrance of Allah, as the main pleasing performance to Allah, has direct effects on the emotional and psychological situation of Muslims. The levels of heart coherence and the effects of any intervention on the rhythmic actions and reactions of human heart are measurable through the use of heart rate variability (HRV)-biofeedback technology and HRV techniques. Thus, this study was conducted through the application of a mixed method research design, which included the use of HRV-biofeedback technology and some interviews, to assess the probable relationship between Ziki, heart coherence and intrapersonal communication of Muslim university students from different nationalities. This study had 20 participants from 10 different countries. From all participants, six of them were interviewed to support the HRV data through their direct views. The results from this study confirmed the existence of a close relationship between Zikr and the levels of heart coherence among the participants. Based on the results, Zikr performance had significant positive effects on the increase of heart coherence among the participants, and heart coherence is among the main factors that affect the process of intrapersonal communication within the human body. The results from this study may encourage individuals to perform Zikr performance as an effective treatment for their emotional and psychological disorders.

Keywords: Zikr, Remembrance of Allah, Heart coherence, Intrapersonal communication, Heart rate variability, Biofeedback.

INTRODUCTION

Coherent heart is associated with stability, well performance, harmony and fruitful intrapersonal communication. Through the increase of the levels of their heart coherence, individuals may have more successful personal and social lives. The coherent heart is connected with association, stability and well-organized energy use, and also with the coordination between diverse erratic mechanisms of human body (Jandt, 1973; McCraty & Shaffer, 2015; McCraty & Childre, 2010). Tiller et al. (1996) have introduced

physiological coherence term to explain the level of harmony, order and stability throughout the different rhythmic actions inside living bodies over an estimated period of time. Some actions and techniques like Zikr or remembrance of Allah and coherence techniques may help individuals to increase the levels of their heart coherence and have coherent hearts. Zikr as the main rewarding performance of Muslims for their Lord (Allah) which has direct influences on emotional, psychological and physical well-being of individuals may affect the levels of their heart coherence. Zikr, as a general religious and cultural practice among all Muslims throughout the globe, could international Muslim university students to have coherent hearts and proper social and academic performances.

The term of Zikr is derived from the word 'dzakara' which is an Arabic word which means remembering. Zikr also means remembrance and recitation of Allah through practicing speech. Zikr involves both mental and physical activities through behavior, attitude and reflection. Zikr is the most pleasing action to Allah and the best way of worship and it has spiritual and psychological benefits for individuals (Amin & Al-Fandi, 2008; Saleh, 2010; Khan, 2000). As Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala says in Surah Ar Ra'd, "Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (13:28). Moreover, the performance of Zikr is easy and available any time, in any state and in any place, and does not require a particular schedule (Saleh, 2010).

The levels of heart coherence and heart rate variability (HRV) of individuals are assessable thorough the use of HRV biofeedback technology. According to McCraty and Shaffer (2015), heart rate variability, the change in the time intervals between adjacent heartbeats, is an emergent property of interdependent regulatory systems that operates on different time scales to adapt to environmental and psychological challenges. The heart coherence is assessable through the use of HRV-biofeedback technology, and the HRV frequency range for a coherent heart is from 0.04 Hz to 0.26 Hz (McCraty & Shaffer, 2015). Good HRV scores are associated with good human performance, harmony, order and stability, decrease of psychological distresses, reduction of problematic behaviors and concerns. Moreover, Jandt (1973) introduces biofeedback as intrapersonal communication, and through a study under the title of (biofeedback as intrapersonal communication) found that humans have an ability to control the functions of their body.

Intrapersonal communication, which happens within individuals' body and helps them to produce and transfer their messages to others properly, affects all other kinds of direct interactions among individuals. As stated by Rhodes (2009), intrapersonal communication competence and skills are the skill of understanding of feelings and practice of personal regulations. The process that individuals learn to overcome their physiological challenges including their heart rate is called interpersonal biofeedback (Kassel & LeMay, 2015). Biofeedback deals with the autonomic physiological process and is intensely related to the internal process of communication in the human body, and it deals with the autonomic physiological process and is intensely related to the internal process of communication in the human body (Jandt, 1973). According to Kassel and LeMay (2015), the biofeedback technology and tools enable people to assess their interpersonal biofeedback.

Generally, besides their university related and normal life stresses, international university students struggle to overcome the pressures concerning cultural issues as well (Lin, 2011). International students experience many personal, social, cultural, and academic difficulties which include their adjustment into the new social norms, cultural shock, isolation and homesickness, and different educational norms and systems (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). According to Newton and Ender (2010), because of the varied nature of environment in the university campus, students may face

some personal challenges such as interpersonal skills, managing and expressing of their feelings, tolerating differences, and establishing relationships. However, a coherent heart, good level of HRV, successful interpersonal communication and well performance skills may help international students to overcome such challenges. As pointed out, the development of social performance is associated with emotional responding and coherent heart. Whereas, the heart coherence (the balanced level of HRV) leads into the decrease of psychological distresses, and decrease of problematic behaviors and concerns, and improves academic achievements and social performance among students (McCraty, 1999; Childre & Rozman, 2003; Cornes & Frank, 1994; Ross, 2011).

Moreover, good HRV scores and coherent heart are also connected with the psychological flexibility, creativity and skills of individuals to deal faster with the affective, cognitive and physiological stresses, and the ability to decide when facing with many alternatives and to choose from the different options (McCraty et al., 2000; Lagos et al., 2008; Tiller et al., 1996; Ross, 2011). One of the main analysis that enabled researchers to assess the relationship between social behaviors and heart functioning is heart rate variability (Chandola et al., 2005; Kimberly, 2012). HRV analyses can explain the psychological and physiological state because of HRV connections with the autonomic nervous system (ANS) of the human body (Berntson & Cacioppo, 2008; Kimberly, 2012). The autonomic nervous system (ANS) which affects the human heart rhythmic actions has two parts which are: sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The high levels of activities of SNS associated with the *fight-and-flight* situation and cognitive and psychological stress, and the high levels of activities of PNS which are associated with the too much relaxation and laziness (Bernston et al., 1991; Jacob, 2010; McCraty & Shaffer, 2015; Tanis, 2008).

The cited verses from the holy Quran grant the positive effects of Zikr and remembrance of Allah on the heart rest and coherence. The main source of knowledge for Muslims is the Holy Quran (Ishak & Yusoff, 2015). Cited scholars emphasize on the relationship between Zikr and heart coherence. However, there are insufficient available works in the literature based on the assessment of the assertions of scholars through the application of technology mediated studies. Thus, this study aims to assess the relationship between Zikr and heart coherence among international students from different countries through the use of HRV-biofeedback technology. International students are university students who hold passports of different nationalities, leave their home countries, and are temporarily staying in foreign (host) countries for the purpose of higher education to further their studies (Huang, 2010; Berry & Sam, 1996).

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Allah (SWT) says “Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured” (13:28). Some new techniques and technology enabled researchers to assess the heart actions and reactions of human-beings. The Neurovisceral Integration Theory of Thayer and Lane (2000) focuses on the relationship between the emotional responding and heart rate variability. According to this theory, the range of cognitive, physiological, and behavioral processes that involved in emotional functioning are the basic parts of a larger autonomic biofeedback system. The Polyvagal Theory of Porges (1997) focuses on an evolutionary mechanism that understands human performance based on the genetically and acquired characteristics, and this process is associated with the autonomic nervous system. The acquired characteristics are based on the acquisition of an autonomic mechanism which influences human performance and their psychological well-being. Both of the polyvagal theory of Porges (1997) and the neurovisceral integration theory of

Thayer and Lane (2000) focus on the importance of HRV-biofeedback on the synchronized emotional responding and the capacity of individuals to control their internal abilities, and to have coherent hearts.

Moreover, the Contact and Cohesion Theory of Sarwari (2017) focuses on Contact Initiation, Negotiation, Cognition, and Cohesion as the four steps for conducting proper interactions among individuals from different backgrounds. At the same time, this theory introduces seven pre-conditions for conducting successful interactions among individuals from various backgrounds in Asian context of communication as well. The proposed preconditions are: Coherent Competence, Coherent Heart, Self-knowledge, Purposefulness, Respect Differences, Shared Interests, and Flexibility (Sarwari, 2017), and the coherent heart is among the proposed preconditions of the Contact and Cohesion Theory, and biofeedback technology and techniques could help individuals to improve and evaluate their heart coherence.

Moreover, according to Kassel and LeMay (2015), HRV-biofeedback analysis is an assessment mechanism and intervention enables individuals to improve their flexibility and well-performance skills (Kassel & LeMay, 2015). HRV-biofeedback as an important psychophysiological intervention is significantly effective and helpful in the performance and flexibility, recovery and resilience, and uniqueness to relationships domains. These domains help individuals to be flexible, to recover from the upset internal communication and overcome the probable challenges, and to improve their self defensive abilities (Roisman, 2007; Tull, Barrett, McMillan, & Roemer, 2007; Guidano, 1991). Thus, the use of HRV-biofeedback technology and techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of Zikr on heart coherence may bring some interesting information in the interdisciplinary field of religion, communication and biofeedback technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The results from various studies indicate that the heart coherence decreases psychological distress, problematic behaviors, improves performance and academic achievements, and personal behaviors among students (Ross, 2011; Childre & Rozman, 2003; McCraty, 1999). One of the best ways that may help Muslim individuals to improve their heart coherence is Zikr and remembrance of Allah. According to the scholars, through Zikr individuals can find spiritual comfort and become closer to Allah (Amin & Al-Fandi, 2008; Saleh, 2010; Khan, 2000). Zikr has direct influences on behaviors of individuals and help them to change their behaviors and attitudes positively (Senik, Nubli & Zamani, 2013). The results from a study on the effectiveness of Zikr on psychological changes of individuals showed that Zikr has positive effects on individuals' psychological well-being (Senik et al., 2013). Moreover, the use of some technologies such as HRV-biofeedback helps researchers to assess the levels of heart coherence among individuals and the probable changes through the intervention of some actions or techniques such as Zikr and the Quick Coherence Technique of HeartMath Institute (2016).

Biofeedback refers to a kind of therapy through the use of sensors attached to the human body to measure body functions, and it helps individuals to know actions and reactions of their bodies. The received information from bodily functions may help individuals to control body functions properly (Krans, 2016). According to Jandt (1973), biofeedback is a process that utilizes electrophysiological instruments to indicate individuals' learning to know and control different bodily functions. Every physiological process which can be observed and monitored is the potential source of biofeedback and could provide biofeedback. A technique that helps people to learn how to control functions of their body such as their heart rate variability is called biofeedback, and

biofeedback gives the power for individuals to control their body, use their thoughts properly, and to improve their physical performance (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2016).

According to Frank et al. (2010), through the use of particular equipment and a computer monitor, individuals get helpful feedback to enhance control over their bodily functioning, and biofeedback enables individuals to see inside of their bodies and to control the action and reactions of their physiology. The use of biofeedback could be helpful on the improvement of well being, performance and physiological changes (Mark & David, 2009). HRV-biofeedback is used as an indicator to stage communication apprehension (Behnke & Carlile, 1971; Porter, 1974). McCraty and Shaffer (2015) argue that, heart rate variability (HRV) is the changes in the time intervals between nearby heartbeats, and it is a developing property of inter-reliant regulatory mechanisms which functions in different time scales to deal with psychological and environmental challenges. A favourable level of HRV reflects well performance and healthy function, a natural self-regulatory capability, and flexibility (McCraty & Shaffer, 2015). Based on Thayer (2007), to guide well-organized portion of cognitive and awareness resources, the use of HRV is essential for competent performance in a demanding environment where delayed reply and behavioral embarrassment are key; while, low HRV enlarged risk of stress disclosure. Furthermore, fruitful intrapersonal and coherent heart influence the process of direct interactions among people, and interactions among individuals are among the most serious and effective parts of human performance (Jandt; 1973; Sarwari & Wahab, 2016; Sarwari, Ibrahim & Nor Ashikin, 2016)

Based on the HRV power spectrum, the HRV frequency ranges are categorized under the three main frequencies as the high frequency (HF), low frequency (LF), and very low frequency (VLF). The HF includes the band of 0.15 hertz to 0.4 hertz and reflects the parasympathetic actions. The LF includes the band of 0.04 hertz to 0.15 hertz, and is also called the mid-frequency band. There is a suggestion that LF mirrors sympathetic activities and the ratio of the LF/HF bands is contentiously used to evaluate balance between parasympathetic and sympathetic activities. Finally, the VLF band is the range of 0.003 hertz to 0.04 hertz and indicates low HRV and is associated with increasing risk of unpleasant results (McCraty & Shaffer, 2015). The desirable HRV for a healthy adult with coherent heart is from the range of 0.04 Hz of LF to 0.26 Hz of HF (McCraty & Shaffer, 2015). Based on the assertions of the cited scholars and the availability of technologies to assess HRV and heart coherence, evaluation of the relationship between Zikr performance and heart coherence may add some new and interesting information in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method research design through the application of the heart rate variability (HRV) and interview data collection procedures was applied to conduct this study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), researchers use a mixed method research design to strengthen their findings. The Quick Coherence Technique (QCT) which was developed and introduced by HeartMath Institute was used. The QCT includes the three data collection and coherence technique stages which are: heart focus, heart breathing, and heart feeling. In the heart focus step, the participants will be asked to focus on the location and actions and reactions of their hearts. The heart breathing stage asks the participants to focus on the process of breathings while he breathes deeply, and the heart feeling stage asks the participant to remember a pleasant moment and try to re-practice that moment (Tanis, 2008; HeartMath.org, 2016). According to McCraty and Shaffer (2015), the results from various studies have confirmed the helpful effects of coherent

training through emphasizing on projected actions based on the positive emotions on improvement of physical, emotional and psychological well-being among different people.

Prior to the HRV data collection procedure, the required information about HRV biofeedback technology were given to the volunteered participants. At the same time, the printed copies of HRV data collection consent which included information about the data collection procedure, time limitations and required sessions were given to the volunteer participants to read carefully. Once the volunteers accepted the conditions, then the data collection procedure were conducted. The HRV data collection procedure included eight sessions which were: baseline 1 (2 minutes), heart focus (2 minutes), heart breathing (2 minutes), heart feeling (2 minutes), baseline 2 (2 minutes) and three sessions under the Zikr performance which named below. To compare the results from the heart focus, heart breathing and heart feeling stages with results from Zikr, three stages of Zikr performance which included 1) **Subhanallah** (Glory be to Allah), 2) **Astaghfirullah** (I beg Allah for forgiveness), and 3) **Alhamdulillah** (Thanks be to Allah) were chosen. The participants were asked to recite any of these holy words for two minutes in silent. In the first stage of data collection, the data were collected under the three proposed steps of QC plus a baseline step prior to the QCT stages, and also in the second data collection procedure the data were collected under the three mentioned stages of Zikr (remembrance of Allah), plus a baseline stage prior to the Zikr stages data collection.

Each of the data collection session for both of the QCT and Zikr stages took two minutes. For the data collection procedure, the HRV biofeedback technology which are available in the emWave PC (1.0) software and device were used. The emWave PC (1.0) device and is a handy and easily applicable tool and the emWave device and software are unquestionable for the HRV data collection. Furthermore, the emWave is a trustable technology (Tanis, 2008). During the data collection, the emWave device was plugged into a laptop and its ear sensor was connected to the ear of the participant to collect the data. The emWave software was already installed in the laptop. Prior

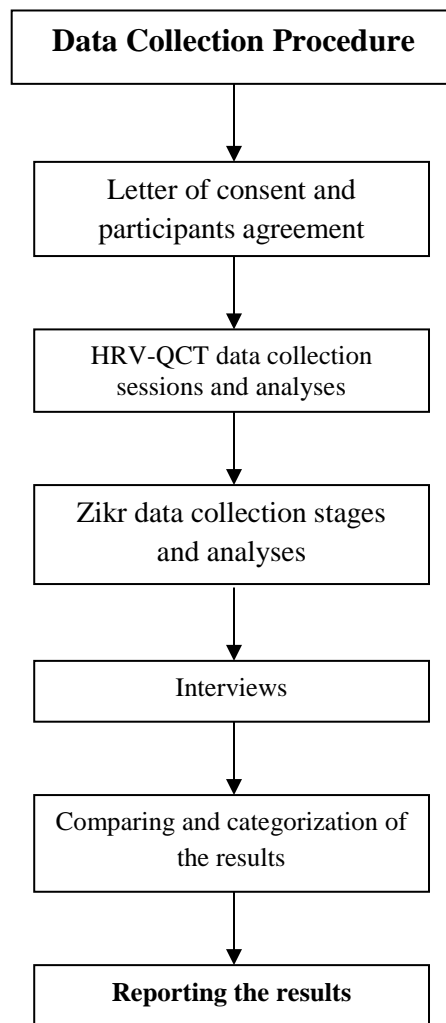
The HRV-biofeedback as the promising mechanism for the rising HRV is becoming more popular to be used in the HRV setting of studies (Rene, 2008; Pignotti & Steinberg, 2001). Rene (2008) also argued that the findings of a study on the effectiveness of a handy biofeedback tool regarding the mental problems confirmed that the HRV - biofeedback is a safe and non-invasive device. The emWave software and devices which are easily applicable and scientifically validated help individuals to achieve alignment and coherence through easily applicable exercises and feedback. At the same time, emWave technology enables individuals to collect their pulse data analyze coherence through the user-friendly data and graphics which will be displayed on their PC screens (HeartMath, 2016).

The data collection procedure of this study took around two weeks from early February to mid-February 2016. The data were collected from the volunteer participants in their rooms in the international residential college of the mentioned university based on the self-agreement of the participants. The data collection procedure had eight sessions: four stages for the QCT and four stages for the Zikr based data collection steps. The received and visible scores from the emWave software were transferred into the SPSS statistical pages and were analyzed through the descriptive test of SPSS.

To support the HRV data through the direct views of some participants, six volunteers were interviewed as well. To conduct the interviews, an interview protocol was designed which included a package of five open-ended questions to enable the participants to state their direct views based on their personal feelings and experiences of their daily Zikr and their heart coherence and psychological well-being. All interviews

were conducted under the guidance of this protocol and were digitally audio-recorded. The interviews were transcribed and were divided under the RQs, the research themes and emerging themes from the answers of the interviewees. For the interviews coding and analyses procedures, the method of constant and comparison which was developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967) was used. Based on this method, three steps were applied to code and analyze the recoded interviews. The required steps are: transcribing the interviews, categorization of the data, and identifying and categorizing the themes that mirror the data set (Sherburne, 2009). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed and the salient parts of the views of the interviewees are directly quoted in findings section below. Figure 1 below illustrates the data collection and analyses procedures.

Figure 1: The data collection and analyses procedures



PARTICIPANTS

This study had 20 participants from international postgraduate students of a Malaysian public university, namely University Malaysia Pahang. The participants were all male Muslim international students. As Zikr is a global cultural and spiritual practice for all Muslims, the participants of this study were sharing the same religious experiences in their personal and social lives. The participants were between the age of 22 and 39, and they came from 10 different countries. From all participants, 11 of them were master

students and nine others PhD students. Based on their personal agreements, six of them were interviewed to support the HRV results.

FINDINGS

The results from both sections of the data, the collected data under the proposed stages of the Quick Coherence Technique (QCT), and also the received data for the Zikr (remembrance of Allah) stages were analyzed separately through the descriptive test of SPSS to find out the mean and standard deviation scores for each step. Based on the results, both of the QCT and Zikr had positive effects on the increase of heart coherence of the participants, but Zikr had more positive effects on the increase of the levels of heart coherence among the participants. For the first section of heart rate variability (HRV) data under the CQT steps, the M/SD scores for the baseline stage which was collected without intervention of any technique were: $M = 17.2$, and $SD = 13.9$. But, though the use of the QCT stages, the participants got better scores and the results showed the positive effects of the use of the QCT on the increase of heart coherence of the participants. For the heart focus stage, the M/SD scores were $M = 19.6$, and $SD = 13.4$, for the heart breathing the scores were $M = 22.1$, and $SD = 12.8$, and for the heart feeling stage the M/SD score were $M = 21.7$, and $SD = 12.3$.

For the data which were collected under the intervention of Zikr, the M/SD scores for the baseline which was collected without any intervention were $M = 16.9$, $SD = 12.7$. But, under the Zikr stages the scores increased significantly. As the M/SD scores for the first stage of Zikr were $M = 22.6$, and $SD = 12.3$, for the second stage the scores were $M = 25.4$, and $SD = 11$, and for the third stage the scores were $M = 25.8$, and $SD = 11.4$. The HRV scores showed the positive effects of the QCT and Zikr on the increase of HRV scores. Based on the results, Zikr had stronger positive effects on the results. Table 2 below illustrates the M/SD scores of participants for all stages of both sections of the data collection procedure.

Table 2: Illustrates the M/SD scores of the participants for both sections of the data

Data collection stages	Mean	SD
QCT		
Baseline	17.2	13.9
Heart focus	19.6	13.4
Heart breathing	22.1	12.8
Heart feeling	21.7	12.3
Zikr		
Baseline	16.9	12.7
Subhanallah	22.6	12.3
Astaghfirullah	25.4	11
Alhamdulillah	25.8	11.4

Based on the results, the Zikr stages helped the participants to have regular pulse graphs as well. The figures below illustrate the irregular pulse graph of a participant for the baseline session and his regular pulse graph for a stage of data collection through the intervention of Zikr.

Figure 2: The irregular pulse graph of a participant for the baseline session

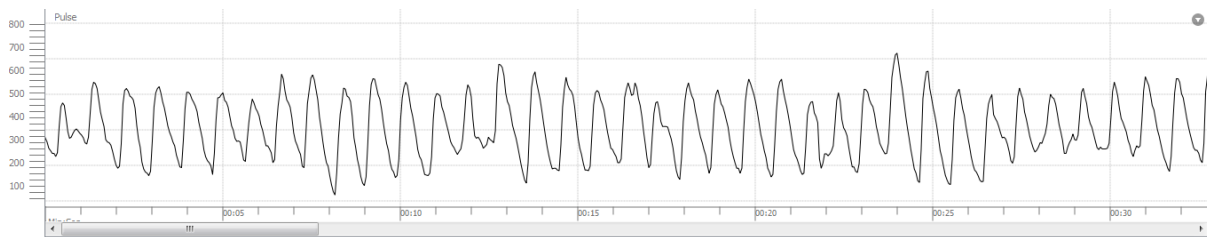
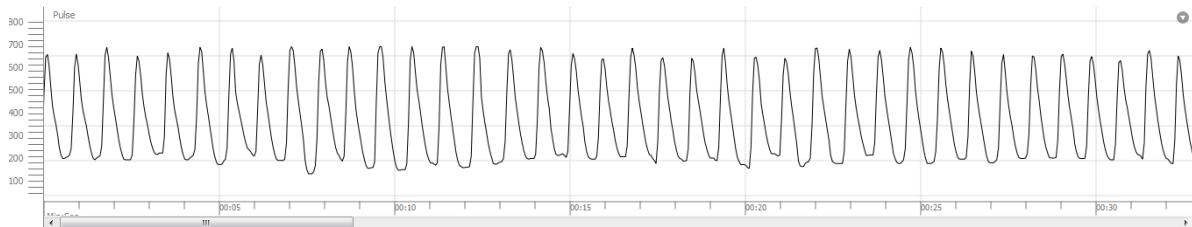


Figure 3: The regular pulse graph of a participant under the intervention of Zikr



INTERVIEW RESULTS

From all 20 participants of this study, six of them were interviewed to strengthen the results through their direct views. All interviews were conducted under the guidance of an interview protocol. The interviewees of this study were: 1) a Master student from Algeria, 2) a PhD student from Bangladesh, 3) a Master student from Indonesia, 4) a PhD student from Egypt, 5) a PhD student from Pakistan, and 6) a Master student from Yemen. The answers of the all interviewees were transcribed and analyzed separately, and the salient parts of their answers are used in the upcoming paragraphs.

All interviewees of this study focused on the effectiveness of Zikr performance (remembrance of Allah) on their heart coherence, and emotional and psychological situations wellbeing. Based on their answers, their daily involvements in Zikr performance helped them to have stronger control on their hearts and emotions, and to increase their heart coherence. Based on the answers of some interviewees, Zikr performance helped them to overcome the daily personal and environmental challenges of their lives in a multicultural university environment. For example, interviewee 2 said that “When I am out of my home country and stay with different people, daily strange things cause me to feel depressed and experience emotional disorder and I try different ways to overcome such personal problems. Sometimes, I walk; sometimes I listen to music and sometimes I perform Zikr. Mostly, I overcome the mentioned challenges and repair my emotional mood when I perform Zikr, especially when I pray in *Masjid* (Mosque) and perform Zikr after prayer.” It means that, Zikr has powerful effects on the daily lives of Muslim students who stay and study out of their own countries.

Their daily prayer and Zikr performance helped the participants to deal with their challenging lives in a different environment. For instance, interviewee 1 said that “Prayer and Zikr performance are among the main strategies for me to control my negative emotions and to deal with the challenging life in a completely different environment.” Interviewee 3 also said that “I do perform Zikr when I start my daily academic tasks, especially when I go to present something and perform Zikr when I finish my duties. It means that the Zikr performance is an important part for my life to control my emotions and to keep calm.” Moreover, participant 6 said that “When I face some personal problems at the university campus or face any harassing statement or action from other students, I try to control myself through the remembrance of Allah and Zikr performance, and it works properly.” Based on the quoted views of the interviewees, performance of

Zikr besides its religious values could be used as an effective strategy for reduction of anxiety, and also for the increase of heart coherence and self-control abilities as well.

Zikr performance can help individuals to have happier lives and increase their positive emotions and be more energetic. Interviewee 4 said that “When I perform Zikr or pray I feel more comfortable and happier. After prayer and performance of Zikr I feel more energetic and think positively.” Participant 5 also said that “Prayer and Zikr performance recharge my body and my soul. Actually, when I am tired of my busy life, my daily prayers and remembrance of Allah helps me to recover easily and be prepared for different parts of my personal and social lives.” These statements show that Zikr performance is a real gift and a powerful and effective strategy for Muslims to increase their positive emotions and self-esteem and deal with the daily personal and environmental challenges in their lives.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to evaluate the relationship between Zikr (remembrance of Allah) and heart coherence of Muslim international postgraduate students. This study used the heart rate variability (HRV) biofeedback technology and the Quick Coherence Technique (QCT) to assess the HRV scores of the participants. According to McCraty and Shaffer (2015), and Tanis (2008), the use of HRV and coherence techniques is helpful for individuals to improve their heart coherence and performance. Also, through the intervention of Zikr the three sessions of the HRV data were collected, and Senik et al. (2013) have focused on the positive effects of Zikr on the personal lives of individuals.

The results from this study confirmed the effects of the use of coherence techniques and Zikr on the increase of the levels of heart coherence among individuals, the results also indicate the effectiveness of Zikr performance on the increase of heart coherence of the participants. Based on the results, Zikr has important impact on the internal activities of human body and help individuals to increase their good HRV scores and the levels of their heart coherence. The results illustrated that Zikr had more influences on the heart rhythmic actions of individuals rather than the Quick Coherence Technique. Based on descriptive results, Mean scores for the three stages of the Quick Coherence Technique (QCT) were 18.6, 2.1, and 21.7 respectively; whereas, the scores for the three stages of the Zikr data collection procedures were 22.6, 25.4, and 25.8 correspondingly. The results indicate a remarkable level of positive changes in the levels of the Mean scores of the participants between the QCT and the Zikr data collection stages, and according to Aidoo (2012), the higher Mean scores show the better situation in personal characteristics. The interview results also supportive of the HRV results regarding the effectiveness of Zikr performance of the increase of heart coherence among Muslim individuals. These findings are supportive of the above mentioned assertions of scholars, and also these findings were supported by Amin and Al-Fandi (2008), and Saleh (2010) who argued that Zikr has spiritual and psychological benefits for individuals.

The results from the data which were collected through the intervention of Zikr showed that Zikr helps individuals to have normal heart actions and reactions and normal pulse graph. Based on the results, Zikr has positive effects on the heart coherence and heart actions and reactions of Muslim individuals, and Zikr helps them to have coherent and healthier hearts; also, their coherent heart and well-performance abilities could help them to conduct successful interactions with other individuals. Moreover, the holy Quran strongly grants the effects of Zikr on the well-being of Muslims' hearts, as says “Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest” (13:28). The results from this study show

that Muslims can improve their coherence and internal abilities through the performance of daily Zikr.

The answers of interviewees also included some interesting information on the effectiveness of Zikr performance on the increase of their heart coherence and positive emotions. The results from the interviews also focus on the positive effects of Zikr performance on the decrease of depression and emotional disorder. Based on the results from the interviews, their daily prayers and Zikr performance help Muslim individuals to overcome the probable challenges in their lives and control their emotional and psychological state easily. Based on the answers of the interviews, Zikr performance helps Muslim university students who stay and study in international university campuses to have happier lives and be more successful on their daily tasks by increasing their heart coherence and positive emotions. The results from this study are quite new and may help researchers to pay attention on the relationships between Islamic recitations and human performances. More studies on the relationship between Zikr performance, human communication and heart rate variability (HRV)-biofeedback through the use of some different tools and techniques may add more information in the literature.

PRAGMATIC IMPLICATIONS

Heart coherence, psychological well-being and well-performance will remain among the important desires of individuals, especially university students. Modern universities and organizations may also expect their students and staff to have control on their personal emotions and perform well. Thus, universities and organizations could improve the levels of the heart coherence, psychological well-being and creativity of their Muslim students and staff by encouraging them to be involved in Zikr performance. Universities and organizations could also try to innovate and establish some particular model kits and methods on the relationship between Zikr performance and bodily actions and reactions of human beings to help Muslim individuals to have coherent hearts, successful interactions and happier social lives.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the effects of Zikr performance on the levels of heart coherence of Muslim postgraduate students of a Malaysian public university through the use of HRV-biofeedback technology and the Quick Coherence Technique (QCT). The results from this study confirmed the positive effects of coherence technique and Zikr on the increase of heart coherence of the participants. Based on the results, Zikr performance had significant positive effects on the increase of the levels of heart coherence. The Zikr performance helped the participants to increase their good HRV scores as well. The Zikr performance also helped the participants to have regular and stable heart activities and fruitful intrapersonal communication.

The results from this study showed that Zikr has positive effects on the internal parts of bodies of individuals. Muslim individuals can achieve a coherent heart through their daily Zikr performance and overcome their psychological and emotional stresses and challenges. Based on the results from this study, Zikr performance helps Muslim university students, who stay in a multicultural collegiate environment, to overcome the environmental challenges, to have coherent hearts, and to conduct proper interactions with one another. The results from this study may add some new information in the literature regarding the relationship between Zikr, heart actions and reactions and social lives of individuals. The results may encourage Muslims individuals to pay more

attention on the relationship between Zikr performance and their emotional and psychological well-beings.

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AUDIENCE NARRATIVES, POPULAR TV FICTION, AND THE UNCONSCIOUS MALAY PSYCHE

Mohd Muzhafar Idrus

*Faculty of Major Language Studies,
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800, Negeri Sembilan*
e-mail: muzhafaridrus@usim.edu.my

Ruzy Suliza Hashim

*Faculty of Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor*
e-mail: ruzy@ukm.edu.my

Raihanah Mohd Mydin

*Sustainability of Language Sciences
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor*
e-mail: raihanah@ukm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

A few years ago, the reach of popular TV fiction in Malaysia seems to have gone unnoticed until recently when media operator Media Prima captured audience attention, that it now draws increasing viewers. Yet, often these discussions on TV fiction and audience's responses manifest state-endorsed, elite, government voices. In this paper, we attempt to introduce unofficial audience voices through focus group interviews and how they relate to *Julia*, *Adam & Hawa*, and *On Dhia*. Through audience narratives, fragments of Malay cultural identity realities create accounts of what we will call the "unconscious Malay psyche". By reading these accounts, this paper provides unfolding, decentralized spaces into Malay worlds in a post-colonial, twenty-first century Malaysian popular culture.

Keywords: unconscious Malay psyche, popular TV fiction, popular culture, audience narratives, literature

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, an increasing amount of Malaysian popular cultural content including, but not limited to movies, fashion, popular songs, and reality shows has gained immediate and immense popularity in other countries, for example, Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore (Ell, 2014; Rosya & Morris, 2014; Shub, 2012). Yet a few years ago, popular television fiction (hereafter, TV fiction) in Malaysia seems to have gone unnoticed. For example, the 2015 *Radio Televisyen Malaysia* (RTM) official annual report (RTM 2014), which is allegedly showcased all aspects of popular culture and media lacked reference to popular TV fiction although it pays tribute to digital texts, popular sports, royal concerts, news anchors, songs, singers, and reality TV shows. Popular TV fiction has also been ignored from the local popular culture scene, as can be read from the following year-end online entertainment report in a major newspaper, *Utusan Malaysia*: "to local artists, it is undeniable that their new resolution is to expand their respective career journeys. Not to mention others who are interested in exploring new opportunities such as business and others" (Mohd Arif, 2012). It is not until much

recently when Media Prima and ASTRO (ASTRO, 2013) having captured audience's attention, that it now draws at least 11 million viewers (Media Prima, 2013).

Often these voices concerning popular TV fiction in Malaysia are centralized, state endorsed, or are provided by government-linked media companies such as ASTRO, TV1, TV2, or TV3, many of which are embedded or echoed with hegemonic elite voices (Siti Zanariah, 2011). Regardless of the channels, we are somewhat removed on everyday bases from these discussions and we must rely on what we know thus far about audience engagement and popular TV fiction. In this paper, we attempt to introduce audience narratives through, cultural identity. Specifically, emerging Malay cultural identity issues from focus group interviews, along with personal narratives from audiences that write and express how they relate to *Julia*, *Adam & Hawa*, and *On Dhia* are elaborated hitherto. Through these voices, different fragments of Malay cultural identity realities, realities that create not only accounts of Malayness, but also the unconscious Malay psyche, which we shall describe below. This paper is important for the fundamental reason in that audience narratives suggest particular stories about the meaning for audience watching and growing up as Malays in light of the proliferation of these popular TV fiction in post-colonial, twenty-first century Malaysian popular culture. How the audience provides ambivalence, resistance, and identification with sociocultural issues could elaborate on how globalization and popular TV fiction are connected to popular culture. The paper, therefore, does not aim to present a true, definitive, or representative account of what it means to grow up being an audience of popular TV fiction; rather, the key reference point here is how this paper discusses the ways in which audiences react to *Julia*, *On Dhia*, and *Adam & Hawa* as a way of opening insights or windows into the audience's contention with Malay worlds.

In the following pages, we are less interested in describing elite formulation of Malay cultural identity as this has been a matter debated prior (see for instance Maznah, 2011; Milner, 2008; Shamsul, 2004), but we will instead focus on socio-cultural and alternative worldviews and the complex links between communal and individual beliefs about Malay heritage streams. Of particular interest to this paper are the audience's decentralized, unofficial accounts of diverse Malay cultural identities as seen on selected popular TV fiction that offer a space for the enactment of the "unconscious Malay psyche". We reinforce this notion by building upon cultural hybridity in order for us to understand complex and nuanced cultural identity issues among audience, as we will expand below.

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND GLOBALIZATION

Before we elaborate on the audience's response to popular TV fiction, perhaps, it is helpful to ascertain globalization and cultural hybridity as relevant concepts to position this study. The following discussions on globalization and cultural hybridity is not definitive and a comprehensive reading goes beyond the focus of this paper. However, a number of insights can be surmised. To this end, three sides to understanding globalization exist. The first thread describes globalization as an entity in which cultural imperialism and individuals are enmeshed. Commonly related to the American lens and derived from the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), this idea of globalization normally subjugates lesser, national, or cultural veins. It is considered a one-way flow of Western- imposed modernization, used within political ambits (Shim, 2006). As this is understood as a top-down approach, this thread of globalization is critiqued due to the increasing forces of international media (Thussu, 2000) and the emerging multi-faceted media proliferation, or what is widely interspersed as cultural proximity factor (Straubhaar, 2007). The second thread points globalization is seen to the outcome of modernity, conceptualization (Giddens, 1991). In this form, globalization as

an expected consequence of modernity elaborated as “historical change” and “development” discourses (Giddens, 1991, p. 90). While this thread is founded based on logical thought and natural accentuation of freedom, reason, and progress (Shim, 2006), technology preoccupies globalization. Put differently, the second line of understanding concerns the improvement of property sketched across cultures, not improvement of humanity alone. This notion of globalization, commonly referred to as taking root of “capitalism,” has been criticized as it suggests ‘inevitability’ of globalization (McChesney, 1998).

In the third essence is the idea that the cultural hybridity of globalization that accentuates power distribution between the periphery and center from the perspective of postcoloniality (Shim, 2006). Within this perspective, the complicated links between the local and global may engender re-localization, a force that could resist foreign elements. Returning to traditions and reconstructing collective belief(s) are some of the many ways (re)localization are played out, accompanying “modernization of economy and politics” (Syed, 2011, p.15). Young individuals in the Philippines and Malaysia involved in motherland disputes, including Asian and Middle Eastern individuals regressing to familiar cultural fragments (Ahmed-Ghoush, 2015) are but some examples of re-strengthening of renewed cultural roots. Re-appropriation of global goods, conventions, styles, music, and cuisine are some instances of re-localization. By the same token, while audience members in our study are confronted with Western, fragments (Mohd Muzhafar, Ruzy & Raihanah, 2015, 2016, 2017), globalization, in one way or another, prompts audience to re-claim their ‘local’, that they might “have forgotten in their drive towards Western-imposed modernization during the past decades” (Shim, 2006, p. 27). This article further contends that, as audience engages with popular TV fiction, cultural identities are reconstructed, reclaim, and culturally yoked, moving away from Western-imposed preoccupation. From media culture, desires, and consumption to ambitions and feelings, cultural hybridity helps reframe and reposition “conflicts” and “societal drama” (Johansson & Lalander, 2012, p. 1083). Within this space, cultural hybridity elaborates between what is staged on popular TV fiction and the ways in which audience react, transpiring “a representation in which a postcolonial nation forms a dialogue with its colonial past” (Kusno, 1998, p. 551).

The idea of re-localization within cultural hybridity spaces is not without criticisms. McLeod (2000) asks, “does the agency for resistance derive from the acts of representation by those from the nation’s margin, or is it found within the nation itself?” (McLeod, 2000, p.120). Critics such as Kraidy (2005) argue that there is no visible historical and political influence when hybridity is engaged. On the contrary, a detailed examination of globalization and cultural hybridity often presents wider, discursive, and changing discussions of culture that may unveil divergent readings. Cultural hybridity context is dependent upon its organization within specific sites. Because cultural hybridity is different from one place to another, it does not have “the same universal significance for all the planet’s inhabitants” (Moore, 2000, p.6). While cultural hybridity is employed not only as a conceptual framework, it has also been deployed as a “practice constitutive of, and constituted by, socio-political and economic arrangement” (Kraidy, 2002, p.18). Likewise, the transaction between audience and popular TV fiction could provide interesting insights concerning “host of foreign entities” (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p.23). We shall elaborate the discourse of Malay cultural subjectivities and modernity in popular TV fiction to contextualize our study.

CONTEXTUALIZATION: MALAY CULTURAL IDENTITY DIMENSIONS AND MODERNITY IN POPULAR TV FICTION

To understand how audience narrate their responses, perhaps we first need to examine how Malay cultural identities are expanded in the Malay world. *Adat* (customs), which encompasses cognitive, religious, and cultural tradition viewpoints are central to this discussion. While it is not necessary to assume that one version of Malay (*adat*) is appropriate to one is also appropriate for others, several perspectives on Malay *adat* exist. One of the consistent threads is the notion of harmony (Provencher, 1972). Any forms of disrespects akin to *Kaum Muda* (younger generation) attacking their *Kaum Tua* (traditional elite)” are subject to sanctions and threats. Many Malays believe that keeping disagreements to oneself is the best remedy for not being direct. Connected to the notion of *akal/budi* (emotion-reasoning), this idea of upholding peace is grounded in several concepts such as compromise, respect, cooperation, forgiveness, and repentance (Bakri, 2013). Such harmonious conduct coalesces into the Malay maxim, *biar mati anak jangan mati adat* (let the child die but not the custom) (AB Sulaiman, 2013). Another fundamental value many Malay individuals associate to is *budi* (being courteous). *Budi* (being courteous) is reasoned as a ‘life compass’; it provides telling stories of some Malay-Muslim manners, behaviors, and socialization; ways to behave and interact with teachers, parents, families, and communities, and play roles as students, parents, and children, just to name a few. Within the perspective of interaction, under no circumstance should unmarried individuals interact in close proximity with one another. Other aspects such as cleanliness, honesty, patience, self- appraisal, justice, modesty, and generosity make up some other concepts embedded in *budi* (being courteous). While the list is not exhaustive, it sheds some light on the links between Malays living in harmony and being courteous.

Secondly, principles appropriated should not be questioned. Ong (1990), in her anthropological study, has observed that many Malay females should accept any position and in one illustration, reluctance towards bearing children means “resistance against Allah giveth” (24). With what is considered appropriate for Malay females to be “domestic” and “feminine” (Healey, 1994), gender relations among them are often upheld by categories of patriarchy to signify “tradition” (Khoo, 2007, p.33). Expected to closer policing, many Malay females are frequently described as metaphors for various aspects of modernity through a sort of hierarchy of virtue (Nagata, 2011). Thirdly, religion plays a central role (Bakri, 2013). Close to this discussion are the concepts of forgiveness and repentance. On the one hand, forgiveness is encapsulated in many Malay beliefs, focused on the idea of Oneness-of-God (Hussain, 2010). Forgiveness, on the other hand, reinforces the need for Malays to be “gentle in nature” (Zainal, 1995, p.4). Because the main objective is “to uphold peace and harmony,” (Zainal, 1995, p. 15), forgiveness is important so much so that it attenuates Malay participation in war or violence (Milner, 2008).

Derived from Islamic precepts, repentance is trivial (Hussain, 2010; Ryan, 2014). In this vein, sinfulness and forgetfulness are believed to be transformed to orderly places of ultimate forgiveness and repentance from God. In Islam, for instance, ethics provides Malays with being accountable for their actions. Specifically, as much as God within the Islamic lens is merciful, Malays must hold accountability for their actions. Unlike Christian’s view, all of their sins (past, present and even future ones) are absolved with Christ’s crucifixion as long as they accept Christ as their saviour (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2001). In Islam and in this context, however, Malay-Muslims must be held accountable for their actions onto themselves and onto others. God does not absolve our sins unless Malay-Muslim subjects repent for them. From the Islamic perspective, this is one of the many reasons why repentance is one of many powerful acts of accepting wrongdoings and accepting God’s mercy to forgive. It is not automatic;

many Malay-Muslims still must accept their faults and ask God for forgiveness and believe that they will be forgiven, given His benevolence (Hussain, 2010). This may show the Malay ‘schemata’ of doing things, that human virtues can consist of repentance. As we will illustrate in the following stories, audience react to the claim that portray deviation away from these nexus of *adat*. While a certain truth exists that audience engage in global manifestation of modernity such as infidelity, alcoholism, and cohabitation, issues resilient in the following stories indeed reflect intersection with *adat*-Islamic values. Through integrating readings from interviews, we could examine readings that provide opportunities for us to understand the ‘movements’ here in the ways in which the closure in *Julia*, *On Dhia*, and *Adam & Hawa*, which we shall see, illustrate unstable alliance between gesturing to Western-imposed globalization and *adat*-Islamic values. To look through these audience voices will unfold the ‘non-linear’ movement of participating in and becoming involved with Western-imposed globalization while indexing conformation to traditional and religious labels.

A lengthy discussion on modernity is impossible due to limitation of space, but what is useful at this point is how popular TV fiction is contextualized within ‘hands’ of modernity. In Malaysia, one of the most widely talked about modernity is that it broadly stretches “imagination beyond the constraints of personal lives, physical locales and cultural boundaries” (Syed, 2011, p. 83). On the basis of freedom of choice, “upward mobility, and unhindered interaction” (Syed, 2011, p. 85), modernity is entrenched with contemporary, urban, and modern lifestyles (Mattelart, 1990). Through “ideal fashion and glamor for its young viewers” and “images of foreign settings” (Geraghty, 1991, p. 127), “urban life and consumption” (Matsuda & Higashi, 2006, p. 19) are intensified through “consumer culture freely available in the market” (Syed, 2011, p. 85) engaging audience with wider, global dimensions. Poor professional morality, directness, exorcism, wars, binge drinking, violence, lewdness, cohabitation, alcoholism, to name a few, manifest worldwide global extension of modernity. However, the examples above are merely a fraction of how modernity and Malay cultural identity dimensions within popular TV fiction sites are elaborated. At the same time, one must be conscious of the fact that while a number of TV fiction encompasses modernity, many of the following narratives unveils adherence to Malay cultural subjectivities. In the following pages, these audience reactions are revealed.

CURRENT STUDY: AUDIENCE VOICES

Eighteen participants aged between 18-24 were involved and voices gathered in this study is part of a larger research. Two responses were eliminated for final analysis because their interest in popular TV fiction had waned and that they had focused on becoming anime fans instead. Through a local community college in the north of Malaysia, participants were recruited. Our notice looking for volunteers posted read, “Malay-Muslim volunteers who watched *Julia*, *On Dhia*, or *Adam & Hawa*” which were posted on notice boards was distributed through emails and listservs. Although gaining response from volunteers was challenging, our interview leads and phone calls continued to demonstrate the otherwise. Requests for participation, surprisingly lasted for more than one and a half year after we conducted our final interview. It is, therefore, not our intention to definitely represent the population of all audience watching all popular TV fiction, rather, we were motivated by Bryman’s (1988, p.90) perspective that our study was “couched in terms of the generalizability of cases to theoretical propositions rather than to populations.” In other words, our study does not present an elaborate, definitive readings of audience narratives fusing foreign and local elements.

Procedure

A set of protocols directed focus group interviews. After general and consent information were presented, interviewees were notified that the interview would last anywhere between 40- 45 minutes, allowing them to begin, pause, and finish at their own discretion. Through Schachter and Ventura's (2008) thematic life story framework which entailed expressing life stories, participants in our study were free to elaborate their life stories of engagement with popular TV fiction, while also linking it to a specific theme. The specific theme of this study was cultural identity. If participants had not elaborated these issues, the interviewer asked certain questions, for instance, "What aspects of *adat* (customs) do you observe?" "Could you explain more?" "What event in popular TV fiction do you relate to; Malay *adat* or modern Malay, or anything else?" "Would you identify yourself in popular TV fiction with issues of modern Malay or Malay *adat*, and why, or can you see some other cultural issues you see emerging later on?" Interview questions from Mohd Muzhafar (2015) were revised. Through these steps, lived experience of audience engaging with popular TV fiction could be described (Hadad & Schachter, 2011).

ANALYSIS

Interpreting interviews was carried out in manifold stages. As soon as the interviews were recorded and transcribed, interpreting interviews was witnessed as a complex, fluidic process (Alasuutari, 1999). Using Alasuutari's (1999) approach of multiple readings, excerpts were extracted from each scenario in which participants linked issues of popular TV fiction to cultural identity, navigating our inquiries on identification, distancing, and stability (Rosya & Morris, 2014). Two key areas, namely, forgiveness and repentance, emerged as key areas. The next section expand on audience responses, culled from a larger-scale study.

Intermingling Local Touch and 'Hands' of Modernity

This section presents insights into audience reactions to popular TV fiction. As popular TV fiction stands as an important visual entity navigating cultural subjectivities (Syed, 2011), many audience members commended cultural content to which they could relate. For the majority of participants, forgiveness and repentance emerged as key aspects, providing an unofficial, decentralized reading of what it means for audience members to engage with popular TV fiction. Of course, the participants were conscious of the scenes portraying foreign elements, for instance, a participant highlighted, "Through these TV fiction, I feel blessed because I get to undo my mistakes through repenting. Not only do TV series show negative scenes, but many of these will also return to religion" (22-year-old, a college student). It was through popular TV fiction that audience members were able to witness the fusion of foreign and local, cultural fragments:

I want my son to learn that even when one wallows in alcohol and commit sins, he can learn that one can always resort to repentance, just like *On Dhia* (20-year-old, a housewife).

I cannot even refer myself as religious, let alone close to doing what religion says. Since I have watched *Adam & Hawa*, I have followed religion slowly. This transition is not without difficulties, but it is all about forgiveness that I ask from God (22-year-old, a student).

In a way, Melli in *On Dhia* paves a direction for me. She shows that it is okay to ask for forgiveness to offset my sins of going to bars (22-year-old, a student).

I could see myself as Julia. Not only does she hang out at bar, in the final scenes, she also prays. (22-year-old, a student).

While it is wrong to have unmarried individuals living under one roof, Azwan in *Julia* does that. But towards the end, he, in addition, repents. In any cases, sinful or not, I learn that it is never too late to repent. (24-year-old, a receptionist).

Americans also forgive people too, right? In *Adam & Hawa*, the door to God is wide open for forgiveness, even after Adam drinks alcohol and cohabitate. Adam, later, goes for Hajj and I cried. (20-year-old, a student).

I am beyond shocked to see Melli sleeping with Rafie in *On Dhia* because they did not have legit marriage documents. But after seeing her praying and repenting, I have since kept calm. No longer mad, I promise (laughs). (20-year-old, a student).

Julia ultimately forgives Azwan. No clue why Azwan's forgiveness is granted, after all the horrible things he did to Julia. (24-year-old, a homemaker).

Didn't Adam dance and drink in bars? I think it's okay because he finally repents and performs the pilgrimage (23-year-old, a housewife).

Religions and cultural issues guided many of our participants in their engagement with popular TV fiction. As a case in point, two participants (20 and 23-year-old) described that while they watch scenes that transgress religious fragments, they could also skip and return to parts where characters pray. One of the participants had this to say: "Modern TV drama is not a thing of the past. I could see both worlds-modern and Western, but I could fast-forward to the ones that keep *adat* alive, right here at home." Audience's motivation to link their reaction to familiar cultural fragments may provide counter-narratives to deep-seated criticisms about audiences simply identifying themselves with ultra-western issues. Instead, many of these participants appear to integrate their responses by returning to local, familiar elements, and are willing to reveal some sort of mobilization towards socio-religious, socio-cultural, and cultural identity. Such regression to local, cultural borders is where the notion of cultural hybridity comes into play because audiences demonstrate an interest in worldwide, contemporary, international popular culture, simultaneously yoking adhesion to Malay-Muslim tradition. Such fusion of responses may be examples of what Shim (2006) refers to as regressing to "the imaginary old days, revisiting and strengthening cultural roots" (p.27). In other words, while audience deal with modernization, popular TV fiction could encourage audiences to re-mobilize to rediscover their 'local' that is often displaced and perhaps forgotten.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that other participants illustrate ambivalence in their reactions. For instance, a participant showed mixed feelings as they engage with scenes demonstrating unmarried characters living under one roof were shown, even when characters repent. One participant, whose response describes Malay-Muslim transgression found that such a scene did not sit comfortably with Malay-Muslim tradition, recommending such scenes be scraped off. She said, "Any scenes showing Malays drinking alcohol should be abandoned, although it is common nowadays." Traumatized victims who could sustain injuries as a result of someone else's alcohol binge drinking was also recalled by another participant. Specifically, a participant projected ambivalence to forgiveness to anyone who is drunk and physically abusive.

Confronting Modernity: Returning to Local, Cultural Fragments

In this section, circumventing modernity is the focus of audience's voices. Taking popular TV fiction as an important approach to a visualization entity of cultural identities, participants were able to highlight what they could relate and refute those that do not. Of course, many of these participants were mindful of Western-related ideas in popular TV fiction and it is unlikely for them to show their regressing to socio-religious elements (Ryan, 2014). However, the following discussions revealed otherwise:

By watching *On Dhia*, my children could understand that repentance put everything in focus. When we make mistakes or commit crimes, God will understand if we apologize (23-year-old, a homemaker).

There is a point in my life where I am not religious, I did not pray. I have learned through *Adam & Hawa* that moderation is the key- we could apologize, repent, and read Quran (20-year-old, a student).

When Julia in *Julia* was young, she hangs out at bars. But I also know, later, she adorns veils. She also, at the end of the show, apologizes to God. That makes me realize- it's all about balance (20-year-old, a student).

Julia can smoke and drink. Julia can also repent. This balance is real! (22-year-old, at a gas station).

I think through *Adam & Hawa*, one can learn about being forgiving and compassionate. Yes, I learn about many American influence such as drinking, but all in all, God is willing to forgive, right? (22-year-old, a janitor).

Maybe *Dhia* should walk away and ignore Raffie's request for forgiveness. Even if this did not happen, I am happy that I could learn something from the TV show (19-year-old, a clerk).

Participants were able to witness issues concerning local, cultural elements. For instance, one participant (21- and 23- year old) admitted to skipping scenes that violate religion, to scenes demonstrating forgiveness and praying. Another participant, however, shows ambivalence to this idea, quoted as saying "Not so sure whether committing sins can magically offset sins and atrocities." Audience voices above, contextualized within modernity spaces are illustrations of hybridity's idea of re-localization, in which Shim (2006) argues as the active recalls to "the imaginary old days, revisiting and strengthening cultural roots" (27).

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this essay, we have addressed that within spaces of popular culture, many of this discussions are centered upon discussions by hegemonic, elite voices. This paper, however, described some of the many ways socio-cultural issues have called attention to many inquiries, including cultural identity. Discerned within audience's local and global dimensions, popular culture, vis-à-vis popular TV fiction, is one of the platforms through which cultural hybridity could be expanded. Within these sites, audience responses conjure up complex cultural issues that are yoked between indexing to Western imposed- modernization and gesturing to local, cultural fragments. In other words, audience reactions delineate that although audience describes issues concerning foreign elements, they also illustrate return to local, cultural spaces.

We have also observed, on the grounds of our interviews, that mainstream popular TV fiction intensifies spaces for many ordinary audience members, including, but are not

limited to female audience in community college and home-related businesses to express their views about such regress to Malay-Muslim spaces. As such, it seems that TV fiction in the likes of *Adam & Hawa*, *Julia*, and *On Dhia* may offer alternative, vital spaces for audience to disrupt normal ways of looking at Malay-Muslim ideals. Through committed and wide-ranging elaborations of Islam and how audience members themselves interpret their cultural and religious realities, audience members in our study present insights into views that are not often heard in mainstream platforms (media). It, thus, seems justified to conclude that audience members in this study have employed TV fiction to give themselves religious, cultural voices, as they flow into the receptacle of global discourse. It also seems legitimate to say that these voices are important, as they negotiate arrays of social and cultural uncertainties that continue to unfold for imagination, forming different presents and futures and giving a particular shape and character into their lives. In this paper, we have sought to demonstrate and emphasize the many ‘circulations’ that reflect unconscious Malay psyche.

The term, unconscious Malay psyche, is used to elaborate perhaps a response towards what is defined as consciousness. While consciousness can be defined as imaginations characterized by some “markers or traces,” “coded or indexes within any territory or field,” in tandem with “explicit structure and effects” (Heron, 1992, p. 145), unconsciousness can be referred to as the “doing of these” concepts (Heron, 1992, p. 146). Put differently, conscious Malay psyche may consist sets of good and deviant behaviors surrounding a Malay subject, but the process in which Malay psyche ‘circulates’ from being good or deviant or vice versa in a non-linear fashion, is, in essence, unconscious Malay psyche. Therefore, the use of the word, unconscious, is deliberate because such intermingling of foreign and local, cultural issues provides spatial connection for audience members to return to Malay norms, in a way that go back and forth “outside their awareness” (Heron, 1992, p.146). It is this difference that may set our understanding apart from those proposed by Khoo (2007) and Stivens (1996) regarding Malayness. While these two scholars have described the links, substitution, and integration between being liberal, urban, as well as modern, our study, however, demonstrates the ‘movement’ surrounding the Malay world; inasmuch as a Malay’s private and public duties diverge from *adat*-Islamic values (for instance, alcoholism and cohabitation), s/he is likely to return to the familiar grounds of Malay-Muslim ideals (for example, forgiveness and repentance).

It is of course important to note that in the development of unconscious Malay psyche, our treatment of audience narratives concerns voices about (re)forming and (re)shaping Malay cultural identities. In formulating this theory, in which audience members are involved, there is no presence of authority to speak to, therefore, the question prevails- to whom are these voices for and who is listening? (Bickford, 1996). Our study certainly did reveal that audience voices are heard, but we have yet to make certain about how exactly they are listened to. Still, we could argue that these voices also make up voices that are acknowledged through the many ways it partakes in an active encounter with cultural identity issues in popular TV fiction. The mixing of multi-faceted cultural issues, the response leaning towards local and global issues as elaborated by audience members in our study indicate that we are witness to the ways of how TV fiction provide spaces of new meaning, that, among others, establish audience members’ personal, continuous experience with cultural identities.

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EXPLORING THE BLENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCE AMONG 21st CENTURY LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Nursyuhada¹, Ab Wahab¹, Azni Mohamed Zain², Melor Md Yunus³

Faculty of Major Language Studies

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800, Negeri Sembilan

syuhada@usim.edu.my¹, azni@usim.edu.my², melor@ukm.edu.my³

ABSTRACT

In line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the world is facing technological transformation in which the Internet, cloud computing, and social media are creating different opportunities and challenges for formal education systems, specifically in relation to tertiary level education. This advancement has improved learning environments in universities, particularly in language teaching and learning. However, the dependency on teachers to facilitate the learning process is still crucial despite the various technological tools used. Thus, the blended learning approach is adopted to cater to the needs of millennial learners. A case study (focused on the implementation of features in a blended learning approach) used in an English for Specific Purpose (ESP) course at a Malaysian public university is presented to illustrate the benefits gained through this mode of learning. This study includes an in-depth discussion of how students benefitted from the combination of traditional face-to-face learning and online teaching modes in language learning. Among the findings of this study, it was discovered that the combination of these two methods managed to encourage students to become independent learners, enabled them to gain easy access to course materials, and assisted them in utilising up-to-date technological tools in their learning processes.

Keywords: Blended learning, hybrid learning, case study, tertiary education, language teaching, 21st century learners.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) in education has transformed traditional teaching pedagogy into dynamic virtual learning spaces to suit the demands of 21st Century learning. The Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025 outlines 10 shifts that will drive continuous distinction in the higher education system.

These 10 shifts specifically address elements of quality, efficiency, and overall performance issues in the system. Global trends that are entering the higher education landscape are also one of the points to be focused on in this new technological development. The use of technology in teaching and learning has attracted great interest from academicians in higher education institutions in Malaysia. Many institutions of higher learning, specifically universities, have started to implement ICT solutions and provide wider options (such as electronic learning), to make teaching and learning processes more flexible and accessible, both inside and outside of the classroom.

The integration of technology and ICT tools into traditional teaching is becoming a new trend that is widely implemented throughout the education system. This combination of methods called “blended learning” is gaining increased popularity in Malaysia higher education institutions. Under the Malaysia Higher Education

Blueprint 2015-2025, public universities in Malaysia have been developing strategic plans for the implementation of blended learning. The socioeconomic and technological changes have shown a clear demand for universities to carefully examine their educational practices from a new perspective. The Ministry of Education has been fully supportive of efforts by higher education institutions in developing strategic plans to mobilise blended learning. Thus, implementing this blended learning approach in classroom learning will be a step in achieving the nation's aspirations and setting higher goals in education transformation.

Language learning in tertiary education is no longer limited to students sitting and listening to lectures. The teaching and learning of language has now evolved into the creation of virtual learning spaces that utilise various modes of technology, which facilitates interactive communication. The students of today are all digital natives (Prensky 2001) as they were born in the era where various types of technology has become an essential part of their everyday lives. Among the traits of today's students according to Prensky (2001) are that they are able to receive information in a quick manner, favour parallel process and multitasking, show a preference towards graphics rather than texts, function best in networking processes, thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards, and would much prefer games over "serious" work.

In acknowledging these kinds of traits, lecturers in higher education institutions should be aware that their students have diverse needs that must be addressed. Notwithstanding, lecturers in higher education institutions are starting to apply a built-in method to handle this challenge by implementing blended learning in their teaching. Thus, it is crucial to reflect and seek the best practices of this approach, which can be applied in higher education institutions. It is also vital to explore how blended learning benefits the students in enhancing their English language skills and proficiency.

In analysing the aspect of English Language Curriculum, the Malaysian Higher Education System has placed strong emphasis for all undergraduate students to take courses under the category of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as one of the requirements for graduation. Exposure to specific vocabulary and terminology related to their respective fields of study and enhanced through ESP courses will equip students with the necessary skills needed for their future career endeavours. It is hoped that a good command of the English language will ensure a higher student success rate in seeking jobs, and prepare them well in order to thrive in real-world working environments, upon graduating.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no single commonly accepted definition for blended learning. However, practitioners "negotiate their own meaning" to suit the needs of their contexts of practice (Heinze, 2004). A definition by Owston et.al (2013) describes blended learning as an instructional approach that substitutes online learning for a portion of the traditional face-to-face instructional time. Additionally, Garrison and Vaughan (2008) define blended learning as "the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. Hence, it can be said that blended learning combines the traditional instructional modes of teaching with online methods for specific educational purposes, in order to reach a desired outcome of enriching the learning experience for students and teachers alike.

In this study, blended learning is referred to as a teaching and learning approach, where both traditional face-to-face instructional activities and online or computer mediated activities are integrated. The online component and classroom

activities are meant to complement one another, working to engage students in providing a more meaningful learning experience.

Previous studies have shown that blended learning, regardless of its implementation design, has shown a considerably positive effect on the teaching and learning process (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010). In Malaysia, there is a growing interest in the blended learning approach as reported by research studies (Puteh & Hussin, 2007; Azizan, 2010; Siew-Eng, Arifin & Rahman, 2010; Leila & Tunku Badariah, 2013). According to Wild (2007) at its most basic, blended learning is "...a blend or mix of the approaches that can be used to design a learning experience."

A growing body of literature has reported numerous benefits on the blended learning approach. The use of blended learning empowers students by giving them the freedom and responsibility to control their learning environment (Becker and Dwyer, 1994). As iterated in Stacey and Gerbic (2007), students' learning experience and performance can be improved when educational technology and ICT are integrated with traditional forms of course delivery, such as face-to-face lectures and tutorials. In a similar vein, Hisham et. al (2012) reported that blended learning increases learning interaction, offers a mixture of learning resources and minimises the feeling of isolation among students.

Blended learning is contemporary in today's 21st century learning as it is transforming education today by creating dynamic learning spaces, through the proliferation of technology. Educators have begun incorporating online learning and adaptive learning technology not only because of the extra resources that they provide, but also because 21st century students have been growing up in a technology-saturated world (Dreambox, 2013). Blended learning is also recognised as a useful approach for improving pedagogical practices among teachers (Kenney and Newcombe, 2011).

Despite the various definitions and vast benefits of blended learning, higher education institutions are striving to adopt this new approach because of the potential it has for transforming higher education and engaging students in more meaningful learning experiences (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). Therefore, implementing the blended learning approach is the best way to teach millennial learners, as it trains them to be autonomous and life-long learners, helps them to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and enables collaborative learning among themselves – which are all the essential traits needed for students to survive in their real-life working environments and also to attain their future career goals successfully.

THE CONTEXT

This study is designed to explore the implementation of the blended learning approach in an English for Specific Purposes course through a case study. The data was obtained using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Methods for data collection included surveys, interviews, documentation, and observations. This study was carried out in a Malaysian public university that offers academic programmes based on Islamic studies. As with most other public universities, one of the requirements for students in this university is to take at least one English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course throughout their studies. The ESP courses offered are developed to cater to the students' needs according to their field of study. Some of the ESP courses offered by this university include English for Science and Technology, English for Professionals, English for Legal Professionals, and English for Medical Practitioners.

English for Business and Commerce

English for Business and Commerce is one of the ESP courses offered in this university. Students taking this course are those who are majoring in Accountancy, Marketing, Corporate and Business Administration, Islamic Banking and *Muamalat* Administration. The course has been developed to reinforce students' knowledge of English grammar, expose them to more specific vocabulary and engage them with real life and hands-on sessions, particularly in the business context.

The objectives of this course include:

- i) to discuss practical solutions using appropriate language forms and functions in business meetings and formal workplace contexts
- ii) to practice communication strategies by responding appropriately in job interviews
- iii) to report the findings and recommendations of a mini market research project through oral presentation and written report.

(Course Outline, BIS4032 English for Business and Commerce)

To achieve these three objectives, the course content has been designed to incorporate online elements to suit the 21st century learning context. Table 1 below illustrates the teaching and learning approach of the English for Business and Commerce course.

Table 1: Teaching and Learning Approach of English for Business and Commerce

Input/Topic	Online Mode	Face-to-face Mode
Introduction to English for Business	Discussion forum English Language Websites	Group discussions
Market survey	Video recordings (including Youtube, Kahoot) Slideshow (Powerpoint /Prezi)	Lectures
Handling meetings	Chatroom (moodle) Skype	Lecture Textbook
Job interviews	Online videos Mobile devices	Lecture Textbook

RESEARCH FOCUS

This study attempts to elicit the students' attitudes and experiences in taking the English for Business and Commerce course (within their undergraduate courses) with blended learning adopted as the teaching and learning approach. Research questions for this study are as below:

- 1) What are the students' attitudes on the implementation of the blended learning approach in an English for Specific Purposes (EAP) course?
- 2) What are the benefits gained by students of an English for Specific Purposes (EAP) course through the blended learning approach?

- 3) What is the most preferred online activity chosen by the students of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course?

METHODOLOGY

Research Background

This study used a case study design for the overall structure. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” In this particular study, both quantitative and qualitative data are used, which helps to explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through observation and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997). This study is an attempt to understand the experience of individual learners as they progressed through an ESP course delivered via the blended learning approach. The study used interviews as the primary research instrument. All the participants involved in this study were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, and this made up the core of the data reported in this paper.

Research Participants

The students selected for this study were second year undergraduate students, taking English for Business and Commerce course, as part of their graduation requirement. They were enrolled into these English courses based on their MUET achievement during university admission. The students taking this course are those who achieved Band 4 and Band 5. A total of 25 students were enrolled for this course, with an age range of 19-21 years old. The students came from various education and family backgrounds and this is purposely addressed in the study to generate their unique and meaningful insights on blended learning and their real experience that they encountered while completing the course. All students expressed agreement as willing participants, when they were approached to partake in this study.

Data collection

The data was collected from semi-structured interviews, students' reflections, classroom observations, and questionnaires. Each participant in this study was issued a consent form which outlines the research background and draws attention to the anonymity of the participants. The research participants are aware of the use of pseudonyms to represent themselves in this study. The duration of this study covered a span of 14 weeks (a full semester) and this was followed up by conducting the following detailed procedures:

- [1] interviews with the students regarding their attitudes towards blended learning
- [2] classroom observations to triangulate the students' attitudes towards blended learning
- [3] reflections by the students themselves on the benefits of blended learning
- [4] survey of the most preferred online activity in the blended learning course

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and recorded with consent from the participants. These sessions were then transcribed and profiled. Besides face-to-face interviews, the participants were also engaged and probed into answering more questions through written reflections of the course in the final

week of the semester. They were also asked to voice out their feelings and give feedback on the teaching approaches and assessments conducted throughout the semester. Participants were expected to give comments and views on the usefulness of the blended learning approach in the course. All feedback collected from the participants contributed to a rich bank of data for this study. **Blended Learning Stages**

The course was carried out in three stages which lasted for 14 weeks of the semester as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Stages of blended learning instructional approach

Stage	Week	Activities
One	Week 1 to Week 6	The students are exposed to the online sharing of notes and guidelines, and the use of <i>Youtube</i> videos during face-to-face classes. They are required to independently search for the extra information available on the Internet, to supplement the input given during class.
Two	Week 7 to Week 10	The students are required to participate actively in an online meeting via MOODLE as the platform (which is better known as GOALS in this particular context).
Three	Week 11 to Week 14	The students are required to use different types of software such as Microsoft Powerpoint and <i>Prezi</i> , to create interesting presentations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The overall findings in each stage demonstrated positive feedback on the students' part and the step-by-step process enabled clearer observations to be made during the follow-up procedures conducted by the researchers in this study.

Students' Attitudes to Blended Learning

In general, the students' attitudes to blended learning showed a favourable outcome. It was found that students responded well to the first research question of this study, with positive feedback. The participants of this study expressed their positive feelings towards the approach used in the course and reported that the blended approach was fun and meaningful to them. The use of blended learning modes were cited as being able to instill life-long learning elements among students and was regarded as beneficial for their future, as revealed in the following discourse:

I really like it, it helps me a lot for my future especially in the business field. It also help me in preparing for my future interview to apply jobs. Overall, I don't feel stress at all. I enjoy my class and also learnt a lot from GOALS. (Fahmi_M_int_2016)

I would say that my experience was pleasant and fruitful as I gained a lot of knowledge in order to prepare me in the real corporate world. The presentation, interview, meeting and et cetera is a good practice for me to undergo before graduating. The

online tools like GOALS, whatsapp, chat and youtube made this course enjoyable and meaningful to me. (Suzana_F_int_2017)

This blended approach makes me feel comfortable and enjoy this course. (Hafiz_M_int_2017)

First Classroom Observation

Although there were three researchers in this study, only one was delegated the task of becoming the 'observer' during the stages of observation. The instructor teaching this course played the dual role of teacher and observer in the duration of this study. Through the classroom observations carried out, it was discovered that the students showed signs of enjoyment as described by the observer.

The students were seen giggling and laughing throughout the lessons, and were obviously enjoying themselves. (Obs_Week 6_2017)

The students also enjoyed the lessons taught in class, where the instructor exposed them to a lot of business terminology according to the topics covered in the course. This included Handling Business Meetings, Job Interviews, Market Surveys and Oral Presentations. The existence of the instructor is crucial in this case, where the instructor was able to share real experiences, provide stage by stage guidelines and carry out demonstrations for the students. Here, it can be noted that the role of the teacher is essential to facilitate interactive communication with learners. The importance of successful communication between instructor and learners is highlighted in a study conducted by Rashid and Abdullah (2017). Communication can take place in any situation, anywhere, either formally or informally, through face-to-face interaction or via online teaching and learning. Regardless of the medium used by teachers, successful communication takes centre stage in effective teaching and learning (Rashid and Abdullah, 2017).

In this study, the students were quite engaged in all activities and performed remarkably well in the assessments. It was observed that students seemed to favor the use of smartphones and computers in learning the language. The students also mentioned that the online component in the course was found to be quite beneficial in training them to be independent. Technological modes used during the face-to-face sessions were also discovered to be extremely helpful for the students to obtain extra information, besides the use of textbooks. In particular, the students stated:

I prefer to have blended classes as there are many things that should be delivered face-to-face as it can be more accurate and have room for questions whereas it can be answered thoroughly to ease the students' doubt and confusion. Not only that, some classes can be done through online as it can be convenient and even beneficial for the students to be independent. Hence, blended classes have a good balance of interaction and independence for the students to practice. (Lisa_F_int_2017)

I like both but if I had to choose, face-to-face is good for me to learn from the lecturer itself. Madam also gave very important tips and guidance. The bonding with my coursemates is also better. (Fatin_F_int_2017)

The activities done online were carried out to complement the face-to-face sessions and this enabled students to enhance and strengthen the knowledge that they had gained in class. The students were eager to participate in online activities and share what they had

learned, while utilising technology. They were also exposed to various types of potential learning resources which contributed to a richer learning experience as depicted by the following discourse:

Through online activities, we can do our own revision or adding extra knowledge about the particular topic when surfing the internet. For example, when we are searching on the questions and answers for job interview assessment. (Raihan_F_int_2017)

Overall, I feel satisfied with blended learning approach; it enhances my English language skills and make English learning more interesting. (Hafizuddin_M_int_2017)

I like blended learning approach especially because bond between the students and instructor can increase substantially with many online tools such as online discussions, learning web (GOALS) and instant messages. I am able to connect with instructor in or out of the classroom immediately especially when I want to ask something that I am not understand. (Shazarna_F_int_2017)

Second Classroom Observation

The observer confirmed that students were having fun and enjoyed participating in the activities. Students demonstrated ongoing enthusiasm and were highly motivated to learn.

The students were smiling and laughing at each other during the online meeting, which shows that they were having fun and enjoying the activity. (Obs_Week 9_2017)

The following section presents an analysis of students' discourse on the benefits gained from blended learning approach:

Benefits Gained from the Blended Learning Approach

This case study is intended to elicit the students' attitudes and experiences undergoing a blended learning course. Instead of merely using the textbook as the primary source of reference, various technological modes and approaches were integrated into the teaching and learning experience. From the blending of both traditional and technological modes, students experienced a new way of benefitting from this teaching and learning approach and were able to highlight the benefits that they gained from the course. Among the benefits mentioned were that blended learning was successful in:

i. Preparing students to be independent / student-driven

The Blended Learning approach adopted a strong student-centered paradigm that helped many learners to become autonomous students, who were able to take charge of their own learning.

This course is interesting because I am free to organize my study as it was blended with online class. (Afina_F_int_2017)

The materials provided in the online session are complete and make me easy to access anytime I want. (Shamimi_F_int_2017)

I think learning process should be from both sides (Lecturers & Students). Students

should be taught to be independent and I think that the online method used in this course is a good method. It helps me to be independent. (Syazana_F_int_2017)

It also encourages me to take the responsibility for my own learning process and can decide when and how to use the resources provided. (Najihah_F_int_2017)

The above feedback seems to suggest and support the notion that the blended learning approach prepares the learners to be independent and highly motivated. The students have the freedom to choose where and when they learn; they are free to choose any time and place they want to do the revision or assigned tasks, as long as they have connection to the Internet. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Hisham et. al (2006) which states that learning is no longer limited to a classroom setting (in front of a teacher), but learning can occur at any time, and anywhere, if one wants to learn.

ii. Enabling easy access to course materials

In addition to the above benefits gained by the students, blended learning also seemed to provide easy access to attaining course materials.

I also like when I don't understand anything in class, I can find what I don't quite understand through online. The guidelines given from our lecturer in GOALS is also very helpful. (Fahmi_M_int_2017)

I like the course materials to be online. Because it is faster and easy for me to refer. (Nabilah_F_int_2017)

The discourse this far seems to suggest that blending the teaching and learning approaches is definitely an effective way in providing accessibility of the limitless amount of knowledge in today's world. It can be said therefore that course instructors of today must step up their methods and provide new ways of teaching as students nowadays can access easy information at their fingertips.

iii. Facilitating up-to-date learning

Other than learner autonomy and accessibility to limitless knowledge, students provided feedback on how blended learning was able to facilitate up-to-date learning abilities.

This course had increased my interest to learn the language. Because, the technology is integrated into lessons, we all more likely to be interested to participate, focused on, and excited about the subjects we are studying. Next it can keep our focused for longer time because the use of computers to look up information in the internet is a tremendous lifesaver and we will get the latest information. So, we become excited to learn and focus on the activities in this course. (Amirah_F_reflection_2017)

The above discourse suggests that blended learning has the highest potential to be used as an approach in ensuring that the learners are not left behind with the

advancement of today's technology. The integration of technology and most recently, social media tools, are in line with the latest teaching and learning approaches currently employed, particularly in higher education institutions around the world.

The following section presents and analyses the most preferred online activity by the students of English for Business and Commerce course.

The Most Preferred Online Activity

In the survey conducted among 25 students taking the English for Business and Commerce course, participants are asked to choose the activity that they liked most throughout the semester. The result of the survey is illustrated in the following table.

Table 3: The most preferred online activity

Online Activities	N(25)	Percentage (%)
Notes & Guidelines on GOALS	9	36
Using Powerpoint / Prezi for presentations	7	28
Online meeting (chatroom/skype)	6	24
Online video viewing	3	12
Online discussion forum	0	0
Video recordings	0	0

Table 3 shows that most of the students (36%) preferred the notes and guidelines of the assignments to be uploaded online. According to them, the notes and guidelines that are available online are really helpful, especially when they wanted to prepare before class and while they were working on the assignments given. This feature was beneficial as students did not have to meet with the lecturers face-to-face, in order to clarify or ask about the assigned tasks, as everything was available online.

None of the students preferred the online discussion forum and video recordings. This is due to the lack of interaction in the forum and the topics in the forum were not of interest to them. As for the video recordings, students expressed that it was quite challenging to record their interview sessions as the respondents refused to be recorded. They also added that the environment for the video recording was not pleasant and suitable, as there was too much noise.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study suggest some insights to the English language instructors in planning and improving blended learning course specifically in higher education institutions.

These include benefits in the pedagogical aspect – providing interesting and meaningful activities both in-class and online which harness student centeredness; greater access to personalized learning, resources and experts. Most importantly, Blended Learning provides more meaningful, inviting and fun learning opportunities, which contribute to

a better learning experience. (Albrecht, 2006; Dziuban, Moskal, & Hartman, 2004; Vaughan, 2007; Dzakiria et.al 2006).

Blended learning also offers a variety of learning methods to the learners, and this encourages more enthusiasm and motivation in learning. It is more likely that learners will learn better when the methods of learning are varied and when learning modes are not routine and predictable. It can be seen that Blended Learning has a lot to offer for learners with different learning styles, different needs, and different levels and speed of learning.

CONCLUSION

The following points are preliminary conclusions that can be made from this study and the implications for 21st Century learners, specifically the effects of blended learning in current and future teaching and learning environments.

- 1) **University students preferred the course materials to be in digital form. However, they still need the existence of teachers to explain and facilitate their learning.**

Teachers could perhaps play a more diverse role in the classroom rather than limiting their delivery to merely being a one-way instructional mode. Here, the inclusion of social media tools, interactive communication and other technological modes could be used to enhance the role of the teacher for a more meaningful learning experience. In ensuring that technology does not omit the traditional role, a more flexible teaching approach can be employed by teachers.

- 2) **The benefits of blended learning outweigh the challenges in its implementation**

Even though the inclusion of blended learning approaches in institutions of higher learning may not be easily and readily embraced by teachers, the benefits for students are immense. In this day and age, this can be the driving factor that could provide vast improvement in the current and ever-evolving learning spaces of today.

As demonstrated by the students' various positive responses, blended learning is easily accepted for the 21st century learners of today, as it provides options that create more dynamic and diverse learning environments for current and future needs. The positive experiences throughout the course made it beneficial and meaningful for students, hence the implementation would be most beneficial to the future generation.

- 3) **Interactive and engaging activities are crucial to grab students' attention and interests.**

Because of the dynamic and multi-dimensional traits possessed by students, as mentioned by Prensky (2001), today's learners need to be

challenged with new modes of teaching to facilitate their interests and encourage their abilities.

As observed by the positive student responses in this study, today's learners easily embrace technological modes in their learning environments, and encouraging this enthusiasm would be a dynamic step in providing innovative solutions to the teaching and learning processes employed in today's world.

Hence, it can be seen that blended learning provides positive implications for both teachers and students in both their teaching and learning. With a more flexible role played by the teacher in utilising technological tools, students may respond in a more favourable manner towards classroom activities. This enhanced role, coupled with the students' enthusiasm in using dynamic modes of interaction will undoubtedly create more diverse learning environments in institutions of higher learning, presently, as well as in the future.

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