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Foreword

Welcome to the **Third Issue 2013** of the Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (JSSH)!

JSSH is an open access journal for the social sciences & humanities published by Universiti Putra Malaysia Press. It is independently owned and managed by the university and run on a non-profit basis for the benefit of the world-wide social science community.

In this issue, there are **25 articles** published; out of which **18** are regular articles and **7** are from an international conference, "Teaching English as Performing Art" ICELT 2011. The authors of these articles vary in country of origin (**Malaysia, Iran, China, Indonesia and Oman**).

The regular articles cover a wide range of topics, from an analysis of the political thought of Nadwī, Mawdudī and Qutb (*Razaleigh bin Muhamat@ Kawangit*), a study on collecting and contextualizing *Sundait* (Riddles) among the Rungus People of Sabah (*Low Kok On*), a study intended to show that Chopin's first novel, *At Fault*, and the tale, of "Lilacs", exhibit the same genius and modern forms and features of her later fiction (*Ali Khoshnood, Rosli Talif and Pedram Lalbakhsh*), a study of the impacts of microfinance bank loan on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries aquaculturists in Ogun state, Nigeria (*Olaoye, Olalekan Jacob and Odebiyi, Oluwaseun Christianah*), to research on Islamic finance on issues and challenges facing Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia (*Mohd. Shuhaimi Ishak, Osman Chuah Abdullah and Dzuljastri Abdul Razak*).

The research studies include topics related to language and linguistics, education and management; a paper on the analysis of the relationship between 'alternative music scene' involvement and English language learning, as described by 5 non-native English speakers (*Marco Ferrarese*), a study on how apologies are used in relation to gender (*Syamimi Turiman, Amelia Leong and Fauziah Hassan*), a research on what tasks of English writing and speaking skills are actually needed by EFL international students in order to improve their ability of English (*Reza Gholami, Noreen Noordin and Ghazali Mustapha*), an exploration study of the impact of Chinese vernacular medium of instruction on unity in multi-ethnic Malaysia (*Saran Kaur Gill, Yuen Chee Keong, Christina Ong Sook Beng and Hao Yan*), an article analyses the *wh*-question words, *naken* and *luk ai*, in Mendriq language using the Minimalist framework (*Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan*), a correlation study conducted to determine the relationship between the performance of educational administrators and organisational health in high schools in Tehran, Iran (*Masoumeh Pour Rajab, Ramli Bin Basri and Shaffe Mohd Daud*), a study on the knowledge sharing amongst lecturers in an educational institution in Malaysia (*Abdul Hamid, J., and Sulaiman, S.*), a study conducted to paint a picture of Malaysian parents' practices and perspectives towards school homework (*Parmjit, S., Sidhu, G. K and Chan, Y. F.*), a study reported on the acquisition of Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills amongst Form 2 Students in Sarawak: Interaction effects of gender, ethnicity, and school location (*Ong, E.T., Wong, Y.T., Sophia, M.Y., Sadiyah B., and Asmayati, Y.*), a study of the

characteristics of effective mathematics lessons as valued by teachers and pupils in three different types of primary schools in Malaysia (*Lim, C. S., Tang, K. N., and Tan, S. F.*), a study of the students' satisfaction towards blended learning in a tertiary course in Malaysia (*Roslina binti Ahmed Tajuddin, Nur Shaminah binti Mustafa Kamalu and Teoh Sian Hoon*), a study of the products attributes as attraction and as pull factor towards sustaining visitation to Putrajaya Botanical Garden (*Asmah Yahaya, Abdullah Mohd*) and a paper on an evasion game model for duopoly competition (*H. Eslaminosratabadi, M. Salimi, G. I. Ibragimov and M. Amini*).

I conclude this issue with 7 articles arising from the ICELT 2011 conference; a study of the factors affecting language performance: A comparison of three measurement approaches (*Kadeessa Abdul Kadir*), the viability of six-step method in teaching academic writing in EFL (*Berrington Xolani Siphosakhe Ntombela*), an article reported the findings of a reading comprehension test (pre-test) consisting of the tri-component skills namely literal, re-organisation and inferential, conducted among students of a public secondary school in the central state of Malaysia (*Abdul Rashid Mohamed, Lin Siew Eng and Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail*), a study on how teachers conceptualize their "professionalism" as English language teacher educators, particularly within the context of Indonesia (*Christine Manara*), the effect of teacher-directed Internet-based extensive reading materials on intermediate students' reading self-efficacy in an Institute in Boukan, West Azerbaijan, Iran (*Ahour Touran and Ghaderi Vafa*), an article on the integration of reading and writing skills in a number of commercial English language teaching (ELT) materials (*Saleh Al-Busaidi*) and a study of the connection between teachers' incidental focus on form, namely, corrective feedback and learners' uptake and immediate repair of errors in communicative English as a Foreign Language classrooms for adults (*Yassamin Pouriran and Jayakaran Mukundan*).

I anticipate that you will find the evidence presented in this issue to be intriguing, thought provoking, and hopefully useful in setting up new milestones. Please recommend the journal to your colleagues and students to make this endeavour meaningful.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all the contributors; namely the authors, reviewers and editors for their professional contributions who have made this issue feasible. Last but not the least, the editorial assistance of the journal division staff is fully appreciated.

JSSH is currently accepting manuscripts for upcoming issues based on original qualitative or quantitative research that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation.

Chief Executive Editor

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An Analysis of the Political Thought of Nadwī, Mawdudī and Qutb

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ABSTRACT

With the fall of the Islamic K̄hilafāh in 1924, many Islamic scholars realised there was an urgent need to reinstall the Islamic K̄hilafāh. Thus political thought in Islam rose to prominence among some scholars. Consequently, many Islamic political and religious movements re-emerged in the Muslim world with the aim of establishing Islamic rule in Muslim countries. These movements presented different methodologies in restoring Islamic rule. Therefore, this article closely looks at the ideas in Islamic political thought as evinced by scholars Nadwī, Mawdudī and Qutb.

Keywords: Political thought, Islamic political system, Nadwī, Mawdudī, Qutb

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic reformers Qutb and Mawdudī responded to the ‘decadence’ of their societies by providing political solutions to what they saw as an endemic malaise which could only be resolved through political means. Thus they embarked on a project of calling people to a political project that would realise their ideal of an Islamic state (Khurshid Ahamed & Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 1979: 73-74). However, in doing so they

stretched the resources in their means to what they believed was right recourse and used modern interpretations to justify their reasons.

Nadwī heavily criticised both Qutb and Mawdudī for claiming a monopoly of understanding of certain terms referred to in the Qur’an. Nadwī used Qur’anic verses as well as logical reasoning to create a powerful critique of their arguments (Arches Quarterly Journal, 2007, pp.101-102). He did this by referring to the interpretation and understanding of the same verses by other scholars in the past to suggest that there existed a great disparity between the actual significance that politics should be

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given in Islamic political discourse and the weight that it is, in fact, given by the interpretations of Qutb and Mawdudi. This method of the caller is the same method of enquiry in Islām. We find examples of this in the life of the Prophet Muḥammed and that of all other Islamic callers. The main objective of this article is to analyse ideas in Islamic political thought evinced by Nadwī, Mawdudī and Qutb.

THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC POLITICAL SYSTEM

Most political discourse in Islam revolves around two issues: the political role played by the prophet and the political position of the ʿArab warrior clans. After the great Islamic conquest had been achieved, the latter were eager to succeed the prophet as overlords within the large, multi-national, newly formed Muslim community. Being the undisputed messenger of God secured for the Prophet the highest position of unrivalled political leader. But shortly after his death, his companions differed on the issue of who should succeed him, and on what religious basis. It was this that came to be known as the issue of *Imāmah* or political leadership, and from which different political views, sects and parties sprang. Noting this earlier conflict, al-Ṣhāhristānī, in his *al-Milāl wa al-Nihāl* (the book of religious and philosophical sects) wrote, “the greatest conflict amongst the *ummah*, was the one of *Imāmah*; on no other Islamic principle has the sword ever been as scathing as on this (one)” (al-Balādhurī, 1988, p. 12).

Numerous definitions have been formulated by many Muslim thinkers based on the above statement to explain this system of governance. The meaning of “political power system” has always been linked to the vision of *Khilāfah* or Kingdom. The *Khilāfah* governance has ruled the Islamic world since the demise of the Prophet. al-Mawardī explained it as such: “It means protecting the religion – Islām – and ruling life with it,” (Abū al-Hasan ʿAli bin Moḥamed al-Mawardī, 1989, p. 15). Among contemporary Muslim thinkers, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabḥānī described the *Khilāfah* as “Presidency of all Muslims in order to rule with *Shariʿah* and to carry *Daʿwah* of Islām” (Taqī al-Dīn Nabḥānī, 1997: 3). ʿAbd al-Qader Awda considered *Khilāfah* as a “Political system based on two principles that are the obeisance to Allah’s order and *Shūra*. It does not matter [what] ... name you [give] to the nature of the governance as long as this governance is respectful of those two principles” (Bukhārī. 1996: Hadith no: 2608). Nadwī opted for the definition given by Ṣhāh Wālī Allah Dihlawī (Aḥmad bin ʿAbd al-Rahīm, known as Wālī Allah Dihlawī, 1702-1762, a great scholar of India, known for his famous book, *Hujjah al-Allah al-Bālighah*) that he considered as being accurate. Ṣhāh Wālī Allah’s definition is given as: “It is general governance with a challenge of setting religion – Islām – as [the] main ruler with the revival of ... Islamic science, the set of the pillars of Islām and the *Jihād* that should be implemented with ... compelling needs” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 203).

Nadwī agreed with the definition of Ṣḥah Wālī Allah as containing an essential acceptance of the Islamic definition of political power or governance (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 49). Islamic *Kḥilāfah* does contain many definitions but Nadwī summarised it in two main words, namely, *Jihād* and *Ijtihād*, for Nadwī the *Jihād* of Muslims was to make applicable the *Shari'ah* of Allah and its recommendations (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 204). It is generally argued if it is possible to find a person with all the required criteria today i.e. the qualities of being a scholar, understanding and being able to administer the law/justice and having intelligence and wisdom,) It is obvious that this type of person does not exist. The well-guided Caliphs of old were surrounded by a consultative Parliament, the *Majlis al-Shūra*. As given in *Sūrah al-Najm*, the Prophet “nor does he speak of –his own-desire, it is only a revelation revealed” (Qur’an: *Sūrah al-Najm*). The Prophet asked for advice from the *Sahābah* on many subjects related to daily life or the battles he led. It is clear that Nadwī was aware that such a well-qualified person did not exist but he suggested that the person chosen to serve the *Ummah* should do so with faithfulness – *Ikhḥlās*. This type of person would certainly devote himself to the *Ummah* with regards to its interests. This devoted person should rule the *Ummah* as successor to the Prophet. His main target would be to work for the sake of the message sent by Allah through the Messenger – *Rasūl*. He should not seek his own glory or power by dictating his own will and desires.

Regarding the *Kḥilāfah* and its state in Islam, Nadwī emphasised its importance by referring to the Qur’an and Sunnah. Islām brought deep reforms to Arabic society. The reorganisation of social relations within the community was the main target of these reforms, which were based on moral values beneficial to everyone. That was why the community needed to be led by the *Kḥilāfah* system implemented through a Consultative Assembly, the ‘*Majlis Shūra*’. Governance by *Kḥilāfah* was to be done according to the rules of *Shari'ah*. Muslims should have an organised community life as taught by the Prophet: “If there are three people travelling together one of them should lead” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 52).

Islām as a way of life with its particular rules forbids any type of governance based on monarchy and clergy because that does not take into consideration the competencies and the values of society. This is very clear in the *Qur'an* as given in *Sūrah al-Māidah*: “Oh Messenger, Proclaim-the message- which has been sent down to you from your lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Verily, Allah guides not the people who disbelieve.” This verse explains clearly why the Prophet did not appoint Ali as his successor. The non-appointment of Ali as *Kḥalīfah* at the decease of the prophet was a mark of the recommendation of the *Qur'an* about the *Shūra*. However, we should not interpret that Ali and his tribe (*Banu Hisham*), which was the Prophet’s tribe as well, were not eligible for such a position. However, if that had happened Islām would have become a

type of governance-ruled system based on inheritance, and the *Banu Hisham* would have been a sort of clergy family, which is in total contradiction with the essence of the message that Islām revealed. The election of Abū Bakr as successor to the Prophet reveals the importance of the *Shūra* in Muslim society. The successor to the Prophet was the ruler, and he and those whom he ruled were there to help each other in order to facilitate a reign of justice and obedience to the *Khalīfah*, which were obligations under Islamic regulations (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, pp. 70-80). The Prophet said, “It is obligatory for one to listen and obey (the ruler’s orders) unless these orders involve disobedience (to Allah); but if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed, he should not listen to or obey it” (Bukhārī. 1996. Hadith no: 203).

There were two types of government in the point of view of Nadwī. One was established to collect money through taxes and to enrich the state and its agents regardless of the social and economic situation of the people. The second was aware of the needs of the people and worked to make a significant contribution by laying aside all the governing protocols established by its predecessors who had transformed the *khalīfah* governance to monarchical reign, and instead, spread Allah’s recommendations on the path of *Hidāyah*. This type of government would certainly bring prosperity and peace to society (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1967: 104-106). Nadwī considered ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al Aziz as the right example when he

took over the governance of the Umayyad dynasty. He was governing as a well-guided *khalīfah*, and re-established his ties with the Muslim population.

Nadwī compared the Abbasid reign to that of the Umayyad before the advent of ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-Aziz. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Muḥamed al-Fateh and the rise of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and Asia bolstered a sense of confidence and strength within the Muslim population. Unfortunately, this Empire failed to regenerate the *khalīfah* governance correctly, and established instead the monarchy system of governance. As the centuries passed, Islamic governance drifted away from rule by the *ʿulama*. The *ʿulama* were consulted by the governor as an independent process in governance. Once the *ʿulama* became distanced from governance they lost influence or impact on decisions taken by the governors. Some of them accepted the status of simple manservant while some others preferred to resign. As the governors grew more and more to represent themselves and their interests, they became less knowledgeable of Islām as a religious guide for Muslims. Everybody has lost faith in their leaders and that is why the Islamic world is accusing such deficiency in all areas of development and progress and became a colonial country (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, pp. 159-170).

Reformers have always been the pillars of governance in Muslim society. The book written by Nadwī about Islamic reformers, *Rijāl al-Fikr wa al-Daʿwa fī al-Islām*- stated

his position on these reformers: “We should recognise that reformers have always been in the forefront at any time ... Muslim society was in need of revival...” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1956, p. 20). Nadwī did not deny that some political issues in the history of Islām stemmed from the negative actions of the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers such as Yūsuf al-Qardhāwī. However, it would be incorrect to give the impression that Muslim civilisation was tyrannical under the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires. It would also be incorrect to state as do some orientalist that these empires made conquests of other countries only to grab the wealth and to make subjects of the populations of those countries (Yūsuf al-Qardhāwī, 1997, p. 172).

Nadwī noticed the consequences of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire on different Arab and Muslim countries. In some Arab countries, the rise of dictators led to a failure to adhere to Muslim rules and regulations within the population. He suggested that for those countries not to experience a total collapse in their faith and practice of Islam, they would have had to return to the prophet’s way, and this only through a large-scale mass protest. The political system established in those countries was not mainly for the benefit of the population or for the preservation of Islam (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1978, pp. 25-26). Nadwī claimed that political campaigns were all based on promises and wishes. In the name of total freedom lies were permitted as long as they could help governance. That was why Nadwī talked about the total absence

of political consciousness in those Arabic and Muslim populations. The people did not make any distinctions between their enemies and their friends. This is in contrast with western countries, where the involvement of the people in the political process in western countries was proof of the very high level of its political consciousness and the political leaders would not try to misguide the people through deception.

Nadwī claimed that “in order to restore the Muslim society to its real identity justice [as given in] ... Allah’s *shari‘ah* should rule ... society. Our leaders do not believe in ... Islamic values as a way of life and happiness. They are submitted to the western values and ignore the essential[s] of Islām. They are imposing their own view of life ... [on] our [people] ... and that’s why there ... [are] always clash[es]. They then try to cut the source of what they call roots of troubles by implementing ... [an] education system with non-Islamic values. This education system is not the real answer to the expectations of these ... [people]” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1990: 180). Nadwī always supported Islām as being indispensable in ruling Muslim society and considered the return to true Islamic an obligation. Islamic governance would avoid any political agenda or clashes between the people and their leaders. The main reason was because everyone would be involved in building an Islamic society with the intention of making applicable Allah’s rule and law, which he called *al-Hakīmiyyah*. Nadwī supported by referring to the Qur’anic verse: “And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression,

and there prevail justice and faith in Allah” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Anfāl: 39).

It is absolutely important to consider the establishment of an Islamic political system as a paramount priority not only by leaders but also the people, who have to involve themselves in achieving this target. An Islamic political system ruling in Muslim countries would prevent the society from falling into immorality and sin. It would also maintain society on the path of the Islamic faith. Leading society is a great duty which must fall to someone who has a clear and thorough understanding of Allah’s obligations and rules. The idea of establishing religion as the ruler of society has legitimacy in the *Qur’an*, where in *Sūrah Shūra*, verse 13 says: “He-Allah- has ordained for you the same religion-Islamic monotheism-which he ordained for Noah, and that which we have revealed to you–Mohamed–and that which we ordained for Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying you should establish religion-to do what it orders you to do practically-and make no divisions in it-religion-intolerable for the *Mushrikīn* is that to which you–Muḥammed–call them. Allah chooses for himself when he wills, and guides unto himself who turns in repentance and in obedience.” This verse confirms that religion is the ruler of society in its daily life, which doesn’t mean *Khilāfah* and governance only, for that what al-Mawdudī has always called . In this context al-Mawdudī asked, “What are the political purposes in order to achieve an Islamic state?” For al-Mawdudī the answer to this question was in *Sūrah al Hadid*, verse

25: “Indeed we have sent our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed to them the scripture and the balance –justice-that mankind may keep up justice.” In *Sūrah al-Hajj*, verse 41, it says: “Those –Muslim rulers-who, if we give them powering the land , they enjoin to perform the five compulsory congregational at to pay the *Zakāt* to enjoin *al-maruf* and forbid *al-munkar*”

Regarding the Hadith narrated by ʿUthman, the Prophet Muḥammed said: “Certainly Allah will perform by the power which cannot be performed by the *Qur’an*” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1990: 180). Islām is in need of a governmental authority to eliminate what the *Qur’an* recommendation cannot do. The purpose of the Islamic state does not only focus on defending borders, raising the people’s quality of life and making the country safe. It is also to lead the people towards goodness –*Hasanah*, which Islām has always recommended for the benefit of humanity. This means that any action performed by the government must consider goodness that can be achieved by the people.

THE VIEW OF NADWĪ ON THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF MAWDUDĪ AND SAYYID QUTB

Mawdudī (1903-1979) is one of the leading Islamic scholars of the Indian subcontinent in the 20th century. However, his ideas have made him quite controversial from the point of view of the traditional ʿulama. He explained in his writings the main Islamic concepts of ʿIbadat (act of worship

or devotion; denoting Man's relationship with God) as well as *Mu'āmalat* (social intercourse, indicating relations among human beings), giving a different definition. In his book, '*al-Mustālahāt al-Arba'a fī al-Qur'an*', he said worship was instituted by Allah as a means to prepare Muslims to work for the cause of establishing Islamic rule on earth. Islamic terms such as *ʿIbadat*, *Rabb*-(Lord), *Ilah* (Lord, Master) and *Dīn* (faith way of life) were interpreted politically in relation to divine sovereignty. However, he did not claim his interpretations were new, but argued that these were actually the original meanings of the terms and their real meaning had remained obscured from the inception of the Islamic caliphate. In his writings he criticised the performance of religious personalities throughout Islamic history such as Hassan al-Banna, Hassan al-Hudaibi and Qutb (Abū al-A'la al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 28).

Undoubtedly, this is the perfect and most suitable method. But some *Du'at* or some reformers who came after Mawdudī came to believe incorrectly that the words from their mouths covered not only the value of calling-*Da'wah*-but also that they completely explained the religion. So it is apparent that their flaws originate from this point. These explanations become generalised beyond the limits of the *Da'wah* movement (missionary work for Islam). When a thought occurs to a *Dā'ī*- he believes that it explains the entire religion. Therefore, he starts to explain the religion according to the idea that had occurred to him (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, pp. 30-31).

This is how Mawdudī and Qutb seem to have approached religion – from the slant of politics. In their point of view, all the parts of religion are based on politics, and for them, politics is a basic unit of *Dīn*-Religion (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 32). It is an undisputable fact that politics is part of religion. No one argues with the views that are expressed by Mawdudī in his book "*al-Mustālahāt al-Arba'a fī al-Qur'an*" (Abū al-A'la al-Mawdudī, 2006: 14), in which he urged that the *Da'ī* compel Muslims to pay attention to one specific area which was the need of the hour, the Islamic State. He further argues that there could not be any revolutionary act if the *du'at* or callers of Islam failed to adopt this method. He blew the political angle out of proportion. He used politics as the basis of religion.

Al Nadwī states that since the first part of the 17th century there had been a decline in Islamic thinking and politics due to the influence of changes in European political thought. Therefore, it was felt that a similar shift needed to be made in the Islāmic thought. A large number of youth travelled to Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century or in the first part of the twentieth century. As they moved closely among and with Europeans, their belief in Islām was shaken and some quit Islām. Most of them were greatly influenced by Western civilisation and thinking. In my opinion, it is true that the Muslim way of life was westernized by the local people in the name of modernity. So, when this happened, writers and scholars living in the different parts of the Islamic world rallied together

to face the difficult situation. They left no stone unturned to defend Islām, its *shari'ah*, its civilisation and its history. In the middle of the 20th century Mawdudī, whose articles began to appear in the magazine, “*Tarjumat al-Qur’an*”, which was published in Hyderabad, India, drew the attention of a large number of educated Muslims. He made a tremendous contribution to criticising the Western way of life and its civilisation under the basis of Islamic principles. There is no doubt that his writings, replete with evidence, made a tremendous impact. It is an undeniable fact that his books and writings made a huge contribution towards creating awareness of Islam within the Islamic world. It would be a great injustice to him if this fact were ignored (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 10-11).

In the point of view of Nadwī, if Mawdudī had paid his whole attention to this point it would have been a great contribution to Islām, and this would have satisfied Muslims. However, he tried to give a new interpretation of Islamic thought by going beyond this point. For this purpose he wrote a book called *al-Mustālahāt al-Arba’a fī al-Qur’an*. Through this he tried to give the political form for the establishment of the Islamic rule (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 15-16). When we examined the stance of Nadwī on the political views of the two scholars (al Mawdudī and Qutb), it is pertinent to put forward some quotes taken from the book, *al-Mustālahāt al-Arba’a fī al-Qur’an*.

AL-MUSTĀLAHĀT AL-ARBA’A FĪ AL-QUR’AN - THE FOUR KEY CONCEPTS OF THE QUR’AN

The contemporary Islamic thinker, Abū al-A’la al-Mawdudī, when trying to explain these terms and their importance on the life of Muslims in his book, mentioned that “these four words are the base of Qur’anic meaning and the whole *Da’wah* of the Holy Qur’an rotates centred around them. It means Allah is one, the Eternal God. There is no God but Allah. No one companies in his divinity. So, man should accept Allah as God and reject the divinity of others; he should worship Him alone and not others. In addition, he should purify his religion of Allah and reject all other religions, except Allah’s religion. It is clear that anyone who wants to learn the Holy Qur’an deeply should get the real meaning and the comprehensive understanding of the four terms mentioned above (Abū al-A’la al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 30).

Mawdudī confirms that these Islamic basic terms are completely understood by the people on whom the Holy Qur’an was addressed to because the Holy Qur’an is in Arabic and the people know the meaning of *Ilah* and *Rabb* as these two words had been used before the revelation of the Holy Qur’an. The other two words, *‘Ibadah* and *Dīn*, are commonly used in their language. Those who opposed the call knew the implications of their refusal while those who accepted the call knew that they had to discard their superstitious beliefs and embrace the new message. Likewise,

‘*Ibadah* and *Dīn* knew what ‘*Ubudiyyah* and what *Dīn* stood for.

However, these gradually changed. The truth began to disappear. The dust of ignorance and sin covered them and not only eroded their broader and real meaning, but also restricted these four Qur’anic terms to a particular nuance. He forwarded two reasons for this sad state of affairs. Firstly, the majority of later generations could not understand the real meaning of some of the pure Arabic words. Secondly, the real meanings of these terms used in the *Jahīliyyah* society did not remain in the Islamic societies that followed it. Hence, the linguists and the scholars who gave explanation to the holy Qur’an interpreted them as they understood. Actually, their interpretations were different from the original meaning of the Arabic language. He gave two examples for this. They made the term *Ilah* similar to the word idols and gods, and they made the word *Rabb* similar to the people who are providers and sustainers, and the word ‘*Ibadah* was defined by them for the activities such as prayers and religious observances. Meanwhile, the word *Dīn* was given the meaning in religious term. The word *Taghūt* was explained by them as Satan or idol (Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 2006, pp. 35-36). Consequently, the people found it difficult to get the real meaning of the word *da‘wah* of the Holy Qur’an.

Thus, let’s highlight this weakness in understanding Mawdudī in the following lines, which were taken from the criticism of Nadwī, and shared by many expert Islamic scholars. Nadwī aptly started his criticism

with a question of historical importance as follows: “Were these terms not understood for many centuries or ages and was the real spirituality of Islam kept hidden” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 42-43). The main points on the criticism of Nadwī are:

- The competence of the Islamic *Ummah* -Muslim societies- of learning and understanding the clarity of the features of the holy Qur’an
- Islamic *Ummah* never became victims of digression or were in complete ignorance in any given period of time or ages (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 42).
- The focal point of the four Qur’anic terms in balance (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 33).
- The Islamic rituals between Means and Goals (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 109).
- Similar statement was also expressed by Sayyid Qutb (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 71).

The aforementioned points are given in detail in the subsequent subsection.

The Competence of the Islamic Ummah of Learning and Understanding the Clarity of the Features of The Holy Qur’an

Al-Mawdudī explains the meaning of these Qur’anic terms completely in terms of the political perspective. The views taken from his famous book “*al-Mustālahāt al-Arba‘a fī al-Qur’an*” clearly indicated that politic was the main and real aim of the Holy Qur’an.

Such a thought as that of Nadwī, sees, that it makes Islamic people who do not possess a deep knowledge of Islām come under the wrong impression that they are not kept well-informed of the Holy Qur'an until scholars such as al-Mawdudī and Sayyid Qutb unveiled it (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 33). Although such explanation seems to be not dangerous, they can become deep rooted, and cause harmful consequences to the Islamic thought because it may create doubts in the competence of the *Ummah* and its leadership and *Da'wah* position. Moreover, it may also create suspicion on the understanding of the Holy Qur'an by *Ummah* and thereby create room for anarchy in their deeds. Further, it devalues the foot prints of the reformists and the hard working scholars as the Holy Qur'an has not been understood for a long period of time and thus, creating doubts about its clarity. Not only that, everything mentioned in respect of the Holy Qur'an may become doubtful at present and in the future (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 34).

Nadwī proves his point of view through some concrete historical evidences pointing out the example of the activities of the group called the *al-Bātīniyyah*. They adopted precisely the same strategies to cut off the connection between the words, terms and their meanings that depend on the basis of Islamic life. It was used to twist the meanings of the terms, as they wanted to destroy Islām. With the growth of the Greek philosophy, the history of *Mazhabs*-school of thought- and groups witnessed a new turmoil, which was most detrimental

to Islam. It was the backdrop of their confusion of *al-Bātīniyyah*. The majority of the *al-Bātīniyyah* were individuals and communities that lost their rulers and leadership in the confrontation with the opponent rulers who had fought against their Muslim rulers. There were no hopes for them to get back their regime tough war. Also, it was impossible for them to take refuge in atheism as it would create an uprising among the Muslims. Therefore, in order to achieve their target without disturbing the Muslims, they adopted a new method (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 133).

They noted that the Islamic basis, its beliefs and its rules and regulations were presented through the words that were indispensable to convey every new message sent by Allah who says, "And we sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the message) clear to them. Then, Allah misleads who He wills and guides who He wills. And He is the All mighty the All – wise" (Qur'an: Sūrah Ibrahim: 4). There were such words with similar meanings that were commonly used and the Islamic *Ummah* were very much familiar with them. So, the words *al-Nubūwwah* (Prophethood), *al-Malāikat* (angel), *al-Ma'adh* (resurrection), *al-Jannah* (heaven), *al-Nār* (Hell), *al-Shari'ah* (Islamic law), *al-Fard* (obligatory duty), *al-Halāl* (allowed), *al-Harām* (forbidden), *al-Zakāt* (charity), *al-Hajj* (pilgrimage) that give the specific meanings were well understood by Muslims in unison. This same view was passed on from one generation to another

in the Muslim *Ummah*. These words are a protected asset, which can be changed by none. Each and every Muslim should adhere to it (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 134).

Al Bātiniyyun well understood that the close link between the religious terms and their meanings which formed a basis of the Islamic life and the main body in terms of education and thought. Therefore, they tried to pollute it by saying that the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muḥammed have both inner and outer meanings as that a seed has got two separate parts, shell and the kernel (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1999, p. 112). Al-Nadwī confirms that the unity of the Muslims is dependent upon this link. Through this link, the Muslims get connected with their past. If the link between words and meanings is cut off, the Muslims will become victims of every philosophy and the forged *da'wah*. When this happens, it will pave a way for everyone to say what he wants, and thus create rational and religious turmoil in the Islamic society (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 36). Nadwī explains this through the historical evidence that the basic characteristics of the Holy Qur'an contradict with the Islamic basic terms and these have not been understood for ages.

The Holy Qur'an has many characteristics. One of the main features of the Holy Qur'an is that its verses are crystal clear. Allah says, "It is He who has sent down to you Muḥammed the Book (this Qur'an). al Nadwī also mentioned there are fifteen places where different forms of words are found, and this ensures

that the Holy Qur'an is explanatory and crystal clear. For an instance, Allah says "It is He who created you from a single person (Adam), and has given you a place for residing (on the earth or in your mother's wombs) and a place of storage [in the earth (in your graves) or in your father's loins]. Indeed, we have explained in detail our revelations (this Qur'an) for people who understand" (Qur'an: Sūrah al-An'am: 98). Through this Nadwī proves that Muslims generation to generation got not only the mere book but also words and meanings. Allah has described in many places in the Holy Qur'an that it is crystal clear. Allah says, "These are the verses of the clear book (the Qur'an that makes clear the legal and illegal things, legal laws a guidance and a blessing). Verily, we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may understand." (Qur'an: Sūrah Yusuf: 1-2) The above-mentioned reality and descriptions contradict the view that the Holy Qur'an has not been understood for many centuries. Therefore Nadwī raises a question, "Can a rational thinking person believe that these four words which contain belief, deeds and *da'wah* cannot be understood?" When Allah repeatedly mentions that the Holy Qur'an is crystal clear. Another question arises here, "Were the Muslim *Ummah* took such a long time to understand what Qur'an said; were they so ignorant to the basic teaching of Qur'an?" (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 42). This matter will be discussed further in the subsequent paragraph.

Islamic Ummah never Becomes Victims of Digression or Incomplete Ignorance in Any Given Period of Time or Age

Nadwī criticises the thinking of Mawdudī by showing evidence of *Sunnah* rational witness and the comments written by Hasan al-Hudaibi (i.e. the leader of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood organization, who was appointed after the assassination of the founder, Hassan al-Banna, in 1949; cited in Sivan & Emmanuel, 1985, p. 49) to counter the ideas of Mawdudī. Nadwī considers such research methods and thinking methodology taken from Mawdudī to have paved a way for the people to devalue the work of reformists and scholars who strived hard for the cause of Islām and the foot prints left by them. Therefore, theoretically, it would be understood as if Muslims had been ignorant throughout all these four terms for a long time. This further raises the doubt that the Muslim *Ummah* has been in sheer ignorance, complete neglect, and clear perversity. The Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, however, clearly declare that the Muslim *Ummah*, unlike in the other communities, never get engaged in perversity (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 47). This view is confirmed by great *Imāms* and scholars who are expert in Hadith. According to a Hadith, "There is a group of my *Ummah* who perpetually remain on truth and those who plot against them cannot cause any harm to them until the Day of Judgment (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 49). Ibn Kathīr, when describing the following verse "And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger Muḥammed after the right path

has been shown clearly to him and follows other than the believer's way..." (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 67), ensures that the total Muslim *Ummah* never rallies around falsehood as they had unshakable respect and trust towards their prophet. Nadwī proves his point through evidence of rationalism and by quoting Hasan al-Hudaibi in the following manner.

Islām has given an important place to education and research, unlike other religions (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 46-47). This is clearly stressed in many places in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Hence, the Islamic scholars have written excellent books on all subjects and left none. As the neutral European researchers mentioned, it is the education which was left by the Muslims that became the fountain of the rise, development of education and growth of the civilization of Europe when it plunged into the darkness of ignorance. The European author, 'Karinsky' says that modern knowledge shows us how much we are indebted to the Islamic scholars, who spread the light of education when Europe sank in complete darkness (cited in Zaook al-Hijr, 2000, p. 161). Nadwī criticises the thought of al-Mawdudī saying that a flawless rational thinker cannot believe that the religion which created many scholars and intellectuals in different spheres has been ignorant of the basic truth of the Holy Qur'an. It is evident that al-Mawdudī also stressed this point when he was giving explanation on the *Ahādith*, "*Imāms* are from the tribe of Quraish". He questioned whether the total *Ummah* was wrong in

understanding the text of the *Ahādith* (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 48).

A number of scholars and the research in the Islamic and Arabic world wrote comments in their respective criticisms about the view of al-Mawdudī. Among them are Hasan al-Hudaibi, an Egyptian, Muḥammed Jerisha also an Egyptian, Ḥussain Aḥmed al-Madanī, an Indian, Yusuf Bin Nūri, a Pakistani, and others along with al Nadwī. Nadwī echoed the views of Hasan al-Hudaibi, written in the book “*Du‘at lā Kud‘aāt*”, in a reply to the views of al-Mawdudī saying that the above statement of al-Mawdudī was unacceptable as the Holy Qur’an mentions each and every word in a clear definition. Thus, there is no necessity to go towards any other interpretation. Here, Nadwī raises a question whether it can be told that a larger part of the Holy Qur’an has not been understood despite the fact that it is a divine guidance.

The Focal Point of the Four Qur’anic Terms on Balance

The criticism of Nadwī on the views of the late al-Mawdudī and Qutb centred around the use of the four terms, *al-Ilah*, *al-Rabb*, *al-‘Ibadat* and *al-Dīn*. The last two words get pushed towards the first two words. Thus, it is pertinent to highlight the following points to summarize his thought. The limitation of the meanings of the terms *al-Ilah* and *al-Rabb* within the framework of sovereignty; the nature of the link between the Lord and the Slave, and the major aim of the *da‘wah* movements. These points will be dealt with in details in the following subsection.

Limitations of the Meanings of the Terms *al Ilah* And *al Rabb* within the Framework of Sovereignty

Al-Mawdudī, when describing the term *al Ilah*, says that its meaning refers to everything that belongs to him in terms of divinity. The basis of divinity is sovereignty and Allah says, “It is He (Allah) who is the only *Ilah* (only God be worshipped) in the universe. He is the all-wise and the all knower” (Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 47). Al-Mawdudī, having cited the above verses to support his view, further says that all these verses from the word underline the main idea that both divinity and sovereignty are closely interwoven, giving no difference between them, so the one who does not have sovereignty can not be an *Ilah* (God) (Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 54). Al-Mawdudī, on the other hand, takes shelter in a number of verses of the Holy Qur’an to explain the word *al-Rabb*, and gives an example: “Indeed your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then He rose over the throne (really in a manner that suits His majesty). He brings the night as a cover over the day, seeking it rapidly, and (He created) the sun, the moon, the stars subjected to his command. Surely, His is the creation and commandment. Blessed is Allah the lord of the ‘*Alamīn* (mankind jinn and all that exists)” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-A‘raf, p. 54) says that the lordship is equal to sovereignty and he describes *al-Rabb* that he is the ruler of this universe and he is the owner of it. It is only his order. And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him” (Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 2006,

pp. 120-121). He further says that the reality of *al-Rabb* is the superpower, and worshipping and slavery mean completely obeying this super power and the prophet is the representative of the *sultān* (Lord), and under this basis, people should obey him. Ruling and sovereignty are homogeneous and inseparable. Believing and obeying other than Allah is polytheism (Abū al-A^ola al-Mawdudī, 1978, p. 217). Meanwhile, Nadwī responded to al-Mawdudī in the side of understanding both names (*al-Ilah* and *al-Rabb*). *Al-Ilah* for Nadwī gives a deep understanding of the only God, while *al-Rabb* refers to the role of God (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 31).

Nature of the Link between the Lord and the Slaves

According to the views of al-Mawdudī, the link between God and man is that of the ruler and the ruled. The description of sovereignty and omnipotence is the original beautiful of his names and characteristics. The *da^owah* means believing the sovereignty of Allah, and leading the life according to it. It was the aim of the prophethood. And it was also the purpose of revealing the Holy Books, Nadwī in his reply says that the real link between the creator and the creations and slaves and the Lord is the most comprehensive, wide, deep and precise rather than the link of the ruler and the ruled. Allah has mentioned his beautiful names and the characteristics in detail in a beautiful manner. They never say what is expected from the slave, believing only in his sovereignty. For an example, Nadwī quotes these two verses, “He is Allah

beside whom *Lā Ilaha Illā Huwa*, none has the right to be worshiped as the king. He is the Holy, the One free from all defects, the creator, the cherisher, the sustainer, and the protector of His creatures and He is the All mighty, and the supreme. Glory to Allah (High is He) above all that they associate as partners with him” (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 81-82). “He is Allah, the creator, the inventor of all things, and the provider of all forms. To him belong the best names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify him. And He is the All mighty, the All-wise” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Hashr: 22-23). He says that the names and characteristics described in the Holy Qur’an request the Prophet to love Allah by his heart and to sacrifice himself for the satisfaction of Allah as a deep love cannot emerge without knowing the characteristics of Allah well. This can be seen in the life of all prophets, especially that of Prophet Muḥammed’s teachings and prayers. The paradigm of the deep love towards Allah and the way of worshipping him could be seen in his companions such as *Tābi^ouns* and *Tābi^ou al Tābi^ouns*, following two generations (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 84).

Ibn Taimiyyah also agrees with this interpretation. According to Ibn Taimiyyah, obedience and submission alone do not fulfil the duty of worshipping; worship should be completed with much love. The definition of the word *Ilah* is that He should be loved by heart, respected, feared and hoped (Ibn Taimiyyah, 1963, p. 6). When the definition of Ibn Taimiyyah on Lord and worship is compared with the

definition given by al-Mawdudī on *Ilah* and *Rabb*, it is obvious that there is a big discrepancy in them. As pointed out by Nadwī, the formal lord hardly requires him to show much love or remembering him; he will simply expect others to abide by his rules and regulations. Nadwī underlines the dangerous consequences of this type of narrow thinking. He says, “whoever confines the characteristics and the duties of Allah within the framework of sovereignty, I fear whether the following verse will be applicable to them (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 84). “They did not evaluate Allah with the evaluation due to him...” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-An‘am: 91).

The Major Aim of the *Da‘wah* Movements

From al-Mawdudī’s point of view, there is no difference between polytheism in the rules and polytheism in worship, i.e. submitting oneself to others (none other than Allah) in his rules with political meaning is polytheism as worshipping others apart from Allah. Politics seems to be the focal point in the efforts and the thoughts of al-Mawdudī. That is why Nadwī criticises his thought, which runs towards a single direction, saying that his call was targeted towards political submission, by submitting himself towards his sovereignty. All his writings and efforts are merely based on this point. This thought will certainly create negative impacts on the society whose members’ religious awareness is feeble read the books, and the articles of Mawdudī will understand that his thoughts are in essence atheism

in politics and theism in worship (Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 47). On the contrary, Nadwī urges that *da‘wah* is for the oneness of Allah, and it completely rejects idolatry, innovations and suppressions and for salvaging the people from the evils. These are the main goals of prophethood. The purpose of sending prophets is to also achieve this goal (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 90). The Holy Qur’an declared the deity of human beings as *al-Arbab*, the lord. Allah said “They (Jews and Christians) took their *Rabbis* and their monks to be their lords besides Allah” (Qur’an: Surah al-Tawba: 31). Allah further describes the deities made of stone as –*Shirkh al-Akbar* – as great polytheism, and –*al-Rijs* – as abomination and –*Kawl al-Zūr* – as falsehood. “So, shun the adulation of idol and shun falsehood” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Hajj: 30). “Be true to the faith in Allah and never assign partners to Him: if anyone assigns partners to Allah, he would resemble a person who had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds, or a person whom the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown into an endless precipice” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Hajj: 31). The second polytheism is not easier than the first from the point of view of Nadwī. Prophet Muḥammed gave preference to fight against idolatry. The same practice was carried out by the earlier prophets. When prophet Muḥammed was victorious in Mecca, he broke with his own hands 360 deities that were around the *Ka‘bah*. Prophet Muḥammed kept on reciting the following verse when he was breaking the statues, “And say: Truth (i.e.

Islamic monotheism or this Qur'an or *Jihād* against polytheists) has come and –*Bātil*-falsehood (i.e. Satan or polytheism) has vanished. Surely –*Bātil*- falsehood is ever bound to vanish” (Qur'an: Sūrah al-Isra': 81). Prophet Muḥammed did not stop there. He began to send brigades to destroy deities wherever they were found (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 93). When Prophet Muḥammed was on his death bed, he said “Curse be on the Jews and Christians, as they took the graves of their prophets as (the places of worship” (Bukhārī, 1996; Hadith no. 727). This clearly shows that he was much concerned about idolatry. Prophet Muḥammed, giving prominence to stop idolatry, indicates that idolatry was an old disease that was afflicted on the people from one generation to another. He warned the *ummah* to be vigilant against the idolatry that would creep into them (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 94).

There is evidence to show various types of idolatry that are practiced from time to time. For instance, twelve centuries after *Hijrī*, some people began worshiping trees in the Arabian Peninsula. This indeed compelled Muḥammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb to take steps to renovate the call for monotheism. Remnants of the idolatry could be seen even now in some rituals such as getting blessing by touching tombs, reciting *Mawluds*, and other similar innovations (ʿAli Muḥammed Juraisha, 1991, p. 28). There is a common feature among all prophets, that is, they all encountered the problem of idolatry and they fought against it. Other forms of *Jāhiliyyah* are obeying

others against the principle of none other than Allah, accepting verdicts of others against the principle of no verdict except that of Allah and following the legislation made by others, shunning divine legislation. All such deviations are equally sin as idolatry. Therefore, no one should make attempts to underrate the seriousness of committing the sin of worshipping idolatry. At the same time, any act of idolatry should not be allowed to occupy any place at the corner of *Jihād* and *Daʿwah*. Therefore, Nadwī insists that such idolatry should not be named as silly *Jāhiliyyah*. Nadwī further warns that such naming does not only cause harms to the *daʿwah* of the prophets and their efforts, but also create doubts on the perpetual existence of the Holy Qur'an. A consequence of such contradictions could be felt in real life, and we can see them in different forms today. That is what the companion of the Prophet learnt from versus such as this (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 97).

Nadwī explains, until the world gets rapid changes, time gets advanced and Islam makes a long journey this danger continues to exist. Therefore, it is the responsibility duty of the scholars, Islamic *Daʿīs*, and the representatives of the apostles to take the necessary measures that can eradicate the problem (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, pp. 94-95). According to our view, the first idolatry, i.e. accepting other gods apart from Allah, is one of the most appalling deviations that makes grave impacts on the Muslim *Ummah*. Therefore, equal efforts should be made to eradicate both forms of

idolatry. Although al-Mawdudī considers the basis of divinity as sovereign and sees no difference between them, the Holy Qur'an makes *al-Rubūbiyyah* worship as similar to sovereignty, and its origin and reality is one's loyalty, obedience and submission (Abū al-ʿAlā al-Mawdudī, 2006, p. 47). Having examined this point, let us come to a question, "what is the status of *ʿIbadah* and its deeds and its forms that are made compulsory in *Shariʿah* and the prophet Muḥammed loved them very much?" The possible answers to this question are elaborated in the following subsection:

The Islamic Rituals between Means and Goals

The Islamic rituals such as prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage are the pillars of the edifice of Islām. Islām is built on five pillars. They are *Imān* or faith - establishment of prayer, giving alms, fasting during the month of *Ramadhān* and performing *Hajj*. How will the building exist if the pillars are weak? According to the analysis of al-Mawdudī, the Islamic rituals are considered as a means to achieve the target of making political changes. Therefore, acts of worship become secondary in his thought. Fully getting engaged in *ʿIbadah* is a result of ignorance of not knowing the spirituality of Islām according to him. In explaining this further, he said that the elements of worship include devotion towards Allah, obedience towards him and respecting him. In order to clarify this point, he also puts forward a question, "What is your opinion regarding a servant who has been commanded to do

a task and unlike the one who is carrying it out. He keeps on standing with his hands folded, repeating the name of his superior millions of time. In such a situation, can it be considered that the servant obeys his superior? (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 103). However, Nadwī refutes this method of al-Mawdudī's interpretation that devalues the *ʿIbadahs* with evidence from the Qur'anic verses and prophets', saying that encourages doing such rituals. He coins some evidence from a historical perspective, as follows:

- Evidence from the Holy Qur'an: Nadwī reveals that, on the contrary, the Holy Qur'an encourages doing *ʿIbadah* and it adores a person who does a great deal of *ʿIbadah*. Allah says, "Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (in charity in Allah's cause) out of what we have done on them" (Qur'an: Sūrah al-Sajadah: 16), and He says "And those who spend the night in worship of their lord, prostrate and standing" (Qur'an: Sūrah al-Furqān: 64). "And the men and women must remember Allah with their hearts and tongues" (Qur'an: Sūrah al-Ahzāb: 35). And He says, "Oh you who believe, remember Allah with much remembrance and glorify Him with praises morning and afternoon [the early morning (*ḥajr*) and *ʿAsr*] prayers" (Qur'an: Sūrah al-Ahzāb: 41-42).
- Evidence from the Sayings of Prophet Muḥammed: Note that only one Hadith will be discussed in this regard, although there are countless of Hadiths on this

particular subject. °Abd Allah Ibn Bisir narrated that a man who came to Prophet Muḥammed and asked the Messenger of Allah, “there are many rituals in Islam and can you tell me one of them that I can perpetually do it? The Prophet replied that your tongue should always remember Allah” (Bukhārī, 1996. Hadith no: 3375).

Historical Evidences of Reformation: Nadwī says that the reformists and religious scholars called the people to concentrate on enhancing their spiritual development, prayer, *Zikr* and other acts of worship. None of these scholars attempted to devalue the act of worship as al-Mawdudī did (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p 103). His thoughts, efforts and writings completely focused only on the political aspect of the life. He has repeated it several times. He mentions that the purpose of sending prophets to this world is to make changes in the shorter worldly life. In his views, the prophets were sent to this world to ensure the establishment of divine rule (Abū al-A°la al-Mawdudī, 1997, p. 28). Nadwī sheds light on the dangerous consequences of this thought, especially on the negative effects it would cause on the minds of the people of the contemporary generation who have not got sound education. He further pointed out that whoever comes across this thought and confines his studies to Mawdudī’s, his bond with Allah will narrow down and he becomes soulless, especially when the focus is entirely diverted from Him. With this, the main thought of al-Mawdudī, which centred around the Islamic state (an Islamic state is

a type of government, in which the primary basis for government is the Islamic religious law), makes all other acts of Islamic worship and the four pillars of Islām (prayer, charity, fasting and *Hajj*) as the means of achieving the end of the Islamic government. This view of al-Mawdudī is severely criticised by Nadwī who stated that the Holy Qur’an clearly states *Jihād* and the state are the means, but prayer is considered as an aim. “Those who, if we give them power in the land enjoin *Iqāmah* as to pay *Zakāt* and they enjoin right (*al Ma’ruf*) and forbid wrong (*al Munkar*) and with Allah rests the end of matters” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Hajj: 41) (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 107).

Nadwi also puts forward an evidence from the models of Prophet Muḥammed to establish the status prayers and concludes that prayers were introduced by Prophet Muḥammed. Prophet Muḥammed, when describing about his attachment to prayer, said the best treatment to his eyes is found in prayer (Bukhārī, 1996; Hadith no: 3950). Prophet Muḥammed said to Bilāl, “Oh Bilāl, call for the prayer so as to have peace of mind” (Bukhārī, 1996; Hadith no: 4977). Man will be questioned regarding such obligatory duties and if he is found to be indifferent to them, he will be punished. Allah says, “What has caused you to enter Hell? They will say, “We were not of those who used to offer the prayer nor we used to feed (*al Miskīn* or poor), and we used to talk falsehood with vain talkers and we used to believe the Day of Recompense” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-Muddassir: 42-47). Nadwī, at the end of his critical analysis, comes to a

conclusion that these acts of worship are the pillars of Islām and man will be questioned about it on the Day of Judgment. However, other things like establishing a divine rule are of secondary importance in the religion. In other words, the people need to be educated at the first state with the pillars of Islam in order to establish the Islamic law and regulation (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 107).

The Psychological Impact of Considering Acts of Worship as a Mean

Based on the above-mentioned evidence, it is clear that the acts of Islamic worship and Islamic pillars cannot be used as a means of achieving the aim of establishing the Islamic state that al Nadwī envisages. This is because considering the acts of worship as a means will cause negative impacts on the minds of human beings (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 115). The connection of heart with the acts of worship gets cut off. Hence, one cannot perform the acts of worship piously. However, the Islamic acts of worship and the Islamic pillars should be performed according to or as mentioned by Allah who says, “Verily my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the lord of the (‘*Alamin*) the Cherisher of the Worlds. He has no partner. And of this, I have been commanded and I am the first of the Muslims” (Qur’an: Sūrah al-An’am: 163-166).

On the other hand, can we interpret the acts of worship and the Islamic pillars as Mawdudī did? According to Nadwī, there is no necessity for such distinction, stating that

those are not the means for the establishment of an Islamic state (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 115). Qutb also had a similar idea, but al-Mawdudī and Nadwī criticize him for the explanations he gives in his writings since the three of them agreed accordingly on what an Islamic state is, i.e. a type of government, and in which, the primary basis for a government is the Islamic (religious) law (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 47; Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, 1997, p. 88; Qutb, 1987, p. 79).

THE VIEW OF QUTB

Every Muslim who reflects the recent history of the revival of Islām in African and Asian continents will gratefully thank the grace of Almighty Allah for blessing the *Ummah* with such fine scholars in the calibre of Hasan al-Banna, Abū al-A‘la al-Mawdudī, Qutb, and the like. Qutb returned to Cairo on 20 August 1950. At that time, he was not a member of Ikhwan. His experience in the United States, and his observations of the Western attitudes towards Ikhwān and Islām, together with Ikhwān’s appreciation of his writings, have helped to draw his attention to their cause. Qutb had decided from America to devote the rest of his life to a social programme in his country. Qutb is best known in the Muslim world for his work on what he believes to be the social and political roles of Islām (Qutb, 2006, pp. i-iii). Qutb is also considered as the first thinker who paired them to a radical, sociopolitical ideology. Qutb’s social justice in Islam, published in 1949, is considered as the first major theoretical work of religious

social criticism. He is considered as an Islamist and the leading intellectual of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1950's and 60's. His extensive Qur'anic commentary, *Fī Dhilāl al-Qur'an* (in the Shades of the Qur'an), has contributed significantly to the modern perceptions of the Islamic concepts such as *Jihād*, *Jāhiliyyah*, and *Ummah*. The *Ma'alim Fī Tārik* or Mile Stone is considered as the final form of Qutb's thought (Qutb, 1987, p. 7).

The Political Thought of Qutb

On the issue of Islamic governance, Qutb differed with many modernist and reformist Muslims who claimed democracy was Islamic because the Qur'anic institution of *Shūra* supported elections and democracy. In addition, Qutb also pointed out that the *Shūra* chapter of the Qur'an was revealed during the Mecca period, and therefore, it did not deal with the problems of government. It makes no reference to elections and calls for the rulers to consult some of the rules, as in the particular case of the general rule of the *Shūra*, which argues a 'Just Dictatorship' would be more Islamic (Qutb, 1994, p. 14). Qutb said that Muslim should resist any system where men are in 'Servitude to other men' (means to obey to other men) as an un-Islamic and violation of God's rules. Qutb opposed to the popular ideology of 'Arab Nationalism, having become disillusioned with the 1952 Nasser revolution. In his book "Islām and Capitalism" published in February 1951, Qutb pointed out the royal capitalist system and its negative impacts on the Egyptian society. He drew

on the socio-political problems in Egypt and emphasized the incapacity of the capitalist system to continue in Egypt. Qutb also stressed Islām as a system of life that is capable of resolving the Egyptian problem (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 19). He exclaimed that state cannot be communist unless its laws and codes are derived from communism (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 19). The Islamic state based on the *Shari'ah* is not rigid; instead, it is flexible and can adopt from the experiences of other states and nations whatever implements of freedom, justice and equality are sanctioned by the *Shari'ah*. Qutb stated his belief that there was no decent life for this *Ummah* unless they returned to a great 'aqīdah. This great 'aqīdah today, in the case of Egypt, is not anything but Islām. Qutb stresses Islām as a national identity with the capacity to protect the life of the nation in place of secular patriotism. Qutb is reading patriotism on the basis of Islām. The Islamic system does not mean this specific form of the first Islamic society, but any social model that is based on the total Islamic idea of life. Hence, the Islamic system has the capacity to accommodate tens of models to answer the requirements of society and age (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 20). Qutb stresses Islām as a religion of the 'great unity' in this vast universe. This idea implies the relationships between the Creator and the creation, the universe, life and humankind. Qutb views Islām as a unique system with the ability to provide guidance for the entire range of human activity. Islām does not separate spiritual from secular

life. In fact, Islām is comprehensive as it covers all aspects of life, just as capillaries and nerves direct themselves to all parts of the body. Qutb drew on early Islām to emphasize his educational programme and ideological training of the individuals and groups in society. His programme is not to change the government, but to reform the Islamic thinking and discourse. At that time, Qutb, together with Nasser and other Free Officers, was enjoying the honeymoon of the revolution. To draw the attention of the new regime, Qutb provided his programme as follows: what is required today is not only to reform the Muslim individuals from the perspective of *‘aqidah* and behaviour, but we should also demonstrate social programmes based on the Islamic idea that is derived from the Islamic *Shari‘ah* at the same time (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 8).

Truth and falsehood cannot coexist on this earth; Islam must be incarnated in a dynamic political society, and is totally obedient to God’s sovereignty as expressed in the *Shari‘ah*. Any society or government that does not fully implement the *Shari‘ah* as the sole source of its legislation is *Jāhili*. *Jāhiliyyah* is not a pre-Islamic historical era of paganism - it is an ever present condition of denying God’s rule, usurping His authority, and living by man-made laws that enslave men to their rulers and engender oppression and tyranny. All contemporary Muslim societies are to be denounced as *Jāhili*. No truly Islamic state exists in the world today. *Jihād*, or striving in God’s cause, is the duty of every Muslim Separation (*hijrah, mufassalah*) from *Jāhili*

society is a necessary step for establishing borderlines and identity. It is not conceived of as total physical separation but as a spiritual separation, whilst staying in society to proclaim and recruit (Qutb, 2006, p. 22). Qutb’s idea that Islām must govern could be seen as having a significant influence on the later Islamic groups of the 1970s and 1980s, i.e. after Qutb’s death. They took the idea but turned a blind eye to Qutb’s educational programme, and tried to open the door of the palace to Islām by force.

The Concept of Hakimiyyah - Sovereignty

Many scholars considered that Qutb arrived at the concept of sovereignty only in his later writings of the mid-1960s (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 19). However, this is not the case. Qutb developed the concept of Sovereignty over many years. Its seeds could be traced back to his early works between 1925-1935, and its genesis took place gradually since then onwards, until this concept finally appeared in his Social Justice in Islām and the later writings (1949) (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 19). In the sovereignty of Allah, Qutb emphasised that all creations issued from the one will and there was no intercession or mediation between the will and the creation. There was harmony among all parts of this universe. The idea of Islām about the universe, life and humankind was used by Qutb to emphasize that the notion of peace was interwoven into the nature of Islām and its teaching, and that in his view, all the Islamic systems, doctrines, legislation and rituals are built on this fundamental idea (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 19). It is crucial to

note that there is no a single English word that could be translated accurately without the risk of seriously misconstruing or losing the force and intent of this Arabic term. We can only give the descriptions and the characteristics of this word. The nature and the meaning of the *Ḥakimiyyah* that Qutb speaks about are different from the nature and the meaning of ‘sovereignty’ known today. The word ‘sovereignty’ is derived from the Latin word *Superanus*, which means super above or supreme. In dictionary terms, the definitions of the term sovereignty are varied, but signify human governmental and legal authority (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 27). What Qutb means is that Islām is a religion and state in one. To him, the state is not a vague concept but it is clearly defined and characterised by sovereignty. In the Islamic state, God is the supreme legislator and the ultimate source of governance and legal authority. Government in Islām is thus specifically designed to implement the Islamic Law, that is, to administer justice in accordance with its decrees. Enforcing the law and facilitating its applications requires Islām to function as a religion and a state. However, the belief in the sovereignty of Allah over the universe, life and humanity is an integral part of *Tawhīd* (Qutb, 1973, p. 12). The ultimate goal of Qutb is to establish an Islamic state. In his analysis, Qutb used a number of comprehensive ideas to foster his ideological discourse. In the Shade of Qur’an, for instance, Qutb states that the judgement should be according to the law of Allah, deals with the most important and serious (*akhtār*) issue (*qadiyyah*) in Islamic

creed. This is because this particular group of verses in its positive terms precisely defines governance in Islam. This matter concerns government, the Islamic law (*Shari‘ah*) and legitimisation (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 8).

Sovereignty and the System of Governance

Every government that is based on the principle that *Ḥakimiyyah* (absolute sovereignty) belongs to none but Allah and implements the *Shari‘ah* is an Islamic government. Hence, every government that is not based on this principle and does not implement the *Shari‘ah* cannot be called Islamic, even if the government is run by official religious organisations. The obedience of the people is to be given only if, and as long as, the government recognises that *Ḥakimiyyah* belongs to Allah alone and then implements the *Shari‘ah* without any qualification other than justice and obedience. This means, the source of governmental authority in the Islamic state is not the Muslim Community or the results of election, but the activity of implementing the Law (*Sharia‘ah*) (Qutb, 1973, p. 18). In other words, applying the law is the only source from which the government derives its authority. The Islamic political system can be explained as rules through consultation obedience to the ruler depend on his fidelity in adhering to the Islamic Laws (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 35).

Thus, the law can be seen as a fundamental tenet above the state and citizens. This is Qutb’s thinking of sovereignty or *Ḥakimiyyah*. In the Islamic system, the *Ummah* chooses the ruler and

gives him the legitimacy to administer their government on the basis of the Islamic Law. The *Ummah*, however, is not the source of *Ḥakimiyyah*, which gives the law its legitimacy. Instead, the source of *Ḥakimiyyah* is Allah (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 35). His article entitled *Adāb al Inḥilāl* (literature of degradation) for the Egyptian radio was written on 10 August 1952, i.e. two weeks before the revolution. However, the radio staff of the old regime rejected the article. The literature of degradation is the literature of slaves - *ʿAbid* -, i.e. the slaves of oppression and the slaves of desires. In this sense, the literature of degradation is the literature of *ʿUbudiyyah* (servitude), which prevails when the people do not strive for higher horizons. You find writers, singers, and poets appear and take their positions in this vacuum to represent reversion in the heat of desires and the heat of *ʿUbudiyyah* (Qutb, 2006, p. 56). There are people who listen to writers who play the roles of lull the people. The oppressors of any time helped such writers, poets and singers and facilitated their works of degradation. Qutb found history on his side as he analysed some accounts from the Umayyad and Abbasid. Using the past to assess the present, Qutb asserted that the Umayyad consolidated them in power, secured themselves from the people of Hijāz and diverted society, through gifts to flatterers, entertainers and singers and the facilitation of their works. Comparing this condition with that in Egypt, Qutb criticised the royal regime who facilitated the works of those writers, poets and singers, who in turn glorify his

majesty. To him, this is the literature of degradation. It is the *ʿUbudiyyah* of the same nature; *ʿUbudiyyah* or servitude of desires and *ʿUbudiyyah* of oppression. Qutb clearly explained in his book milestone, “this *Dīn* (Religion) is a universal declaration of the freedom of man from slavery to other men to his own desires, which is also a form of human servitude. It is a declaration that the sovereignty belongs to only Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. It challenges all such systems based on the sovereignty of man, where man attempts to usurp the attribute of divine sovereignty. Any system in which the final decisions are referred to human beings, and in which the sources of all authority are men, deifies human beings by designating others than Allah as lords over men” (Qutb, 2006, pp. 56-59). For Qutb, the present life is not based on the Islamic bases. Therefore, there is a conflict between the religious conscience and the practical life of the people.

Qutb also listed the concept of *Ḥakimiyyah* and its characteristics, as follows:

- The system of government in Islām is not similar to any other system.
- It is distinct from all forms of government in secular democracies.
- It is constitutional.
- It is not inherently theocratic or autocratic.
- The form of the Islamic government has no impact on the Islamic identity of the state. All the items listed above are depending on each other, which means,

if one of them leaves it behind, the concept of *Hakimiyyah* will collapse (Qutb, 1994, p. 23).

Islām, as Qutb asserts, does not impose a specific form of government. The political system in Islām can be understood as a rule by *Shūra* (consultation). *Shūra* is a basic principle in the *Shari'ah* and it is essential to the organs of state and its overall Islamic identity (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 29). The *Shūra* appears to be different from that known today as the parliamentary government of any type or a form of democracy or any other system. Meanwhile, through '*Lā Ilaha Illā Allah*', Qutb understands that *Hakimiyyah* should be placed in all affairs to Allah. He says "*Lā Hakimiyyah Illā Li Allah*" (or no sovereign except Allah). Through this statement of Qutb, Nadwī sees that he makes *al-Hakimiyyah* as one of the most important characteristics of sovereignty (Abū al-Hasan al-Nadwī, 1979, p. 71). Qutb mentioned this reality in his book entitled, "*Fī Zilāl al-Qur'an*" when he described the following verse, "The command is of none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him that is the straight religion, but most men know not" (Qur'an: Sūrah Yūsuf: 40), and the rules belong to Allah because *Hakimiyyah* is one of the divine characteristics of Allah (Qutb, 1994, pp. 35-38).

Nadwī criticised Qutb in a fair and constructive manner by presenting the views of al Hudaibi regarding this point. Several other prominent thinkers like al Hudaibi who had realised the negative

side of the thought of Qutb joined Nadwī in criticising him. Nadwī presented the statement of al Hudaibi because both the scholars (al Hudaibi and Qutb) belonged to the movement of al Ikhwān and both were trained in the same camp, and thus, it is not surprising that they came to an agreement. However, al Hudaibi presented his idea on the contrary to Qutb on this particular subject. As Qutb said, "There is no Islam without state" (Qutb, 1973, p. 67). The matter of Allah's power (or *al Hakimiyyah al Ilahiyyah*) is not the creation of Mawdudī and Qutb, simply because it is mentioned in their books and statements many times. However, the Qur'an has confirmed this many times, "the command rests with none but Allah" (Qur'an: Sūrah al An'am: 53). Meanwhile, Yūsuf al Qardhawī explained that what we should understand by the statement of Mawdudī and Qutb about the *al Hakimiyyah* is that the *Shari'ah* rules, which do not mean that Allah is appointing someone (kings/ leaders) to command on his behalf. The support of the political authority belongs to the *Ummah* who has the right to elect or to resign the leader-*al Hakim* (Yūsuf al-Qardhawī, 1996, p. 62).

By perusing the statements of these scholars, as a researcher, I can understand the environment which has shaped Nadwī's position; he categorically rejected the opinions of Mawdudī's and Qutb's as something that would lead to obey human rulers and he branded that view as *Jāhiliyyah*-pre Islām of the twentieth century. In Nadwī's point of view, state power is a minor issue blown out of proportion by

these scholars and it is also tantamount to polytheism and worshipping deities. The environment where Nadwi grew and spent his life is full of millions of idol worshipers as he himself declared, “when Qutb was living in society which was facing the problem of governance/ *Hakimiyyah*”. When al-Mawdudī thought about an independent Islamic state from the Hindus, Nadwī rejected it completely and never thought about an Islamic government. His biggest hope was to see the Islamic minority of India living safely, peacefully, and freely within the greater united India, together with the Hindus.

In his book ‘Milestone’, Qutb expressed that the Muslim world has ceased to be and reverted to pre-Islamic ignorance known as *Jāhiliyyah* because of the lack of the *Shari‘ah* law (Qutb, 2006, p. 81). Consequently, all states of the Muslim world are not Islamic and thus illegitimate, including that of his native land Egypt. The idea of *Takfīr* in the above is their strategy. Even though there are disagreements among the Ikhwān members in the above issue, they unanimously agreed that the contemporary society is in the condition of *kufr* which must be changed and the Islamic state be established (Sayyid Khatab, 1997, p. 43). The main reason of Nadwī’s criticism on the thought of Qutb is that his term *al-Hakimiyyah* (sovereignty) is made as an essential part of divinity by him. It is worthy to mention that Qutb was very much attracted by the book of al-Mawdudī, “*al-Mustalāh al-Arba‘a fī al-Qur’an*”, and he completely agreed with his thoughts. This

was the reason why Jan Peter Hartung, in his published research work on Nadwī, clearly pointed out that Qutb is Mawdudī’s intellectual son in Egypt and the Arabic-speaking world (Jan Peter Hartung, 1998, p. 124).

CONCLUSION

Both al-Mawdudī and Qutb were attacked by Nadwī for sending prophets to the world charged with the mission of establishing divine sovereignty on earth, and this became the main pre-occupation of those who came after them. They also believed that the prime objective of worship is to assist the establishment of divine rule on earth. Besides the Islamic movements, Nadwī also engaged in dialogues with many others including the non-Muslims of India, with whom he considered dialogue as essential for communal harmony between the communities. He also believed that people of all communities must learn to resolve issues and co-exist in harmony despite their differences, which is inevitable in the course of human interactions. The partitioning of India and Pakistan demanded that the ensuing imbalance of Muslims compared with Hindus necessitated that Muslims’ vulnerability was compensated for by better interfaith relations. His interfaith dialogue programme was not restricted to India, but saw the ‘Arab and Western worlds as being in need of Islām and related how they could benefit from the Islamic message.

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The Relationship Between the Performance of Educational Administrators and Organisational Health with a Focus on Teachers' Perception in High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This correlation study was aimed at determining the relationship between the performance of educational administrators and organisational health in high schools in Tehran, Iran. Cluster sampling method was used and the responses of a total of 180 teachers were obtained. Two selected questionnaires were used: the school organisational health questionnaire and the administrator performance questionnaire. The research data were analysed using SPSS software. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used: the variables were the Pearson correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination and t-test. The results of the study show that about two thirds of the schools that were studied enjoyed a high level of organisational health, and the teachers of about 30% of the schools believed that they had principals whose performance in different areas was weak. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between organisational health and the performance of the principals. The findings also indicated a relationship between administrator performance in the areas of education and the teaching programme, student affairs and staff affairs and organisational health.

Keywords: Educational administration, administrator performance, organizational health, teacher, high school

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INTRODUCTION

The terms organisational culture, health and climate have been widely discussed by administrators, employers and academic institutions in the past 50 years. The use of these terms mostly shows the dominance of different scientific mentalities which have influenced academic management circles

and the related disciplines and in a way has provided “a special interpretation of the world” for the people interested in this field of human knowledge. This interpretation indicates the mental climate and the main worries of management scientists which are presented as theories to explain the organisational phenomena and issues (Madandar, 2006).

In fact, the presentation of different theories helps us understand what the dominant explanations, analyses and attitudes are and what factors affect the intellectual development of researchers in that field. Historically, the dominant interpretation of the relationship between manager and employees began with the presentation of the scientific theory of management and as the new theories followed an evolutionary path. The use and application of the term “organisational culture” indicates the dominance of sociology over the intellectual climate of management experts (Madandar & Abbasi, 2008). From this viewpoint, each organisation must be viewed as a social entity which is affected by the values, customs and rituals of its society. The analysis of the performance of people in this organisation without paying attention to these variables is impossible. On the other hand, the term “organisational health” is indicative of the dominance of viewpoints borrowed from psychology which consider the organisation as an organism which, like humans, follows a varied development from balance, health, sickness and, finally, to death. As a result, like a human being, organisations can be cultured, uncultured, healthy and unhealthy. The organisational

climate offers an interpretation of the organisational state as moving between the continuum of sociology and psychology (Glisson & James, 2002). Considering these issues, the governing approach taken in this article is directed towards the study of the relationship between the performance of the principal of an educational institution and the organisational health of the institution.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH OF SCHOOLS

Management science as a modern field of enquiry, puts great emphasis on the role of leaders, among other factors affecting the success of an organisation. Additionally, because of the social nature of the school organisation, educational management experts consider the position of the administrator as doubly effective and believe that schools are very good fields in which to test, evaluate and critique management theories, which might not be as easily surveyed and measured in other organisations. According to these thinkers, although the role of other people in the educational system in attaining educational goals cannot be ignored, on the level of educational leadership, the abilities of administrators have a fundamental application and the impact of their performance in school cannot be denied (Hallinger & Heck, 2004; Lezotte, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1998; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

In fact, the principal of an educational institution becomes the head of the organisation of whose performance and

results, on one hand, society and people are very sensitive to, and on the other, whose tasks and responsibilities are very complex and depend on the knowledge, expertise and professional skills of, while at the same time requiring a close and friendly relationship with the teachers, students and others involved in the process of education (Mirkamali, 2005). The laboriousness of this task has resulted in the elaboration of a range of the required abilities in the definition of qualities and requirements of the administrator. Considering the dos and don'ts of educational administration, the administrator is a person who can adeptly apply scientific principles, findings and technical skills based on the situation at hand and at the same time observe ethical principles and solve problems and achieve goals. The basic requirement for such management in an educational environment is that the administrator knows the educational system's objectives and processes, is able to induce the proper organisational climate for the employees to carry out their tasks and responsibilities, utilise the available materials and human resources as needed, create the needed integration and synchronicity between the elements and components of the organisation and, finally, to arouse his colleagues and subordinates to effective work and activity (Alagheband, 2006).

Despite the aforementioned description which affirms the hidden complexities in the performance of the administrator and the span of the intervening factors, researchers in the field of educational

administration have tried to formulate a clear framework for the width and breadth of the responsibilities of the administrator so that they can properly evaluate their performance based on it. Based on this, according to Alagheband (2006), the responsibilities of educational administrators can be limited to the following six duties:

- Planning for education and teaching
- Student affairs
- Staff affairs
- The interactions between the school and society
- Facilities and equipment and
- Administrative and financial affairs

The administrator's performance in each of these areas is affected by the kind of relationship and the general environment that he has created, and this forms his behaviour towards others. Based on this, the organisational climate of the school as a general concept is the natural consequence of the kind of relationship the administrator has with the internal and external environment whose final outcome is known as organisational health (Alagheband, 2006). Organisational health is indicative of the extent to which the school organisation as a living and dynamic organism, under the influence of the administrator's performance in the aforementioned areas, will tend to move towards youth and liveliness or old age, helplessness and desperation. Therefore, the main question is what features or characteristics define the healthy organisation.

Some researchers believe that a healthy organisation is realistic about itself and the situation it is dealing with, flexible and able to use its resources in the best possible way in dealing with each problem (Saatchi, 1995). Lorenzo, Williams, Hunt and Haffner (2007) claimed that a healthy organisation was characterised by concentration on objectives, efficiency in communication, optimal distribution of power, the use of resources, unity and integration, morale, innovation, autonomy, adaptability to the environment and the capability to solve problems. According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), a healthy school is characterised by being secure against unreasonable pressure from the environment and parents, enjoys dynamic and lively management and has an administrator who is both task- and relationship-orientated. Such a school also supports the teachers and encourages them to improve their performance levels. In addition to influencing them, the administrator is independent in thought and practice. The students are highly motivated to participate in scientific and educational activities. Educational tools and instruments are available to the students. Finally, the teachers like and trust each other and are passionate about their work.

The organisational health of schools can be measured using the following seven variables:

- Institutional unity: School's capability for adaptation to the environment so that the integrity, concord and totality of educational programmes are preserved

- Influence of administrator: Administrator's ability to direct and to encourage solutions to the school's problems
- Considerateness: Friendly and open behaviour of the administrator based on mutual respect, trust and cooperation for and with staff
- Structuring: Defining the professional relationship among teachers, job expectations, performance standards, and procedures
- Resource support: Main educational facilities and equipment needed by the teachers for effective teaching
- Morale: Emotional state based on joy and satisfaction among staff and students or excitement-based behaviour
- Scientific emphasis: Desire and interest shown by students and staff to achieve cultural, educational and scientific superiority in comparison with other schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Considering the research findings on the mutual relationship between the administrators' performance inside and outside school and the level of organisational health, the present study has tried to examine the relationship between the six dimensions of the administrator's performance and the seven variables measuring organisational health in high schools. To achieve this goal, one general hypothesis and six detailed hypotheses are stated as follows:

General hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's

performance and organisational health in high schools.

Hypothesis one: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's performance in educational and teaching programmes and organizational health.

Hypothesis two: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's performance in student affairs and organisational health.

Hypothesis three: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's performance in staff affairs and organisational health.

Hypothesis four: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's performance in school-society interactions and organisational health.

Hypothesis five: There is a significant relationship between the administrator's performance in the provision and management of school facilities and equipment and organisational health.

Hypothesis six: There is a significant relationship in administrative and financial affairs and organisational health.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991) are some of the most renowned researchers who, in the recent three decades, have focussed their efforts on the explanation, clarification and analysis of the concept of organisational health and its function in educational organisations. According to

them, organisational health can be defined as the capability of the organisation for successful adaptation to the environment, preservation of concord between members and achievement of goals (Licata & Harper, 2001). For instance, a technical instrument for confirmation of the degree of organisational health in schools is the recognition and discernment of the presence of an open and trust-based relationship between the administrator and the teachers. Also, a positive, mutual and trust-based relationship between the administrator, students, parents and local authorities can guarantee organisational health on a grander scale. It appears as if healthy schools emphasise professional cooperation on technical, administrative and human levels (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986).

Numerous research studies on the organisational climate of schools show that the mutual commitment of the administrator and teachers to enhance the process of teaching-learning is only possible when the organisational health of the school is guaranteed (Schein, 2010). The findings of a new study by Roney, Coleman and Schlichting (2007) show that there is a direct relationship between a healthy organisational environment and the teachers' efficiency given the performance of the administrator. Murphy and Datnow (2003) have also found that the success of the proposed reforms by the administrator for inducing a healthy organisational environment depends on the establishment of a participatory relationship between the teachers and the administrator.

Another research study by Gronn (2003) corroborates the results of the previous study i.e. adoption of participatory strategies by the administrator leads to an enhancement in the individual and group performance of teachers and the administrators as educational leaders facilitate a healthy organisational environment for the school. Additionally, different studies and research have demonstrated that organisational health is an effective variable among many of the facets and dimensions of the educational system. As an example, research has shown a linear relationship between organisational health and the performance of the administrator on the one hand and the students' educational success on the other (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, *et al.*, 1991).

Zangal's research (2003) showed that: (1) there is no significant difference between the type of school and the organisational climate in terms of organisational health at the institutional level; (2) there is a significant difference between the type of school and the organisational climate in terms of organisational health at the administrative and technical level; (3) there is no significant difference between educational level and organisational climate in terms of organisational health at the institutional, administrative and technical level. Although there seems to be a contrast between some of the aforementioned findings and some international research studies, they generally confirm previous findings.

Another research study conducted by Mansouri (2007) shows that there is a middle level of organisational health in Tehran's high schools. Also, in terms of resource support, there is a significant difference between schools for boys and schools for girls. The research carried out by Javadi (2000) also confirms that among the effective variables in organisational health, the highest score belongs to morale and the lowest score to administrator's influence. A survey by Pourdehkordi (2009) revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the organisational health of high schools for boys and educational success.

METHODOLOGY

This correlation study was carried out in Tehran's high schools with the objective of studying the relationship between the performance of educational administrators and organisational health. The sample includes 180 teachers who were selected using the cluster sampling method. First, all high schools in Tehran were divided into four geographical regions (North, South, East, and West). After determining the number of high schools in each region, 14 high schools and 13 teachers from each high school were selected at random.

The research instruments i.e. the administrator performance questionnaire and organisational health evaluation questionnaire, were made available to them. The organisational health questionnaire was prepared by Hoy *et al.* (1991) with three different forms for use in elementary schools, secondary schools and high

schools to measure important dimensions of organisational health. This questionnaire consisted of 44 items which were completed by the teachers. They were asked to complete the descriptive items as much as was true for their schools based on the Likert Scale. This scale involved a minimum score of 44 and a maximum score of 220 and a subsidiary dimension with a range of 1 to 5.

In order to evaluate the performance of school administrators and considering previous research and after consultations with expert instructors in the field of educational management and also the teachers, 55 questions were prepared and the teachers of two schools in the studied population were asked to evaluate the performance of the administrator by answering them. The initial results and evaluations led to the omission and modification of some of the questions, and the final questionnaire known as “administrator performance questionnaire” was prepared with 44 closed-ended questions and four open-ended questions. To determine the reliability of the organisational health questionnaire, using the SPSS software, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated, which was 0.78, and showed that the questionnaire had a satisfactory level of reliability. Cronbach’s alpha for the administrator performance questionnaire was calculated as being 0.85, which is quite a satisfactory result (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2009). To describe the research variables, in addition to using descriptive and inferential indices, the profiles of the organisational health and the administrators’ performance based on the seven dimensions

of organisational health and the six areas of administrator performance were illustrated in tabular form. In addition, to determine the extent of the relationship and the correlation between the two variables of administrator performance and organisational health, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as an appropriate statistical index. Likewise, the results of the research showed that the relationship between the variables was significant.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS

The collected data shows that 78.3% of the teachers in the studied sample were married, and 65% were younger than 35 and 85% were official (permanent) employees. Additionally, based on the distribution of their degrees, 80% of the participants had a bachelor’s degree. The aforementioned data indicate that the participating teachers possessed the necessary capabilities to answer the research questionnaires in terms of social responsibility, familiarity with the organisational and employment structure of the educational system and the needed expertise. Based on the evaluation of the collected data and the sorting of the organisational health evaluation questionnaire scores, the average scores of the studied high schools are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Average Scores for the Organisational Health of the
Research Sample (High Schools)

| High School Number | Mean |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1 | 160.44 |
| 2 | 148.48 |
| 3 | 196.67 |
| 4 | 166.83 |
| 5 | 167.5 |
| 6 | 163.42 |
| 7 | 165.77 |
| 8 | 163.06 |
| 9 | 163.53 |
| 10 | 149.30 |
| 11 | 143.32 |
| 12 | 170.71 |
| 13 | 159.64 |
| 14 | 168.17 |
| Overall | 163.35 |

The calculated average of the scores for the studied high schools is 163.35, which, if we consider this average as the criterion for the organisational health of the schools, gives us the following results: nine high schools from among all the surveyed schools had an average higher than the total average while five high schools had lower averages. Therefore, it can generally be said that about two thirds of the schools in the surveyed population (64.28%) enjoy high levels of organisational health and 35.72% have low levels of organisational health. Also, the study of the performance of the administrators of these high schools based on the second questionnaire as filled out by the teachers shows that the average scores for the administrators is 151.75. If we consider this the criterion for evaluating the performance of the administrators, we find

that nine high schools from among the 14 studied high schools have a higher average score than the total average and, according to the teachers, administrator performance in five high schools is lower than the total average. Table 2 shows the average scores for administrator performance.

TABLE 2
The Average Scores for Administrator Performance
in the Research Sample (High Schools)

| High School Number | Mean |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1 | 155.56 |
| 2 | 146.22 |
| 3 | 156.94 |
| 4 | 162.39 |
| 5 | 160.07 |
| 6 | 156.5 |
| 7 | 161.69 |
| 8 | 158.82 |
| 9 | 152.65 |
| 10 | 131.6 |
| 11 | 128.33 |
| 12 | 150.79 |
| 13 | 147.82 |
| 14 | 155.13 |
| Overall | 151.75 |

Considering the findings shown in Tables 1 and 2, we can infer that about two thirds of the schools in the surveyed population had organisational health at the desired levels and the performance of the administrators of these schools was accepted by the teachers. Under the circumstances, it is necessary to pay attention to the teacher's answers to the different items in the organisational health questionnaire to be able to find out which one of the seven variables has the highest impact on the

performance of the teachers. Table 3 shows the total average of the seven variables of organisational health.

TABLE 3
Total Average of the Seven Organisational Health Variables

| Variable | Average |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Institutional unity | 3.68 |
| Administrator influence | 3.35 |
| Considerateness | 4.23 |
| Structuring | 4.41 |
| Resource support | 3.78 |
| Morale | 4.59 |
| Scientific emphasis | 3.32 |
| Overall | 3.91 |

The total average shows that morale and structuring variables have the highest impact on the evaluation of performance while scientific emphasis and administrator influence have the lowest impact. After determining the level of the organisational health and administrator performance, given the available information, the main hypotheses of the research can be examined, and the relationship between the six dimensions of administrator performance and the seven organisational health variables can be scrutinised in terms of their function in the studied population.

The results obtained from the analysis of data for testing the main research hypothesis demonstrate that there is a positive and significant relationship between the

performance of educational administrators and organisational health in high schools. A summary of the results of statistical calculations necessary to test the hypothesis and to confirm or reject the null hypothesis is presented in Table 4.

The calculated correlation coefficient between the two variables of administrator performance and organisational health is $r=0.555$ which, according to the table prepared by Delavar (2001), is at a medium level. The significance test of the above correlation coefficient (t-test) shows that the absolute value of the observed t (8.92) is greater than the critical value of t at the 0.01 level ($\alpha=2.576$) with the degree of freedom of 178, and with %99 confidence, we can confirm the relationship between administrator performance and organisational health. Additionally, the calculation of the coefficient of determination as a generalisation index indicates that 30.8% of implementation and realisation capacity for organisational health in the aforementioned schools is affected by implementation and realisation capacity for administrator performance. Table 5 displays the information about the analysis of the correlation between variables in hypotheses one to six.

The information displayed in Table 5, with a view towards the six dimensions of administrators' performance, shows the relationship between each area of the

TABLE 4
Summary of Information About the Correlation of Variables in General Hypothesis

| T | Coefficient of determination | A | N | Df | Rxy |
|------|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-------|
| 8.92 | 30.8 | 0.10 | 180 | 178 | 0.555 |

responsibilities of the administrator and the level of organisational health in the subsidiary hypotheses one through six.

The first hypothesis sets out to test the relationship between the performance of school administrators in the field of educational and teaching programmes and organizational health. The obtained information shows that the calculated correlation coefficient between these two variables in the field of educational and teaching programmes is 0.548 and because the value of the calculated t (10.54) is greater than the critical t ($t=2.576$) at the significance level of $\alpha=0.01$ with the degree of freedom of 178, therefore with a confidence coefficient of 99%, the mutual effect of these two factors on each other can be confirmed. The calculation of the coefficient of determination indicates that 30% of the variation in organisational health and administrator performance in the field of educational and teaching programme is under the influence of this relationship.

Hypotheses two, three and four try to demonstrate the relationship between the performance of administrators in three fields (student affairs, staff affairs and society-school interactions) with organisational

health. The statistical results displayed in Table 5 indicate that the calculated t (for the three hypotheses respectively 10.45, 14.86, 11.55) is greater than the tabular t at $\alpha=0.01$ with a degree of freedom of 178. Therefore, these hypotheses are confirmed with a confidence coefficient of 99%.

In addition, hypotheses five and six try to demonstrate the relationship between the performance of administrators in two fields (facilities and equipment and financial affairs) and organisational health. The statistical evidence displayed in Table 5 indicate that the calculated t (11.74 and 8.11) is greater than the tabular t ($t=2.576$) at $\alpha=0.01$ with a degree of freedom of 178. Therefore, these hypotheses are confirmed with a confidence coefficient of 99%.

Finally, we can infer that all the hypotheses were confirmed and moreover, the correlation coefficients show that from among the six different areas of administrator performance, the highest values of correlation belong to the subsidiary hypotheses one and two and the lowest value belongs to hypothesis six. Of course, an examination of the coefficients of determination of the percentage of variation in organisational health and school

TABLE 5
Summary of Information About the Analysis of Correlation Between the Variables in Hypotheses One to Six

| Hypothesis Number | T | Coefficient of Determination | A | N | Df | Rxy |
|-------------------|-------|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-------|
| 1 | 10.45 | 30 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.548 |
| 2 | 10.45 | 30 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.548 |
| 3 | 14.86 | 27.77 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.527 |
| 4 | 11.55 | 21.53 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.468 |
| 5 | 11.74 | 21.9 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.468 |
| 6 | 8.11 | 14.29 | 0.01 | 180 | 178 | 0.378 |

administrator performance in the six areas also shows this descending trend from hypothesis one to six. As a result, it can be said that the coefficient of determination of the percentage of variations in organisational health and administrator performance in the field of educational and teaching programmes demonstrates the highest (30%) and in the field of administrative and financial affairs show the lowest (14.29%) impact.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this research, after conducting a general discussion of the status and the role of the administrators and their impact on organisational health, the relationship between these two factors was studied. The findings of this research concord with the findings of previous research on the relationship between the two factors of administrator performance and organisational health (Goddard, *et al.*, 2000; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy, *et al.*, 1991). In addition, the research findings indicate that about two thirds of the schools in the surveyed population have high levels of organisational health, while the other third has a low level of organisational health. This finding that the majority of the schools enjoy a proper level of organisational health can be explained and justified much better based on the research findings of Dastmalchian, Javidan and Alam (2001) and Madandar and Abasi (2008).

The aforementioned studies showed that mostly because of the presence of a “paternal organisational climate” and a “familiar

organisational climate” which governed the relationship between administrators and staff and which was under the influence of Iranian culture, and regardless of the problems and economic hardships, generally the employees, and especially in educational organisations, enjoyed strong morale. Of course, it is logical to assume that this issue would not be true for all areas administrator performance. Because of this, the present study confirms research findings by Mansouri (2007) and Darabi (2001) which showed that the significant relationship between administrator performance and organisational health can be mostly observed in the two areas of educational and teaching programme and student affairs.

The findings of this research also substantiate studies by Zangal (2003) and Darabi (2001) that although administrators were not able to solve the material and pecuniary problems of the teachers, they could create such an environment that these problems cause no serious disruption in the process of teaching-learning. The administrators should provide the necessary educational instruments and facilities for the school and the teachers adequately so that teaching can be done more effectively and this will result in a healthier organisational climate. The results of the present study support the findings of studies by Mansouri (2007) and Javadi (2000) that showed that the competence of the administrator in the field of administrative and financial activities and in establishing an effective relationship between the school and other social institutions can enhance organisational health.

Finally, it is suggested that the educational authorities select administrators who have the necessary administrative and managerial training and skills so that a healthy organisational climate will develop in high schools. It is obvious that adopting measures in order to increase decentralisation and increase the power and authority of schools and administrators can pave the way to facilitate organisational health.

It is concluded that organisational health which includes planning for education and teaching, student affairs, staff affairs, interactions between school and society, facilities and equipment and administrative and financial affairs have a significant relationship with variables measuring organisational health. These variables include institutional unity, influence of the administrator, considerateness, structuring, resource support, morale and scientific emphasis with a focus on teachers' perception in high school.

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A Perspective on Alternative Music Scene Involvement and English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to analyze the relationship between ‘alternative music scene’ involvement and English language learning, as described by 5 non-native English speakers. Today’s times, strongly dominated by the rules of mass media commercialism, have somewhat rejuvenated the learning experience, creating a cultural and generational gap between the teachers and the students. Learners have been increasingly influenced by ‘alternative’ ideas which have formed social rules and subgroups, primarily in the form of ‘alternative music’ genres and subcultures. ‘Alternative music’ has been able to foster and create interest, shape social models and groups, and stand as an alternative option to the cultural mainstream. An extensive corpus of English written music has proved to be the catalyst of the students’ attention towards English language learning. One of the authors’ 10 years personal involvements in the punk ‘music scene’ and the experiences of 4 other individuals representing different stages of participation to a ‘music scene’, as defined by Lena and Peterson (2008), have been considered. A Delphi Panel Meeting was organized in order to individuate and discuss the learning constructs drawn from the qualitative analysis of the data. The findings supported the existence of a positive relationship between ‘alternative music scene’ involvement and English language learning.

Keywords: Alternative music, music curriculum, English and music, Alternative music scene, music scene involvement, language teaching curriculum, generational gap

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INTRODUCTION

21st century classrooms around the world are beginning to witness pockets of students quietly seated in the back rows totally unaware of what is happening because

listening to their MP4 players. To many teachers and other practitioners, this kind of students may be categorized as “at-risk” or “unsuccessful” language learners, only because they are not learning English through the institutionalized curriculum presented in the classroom. Instead, they are constructing their very own curriculum managing the learning of English through the fresh, contemporary and motivating world of today’s hundreds of ‘alternative music’ bands.

‘Alternative music’ has gained a position and role in the contemporary international music industry, becoming an umbrella definition for many musical styles which may not be just limited to the most popular punk, heavy metal, rap, and funk. Being an alternative to mainstream music and using a fresher, less institutionalized form and style, ‘alternative music’ has widened its boundaries and attracted millions of fans worldwide.

Previous literature in the field of English language teaching (ELT) has regarded learners’ motivation among one of the key factors for successful language learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Oxford, 1990). Nevertheless, how such motivational factors may be employed to meet the learning needs of that fringe of students who embrace one or the other subgenres of popular rock, or “alternative” music, is a question that thus far seems to have been completely neglected by ELT researchers. The reasons behind this gap are unknown, but still leave many questions open to interpretation. Would it be possible to capture the attention of these apparently rebellious students?

Why are they not interested by traditional teaching? Would their favourite music styles constitute a complementary addition to the ELT curriculum?

According to Prodromou (1988), English is not only the international language, but it is also the language of international (and often national) rock and alternative music. Students learn English words from the song lyrics and the records’ sleeves; they sing them and quote them back at the teachers. To ignore this variety of English because of its popular background would represent a big mistake (Moi, 2003; Prodromou, 1988). Kirkland (2007) later evidenced how the same motivational value addressed to rock music has great effect on focusing at-risk students by means of employing hip-hop music lyrics as texts the students can relate to and appreciate. In this regard, Cremin (2009) also stresses that music is a useful component to motivate English learners, and may be employed as a key to interpret poetical texts in the lyrical form. Furthermore, music has also been positively associated with the advancement of English reading and writing skills (Diedwardo, 2007).

Nevertheless, teachers and policy makers may still legitimately question the pedagogical validity of ‘alternative music’ genres, mostly because research in the field has not as yet critically explored their positive values, which are often being discouraged by the strong and unconventional imagery of umbrella genres such as punk, heavy metal and their derivative styles. This factor outlines, ultimately, where the pedagogical

challenge emerges: is alternative rock music suitable as an educational tool?

Today's youth communicate ideas by just mentioning 'alternative music' artists, popular songs' titles or citing lyrics. We may affirm that 'alternative music' constitutes an important corpus of the 21st century English language and that students around the world are more inclined to start learning from this "alternative corpus" rather than from institutional (mainstream) music sources (Moi, 1994, 2003). As Moi (2003) outlined, the 'alternative music' context is highly motivating, relevant to student's lives and settings, a potential bridge to more "serious" literature and, most importantly, a source of authentic language readily available as reading and listening material for language classrooms. As outlined by Reddick and Beresin (2002), analysing the social implications of 'alternative music' styles heavy metal and rap, music can be a powerful tool in the social life of adolescents. It is the background of social gatherings, and it also presents the view of the adult world filtered through the perspective of the artists and forms associations and friendship with others recognizing 'alternative music' as a social group, where allegiances and kinships form. In this regard, Jaffurs' (2004) study concluded that popular rock music is a crucial component in the students' culture and everyday life, and it constitutes a helpful tool to focus the attention on classroom activities.

Considering the enlightenment brought about by 'alternative music', can it be a useful pedagogic method to instruct English

language learners? Is its postmodern, sometimes unconventional imagery suitable to transmit learning values? In light of the previous considerations, using the 'alternative music' literary corpus as a multimedia learning tool may prove to be an efficient way to teach English in the classroom. Taking this hypothesis into account, it may be plausible for educators to accept 'alternative music' as a complementary corpus to convey students' attention.

REVIEW ON WORKS CONDUCTED ON MUSIC AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The value of music as an educational approach in the language classroom has been acknowledged by several studies (see Abbott, 2002; Domoney & Harris, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1994; Lake, 2003; Lems, 1996; Moi, 1994, 2003; Murphey, 1992; Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Shuman & Wolfe, 1990).

According to Shuman and Wolfe (1990), music is a composing activity, and focuses the learner's mind - as much as does speaking and writing - on the use of the language and its learning. This is evidence that thought has been occurring, and not only for a mere communicative reason, because "another person's words may be expressed more figuratively as a painting, a musical composition, a photograph, a design, a film, perhaps even a cartoon. It is useful to think of 'words' in the broadest sense as we draw connections between language and cognition" (Shuman & Wolfe, 1990). Murphey (1992) examined a large

corpus of pop songs and concluded that they have several features able to help second language learners; he individuated common short words and pronouns, conversational language and a speech speed rate which is slower and has more pauses between utterances, allowing for better understanding. Validating this contribution, Domoney and Harris (1993) evaluated the employment of pop music in Mexican EFL classrooms, providing a useful list of teachers' activities focused on implementing popular music in the English curriculum.

Lems (1996) further describes the many possible uses of music and songs as powerful teaching aid in the ESL classroom, ideally continuing a study by Fitzgerald (1994) focusing on the motivational dimension of music in the classroom. Fitzgerald demonstrated that by using background music during a lesson it is possible to create a friendlier, more motivating experience, improving English reading skills and vocabulary acquisition for low proficiency level groups.

Lake (2003) worked on the validity of Krashen's Affective Filter Theory (1982) by analysing a range of activities involving the use of music in the English classroom. Lake, an amateur musician, demonstrated that playing a guitar and singing with his students in the classroom may help establish a friendly atmosphere and favour language learning. Similarly, Moi (2003) explored the links between the corpus of popular rock music and higher literature, asserting that students motivation in English language learning increases when they are presented

rock music related items as classroom materials. To a similar extent, Kirkland (2007) proved the value of hip-hop music texts as attention catalyst for urban at-risk students in the language classroom. Kirkland argued that hip-hop culture transcends the music itself, as he observed one of his students' developing the four language skills by immersing totally into the hip-hop culture. In this way, the individual who presents himself as a "hip-hop head" has a concrete opportunity to focus on English learning because he desires to reach a total understanding of the alternative music's subject matter. The implementation of such texts in the English classroom is seen by Kirkland as crucial to shorten the learners' achievement gap (Kirkland, 2007, p. 132).

Ultimately, Diedwardo (2007) devoted his attention on pairing popular music with linguistic activities, discovering that its integration into college linguistic and virtual EFL classrooms might enable students to develop their English reading and writing skills.

Paquette and Rieg (2008) have also concluded that by using music with young learners of English, classrooms can be transformed into positive learning environments where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, despite the teacher's level of aesthetic appreciation and musical training.

As much as previous studies have given ample evidence of the positive values music may bring to English language learning, it may be useful to define the boundaries and significance of the term 'alternative music'.

The complex definition deserves more in-depth explanation in order to justify and contextualize its addition among the choices of didactically accepted music for focusing students' attention to English language learning.

THE 'ALTERNATIVE' CONCEPT IN POPULAR MUSIC AND CULTURE

Defining 'alternative music' may prove to be a difficult task: as Taylor (2006) stated, alternative is not a fixed definition but a constantly revolving one. It is not possible to know "what alternative is until we know what it is an alternative to, and we can't know what that is until the alternative shows us" (Taylor, 2006, pp. 2-3).

Under this perspective, the term 'alternative' in popular music appears to indicate an umbrella definition grouping together many performing styles that, before becoming institutionalized and 'mainstream', have to evolve and revolve. 'Alternative' may apply as a categorization under which new realities identify and shape themselves seeking acceptance.

When rock bands such as Green Day achieved large-scale success since 1993, popular music magazines in the USA reported this situation as the outbreak of an alternative music "revolution" (Tsitsos, 1999). Nevertheless, the origins of a link between popular music and 'alternative' connotations have to be traced back to late 1970s punk groups such as the Sex Pistols, the Ramones and the Clash. Punk was a popular music genre born in the UK and transplanted in the USA, which

evolved as a progression and essentially an 'alternative' to the sounds of the early 1970s (Laing, 1985). Punk broke out in 1977's London as a rebellious, provoking and extreme musical 'alternative' and social subculture. According to Pete Lentini (2003), the birth of punk is a product of two "cultural swings" among the UK and the USA in the mid and late 1970s, as some sort of transatlantic musical syncretism of cultural exchanges among the two superpowers. In that particular historical period, the youth of London and New York invented punk as the 'alternative' musical transposition of a feeling of alienation towards the surrounding social, political and economical forces (Dunn, 2008). As Hebdige observed (1979), in those times, the punks materialized into tangible terms what was a sense of crisis permeating the 'mainstream' airwaves and magazines' headlines. Although punk and alternative rock formally differ in the content of their music and style, Moore (2007) state they both represent a commercially autonomous stand from the increasingly dominant corporate conglomerates in the music industry.

Consequently, it may be possible to identify the 'mainstream' as the current thought of the majority, and 'alternative' (or 'independent') as a minority voice, referring to a different category of music opposing the familiar and unthreatening 'mainstream' music for the masses (Halnon, 2005). During the post-punk (1979-1986) era, 'alternative' popular music developed into 'indie' (abbreviation for 'independent'),

a term mostly indicating those record labels who constituted an 'alternative' to the mainstream industry's distribution channels; this tag was later used to categorize a musical genre per se, encompassing at large many different artists playing different 'alternative' music styles (Borthwick & Moy, 2004). A multitude of musical genres, from post-punk to ska to Britpop, were labelled as 'independent' or 'alternative'.

Heavy metal, another musical genre born as an alternative to traditionally blues oriented 1960s rock, kept mutating and increased in popularity during the 1980s and the 1990s, ultimately becoming one of the most followed popular music genres in main worldwide popular culture provider the USA (Weinstein, 2000). Although originally presenting an innovative, sometimes provoking image, heavy metal gradually domesticated and blended into the mainstream's spotlight, creating a choice of 'alternative music' readily available to the general consumers through record stores, radio, the Internet, and cable television (Borthwick & Moy, 2004; Starr & Waterman, 2003; Weinstein, 2000). As Halnon (2005) observed, the original 'alternative music' transformed into a different commercial approach to marketing of music.

During the post-punk period in the 1980s, repeated attempts were done to recapture an 'alternative' culture by building new genres upon the heavy metal and punk subcultures of the prior decade. Hardcore, thrash metal, skate punk and death metal are all facets of the new 'alternative' to mainstream heavy metal. These genres were absolutely not commercial, did not receive any mainstream

radio or television exposure, and ultimately constituted an 'underground alternative' to the domesticated heavy rock manipulated by the record industry (Weinstein, 1995).

As Weinstein (1995) continued explaining, the 1990s saw a great deal of musical creativity, greatly supported by a network of college radio stations, independent record labels, fanzines and venue owners that provided a map for a fragmented 'alternative' audience and helped show the diversity of experimentations and enlightening the way towards further 'alternatives'. This situation became a breeding ground for a number of artists and musicians who could literally feed off each other, creating distinctive 'alternative' sounds and scenes to the national and regional levels. The 1990s iconic 'alternative' style was grunge, whose most representative band Nirvana's "Nevermind" album sold millions of copies around the world by mixing punk, heavy metal and hipster college rock (Shevory, 1995). 'Alternative music' in the 1990s became therefore identified with the "Seattle sound", the North western American city, where Nirvana and other famous (and extremely diversely sounding) bands such as Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and Mudhoney came from (Prato, 2009). Grunge's marginal, destitute flannel wear appeal (a reminiscence of the 1960s hippie culture) revolved in a few years, again, from an 'alternative' and 'underground' movement to a 'mainstream' money maker for the popular music business (Weinstein, 1995).

Waksman (2009) observed that over the last decade, the modern versions of

more authentically ‘alternative’ genres such as punk embraced a definite stand against mainstream commercialism and popular heavy metal music’s domesticated rebellion. This attitude has kept nurturing an ‘independent’ concept of music and record distribution as an extreme consequence of the ‘do-it-yourself’ ethics abundant in the hardcore and punk communities during the 90’s and the first decade of the new millennium (Waksman, 2009). Nevertheless, Waksman concluded that since heavy metal and punk fundamentally embody two different sources of the same ‘alternative’ to the mainstream pop music, the only meaningful difference lies in the listeners’ chosen singular identities: those who identify with rock (the ‘alternative’, at large) and those who do not, preferring other mainstream forms of music.

Based on this perspective, it may be possible to identify a segment of society, particularly the youth, who literally “live and breathe” ‘alternative music’ styles and messages. To this segment of population, the ‘alternative’ cultures may constitute an attractive path to English language learning. This advantage may prove particularly important in those countries where English is not a first or a second language as the ‘alternative’ genres of rock, being highly anglocentric (Gudmundsson, 1999), provide optimal sources of authentic English materials.

FITTING THEORY

In order to justify why students may develop their motivation and improve their English

learning using ‘alternative music’, it is important to consider the Affective Filter Theory postulated by Krashen (1982; 2003). According to this hypothesis, certain emotions such as anxiety, self-doubt and mere boredom, interfere with the process of acquiring a second language. They function as a filter between the speaker and the listener that reduces the amount of language input the listener is able to understand. This theory further states that the blockage can be reduced by sparking interest, providing low anxiety environments and bolstering the learner’s self-esteem.

This assumption may lead to consider “alternative music learning” under a hybrid linguistic and social learning framework. As postulated in the Social learning theory (1977), Bandura asserts that people can learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modelling. In the ‘alternative music’ context, the musicians, mostly English speaking, become the model of behaviour. Attempting to be part of their social context, the individual is compelled to approach English learning with stronger motivation.

This paradigm may also be supported by Vygotsky’s theory of Social Constructivism (1978), wherein groups construct knowledge for one another, collaboratively creating a small culture of shared artefacts with shared meanings. When an individual is immersed within a culture of this sort, he is learning all the time about how to be a part of that culture on many levels. The “zone of proximal development” theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is also fitting, the process of voluntary

acting is distributed between two people, one of whom already knows how to perform a particular act (the adult or “expert”), and one who does not (the child, or “novice”).

The role of ‘alternative’ music for English learning resembles the “concert sessions” of the Suggestopedic teaching method as postulated by Lozanov (1978; 1982). They are theorised as a text being solemnly and dramatically read with specially selected classical background music. The learners listen to the teacher’s voice in a “pseudopassive state” (Lozanov, 1978) as they follow the text and translation, absorbing both the linguistic rhythm and meaning of vocabulary. Similarly to Lozanov’s students, the ‘alternative’ music fans may absorb large amounts of English language input as a result of their psychorelaxation during the musical performance.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative data were collected using one of the author’s 10 years of experience in the ‘alternative music’ genre punk context, and a Delphi Panel Meeting organized with four respondents through a cyber conference. The Delphi Panel members were asked the following questions:

- What aspects of the ‘alternative music’ experience did they use to improve their English?
- How was their English language learning influenced by the “experts” in the ‘alternative music’ social context?

- How did they use the English written ‘alternative music’s lyrical corpus in order to improve their English?

As the nature of an individual’s involvement in ‘alternative music’ is multi-faceted, and being the purpose of the present study to explore how participants relate their different experiences in the world of ‘alternative music’ to their English learning, it was chosen to select four participants with different backgrounds and functions. The choice was operated on the base of the description of the roles in a “music scene” as postulated by Lena and Peterson (2008): a “scene” is a community of artists, fans and supporting small businesses, such as independent record companies, and alternative press. These local “scenes” may connect with other distant local communities whose members share the same musical taste and lifestyle, and cooperate through the exchange of information and music by means of small-parcel shipping and the digital technologies such as the internet. Since the identification of individuals involved in a “music scene” is difficult for outsiders, and because the nature of such a connection has a loose organizational form characterized by varying degrees of commitment to the genre’s ideal (Lena & Peterson, 2008), this study employed snowball sampling in order to obtain a sample of participants who are fully committed and may represent each of the four aspects of involvement in the “music scene”. To this extent, one of the authors, having been involved in several of the alternative music genres for 10 years,

purposely selected four other participants representing a musician, an independent record label owner, a fanzine writer and a simple dedicated concert attendant. Then, to ensure a meaningful selection among the numerous different music styles categorized as “alternative”, four individuals claiming to belong to the hardcore punk, heavy metal, grunge and alternative rock “music scenes” were selected. The participants are four males of Italian nationality, aged between 25 and 31 years old, and have been proactively involved in an “alternative music scene” for more than 5 years. Before answering the research questions, the participants agreed on the use of their answers for the scopes of this research. The data were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively from the notes collected by one of the authors, who moderated the Delphi panel cyber conference. The following sections illustrate a description of the findings in greater detail.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One of the Author's Personal Experiences

It seemed very valuable to analyse one of the authors' 10 years 'alternative music' social context experience, firstly in his home country Italy and later in the European and North American contexts. The author was involved in the Italian punk community starting from the mid '90s, just after the boom of grunge and the worldwide success of Nirvana gave 'alternative music' a crucial chance to reach the youth worldwide. This first exposure was the lead to discover many other artists, past and present, linked to the same sound. For the author as for many

other young people, Nirvana constituted a starting point to research the shelves of local record shops in order to unearth other music suitable to the new taste. The worldwide influence of grunge music brought back the imagery of rock as an exciting, motivating and liberal movement the youth could relate their lives and problems to (Bell, 1998).

The author's involvement in the punk community spanned a decade, and concluded in year 2007 when the author resigned from duties as a guitarist in the band he played with for 10 years. The author, besides being a musician, experienced deep involvement in the local Italian punk community, not only attending shows, but also taking part in the organization of events, writing reviews and personal opinions on several fan produced magazines, and hosting other touring bands. The experience of the author was gradual, and involved an increase of the time and effort dedicated to attend the musical matters, until they become almost a part time job. However, in a “music scene”, musicians and creative people seldom can support themselves financially from the music alone (Lena & Peterson, 2008). The following is a report of the findings extrapolated from the answers to the research questions.

What aspects of the 'alternative music' experience did he use to improve his English?

In the middle of the 1990s, the English language in Italy was taught in secondary and high schools, but the opportunities of unearthing authentic material in the real world were very limited. Consequently, the average students' level of English was not

very proficient. 'Alternative music' offered a readily available corpus of English written material, although at the time, the scarce availability of the internet made the research for lyrical transcriptions more difficult. Listening to the music by following lyrical reference proved to be a very effective way to enhance English vocabulary knowledge, perfect the pronunciation and understand several grammar structures. Additionally, by discovering the existence of other foreign 'alternative music' social groups, the author was forced to put effort into improving his reading and listening skills to the extent of understanding oral communication and writing letters to "experts" within those foreign groups. When some years later the Italian 'alternative music' environment became more internationalized, the first foreign bands started travelling to Italy to play their shows. This was an opportunity to practise oral English to communicate with them, consequently enhancing the author's oral English fluency skill.

How was his English language learning influenced by the "experts" in the 'alternative music' social context?

The author's first contact with 'alternative music' experts was in the written form of music "fanzines", which are self-produced press created by specialists. He discovered "fanzines" by way of an older friend ("the expert") and started attending concerts. These early meetings fostered his interest for the community and started a "learning process" through behavioural observation of peers and "experts". He learnt that "experts"

knew how to access to the latest musical information by way of foreign English written press and English communication with other foreign "experts".

The author also experienced a performing 'alternative music' career playing guitar in a band. The author had a chance to enter the European 'alternative music' social context supporting a record deal. This experience fully exposed the author to the international 'alternative music' social context where the language of communication is English. Consequently, through a lengthy exposure to the "music scene", the author was able to enhance the four skills of English (reading, writing, listening and speaking) by means of increased oral communication in English language, reading and translating fanzines and song lyrics, writing e-mails and letters to other musicians and articles for the fan based press, and ultimately listening to a substantial amount of English, not widely available in the author's original Italian community.

How did he use the English 'alternative music' lyrical corpus to improve his English?

The author improved his English listening to music and following a visual reference of the lyrics. When he was playing in an 'alternative music' band, he had to write lyrical content in English to make the songs more appealing to the international audience. This process helped him improving his English vocabulary and reading/writing skills by way of using dictionaries to translate ideas from Italian into English.

Considering the author's experience it may be possible to recognize "cognition" and "learning" as important constructs for the use of 'alternative music' to learn English. Accordingly, the involvement in the 'alternative music' social context can also indicate "sustainability" factors: the English learning proved to be effective for the author over a period of 10 years. Finally, we can recognize "learning" as an additional construct because the process of learning from the social context as postulated by Bandura (1977) has affected the whole author's experience in the 'alternative music' community, maximising the improvement of English for communication purposes.

The Delphi Panel Meeting

A Delphi Panel meeting with four experts was organized by interactive cyber conference and moderated by one of the authors. We looked for common constructs related to the different involvement in the 'alternative music' social context and "music scene" as identified by Lena and Peterson (2008), specifically an "alternative musician", a record label manager, a journalist and a simple fan who likes to attend concerts. The participants' recalled their experiences in the 'alternative music' social context and answered the research questions.

Which aspects of the 'alternative music' experience did they use to improve their English?

The respondents reported that reading English written 'alternative music' magazines and fanzines not available in

their mother tongue was very helpful. Listening to music and following a visual transcription of the lyrics also emerged as a favourite strategy. Some of the respondents also asserted that watching original English spoken music documentaries and videos was a contributing factor in their English improvement. Playing in a band was also considered very important. The participants who did not engage in musical activities asserted that the 'alternative music' social context improved their English by means of travel opportunities to countries where English is the language of communication.

How was their English language learning influenced from "experts" in the 'alternative music' social context?

The respondents reported that they enhanced their English oral fluency skills by observing how "experts" exchanged conversation in English with international touring bands. Some of the respondents, motivated by the desire to play in a band and tour internationally, consequently improved their English oral fluency skills also by participating in the international 'alternative music' touring community. Thus, we may affirm that the participants demonstrated an English oral fluency improvement by way of direct observation of a "music scene" social context which uses the English language as medium of expression.

How did they use the English 'alternative music' lyrical corpus to improve their English?

The participants reported that they translated English lyrics to decode the 'alternative

music’ messages. One affirmed that by translating English written alternative music’s lyrics, he learned new key vocabulary items and reviewed grammar rules and structures, as to reach an intermediate level of English, and consequently pass an English University admission test. The participants also reported that they listened to original music while following the lyrical transcription to better understand the meaning. These activities have been indicated as factors of English listening and pronunciation’s skills enhancement.

Compared with the evidence of the author’s involvement in the ‘alternative music’ social context, the findings of the Delphi Panel meeting may confirm that “cognition” and “learning” are recurrent constructs, and it also seems relevant to consider “social value” as one of the main constructs.

In the next section, we attempt to exemplify how the individuated key constructs might be associated to create a functional framework for the use of ‘alternative music’ as a valid tool in the English classroom.

Defining the Key Constructs of English Language Learning through ‘Alternative music’

The following key constructs are postulated on the basis of analytical reflection on the theoretical framework and the evidence drawn from the sources of research information. We may come to a conclusion that the major constructs may be individuated as “sustainability”, “cognition”, “social value” and “learning”.

Further explanation of the indicators resulting from the “Learning” column is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

List of constructs and indicators derived from the theoretical framework, the author’s firsthand experience in the ‘alternative music’ social context and the Delphi Panel Meeting.

| SUSTAINABILITY | COGNITION | SOCIAL VALUE | LEARNING |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Youth aggregation | Creativity | Understanding of social problems | Novice/Expert relationship |
| Self-development | Organization | Cooperation | Mentor/Mentee relationship |
| Social development | Decision making | Sharing | Social learning |
| Community participation | Mental associations | Community development | Spoken English practice |
| Community sharing of knowledge | | Creation of a social context | English listening practice |
| Internationalization of experiences | | Active involvement in a social context | English vocabulary decoding |
| Personal Development | | Concerts as social meetings for the community | |
| | | Improvement of youth’s social life in suburban areas | |

Novice/Expert relationship: It appears to be common to learn more about 'alternative music' and its culture as a consequence of involvement in the social group. The novice can gradually learn from observing the experts, relying completely on a Social Learning approach (Bandura, 1977). This is also an important key theory in Vygotsky (1978), i.e. novice will learn from the social context, firstly assisted by the expert, and then becoming more and more capable of performing the observed tasks by himself.

Mentor/Mentee relationship: In a spirit of conservation and development of the community, the "experts" seem to be compelled to adopt mentoring positions for particularly interested or skilled novices. The mentor/mentee has a stronger social value and tends to transmit stronger values from highly committed individuals to others that are individuated as possible purveyors of that particular culture.

Social learning: The people involved in the 'alternative music' social group usually identify completely with it and its philosophy. They live the music ideology, talk about it, read about it and actively contribute in its capillary spread. Some of them write about it and publish their ideas and findings on self-produced fan magazines that are sold and distributed through independent channels and further contribute to foster the community's development to broader levels.

Spoken English Practice: In the 'alternative music' social group it is very important to participate actively, to put aside shyness and engage in socialization (Reddick & Beresin, 2002). This appears

to lead to English development in those countries where English is not the first language. English is used as an international language, the majority of the 'alternative music' corpus being in English.

English Listening practice: This happens mostly in two major ways: firstly, listening to the 'alternative music' lyrical corpus, most of the time following a visual transcription; secondly, when the individual engages in oral communication with members of other foreign groups within the community.

English vocabulary decoding: The act of decoding the 'alternative music' corpus is very important for the enhancement of English language knowledge. The individuals are motivated by the 'alternative music' context and thus may be exposed to new vocabulary which they need to decode and understand.

POSSIBILITIES OF 'ALTERNATIVE MUSIC' FOR THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH

One of the strengths of the employment of 'alternative music' in English language learning lies in its broad range of adaptability in the teaching context and its ability to be tailored according to different target learners. In fact, there are a wide number of 'alternative music' genres which appeal to most segments of youth, and it is possible to recognize a wide number of subjects and topics in the lyrics. This aspect facilitates the use of 'alternative music' as a tool for teaching different kind of students and suits a wide range of interests. Furthermore, it has to be considered that music, despite its orality, is also deeply text-driven. Each song

becomes a kind of template for language use, a way to navigate meaning and learn sentence style, use of symbolism, nuances and patterns.

Secondly, 'alternative music' may be employed to attract at-risk students to the learning of English language. According to Reddick and Beresin (2002, p. 58), 'alternative music' constitutes an "alternative appeal" to the less rebellious mainstream music context with which most of the people identify with. The more rebellious youth groups, including at-risk students, tend to identify themselves with a style of 'alternative music' and its community. Consequently, by using 'alternative music' as a source of classroom materials and activities, these at-risk students may be attracted to the scholar curriculum, stimulated by a changed perspective on the school system as an institution they can identify with.

Thirdly, it is easy and naturally employed because it engages students' interest and nurtures their motivation. Its corpus draws inspiration from youth experiences and problems, naturally using the English language to communicate, engaging the students' analytical thoughts, creativity and interpretation.

Additionally, it abandons teacher-centred interpretations and delineations of the texts, developing personal thought and interaction with peers, exchange of ideas between followers of antithetical 'alternative music' subgenres and nurtures language learning through critical discussion.

Finally, it is a linguistic empowering tool as it enables previous vocabulary and

linguistic context knowledge to be expanded with new, familiar input, combine it with existent knowledge and immediately check and revise it through the listening context of the music corpus.

CONCLUSION

The present paper contributes to the body of knowledge and research on ELT by adding an insight on the possibility for English language teachers, policy makers and curriculum developers to use the corpus of 'alternative music' in the classroom, in order to attract students' attention to the English language teaching by means of narrowing the generational gap among teachers and students. To this extent, by researching how strongly committed 'alternative music' individuals have exploited their functions in the "music scenes" as ways to practice and enhance their English language proficiency, the present paper attempts to add to the ELT scholarly literature that, as previously observed (Kirkland, 2007; Moi, 1994, 2003), the use of 'alternative music' for English learning may shorten the gap between students and teachers, increase students' English learning motivation and bring topics of interest in the classroom. By accepting the post-modern and unconventional facade of 'alternative music', teachers and curriculum developers may update their teaching styles and decisions, become closer to the world and opinions of the students, and ultimately increase the learners' English language proficiency. It is also crucial to outline that by adding such an insight into the classroom, at-risk students who generally

tend to identify with one or the other subgenres of 'alternative music' may be attracted to English learning, and thus aided to become more successful English learners. The 'alternative music' implementation into the English teaching curriculum needs more work and thoughtful observation because we cannot dismiss and ignore what is actually happening in the world around us. The mass media have strongly influenced the imagery of the youth of today in such a way to affect its decisions, strategies and educational choices. To understand and use the situation to our educational advantage, we have to give the "alternative music approach" a chance, and consider it a challenge to look deeper inside the minds of the youth and their role and position in the modern social context. It can be used as an effective methodology to focus the learning of English.

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Collecting and Contextualising *Sundait* (Riddles) among the Rungus People of Sabah

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ABSTRACT

A field exercise conducted among the Rungus people of Sabah, East Malaysia, yielded a total of seventy-eight riddles, together with valuable contextual information on the practice of riddling. The products of this research are herein recorded in both the Rungus and English languages, and it is hoped that the data will prove useful to researchers, who may be interested in pursuing scholarships on riddling in the Rungus society. A crucial discovery made during the research concerns the taboo aspects of riddling: riddles can only be posed during the paddy harvest period - and not at other times during daily life. Consequently, this paper sets out to investigate the reasons why the practice of riddling is restricted, while also examining the traditional, cultural and religious contexts associated with the activity.

Keywords: Harvest-time riddling, paddy-spirits, Rungus, *sundait* (riddles), taboo in riddling

INTRODUCTION

To date, only five academic works have been published on the Kadazandusun¹ *sundait* (riddles) of Sabah, and these are by Evans (1951, 1954, 1955), Williams (1963), and Lokman (2004). Evans (1951) was the first researcher to conduct fieldwork on Kadazandusun riddles. In 1950, he managed

to collect fifty riddles from Kadaimain village, in Kota Belud district. Later in the same year, he documented seventy-four riddles from Tombulion, Kaung Saraiyoh and Tambatuon villages, which are located in the same district. Besides giving a brief account and making a full inventory of the riddles collected, Evans (1951, 1954, 1955) did little in the way of analysis.

In "The Form and Function of Tambunan Dusun Riddles", Williams (1963) stated that Dusun riddling is a fundamental part of the structure and functioning of the

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Dusun society. Focusing on the forms and social functions of the *sundait*, he concluded that riddling behaviour could not be categorized as a leisure time game or activity. Furthermore, Dusuns do not view riddles as tests of chance or luck (Williams, 1963). From another perspective, Lokman's (2004) study investigated the performance of Kadazandusun riddles as a unique oral skill.

The Rungus are acknowledged as one of several Kadazandusun subgroups, and like other Dusunic groups, they possess a rich riddling heritage. To date, no research on Rungus riddles in relation to paddy spirit beliefs has been published. In an attempt to bridge this research gap, the author collected riddles and contextual information about the practice during a field trip conducted in September 2009. The outcome of this research is a collection of seventy-eight Rungus riddles, together with their English translations. Also examined were the various contexts in which the riddling is typically carried out.

THE RUNGUS

The Rungus are a group of indigenous people residing in Kudat District in the north of Sabah. They refer to themselves as being of Momogun ethnic stock², and as hailing from one of sixteen or more different subgroups. Of these known subgroups - which include the Lingkabau, Nulu, Gonsomon, Sindapak, Garo, and the Marigang - the Rungus are the largest (Appell, 1963). As the language, culture and mythology of the Rungus are quite similar to

that of neighbouring Dusunic people, they are categorised as one of the Kadazandusun ethnic groups (Topin, 1996; Reid, 1997). Their language is categorised as belonging to the "Dusunic" family, i.e., a part of the Austronesia group from Northern Indonesia. Within the Rungus language itself, there are five language groups, namely, the Nulu, Gonsomon, Rungus, Pilapazan and Gandahon. The spoken language is tonal in nature (Prentice, 1970; Porodong, 2004). Well-defined social boundaries are a facet of the community life that distinguishes the Rungus from other Dusunic-speaking groups. These are delineated by differences in speech, customary law, the use of the autonym "Rungus" and dress (Appell, 1978).

The origins of the Rungus remain shrouded in mystery – no written records exist regarding their ancestry. Appell (1978) stated that the Kudat Peninsula is considered to be the original homeland of the Rungus; those occupying the Melabong Peninsula across Marudu Bay first moved there sometimes in the last century prior to the arrival of the British. The major social groupings are the domestic family, the long-house, and the village. Traditionally, the Rungus as a unit were politically acephalous, although regional leaders did arise in pre-British times. Their social organization is also egalitarian in that there are no hereditary leaders, nor is there a hereditary class system (Appell, 1978). Such social organization system has, in a way, contributed to the difficulty in tracing the origins of the Rungus. As such, one has to

refer to their oral tales to gather some hints as to their origins.

As with many other Kadazandusun subgroups, the Rungus generally believe that their forefathers originated from Nunuk Ragang (*nunuk* - banyan tree and *ragang* – red) – which is the sacred birthplace of all Dusunic-speaking peoples of Sabah (Topin, 1981).³

A migration legend gathered in 2001 from a Rungus informant revealed that the ancestors of the Rungus people originated from a faraway place known as “Hujung Dunia” (the furthest end of the world). There once lived two brothers named Lungguvai and Runsud. When their soils were no longer fertile, they decided to find a new place to live. Lungguvai asked Runsud to begin his search for the new land. Before Runsud started his journey, Lungguvai told him to leave behind trace marks using pieces of wood but unfortunately Runsud forgot to follow his request. As a result, the brothers were separated. Lungguvai reached a place known as Kamburaya and settled down there. His descendants formed the Dusun tribe. Meanwhile Runsud reached a place known as Pomipitan. He decided to stay there and thereafter formed the Rungus tribe (Low Kok On, 2005).

From the historical aspect, North Borneo was at one time ruled by the Brunei Sultanate. Fortunately the Brunei Sultanate at that time recognised the Rungus headman as the leader of the community. On the other hand, the Suluk Sultanate in the Southern Philippines encouraged slavery through the sanctioning of kidnapping of the

Rungus people who lived along the coast. As a result, many Rungus people shifted to the interior or the mountainous terrain (Porodong, 2004).

The Rungus are excellent farmers, probably the most proficient of all those residing in Borneo. Traditionally, their main crops are paddy, followed by maize and cassava (Appell, 1976). To date, the majority of the Rungus depend on swidden-cultivated rice (hill paddy). There exists a widespread myth that wet rice cultivation does not exist among the Rungus. Although this is untrue, a lack of predictable water supplies has prevented a more widespread adoption of the practice (Appell, 1986).

In their traditional planting practices, each year a field was cut, allowed to lie until the slash became dry, and then burned. This provided ash to help fertilize the crops. Maize was planted first, followed by paddy, and then a variety of vegetables. In addition, the Rungus maintained extensive groves of *langsai* (*Lansium domesticum*), *limau* (*Citrus hystrix*), *timadang* (*Artocarpus odoratissimus*) and other fruit trees. Since rice is the staple food for the Rungus and its yields are crucial to them, it is not surprising that this crop is endowed with cultural and religious significance. This is typified by the fact that riddling is closely associated with their belief in paddy-spirits.

THE TERM *SUNDAIT*

Like most of the Kadazandusun subgroups, riddles are termed as *sundait* (pronounced as soon/da/it) among the Rungus. Typically, a Rungus villager may ask “*Monundait oku po*

[Let me ask you (a riddle)], *ikau mengarait* (you answer it)” [Informant: Manadas Mogiom]. According to Lokman (2004), the word *sundait* in Kadazandusun is the combination of two words, i.e. “sunundait” (to tell or to pose) and “karait” (to answer). However, the Rungus use “*monundait*” to mean asking a *sundait* and “*mengarait*” to mean answering the *sundait*. Naturally, the terms vary between the different Kadazandusun subgroups. For example, the Tambunan Dusun refer to their riddles as *sosundaiton* or *sunandait* (Williams, 1963), while the Dusun from Ulu Kaung, Kota Belud call riddles *susundoiton* and answers, *narait* (Evans, 1951). An answer to a riddle is also termed as *narait* by the Dusun from Tambunan (Williams, 1963). Evans (1951) also reported that in Kadaimaian, Kota Belud, riddles and their answers are called *sundait* and *araiton*, respectively (Evans, 1951). In Kadazandusun, *araiton* means answering. To sum up, the term *sundait* is closely related to words like *sosundaiton*, *susundoiton* and *sunundait* as used by other Kadazandusun subgroups to denote a riddle.

LEGENDS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE RUNGUS *SUNDAIT*

Just as little is known about the origin of the Rungus people, equally little is known about their *sundait*. Consequently, the author turned to the Rungus elders for answers. When asked about the origin of the Rungus *sundait*s, Rundabang binti Linsapu [Informant 1] narrated the following legend:

Once, a girl was wandering from one place to another trying to find her life

partner. On the way, she met Rumolizan (one of the paddy spirits). At that time, Rumolizan was about to build a ladder for his *sulap* (rice storage hut). He tested the girl by uttering the phrase “*kazimipas sudorudun*” (*kazimipas* is a special type of wood and *sudorudun* refers to layers of things). To his surprise, the girl answered, “I know that you are going to build a *tukad* (ladder) for your hut”. As the girl had been able to answer his riddle, Rumolizan decided to marry her. “*Kazimipas sudorudun*” is one of the oldest *sundait* known to the Rungus. Rinjamal Montuduk [Informant 2] added that once this *sundait* was known, riddling became popular among the Rungus people.

Conversely, Limpot Majalu [Informant 8] had this to say, “*Ah, itu dulu-dulu ada orang Rungus pergi ke tempat Bambarazon, dari situ bah mereka bawa balik itu sundait.*” [“Ah, a long, long time ago, some Rungus went to the dwelling place of the Bambarazon (paddy-spirit); from there they brought back the *sundait* (riddles)”].

Thus, if the above accounts of Rungus legends are to be believed, the origin of the *sundait*s is closely linked to the paddy-spirit known as Bambarazon. Beliefs relating to the paddy spirits vary among the different Kadazandusun subgroups. According to Phelan (2005), the Kadazandusuns believe that there are seven types of paddy-spirit and that Bambarazon or Bambarayon (variously spelt) is a general term for them. Each of the seven categories of the paddy-spirit has a distinct role to fulfil. The special capability of the paddy-spirit known as Gontolobon, for example, is to give rice piled up in huge

quantities like boulders. Prosperous farmers were assisted by most of the seven paddy-spirits and these took residence in their paddy-fields and in their rice barns, whereas poor farmers were considered to have the help of one, or perhaps two spirits. Evans (1953) said, "I am told that at Kadamaian, the belief is that if a poor man has only one rice-spirit, it will be Sambilod, or if two, an Ohinopot and a Sambilod. Even the one spirit may desert him and go to a rich man's house, where there is plenty of paddy, only returning when the poor man has a little paddy in store" (Phelan, 2005).

In Rungus animistic beliefs, Bambarazon or Odu-odu (paddy spirits) are considered as good spirits. During his fieldwork, Yutaka Shimomoto (1979) gathered many myths from Rungus informants, including one about the relationship between Bambarazon and the Rungus rice cultivators. According to this particular tale, a Rungus once sailed across the sea until he arrived at a distant shore where he came upon a large red house in which many red men lived. However, they did not welcome him, so he went on with his journey to look for food and shelter. In all, he visited seven houses, but none of the inhabitants welcomed him. Finally, he arrived at a house and asked if he could stay there. The people in the house welcomed him and offered him food and accommodation. Later, the kind-hearted hosts told him that they were Bambarazon.

The man noticed that Bambarazon had body burns. He asked them the reason for this and they told him that a man had burned the *sulap* (rice storage hut) before

he finished the rice harvest, and they were burnt as a result. The man stayed with the Bambarazon for seven days and they gave him the directions to his homeland. On his way home, he re-crossed the sea. The crossing went well although he did not use the sail. When he arrived home, he met a farmer who complained of his long run of poor harvests. He asked the farmer for details of his methods, and the farmer replied that he had burned his *sulap* before he finished harvesting. Remembering the Bambarazon and their burns, the man advised the farmer to sacrifice some chickens to Bambarazon. As a consequence, the harvests got better each year.

Then one night, the farmer had a dream and heard voices telling him that for his final sacrifice, he must conduct the Magahau ceremony (the rite of sacrificing fowls and pigs to the spirits like Minamagun, Kinoingan and Bambarazon after the rice harvest). From this myth, we learn that the Rungus believe that the Bambarazon live in a distant land beyond the sea. They are good spirits and the protectors of rice. However, if people showed disrespect by, for example, burning the *sulap* before the rice harvest, the Bambarazon would take revenge by giving them poor yields. Thus, in order to sustain the good harvest, farmers must conduct certain rites.

In contrast, the first Rungus myth gathered by Yutaka Shimomoto (1979) explained how their forefathers had visited the dwelling place of the Bambarazon in the remote past. In the course of his visit, he learnt how to show them respect, thus

ensuring a bountiful harvest”. This is similar to the myth recounted by another informant in this research, who stated that “some Rungus went to the dwelling place of the Bambarazon; from there they brought back the *sundait* (riddles).” Both Rungus myths reveal that the beliefs about the Bambarazon, paddy yield, and *sundait* are closely related.

FIELD TRIP AND OUTCOME

A field trip designed for the purposes of collecting, transcribing and archiving Rungus *sundait* (as well as gathering information on riddling contexts) was carried out in September 2009. The team comprised the author and two assistant researchers, Mr. Janathan Kandok and Mr. Romzi Abdullah. With the help of Mr. Azlan Shafie, a Rungus from Matunggong village in Kudat, nine Rungus informants were identified and interviewed by the author. The location of Kudat is indicated in Map 1 below, while details about the informants are listed in Table 1.

All the informants cited in this research are small-scale farmers who plant hill paddy, maize, cassava, vegetables, and fruit trees. Besides being a farmer, Rundabang Linsapu from Matunggong village, Kudat, is also a well-known female *bobolizan* (ritual specialist). Listed below are the verbatim texts of *sundait* collected from the field trips. They were transcribed from the spoken language of the Rungus informants. In doing so, the author has retained the textural aspect of the Rungus *sundait*.

In verbal forms of folklore, the texture

is the language, the specific phonemes and morphemes employed. In other words, textural features are equally linguistic features. The failure to collect folklore in the original native language results in the loss of texture. Texture is, on the whole, untranslatable; whereas text may be translated (Dundes, 1980). In other words, the *sundait* verbatim texts may, in theory, be translated into any language, but the chances of the textural features of rhyme surviving the translation are virtually nil. Of course, in order to let non-native readers understand them, the *sundait* must be translated into an accessible language.

Some translated versions of the *sundait* are written in colloquial English as the author tried to keep as close to the meaning of the original Rungus as possible. Terms or words with no equivalents in English such as the name of certain trees, birds and flowers have been retained and explained (in brackets), where necessary. The majority of the Rungus words starting with the letters “B”, “D” and “L” are spelt with a double consonant (Bb or bb, Dd or dd and Ll or ll). According to the translator, this reflects the way the Rungus pronounce words with these initials.

THE RIDDLING CONTEXT AMONG THE RUNGUS

In general, there are three levels of analysis in studying various forms of folklore. With respect to any given item of folklore, one may analyze its texture, its text and its context. The context of an item of folklore is the specific social situation in which

Informant 1: Rundabang Linsapu

| Rungus Sundait | Pragmatic Translation* |
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| 1. <i>Togod ku ddo rokizan, A-millo soromo, Pallad oku rokizan, Llid noko bbinonduk. (It rogon ddot rusod monuhu moginum.)</i> | I am disappointed, Because you are not well behaved, If I were you, I'd give the feast. (A house ghost asking for a ritual feast.) |
| 2. <i>Sanggung surip ddi Sogondoï, Sinuripan ddi ombura, Duwo ddara pogombiton, Sontiga-tiga dazang. (Potizukan)</i> | How nice are the patterns of Sogondoï's (a name) weave, Like the scales of the <i>ombura</i> fish (a kind of white fish), Two of them stretching out their arms, Three of them are maidens. (<i>Potizukan</i> – a type of bee.) |
| 3. <i>Apui-apui ddi bbaging, Kotitiw om kabbabbang, Roun kaka ddi pagung, Kallapik om kasaniw, Kokun kotikai, Kundago kanagi. (Saai - ello modtitiw ddot saai)</i> | The fire of Bbaging (a name), It can shine and brighten up, You are like a nipah leaf, You can function like a base and are able to shine, One has to be skilful in order to catch you. (<i>Saai</i> – a kind of edible frog. One has to be very skilful to catch it.) |
| 4. <i>Lungui ddi uriposon, Sangadau ddo tollungui, Kondom turu naku - Vusak ddot bbonsisiaan. (Olungui tu kohondom ddi ondu sovoon dau.)</i> | Uriposon (a kind of bird) is feeling sad, The whole day it looks sorrowful, May be it is missing – thinking about the <i>bbonsisiaan</i> flower. (A man missed his lover.) |
| 5. <i>Mogom-ogom monsimong, Kobburuon rinibba. (It ullun ddot mangagama ddot ongo saging.)</i> | <i>Monsimong</i> (an animal) is sitting around, making work for people. (People sitting around making a type of traditional basket known as <i>saging</i> and <i>barazit</i>). |
| 6. <i>Arug-arug kud savat, Monondot kud llibbabbou, Magandak apui-apui, Kallu ong kopongintallang. (Ong kaboros elo osukod, avallang onong no ddit osukod.)</i> | The wheel in the air, Landed on the <i>llibbabbou</i> (world), Dance and dance the fire, Trying to show something clearly. (A headman's words will settle a dispute)** |
| 7. <i>llosing no mang llazo, Potizukan sumagou. (llumohong ko no nga kakal-I avasi ko.)</i> | The ginger has turned rough; the bee fetches water. (An elderly woman who still looks beautiful) |
| 8. <i>Kisigal okon ko ullun, Kisisi okon ko sada. (Paranggi)</i> | It has head gear but not a man; it has scales but not a fish. (Pineapple) |
| 9. <i>Guol inimborutan, Popinukol. (Aakanon ddot ginovullan ddot guol.)</i> | Yam was spreading around, and found in between too. (A type of food mixed with yam.) |

Notes

*Brislin (1976) stated that pragmatic translation is the translation of a message with an interest in the accurate duplication of information in the target language form. In translating the Rungus *sundait* from its spoken language to English, the author aimed to accurately convey the meanings of the *sundait* and their answers to those who do not understand Rungus. The language style and linguistic aspects of the *sundait* are not taken into account in the translation as the language is tonal in nature. Porodong (2004) reported that the meaning of the Rungus words can only be identified through the way the words are spoken, although the spelling of the words may be the same. Hence, it is the accurate conveyance of the meaning of the *sundait* and their answers in English that concerns the author. The name of certain trees, birds

and flowers have been retained and explained (in brackets), where necessary. Two words in *Sundait* 13 are unknown to the translator and the informant as they are old Rungus words which the informant learnt from their forefathers without ever knowing the meaning. The author refers to these words as “unknown”.

²One of the principal duties of a village headman among the indigenous peoples in Sabah is to act as a judge in disputes that arise in the village. The villagers follow traditional law which was handed down orally from one generation to the next. In other words, the role of headman in settling disputes is that of arbitrator. The headman’s power rests on his ability to bring about conciliation and compliance with his decisions, and on his ability to explain and recall the details of the traditional law (Phelan, 2005).

Informant 2: Addek Riupa

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| 10. <i>Kulli no pitamangan,</i> <i>Apo nokulli ong it momitamong.</i> <i>(Momuhau ddot pirit - it pirit tumullud</i> <i>mulli, it pinongindorosi, sino-i.)</i> | The ones who are taken care of have gone home but the caretaker remains there. (Guarding the paddy field (scarecrow) –when the sparrows have flown away from the paddy field, the scarecrow remains) |
| 11. <i>Kodongon i-kikuk, monginsisiro.</i> <i>(Monigup)</i> | When inhaled, the fire lights up. (Smoking) |
| 12. <i>Monduk nopi sinsillog,</i> <i>Garaon ahis-ahis,</i> <i>Matai nopi bborillit,</i> <i>Olluvas o bbinorun.</i> <i>(Tumutud - ovuvuon po olluvas no it</i> <i>tagad.)</i> | When <i>sinsillog</i> (a type of insect) is singing, <i>ahis-ahis</i> (a type of insect) clamours. When the <i>bborillit</i> (name of a plant) are dead, the surrounding is clear. (<i>Tumutud</i> – burning and clearing the field for planting paddy) |
| 13. <i>Sollitanad ddi gana,</i> <i>Sinimpul ddi kudumai,</i> <i>Kiavau ddo kalanung,</i> <i>Songkologkong tunan,</i> <i>Songkilad kulasaian,</i> <i>Kosimpun potungan.</i> <i>(Tuvo - llakaton tu kiavau, oviton sid rahat</i> <i>yaampallang.)</i> | The situation of the plants, Jerks by <i>Kudumai</i> (name of a person), Got the smell of <i>kalanung</i> (unknown), The noise of <i>tamu</i> (weekly local open market) Shines the <i>kulasaian</i> (unknown) Surrounding the place where they placed them. (Fish caught by using <i>tuba</i> - a type of poison made from various roots - and brought home to cook.) |
| 14. <i>Ong imot nu yama nu ddot mokud-okud,</i> <i>a-ko unsopot, bang emot no yama nu ddot</i> <i>mahi-llahis, unsopot ko.</i> <i>(Modsubbol)</i> | When you father is bending; you won’t feel thankful. But when your father’s body is straightened then you will feel thankful. (Trapping squirrel) |

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| 15. <i>Tumullud i-nganingani, Piopitan ddi ngani. (linggaman om mongomot)</i> | <i>I-nganingani</i> (just a sound) is flying, <i>Ngani</i> (another sound rhyme with <i>I-nganingani</i>) has landed. (Harvesting paddy with a <i>linggaman</i> - a tool used for the purpose. It has a small blade which fits into the palm of the hand and its wooden handle protrudes between the little finger and the ring finger.) |
| 16. <i>Sompidding ulan-ulan, Pingansak ddo siou. (Tapai)</i> | A piece of the “moon” gives rise to courage. (<i>Tapai</i> – Rice wine. A small amount of yeast is used to turn rice into rice wine.) |
| 17. <i>Ullu kara akanon, iku kara ikana. (Guol - it onsi, ikana; it tullang toddukon.)</i> | The Monkey’s head is being eaten, its tail turned into a dish. (A type of local yam – Its flesh can be cooked as a main dish; its young stem can be cooked as vegetable) |

Informant 3: Rinjamal Montuduk

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| 18. <i>Addi sanggong ddit tinanku, Addi vasi ddiriku, Kinan okud tinondugu, Kiddiri okud tinandagas, Minongogom ddot tanapu, Moinodtuddung ddo tarantai, Kiobbuk sangrabboi-rabboi, Kitungkui songbbiris-bbiris, Tillibbon nopod tillibbon, Tadjaron nopod tadjaron, Millintazuk-tazukno, Millinggonoi-gonoino, Ahabba sid kotonobbon, Apangging sid kosillahon. (Korumanggallang)</i> | Just imagine how pretty I am, My body looks great, It’s slim, It’s tall and straight, I am sitting on flat land, Cross-legged in a valley, My hair is hanging loose, It will be stroked gently, When a light breeze is blowing, My arms are swinging, My body is shaking, Tilting towards sun set, To glance sideways towards sun rise. (<i>Korumanggallang</i> – a type of tall jungle tree) |
| 19. <i>Rollibu ddi rumbovos, ikorosi rinibba. (Potizukan)</i> | It’s Rumbovos’ (a name) tray that people are frightened of. (<i>Potizukan</i> – a type of bee that stings People.) |
| 20. <i>Podtullud po llinggata, pandai bbokullintangan. (Ombollog llogundi)</i> | <i>Llinggata</i> (insect) is flying, good at playing <i>kulintangan</i> (a type of traditional musical instrument) (<i>Ombollog llogundi</i> – a type of bird) |
| 21. <i>Tumolong siti, mimbulai silo. (Monombil jarum)</i> | Entering the river from this side, coming out of the water surface from the other side (Sewing with a needle.) |
| 22. <i>Inddallanon nu ogi ot ralan dot ullun ko rallan nu kondiri. (Ngaran)</i> | You are moving along other people’s path rather than your own. (<i>Ngaran</i> – a person’s name. We used to call other people’s name more often than our own name). |

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| 23. <i>Monsoronsot mizut, kiavau tinompuri.</i> (Mompiri) | The act of making love, and it smells like a paddy husk has just been peeled off (Making fire using wood.) |
| 24. <i>Tongkud do mangazou, Tangkus ot azohon.</i> (Using om tikus) | Bending the head-hunter, the prey keeps on running. (Cat and rat.) |
| 25. <i>Opoddok asin-asin, kuru ddo sovollok.</i> (Ladda) | So small is the salt, it satisfies one's appetite. (Small hot chilli.) |

Informant 4: Kinindangang Masani

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| 26. <i>Adi sangggong ddi inanku, addi vasi ddi ddiri, kinan ddo tinonodugu, kiddiri ddo tinandagas, bbaraton nopod bbaraton, hibbuton nopod hibbuton, illumpingoi-llumpingoi no, illintazuk-tazuk no</i> (Ombirog) | Just imagine how beautiful I am, Just imagine how attractive my body is, I am having a body of a tree's core, I am slim, When the wind is blowing lightly, When the breeze is touching me, I'll be swinging, I'll be swaying. (Ombirog – a type of tree.) |
| 27. <i>Mongkoruddu tinagad, mogkorovolloi untu.</i> (Allud) | The part that has been cut is crying while its stem is moving further and further away. (Boat – a boat being rowed) |
| 28. <i>Gozuvon om kungkung, okanon om onggiput.</i> (Ahapak) | The pig's skin is being cooked but the small prawns are being eaten. (Ahapak - small bees that are still in the hive) |
| 29. <i>Ikorosi ot iddi, ikahari ot anak.</i> (Potizukan) | People are scared of her, but not her children. (Bee) |
| 30. <i>Isiso torigi, hatu s panding.</i> (Pazas) | A pole with hundreds of jars hanging there. (A papaya tree with papayas) |
| 31. <i>Makan siti, sori ot mumuk.</i> (Ilallatu) | Eating over here but the remains are over there. (Ash – After burning, the ash will be blown away) |
| 32. <i>Matai tullun tagayo, soribu tulang.</i> (Bbinatang) | A big man dies with hundred of bones. (Long house) |
| 33. <i>Ohun kinoringan, tumokin sid kiruzou.</i> (Bbonging) | Charcoal of Kinoringan (Chief god of the Rungus) marrying a dry thing. (Bbonging – a type of black beetle) |
| 34. <i>Sadda ddi bbarakavan, sangadau monginsisi.</i> (Manansag ddot mallapi) | A <i>bbarakavan</i> fish throwing off its scales each day. (An act of cutting a big tree's bark for making <i>llingkut</i> for rice storage) * <i>Bbarakavan</i> is a big, tall tree. In this riddle, it symbolises "big" in size. |

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| 35. <i>Bbokolluvon ddot vallai, origi ot aakanon.</i> (<i>Bbubbulan</i>) | <i>Bbokolluvon</i> stays in the house, <i>origi</i> becomes its food. (<i>Bbubbulan</i> – a tool used to make threads out of the cottons.) * <i>Bbokolluvon</i> is a long, round-shaped fish. <i>Origi</i> is the support for a long house. |
| 36. <i>Mamadsul sid gullu, mamampang sid tohuddi.</i> (<i>Vogok</i>) | The front part is roving here and there, while its back keeps on shaking. (A pig – while walking, its head keeps on shaking and its tail is wagging all the time) |
| 37. <i>Uva ddi ondurungin, sodduvon om Koddop.</i> (<i>Korijongkom</i>) | The ondurungin fruit (a type of plant) will sleep whenever it is stumbled upon. (<i>Korijongkom</i> – an insect which will curl up its body whenever it is discovered by someone) |

Informant 5: Manandas Mogiom

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| 38. <i>Anak ddatu ogimba, tumulud om kumawad, misambbataian cina, aki ambun bulawan.</i> (<i>Potizukan</i>) | Rich man's children are coming, flying and clinging to each other, lining the way, with smoke that looks like gold. (Collecting honey from beehive hanging on a tree) |
| 39. <i>Tangga tanggaron, tangga tingguon savat, orongou nu bbirion, bbirion mollu-kollu.</i> (<i>Tambang om bbilok</i>) | The <i>tangga</i> (a bamboo container) on one's shoulder is slipping and pointing upwards, someone heard the noise while observing with sorrow. [Deer and <i>bbilok</i> (a type of spear) – The informant indicates that when a deer notices a hunter carrying a spear, it feels sad for fear of being the next victim] |
| 40. <i>Timpanon nu raja, rikonnu rogon.</i> (<i>Rovuw</i>) | From afar, it looks like a king but when you approach it, it is evil. (<i>Rovud</i> – a type of mangrove plant. It looks nice from faraway but the plant is full of thorns) |
| 41. <i>Misangai-sangai kito, kapatai koddoho.</i> (<i>Tambang om bbarambang</i>) | We are having the same name but you will kill me. [<i>Tambang</i> (Deer) and <i>bbarambang</i> (steel spikes on the fence which may kill a deer) both sound alike in Rungus] |
| 42. <i>Misangai-sangai kito, kollomu koddoho.</i> (<i>Vogok om kombogok</i>) | We are having the same name but you will make me fat. [<i>Vogok</i> and <i>kombogok</i> - <i>Vogok</i> (pig) and <i>kombogok</i> (pig's food) both sound alike in Rungus] |

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| 43. <i>Tub kaza</i> (<i>Tutub om raza</i>) | <i>Tub kaza</i> (Cover of a rice container and a round tray) * <i>Tub kaza</i> is a combination of two sounds i.e. "tub" which is rhyme with the word "tutub" (cover of a rice container) and the second sound "kaza" is rhyme with the word "raza" (a round tray). |
| 44. <i>Impit-impit aratu ko.</i> (<i>Pirit om ratu</i>) | A little push and you will fall. (<i>Pipit</i> and durian.) *The word <i>impit-impit</i> sounds like "pipit" (a kind of bird) and "aratu" sounds like "ratu" which in Rungus means durian. |
| 45. <i>Modop-odop ko, suhakon do ddo gurai.</i> (<i>Tumpok</i>) | You are lying down, poked by someone with a hare-lip. (<i>Tumpok</i> – a long house stand.) |
| 46. <i>Ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po.</i> (<i>Bbakul, ongkukul, tinukul, pukul</i>) | <i>Ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po, ukul-ukul po.</i> (<i>Bbakul</i> (basket), <i>ongkukul</i> (spotted dove), <i>tinukul</i> (a kind of gong) and <i>pukul</i> (the stem of a maize) – These four things are having the same rhyming suffix, i.e. "kul" in Rungus) |
| 47. <i>Ontut ddi omburongo, inturu llobbu tavan.</i> (<i>Kombburongo</i>) | Omburongo's fart passing through seven layers of sky. (<i>Kombburongo</i> – a type of plant with a very bad smell to the extent that the locals believe it will scare away ghosts) |
| 48. <i>Vullanut ddot himbaan, korijongkom ddot tagad.</i> (<i>llingkut</i>) | The snake is in the jungle, <i>korijongkom</i> (a type of insect) is in the field. (<i>llingkut</i> - rice barn) |

Informant 6: Bunou Masipman

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| 49. <i>Mitimpan-timpan kito, a-kito kopirikot.</i> (<i>Timbang vaig</i>) | We are facing each other but we can't touch each other. (River banks – separated by water.) |
| 50. <i>Mirompit-rompit kito nga a-kopimot.</i> (<i>Adsip</i>) | We are next to each other but we can't see each other. (<i>Adsip</i> – battens retaining a Rungus house wall. They are one external, one internal, therefore, near but do not meet.) |
| 51. <i>Momusak om hambaron, munongol om giring.</i> (<i>Mambarambat</i>) | Small plates are its flowers, small bells are its fruits. (<i>Mambarambat</i> – a type of plant with flowers that look like small plates and with bell-shape fruits.) |
| 52. <i>Iso no tinan, apat ot tullu.</i> (<i>Kikizop</i>) | It has one body and four heads. (<i>Kikizob</i> – a traditional Rungus fan used for fanning a cooking fire. It consists of a flat body and a four-layered end for holding purposes. See Appendix 1, Photo 1) |

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| 53. <i>Llingallinggahon ddallid, timubburullai pallang.</i> (<i>Tumutu</i>) | A length of stick keep on knocking and a white substance appears later. (The act of pounding paddy – when a rice pounder hits the paddy, the husk comes off, revealing the white rice.) |
| 54. <i>Momusak om tutuntung, munongol om karis.</i> (<i>Uva ddot kupang</i>) | Bearing a striking gong's stick flowers and with hard fruit. (<i>Kupang</i> tree – the shape of the flowers look like a stick used for striking a gong, whereas the fruit is hard). |
| 55. <i>Vaig ullak-ullakan, vaig ihm-ihimon.</i> (<i>Rahat</i>) | Stepping on this water, looking for another type of water. (Sea water – after swimming in the sea, one has to look for plain water to drink) |
| 56. <i>Pallanuk togurolluw, vaig togunonomon.</i> (<i>Rongisan</i>) | Sound like a deer eating, but it is the that we enjoy. (<i>Rongisan</i> – a type of sweet fruit.) |
| 57. <i>Llontugi mitongisan, lliotong millintanga.</i> (<i>Bbidai</i>) | Its side looks like the <i>llontugi</i> (a type of insect) and its centre looks like the surface of water. (<i>Bbidai</i> – a type of mat. The pattern on its side looks like the <i>llontugi</i> and its centre portion is flat). |
| 58. <i>Momusak om bbulavan, munongol om llonguvai.</i> (<i>Uva llabbuk</i>) | It produces golden flowers and <i>lengguai</i> -shape fruit. (Pumpkin plant – Its flowers are yellowish and the shape of a pumpkin looks like a Rungus' <i>lengguai</i> (Appendix 1, Photo 2). |

Informant 7: Mongulintip Momgimbal

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| 59. <i>Miniginin yindinu, ihad-ihaddannu.</i> (<i>Vogok om susumaddan</i>) | Your mother is hanging there while you all keep on crying. (Pig's food tray and the pigs – A hanging pig's food tray is surrounded by many hungry pigs that make lots of noise.) |
| 60. <i>Opoddok po agarang ot bbusulnu, agazo po, amuno aragang ot bbusul.</i> (<i>Lliposu</i>) | When young, your buttocks were red but not so after you have grown up. (<i>Lliposu</i> – a type of wild plant which is red in colour when young but not so after it has grown up.) |
| 61. <i>Timpanonnu minatai, rikotonnu mizau.</i> (<i>Kazu ddaat</i>) | When you look from afar, it is death, but when you go near, it is alive. (<i>Kazu ddaat</i> – a type of tree with brownish leaves) |
| 62. <i>Tollu kou songopinai, aragang koviai.</i> (<i>Oddon</i>) | There are three brothers, all of them are red. (<i>Oddon</i> – Rungus traditional stove supports made of mud. Appendix 1, Photo 3) |
| 63. <i>Kara monuvang bbotung, kara avanit.</i> (<i>Kinomol miinum.</i>) | A Monkey fills up the pond and gets poisoned. (A person drinking rice wine.) |

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| 64. "Pok" palampag, guli odung. (Mongontut) | A "pok" sound hits the ground and returns back to the nose. (A fart) |
| 65. Sangadau managad, amu inning ot llopok. (Mongomot) | Cutting trees throughout the day without making any sound. (Harvesting paddy) |
| 66. Mogkomuddi ot tii. (Ku-kukon tollutu) | It is the lice that steers a boat. (<i>Ku-kukon</i> – flower of the <i>tollutu</i> tree. Its shape looks like a boat and its inner part looks like lice) |
| 67. Sangallud ot llaga. (Pagung) | A boat of ants. (Nipah palm - its leaves looks like ants lining up) |
| 68. Isunsud no ogi ot ullu no ko tinan nu (Tukad) | You give shelter to your head but not your body. (A ladder to the house) |

Informant 8: Limpot Majalu

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| 69. Mimputul ddo kakang om uddungon. (Subbol) | A piglet is riding on top of a piece of wood (<i>Subbol</i> – a squirrel trap) |
| 70. Ddunguan nu ogi ot minatai, ko mizau. (Monimpus ddot udtul) | You kiss the dead thing rather than the one alive. (The act of eating a type of cooked snail. A person sucks the flesh of the snail which has been cooked) |
| 71. Tumollong om kibbaddu, mimbbulai om kikaris. (Tobbu) | It enters the water with a shirt and comes out later with a <i>keris</i> (Malay dagger). [Sugar cane – when planting sugar cane, the portion of sugar cane which is planted will be wrapped with leaf (symbolised shirt). When the sugar cane plant is growing its leaves look like a <i>keris</i>] |
| 72. Ombbollong ddot bburunai, mulli siti moninduk. (Jarum) | A bird from Brunei comes back here to peck. (Sewing needle – One will buy it from the shop - owned by the Brunei people – and brings it home for sewing) |
| 73. Rumatu ogi ot raan ko roun. (Sangau tambang) | Its branches will drop off before its leaves. (Deer's horns – the horns of a deer will drop off when it is old but not its ears) |
| 74. Kisangau ogi ot pallanuk ko kallasiw. (Sangit om tangga) | Deers have horns as compared to wild oxes. (<i>Sangit</i> and <i>tangga</i> – a <i>sangit</i> is a type of tool used for fetching water which is equipped with a horn-shaped handle, whereas <i>tangga</i> is also a type of fetching water tool made from bamboo) |

| | |
|---|--|
| 75. <i>Mokilloki monudtul, potingaha monopuk.</i> (<i>Pitik, llundunan om monigup</i>) | With a long, loud noise, he breaks a snail's shell and focuses on blowing a blowing pipe. [<i>Pitik</i> (a stone used to ignite fire), <i>llundunan</i> (strip leaves) and <i>monigup</i> (Smoking)] |
| 76. Tumollong om gurondu, mimbullai om llangan. (<i>Minggat</i>) | The one who enters the water is <i>gurondu</i> (a greenish female <i>uripos</i> bird) but the one who comes out is <i>llangan</i> (a reddish male <i>uripos</i> bird). (Eating betel nut. When put into the mouth, the nut, which is wrapped with betel, is green in colour. By the time the eater spits it out, it is red in colour) |
| 77. <i>Pallampang tosundu, ponimbang pitunan.</i> (<i>Llinazang</i>) | The floor of a supernatural being that balances the season. (A toy fan) |
| 78. <i>Sogo ginollung-gollung, kotitiw ddo hamaddon.</i> (<i>Vulan</i>) | The rattan-roll that brighten up the surroundings. (The Moon) |

that particular item is actually employed. It is necessary to distinguish context and function. Usually, function is an analyst's statement of what (he thinks) the use or purpose of a given genre of folklore is. It is not the same as the actual social situation, in which a particular folklore genre is used. One reason for collecting context is that only if such data is provided can any serious attempt be made to explain why a particular text is used in a particular situation (Dundes, 1980).

Kaivola-Bregghenjoj (2001) stressed that riddles have in most cases been published without any contextual information whatsoever. Even the best accounts of riddling fail to give any information on what the riddles are actually posed. It is, however, clear that the social context imposes and provides divergent levels ignored when riddles are analysed only as texts. Besides, in dealing with tradition, we must also examine

the cultural context, referring on one hand, to the tradition bearer's background (occupation, educational background etc.), and on the other, to the culture in which he operates and the world of which he is speaking (Kaivola-Bregghenjoj, 2001). The discussions that follow focus on the situational and cultural contexts associated with Rungus riddling. Prior to this, it is important to point out that the Rungus, as well as being fluent in their mother tongue are equally fluent in Malay. When gathering information on context, the author interviewed informants in Malay in order to remove one stage of the translation process into English. Besides, when researching context specifically, language texture is of lesser importance.

Before examining the context of Rungus riddles in relation to their beliefs about paddy spirits, it is necessary to explain the basic function of riddling and the Rungus

traditional animistic beliefs. Just as with any other riddling culture in the world, one of the primary functions of the Rungus riddle is to entertain. During the in-depth interviews, many informants told the author that searching for the correct answer to riddles during the harvest distracts them from the heat and makes them forget their physical discomfort. In addition, they are amused by the wrong answers given by friends or relatives, as well as humorous correct answers.

Traditionally, the Rungus are animists. They believe in Minamangun, the Creator who inhabits the seventh layer of heaven and decides the fate of humans from the very instant of their birth (Appell, 1976). The Rungus also believe in the existence of various good and evil spirits. Evil spirits are referred to as *rogon*. According to Appell (1976), there are two classes of *rogon* in the belief system of the Rungus. The first class of *rogon* lives in a specific place in the world, while the second class wanders about, not staying put in any one place. Both classes of *rogon* are capable of stealing the spirits of human beings and making them sick.

Furthermore, there are many different types of *rogon* that harm people in different contexts. According to some informants, if *rogon* are offended by farmers, they are likely to ruin their rice harvests by bringing diseases, pests, unnecessary rain, and other calamities to the paddy fields. Many more malevolent spirits can be found in the Rungus' animistic beliefs. Porodong (2001) further divided them into two groups; the

violent and the less violent spirits. The most violent are those of the air, house, water, sea, soil and the swidden, while the spirits of the trees, holes, forests and longhouse structures among others, are considered to be less violent.

Good spirits are known as *osundu*, on account of the fact that they help people when they are sick or have had bad things happen to them. All the rituals connected with the world of spirits are carried out by ritual specialists known as *bobolizan*, the majority of whom are women (Appell, 1986). Porodong (2001) stated that a man could also be a *bobolizan* although he would be considered inferior to a woman with the same qualities. The role of the *bobolizan* covers matters like the future of newlyweds, fertility of the cosmos, safety of the village from the threat of supernatural powers and healing (Porodong, 2001).

Of the good spirits, the Bambarazon (paddy spirits) are viewed as particularly important. All the informants said that if the Bambarazon are treated well, they will protect the paddy from natural disasters and pests, and ensure a bountiful harvest. The Rungus praise Bambarazon by sacrificing fowls and pigs in order to receive good yields. If the Rungus neglect the ceremonies, they can expect a poor harvest (Yutaka Shimomoto, 1979). In addition to Bambarazon, Rinjamal Montuduk (Informant 3) mentioned two more significant spirit-beings, namely, Mongulungung and Mongintanau. According to Rinjamal, Mongulungung lives in the sky and his role is to monitor things happening on earth. He looks after

the sun, the rain and the wind and helps at times of natural disaster. Mogintonau, on the other hand, lives on earth and presides in the plant world.

Based on the above evidence, one can say that the Rungus are rich in spirits related to the natural surroundings. It is also clear that the Bambarazon are just one of many types of spirit in the Rungus animistic belief system. With this background information in view, the author focuses on the relationship between the paddy spirits and the custom of riddling. When questioned, all eight of the hill paddy planting informants said that they are prohibited from riddling outside the paddy harvesting period. Kinindangang Masani (i) and Mongulintip Momgimbal (ii) commented as follows:

i. *Ah, hanya pada pesta, ah, musim menuai baru boleh "bersundait". Kita tidak boleh "bersundait" kalau bukan musim menuai, musim menuai saja, ah.*

(Ah, only during the harvest, ah the harvest time then only we can carry out riddling. We do not allow riddling if it is not harvesting season, only during the harvesting time, ah.)

ii. *Ah, sekarang musim menanam padi, sepatutnya tidak "bersundait". Ah, musim dia, pabila sudah musim padi berbuah. Ah, jadi yang betul-betul masa mau mengetamlah.*

(Ah, now is planting paddy time, by right we shouldn't do riddling. Ah, the right season is, when harvesting paddy.

Ah, the correct timing is when we start harvesting...)

When asked about why the Rungus can only carry out their riddling activities during harvest season, the above-mentioned informants replied thus:

i. *Em... sebab sundait ini, dia berkaitan dengan, dengan itu semangat padi bah, itu Odu-odu. Semangat padi itu nama Odu-odu. Ah, yang Odu-odu itu hanya muncul semasa musim menuai padi. Ah, itu sundait ada kaitan sama Odu-odu, ah Bambarazon (Informant: Kinindangang Masani).*

(Er... because this *sundait* (riddle), it is connected with the paddy-spirits. It is Odu-odu. The name of that paddy-spirit is Odu-odu. Ah, Odu-odu will appear when we harvest paddy. Ah, *sundait* have connection with Odu-odu, ah Bambarazon (paddy-spirit).

ii. *Sebab kalau "bersundait", dia boleh mengakibatkan tanaman itu tidak menjadi. Ah, dia jadi rosak (Informant: Mongulintip Momgimbal).*

(If we do riddling, the paddy plants may not grow well. Ah, they will be destroyed).

Due to such beliefs, any villager uttering *sundait* outside the harvest season is liable to be scolded by their parents or other elders in the village. As rice is the staple food for the Rungus, no breaking of the taboo associated with the paddy-spirits is tolerated. Furthermore, the Rungus believe that the paddy-spirits will only appear

during the paddy planting and harvesting seasons. Consequently, riddling at other times will not benefit them but may only offend the paddy-spirits. According to Appell (1986), the Rungus believe that if the rice spirits are treated well and not frightened away during the paddy growing season, they will ensure a plentiful harvest. According to the various taboos, the farmers are not allowed to cut paddy plants during weeding season, or to shout or make noise in the paddy field; the heads of the rice must also be treated with care. Furthermore, the farmers are forbidden from posing riddles other than during harvesting time.

One of the reports published by Sabah Museum in 1993 stated that Kadazandusun farmers believe that if they practice riddling at inappropriate times (such as when clearing weeds from the paddy field), their work will take longer than usual. Hence, they avoid riddling at such times (Lokman, 2004, p, 44). This belief is endorsed by Williams (1963, p. 110), who in his research on Tambunan Dusun riddles observed, "Thus, one is told, it is bad luck to say riddles any time but harvest".

According to the religious beliefs of the Rungus, the Bambarazon are a group of benevolent rice spirits. They live in a country beyond the sea, although no one can explain its whereabouts. One villager reported that the Bambarayon live at the edge of the Piromitan¹ layer, where good spirits reside. Above the Piromitan layer is the Monkulun layer, where the most powerful spirits (or Gods) - Sambavon², Kinoringan, and Minamangun - live. These

spirits on the Piromitan and Monkulun planes protect human beings from sickness, death, and other misfortunes, but they do not take care of rice. Only the Bambarayon can do this. The Rungus believe that rice was first brought to them by the Bambarayon in the remote past (Yutaka Shimomoto, 1979).

On the other hand, a Rungus ritual specialist said that the Bambarazon live in a very distant land called Surung Rumuvab. Nobody knows where Surung Rumuvab exactly is, but the priest said it was in Pintigavan do Tavang (the place where the sky reaches the horizon). At this place, there is a wide river, on the banks where the Bambarazon live. The Bambarazon's family consists of parents and seven sons and seven daughters. It is said that every rice season the Bambarazon come to the rice field by sail boat, and when the rice season is over, the Bambarazon will then return to Surung Rumuvab, also by sail boat. This is why the Rungus make a small sailboat (3 inches in size) and place it on the rice container known as *lingkut* after harvest (Yutaka Shimomoto, 1979). Similarly, Appell (1976) wrote that the rice-spirits are called back to the location where hill paddy is to be planted on an annual basis, only to be sent home at the end of the year.

Conversely, the Rungus believe that reciting *sundait* at harvest period, attracts the paddy-spirits, who will then be more likely to stay around to protect their paddy. Use of the terms "*menundait*" (to tell a riddle) and "*mengarait*" (to answer a riddle) reinforce this belief. In the legend recounted by Rundabang [Informant 1], the marriage

of the paddy spirit, Rumolizan and the Clever Girl came about because of a *sundait*. Hence, any reference to, or performance of “*menundait*” and “*mengarait*”, alludes to the realm of the paddy spirits. It is interesting to note that many other traditional paddy planters across the Southeast Asian region also limit riddling to the harvest period. Vanoverbergh (1941) studied the context of riddling in the Philippines and reported that for the Isneg people, the harvest period is the time for proposing riddles, a pastime that is considered a taboo in any other season (quoted by Hart, 1964). This taboo is even clarified in a riddle: “We cannot say it except at the time of harvest” has “riddle” as its answer (Hart, 1964). The Toraja paddy planters living in central Sulawesi also restrict riddling to the time when their rice matures through to its harvest. According to Huizinga (1949),

The “coming out” of the riddles naturally promotes the coming out of the rice-ears. As often as a riddle is solved the chorus chimes in: “Come out, rice come out! You “fat ears” high up in the mountains or low down in the valleys!” During the season immediately preceding the above period, all literary activities are forbidden, as they might endanger the growth of the rice (quoted by Hart, 1964).

Evans (1951), in his study of the context of riddling among the Tindal Dusun group in North Borneo (Sabah), states that riddling

occurs only at harvest, either in the field or in the house, or at marriages. Evans’ informants told him that if riddles were asked at other times of the year, they would be answered by evil spirits and those responsible for asking them would have bad dreams. Williams (1963), in his study of the riddling behaviour among the Dusuns in Tambunan district of North Borneo (Sabah), states that “There is some evidence, based on observation and interviews, that Dusun riddling behaviour is associated with and functions as part of religious behaviour patterns related to harvest activities.” Back to the Rungus of Sabah, they believe that paddy-spirits will appear during the harvest period and the riddling activities will please them. Thus, riddles are posed at this time, but not at others.

The Rungus like to exploit our “fears of the unknown” when riddling, too. If the respondent fails to answer the initiator will say, “You must answer the *sundait* or else someone (a spirit) will sleep with you tonight.” Such a threat inevitably intimidates children, who are then motivated to find the answer to the *sundait* by asking their parents, friends, or other villagers.

One *sundait*, in particular, is closely associated with the paddy harvest taboo:

Flying *si i-nganingani*,
Si ngani landed.
 [Informant: Addek Riupa]

The answer to the above riddle is a *llinggaman* - a traditional tool used for harvesting paddy. It comprises a small blade which fits into the palm of the hand and a

wooden handle which protrudes between the little finger and the ring finger. Most of the paddy farmers in Sabah use a sickle to harvest paddy, but not the Rungus. The use of the *llinggaman* reflects the respect of the farmers for the rice-spirits; they do not wish the Bambarazon to see the blade of the *llinggaman* as the paddy stalks are being cut (Phelan, 2005).

According to all the informants, riddles are asked throughout the day during harvest season - on meeting family members or friends, during feasting and drinking sessions. Even though this is done primarily for their own enjoyment, those who have studied the Rungus culture know that it is connected to their traditional beliefs.

Ah, itu sundait, memeriahkan itu musim. Ah, itu masa memuji itu semangat padi, itu Odu-odu, menjadikan itu tahun, tahun yang meriah. Ah, kalau dulu siang malam, sampai subuh pun orang kampung "bersundait", tengah malam begitu, semasa musim menuai padi. Di sawah padi pun "bersundait", orang mengetam padi pun "bersundait", em... sehingga berlalulah musim mengetam [Informant: Kinindangan Masani].

(Ah, riddling used to make that season (harvesting paddy) merry. Ah, that was the time to praise the paddy-spirits, so that Odu-odu, would make the year merrier. Ah, in those days, the villagers would carry out riddling from early morning until night time in the paddy

harvesting season. They performed "bersundait" (riddling) in the paddy field while harvesting, um...until the harvest season was over).

Ah, orang sedang mengetam pun bersundait. Di waktu berehat di pondok pun "bersundait", di rumah pun "bersundait". Em... di mana-mana dan bila-bila masa pun "bersundait". Ah, orangnya, tua-muda, lelaki-perempuan, ah, satu rumah panjang... Ah, biasanya, di rumah panjang, orang "bersundait" di sini. Ah, kadang kala dia panggil orang di luar rumah panjang. Jauh-jauh dia orang datang. Ramai orang datang, jauh-jauh mereka [Informant: Kinindangan Masani].

(Ah, people do "bersundait" (riddling) while harvesting paddy. At break times, they practice "bersundait" under the trees. In their house they are also doing "bersundait". Um...anywhere and at any time people do "bersundait". It doesn't matter whether they are old or young people, men or women, ah, the whole long house...Ah, normally people staying in this long house start a riddling session, and sometimes they will call passers-by to join them. From far, they come and join in the riddling sessions. A lot of people come from far away villages).

From the riddle answers given in this research, it is clear that many Rungus *sundait* creators were inspired by paddy-

related activities. This is evident in the *sundait* answers:

- i. Informat 2: *Sundait* 10 - Guarding a paddy field from sparrows (scarecrow).
- ii. Informat 2: *Sundait* 12 - *Tumutud* - Burning and clearing land for planting paddy.
- iii. Informat 2: *Sundait* 15 - Harvesting paddy with a *llinggaman* (tool).
- iv. Informat 2: *Sundait* 16 - *Tapai* - Fermented glutinous rice or rice wine.
- v. Informat 4: *Sundait* 34 - The act of removing the bark of a tree to make *llingkut* for keeping rice.
- vi. Informat 5: *Sundait* 43 - *Tutub* (cover of a rice container) and *raza* (a round tray).
- vii. Informat 5: *Sundait* 48 - Rice barn.
- viii. Informat 6: *Sundait* 53 - The act of pounding paddy.
- ix. Informat 7: *Sundait* 63 - A person drinking rice wine.
- x. Informat 7: *Sundait* 65 - Harvesting paddy.

According to the informants for this research, when a person is engaged in “mengarait” (answering a riddle), he is indirectly calling a paddy spirit to protect his paddy: specific references to “paddy” in the answer (as featured in all the above *sundait*s) only serve to reinforce the request. In addition to that, Hart (1964) in *Riddles in*

Filipino Folklore stated that in a basically agricultural nation, one might expect that economically important, widely distributed, and indigenous agricultural plants and products would receive emphasis in a riddle corpus. He also assumed rice to be a common subject for the riddles in a Southeast Asian country, where its animistic nature is accepted by most of the people. Hart (1964) also stated that scholars like Archer Taylor imply the existence of a selective process in the choice of the riddle subjects as portrayed in their riddle answers. With regard to selection, Hart has identified four factors. Firstly, riddle subjects are familiar subjects. Secondly, riddles usually deal with concrete objects, occasionally with processes, and rarely with abstractions. Thirdly, selection of riddle subjects is influenced by people’s value systems. Finally, selection of subjects is determined by their inherent riddle potentialities. Hart’s (1964) statements verify why so many Rungus *sundait* subjects are related to paddy and paddy related activities.

None of the Rungus *sundait* images or *sundait* answers collected in this research have any connection with the paddy-spirits themselves. The author would say that the sacred aspects endowed to the paddy-spirits have made them a less appropriate riddle subject among the Rungus. However, there is a *sundait* answer found to have connection to the Rungus’ belief in spiritual beings:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Togod ku ddo rokizan,</i> | I am disappointed, |
| <i>A-millo soromo,</i> | You are not well behaved, |
| <i>Pallad oku rokizan,</i> | If I were you, |
| <i>Llid noko bbinonduk.</i> | I'd do the feast. |
| (<i>It rogon ddot rusod monuhu moginum</i>) | (A house ghost asking for a ritual feast) |
| [Informant: Rundabang Linsapu] | |

The supplier of this *sundait*, Rundabang Linsapu, is a high-ranked and well-respected priestess of the Matunggong village. Her use of this riddle illustrates the Rungus belief in panoply of spirits (including the house ghost), which need to be appeased. In this context, *sundait* can be considered as one of the several techniques utilised by the Rungus for dealing with the supernatural. When Williams (1963) explained in length about the magical function of the Dusun riddles in his research, he stated that riddling provides for a purgation of fears of the unknown through affording a means for expression of fears. At the same time, nonetheless, he admitted that the riddles recorded by him at that time do not convey meanings of magical function; nor do such riddles convey a sense of imitative or homeopathic magic. However, the above-mentioned *sundait* does manage to convey a 'meaning of magical function' in relation to the Rungus' belief in the supernatural world.

Moreover, it is important to note that in the social context of the Rungus, people are prohibited from engaging in leisure activities like dancing, singing, storytelling, and riddling before the harvest. According to Rinjamal Montuduk⁴, a senior Rungus informant in the Matunggong village of Kudat, if one engages in any of these leisure

activities, it is considered disrespectful to the other workers in the paddy field. Besides, the Rungus believe that enjoying oneself in this way before the paddy bears its grains constitutes a premature celebration which may well offend both the Odu-odu (paddy spirits) and the *rogon* (evil spirits). As a result, the *rogon* may punish the farmers by creating problems to jeopardise their harvests. From this, it is clear that the prohibition of riddling before harvest-time is closely linked with the Rungus' belief in paddy spirits, as well as with their social and cultural considerations. The reason for this is obvious; of all the plants, paddy is their most important crop.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, riddling is closely linked to the Rungus belief that paddy-spirits will appear during the paddy harvesting season. When the villagers "*monundait*" (pose a riddle) and "*mengarait*" (answer a riddle), the paddy-spirits are thought to be pleased and to protect their paddy as well as providing a bountiful harvest. On the other hand, it is considered taboo for the Rungus to perform riddles outside the harvesting season, as such an action will offend the paddy-spirits and may negatively affect the paddy yields. The

belief in paddy-spirits so important to the Rungus that riddling activity during harvest-time proliferates. As a result, the industrious Rungus farmers have amassed more and more *sundait* with the passing of time. As pointed out by Abrahams (1972), "It is the riddling process and the riddling occasion and the presence of riddlers that produce riddles..." (as cited in Kaivola-Bregthenhoj, 2001). Besides the situational context (i.e., the situation of the oral performance), this paper has highlighted the cultural context of the Rungus riddling; namely, the informants in this research are hill paddy planters; they participated in riddling at harvest-time when they were young, and they share the belief that riddling will increase their paddy yields. It should also not be forgotten that the riddling activities of the Rungus are inseparable from their society and culture.

Finally, all the informants in this research revealed that the practice of riddling at harvest-time is no longer popular among the Rungus farmers in Kudat. In fact, it was only widely practiced up to the 1950s. The author believes that the seventy-eight *sundait* listed in this paper represent just a small proportion of the total number of the *sundait*s created by the Rungus farmers over the generations. Hence, further fieldwork is required so that the remaining of the Rungus *sundait* can be collected and preserved for the future generations.

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ENDNOTES

¹The term Kadazandusun - officially coined in the 1990s - is a combination of the words Kadazan and Dusun, devised with the aim of uniting all the sub-ethnic groups encompassed by these two major ethnic groups. The official Kadazandusun language was first taught in schools in 1997 (Reid, 1997).

²The ethnic terminology of the Dusunic-speaking peoples of Sabah is a highly problematic area. Some researchers refer to those of Rungus ethnic stock as Dusun, while others refer to them as Momogun. Appell (1978), for example, used the term Rungus Dusun in his article but conceded that the title Rungus Momogun was more appropriate. Porodong (2001) stated that although it is right to include the Rungus under the Dusunic language family, they do not regard themselves as Dusun. They prefer to be called Rungus or Momogun.

³According to Low Kok On (2006), the Tambunan Dusuns associate their ancestors with Nunuk Ragang as revealed in the "Tambunan Dusun Origin Myth" published by Williams in 1960. According to the myth, Muhgumbul (an early Tambunan Dusun) and his family decided to run away from Saroh, the evil spirit fearing his revenge. After leaving Nunuk Ragang, the family broke up and went on their separate ways and made a hut. The first person made his hut from the leaves of Tuwon tree, hence, his descendants are known as the Tuwawon. The second hut was built under the Tagahas tree; consequently, the descendants are called the Tagahas. The third hut was built at the intersection of two tracks. The descendants

of the builder are called the Tibabar, i.e., people who build in a cross-wise way. The fourth hut was built under the Bundu tree. The heirs are, not surprisingly, referred to as the Bundu. The fifth hut was made on a great plain on level ground. Today, the offspring of this person are called the Gunnah, which means plain. The sixth hut was made in the shade of the Palupuh tree and the builder's descendants are referred to as the Palupuh. The seventh person did not build a hut. He made a thick cooking pot to cook his food. Today, the descendents of this person

are called the Kohub. Later, some of the Kohub people went another way, and made a hut from Nuhreoh (dead wood) tree. The offspring of these people are known as the Kureo. Evidently, natural objects (trees), the landscape (the plain and the crossroads) and household utensils (cooking pot) were all mythologized by the Tambunan Dusun to account for the origins of the seven Tambunan Dusun sub-tribes.

⁴Telephone interview on 16 November 2011, 1.30 – 2.30 pm.

APPENDICES



Photo 1: A *Kikizob* (a Rungus traditional fan used for fencng cooking fire)



Photo 2: A *lengguai* (a Rungus traditional container)



Photo 3: *Oddon* (Rungus traditional stove supports made of mud)

Impact of Microfinance Bank Loan on Aquaculture Development in Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the impacts of microfinance bank loan on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries aquaculturists in Ogun state, Nigeria. A total of eighty aquaculturists (40 beneficiaries and 40 non-beneficiaries) were randomly selected from four agricultural extension zones, as classified by Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP). Data collected were scored and the percentages of the parameters were calculated appropriately. The types of loan disbursed to beneficiaries revealed that 27.5% was in kind, 7.5% in cash, and the remaining 65% was both in cash and kind. The credit package ranged between ₦50,000 and ₦250,000, with 40% of them ranging between ₦ 100,001 and ₦150,000 were approved, and 70% of the loans were released timely. The results obtained from the membership of cooperative showed that 87.5% of the beneficiaries and 37.5% of the non-beneficiaries were cooperators. Meanwhile, 65% of the beneficiaries earned a higher income (₦62,500), while only 42.5% of the non-beneficiaries earned this amount per respondent. Major constraints hindering aquaculture development in the study area include high cost of feeding, poor marketing channel, lack of adequate capital and high cost of investment. Lastly, recommendations are made for the financial institutions, government and other lending institutions on how to improve the livelihood of the aquaculturists, i.e. by increasing the loans that are usually granted.

Keywords: Aquaculture, constraints, loan and microfinance

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INTRODUCTION

Aquaculture has been globally recognized as the fastest growing food industry NACA/FAO (2000), and it also plays an increasingly important role in meeting the demand for

fish. Fish is the critical food supply for the poor people in the world, providing 1 billion people sustenance for their daily lives and 150 million people employment, in which 90% are in the artisanal sector mostly in Africa. Worldwide per capita fish supply in 2009 stood at 17.2 Kg/yr, in which aquaculture accounted for 38% (World Fish Centre, 2005; FAO, 2010). The ability to meet the world's demand for fish from natural fish stock has reached its peak and it is now declining. The growing human population and dwindling natural stocks require the world to turn increasingly to aquaculture, managed natural fisheries and genetically improved fast growing fish, if it is to meet future food needs (World Bank, 2004; FAO, 2010). According to Heindl (2002), aquaculture contributes to more than 19 million tones of fin fish and shell fish annually to the world fish supply, with most of these produced in an extensive system particularly in China, whereby about 11 million tones of Carps are produced (about 8 million tones are produced in semi-intensive systems). In 2006, total world aquaculture production was 51.7 million tones (FAO, 2008), while the total world aquaculture in 2009 was 55.1 million tones (FAO, 2010).

ICLARM (2001) reported that aquaculture appeared to be one of the last frontiers to increase contribution to food security in developing world and it now represents the fastest growing agricultural industry in some countries, with freshwater aquaculture dominating the total aquaculture production.

In recent times, however, only 0.62 million metric tones of fish are produced annually, which is less than one-third of the annual fish demands of about 2.6 million metric tones supplied from the local production in Nigeria (CBN, 2007; FDF, 2005). The implication of this is that there is still a demand-supply gap which has to be filled by importation of more than 1.98 million metric tones valued at about ₦165 billion annually (Dada, 2007; Olaoye, 2010). Only 2% of these 0.62 million metric tones are produced locally from aquaculture, while the remaining 98% is from captured fisheries which are already over-exploited (Aliu & Agbolagba, 1998). The potential of Nigeria's fishery resources has been estimated at over 3.0 million metric tones per annum and if properly harnessed, it will not only be capable of bridging the wide demand-supply gap but also generate surplus for export (Dada, 2007).

Despite all the potentials in this industry, maximum aquaculture production is faced with many problems hindering its development such as the lack of sufficient fund or credit sources, technical know-how, high cost of feeding, poor marketing channels, and poaching, among others (Olaoye, 2010).

Nigeria is one of the largest importers of fish with some 800,000 metric tones annually, contributing to a negative impact on the balance of trade (Miller & Atanda, 2004). Nigeria now seeks substitution with increase domestic production through aquaculture and culture-based fisheries

development, which can increase rural employment, improve food security and reduced rural poverty (Alamu *et al.*, 2004).

Credit that has been discovered to be of great importance to the sustenance of fish farming and aquacultural development in Nigeria is lacking and regarded as a major constraint militating against the development of the aquaculture industry (Onwuka, 2006). Credit is also needed for the diversification of fishing efforts away from over-exploited resources to less exploited ones, therefore, a shift to aquaculture (FAO, 2008). Recent developments in Africa and other developing countries reinforce the contention that microfinance institutions are essential for the development of rural areas (Iheduru, 2002).

Aihonsu (2001) further stressed that in developed countries, credit has been used as a means to improving farmer's efficiency and accelerating aquacultural productions. To this end, inadequate flow of funds (loans) into aquaculture has been identified as a critical factor in accelerating incremental fish production in Nigeria (Olieh, 1980). According to Kherallah and Olawale (2000), the lack of access to loan and adequate working capital is a significant barrier to further expansion of aquaculture development. Although economic analysis of aquaculture practices in Ogun state has revealed fish production to be generally profitable (Aihonsu., 2001; Olaoye & Odebiyi, 2010), the profit cannot be maximized if there is no adequate loan or capital for an effective monitoring of lucrative aquaculture business.

Loan has been established to affect farmers' investment behaviour and productivity. However, there is presently no adequate basis to suggest that credit or loan use has a positive or a negative influence on farm productivity in Nigeria. Most of the studies on credit in the country have concentrated on understanding the socio-demographic and economic factors influencing the supply and demand for credit in the economy (Okoruwa & Oni, 2001; Okunade, 2007).

In order to bridge this gap in knowledge, the current study economically relates access to loan and the impact of microfinance bank loan on aquaculture development. It is against this backdrop that this study aims to examine the productivity, output and profit level of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of aquaculture in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The general objective is to assess the impacts of microfinance banks loan on the development of aquaculture industries in Ogun state of Nigeria to increase productivity and income and to improve the livelihood of the populace.

The following specific objectives were addressed in order to achieve the broad objective. The specific objectives are to:

- describe the socio-economic characteristics of the fish farmers in Ogun state.
- examine the characteristics of microfinance bank loan and its contribution to aquaculture development.

- identify the constraints facing aquaculture development in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ogun state with Abeokuta as the state capital that consists of twenty local government areas. The state covers an area of about 16,409.265 Km² (Ayinde *et al.*, 2002), with an estimated population of over 3 million people (NPC, 2006). The study covered the whole four agricultural extension zones, as classified by the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP) based on the ecological views for effective, adequate and complete improved technologies dissemination (Olaoye *et al.*, 2007). The four zones are Ikenne, Ilaro, Ijebu-ode and Abeokuta zone that are located in the south-western Nigeria.

The four agricultural zones are well known as the best ecological suitable areas for fish production and hence the state is referred to as the basket of fish for the nation because of the abundance of wetland, with an annual growth rate of 3% per annum. As of 2008, farmed fish produced by 6,664 productive fish farmers was found to be synchronous with the growth trend of aquaculture and the resources in Ogun state within the same period (OGADEP, 2008).

Data Collection and Sampling Technique

The study covered the four agricultural extension zones. Clustered sampling method

was used by selecting blocks and circles in each zone based on the higher number of microfinance loan beneficiaries. Productive fish farmers benefitting from microfinance bank loans were purposively selected from all the zones to give a total of 40 beneficiaries. These 40 non-beneficiaries respondents were also selected using simple random sampling technique. Both primary and secondary data were used during the study. The respondents were interviewed using their responses as primary data, while secondary data were obtained from the records provided by microfinance bank, published articles, annual reports and relevant texts.

Analytical Techniques

The primary data obtained from the structured interview schedule were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics for this study included frequency, percentages, mean and mode, while a hypothesis was tested using budgetary technique and profitability ratios.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

The ages, marital status, number of wives, educational qualification, and fishing experience of the aquaculturists are presented in Table 1. Majority of the respondents were within the age group of 41 and 50 years, and these accounted for 62.5% and 45% for the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Most (75% and 80%) of the beneficiaries and

TABLE 1
Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

| Parameters | Beneficiaries | | Non-beneficiaries | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percentages | Frequency | Percentages |
| Age (Years) | | | | |
| 21-30 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 10.0 |
| 31-40 | 6 | 15.0 | 9 | 22.5 |
| 41-50 | 25 | 62.5 | 18 | 45.0 |
| 51 & above | 9 | 22.5 | 9 | 22.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Marital Status | | | | |
| Single | 4 | 10.0 | 6 | 15.0 |
| Married | 30 | 75.0 | 32 | 80.0 |
| Divorced | 4 | 10.0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Widow | 2 | 5.0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Educational level | | | | |
| Primary school completed | 1 | 2.5 | 3 | 7.5 |
| Primary school uncompleted | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Secondary school completed | 23 | 57.5 | 17 | 42.5 |
| Secondary school uncompleted | 2 | 5.0 | 4 | 10.0 |
| Tertiary school completed | 11 | 27.5 | 9 | 22.5 |
| Tertiary school uncompleted | 2 | 5.0 | 6 | 15.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Religion | | | | |
| Christianity | 25 | 62.5 | 22 | 55.0 |
| Islam | 14 | 35.0 | 16 | 40.0 |
| Tradition | 1 | 2.5 | 2 | 5.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Household size | | | | |
| 0-3 | 8 | 20.0 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 4-6 | 26 | 65.0 | 24 | 60.0 |
| 7-9 | 5 | 12.5 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 10 & above | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Fish farming experience | | | | |
| 0-5 | 3 | 7.5 | 14 | 35.0 |
| 6-10 | 16 | 40.0 | 7 | 17.5 |
| 11-15 | 11 | 27.5 | 13 | 32.5 |
| 16-20 | 3 | 7.5 | 4 | 10.0 |
| 21-25 | 5 | 12.5 | 2 | 5.0 |
| 26-30 | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 31 & above | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |

non-beneficiaries were married. Education is an important factor which can influence farm productivity and determine farmer's access to loan and repayment. Level of education, according to the study, showed that over 95% and 90% of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries respectively have one form of education or the other. From the results, one can also infer that Christianity is the mostly practiced religion than any other religions as the majority [62.5%, 55%] of the benefiting and non-benefiting fish farmers respectively are Christians. The average household size in the locality was found to be 5 persons for both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The respondents' mean fish farming experiences showed 13 years and 12 years for the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, respectively. As the major occupation, fish farming is a function of the importance attached to it as a source of livelihood. In particular, 65% of the beneficiaries and 52.5% of the non-beneficiaries had fish farming as their major occupation and thus were likely to commit more number of hours, efforts and loans towards the success of the farm enterprises.

Fisheries Credit Package

The results in Table 2 show the loans benefited from the microfinance banks in Ogun state, Nigeria, by sample fish farmer beneficiaries. The kind of loans disbursed to fish farmers' shows that 27.5% were in kind (loans disbursed in kind were usually in form of input such as fish feed, fry and fingerlings), while only 7.5% were in cash, and the remaining 65% were both in

cash and kind, and this may be a means of monitoring the use of the released loans. Forty percent (40%) were granted loans of between ₦ 100,001 and ₦150,000, while 20% and 15% received between ₦150,001 and ₦200,000 and ₦50,001 and ₦100,000, respectively. However, one of the setbacks in the loan is the relatively high interest rate complained by the beneficiaries, whereby 75% said they paid well over ₦10,000 (12%) on the granted loans. The distribution of the beneficiaries according to the year of disbursement is shown in Fig. 1.

Fishermen Cooperative Society

Cooperative society involves a social participation that helps farmers to pool their resources to have access to fisheries inputs and to have insights into their fishing issues. Membership of the cooperative is therefore a factor which influences the adoption of improved fisheries technologies and poverty alleviation (87.5%) of the beneficiaries were cooperators, while 62.5% of the non-beneficiaries were not in any cooperative society, which may be the reason for not benefiting from any source of loan. This is in line with the position of (Akinbile, 1998) that groups which ensures that members derive benefits from the groups such that they will not have derived individually if they were acting alone.

Income Realized from Sales of Fish

The average income earned by the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of Microfinance Bank loan, as revealed by the respondents showed that 65% of the

TABLE 2
Loan Beneficiaries from Microfinance Bank in Ogun State, Nigeria

| Parameters | Frequency | Percentages |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Kinds of Loan | | |
| Cash | 11 | 27.5 |
| Kind | 3 | 7.5 |
| Both | 26 | 65.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 |
| Amount Approved | | |
| < ₦50,000 | 4 | 10.0 |
| 50,001- 100,000 | 6 | 15.0 |
| 100,001-150,000 | 16 | 40.0 |
| 150,001-200,000 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 200,001-250,000 | 4 | 10.0 |
| 250,001 & above | 2 | 5.0 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 |
| Interest Payment | | |
| < 4,999 | 2 | 5.0 |
| 5,000 – 9,999 | 1 | 2.5 |
| 10,000- 14,999 | 11 | 27.5 |
| 15,000-19,999 | 11 | 27.5 |
| 20,000-24,999 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 25,000 &above | 7 | 17.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.0 |

When loan was taken

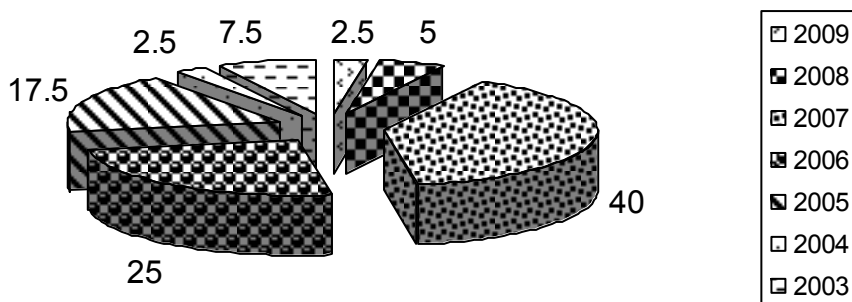


Fig.1: A pie-chart representation of the respondents showing the year when the loan was taken

beneficiaries earned well over ₦2.5 million, while only 42.5% of the beneficiaries did so (see Table 3).

Factors Affecting Aquaculture Development in Ogun State

From the survey, 90% and 80% said the lack of sufficient fund as the major setback to aquaculture development in the study area, while 100% and 95% of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries considered high cost of feeding as the major problem hindering aquaculture development. Similarly, 95%, 97.5% and 82.5% of the beneficiaries

and 72.5%, 85%, and 77.5% of the non-beneficiaries said that high inflation rate in the economy, high cost of investment and poor marketing channels respectively as the major factor militating against the development of aquaculture industry (see Table 4).

The Impacts of Microfinance Loan on Aquaculture Development

A larger percentage of the beneficiaries said that the use of microfinance loan had positive effects on aquaculture development, as shown in Table 5.

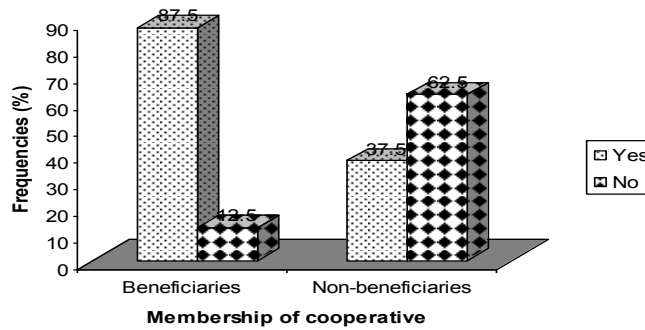


Fig.2: A bar chart representation of memberships of the cooperative of fish farmers

TABLE 3
The distribution of the total income of the fish farmers

| Categories of total income (₦) | Beneficiaries | | Non-beneficiaries | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| <499,999 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 5.0 |
| 500,000-999,999 | 1 | 2.5 | 3 | 7.5 |
| 1,000,000-1,499,999 | 2 | 5.0 | 7 | 17.5 |
| 1,500,000-1,999,999 | 5 | 12.5 | 4 | 10.0 |
| 2,000,000-2,499,999 | 6 | 15.0 | 7 | 17.5 |
| 2,500,000 & above | 26 | 65.0 | 17 | 42.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2009

TABLE 4
Distribution of factors affecting aquaculture development in Ogun state

| | BENEFICIARIES | | | | NON-BENEFICIARIES | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| | Very serious | Serious | Not a problem | I don't know | Very serious | Serious | Not a problem | I don't know |
| Lack of appropriate land | 0.0 | 25 | 70 | 5 | 0.0 | 30 | 70 | 0.0 |
| Old age | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 92.5 | 5 |
| Lack of sufficient fund | 0.0 | 90 | 10 | 0.0 | 80 | 12.5 | 5 | 2.5 |
| Poaching | 2.5 | 22.5 | 60 | 15 | 0.0 | 5 | 52.5 | 42.5 |
| Lack of technical know-how | 5 | 75 | 20 | 0.0 | 15 | 50 | 20 | 15 |
| Disease and predators | 0.0 | 7.5 | 60 | 32.5 | 2.5 | 12.5 | 35 | 50 |
| High inflation rate in the economy | 95 | 5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 72.5 | 17.5 | 7.5 | 2.5 |
| High cost of investment | 97.5 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 85 | 12.5 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| Poor marketing channels | 82.5 | 10 | 7.5 | 0.0 | 77.5 | 12.5 | 10 | 0.0 |
| Poor quality fish seed | 12.5 | 32.5 | 52.5 | 2.5 | 5 | 55 | 37.5 | 2.5 |
| High cost of feeding | 100 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 95 | 5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2009

TABLE 5
Percentage distribution of the impact of microfinance loan on aquaculture development

| Beneficiaries | Yes | | No | |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Reduction in culture period | 33 | 82.5 | 7 | 17.5 |
| Increase in overall yield | 39 | 97.5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Expansion of business | 39 | 97.5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Increase revenue | 40 | 100 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Improvement in livelihood security | 36 | 90.0 | 4 | 10.0 |
| Improvement in usage of innovation | 28 | 70.0 | 12 | 30.0 |
| Generate employment | 38 | 95.0 | 2 | 5.0 |
| Reduce rural-urban migration | 40 | 100 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Enhance growth and development of rural areas | 40 | 100 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Poverty alleviation | 39 | 97.5 | 1 | 2.5 |

Source: Field survey, 2009

DISCUSSION

The results indicate the impacts of microfinance loan on aquaculture development which spread over the four agricultural extension zones (Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ikenne, and Ilaro) of Ogun State. Majority of all the 40 beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries sampled were between the age of 41 and 50 years, an age in which they are considered highly productive and active to undertake strenuous tasks associated with farm work. This is in line with the assertion of Bello (2000) that age has positive correlation with the acceptance of innovations and risk taking as implicit in the credit borrowing for agricultural production.

Most of beneficiaries (75%) and non-beneficiaries (80%) are married. Education is an important factor which influences farm productivity and determines farmer's access to loan and repayment. In specific, the level of education showed that over 95% and 90% of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have one form of education or the other, respectively. This contradict with the general opinion that most farmers are illiterate or semi-illiterate; most of whom have dropped out of the formal school system, as evidenced from the studies of Ozor (1998) and Okwoche *et al.* (1998).

From the results, one can also infer that Christianity is the mostly practiced religion than any other religions among the benefiting (62.5%) and non-benefiting fish farmers (55%). The average household size in the locality was found to be 5 persons for both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The implication is that the relatively small

household size may increase the number of labours needed as against the findings of Adegbite and Oluwalana (2004) and Adegbite *et al.* (2008) that the larger the household size, the more the likelihood of sustainable labour efficiency on farmer's farm, given the constant labour.

The respondents' mean fish farming experiences showed 13 years and 12 years for the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, respectively. Fish farming, as the major occupation, has a function of importance attached to it as a source of livelihood. In particular, 65% of the beneficiaries and 52.5% of the non-beneficiaries have fish farming as their major occupation and are thus likely to commit more number of hours, efforts and loans towards the success of the farm enterprises.

Cooperative Society involves a social participation that helps farmers to pool their resources to have access to fisheries inputs and insights into their fishing issues. Membership of the cooperatives is therefore a factor which influences the adoption of improved fisheries technologies and poverty alleviation. In particular, 87.5% of the beneficiaries were co-operators while 62.5% of the non-beneficiaries were not in any cooperative society, which may be the reason for not benefiting from any source of loan. This is in line with Akinbile (1998) that the position of the groups ensures that members gain benefits from it in such that they will not have derived individually if they were acting alone.

The respondents earned their incomes from the sales of fish, fish products and

farm produce. It was therefore pertinent that the respondents brought in more profits to alleviate poverty. The yearly estimated income showed that 65% of the beneficiaries and 42.5% of the non-beneficiaries earned well over ₦2.5 million. In more specific, 2.5% and 7.5% of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were earning between ₦500, 000 and ₦999, 999. This is in agreement with the observation of Sirkin (1995) who stated that the established indicators abound to lend credence to the fact that about 80% of Nigeria's over 100 million population are barely existing even below the internationally recognized poverty line of \$1 (About ₦135) per day, lacking a combination of food, shelter and clothing, and operating within a extreme poverty bracket.

The results showed that majority of the respondents obtained credit worth ₦100,001 to ₦150,000 in the study area, while 40% obtained the loan in 2007, and this was probably a result of the new transition (change of name from community bank to microfinance bank). The credit obtained by the fish farmers had a significant relationship on aquaculture development by increasing overall yield (97.5%), revenue (100%), and reducing rural-urban migration (100%), as revealed by the beneficiaries. The implication of this was that most of the farmers would use the obtained credit for the expansion of their fisheries enterprises. Meanwhile, the rate of interest may determine the extents and duration of borrowing (Ijere, 1998).

Although the study has revealed that aquaculture is a profitable business in the study area, it appears that opportunities still exist for increased income if the constraints identified by the fishermen are addressed. These include the lack of sufficient fund and the high cost of feeding.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Microfinance Bank Loan in Aquaculture has a great potential to increase fish production, fishermen income, and livelihood of the populace, if the loan given policies are placed rightly and administrative bottlenecks are eliminated. In addition, the socio-economic features of the aquaculturists have been fully considered and the constraints identified (high cost of feeding, poor marketing channel, lack of adequate capital and high cost of investment, among others) in this study to the barest minimal level.

Hence, the following are recommended based on the findings of this study:

- The government should increase the amount of loans allocated to the agricultural sector and invariably the fisheries sector.
- The government should see the granting of loan to aquaculture sector and the monitoring of the loan to ensure that it is used for what it is meant for.
- Credit should be made available from other sources and even from the non-governmental organization at very low interest rates.

- Banks should provide package with a reasonable amount to be disbursed to farmers to help them increase production.

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Relationship between Perceived Costs, Perceived Benefits and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among Lecturers in Educational Institution in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing behaviour has positive impact on individual innovation capability. However, since sharing knowledge is often unnatural, effective strategies and sufficient initiatives need to be deployed to ensure lecturers communicate their teaching experiences with others. This paper examines the extent of knowledge sharing amongst lecturers in an educational institution in Malaysia, and whether their knowledge sharing behaviour is influenced by their perceptions of costs-benefits in knowledge sharing. The analysis is based upon questionnaire surveys of lecturers ($N=50$) on their perception of costs and benefits motivation factors affecting their behaviour in sharing knowledge. While perceived benefits explained better orientation towards knowledge sharing, certain cost factors tended to restrict actual knowledge sharing. The article notes the influence of some perceived benefits dimensions in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour in academic work setting. Recommendations on maximizing the influence of the related perceived benefits are also discussed.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, perceived benefits, perceived costs, social exchange

INTRODUCTION

In the face of high demand of quality education in higher education, it is essential to deploy knowledge already within the

organization (Wiig, 1993) by sharing it. One of the major requirements for creating and leveraging organizational knowledge is the exchange of information (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Knowledge sharing, as defined by Lang (2001), is a process of translating information such as past experiences into a meaningful set of relationships which are understood and applied by individuals who share the

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same context of philosophy, experience, values and goals. Through sharing, new perspectives of knowledge emerge in random and in informally systematic process as individuals synthesise and draw insights which they apply in various situations such as at work to achieve organizational goal (Sethumadhavan, 2007).

One theory that has attempted to explain knowledge sharing behaviour is the social exchange theory (Liang *et al.*, 2008). According to Liang, since knowledge sharing is a social activity, a lot of what governs the nature of exchange depends on how people assess the meaningfulness of the encounter and the exchange. Meaningfulness is in turn determined by relevance to one's orientation and goals. According to Cook (1977), social exchange theory is driven by the concept of supplementary-complimentary exchange of resources amongst people via a social exchange relationship. People naturally seek to obtain resources that supplement or complement their efforts to achieve certain goals. The principle of social exchange theory posits that human beings look forward to relationships in order to obtain reward, resource, support and fulfilment. Human beings avoid risks by maximising on benefits and minimising costs, and in their social relationships they look out for encounters and exchanges whereby they obtain more benefits.

A literature review in KS has revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between perceived benefit to the recipient and propensity to share knowledge (e.g., Chu, 2002). In this research, perceived benefit is defined by Constant *et al.* (1994) as

the individual's subjective perception of gain from their behaviours. Knowledge sharing literature that adopted social exchange theory as the theoretical framework in studying knowledge sharing behaviour showed that reputation, reciprocity, reduced work load, professionalism, enjoyment in helping others and knowledge self-efficacy are significantly related to knowledge sharing.

Reputation is a strong motivator in knowledge sharing (Jones *et al.*, 1997). People often seek recognition and status as an expert in their field of work. One seeks for positive judgment of one character, skills, reliability and other personal attributes. Reciprocity is the degree which one believes that one can improve mutual relationships with others through such behaviour (Bock *et al.*, 2005). Employees will intend to share knowledge if they expect reciprocal knowledge sharing in the future (Endres *et al.*, 2007). They believe that current effort on knowledge sharing will lead to future exchange of other knowledge.

Information sharing among team members is associated with higher organizational efficiency and lower workload. In a study by Jamaliah Abdul Hamid (2007) of knowledge management in schools in Malaysia, one finding reveals that sharing knowledge has increased the productivity and knowledge of teachers and students. Team work has been reported to be well-facilitated, thus reducing teachers' workload.

By sharing expertise, knowledge contributors also gain confidence in their ability and thus increase their perception of

self-efficacy (Constant *et al.*, 1994). Fong and Chu (2006) identified 'increasing the level of expertise' and 'improving quality of work' as the second and third highest ranking out of 15 reasons for sharing knowledge.

For others, sharing knowledge brings altruistic satisfaction. There is enjoyment derived by the act of sharing, without expecting anything in return (Smith, 1981; Wasko & Faraj, 2000). Altruistic acts of sharing have a significant impact on the type and extent of knowledge contributions people are willing to engage in (Kankanhalli *et al.*, 2005). The type of information is likely to benefit a large mass of recipients, whether in direct ways or indirectly and can range from tips to the relaying of news, experience and events that are likely to affect people's lives and career. Fukui *et al.* (1998) reported in their study that experts contribute their knowledge into knowledge-bases because they are asked to input it by someone, and therefore, it is a pleasure to help someone else. This is very much related to perceived intrinsic benefit to oneself, and also to others. Wasko and Faraj (2000), in their study, found that 31.3% shared their knowledge due to enjoyment in sharing experiences. They acted with altruism and wanted to contribute to the improvement of the community knowledge.

Meanwhile, there is a significant relationship between the level of knowledge contribution and knowledge self-efficacy, whereby low knowledge self-efficacy people tend to shy away from knowledge sharing because they believe that their

knowledge will not contribute to any significant difference (Draajier, 2008; Kankanhalli *et al.*, 2005). Low knowledge-efficacy people typically have incompetent skills or poor cognition that impedes their ability to acquire, understand and use knowledge. They are likely to under-value their own knowledge and exercise strict self-restraint in knowledge sharing. On the other hand, people with high knowledge self-efficacy are confident of the value of their knowledge and positively seek to expand it through sharing.

Here, knowledge self-efficacy is defined by Kankanhalli *et al.* (2005) as the beliefs that other would value the knowledge that someone holds. 'In order to share knowledge, individuals must perceive that sharing it would be worth the effort to others.' (Wasko & Faraj, 2005, p. 39), such as colleagues and companies (Fong & Chu, 2006), as well as it benefits oneself. Hence, knowledge self-efficacy affects one's perception of benefits or costs in sharing knowledge.

In relating to costs that impede knowledge sharing, past research has confirmed that time constraint is a barrier in knowledge sharing (e.g., Fong & Chu, 2006; Hew & Hara, 2007; Kankanhalli *et al.*, 2005; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Knowledge sharing can be too time-consuming as a result of confusing, technically demanding and difficult to use communication technology (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). People with language difficulties also find knowledge sharing a demanding and challenging task. In this way, knowledge sharing will be

likely regarded as cost rather than a benefit (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

Perceived costs can incur in the form of opportunity costs and actual loss of resources (Molm, 1997). Actual loss of resources may be described as one's perceived or actual loss of power and unique value within the organization (Orlikowski, 1993). Opportunity costs are rewards foregone due to one's decision to forgo actions or behaviours that was required at a particular moment (Molm, 1997). For example, the time and effort spent in codifying and contributing knowledge into electronic knowledge repositories can become an opportunity cost since knowledge contributors were prevented from attending to other important alternative tasks during that time. In the hierarchy of importance, knowledge sharing may lose its level of priority if more individuals believed that it incurs opportunity costs that brought potential harm to their careers.

In specific, Orlikowski (1993) acknowledges that demand on tasks, lost opportunities and loss of knowledge power are among the risks and costs for engaging in knowledge sharing behaviour. Also, sharing knowledge is risky since knowledge contributors do not know how knowledge will be used by the party that receives it (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Acknowledgement, plagiarism and manipulation of contents are some risks related with information sharing.

It is thus shown in the knowledge sharing literature that what people gain from sharing knowledge does influence their

knowledge sharing behaviour. This means, the higher the benefits gained from sharing knowledge, the higher people's engagement in knowledge exchange (e.g., Chu, 2002). While some elements of perceived benefits (such as reputation) play important roles in affecting human knowledge sharing behaviour, the risk and cost resulted in the act of sharing knowledge also give a negative impact. The findings in knowledge sharing literature hence complement the principle of social exchange theory that highlights people's behaviour in doing cost-benefits analysis before engaging in a social exchange relationship.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since in social exchange theory, people do cost-benefits analysis of their exchanges, the question arises as to whether perceived costs or perceived benefits have the most influence on teachers' knowledge sharing behaviour, particularly in the context of the selected educational institution in this study. In addition, there is a need to examine the elements of perceived costs and perceived benefits that most influence one's level of knowledge sharing. Hence, the benefits that are perceived as most influential could be maximized, and the perceived cost that minimizes the act of sharing could be eliminated or reduced.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study was to examine the extent of knowledge sharing amongst lecturers in an educational institution in Malaysia, and whether their knowledge

sharing behaviour was influenced by their perceptions of costs-benefits in knowledge sharing. The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine knowledge sharing behaviour among lecturers in an educational institution in Malaysia;
2. To determine perceived costs and perceived benefits in knowledge sharing as perceived by lecturers;
3. To determine the relationship between perceived costs and benefits factor with the lecturers' knowledge sharing behaviour; and
4. To predict which elements of perceived costs and benefits predict knowledge sharing behaviour among respondents.

The overall view of this study is represented by the research framework illustrated in Fig.1.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses quantitative descriptive correlational research design. The research was conducted on 143 teachers who were attending a training course. Since Neuman (2007) asserted that for a small population (i.e., under 1,000), a researcher needs a large sampling ratio (about 30 percent). Out of 143 total populations, 100 questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers attending the course at one of the educational institutions in Malaysia. Returned questionnaires were 55, giving an average response rate of 55%, but five questionnaires were later excluded

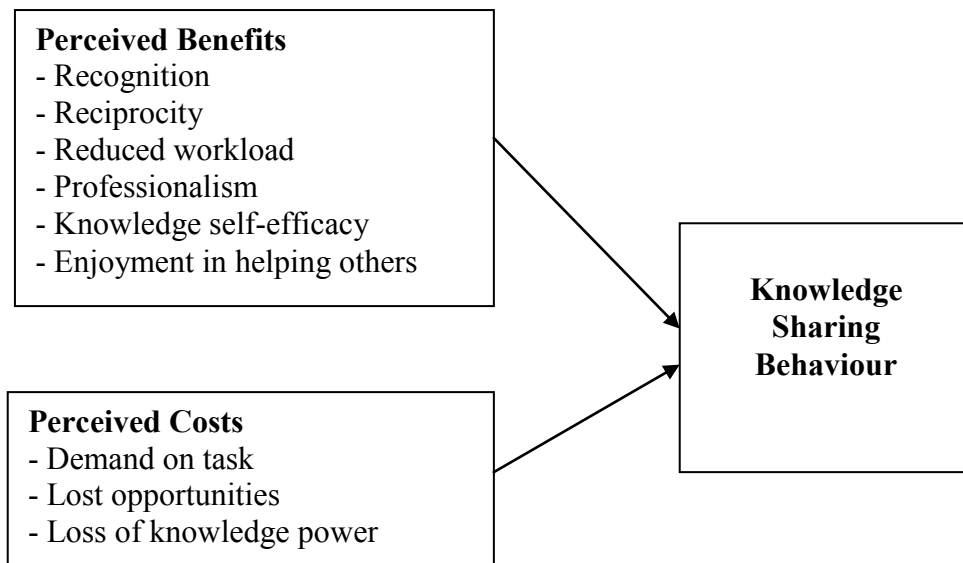


Fig.1: Research framework

due to incompleteness. Thus, the sampling size of this research met the requirement as specified by Neuman. A bigger sample would have been more adequate, but since the nature of this study was exploratory to examine the applicability of social exchange theory of costs and benefits in knowledge sharing amongst Malaysian teachers, the sample of 50 could be considered as quite adequate.

The questionnaire comprised 12 items measuring knowledge sharing behaviour. The items in this scale measured knowledge sharing behaviour in terms of the extent knowledge is shared through discussion, seminar and conference exchanges, peer observation, team teaching and committee work, emails and document sharing and other activities among lecturers as they dealt with their daily teaching tasks. Next, 10 items measured perceived costs of knowledge sharing. These items measured the dimensions of demand on task, lost opportunities and loss of knowledge power. The final section of the questionnaire contained 20 items measuring perceived benefits which measured six dimensions; namely, recognition, reciprocity, reduced work load, professionalism, knowledge self-efficacy and enjoyment in helping others.

All the items were rated on a Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The Knowledge Sharing Behaviour Scale was guided by the literature review on knowledge sharing strategies applicable in school context (Fernandez-Chung, 2009; Mohayidin *et al.*, 2007; Jamaliah Abdul Hamid, 2007).

Perceived Cost Scale was developed based on Molm (1997), Orlikowski (1993), and Thibaut and Kelley (1986). Perceived Benefits Scale was developed based on Bock *et al.* (2005), Constant *et al.* (1996), Kalman (1999), and Wasko and Faraj (2000). The Perceived Costs and Benefits Scale were used in the study by Kankanhalli *et al.* (2005) to identify cost and benefit factors affecting electronic knowledge repositories usage by knowledge contributors.

The Knowledge Sharing Scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's alpha for perceived costs was 0.91 and 0.93 for the perceived benefits. The Perceived Costs and Perceived Benefits Scales were also reported by Kankanhalli *et al.* (2005) to have good internal consistency ranging from 0.85 to 0.96. In this study, mean scores and standard deviation were used to assess the levels of knowledge sharing behaviour, perceived costs and perceived benefits. After analysing for the relationship of factors using Pearson's correlation coefficient, Multiple Regression test was then used to test the strength of our proposed relational models between perceived benefits and costs to knowledge sharing behaviour.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Background of the Respondents

Referring to Table 1, there were 46% male and 54% female respondents in this study. Meanwhile, 56% of the respondents were above 40 years of age. The majority of the respondents (68%) had Master degree as their highest academic qualification. The

respondents without teaching certificates outnumbered those with teaching qualification at a ratio of 54% to 46%. The respondents with more than 21 years in teaching profession were 22%, while 50% of them have been teaching between six to 20 years. Only 28% of the respondents had five years of teaching experience or less. The majority profile of the respondents therefore appeared to be experienced lecturers, mature in age and, with a high academic qualification, although not necessarily possessing professional certification of teaching competence.

Perception of Costs and Benefits and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among Lecturers

In Table 2, the levels of perceived benefits and knowledge sharing behaviour were moderate at respective means of 3.62 and 3.43. Perceived costs, however, was low, at 2.23. Generally, these descriptive mean scores showed that the lecturers were more inclined to believe in the positive benefits of knowledge sharing.

The level of each dimension of perceived costs is as displayed in Table 3. The demands in doing knowledge sharing

TABLE 1
Respondents' profile

| <i>Variable</i> | | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------|
| Gender | M | 23 | 46.0 |
| | F | 27 | 54.0 |
| Age | <25 yrs | 2 | 4.0 |
| | 25-29 | 8 | 16.0 |
| | 30-34 | 5 | 10.0 |
| | 35-39 | 7 | 14.0 |
| | 40-44 | 14 | 28.0 |
| | >44 | 14 | 28.0 |
| Highest Degree | BACHELOR | 13 | 26.0 |
| | MASTER | 34 | 68.0 |
| | PHD | 3 | 6.0 |
| Teaching Certification | NO | 27 | 54.0 |
| | YES | 23 | 46.0 |
| Years in Teaching | <= 5 | 14 | 28.0 |
| | 6 - 13 | 11 | 22.0 |
| | 14 - 20 | 14 | 28.0 |
| | 21+ | 11 | 22.0 |

TABLE 2
Means and standard deviation for perceived benefits, perceived costs and knowledge sharing

| | Perceived Benefits | Perceived Costs | Knowledge Sharing |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Mean | 3.62 | 2.23 | 3.43 |
| Std. Dev | .522 | .587 | .640 |

acts, fear of lost opportunities and fear of loss of unique value in one's organization due to loss of knowledge power all scored low mean values (less than 3.0), suggesting that the perceptions of costs did not appear to overshadow the perceptions of benefits of knowledge sharing.

TABLE 3
Mean value of perceived costs

| Variable Dimension | Mean |
|-------------------------|------|
| Demand on task | 2.55 |
| Lost opportunities | 2.13 |
| Loss of knowledge power | 1.97 |

In Table 4, the benefit of altruistic satisfaction in helping others had the highest mean score, while the benefits of earning a reputation and reduced work load were ranked lower, although all were still moderate (i.e. above 3.0).

TABLE 4
Mean value of perceived benefits

| Variable Dimension | Mean |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Enjoyment in helping others | 3.91 |
| Reciprocity | 3.71 |
| Knowledge self-efficacy | 3.52 |
| Professionalism | 3.51 |
| Reputation | 3.46 |
| Reduced work load | 3.37 |

In Table 5, knowledge sharing behaviour mostly were *vis-a-vis* listening to talks concerning teaching and learning, while inviting/doing peer observation to share knowledge was ranked lower. Interestingly, writing to share knowledge via emails, short message service (sms) and articles was the least preferred strategy (mean value less

than 3.0), suggesting that people found writing as a medium of knowledge sharing either taxing, time consuming or simply demanding.

TABLE 5. Mean value of knowledge sharing behaviour

| Items | Mean |
|---|------|
| Listen to talks | 3.92 |
| Enjoy talking to friends | 3.84 |
| Listening for new ideas through conversation | 3.80 |
| Seeking peers' comments | 3.78 |
| Being involved in knowledge generation/sharing activities | 3.54 |
| Participate in seminars/conferences | 3.36 |
| Talking to un/successful colleagues | 3.34 |
| Make copies of articles and pass to friends | 3.26 |
| Do team teaching | 3.24 |
| Ask peers to observe my teaching | 3.04 |
| Observe peers' teaching | 3.02 |
| Write emails, sms, articles | 2.96 |

Relationships between Perceived Costs-benefits Factor with Lecturers' Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Referring to Table 6, perceived benefits appeared to have significant and positive relationship to knowledge sharing behaviours ($r = .61, p < .01$). On the other hand, the relationship between perceived costs and knowledge sharing behaviour was significant but negative ($r = -.36, p < .01$), indicating that the more people believed that knowledge sharing was going to incur costly risks, the less they would engage in knowledge sharing behaviours.

As shown in Table 7, item-by-item relationship to knowledge sharing showed

moderate relationships between the perceived benefits of earning a reputation, reciprocity, knowledge self efficacy, reduced work load, professionalism and altruistic enjoyment to the practice of knowledge sharing. The relationship coefficient between the benefits of increased professionalism to knowledge sharing behaviour held the highest ranking ($r=.51, p <.01$). It would appear that people who wished to develop their professionalism would engage in more knowledge sharing.

Table 8 shows that in perceived costs, demand on tasks ($r = -.30, p = 0.04$), and lost opportunities ($r = -.41, p = 0.0001$) had significant negative effects on knowledge sharing, with the latter showing a higher degree of likelihood. Interestingly, the fear

of losing knowledge power did not appear to significantly affect knowledge sharing behaviour ($r = -.24, p = 0.09$). This finding suggests that knowledge sharing by itself was not perceived as having a negative effect on one's credibility or status. However, constraints in the forms of task demands and lost opportunities for career progress were real risks affecting knowledge sharing. Institutional managers need to resolve the balance between offering incentives and rewards for knowledge sharing on one hand, and the removal of real fears associated with the time and energy diverted from career and work demands during the act of knowledge sharing.

In relating to the demographic variables, age appeared to have contributed to

TABLE 6
Correlation analysis between perceived costs and benefits with knowledge sharing behaviour

| Knowledge Sharing | Pearson Correlation | Perceived Benefits | Perceived Costs |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | | .61** ($p=.00$) | -.36* ($p=.01$) |

TABLE 7
Correlation analysis between perceived benefits and knowledge sharing behaviour

| Perceived Benefits | Knowledge Sharing | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Reputation | .48 | .00 |
| Reciprocity | .42 | .00 |
| Knowledge self-efficacy | .46 | .00 |
| Reduced work Load | .46 | .00 |
| Professionalism | .51 | .00 |
| Enjoyment in helping others | .48 | .00 |

TABLE 8
Correlation analysis between perceived costs and knowledge sharing behaviour

| Knowledge Sharing | Demand On Task | Lost Opportunities | Loss of Knowledge Power |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | -.30* ($p=.04$) | -.41** ($p=.00$) | -.24 ($p=.09$) |

significant differences amongst the mean scores of knowledge sharing behaviour ($p < .05$). However, neither gender, highest degree, length of teaching experience nor teaching certification contributed to significant differences of knowledge sharing behaviour.

Regression Model of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

In order to explore the fourth research question, linear regression analyses were conducted with perceived costs and benefits as independent variables predicting knowledge sharing behaviour, and knowledge sharing as the dependent variable (see Table 9).

The model was significant, but just moderately strong (adjusted R square .36) for this small group of respondents.

Table 10 shows that perceived benefits ($t = 4.480, p=0.0001$) make the strongest unique contribution to explain knowledge sharing behaviour compared to perceived costs.

In analysing the contributory effects, we analysed the beta contribution of each of the dimensions within perceived costs and benefits to knowledge sharing behaviour. Table 11 shows that lost opportunity ($t=-2.054, p= .046$) is the only dimension that significantly has the strongest unique contribution to explain knowledge sharing behaviour compared to demand on tasks and loss of knowledge power.

TABLE 9
The regression analysis between knowledge sharing behaviour and perceived costs and benefits

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .62a | .39 | .36 | .51 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Costs, Perceived Benefits

TABLE 10
The effects of perceived benefits and costs on knowledge sharing behaviour

| Predictor | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|--------------------|-------|------------|-------|-------|------|
| Perceived Benefits | .693 | .155 | .565 | 4.480 | .000 |
| Perceived Costs | -.126 | .137 | -.115 | -.914 | .365 |

TABLE 11
The effects of perceived costs on knowledge sharing behaviour

| Model | | Unstandardised Coefficients | | Standardised Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.271 | .375 | | 11.373 | .000 |
| | Demand on task | -.106 | .170 | -.101 | -.623 | .536 |
| | Lost opportunities | -.370 | .180 | -.445 | -2.054 | .046 |
| | Loss of knowledge power | .108 | .169 | .127 | .642 | .524 |

a. Dependent Variable: knowledge sharing

Table 12 shows that none of the dimensions of perceived benefits makes uniquely significant contribution to explain knowledge sharing behaviour, suggesting that all these dimensions accumulatively interact to influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study sets out to examine the knowledge sharing strategies used by the lecturers in one educational institution in Malaysia. It also examined the perceived costs and benefits factors affecting knowledge sharing behaviour of the lecturers. Generally, the respondents tended to practice personal social strategies such as through interaction, observation and discussion in knowledge sharing, more than codification strategy such as through writing, e-mails and publication. Peer observation, although a very likely medium for knowledge exchange, was found to be least preferred. This scenario might be due

to the fact that in the school context, people were being rewarded for individual effort instead of teamwork, and they tended to be reserved when it came to sharing expertise (Petrides & Guiney, 2002). Earlier study on peer observation by Fernandez-Chung (2009) also found that peer observation was not commonly practiced in Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions as a result of time constraints, as well as extra burden to the lecturers. Thus, it is suggested that the institutional management rationalize the objectives of peer observation as one of the best practices for knowledge sharing. Information from observations should be used for personal and team growth instead of for appraisal purposes.

Meanwhile, enjoyment in helping others was found to be the most influential factor in knowledge sharing. Wasko and Faraj (2000) also found that enjoyment and the feeling of satisfaction in helping people encouraged knowledge sharing. Another significant perceived benefit is the anticipation of reciprocal exchange and relationship. In

TABLE 12
The effects of perceived benefits on knowledge sharing behaviour

| Model | Unstandardised Coefficients | | Standardised Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 1.032 | .652 | | 1.581 | .121 |
| Reputation | .029 | .215 | .031 | .133 | .895 |
| Recognition | .183 | .165 | .192 | 1.112 | .272 |
| Knowledge self efficacy | .162 | .280 | .125 | .581 | .565 |
| Reduced work load | .036 | .302 | .053 | .119 | .905 |
| Professionalism | .127 | .409 | .163 | .310 | .758 |
| Enjoyment in helping others | .122 | .196 | .135 | .620 | .539 |

a. Dependent Variable: knowledge sharing

their works, Davenport and Prusak (1998) and Bock *et al.* (2005) also cited anticipated reciprocal relationships as having a positive impact on the attitudes essential for knowledge sharing. However, knowledge deficiency will occur if people attempt to free-ride and enjoy the contribution of knowledge of others without contributing back to others. Fortunately, many research has shown that people who have received help in the past feel a moral obligation to contribute what they know (Hew & Hara, 2007; Wasko & Faraj, 2000; Tohidinia & Mosakhani, 2009). Reciprocity is a strong tenet in Social Exchange Theory which attempts to explain the behaviour of sharing knowledge among humans.

Knowledge self-efficacy was significantly related to knowledge sharing; suggesting that this group of lecturers were competent in their field of specialisation, and they believed that their knowledge contribution would make some difference. Hence, we suggest that in order to leverage on the knowledge self-efficacy of individual contributions, the management of educational institutions must attempt to provide feedback loops which inform contributors whenever their knowledge contribution has been referred to or used by others. Cabrera and Cabrera (2002) observed that feedbacks from other users are a motivation for contributors to continue to contribute. Such feedback may include rating scales or a simple message alert. Furthermore, employees who may not know what types of experience are worth sharing or how to put their experience into words

will find such feedback helpful.

Increased professionalism was also a benefit of knowledge sharing behaviour. Hew and Hara's (2007) study confirmed this. Reduced workload, however, was the least perceived benefit from knowledge sharing. This may suggest to us one possible reason, i.e., the lecturers do not necessarily know or bother to translate their knowledge into direct use or application within their work. Knowledge being shared is mostly at the conceptual level, not at the practice-operational level. Therefore, we need to develop and foster a culture of contributing practical material that can effectively reduce work load for instance, in terms of teaching material and classroom management. Lecturers as communities of practice need to encourage each other to contribute practical types of knowledge forms that are readily usable by fellow colleagues.

In regards to perceived costs, our findings refuted major claims such as Harris and Clark (2007) and Davenport and Prusak (1998), who asserted that fear of loss of knowledge power would inhibit knowledge sharing behaviour. They maintained that it was only natural for humans to hoard knowledge since most people were afraid of losing superiority. However, our study showed otherwise. Instead, work demands and career related risks were two factors that appeared significant in off-setting the willingness to engage in knowledge sharing. Previous work by Fong and Chu (2006) acknowledged that their respondents ranked 'heavy work load and busy nature of work' as the highest out of 11 organizational

barriers in sharing knowledge. If knowledge sharing is to take off as an institutional culture, managers will then need to seriously consider knowledge sharing as a part of work performance and to give adequate space for its institutionalisation.

In this research, our findings show that the effort and time spent in knowledge sharing may be affected by language and/or technological incompetence. Harris and Clark (2007) had also pointed to the obstacle of poor technological skills in knowledge sharing. Therefore, it is suggested that if sharing knowledge involves technology, these technological systems will then need to be well-designed and user-friendly for knowledge transfer (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002).

Gender, educational level and work experience all were not significantly related to knowledge sharing (see also related findings by Ojha, 2005; Riege, 2005; Wasko & Faraj, 2005; Hew & Hara, 2007). Instead, Ojha (2005) found that age was the single significant factor in explaining the differences of mean scores in knowledge sharing behaviour. Other related findings also revealed that age differences were likely to affect knowledge sharing (Keyes, 2008; Ojha, 2005; Riege, 2005). Leiter *et al.* (2009), in their study, found that Generation X's respondents reported to have a more negative evaluation of personal knowledge sharing involvement. It was also found that age-compatible team members were more likely to share knowledge (Keyes, 2008). Moreover, the respondents might

differ with regard to their familiarity with information technology, whereby older workers are sometimes technology resistant (Keyes, 2008). Hence, information on age differences might be useful in guiding the management to plan for knowledge sharing activities that accommodate the respondents' distinct learning styles.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are preliminary in the sense they are derived from a relatively small sample from one educational institution. The findings should not be considered as a representative of the Malaysian educational institutions. However, the findings of this study may be useful in guiding the interventions for knowledge sharing initiatives in institutions. Some of the findings relating to the demographic data were inconsistent with previous research on this topic. This might be due to the small sample size that had limited the power of the relationships identified. Therefore, it is suggested this study be replicated using a larger sample. In addition, combining questionnaires survey with interviews could examine closely how the cost-benefit analysis factors affect lecturers' sharing of knowledge in the school context.

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Are Men More Apologetic Than Women?

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ABSTRACT

Apologies are common utterances. When an individual has violated a social norm, apologetic utterances are offered. This study investigates how apologies are used in relation to gender. A total of 120 ESL learners were asked to respond to a Discourse Completion Test that had 4 apology situations. Their responses were categorised into different speech act strategies. The results suggest that women tend to apologize more than men. Men and women also differ in the order of primary strategies used. There is a difference in the frequencies and the type of apology strategies used when the respondents apologized to their own gender compared to the opposite.

Keywords: Apology, apology strategies, ESL learners, gender, speech act

INTRODUCTION

Olshtain (1989) defines an apology as ‘a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation’ (pp. 156-157). The speech act of apology aims at maintaining good relation between participants (Holmes, 1990, p. 156). Two speakers carry the role of an ‘apologizer’ and

an ‘apologizee’ (Istifci, 2009). Apology is used as remedial interchanges to re-establish social harmony between an apologizer and an apologizee (Goffman, 1971; Leech, 1983). One will receive an apology only when the person who causes the offence perceives herself or himself as an apologizer (Istifci, 2009).

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983), the act of apologizing requires an utterance which is intended to ‘set things right’. Hence, apology is seen as a remedial act, especially when the purpose is to change the meaning of an action; from what could be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable (Goffman, 1971).

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When an apology is made, the apologizer has to act politely and pay attention to the apologizee's face needs (Holmes, 1990; Brown & Levinson, 1978). When offering an apology, 'one shows willingness to humiliate oneself to an extent that makes an apology a face-saving act for the hearer and a face-threatening act for the speaker' (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, p. 1903). For the apology to have an effect, it should reflect true feelings.

The speech act of apology is complex in nature (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), where a variety of possible strategies may be employed. Olshtain and Cohen (1983, p. 22) asserted that an apology could comprise one or more components, and each is a speech act in its own right. Some examples of the components are an apology or Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), "I'm sorry;" an acknowledgement of responsibility, "It's all my fault;" an offer to compensate, "I'll replace it;" a promise of forbearance, "It will never happen again;" or an explanation, "It was an accident." These semantic formula has been the basis of many studies on apology.

Sugimoto (1997) explained that 'findings from existing empirical studies on apology do not lend themselves easily to a clear comparison' (p. 351). Previous research has categorized apology according to various strategies. Their list is not mutually exclusive, and can be overlapping with one another. Nevertheless, the list is not exhaustive.

In the research of apology, gender is one of the main variables used. Holmes (1995)

investigated gender differences in apologies and found that women used significantly more apologies compared to men. Women also used more apologies for apologizees of equal power, i.e., when apologizing to their female friends of equal status. On the other hand, men apologized more to socially distant women, specifically to women of higher status.

Holmes (1989), in a study conducted on New Zealanders, found that women apologized more than men. Women also apologized more to other women than to men. On the other hand, men apologized to women more than to men. It was also found that women apologized more for offences of space and speaking rights, as compared to men who apologized more for offences involving possessions and time.

According to Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), women tend display statements of regret (e.g., I'm sorry, I apologize) in most situations, compared to men. This finding is found to be consistent with Holmes (1995) who found that women apologize more for their mistakes. Women do so consistently, not only to females but also to males. Women were also found to be assigning responsibility to themselves, i.e. clarifying the situation 'to ensure the offended's understanding of the issue for which they are apologizing' (p. 161). Furthermore, women tend to avoid face-to-face confrontation as compared to men.

In the second and foreign language context, studies on apology are associated with sociopragmatic competence (Istifçi, 2009). Sociopragmatic competence is

the ability to adjust speech strategies appropriately according to different social variables such as the degree of imposition, social dominance and distance between participants of conversation, and participants' rights and obligations in communication (Harlow, 1990). Speakers of second or foreign language may face difficulties to apologize in the target language. The ESL learners may also use their own social or cultural rules to those of the target language. In other words, an appropriate way to apologize in one language could be recognized as inappropriate in another language.

An example is provided by Olshtain (1994) in her talk presented at the 1994 Nessa Wolfson Memorial Colloquium at the University of Pennsylvania, where an intermediate Chinese student, studying in the United States, accidentally took someone else's umbrella. When he was told that the umbrella was not his, he apologized profusely and provided an explanation, when a simple 'sorry' was entirely sufficient.

Eslami-Rasekh and Madani (2010) mentioned that the ability to interpret deliver an appropriate response when apologizing is a social skill which can add greatly to the language learners' opportunities to enter into friendly relationship with native speakers. They also noted that teaching speech acts of apology to language learners will enable them to become aware of sociolinguistic conventions of language use and cultural differences which constitute appropriate use when apologizing in English (p. 96).

In the Malaysian context, there are limited studies carried out with regards

to apologizing in English. Among them is Marlyna (2006) who explicates the production of apologies by adult Malay speakers in Malaysia. She found that the apologies pattern by Malay speakers displayed their L1 linguistics and sociocultural rules, negatively affecting their sociopragmatic competence in the production of apologies in English. For example, the respondents confused the formulae "I'm sorry" with "Excuse me" in utterances, such as "Excuse me, I don't like the cake". In the Malay language, there is only one form for "Excuse me" and "I'm sorry", which is "*Maafkan saya*" (Marlyna, 2006). These errors occurred because of the influence of the speakers' native language (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978; Marlyna, 2006). According to Borkin and Reinhart (1978), the inappropriate usage of these formulae is also common among Thai and Japanese ESL learners.

In another study, Farashaiyan and Amirkhiz (2011) compared the apology strategies used by Malaysian ESL and Iranian EFL learners. The study reported similarities and differences in the types of apology strategies used by both groups. For example, both Iranians and Malaysians displayed an expression of regret in most situations. However, the Malaysians used this strategy at a higher frequency as compared to the Iranians.

The Iranians also used a wider range of apology strategy types as compared to the Malaysians. There were four types of apology strategies which were used by the Iranians but not the Malaysians. They were expressions of embarrassment, denial of

responsibility, blame the hearer, and pretend to be offended. The researchers suggested that these could be due to individual differences such as personality-related style preferences, language-learner strategies, and sociopragmatic competence.

The apology strategies used most frequently by the Malaysian respondents were expression of regret, offer of repair and explanation. The authors asserted that this might be due to their L1 linguistic and sociocultural influence on their sociopragmatic competence.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

According to Allan (2011, p. 5), language is a representation of culture and it is a culturally specific form of communication. Therefore, it is important to study how different speech acts are used in different cultures. The present study comes with the purpose of identifying the strategies used by the Malaysian respondents in apologizing and their frequency of occurrence in relation to gender. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Do men and women differ in their use of apology strategies?
2. Do women differ in the types of apology strategy used when apologizing to a man compared to a woman?
3. Do men differ in the types of apology strategy used when apologizing to a man compared to a woman?

METHODOLOGY

Design

The present study employed a qualitative method. Fryer (1991) noted that qualitative method is often associated with the collection and analysis of written or spoken texts. Qualitative procedures were previously employed to investigate apology strategies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1990; Sugimoto, 1997; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006) through the use of Discourse Completion Tests (DCT). Following the works of the researchers aforementioned, the present study utilized the qualitative design for the purpose of discovering the differences of the respondents' realization of apology when apologizing to the same and opposite gender.

Sample

The respondents were 120 students, comprising 60 males and 60 females, from a public higher learning institution in Malaysia, and aged between 22 and 55. The respondents, drawn from education courses in the same faculty, included 20 first-year students, 20 sophomores, 35 juniors, 20 seniors and 25 graduate students. A stratified random sampling was employed, where subjects were selected at random from the population strata (i.e., males and females).

Instrument

The instrument used in this study is the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). According to Mackey and Gass (2005), DCT

is the most common method in pragmatic-based research and particularly useful if one wants to investigate speech acts such as apologies, invitations and refusals (p. 89). The DCT used is adapted from Cohen and Olshtein's Discourse Completion Test (1981) in the study of apology. It consists of four (4) prompts which were adapted from Olshtain (1983). These prompts suggested scenarios of apologizing to another individual of different or the same gender. The descriptions in each of the prompts are as follows:

1. Apologizing to a female elderly.
2. Apologizing to a male stranger.
3. Apologizing to a female stranger.
4. Apologizing to a male elderly.

An example of prompt 1 in the DCT is:

You accidentally bump into an elderly lady at a department store, causing her to spill her packages all over the floor. You hurt her leg, too.

Her: "Ow! My goodness!"

You: (participants' response)

Data Collection Procedure

Respondents were contacted in their classes where permission has been asked from the respective instructors before hand to allow the research to be carried out personally by the researchers. During data collection, the respondents were first told the purpose of the research. They were asked to write what they would say based on the provided situations.

The respondents took about 15-25 minutes to complete the DCTs. The respondents handed in the DCT questionnaires to the researchers as soon as they had completed it.

Data Analysis

Firstly, the researchers identified the strategies used by the respondents, and categorised them according to their types of apology strategies. The list of strategies was found to be similar to that of Marlyna's (2006). They are as follows:

1. Direct Apology (DAp)
e.g. I'm sorry.
2. Explanation (E)
e.g. I didn't see you.
3. Acceptance (A)
e.g. It's my fault.
4. Offer to repair (O)
e.g. Let me help you to pick them up.
5. Promise (P)
e.g. I'll never do it again.
6. Justification (J)
e.g. I was just too busy.
7. DAp-A or Direct Apology-Acceptance
e.g. I'm so sorry. It's totally my fault.
8. DAp-O or Direct Apology-Offer
e.g. I'm sorry. Let me help you to your car.
9. DAp-P or Direct Apology-Promise
e.g. I'm so sorry. There won't be next time.
10. DAp-J or Direct Apology-Justification
e.g. I'm sorry. I really didn't see you.

11. DAp-DAP or Direct Apology-Direct Apology
e.g. I'm sorry. So so sorry.
12. DAp-DAP-A or Direct Apology-Direct Apology-Acceptance
e.g. I'm sorry. Very sorry, it's my fault.
13. DAp-DAP-O or Direct Apology-Direct Apology-Offer
e.g. I am sorry. I am apologizing to you. Please let me know what I can do to compensate to you.
14. DAp-DAP-P or Direct Apology-Direct Apology-Promise
e.g. I'm sorry. So sorry. I'll not do that again.
15. DAp-DAP-J or Direct Apology-Direct Apology-Justification
e.g. I'm sorry. I really am sorry. I really didn't see you.
16. DAp-DAP-A-P or Direct Apology-Direct Apology-Acceptance-Promise
e.g. I am so sorry. So sorry, I know it's my fault, I promise I'll not do it again.

Four new categories were also identified; these are DAp-J-O or Direct Apology-Justification-Offer; DAp-A-O or Direct Apology-Acceptance-Offer; DAp-J-A or Direct Apology-Justification-Acceptance; and finally A-O or Acceptance-Offer. That also means that a total of 20 categories were identified.

Secondly, the overall frequencies of occurrence of each apology strategies in all four situations were calculated. Finally, the types of apology strategies used by both men and women when apologizing to the same

gender and the opposite were also identified, and their frequencies were calculated. The information was used by the researchers to explain the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented according to the research questions mentioned earlier. The data in Table 1 presented the various patterns of apology strategies and their frequency used by both men and women in the present study.

The figures in Table 1 indicate that overall, women apologize more than men, with a total number of 255 as compared to 229, respectively. This is consistent with the findings of Holmes (1989) who reported that women apologized more than men. The difference in terms of the overall number of apology produced by men and women in the present study coincides with the findings of some previous studies that present gender as an important factor in people's use of apology (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Holmes, 1989). According to Schumann and Ross (2011, p. 1651), women apologize more as compared to men because both genders perceive offences differently, and women have a 'lower threshold of what constitutes offensive behaviour'. In other words, the severity of the offence is perceived more seriously by women compared to men. Men tend to apologize when they believe that they have actually offended someone.

The results also indicate that there is a difference in the number of strategy types used by men and women. The type

of apology strategy mostly used by men in the present study is DAp – DAp (e.g., I’m sorry. I’m terribly sorry), with 40 occurrences. This is found to be consistent with Meier (1998) who reported that the males in his study were responsible of 84% of the use of the word ‘terribly’. Meanwhile, women were found to use DAp-A followed closely by DAp-O. Women tend to assign responsibility to themselves, and then offer compensation to the offended more than men did.

Women used more variety of apologetic strategies (17 types) as compared to men with only 14 types. Both men and women

used the same apologetic strategies, but women used 3 additional types, which are DAp-DAp-A (e.g. I’m sorry, I’m very sorry. It’s my fault); DAp-DAp- J (e.g., I’m sorry. I’m really sorry. I really didn’t see you); and A-O (e.g. It’s my fault. Let me help you).

The three types of apology strategies mentioned indicated that women tend to assign responsibility to themselves, while expressing regret about the situation. Apart from that, women also tend to justify themselves. According to Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), this is because women wanted to clarify the situation to ensure the offended’s understanding of the situation

TABLE 1
Type and frequency of apologetic strategies used by men and women

| Type of strategy | Men | Women |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|
| DAp | 22 | 26 |
| E | 11 | 1 |
| A | 2 | 3 |
| O | 14 | 11 |
| P | 0 | 0 |
| J | 2 | 5 |
| DAp- A | 32 | 33 |
| DAp-O | 33 | 31 |
| DAp-P | 4 | 11 |
| DAp-J | 22 | 27 |
| DAp-DAp | 40 | 18 |
| DAp-DAp-A | 0 | 11 |
| DAp-DAp-O | 16 | 11 |
| DAp-DAp-P | 0 | 0 |
| DAp-DAp-J | 0 | 1 |
| DAp-A-O | 13 | 15 |
| DAp-J-A | 5 | 4 |
| DAp- J – O | 13 | 9 |
| A-O | 0 | 10 |
| Total of frequency of Strategies | 229 | 255 |
| Total strategy types | 14 | 17 |

which they had apologized for. Holmes (1995) also mentioned that ‘women use language to establish, nurture, and develop personal relationships’ (p. 2). This explains the preference of the type of apology strategies used by women in the present study.

Table 2 presents the strategies mostly used when women apologize to a man and a woman. Out of 20 types of apology strategies, only the top five are presented. The total numbers of apologies made by women when apologizing to the same gender and the opposite were also included in the table, as Table 2.

Based on the list of apologetic utterances preference by women, the results indicated that the women use different apologetic utterances when apologizing to the same gender and the opposite. Women tend to use DAp-DAp the most when apologizing to another woman. On the other hand, when they apologize to a man, women prefer using DAp-O. This is followed by DAp-A, which is the only apology strategy when apologizing to both the men and women,

as the second preference. According to Schumann and Ross (2010), women are more concerned with others’ emotions and maintaining harmony among speakers. That explains the selection of strategy of women in the present study who used Dap-A, showing that they feel sorry about the offence committed, and they admit that it is their fault. The findings also indicated that women apologized more to woman as compared to man. This is found to be consistent with the finding of Holmes (1995).

On the other hand, men responded to the situations given in the questionnaire using the following strategies (Table 3).

From the results obtained, men did not seem to use the same apologetic utterances when apologizing to different genders. When apologizing to a man, the male respondents tended to use DAp-J the most. This is followed by the use of DAp-O, Dap, and DAp-A. In contrast, when apologizing to a woman, they tended to use DAp-A the most, followed closely by DAp-DAp. Engel (2001) argued that men have difficulty

TABLE 2
Apologetic Utterances Preference of Women

| Apologetizer = WOMEN | GENDER OF APOLOGIZEE | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Man | | Woman | |
| | Type of apology strategy used | Number of occurrence | Type of apology strategy used | Number of occurrence |
| | DAp – O | 22 | DAp – DAp | 18 |
| | DAp – A | 20 | DAp – A | 14 |
| | DAP | 16 | DAp-A-O | 13 |
| | DAp-DAp – O | 12 | DAp – O | 10 |
| | DAp – J | 7 | DAP | 10 |
| Total | | 115 | | 140 |

admitting that they are wrong. However, this can only be seen when they are apologizing to another man. It contradicts their nature of not wanting to apologize when an offence is done to a woman. Men in the present study admitted and accepted their mistake when the apologizee is a woman. Hence, the results suggest that the gender of the apologizee does influence the choice of apologetic utterances used by men. This is found to be consistent with the finding of Holmes (1989) who concluded that apology may function differently for men and women.

Another finding which is worth discussing is the total number of apologies made by men when apologizing to the same and different gender. The result shows that men apologized to both man and woman to the same frequency. This differs from the women in the present study who apologized to woman to a far greater frequency as compared to man.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results suggest that women in the present study tend to apologize more than men do. There is also a difference in the choice of apologetic strategies when the respondents apologize to their own gender compared to the opposite. Both men and women use more apologetic strategies when apologizing to the same and opposite gender. The researchers have also discovered 4 new categories; namely, DAp-J-O or Direct Apology-Justification-Offer; DAp-A-O or Direct Apology-Acceptance-Offer; DAp-J-A or Direct Apology-Justification-Acceptance; and finally A-O or Acceptance-Offer.

The present research is significant because it explores the area of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, which to the best of the researchers' knowledge, have not been adequately researched for this topic and target group. Hence, it is hoped that the research findings may contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the research of speech act in general, and specifically, research on apology.

TABLE 3
Apologetic Utterances Preference of Men

| | | GENDER OF APOLOGIZEE | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----|
| | | Man | | Woman | |
| Apologizer = MEN | Type of apology strategy used | Number of occurrence | Type of apology strategy used | Number of occurrence | |
| | | DAp- J | 44 | DAp - A | 20 |
| | | DAp - O | 23 | DAp-DAp | 17 |
| | | DAp | 13 | DAp-A- O | 13 |
| | | DAp - A | 12 | DAp- J - O | 13 |
| | | DAp - DAp - A | 8 | DAp | 9 |
| Total | | 116 | | 113 | |

Since research on apology within the Malaysian context can be considered limited, future studies should explore this topic further. Firstly, future research may use a bigger sample size. Secondly, the instrument used in the present study, which is DCT (Discourse Completion Test), could be improved by using other instruments that can measure real utterances. Instead of obtaining responses in which the subjects think they may say, it is better if the responses are those which they actually say in real-life situations. Written responses give them time to think and reflect what they want to say, whereas in a situation which they need to respond to instantly, the responses can be considered more genuine.

Thirdly, the way one apologizes is very much culturally influenced. Hence, a study to compare the way people in different cultures in Malaysia apologize would be interesting. There are more than 200 races in Malaysia. Future research may want to examine how people of different races react when someone from another race apologizes or does not apologize. Fourthly, it would also be interesting to compare apology strategies of different speech communities - different regions; royalties vs. commoners; people from different hierarchy in the social structure, or even power distance (boss-employee, parents-children).

Finally, it is important to note that the researchers did not address the pragmatic or the grammatical appropriateness of the responses in the questionnaire. Future research may also want to look at these issues as to examine whether ESL learners

in the Malaysian context are socio-pragmatically competent in producing apologies in English.

CONCLUSION

The current work is a descriptive study on apology in the Malaysian context. The results suggest that gender does affect the way one apologizes. People of different genders have the tendency of using different apologetic strategies when apologizing. A better understanding in gender differences may help individuals to improve communication with others, and to avoid misunderstanding while interacting.

On that note, several pedagogical implications can be discussed. Firstly, ESL students' should be made aware of the socio-cultural rules for apologizing. Since their cultural background and L1 have some influence on the production of apology (Marlyna, 2006; Borkin & Reinhart, 1978), being aware of other cultures may help students to apologize appropriately. This will ensure that the apologies produced by the students are grammatically and pragmatically correct. Secondly, in terms of ESL teaching, teachers should be more concerned in helping the students to identify the appropriate apology strategies to be used when apologizing to a man and a woman since both genders perceive apology differently. For instance, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in the apologetic strategies used by men and women may be a helpful way to raise their pragmatics and gender differences awareness. Besides that, teachers

may also help to develop students' ability to identify potential sources of offences so that misunderstandings can be avoided. With a better understanding on how different individuals interact, we are able to produce a more socially and pragmatically competent learners.

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Issues and Challenges Facing Islamic Financial Institutions in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The issue of *riba* or usury has long been a problem for Muslims. The establishment of Islamic financial institutions is a major step in addressing this predicament, as Islamic finance has been characterized as a body to remove exploitation and injustice. The concepts of Islamic finance were initially discussed in the mid 1940s; however, further details were only revealed and then practiced in the late 1960s. The Pilgrims Management and Fund Board of Malaysia (TPMFB) established in 1962 was the earliest Islamic financial institution set up to cater for the pilgrims in Malaysia. This was followed by Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB) in 1983, which marked the beginning of commercial financial institutions offering Islamic products and services to consumers. This paper evaluates the issues, challenges and prospect of this emerging industry, and ends with suggestions and recommendations on how they can be addressed for Muslims to go forward in the field of financing.

Keywords: Riba, Islamic Financial Institutions, Malaysia, Islamic Finance and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic law (*Shariah*) of commercial transactions is fundamentally rooted in the premises of eradication of *riba* (usury). It balances the moral and material needs of individuals and society. The very objective of the *Shariah* (*Maqasid al-Shariah*) is to promote the welfare of the people

and remove injustice and unfairness (Al-Ghazali, 1937). As the custodian to the Islamic financial system, Islamic financial institutions face challenges in ensuring that the prescribed rulings are met and their products are *Shariah*-compliant. One way to reduce its dependence on debt-based products, such as *Murabahah* and *Bai Bithaman Ajil* (BBA) which many scholars argue are similar to the profits of conventional financing, is predetermined. The practice of the BBA concept in Malaysia for not being *Shariah*-compliant, as bank do not take the risks of ownership, liability and effort, and act as a mere lender.

As an alternative, equity-based concepts such as *Mudharabah* and *Musharakah*, which operate based on the profit and loss sharing modes, are seen to be fairer and can reduce the hardship and burden of individuals and society in financing. This is because banks and customers are partners and profits and losses are shared in the business. The verse in the Quran that says:

Allah has permitted the trade and forbidden riba (usury)
(Qur'an, 2: 275)

is the key guiding principle in Islamic finance transactions. Moreover, Islamic finance transactions should not contain elements of *gharar* (ambiguity) and *maysir* (speculation) so that they can be conducted fairly and with transparency. The Quran and *Sunnah* have both placed tremendous emphasis on justice, making it one of the central objectives of the *Shariah* (Chapra, 2000). Thus, financial transactions and activities that violate the

Shariah requirement are not permitted in Islamic finance.

There has been a tremendous growth of Islamic banking and finance internationally. The current global Islamic banking assets and assets under management had reached USD 750 billion and were expected to hit USD 1 trillion by 2010 (McKinsey Report, 2007-2008). According to (Abdul Razak, 2011), the total assets by Islamic financial institutions in 2008 was estimated to be between USD 400 billion to USD 500 billion and the potential market for Islamic financial services was then close to USD 4 trillion.

Malaysia's long track of building a successful domestic Islamic financial industry of over 30 years has given the country a solid foundation. Presently, Malaysia's Islamic banking assets reached USD 65.6 billion, with an average growth rate of 18-20% annually (Abdul Razak, 2011). The share of Islamic banking assets in the banking sector as of 31 December 2008 expanded to 17.4% of the total banking assets of the Malaysian financial system as compared to 6.9% percent in the year 2000. As of 2008, the total assets of Malaysia's *Takaful* industry amounted to USD 240.2 million, with a market penetration of 7.5%. *Takaful* assets and net contributions experienced strong growth of an average of 21% and 29%, respectively, from 2004 to 2008 (MIFC, 2011). To date, there are more than 100 financial institutions in over 45 countries and the industry has been growing at a rate of more than 25 % annually for the past five years. The market's current annual

turnover is estimated to be USD 70 billion compared to a mere USD 5 billion in 1985, and this is projected to grow further (Zamir Iqbal, 1997).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the issues, challenges and prospects of the Islamic finance industry. It critically assesses the traditional interpretation of *riba*, which is the *raison d'être* of the Islamic finance. It also examines the extent to which *maslahah* (public welfare) and the purpose of the *Maqasid al-Shariah* have been fulfilled in developing the products. The paper is organised into five sections. The immediate section provides a definition of *riba* in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The second section describes the importance of *Maqasid al-Shariah* and *Maslahah* (public welfare) in the Islamic finance. This is followed by a discussion on the features and principles of Islamic finance. The fourth section addresses the contemporary issues in Islamic finance and the challenges faced by the industry in Malaysia. The last section concludes with suggestions and recommendations based on the analysis.

THE DEFINITION OF *RIBA* IN THE QUR'AN AND *SUNNAH*

Riba means "usury" which is of two major kinds. The first type is called *riba al-nasiah*, which means interest on lent money over time. The second type is called *riba al-fadl*, which means unlawful excess in the exchange of two counter values where the excess is measurable through weight and measure (Usmani, 2002). This is based on the *hadith* of the Prophet (saw):

The selling of wheat for wheat is riba except if it is handed from hand to hand and equal in amount. Similarly, the selling of barley is riba except if it is from hand to hand and equal in amount, and dates for dates is riba except if it is from hand to hand and equal in amount

(Bukhari, 1985).

Literally, *riba* means excess, (*ziyadah*), increase, augmentation, expansion, or growth (Usmani, 2002). *Riba* is also interpreted as an increase and *al-Irba`* means the addition of a thing (Al-Tabari, n.d.). The increase (*ziyadah*) is due to either in the thing itself (Quran, 22: 5) or in the exchange or sale of money as the sale of one dirham for two dirham or the like in commodities (Al-Shawkani, 1973).

Riba in Islam refers to a specific kind of increase or excess. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani explains that the excess is either in terms of money or goods. It is an element in debt which is advanced on the condition that the borrower will pay more or better than what he has received from the lender. Abu Bakr Ibn 'Arabi held that every excess is *riba* if no reward is paid (Al-Rahman, 1976).

Based on the knowledge and interpretations of trade and credit transactions during the time of Prophet Muhammad, *riba* is defined as a predetermined excess or surplus over and above the loan received by the creditor conditionally in relation to a specified period. It possessed the following three elements (Al-Rahman, 1976), namely:

- a. Excess or surplus over and above loan capital.
- b. Determination of this surplus in relation to time.
- c. Stipulation of this surplus in the loan agreement.

The above description of *riba* can be identified by the meaning of the word “interest” and “usury.” Both words are used to indicate excess or increase or additional amount paid over or above a loan capital. Thus, the prohibition on *riba* is affirmative. The Qur’an says:

That is because they say: trade is just like riba whereas Allah permitted trade and forbids riba
(Qur’an 2:275.)

Qur’an Exhorts on Generosity but not Riba-Based Lending to Help People

While the Qur’an clearly mentions that *riba* is haram, the Qur’an encourages people to help the poor, the needy, orphans and others. The Qur’anic commandment is definitive as those who do not perform prayers and feed the destitute would be sent to hell (Qur’an, 74:43-44). The Quran also insists that beggars and those destitute have a share of the wealth of the affluent (Qur’an, 70:24-25). The Qur’an also condemns the rich from preventing the poor from having a share in their wealth (Qur’an, 17-33).

There are numerous other verses on spending either as *sadaqah* or *zakat* (Qur’an, 2:262; 4:39; 13:22, 25:67, 35:29). *Zakat* is used as spending 31 times (Qur’an, 2:43; 2:83; 2:110; 2:277; 4:77; 4:162; 5:12

etc). Meanwhile, *sadaqah* is considered a voluntary donation, and *zakat* is a compulsory payment. It gives an impression that when we pay *zakat*, there are no more legal obligations to the society in terms of financial help. This question requires new *ijtihad* (derivation) from our scholars.

The Qur’an is deeply concerned with the weaker strata of the society; there are many cases where the rich are commanded to look after the poor relatives (Qur’an, 8:41), orphans (Qur’an (2:177) debtors (al-Quran 9:60), beggars, wayfarers (al-Quran, 2:177, 8:41; 9:60) migrants (Qur’an, 24:22) prisoners of war (Qur’an, 76:8-9), the divorced (Qur’an 2:236), the deprived (Qur’an, 51:19; 70:19-25), the destitute (Qur’an, 8:41; 76:8-9), the poor (Qur’an, 2:271; 9:60; 58:3), and slaves (Qur’an, 2:177; 9:60; 58:3).

The Qur’an also reminds us that wealth is just a trust and test (Quran, 2:155; 3:186; 8:28). Amassing wealth without considering social and economic responsibilities will not lead to salvation (Qur’an, 34:37). In addition, it also reminds us that God has destroyed many rich people for being arrogant and not concerned about the poor and needy (Qur’an, 17:16; 23:64; 28:58; 28:81). Spending to help the poor is known as spending for the way of God. In Islam, loan is known as *qard hasan*, where the borrower is not required to pay any returns (Qur’an, 57:10-11). As far as wealth and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) are concerned, the latter is a man full of love for mankind. The Qur’an has mentioned that that he has been sent as a *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy

and blessing for all mankind) (Qur'an, 21: 107). It is quoted that someone came to see Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and asked for something as he was poor. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gave him some sheep as a mere gift. The poor man returned with the sheep and after three days, he came back to meet Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and informed him that he intended to embrace Islam (Al-Yahsubi, 1991).

Islam exhorts the concept of generosity so much so that it is embedded in the Pillars of Islam, known as the obligatory charity of *zakat*. Rather, *riba* is more of socio-economic exploitation as the borrower is the one who has to take the risks in the business and puts in the hard work while the lender only waits to earn the profits.

MAQASID AL-SHARIAH AND MASLAHAH

Maqasid al-Shariah or the objectives of Islamic Law is an important science of the *Shariah* (Kamali, 1991). The *Shariah* generally predicates the benefits to the individuals and the community, and its law is designed so as to protect these benefits and facilitate the improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth (Nyazee, 2000). The Qur'an is expressive of the aims of the *Shariah* when it highlights the most important task of Prophet Muhammad:

We have not sent you but as a mercy to the world

(Qur'an, 21: 107)

Similarly in another verse:

and a healing to the (spiritual) ailments of heart – a guidance and mercy for the believers

(Qur'an, 10: 57)

Thus, the uppermost objectives of the *Shariah* rest in the moral aspect of compassion and guidance which seeks to establish justice, alleviate hardship, and eliminate prejudice (Kamali, 1991).

The fundamental objective of the *Shariah* is based on the concept of "guidance and mercy" to seek the establishment of equilibrium between rights and obligations so as to eliminate excesses and disparities in all spheres of life (Shah Haneef, 2005). This is manifested in the realisation of *maslahah* (public welfare), which is generally considered to be all-pervasive value and objective of the *Shariah*.

A significant element in the meaning of *maslahah* is the sense of the "protection of interest." *Maslahah* concerns the subsistence of human life, the completion of man's livelihood, and the acquisition of what his emotional and intellectual qualities require of him, in an absolute sense (Shatibi, 1970). Literally, *maslahah* is defined as seeking benefits and repelling harm, as directed by the lawgiver or *Shariah* (Nyazee, 2000). Thus, the obligations of the *Shariah* concern the protection of the *Maqasid al-Shariah*, which in turn aims to protect the *masalih* (welfare or interest) of the people.

As can be seen, the most important challenge to the Islamic finance sector is

adherence to the *Shariah*. In addition, the features of banking products should also abide to the *maslahah* (public welfare) which removes burden and hardship to individuals following the spirit of *Maqasid al-Shariah*.

FEATURES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ISLAMIC FINANCE

The discussion of paragraph 2 provides us with a theoretical understanding of the importance of avoiding *riba* (usury) in the Islamic finance transactions as it causes unfairness and injustice due to increases, augmentation, expansion or growth, as a result of time known as *riba al-nasiah*. Another form of *riba* that should be avoided is known as *riba al fadl* due to the unequal exchange of counter value in sale or *iwad*. While paragraph 3 restates the importance of *maslahah* (public welfare) and *Maqasid al-Shariah*, which are critical factors to be considered by the Islamic financial institutions in developing their products. This implies that the product features in Islamic finance should not contain elements that cause hardship and burden to customers (Saeed *et al.*, 2001).

Apart from avoiding *riba* (usury), the Islamic finance transactions should also be clear of ambiguity (*gharar*) and *maysir* (speculation). The main difference between conventional and Islamic finance transactions is that the former is based on lending similar to giving out loans in conventional financing. The Islamic finance transactions are governed by the *Shariah* principles, as follows:

Murabahah

This concept applies to the buying and selling transactions between the customers and the bank. The bank takes ownership of the asset before it is sold to the customers. According to Imam Abu Hanifah, the seller has the right to include all the costs for the payment of the goods. This is supported by Hanafi and Malik who also stipulated the inclusion of cost to the original price (cost plus) (Muhammad Kamal Azhari, 1993). Hence, the bank can add its profit to the cost of the goods which then forms the total selling price.

Bai-Bithaman Ajil

Bai-Bithaman Ajil (BBA) refers to the sale of goods or assets on a deferred payment. Goods or property required by the customers are bought by the bank and subsequently sold back to them at a higher selling price, which is inclusive of the bank's profit margin. The customers are required to pay monthly instalments to the bank to settle the outstanding amount within the stipulated period. It is a form of long-term debt where the selling price is fixed and cannot be changed until the end of tenure.

Ijarah

Another principle used is known as leasing or *Ijarah*. It is a *fiqh* term which means "to give something on rent" (Usmani, 2007). It refers to the transfer of the usufruct of a particular property to another person in exchange for rent claimed from him. The rule of *Ijarah* is similar to sale because in both cases, a commodity is transferred to

another person for a valuable consideration. However, the difference is that in the case of sale, the corpus of the property is transferred to the purchaser, while for *Ijarah*, ownership remains with the lessor (bank) and only the usufruct (right to use it) is transferred to the lessee (customer). As ownership is retained by the lessor, all the risks and liabilities emerging from the ownership are borne by the lessor throughout the lease period until the property is fully transferred to the customer (Usmani, 2007).

Mudharabah

This principle is derived from the Arabic word *dharaba*, which means walking on the road. It implies a journey to seek profit for the benefits of trade. Before the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) married Khadijah, he was entrusted to trade in her business and he succeeded in making substantial profits (Ahmad Shalaby, 2000). A *Mudharabah* transaction between the bank and customer can be in the form of investment, whereby the bank and customer share the profit based on a pre-agreed profit sharing ratio such as 70% (bank) and 30% (customer) [Ibn Rushd (trans.), 2000]. Under this arrangement, the customer is the sole capital provider (*rabbul-mal*) and the bank is the entrepreneur (*mudharib*). In the case of loss, the customer has to bear it solely.

Musharakah

Musharakah is another form of profit sharing between the bank and customer derived from the word *sharikah*. It is a joint venture, whereby both parties provide their

own capital jointly, such as Bank (80%) and Customer (20%). The profit sharing ratio may differ from the capital contribution, i.e., Bank (60%) and Customer (40%). The loss sharing is based on the capital contribution. *Musharakah* can also be in the form of cooperatives whereby members contribute capital to the cooperative for investments in projects. Profits will be shared based on their capital contribution (Muhammad Kamal Azhari, 1993).

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ISLAMIC FINANCE

Despite the encouraging growth of Islamic banking and finance industry to date, many scholars such as El-Gamal (El-Gamal, 2006) argue that the Islamic finance has failed to serve the objectives of the *Shariah* (*Maqasid al-Shariah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1937). This is because majority of the financing modes are still based on debt financing which is similar to conventional financing that uses a fixed rate to determine its profit upfront (Abdul Razak, 2011). This argument is supported by Dusuki (2005) who also commented that a financial system built dominantly on debt-based modes of financing cannot be superior to the existing interest-based system on the basis of profit sharing as it cannot remove the injustices of the interest-based system. Al-Ghazali defines the objective of the *Maqasid al-Shariah* as promoting the well being of all mankind, which lies in safeguarding five essential elements namely faith (*din*), human self (*nafs*), intellect (*aql*), posterity (*nasl*) and wealth (*mal*). He further contends that whatever ensures the safeguard of these five

essential elements as serving public interest (*maslahah*) is desirable (Al-Ghazali, 1937). Thus, the goals of *Maqasid al-Shariah* entail intense commitment of every individual and organisation to the promotion of justice, brotherhood and societal well-being. In the context of the Islamic financing, this means that the products and services implemented by the financial institutions should reflect ethical values, fairness and justice (Yousri Ahmad, 2009).

Since the establishment of BIMB in 1983, the main principle used in financing has been *Bai Bithaman Ajil* (BBA). This principle has been practiced by Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia for the past 28 years. BBA is based on a deferred payment sale of an asset at an agreed selling price between customer and bank inclusive of bank's profit margin. It is structured as a long-term debt financing, whereby price is fixed and benchmarked on market interest rates (Abdul Razak, 2011).

The same formula based on time value of money in conventional financing is used to compute bank's income using the principle of BBA. The only difference is that the term used for pricing is known as 'profit rate' instead of 'interest rate' (Abdul Razak *et al.*, 2005). During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, home financing using BBA home financing was much more expensive than conventional financing as it was based on fixed profit rates. Hence, the selling price could not be changed until the end of the tenure, e.g., 20 years. Conversely, home financing using conventional financing was cheaper because interest rate could be

adjusted freely when the economic condition improved. As a result, there were many customers who have transferred their BBA home financing facilities to conventional home financing as the latter is cheaper in the long run.

There are several cases involving BBA home financing. One of the most glaring case is BIMB vs. Adnan Bin Omar (1994) 3 CLJ 375. In the above case, the buyer Adnan bin Omar entered into a debt financing facility with BIMB using the principle of BBA to purchase a property valued at USD 88,333.33. The selling price based on the BBA agreement was USD 194,333.33 to be repaid by 180 monthly instalments over 15 years. However, the defendant defaulted in making payment at the end of the second year. The bank sued him for USD 194,333.33. The court held that the defendant was required to pay the full amount and was not entitled to rebate (*ibra'*) for early settlement (Malaysian Bar, 2008). Paradoxically, the amount of claim would be much lower if the facility was under conventional financing. This is because the bank's accrued interest would only be computed for two years instead of 15 years under BBA home financing. The case illustrated that Islamic financing transaction using BBA had caused burden and hardship to the customer as he had to pay a higher amount upon default, which is not in line with the objectives of the *Shariah* (Al-Ghazali, 1937).

Similarly, in another case, Affin Bank vs. Zulkifli Bin Abdullah (2006) 1 CLJ 438 Abd Wahab Patail J., the learned judge, remarked

that the total outstanding amount claimed by the bank under BBA home financing facility also resulted in the customer having to pay more than conventional home financing (ISRA, 2009). This is because the bank had included its unearned profit in the selling price for the 20 years home financing facility but did not rebate the customer on default at the end of two years. Hence, the bank claimed a higher amount compared to conventional financing. The bank did not provide the rebate to the customer because it is the bank's sole discretion to do so. Thus, this judgment also implied the existence of injustice and unfairness to the customer due to the higher amount claimed by the bank for the prevailing BBA home financing.

In Malaysia, Islamic law and conventional banking regulations exist side by side. However, Islamic banking and finance are under the purview of the federal law of Malaysia. The law pertaining to Islamic banking and finance is passed by parliament. Currently, the avenues for legal disputes involving Islamic financial transactions rest under the purview of civil courts and not the *Shariah* court. Nonetheless, the civil court in dealing with Islamic finance cases should be judicially considered within the spirit of the Islamic Banking Act 1983.

Islamic finance transactions are also involved in real or genuine transactions, whereby banks take possession of an asset before it is sold to a customer. In doing so, the bank takes ownership risk which fulfils the *Shariah* requirements of equivalent counter value (*iwad*) (Rosly, 2005).

According to Rosly, *iwad* or equivalent counter value is the basic trait of a *halal* or lawful sale (*al-Bay*) because a sale is essentially an exchange of value against an equitable return and compensation for the goods or services exchanged. There are three components of *iwad*, namely, *ghorm* (risk), *daman* (liability) and *kasb* (effort) (Rosly, 2005). Sanusi further argues that the current practice of home financing in Malaysia does not genuinely fall under the concept of buying and selling required by the *Shariah* as the bank does not buy the house directly from the developer and hence does not have possession of the property (Sanusi, 2006). Instead, it falls under the contentious sale of *Bai Inah* (sale and buy back) as the customer first purchases the house from the developer and sells it to the bank for cash. Therefore, the bank sells the same house to the customer inclusive of its profit on deferred payment basis. The difference between the two prices resembles interest in conventional loan.

It is also observed that there is currently very low financing volume that uses the profit sharing principles of *Mudharabah* and *Musharakah* when compared to debt financing modes such as *Murabahah* and BBA (Abdul Razak, 2011). In the profit sharing model, each individual is involved in the economic activity promoting entrepreneurship and creativity in the economic cycle. These modes ensure fairness and equitable distribution of income meeting the purpose of the *Shariah* (Nik Yusoff, 2002). The profit sharing mode is embedded in the concept of *Musharakah*,

which is a partnership between the bank and customer. Ariff argues that a *Musharakah* contract conforms fully with the Islamic principles as the bank shares all the profits and losses with its customer (1988).

There are several verses in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* that support the use of the *Mudharabah* and *Musharakah* principles. For example, the term partnership appears in the Qur'an in relations to the share of inheritance:

But if more than two they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused to anyone

(Qur'an, 4:12)

In *hadith Qudsi*, Allah says:

I am the third in the partners as long there as there is no defector. If one of the partners does betray the other, I cease to be the partner to them

(Al-Zuhayli, 2003)

In addition, Prophet Muhammad SAW (pbuh) had in many occasions approved the practice of partnership and entered into a partnership with Ibn Abi Saiib before the advent of Islam (Ahmad, 1998).

The basic principle of *Musharakah* financing has been used as the Islamic financing product for commercial enterprises such as to structure a working capital facility, joint investment in real estate development and rural residential property (Lewis, 2009). Some Islamic scholars such

as Bendjilali and Khan (Khan *et al.*, 1995) and Usmani (Usmani, 2007) agreed on the implementation process of *Musharakah Mutanaqisah* or Diminishing Partnership. They also agreed that the principle used could help people to rely less on debt financing such as *Murabahah* and BBA. They agreed that it is best to implement Diminishing Partnership for the purchase of houses or machinery financing, whereby both assets can be leased out according to agreed rental rates.

Unlike the BBA home financing, which is based on debt financing, Diminishing Partnership (DP) is a joint ownership of the house between the bank and customer. For example, if the cost of the house is USD70,000, the bank may own 90% of the property which is USD 63,000 and the balance 10% or USD700 is owned by the customer. The bank rents out its portion of share to the customer based on the rental value of the property, for example USD400. The rental amount is then shared between the bank and the customer based on their capital portion, i.e., bank will earn USD360 whilst the customer USD40. The customer utilises his profit amounting to USD40 to buy the bank's equity until he fully owns the house. In order to own the house earlier, he can buy more of the bank's equity periodically, which will subsequently reduce the period of financing (Abdul Razak *et al.*, 2005).

There are several differences between DP and BBA home financing. In terms of pricing, the former uses actual rental rate of the house which differs based on

the location, size of house and amenities. However, the profit rate for BBA home financing is benchmarked using market interest rates. Rental rates are flexible and can be changed according to economic conditions. However, profit rates in BBA home financing remain fixed throughout the period of financing and are more expensive. DP home financing is *Shariah*-compliant because bank takes ownership and liability of the house. Conversely, the current practice of BBA home financing is similar to *Bai Inah*, which is a contentious sale because the bank does not take possession of the property. In addition, the difference between the buying and selling prices is akin to *riba* (usury). Diminishing Partnership principle has greater justice and fairness and meets the goals of the *Maqasid al-Shariah*, as the bank does not pre-determine its profit upfront but shares it with the customers based on their portion of the capital. Hence, it is not a debt obligation which poses a burden and hardship to customers that is similar to conventional financing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The future challenges of Islamic banking and finance and banking are tremendous. However, in order to reap this benefit, we should firstly realise that the objective of Islamic financing is not just to remove the interest rate element in the society. It has a broader objective of eliminating the entire system of *riba* (usury), *gharar* (ambiguity) and *maisir* (speculation) by ensuring that its operations are *Shariah*-compliant.

Secondly, the goals of Islamic financing is to address the broader objectives of *Maqasid al-Shariah* and *maslahah* by ensuring that the transactions in which it operates do not cause hardship and burden to individuals and society. In doing so, it favours the concept of equity such as *Mudharabah* and *Musharakah*, which are based on profit and loss sharing rather than debt financing in *Murabahah* and BBA that resembles conventional financing due to its fixed profit rate structure. Furthermore, banks do not take the risk in owning the product making it similar to conventional loan. However, the use of the profit sharing concept to date is still minimal and steps should be taken to encourage Islamic financial institutions to utilise this concept by ensuring proper regulations, governance and procedures.

Thirdly, there is also a need to review the prevailing legal environment which limits the administration of justice based on the *Shariah* regulations. This is because the existing disputes involving Islamic financial transactions are under the purview of civil courts and not the *Shariah* court. Hence, steps should be taken to ensure justice, while fairness on disputes involving Islamic financing transactions from the *Shariah* perspectives should be implemented.

Fourthly, we need a new *ijtihad* (derivation) from the scholars to determine the obligations of the Islamic banks to the society in helping the poor, destitute and others, as mentioned in the Qur'an. As Islamic banks, they are also obligated to meet their moral obligation and social

responsibility to the society apart from paying annual *zakat*. This can be carried out using the *qard hassan* concept by awarding those in need of financial assistance in the form of gift without any obligation for payment.

Lastly, Islamic financial institutions should be prepared for a paradigm shift which requires a change in mind-set by adopting the real practices of Islamic finance. In order to prepare themselves to do this, they should be willing to increase their knowledge in *Shariah* by attending courses and training with the support of their respective organisations. Meeting this objective requires us to be *Khalifah* (vicegerent) in carrying out our duties so as to ensure that justice and fairness is carried out for the benefit of the *ummah*. There is no era or organisation which fulfils all the objectives of *Shariah* except that of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who gave away all his wealth to others, and upon his death, he did own even a dinar.

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Products Attributes as Attraction and as Pull Factor towards Sustaining Visitation to Putrajaya Botanical Garden

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ABSTRACT

Park visitation is a popular recreational activity among urban residents. The decision to visit a park is related to the park's attraction as the pull factor. The attractions include park's products such as its facilities, services and programmes provided by the management. In many situations, lack of attractive products or recreational opportunities contributes to the decline in its visitation. Since year 2005, Putrajaya Botanical Garden has faced a similar situation, whereby its low visitation could be associated to unexciting product features offered by the park's management. In this study, an evaluation was carried out on the products' performance in attracting people to visit the park. Hence, 18 park attributes were chosen as attractions or pull factors to determine their relationships with socio-demographic background of visitors and their visitation attributes. Income and education attainment were identified as the significant reasons of visitation to Putrajaya Botanical Garden. Among the most important findings is the "park tranquil setting", which is considered to be the park's biggest attraction, among other attributes. Based on the factor analysis, three key factors were identified and labelled as "facilities and park settings", "services and key visitors' attractions" and "programmes and activities". Meanwhile, "facilities and park setting" also showed the strongest positive relationships to the visitors' extent of visitation. The study revealed the attractiveness of the park's products would have the influence on people's decision to visit it. These findings therefore contribute to the important idea to the current understanding of pull factors that influence park visitation to Putrajaya Botanical Garden as a thematic nature park.

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INTRODUCTION

Parks play an important role as a venue and a nature resource site for leisure and recreational needs of the people. In some localities, parks are set up with special theme offered as attractions and as tourism products. Hence, the ability of a park to draw continuous number of visitors throughout the years is crucial for its sustenance and able to serve its function. Park visitation is associated with an individual who seeks an outlet for open spaces or other amenity areas such as gardens, parks or wilderness to enjoy them during his or her leisure time. The activities and outcomes from the experience on-site and off-site of those areas could bring satisfaction to visitors (Abdullah *et al.*, 1999).

There are several factors associated to park visitation, and these are socioeconomic background, recreational opportunities and attributes of the park that attract people (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; McCormack *et al.*, 2010). These factors, along with societies' needs and lifestyle, are therefore considered among the determinants of visitors' arrivals. For example, some attractions such as the recreational facilities or activities, designed and developed during the planning stage, are no longer desirable due to the lack of support by visitors or are not up to their satisfaction. Such a situation seemed relevant previously but after a period of time, the products became no longer attractive. In many situations, however, thematic parks which are usually associated with products' niche as their main attractions have experienced difficulty in maintaining their visitor base

(McClung, 1991). Hence, reviewing the performance of product attributes (pull factors) will provide relevant information for the park management to better offer the opportunities to visitors.

In Malaysia, several nature thematic parks were found to be lacking in attracting or sustaining visitation (Fernandez, 2010; Baharuddin, 2006; Perumal, 2008). Most of the parks in this country involved significant investment for development. These include Paya Indah Wetland in Dengkil, Selangor (Fernandez, 2008; Fernandez, 2010), Agriculture Park Malaysia in Shah Alam, Selangor (Hassan, 1997; Baharuddin, 2006), and Mimaland Recreation Park in Gombak (Perumal, 2008). There are occasions where those parks are quite successful in drawing visitors at the initial stages but they have failed to sustain visitation after a period of time. With this concern in mind, the current study was undertaken to understand how such thematic parks are being perceived by visitors in relation to their attractiveness and products offered, and their influence on visitation.

THEORY RELATED TO PARK VISITATION

In recreation, the decision to visit a park with specific purposes is related to push and pull theory of human behaviour and motivation. Push factors refer to specific forces that influence one's decision to go out from his or her everyday environment, while pull factors refer to the forces that influence the person's decision in choosing the specific decision to go. The push and

pull theory is influenced by the way people see and understand the world around them (Klenoski, 2002). The roles of site attractions, advertising, flow of information and activities have influenced people's decision making process, whereby they are more likely attracted to visit the places that have a good appeal or possess distinctive attributes such as beautiful scenery, lots of recreational opportunities or special attractions. The location that possesses those kinds of attributes is more likely to be chosen as a destination.

Meanwhile, many researchers claimed that push and pull factors should be considered as independent constitutions as they are related to two separate decisions made by two separate points at a time, such as one that focuses on whether to go while the other about where to go (Dann, 1981; Klenoski, 2002). Pull factors are the attractiveness of a destination as it is perceived by people with the propensity to travel (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). According to Hu and Ritchie (1993), visitors' destination comprises of facilities and services based on a number of multidimensional attributes related to their attractiveness to a particular individual in a given choice destination. It reflects the feeling, beliefs and opinions that somebody has about the destination's perceived ability to provide satisfaction in relation to her or his visitation needs.

Previous research on push and pull factors in tourism carried out by Kim *et al.* (2003) concluded that the relationships existed between the three pull factor domains, whereby 12 pull item attributes

were studied on a sample of 2,720 visitors in Korean National Parks. The factors identified constituted attractions of the park, namely, "key tourist resources", "information and convenience of facilities" and "accessibility and transportation". Meanwhile, a study by Uysal and Jurowski (1994) on the Attribute and Motivation Survey of Canadian Tourism related to specific type of destination identified four pull factors out of 23 items that motivated tourism in Canada and these were "Entertainment/Resort", "Outdoor/Nature", "Heritage/Culture" and "Rural/Inexpensive". The findings suggest that the pull factor attributes differed according to the study location as well as the background of visitors as the respondents.

PRODUCTS' INFLUENCE ON PARK VISITATION

Studies on park visitation have shown that the contributed attributes are influenced mainly by the parks' attractions. These attractions are related to facilities, programmes and services that enable the visitors to enjoy their visiting experience. Howard and Crompton (1980) define facilities, programmes and services as products which are attractive enough to sell to people to visit the locality. The visitors to the parks are therefore the consumers of the products that are essential and important as elements of visitation (Scott & Jackson, 1996; Cohen, Marsh *et al.*, 2010). The success of these parks depends not only on good planning and execution of the design, but also on the delivery of the products to the visitors as clients (Howard & Crompton, 1980). In other words, visitors'

satisfaction towards the products in the park has implications on their extent of park visitation. This is because satisfied visitors are more likely to stay longer on-site, as well as to revisit and promote the park to others (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). Therefore, the pull factors as parts of push and pull theory provide a useful framework in examining the performance of the park's products in attracting visitors to the area.

*Product Attributes as Attractions
(Pull Factors)*

Park products are made up of facilities, programmes and services where most times, they are in combination and interrelated while providing recreation opportunities to visitors. As pull factors, these product attributes can be both or either in tangible forms such as beaches, recreational facilities, and cultural attractions, and in intangible forms such as visitors' experiences, perceptions and expectations (Howard & Crompton, 1980; Kelly & Nankervis, 2002; Fyall *et al.*, 2008).

Past research on visitation and facilities found that parks having more facilities are more frequented by visitors (McCormack *et al.*, 2010). The facilities include natural resources found in a vicinity or manmade structures that are constructed such as playgrounds or water features for recreation (Mull *et al.*, 2009). A study by Hollenhorst *et al.* (1992), which employed the Important Performance Analysis, found visitors' satisfaction on provision of state cabin as a facility in the West Virginia State Park System found comfort as a necessity and

the experience of using such facility is the most important. The success of a park is therefore depending on bringing the visitors to the park to enjoy the facilities and to gain good or positive experience as the outcome. The goal of the agency is to provide an experience which meets user's expectations that will encourage return visits.

Park programme provided by management is another pull factor attribute that has impact on park visitation. The purpose of a programme is to offer products in which people get the opportunities to interact with one another by having creative objects in a leisurely environment to derive a rewarding sense of meaning and self-worth experience (DeGraaf *et al.*, 1999). Successful park programme includes a wide range of different activities that provide values and are able to meet customers' needs (Greenhalgh & Worpole, 1996; DeGraaf *et al.*, 1999). Programming is a continual process of planning, implementing, and evaluating leisure experiences (Howe & Carpenter, 1985). Consistent evaluation is necessary to ensure that all products offered are within the customers' needs and satisfaction. Studies on the importance of programmes and activities that lead to increase use of parks involve strategies such as provisions of more activities held concurrently with the park information (Mowen *et al.*, 2005; Moore *et al.*, 2010). In addition, a study by Cohen *et al.* (2009) in Los Angeles found that public parks' supervised activities were able to draw more people as special events like sport competitions attracted not only the players

but also spectators. The same study also suggested that changes in programming and events might have a significant impact on park usage.

Meanwhile, services provided in the park ranging from disseminating the information to visitors, offering venues or events and programmes or any other activities as a means of participation, could make the visiting experiences of recreationists more meaningful and memorable. Hamilton (1991) identified four dimensions in service quality; namely, tangible, reliability, responsiveness and assurance of the products and services. The most important dimension is tangible which consists of the physical aspect of the park such as the condition and adequate number of the facilities, convenience of the location, as well as compatibility among the programmes planned in the park. High quality services mean delivering leisure that consistently conforms to, or exceeds consumer's desire. Thus, service quality may be defined as the gap between what visitors' desire from a service and what is perceived to be received. A study by Backman and Vieldkamp (1995) on service quality on participants in two aquatic programmes of YMCA in Escondido found a strong association between users' activity loyalty and the perception of recreation service quality. Therefore, emphasizing on service quality in destinations like parks appears to be a determinant to the extent of visitation. In other words, visitors who are satisfied with the service in the park have high potential to make a return visit and

recommend the park to others. Level of satisfaction also was also found to have the biggest influence on the decision of whether to revisit one destination (Campo-Martínez *et al.*, 2009).

In summary, this section presents the results of past research that are related to the products as attractions and their influence on park visitation, thus provides the framework for this study. The focus of this study is Putrajaya Botanical Garden, a thematic nature park that features some product attributes as its attractions. The park has been experiencing a decline in its visitation since 2005 until recently. This may be related to the products offered, which are not attractive enough to draw visitors to the park and to satisfy their leisure needs and experience. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to assess the performance of the product attributes in attracting visitors (pull factors) and their correlation to park visitation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Site and Data Collection

Putrajaya Botanical Garden is located in Putrajaya, the administrative capital of Malaysia. It covers an area of 93 hectares, where two third of the park's area is opened to visitors (Putrajaya Corporation, 2009). A field survey using questionnaires was administered to gather data on socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds of the respondents, visit characteristics, and park's attributes (product items attracting people to visit) related to pull factor. A pilot study was conducted to pre-test and refine the

list of park attributes as pull factors and questionnaires in general.

The field data collection involved on-site self-administered questionnaires at the two main entrance or exit points in Putrajaya Botanical Garden. This data collection exercise was carried out from December 2010 to January 2011. A systematic sampling procedure was administered, where every third visitor was approached to fill in the questionnaires. Some refusals occurred during the survey but were compensated by selecting the next person in a row. A total of 400 sample questionnaires were distributed, out of which, 384 were completed and used for analysis.

The questions were prepared in both the Malay and English languages, using a continuous score of 5-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' agreement-disagreement with the statement describing the product items as the pull factors. For each item identified as a park attraction, the question asked whether the item was indeed contributing to the decision to visit the park. For example, Moroccan pavilion was identified as one of the park main attractions and the relevant question was, "I come to the park to visit the uniqueness of Moroccan pavilion". The level of agreement to the statement shows the performance of particular items in drawing visitors to the park. The same kind of strategy was also used for the rest of the items listed in the questionnaires.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics was used to describe

the composition of the socio-demographic of visitors and their responses relating to the promotion of the park based on the product's attributes that are the most appealing to them. In addition, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for continuous scale answers and to examine the significant difference of the product attributes (pull factors) related to socio-demographic groups.

Multivariate procedure, i.e., factor analysis, was conducted to group all the 18 product attribute items to delineate the underlying dimensions. This was done to evaluate the products' attributes as pull factors and their correlation to park visitation. Only the factors with Eigen values greater than 1 were retained, while the items with communalities of 0.4 were included in the final factor structure. The factors' internal consistency within each dimensions were confirmed by the computation of reliability alphas. Later, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to identify the degree of interrelations among the pull factors dimension to the extent of visitation to the park.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Socio-demographic factors are important to form the basis of park visitation. Through identifying variables, such as gender, age, income and educational level, the visitors' group homogeneity was determined within the broader heterogeneous population of visitors (Kelly & Nankervis, 2002). Results of this study showed that the demographic profile of the visitors as a mix of males

(42.4%) and females (57.6%). Almost half of the visitors to Putrajaya Botanical Garden aged between 18 and 24 (49%), and more than a third (34%) were from 25 to 34 years. Occupation wise, students (38.5%) represent the majority of visitors, followed by working adults who are attached with the private sector (27.3%) and government agencies (20.3%). Majority of visitors had completed their tertiary education. In term of ethnicity, almost three quarter of the visitors (72.7%) are Malays. Most of the visitors are earning between RM1001-RM2500 a month. Among the visitors, Putrajaya

residents formed the minority, while the rest (82.3%) are from areas outside Putrajaya (Table 1). The results support the study by (Oguz, 2000) that leisure and recreation are participated more by the young people. A study by McDonald (2009) showed that people are willing to travel to parks if there are some good products available for their consumption and suit their leisure needs. However, the finding is inconsistent with that of other researches who that claimed parks are visited more by people who are staying closer to the area (Mowen *et al.*, 2007).

TABLE 1
Profile of the respondents (N=384)

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 163 | 42.40 |
| | Female | 221 | 57.60 |
| Age Category | Less than 29 years | 279 | 72.70 |
| | 29-39 years | 77 | 20.10 |
| | 40-49 years | 20 | 5.20 |
| | 50 years and above | 8 | 2.10 |
| Ethnicity | Malays | 279 | 72.70 |
| | Chinese | 76 | 19.80 |
| | Indians | 11 | 2.90 |
| | Others | 18 | 4.70 |
| Level of Education | SPM/ O Level | 93 | 24.20 |
| | STPM/ A Level | 31 | 8.10 |
| | Diploma | 89 | 23.20 |
| | Degree | 140 | 36.50 |
| | Master/ PhD | 19 | 4.90 |
| | Others | 12 | 3.10 |
| Occupation | Government Servants | 78 | 20.30 |
| | Private | 105 | 27.30 |
| | Self-employed | 27 | 7.00 |
| | Pensioners | 3 | 0.80 |
| | Unemployed | 18 | 4.70 |
| | Students | 148 | 38.50 |
| | Others | 5 | 1.30 |

TABLE 1 (continue)

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Estimated Income | below RM1000 | 14 | 7.40 |
| | RM1001-RM2500 | 100 | 52.90 |
| | RM2501-RM4000 | 50 | 26.50 |
| | RM4001-RM5500 | 15 | 7.90 |
| | RM5501 and above | 10 | 5.30 |
| Residency | Putrajaya residents | 67 | 17.40 |
| | Non-putrajaya residents | 317 | 82.60 |

Product Attributes' Performance as Park Attractions

An evaluation on 18 products performance in attracting people to visit the park was conducted. These product attributes that served as the pull factors were chosen based on the literature, and parks advertorial materials including the website and onsite interviews with visitors and park management. By indexing attractions through the overall mean score, it was obvious that park's tranquil setting is the highest reason why people choose to visit the park (mean=4.258) compared to other attractions. This was followed by the availability of bicycle rental service (mean=4.117). The findings also showed that some of the main park's attractions, such as the Moroccan Pavilion which are featured in park brochures and the website, received among the lowest score (Table 2). This finding indicates that what are being considered by park management as the park's main attractions and promoted and displayed in the park's advertorial materials were not given the expected attentions by people. The above finding on park's tranquil setting as the biggest park attraction, however, supports Chiesura's

(2004) earlier study which pointed out that the major reasons people chose to go to the park was to be closed with nature.

A Comparison of the Pull Factor Items for Different Socio-economic Background of the Visitors

A test was conducted to check for normality and homogeneity of variances of pull factors score. The differences in the mean of pull factor attributes for a different socio-demographic background of the visitors were examined using ANOVA procedure (Table 3). In this analysis, the means of pull factor attributes are treated as the dependent variables, while the socio-demographic background of the visitors (age, income, occupation and education group) are treated as independent variables.

The results showed significant differences in the mean pull factors among the visitors with different income levels ($F = 4.926, p = 0.003$) and different education attainments ($F = 4.107, p = 0.001$) (Table 3). For the income group, the mean pull factors among the income categories indicated that the visitors with the high income perceived the park as the least attractive. Bonferoni Post Hoc multiple comparisons test revealed

TABLE 2
Product attributes performance as park attractions (pull factors)

| Rank | Attributes | Mean score |
|------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Park's tranquil setting | 4.258 |
| 2 | Bicycle rental facilities | 4.117 |
| 3 | Park's cleanliness | 3.992 |
| 4 | Conducive environment for exercise | 3.917 |
| 5 | Cheap fees | 3.706 |
| 6 | Good service | 3.745 |
| 7 | Picnic facilities | 3.745 |
| 8 | User friendly facilities | 3.706 |
| 9 | Plants collection | 3.662 |
| 10 | Canopy walk | 3.630 |
| 11 | Availability of the information | 3.620 |
| 12 | Tram service | 3.620 |
| 13 | Recreational programme | 3.544 |
| 14 | Interpretation centre | 3.497 |
| 15 | Moroccan pavilion | 3.388 |
| 16 | Educational programme | 3.388 |
| 17 | Restaurant | 3.357 |
| 18 | Organized event | 3.159 |

TABLE 3
ANOVA result for the comparison of pull factors by age, income and occupation and education categories

| Pull factors Attributes | Mean | SD | F | <i>Sig-f</i> |
|-------------------------|-------|------|-------|--------------|
| Age Group | | | | |
| < 29 yrs old | 3.611 | .538 | 1.029 | .380 |
| 29 – 39 yrs old | 3.541 | .588 | | |
| 40 – 49 yrs old | 3.778 | .496 | | |
| > 50 yrs | 3.590 | .552 | | |
| Income Group | | | | |
| < RM1500 | 3.620 | .579 | 4.926 | .003 |
| RM1500 – RM3000 | 3.796 | .507 | | |
| RM3001 – RM4500 | 3.536 | .520 | | |
| > RM4500 | 3.374 | .541 | | |
| Occupation Group | | | | |
| Government servant | 3.750 | .538 | 1.714 | .116 |
| Private sector | 3.538 | .533 | | |
| Self employed | 3.654 | .555 | | |
| Pensioner | 3.852 | .746 | | |
| Unemployed | 3.713 | .345 | | |
| Students | 3.554 | .574 | | |
| Others | 3.478 | .128 | | |
| Education Group | | | | |
| SPM/ O Level | 3.658 | .606 | 4.107 | .001 |
| STPM/ A Level | 3.527 | .616 | | |
| Diploma | 3.760 | .473 | | |
| Degree | 3.539 | .526 | | |
| Master/ PhD | 3.228 | .462 | | |
| Others | 3.616 | .355 | | |

that there was a statistically significant difference for those in the bracket income of RM1500-RM3000 and the visitors who are earning \geq RM4500 a month (Table 4). Meanwhile for education attainment groups, the mean pull factors among the education level categories indicated that the visitors with the highest degree perceived the park as the least attractive. The results from the Bonferoni Post Hoc multiple comparison test revealed the statistically significant difference for those who completed their SPM/O Level and Master/PhD degree, between Diploma and Degree holders and between Diploma and Master/PhD degree holders (Table 5).

These results indicate the types of occupation they hold and the level of education attained by visitors have influence on the way they perceive the park. These findings also suggest that the visitors with higher education attainment are accessible

to wider variety of recreational products due to the better job opportunity, as well as better income which have allowed them to travel and to experience more of leisure opportunities (Mowen, Payne, & Scott, 2005).

Factor Analysis of the Products' Attributes

The park's product attributes were examined based on their relationships using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The procedure is used to reduce the large number of related variables to a more manageable grouping (Pallant, 2007). An inspection of the correlation matrix found the data for this assumption met with the number of items showing the correlation above 0.3, whereas Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be 0.888, and Bartlett's Test is highly significant (sig-p; $0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the factor analysis was appropriate for these data.

TABLE 4
Post-Hoc Test results for the multiple comparison of pull factor attributes among the different income groups

| | (I) Income categories | (J) Income categories | Mean Difference (I-J) | Sig. |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Bonferroni | <RM1500 | RM1500 – RM3000 | -0.176 | 0.415 |
| | | RM3001 – RM4500 | 0.084 | 1 |
| | | > RM4500 | 0.246 | 0.45 |
| | RM1500- RM3000 | <RM1500 | 0.176 | 0.415 |
| | | RM3001 – RM4500 | 0.261 | 0.132 |
| | | Above RM4500 | .423* | 0.005 |
| | RM3001- RM4500 | < RM1500 | -0.084 | 1 |
| | | RM1500 – RM3000 | -0.261 | 0.132 |
| | | > RM4500 | 0.162 | 1 |
| > RM4500 | < RM1500 | -0.246 | 0.45 | |
| | RM1500 – RM3000 | -.423* | 0.005 | |
| | RM3001 – RM4500 | -0.162 | 1 | |

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

In this study, the component factor analysis which included 18 pull factor items yielded three factors with the Eigen value greater than 1.4. These factors explained 53.18% of the variance and labelled as “facilities and park setting”, “services and key visitors’ attractions” and “programmes and activities”. All the 17 items with loading factors of over 0.46 were retained. The reliability alpha to check the internal consistency of the items within each dimension greater than 0.78 were accepted

TABLE 5
Post-Hoc Test results for the multiple comparisons of pull factor attributes among the different education attainment groups

| (I) Level of Education | (J) Level of Education | Level of Education (I-J) | Sig. |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| SPM/O Level | STPM/ A Level | .131 | 1.00 |
| | Diploma | -.103 | 1.00 |
| | Degree | .118 | 1.00 |
| | Master/ PhD | .430* | .024 |
| | Others | .042 | 1.00 |
| STPM/A Level | SPM/ O Level | -.131 | 1.00 |
| | Diploma | -.233 | .562 |
| | Degree | -.012 | 1.00 |
| | Master/ PhD | .299 | .847 |
| | Others | -.089 | 1.00 |
| Diploma | SPM/ O Level | .103 | 1.00 |
| | STPM/ A Level | .233 | .562 |
| | Degree | .221* | .038 |
| | Master/ PhD | .532* | .002 |
| | Others | .145 | 1.00 |
| Degree | SPM/ O Level | -.118 | 1.00 |
| | STPM/ A Level | .012 | 1.00 |
| | Diploma | -.221* | .038 |
| | Master/ PhD | .311 | .271 |
| | Others | -.077 | 1.00 |
| Master/PhD | SPM/ O Level | -.430* | .024 |
| | STPM/ A Level | -.299 | .847 |
| | Diploma | -.532* | .002 |
| | Degree | -.311 | .271 |
| | Others | -.388 | .758 |
| Others | SPM/ O Level | -.042 | 1.00 |
| | STPM/ A Level | .089 | 1.00 |
| | Diploma | -.145 | 1.00 |
| | Degree | .077 | 1.00 |
| | Master/PhD | .388 | .758 |

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

(Table 6). These coefficient were above the standard of 0.7, as recommended by the factor analysis procedure (George & Mallery, 2010).

According to the key group mean score, the main groups that acted as the pull factors were “facilities and park setting” (Mean=3.950), followed by “services and key visitors attractions” (Mean=3.604) and “programmes and services” (Mean=3.261). This finding suggests that currently “facilities and park setting” play the most important role in attracting people to visit the park as compared to “services and key visitors attractions” which were supposed to be the main park’s attractions, as have been promoted and publicized widely in the park’s brochures and websites.

Relationship between Pull Factors and the Extent of Visitation

The relationships between the three key factors from the factor analysis, “facilities and park setting”, “services and key visitors’ attraction”, “programme and activities” and the extent of park visitation were examined using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Preliminary analyses were also performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. Since there were three (3) bi-variate pairs, the Bonferroni adjusted alpha of 0.1667 (0.05/3) was used to test the null hypothesis of the bivariate correlations. The strongest linear relationship was found to exist between “facilities and park setting” and the extent of park visitation ($r = 0.379$, $p = .0001$). The positive correlation coefficient

of 0.379 indicates that as the score for “facilities and park setting” as a pull factor increases, so do the extent of the park visitation (Table 6). The second highest was found between “services and key visitors’ attractions” ($r = 0.226$, $p = 0.0001$) and the correlation coefficient of 0.226 indicated a low positive linear relationship between “services and key visitors’ attractions” and the extent of park visitation (Table 7). However, “programmes and activities” do not show any significant linear relationship. This result showed that “programmes and activities” do not correlate with park visitation. Even though this study is not intended to measure the strength of the existing relationship, the results seem to suggest that the extent of park visitation is more likely to increase when two pull factor dimensions “facilities and park setting”, as well as “services and key visitors’ attraction” improve accordingly.

CONCLUSION

This study offers findings which can explain the role of products as park attractions (pull factors) towards bringing in visitors to the park, and thus, sustain visitation. The findings revealed the tranquil setting of the park as the biggest pull factor item and the main visitation motive to Putrajaya Botanical Garden. Therefore, this attribute should be recognized as the park’s best asset and promoted accordingly to improve visitation. On the contrary, despite being identified as key attractions, certain product attributes in the park such as Moroccan Pavilion and Park Interpretation Centre have failed

TABLE 6
Rotated Component Matrix^a

| | Factor Loadings | | | Communalities | Mean |
|---|-----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | | |
| Facilities and Park Setting | | | | | 3.950 |
| Conducive environment for exercising | .717 | | | .558 | |
| Cleanliness of the facilities | .663 | .336 | | .554 | |
| Availability of bicycle rental facilities | .663 | | | .467 | |
| Picnic's facilities | .618 | | | .500 | |
| User friendly facilities | .589 | .427 | | .539 | |
| Park's tranquil settings | .584 | .487 | | .611 | |
| Services and Key Visitors' attractions | | | | | |
| The canopy bridge walk | | .749 | | .574 | 3.604 |
| Plants collections | | .711 | | .542 | |
| The information and education centre | | .637 | .379 | .591 | |
| The uniqueness of the Moroccan Pavilion | | .567 | .352 | .450 | |
| Easy to obtain information | .451 | .543 | | .583 | |
| Good service | .446 | .463 | | .414 | |
| Programmes and Activities | | | | | |
| Participating in organized event | | | .735 | .554 | 3.261 |
| Availability of educational programmes | .308 | | .718 | .686 | |
| Availability of tram service | | .355 | .637 | .553 | |
| Availability of recreational programmes | .454 | | .593 | .565 | |
| Affordable programme fees | .419 | | .535 | .486 | |
| Eigen Value | 6.287 | 1.832 | 1.453 | | |
| Variance Explained | 34.93% | 10.18% | 8.08% | | |
| Reliability coefficient | .793 | .795 | .781 | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

TABLE 7. Relationship between pull factors with the extent of park visitation

| Extent of Visitation | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Facilities and Park Setting | .379** | .000 |
| 2. Services and Key Visitors' Attractions | .226** | .000 |
| 3. Program and Activities | .031 | .545 |

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

to attract visitors. The results demanded further in-depth investigation in order to identify the contributing factors leading to this outcome. Socio-demographic factors, income level and education attainment showed significant differences among the groups of visitor. Therefore, in order to satisfy the leisure needs and experience of the highly income and educated groups of park visitors, the park management must ensure that products provision in the park must meet their expectations and knowledge level at all time. Meanwhile, “facilities and park setting” proved to have the highest positive correlation with the extent of park visitation. This finding supports the pull theory that the degree of attraction influences the level of visitation. Therefore, park management should focus on “facilities and park setting” as key attractions and promote them accordingly in order to improve visitation.

The results of this study provide the management of Putrajaya Botanical Garden with valuable information on understanding their visitors and managing their resources in a more specific manner. Based on these findings, park management is now able to identify the performance of selected products in attracting visitors. Meanwhile, mitigation measures can be undertaken to improve some of the product items that ranked low in terms of their attractiveness. The focus is not only to provide good products but also on product delivery to customers’ needs and satisfaction. This study can be used to lay the groundwork

for future research on identifying and improving product items so as to increase the pulling factors, thus sustaining visitation level to the park.

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Investigating EFL Students' EAP Needs on Productive Skills in Malaysian Universities

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ABSTRACT

Many international students are currently pursuing their post-secondary studies in Malaysia. At the beginning of each study programme in Malaysian universities, international students typically attend EAP courses for a better performance on campus. However, it is believed that these courses do not satisfactorily meet the EFL international students' needs, and this is probably because such courses do not take into consideration a comprehensive need analysis. This survey is one of the forerunning efforts to find out what tasks of English writing and speaking skills are actually needed by EFL international students in order to improve their ability of English as these two skills have been reported to be the most essential ones in academic settings. To this end, a *Need Analysis* questionnaire was employed to examine EFL international students' needs over productive skills. The questionnaire was sent to respondents via email and 60 post-secondary students responded and returned the questionnaire. The data analysis revealed that the majority of the participants considered speaking as the most important language skill that they needed to improve. Also, they reported that *Explaining Ideas*, *Giving a Presentation*, *Giving Reasons*, and *Discussing in Meetings* ranked on top of their speaking needs. In addition, the most needed writing tasks in EAP classes included *Taking Lecture Notes* and *Writing Journal Papers/Articles*. Moreover, gender was found to be significant in determining speaking tasks needed by EFL international students. Finally, PhD students reported to have different speaking needs compared to students studying Master and Bachelor programmes. Findings of this

study are majorly congruent with other studies on international students' needs in academic settings, which can be of worth for the current EAP/ESP courses offered in Malaysia for EFL international students.

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INTRODUCTION

It is apparent that the rapid growth in science, technology and economic activities in countries like Malaysia has given rise to an ever-increasing demand for the use of the English language. Nowadays, English is a common medium of instruction in most Malaysian universities and a means of communication throughout the country. Therefore, understanding the scientific and technical literature in English is difficult for people with insufficient knowledge of English (Nur Muhammad & Mohd Fauzi, 2009). Moreover, in the last few years, many international students from around the globe have flocked to Malaysia to further their post-secondary studies and obtain new knowledge.

As Berman and Cheng (2001) stated, at the universities where the medium of instruction is English, international students particularly the non-native speakers of English, have to overcome various challenges throughout their academic studies including English (learning), mostly at the beginning of their academic studies. To cope with academic demands, these students need to be competent in certain language areas and skills. In addition, the level of studies and the subject areas these international students study would determine the difficulties they face (Berman & Cheng, 2001). The increasing demand for English has resulted in changes in English language teaching requiring

new perspectives on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), simply because ESP deals with the student training in specialized language areas (Nur Muhammad & Mohd Fauzi, 2009). According to some reports, ESP courses have attracted the attentions of most universities and are required accordingly (Khairi Izwan Abdullah *et al.*, 1993).

Based on the literature, two main strands of ESP include English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EOP deals with the preparation for occupations students may take up when they graduate (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 11), whereas EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

According to Kennedy and Bolitho (1990), EAP is commonly offered within the educational institutions to those students who need English for their academic courses. Hence, the disciplines and majors that the students take at post-secondary levels determine the language to be taught. It is reported by Nur Muhammad and Mohd Fauzi (2009) that the learners' specific needs determine the foundation of ESP (including EAP). In other words, the learners' reasons for learning mainly specify the decisions on the content and method of teaching. Therefore, need analysis is required to collect and analyze subjective information in order to define and validate the language requirement of the students. Such information will eventually lead to the construction of an English language course which can fulfil the specific needs

of the learners (Nur Muhammad & Mohd Fauzi, 2009).

The rationale of EAP programmes at the university level should be to offer academic and linguistic supports in order to help L2 students adjust to the academic expectations of English-speaking universities. Discovering the required strategies and skills for the international students to learn for successfully partaking in their academic classes has always been attempted by EAP research (Fox, Cheng, Berman, Song, & Myles, 2006). As a matter of fact, identifying related factors to academic success and detecting the effect of EAP programmes seem essential for the international education community, for individual institutions of higher learning, and for the students themselves (Fox *et al.*, 2006). Hence, it is obvious that language teaching programmes should not be designed without a systematic needs analysis (Long, 2005).

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Nowadays, English is necessary for obtaining a job, getting a promotion and performing effectively in the world of work (Afzali & Fakharzadeh, 2009). The demand for EAP courses is increasing globally due to the fact that such courses are necessary not only for educational purposes in countries where English is the mother tongue language, but also in other countries (like Malaysia) where English is the medium of instruction in universities (Eslami, 2010). The significance of English in higher learning institutions is being widely accentuated in Malaysia today.

Various universities in Malaysia offer ESP/EAP courses to expose their international students to a different kind of English language from the one they have already experienced during schools (Nor Aslah, Samsiah, Syazliyati, & Kamaruzaman, 2009), and to equip them in terms of specific needs of English language (Momtazur, 2009). Furthermore, ESP/EAP courses are offered to provide a variety of English learning programmes for EFL students who have come to Malaysia for their post-secondary studies in order to enhance their academic abilities. In most Malaysian Universities today, English language is the medium of instruction, and because of its importance, universities make English language courses compulsory to be taken by those students who do not hold any acceptable TOEFL or IELTS band score.

Nevertheless, the issue now is whether the current EAP courses in Malaysia are appropriate as far as the students' needs are concerned. Moreover, it is important to consider the students' needs to ensure their success in the academic setting. Another issue is whether or not these courses adequately prepare the students to function according to their specializations (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, in the public universities of Malaysia, there are no ESP/EAP courses offered for graduate studies based on the language needs analysis (Momtazur, 2009). Accordingly, the textbooks selected for foreign students in Malaysian Universities (among them Iranian EFL students) and the courses do not meet the students' real academic needs

and demands. There has always been an issue that EAP programmes have been developed without conducting a systematic needs analysis both from the students' and instructors' perspectives (Eslami, 2010).

Since needs assessment plays an important role in all aspects of language education planning, and in EAP/ESP in particular (Benesch, 1996), development of a syllabus based on the learners' needs and analysis of the target situation is favoured by the communicative approach. Needs are considered to have diverse categories and are not observed as a unitary term anymore (Hoseini & Shahriari, 2010). Components of a language course are determined by a needs analysis that plays a pragmatic role in leading the language classes (Momtazur, 2009). Through needs analysis procedure, information about learners' needs is collected (Richards, 2001). The importance of a need analysis is stressed through ESP and EAP, as well as general language courses, task-based curricula, and performance-assessment (Afzali & Fakharzadeh, 2009). EAP begins with the learner and the situation (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Curriculum development of EAP is guided by learners' needs. That is why needs analysis is necessary for EAP curriculum development through collecting data on learners' background and goals, linguistic demands, and preferred learning strategies (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999). Yet, there are no ESP/EAP courses offered for graduate students based on the language needs analysis of the international students in Malaysian Universities (Momtazur, 2009). Accordingly, any effort to shed light

on the current situation will contribute not only to the Malaysian authorities inside the country, but also to the curriculum developers in other countries where English is a second language.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

After describing the academic context within Malaysia briefly, it is worth mentioning that many Iranian students (who are typical EFL learners) have recently chosen Malaysia as a country overseas for furthering their post-secondary studies by studying various disciplines in international Malaysian Universities. The Iranian community is rapidly growing and has turned into one of the largest communities all over Malaysia. Although the Malay Language or Bahasa Melayu (BM) is the national language within Malaysia, English language is used widely in university or business settings. Thus, international students (among them the Iranian typical EFL Learners) need to be proficient enough in the language to effectively perform their academic affairs. They should be also equipped with the necessary language skills and sub-skills by attending EAP courses so that they will be able to cope well with the complex language used in textbooks, research journals, technical reports, etc.

In the current academic setting of Malaysia, English language courses only expose the students to the four major skills generally. Students face difficulties in coping with these courses as the faculties also require them to have other relevant skills such as presentation or public speaking

skills, report writing, or product report skills that are applicable in their respective programmes (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, it is significant to identify which skills of English language need more focus and attention. A study at the University of Alberta in Canada revealed that 37.7% and 36.7% of international students found speaking and writing a big problem, respectively. A similar proportion found it difficult to understand their instructors, and that academic stress was high among over two thirds of the group (Chacon, 1998, as cited in Berman & Cheng, 2001). In this situation, the needs analysis may help us specify several language functions which occur frequently in certain contexts such Malaysia (Blue, 2006, as cited in Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, identifying the most required skill by the international students seems essential. Also, it is of worth to identify the students' needs in terms of speaking and writing skills.

Findings of a study in Malaysia by Nor Aslah and associates (2009) revealed that the students of art and design had problems in acquiring the English language skills. This confirms the weaknesses of English Language courses in helping the students to acquire the language skills needed by the faculty. Moreover, it was concluded that relevant actions should be taken to ensure that the students' needs are fulfilled and that they will effectively perform in the study programme. In addition, it is mentioned that the English language courses may have not given the students what they actually need to ensure their success in the academic context

or specialized field as the analyses of the students' English course results showed a high failure rate among the subjects of the mentioned research. This failure rate was reported to have contributed to the students' bad performance in specialized courses (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Drawing on the issues pinpointed earlier, it seems that running needs analysis in Malaysian universities to focus on English language skills needed by the international students may reveal significant results to help course developers and authorities to conduct EAP courses more effectively. This survey is actually an attempt to do so.

In line with this, it is essential to know whose needs are to be analyzed, and to know specific English requirements expected, and the kind of English language skills that are prioritized as more important than the others when preparing EAP syllabi (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, it is relevant to know the specific English language needs among the international students to make them aware of the required skills so as to function effectively in their studies. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposed an approach to ESP which focuses on learning needs by referring to various factors such as the learners' gender, age, socio-cultural background, background knowledge, attitudes, etc. Likewise, Grave (2000) highlights that gender can be an important construct to be examined while conducting need analysis. In this study, gender was regarded as an important construct to be examined to determine whether or not it affects the international students' needs in EAP courses.

In Iran, all schools and English institutes hold gender segregated classes, while in Malaysian English institutes and schools mostly hold co-ed classes. This fact might affect the Iranian students' needs in EAP classes in terms of their gender because of their cultural and educational backgrounds. Thus, running gender-based needs analysis can contribute to our understanding of the language skills needed by male and female international students, too.

In addition to gender, the learners' background knowledge, English proficiency and the majors they are studying need to be taken into consideration (Grave, 2000; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In Malaysia, the current EAP syllabi in the universities are taught across all disciplines. Also, students in EAP classes pursue different programmes, namely, master and PhD. Meanwhile, students of different specializations take the same EAP course of the same 'generalized' syllabus. This may not always be advantageous in the context of students' academic development. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) pointed out that EAP should focus on specific language that is appropriate to the target discipline. Thus, there is a danger that the current EAP courses may not be able to fully cater to students' specific language needs, especially when they come from different disciplines of studies and different educational levels.

The findings from this study can help practitioners who are deeply concerned with preparing EAP courses because needs analysis is a very fundamental first step prior to designing and developing a language

course, producing materials for teaching and learning, and developing language tests. Nonetheless, it is demonstrated that there are no ESP/EAP courses offered for graduate studies based on the language needs analysis in Malaysia (Momtazur, 2009). ESP/EAP courses are in fact as varied as the universities offering them since there is little or no research which has specifically investigated the kind of language support that has the greatest impact on supporting L2 students' transition to and engagement with undergraduate studies (Berman & Cheng, 2001), nor is there any sufficient information regarding individual student's factors that impedes or assists academic success (Fox *et al.*, 2006). This study is an effort to clarify such a context.

As far as the objectives and results of this study are concerned, a new perspective on needs analysis ought to be taken up by Malaysian universities. While it is essential to identify the skill-related needs of the international students, focusing on their gender, level of education, majors, and proficiency levels are also the factors which need to be taken into account. Having EAP courses based on the students' level of education, majors, and principles they are studying and finally their gender may be costly but efficient enough as the courses can be more specified and succinct.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study attempted to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine which productive skill has priority of being improved for EFL

students.

- To identify the tasks of writing skills needed by EFL post-secondary students for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia.
- To identify the tasks of speaking skills needed by EFL post-secondary students for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia.
- To determine whether gender is a determinant of EFL post-secondary students' English needs.
- To determine whether educational level determines English needs of EFL post-secondary students in Malaysia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the established objectives, this research tried to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Which productive skill has priority of being improved for the EFL students?
2. What tasks of writing skills do EFL post-secondary students need for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia?
3. What tasks of speaking skills do EFL post-secondary students need for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia?
4. Is gender a determinant of EFL post-secondary students' English needs?
5. Does educational level determine English needs of EFL post-secondary students in Malaysia?

NEEDS ANALYSIS

All ESP/EAP courses ought to be based on a perceived need (Hutchinson & Waters, 1994). Thus, needs analysis is regarded as critical to ESP (Robinson, 2001). According to the learner-centred approach of language learning, teaching/learning programmes ought to be responsive to the learners' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991). EAP begins with the learner and the situation (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Moreover, EAP curriculum development is directed by the learners' needs leading to a research area known as 'needs analysis'. Michael West of India in the 1920s coined the term "needs analysis", which is the first step in developing a language curriculum (Brown, 1995). Students' needs assessment seems to be fundamental to EAP (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). One distinctive feature of EAP courses is defining the objectives and contents of each course consistent with the learners' needs in the target language and determining how they need to perform in conforming to the norms and conventions of their academic disciplines (Eslami, 2010). Needs analysis is an unending systematic process of information gathering about learners' needs, as well as interpreting the information to help make course decisions to meet their needs (Khamkaew, 2009). Accordingly, for producing and teaching an efficient course, teachers and planners are responsible to examine the learners to identify the language skills they mostly need and to determine whether the objectives of the programmes and the learners' requirements are being accomplished. It is

also used for planning the learners' and the programme's future directions and making informed decisions (Purpura & King, 2003; Santopietro & Peyton, 1991, as cited in Eslami, 2010).

Needs analysis is an imperative tool in distinguishing where the learners are and where they should be (Khamkaew, 2009). Therefore, the needs analysis must be initiated to guide EAP curriculum development by surveying the learners so as to collect data on their background and goals, linguistic and behavioural demands, and preferred learning/teaching strategies (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999).

Language Needs Analysis is a set of tools, techniques and procedures used in determining the language contents and learning processes. It entails a systematic means of gathering information about learners' language needs (Khamkaew, 2009). By employing appropriate teaching methods based on a curriculum and context, learners' needs will be met. In order to improve the learners' English language skills and to identify their needs, a need analysis is mainly conducted which is the chief stage in ESP (Momtazur, 2009) and it is the foundation of ESP that leads to a focused course (Brown 1995; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Needs analysis is claimed to be significant in ESP although it is absolutely not the only educational enterprise which makes use of it (Robinson, 1991).

Regarding the needs analysis, we must know how the notion of 'need' is to be conceptualized. Brindley (1989) maintains

that we need to make a distinction between the different concepts of need such as the distinction between *necessities* or *demands*, and learners' *wants* and the methods of bridging the gap between the two. For Berwick (1989), 'need' is a measurable discrepancy or a gap between the existing and the desired future conditions.

Robinson (1991) considered needs as linguistic deficiencies which are goal-oriented and can be regarded as objectives. Also, the 'need' must be considered in the educational context where the study occurs (Holmes & Celani, 2006, as cited in Eslami, 2010). Because students' needs vary in different contexts, needs analysis can be of help if the academic language needs are considered properly and specificity is sought within the specific target use, particularly in the universities (Deutch, 2003). For such reasons, the current survey attempted to analyze the needs of the EFL international students in terms of productive skills in Malaysia to provide informative data about their needs within the given context.

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)

Teachers' enthusiasm to meet learners' needs and wants resulted in ESP, which actually emerged as a discipline in the 20th century. ESP primarily focuses on furthering the students' linguistic development. Through this focus on the learners' demands, teachers will be able to identify the real needs of the learners in order for them to use English for specific purposes (Griva, 2009). Also, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998)

asserted that developments in the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s, science and technology growth, growing use of English as the international language of science, technology and business, as well as increased number of international students studying in UK, USA, and Australia have all given birth to the ESP movement. People across the globe who want to learn English language because it is the key language for the fields of science, technology and commerce reinforce the ESP context. ESP is an approach to language teaching, in which all decisions as to context and method are based on the learner's reason for learning, i.e. it is based on the learners' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Momtazur, 2009).

Because ESP has expanded as a new concern for the needs and feelings of the learners, needs analysis seems to be advantageous for ESP practitioners in programme design and planning of any

language course since the aim in ESP is to meet the needs of particular learners (Robinson, 1991). ESP courses can be purposeful only if they are based on a strong analysis of the learners' needs. Therefore, any ESP course varies from another in terms of skill selection, topics, situations, functions, as well as the language (Robinson, 1991).

ESP is an 'enterprise' involving "education, training and practice", and drawing upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and students' specialist areas of interest" (Robinson, 1991). Robinson categorizes ESP situations into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). This division can be displayed in a tree diagram as in Fig.1 (Robinson, 1991; Robinson, 2001a, Robinson, 2001b; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

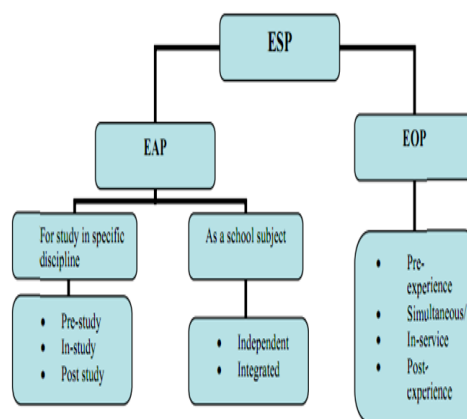


Fig. 1: The ESP Tree Diagram

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)

EAP, a branch of ESP which emerged in the 1970s, refers to the specific English language teaching related to academic purposes (Momtazur, 2009). EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In fact, the students' academic needs in the discipline-specific course direct the EAP component and EAP is taught within educational institutions to students requiring English for their academic courses (Fox, *et al.*, 2006). EAP tries to help international students overcome linguistic and cultural difficulties involved in studying through the medium of English. Teaching and learning of EAP presents its own challenges, problems, opportunities, failings, and successes (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). The reason why EAP teaching differs from general-purpose ESL instruction is that EAP instruction aims at increasing the capabilities of L2 students to manage academic work more successfully by focusing on the development of academic skills and strategies; it also supports the acquisition of specific academic subject matter (Fox *et al.*, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of this study is descriptive non-experimental and it employs the Needs Analysis technique. To conduct a survey among the Iranian post-secondary students (typical EFL Learners) studying and residing in Malaysia, a questionnaire was used since

the questionnaire can reveal noteworthy information on rating the importance of language skills in ESP/EAP courses (Fox *et al.*, 2006). Also, a questionnaire, with a quick and easy coverage, is proper in needs analysis surveys (Long, 2005). The data collected from the questionnaires [the Likert scale data that ranged from 1 (not necessary) to 5 (very necessary)] were given numerical values used for testing the research questions.

Research Instrument

Particularly for the field of ESP/EAP, surveys and questionnaires are able to provide significant information on rating the importance of language skills and the generic difficulties faced by L2 students (Fox *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, questionnaires are valuable for ascertaining the pervasiveness of existing views (Long, 2005). In addition to the quick and easy coverage, using questionnaires can be as an appropriate approach to needs analysis especially when they are employed in an unfamiliar domain or alone (Long, 2005). Hence, a questionnaire in 2 parts was adopted from Prapawuttikul's research (2003) and adapted to suite the objectives of this study. It seemed that productive skills were needed more than the other skills since the students in an ESL context, where the medium of instruction is English, are required to communicate and be involved in encoding and decoding processes more frequently (Berman & Cheng, 2001; Fox *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, the questionnaire only focused on speaking and writing needs

analysis (Productive Skills). Subsequently, the adapted questionnaire was sent to two PhD candidates for validity. After applying their suggestions, the final validated questionnaire was prepared for the purpose of data collection.

The questionnaire contained two main parts: Part A elaborated on demographic data seeking information on gender, education level, years of living in Malaysia, years of studying English, etc. Part B was a 5-point Likert Scale (in two sub-scales) focusing on writing and speaking needs analysis. The criteria used to analyze Likert scale data ranged from 1 (not necessary) to 5 (very necessary).

In part B of the questionnaire, two subsections examined the respondents' needs. The first part elicited students' responses on Writing Skill Needs, which included writing a thesis, writing a proposal, writing a progress reports, writing technical reports, writing journal papers/articles, writing business letters, writing email, taking lecture notes, and writing minutes of a meeting.

The Speaking Skill Needs included Giving reasons, Explaining ideas, Describing technical functions, Negotiation, Telephone Conversations, Discussing in meetings, Reporting in meeting sessions, Asking for opinion, Giving a presentation, and Giving lectures.

To examine the reliability, Chronbach's alpha was obtained for all the items in the questionnaire. Table 1 demonstrates that the standardized alpha for the 19-item scale was 0.84, indicating a high degree of internal consistency.

TABLE 1
Reliability Statistics for the Questionnaire

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | No. of Items |
|------------------|--|--------------|
| .83 | .84 | 19 |

Sampling Design: Participants

As highlighted by Long (2005), a *random sample* is preferable because each member of the population will have an equal chance of being selected. However, this method is costly in terms of time and money, if the population is large (Long, 2005). Other random methods are also avoided because randomness of the selection could result in unequal numbers of undergraduate and graduate courses offered by the faculty, and the target reading tasks for which are often different (Long, 2005). As the population of this study was rather large, a *purposive sample* was chosen to avoid the abovementioned issues. In this method, the group chosen by the analyst is supposedly typical and it is only as good as the criteria for judging typicality which is unknown (Long, 2005).

Using purposive sampling, the researchers chose 110 Iranian students living and studying in different Malaysian main universities to ensure better representativeness. These students were at different post-secondary educational levels. It crucial to note that all the selected students had passed their universities' Compulsory English Course (EAP) which is meant to improve and enhance their academic English proficiency to better cope with their academic work. This sample was selected to

help shed light on real productive needs of the Iranian students. As mentioned earlier, most universities in Malaysia offer ESP/EAP courses. However, no needs analysis has been conducted prior to designing such courses (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009; Momtazur, 2009). Hence, carrying out needs analysis for appropriately determining the international students' real needs on productive skills is necessary. This research is an effort to do so.

According to Long (2005), if the questionnaires are mailed, they can obtain considerable amounts of focused, standardized, and organized data, potentially from a large sample of respondents, and they do so quickly and cheaply. They can accomplish all these, and with the option of anonymity (Long, 2005). Thus, copies of the prepared questionnaire determining the writing and speaking needs were emailed to all 110 students. However, only 64 copies were returned, making a response rate of 54.54%. The 4 answered questionnaires were incomplete, so they were discarded. The rest constituted 60 valid ones. Table 2 displays the respondents' profiles.

TABLE 2
Respondents' Profiles

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Gender | Male | 63.3% |
| | Female | 36.6% |
| Education Level | Undergraduate | 5% |
| | Master | 23% |
| | PhD | 57% |

Data Analysis

The responses from the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 17.0. The statistical procedures used to suite the objectives of this study included:

- The data concerning the gender, years of study, years of staying in Malaysia, preferred productive skill to be improved, etc., were presented in *Percentage*.
- A five-point Lickert scale was employed to determine the Iranian EFL learners' needs on speaking and writing skills. This scale was used in the questionnaire to determine the level of necessity on the criteria of Lickert Scale (Table 3):
- To interpret the necessity of writing and speaking needs, *Mean (x)* was used. A higher mean score (*x*) of each item indicated higher needs in English writing and speaking of the Iranian EFL students. On the other hand, a lower mean score (*x*) indicated lower needs in the same productive skills.
- Independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and Post-hoc tests, such as Tukey and Tamhane tests, were conducted to determine the difference in writing and speaking needs of Iranian EFL learners in terms of their gender, and three levels of education. The results are presented in subsequent sections.

Table 3
Criteria of Likert Scale

| Scale | Needs | Mean Range |
|-------|----------------|------------|
| 5 | Very Necessary | 4.50-5.00 |
| 4 | Necessary | 3.50-4.49 |
| 3 | average | 2.50-3.49 |
| 2 | less necessary | 1.50-2.49 |
| 1 | not necessary | 1.00-1.49 |

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to obtain clear results, each research question of this study was independently examined. The findings are as follows:

Research Question 1

Which productive skill has priority of being improved for the Iranian students?

The collected data were analyzed through a descriptive analysis to find out the percentages in respect to the first question. In fact, the most significant finding of this research was that 80% of the respondents chose speaking skill as the number one skill which needed to be improved. Only 20% of the respondents chose writing as the premier productive skill which has priority to be improved.

This is consistent with various studies on the perceptions of students as they rank-order the importance of language, academic and social skills (Fox *et al.*, 2006). Also, the findings of this survey, particularly ones answering this question, are consistent with Berman and Cheng's (2001) survey. They reported that the most difficult language skills for L2 students as a whole were academic oral communication (e.g., giving presentations, participating in class discussions) and writing (e.g., examinations, essays, reports) after conducting a needs assessment of L2 undergraduate and graduate students, as well as native English speaking students in Canada.

Sun (1987) conducted a study at a Canadian university asserting that writing and oral communications were important to both Chinese graduate students and

visiting scholars. Skills which support social interaction and communication were also emphasized by the students in that particular research. In another study involving the rating of language skills, once again, more difficulties were reported by L2 graduate students with regards to speaking and writing than any other skills (Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004).

Theoretically, speaking and oral communication seem to be essential in EAP courses as the students need to survive on campus and perform acceptably in their studies in Malaysia, according to the findings of the current survey. This is also asserted by Berman and Cheng (2001), who stated that the international students need to be competent in certain language areas and skills to cope with their academic demands.

Research Question 2

What tasks of writing skills do EFL post-secondary students actually need for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia?

To examine this question, means (\bar{x}) were obtained for 9 writing items rated by the students so as to specify the tasks considered to be the most required (*Necessary*) (see Table 4). As for the writing skill needs analysis, the respondents decided that this skill was not as important as speaking for them. However, all of them chose *Taking Lecture Notes* as necessary, with a mean of 3.80 and standard deviation of 0.91. Similarly, *Writing Journal Papers/Articles* comes next as the necessary writing task for EFL graduate and postgraduate students in Malaysian international universities, with

the mean score of 3.67 and the standard deviation of 1.23.

The rest of the tasks were selected to be of average necessity for these students. *Writing a Thesis* and *a Proposal* had a mean of 3.47, followed by *Writing Emails* with a mean of 3.40, and *Writing Progress Reports* obtained 3.37. The mean for *Writing Business Letters*, *Writing Minutes of a Meeting*, and *Writing Technical Reports* had lower importance, with the mean scores of 3.20, 3.03, and 2.90, respectively.

Although Malaysian universities do not thoroughly follow a needs analysis to design the EAP/ESP courses (Momtazur, 2009), it seems that education authorities need to consider the findings of this study for EAP course designs in Malaysia. Therefore, the needs analysis may help us to specify language functions which occur frequently in certain contexts (Blue, 2006, as cited in Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009), and it will assist us in identifying the specific English language needs among international students. As mentioned before, international students indicated writing and speaking as big challenges for them in the academic settings

(Chacon, 1998, as cited in Berman & Cheng, 2001). Hence, it is relevant to pay attention to the real needs of these students and plan a course that could help them succeed in their studies. Although in Malaysia, most university EAP courses only expose the students to the four major skills in general, the courses do not fully cater to students' specific language needs and they consequently face difficulties in coping with these courses as the faculties also require them to have other relevant skills such as report writing or reporting skills that are applicable in their respective programmes (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, appropriating the syllabuses in accordance with the students' needs will definitely enhance their academic performances.

Having conducted extensive research in the writing practices of graduate students, both native English and L2 speakers alike, Prior (1995; 1998; 2001) argues that learning in academia is a complex process and that communication, especially in writing, must always be understood as a situated literate activity.

TABLE 4
Needed Writing Tasks

| Writing Needs Analysis | | Mean | Standard Deviation | |
|------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Taking Lecture Notes</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 3.80 | 0.91 |
| 2 | <i>Writing Journal Papers/Articles</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 3.67 | 1.23 |
| 3 | <i>Writing A Thesis</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.47 | 1.66 |
| 4 | <i>Writing A Proposal</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.47 | 1.39 |
| 5 | <i>Writing Emails</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.40 | 1.21 |
| 6 | <i>Writing Progress Reports</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.37 | 1.41 |
| 7 | <i>Writing Business Letters</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.20 | 1.26 |
| 8 | <i>Writing Minutes Of A Meeting</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.03 | 1.23 |
| 9 | <i>Writing Technical Reports</i> | <i>Average</i> | 2.90 | 1.33 |

**Valid N (listwise): 60

Writing “does not stand alone as the discrete act of a writer, but emerges as a confluence of many streams of activity: reading, talking, observing, acting, making, thinking, and feeling as well as transcribing words on paper” (1998). Morita (2000), Imber and Parker (1999) and Thornton (1999) specifically investigated the oral discourse needs of L2 international students. Morita (2000) spent 8 months observing both L2 and native English speaking students enrolled in an oral academic presentations class, as parts of their TESL graduate programme. She found that students became apprenticed into academic discourse by moment-by-moment negotiating of expertise with instructors and peers, as they prepared their materials, observed others, and presented their own work. She also observed that both L2 and native English speakers felt insecure and anxious about their knowledge, skills and performances. In spite of their language difficulties, many L2 students were as successful as their native English-speaking peers in participating in discussions and giving presentations. With careful preparation, effective uses of visual aids, practice rehearsals, handouts and note-cards as prompts, L2 students were able to present their topics with confidence and clarity. Consistent with some researchers (Casanave, 2000, 1992a, & 1992b; Spack, 1997; Prior, 2001; Belcher, 1994; all cited in Fox *et al.*, 2006), Morita (2000) argues that “academic discourse socialization is not a predictable, entirely oppressive, unidirectional process of knowledge transmission from expert to

novice, but a complex, locally situated process that involves dynamic negotiations of expertise and identity” (p. 304).

Research Question 3

What tasks of speaking skills do EFL post-secondary students need for the betterment of their post-secondary studies in Malaysia?

Means (\bar{x}) were obtained over 10 speaking items rated by the students to determine the tasks were considered to be the most required (*Necessary*) (see Table 5). The respondents of this study had chosen speaking as the most important skill, which needed attention and improvement. Meanwhile, the number one task needed was *Explaining Ideas* within an academic setting, with a mean of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 0.93. The next necessary tasks chosen were *Giving a Presentation* on campus with a mean of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 1.19, *Giving Reasons* with a mean of 4.03 and standard deviation of 0.55, and *Discussing in Meetings* which had a mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.66. The rest of the tasks; namely, *Negotiation*, *Telephone Conversations*, *Giving Lectures*, *Describing Technical Functions*, *Asking for Opinion*, and finally *Reporting in Meeting Sessions* were respectively selected to be needed on an average rate for these students. Detailed information is displayed in Table 5.

As for speaking, the results of a study reported by Fox and colleagues (2006) showed that international students generally thought daily conversation as manageable; nevertheless, academic speaking such as in presentation was indicated as a problem.

Similarly, the findings of the current study prove that *Giving a Presentation* is a high need while *Telephone Conversation* was average. It is worth noting that in Malaysia, universities ought to design courses which emphasize more on academic speaking tasks (as ranked by these EFL learners) to help the students succeed in their academic work. In another study, Schneider and Fujishima (1995) concluded that the reasons for course failure of a Chinese graduate student in the US could be the lack of communication between the ESL instructors in the language support programme and the faculty in the academic departments from which this particular student was taking courses. Such high stake issues need careful consideration since EAP course authorities are responsible not only for the course design but also for the relationships and socio-affective factors as well. Whatever the situation might be, we should consider this fact that the students in EAP classes tried to employ various strategies to learn and improve. Studies have shown that L2 students practise, rehearse and memorize materials for oral presentations when asked to categorize

some of the learning strategies they utilize to help them manage their coursework and activities (Fox *et al.*, 2006). Nevertheless, EAP courses need to centre more on better contents, needed tasks, and appropriate materials for reinforcing the students' abilities of productive skills.

Research Question 4

Is gender a determinant of EFL post-secondary students' English needs?

L2 literature is replete with studies which tried to determine whether gender plays an important role in distinguishing different activities. Our assumption is that gender is not significant in needs assessment. As displayed in Table 2, 63.3% of the respondents are male and 36.6% are females. According to the data presented in Table 6, the means for the male and female groups are 3.32 and 3.43, respectively. In order to identify whether male and female EFL students differ in terms of their writing needs in Malaysia, an independent sample t-test was conducted. Based on the data given in Table 7, no significant difference was obtained for the writing needs of the

TABLE 5
Needed Speaking Tasks

| Speaking Needs Analysis | | Mean | Standard Deviation | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Explaining Ideas</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 4.27 | 0.93 |
| 2 | <i>Giving A Presentation</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 4.07 | 1.19 |
| 3 | <i>Giving Reasons</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 4.03 | 0.55 |
| 4 | <i>Discussing In Meetings</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | 4.03 | 0.66 |
| 5 | <i>Negotiation</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.93 | 0.89 |
| 6 | <i>Telephone Conversations</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.87 | 0.99 |
| 7 | <i>Giving Lectures</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.69 | 1.40 |
| 8 | <i>Describing Technical Functions</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.63 | 1.11 |
| 9 | <i>Asking For Opinion</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.57 | 0.76 |
| 10 | <i>Reporting In Meeting Sessions</i> | <i>Average</i> | 3.50 | 1.15 |

**Valid N (listwise): 60

male and female EFL students in Malaysia since the probability of error is $>.05$ (t -value = $-.54$, $p = .59$).

Furthermore, the means obtained for the speaking needs of the male and female EFL international students were 4.11 and 3.41, respectively, as displayed in Table 8. Hence, to find out whether these means are statistically different, another t -test was conducted to determine the difference between male and female EFL students in terms of their speaking needs. As opposed to the writing needs, Table 9 displays that the male and female EFL students differ significantly over their speaking needs as the p -value is smaller than 0.05 (t -value = 4.66, $p = .00$). Having dissimilar aims and objectives in accomplishing different majors, and coming from different educational backgrounds might justify the differences reported by these international EFL students, all participated in a common class. Discipline-specific EAP courses might yield other results than those of this research in terms of gender difference. Hence, a more detailed survey is needed to understand in the aspects of speaking tasks these EFL students may differ in.

TABLE 6
Group Statistics for the Male and Female Scores on Writing Needs

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| male | 38 | 3.32 | .51 | .08 |
| female | 22 | 3.43 | 1.02 | .21 |

TABLE 7
T-Values for the Difference between Male and Female Scores on Writing

| | d.f. | t-value | Significance |
|---------------|------|---------|--------------|
| writing needs | 58 | -.54 | .59 |

TABLE 8
Group Statistics for the Male and Female Scores on Speaking Needs

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| male | 38 | 4.11 | .50 | .08 |
| female | 22 | 3.41 | .64 | .13 |

TABLE 9
T-Values for the Difference between the Male and Female Scores on Speaking Needs

| | d.f. | t-value | Significance |
|----------------|------|---------|--------------|
| speaking needs | 58 | 4.66 | .000 |

Research Question 5

Does educational level determine productive skills needs of EFL post-secondary students in Malaysia?

The participants of this study came from three different educational backgrounds. In particular, 57% were PhD students, 23% were master students and only 5% were undergraduate EFL students. Our assumption was that between different educational levels, there might be a difference in the *writing* and *speaking* needs because of the different programs the students follow. Primarily, an ANOVA test was conducted to find out whether there is a significant difference in the writing needs of the EFL students studying at three different education levels; namely, bachelor, master, and PhD. Table 10 displays the results of the test of homogeneity of variances confirming that the variances are equal at three levels since the p -value is larger than 0.05 and the homogeneity of variance assumption is supported.

TABLE 10
Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Writing Needs At Three Education Levels

| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| 2.07 | 2 | 57 | 0.13 |

Results obtained from the ANOVA test (Table 11) confirmed no significant differences exist between the writing needs of EFL students at three education levels since the p-value is larger than .05 ($p=.073$). To confirm this, a Tukey test was also run to show that there was no statistical difference. As there is no difference between the students of different levels in term of their writing skill, it is probably because of its insignificance as the participants of this research believe so.

TABLE 11
ANOVA Results for Difference between Means of Three Education Levels in their Writing Needs

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 2.79 | 2 | 1.39 | 2.74 | .07 |
| Within Groups | 29.06 | 57 | .51 | | |
| Total | 31.85 | 59 | | | |

In contrast, the results of the ANOVA test for speaking needs of EFL students studying three education levels confirmed that there was significant difference between the speaking needs of EFL learners pursuing their PhD, Master, and Bachelor programmes since the p-value is smaller than .05 ($p=.034$). The results of the test of homogeneity of variances confirm that variances are unequal at three levels, since the p-value is smaller than 0.05 and the homogeneity of variance assumption is not supported (Tables 12 & 13).

TABLE 12
Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Speaking Needs of Students at Three Education Levels

| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| 11.937 | 2 | 57 | .000 |

TABLE 13
ANOVA Results for the Difference between the Means of Students at Three Education Levels in

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 2.80 | 2 | 1.40 | 3.59 | .03 |
| Within Groups | 22.22 | 57 | .39 | | |
| Total | 25.03 | 59 | | | |

A probability value $p < 0.05$ indicates that a significant difference exists among EFL students at three education levels but it does not indicate which means are significantly different and which are chance differences. In order to determine this, post-hoc tests need to be carried out so as to determine the pair(s) among the groups under the study to have expression means that are statistically different. Therefore, Tamhane test was used to test the differences between the means of the three groups and to determine the pairs that differ in terms of their speaking needs. This test is suitable for pairwise contrasts when unequal variances are assumed, which is the case in the present study (Table 14). The findings from the Tamhane test indicated that there is statistically significant difference between the means of students at PhD levels compared to the students at Master and Bachelor levels in terms of their speaking needs ($sig=.04$). Nonetheless, there are no statistically significant differences between Master and bachelor levels. It is apparent that students at PhD level need to use different approaches and activities in terms of speaking and this difference implies that EAP course providers primarily need to offer different classes for undergraduate, master, and PhD programmes instead of

offering the same classes as their needs and demands are statistically different in terms of their study programmes.

TABLE 14
Results of Tamhane Test Determining the Difference between Pairs

| Education Level | Education Level | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|------|
| Bachelor | Master | -.23 | .27 | .77 |
| | PhD | -.53 | .28 | .03* |
| Master | Bachelor | .23 | .27 | .77 |
| | PhD | -.29* | .11 | .04* |
| PhD | Bachelor | .53 | .28 | .03* |
| | Master | .29* | .11 | .04* |

Tamhane Test: $\alpha = 0.05$;

CONCLUSION

A number of conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the current study. Below is a summary of the conclusions based on the analysis of the data gathered.

- In this study, 80% of the EFL students rank-ordered speaking skill as number one skill which needed to be improved more in the academic settings of Malaysian universities. This confirms the findings of various reported studies (see Fox *et al.*, 2006; Sun, 1987; Berman & Cheng, 2001; Cheng, Myles & Curtis, 2004). In addition, this finding also supports the claims of Fox and colleagues (2006) who stated that international students generally think academic speaking (e.g. presentations) as a problem.
- Of various academic speaking tasks mentioned in the questionnaire of this survey, EFL students reported that explaining ideas, giving a presentation, giving reasons, and discussing in

meetings within an academic setting as are more necessary than the other academic speaking tasks.

- As for the writing tasks, EFL international students needed to take lecture notes and write journal papers/articles more than the other tasks.
- Although male and female students showed no difference in their writing needs, gender has been proven to be significant in terms of the speaking tasks needed academically.
- Similarly, level of education revealed no difference on writing tasks; however, EFL students reported different needs on speaking tasks according to their education levels. The difference is also significant between the needs of bachelor and master with PhD students stating that the communicative needs of the Doctoral candidates are different from the other two levels.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SURVEY

- Since English is the medium of instruction in almost all Malaysian universities, the findings of this study are particularly helpful for the International EFL students studying in Malaysia because they are likely to encounter difficulties in understanding lectures or participating in seminars which are closely content-related (Nor Aslah *et al.*, 2009). Identifying productive skills needs of these students at three education levels (namely, bachelor, masters, and PhD) is a step towards

- guaranteeing that their academic needs are being met.
- b. The ability to speak fluently in an academic setting plays a vital role in EFL students' success as it is the number one skill they need assistance with. Malaysian Universities need to pay more attention to their EAP courses as they can provide more programmes/ syllabi that help to reinforce and improve international students' ability on explaining ideas while running research or taking courses, giving a presentation, which is one indispensable component of most academic settings, giving reasons to justify their opinions, findings or research programmes, and finally improving their ability to discuss in meetings because interactions can be an efficient factor in their pursuit of knowledge.
 - c. In terms of writing, the findings of this survey suggest that Malaysian universities ought to hold workshops or classes in which note taking skills are taught to international students in addition to preparing them to write papers and articles for journals as these are the most required academic writing tasks.
 - d. As male students differ with their female counterpart in terms of their speaking needs, it seems logical to run courses which are gender-based where international students can freely learn to negotiate their ideas and learn how to survive in an academic setting in Malaysia. This, however, may be costly.
 - e. Finally, Malaysian universities need to offer EAP courses according to the international students' education level instead of offering these to students coming from different educational levels. As for this study, it was found that the PhD students' needs are different from those of the bachelor and master students when speaking needs are considered; accordingly, the classes held for similar education programmes (Bachelor, Master, and PhD) would yield more benefits for the students.
- Although international students may have difficulties understanding lectures, asking questions, taking part in class discussions, writing formal essays and selecting appropriate English to express ideas, it is an oversimplification to see problems arising from linguistic difficulties alone as it is believed that students and faculties tend to attribute academic and social problems to English proficiency alone, when in fact difficulties are more likely to stem from the lack of familiarity with cultural norms or the new university setting (Todd, 1997; Fox *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, it seems relevant to offer EAP courses which also focus on the culture, social norms and values of *the host country* and the target language. In addition, it is important to highlight that students' achievement is affected by social factors and the students in a classroom learn in a social situation which is in fact affected by social influences from outside the classroom (Gholami *et al.*,

2012). Moreover, social contexts determine formal learning opportunities and it is in this social context that the learner's language is occurring; learners who participate in structured social networks (Gholami *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, EAP programmes should not only pivot around teaching of technical skills. It is "too simplistic to think that the task of the EAP tutor is simply to help students with their academic writing skills and the language work involved in formulating questions, learning to interrupt and to ask for clarification" (Harris & Thorp, 1999, p. 11). Rather, EAP courses have to focus on the total surrounding context within which students are studying.

FUTURE STUDIES

In order to test whether the findings of this study can be generalized to other EFL international students who are studying in Malaysia (or other countries where the English is a second language), further surveys are needed. The Needs Analysis questionnaire can be used to analyze the productive skills needs of students from Asian countries such as China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and those from Arab countries who are currently taking EAP courses in Malaysia. Moreover, analyzing the needs of EFL students with respect to the receptive skills (reading and listening) will also add to our understanding of the international students in Malaysia.

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Malaysian Parents' Practices and Perspectives on the Organization of School Homework

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this descriptive nature study is to paint a picture of Malaysian parents' practices and perspectives towards school homework. Additionally, it determines the amount of time children spend on doing homework and aspects related to the management of homework. The sample of the study consisted of 723 parents with children in Primary 3 (aged 9) and Primary 5 (aged 11) from 17 schools selected via a random sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was a self-designed questionnaire comprising three sections: (a) demographic details, (b) parents' perceptions on homework, and (c) open and close-ended questions. Interviews were also conducted to triangulate the data collected from the questionnaire. The results showed that most of the parents viewed school homework as a positive catalyst to help a child learn independently. The majority of parents agreed that doing homework helps improve their children's academic achievement. In terms of time spent in doing homework, the findings indicated that children spent 1.92 hours daily on their school homework, and in terms of communicating with their children's school teachers, approximately 90% of the parents indicated that they hardly communicated with the teachers. The findings also revealed that only 48.9% of the respondents assist their children with homework. In addition, more than two-thirds of the mothers constantly monitor and help their children to complete their homework. It is hoped that the findings will generate further research that can contribute to the area of the practices and perceptions of parents with regards to the organization of school homework.

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INTRODUCTION

In the education of a child, homework is often viewed as one of the main strategies

used in schools to help learners revise, review, and reinforce learning that takes place within the limited time learners have in the confines of their classroom. Homework can be defined as any task assigned by school teachers meant for the students to complete during non-school hours (Cooper, 1989). According to Painter (2003), homework is an integral part of learning and it is expected by students, parents, and teachers. It functions as reinforcement to what students have learned during the school day and enriches the existing knowledge students have gained from previous lessons. Teachers have long used homework as a mechanism to provide additional learning time, strengthen learners' study and organisational skills, and inform parents about their children's progress (Warger, 2001). It is also seen as a catalyst in cultivating healthy study habits, ultimately allowing students to develop as autonomous learners.

It is generally agreed as illustrated in the literature (Cooper *et al.*, 2006; Painter, 2003; Keith, 1992; Rutter *et al.*, 1979) that the assignment of homework improves students' academic achievement. Therefore, there is a significant need for homework to be assigned to the students in order to support and maximize the learning process. Although homework enhances learning in students' daily lives, it competes with multiple daily activities such as maintenance and leisure. Thus, teachers should assign appropriate homework at instructional levels that match students' skills and provide positive consequences

for homework completion (Rademacher, Deshler, Schumacher, & Lenz, 1998; Rosenberg, 1989). From these literatures, it can be surmised that the assignment of school homework plays an important role in students' school life as most of this homework is done at home.

In Malaysia, a child spends approximately eight hours in school (7.30am to about 3.30pm) on average, including afterschool programme activities. In other words, approximately two-thirds of the day in the life of a child is spent at home (literally eight hours in schools and 16 hours at home), and it is undeniable that the parents' involvement in a child's education plays an important part in ensuring that children do not get left behind in their studies. With regards to homework, parents often play a part in assisting them to complete their assigned homework. Research (Henderson, & Mapp, 2007; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Tam & Chan, 2005) has shown that higher parental involvement, whether formal or informal, in spending time with children, contributes significantly to children's development resulting in higher grades, improved student attendance, improved student conduct and attitude. However, parental involvement becomes a cause for stress when parents feel they lack the knowledge, time, and guidance to support their children's homework efforts. The main issue here is what parents' roles are, and how much time they spend in helping their children complete the given homework. A related issue concerns their perceptions of the homework given to their children.

In 2004, the issue of homework was highlighted in Malaysia when an Australian psychologist Carr-Gregg told a local daily that Malaysian students spent more time on homework than those in most other countries (The New Straits Times, 2004). The Malaysian students were said to spend an average of 3.8 hours a day compared to Singapore (3.5), Russia (3.1), Australia and Canada (2.2) and Japan (1.7). Later, another daily (The New Straits Times, August 8, 2004) highlighted the issue of “too much or too little” with reference to both parents and school students’ opinions on the amount of homework given to school children in Malaysia. Some adamantly viewed homework as the only way to achieve academic excellence, while others questioned not only the amount of homework but also the type of homework teachers hand out to school children. What is most interesting is the fact that these articles sparked a nationwide uproar over the issue of homework given to Malaysian students. The matter was duly investigated by the Ministry of Education and a new circular on homework was issued on 31 December 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2004). The circular highlighted the objective and importance of homework and highlighted 3 aspects concerning the organisation of homework in Malaysian public schools: the planning, implementation, and monitoring. Furthermore, teachers were reminded to use their discretion when giving homework taking into account factors such as amount, type, frequency, level of difficulty and students’ abilities.

Teachers were also advised to think carefully before assigning homework as spot checks would be conducted by the state and federal Inspectorate Division to ensure schools’ adherence to the given guidelines. Henceforth, school management and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) were encouraged to set up their own mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of homework in schools such as requiring subject teachers to display homework given to each class.

The trouble with the existing research especially in the Malaysian context is, firstly, it focuses mainly on students and teachers’ (Mohamad, 2008; Kralovec & Buell, 2001; Cooper, Robinson & Patall, 2006) perspectives with regards to academic achievement and ignores the contexts of students’ home lives, where parents are the students’ first teachers. Secondly, while numerous studies (Cooper *et al.*, 2006; Carr-Gregg, 2004) have looked into the amount of time children spent on homework, the studies have focused on the perspective of the students, sidelining the perspective of the parents. Thirdly, research (Parmjit, 2009; Yusop & Veloo, 2003; McIntosh, 1996) has shown that Australian students, especially in primary schools, have a poor sense of numbers, particularly in estimating time, and asking them to estimate the time taken to do homework assigned to them might distort the actual data. In view of this, it is believed that parents would provide a better estimation as to the time taken by children to complete their homework and issues related to the management of their children’s

homework at home. Therefore, the scant empirical research on parents' perspectives in the Malaysian context provided the main impetus for this study.

With particular reference to the report published by Carr-Greg in 2004 (despite the lapse of 6 years) and in consideration of these issues and concerns, this study was undertaken to look into the organization of homework in Malaysian primary schools from the perspectives of parents. The study focuses on examining parents' perspectives and practices regarding the organisation of homework in Malaysian primary schools. Thus, the research question that framed this study was "What are the parents' perspectives on homework in relation to the following?"

1. The Importance of homework
2. Management of children's homework
3. Time children spend on doing homework
4. Measures to be taken when children fail to complete homework
5. Parents' communication with school teachers
6. Homework and tension

Studies carried out by Kralovec and Buell, (2001) and Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) pointed out that the trouble with existing research on homework is that it focuses too narrowly on its relationship towards academic achievements and hence it is hoped that this study will help provide some input and feedback on parents' beliefs regarding homework and show the link between homework and the context of

students' time and life at home. More importantly, the output of this study will help shed some light for policy makers, groups, and individuals involved in the education system to bring about improvement to the current practice of homework assignments in the Malaysian primary school.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive design as it allowed both the qualitative and quantitative description of the relevant features of the data collected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). The population sample consisted of 17 randomly selected primary schools from the following six states in Peninsular Malaysia – Kelantan (K), Terengganu (T), Melaka (M), Selangor (S), Pulau Pinang (PP) and Negeri Sembilan (NS). From these 17 schools, 13 comprised National Primary Schools (referred to as SK - *Sekolah Kebangsaan* – coded as *School 1-13*) and four National-Type Chinese Schools (referred to as SJKC - *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* – coded as *14-17*). In each of the 17 schools, 25 questionnaires were distributed to parents with children in Primary 3 (aged 9) and 25 other questionnaires were sent to parents with children in Primary 5 (aged 11). Out of the 850 questionnaires distributed, a total of 723 parents (85.1%) responded to the survey with a composition of 39.0% (282) males and 61.0% (441) females.

A questionnaire was designed with the help of a panel of university lecturers, teachers and parents. The questionnaire was based on past literature on homework,

combined with the recent concerns highlighted by the Malaysian public and the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The questionnaire consisting of both close- and open-ended questions comprised three sections – Part A, Part B, and Part C. Part A investigated the demographic details of the child, while Part B comprised 40 items which examined the parents' perceptions regarding homework. Finally, Part C consisted of 6 open- and close-ended questions which further explored and helped support parents' perspectives on homework.

The instrument's validity was established by a panel of three experts, which comprised of an educationist, a Ministry of Education officer, and an experienced teacher. All three were also parents with school going children at the primary level. The panel looked into both the content and face validity of the instrument. Where possible, unknown or unfamiliar words and phrases were deleted or replaced with words that are easily understood by lay man. The feedback received from them was used to further fine-tune the instrument. The reliability was established via a pilot test in a primary school located in Shah Alam, Selangor. It involved 15 parents with children in Primary Three and Primary Five. The reliability measure for the instrument reported a Cronbach Alpha of 0.82, indicating a moderately high level of internal consistency.

To support data collected from the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with 3-4 volunteer parents from each school (PA referred to a Parent A, PB referred to

Parent B, etc.). Samples from each school involved 2 parents with children in Primary Three and two volunteer parents with children studying in Primary Five. A total of 52 parents were interviewed. These parents were identified using the following coding procedure:

- Parent Code = PA, PB, PC & PD,
- Gender= M (male) or F(female),
- State = Kelantan (K), Terengganu (T), Melaka (M), Selangor (S), Pulau Pinang (PP) and Negeri Sembilan (NS),
- Children's year of study (3 = Primary 3, 5 = Primary 5) and
- type of school = SK (National Type School) SKJC = National Type Chinese School

Therefore, PAFT5 (SK) would refer to Parent A, who is a female (PAF) from the state of Terengganu (T), and with a child in Primary 5 (5) in a National Type Primary school (SK).

The interview questions comprised mainly aspects such as the importance of homework, the number of hours their children spend on homework, the kind of homework they received, how often they helped their children with their school homework, who monitored their children's homework at home and whether their children were also involved in going for tuition class after school hours.

Descriptive statistics involving percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to analyze the quantitative data collected, while the qualitative

data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed both inductively and deductively based on the questions posed. Finally, the data obtained were constantly compared and contrasted before any final conclusions were made.

FINDINGS

This section details the findings of the study.

The Importance of School Homework in Students' Learning

The findings presented in Table 1 show the parents' perception towards the importance of homework. Most of the respondents (89.6%) agreed that their children learn a lot by doing homework. The majority (87.6%) of the respondents also agreed that homework helps a child to learn independently.

Besides that, the majority of parents (89.9%) agreed that doing homework helps improve their children's academic achievement although close to 10% of the parents disagreed.

Interviews with the parents corroborated these findings as the majority viewed homework as an effective and vital tool to

enhance students' learning. Approximately 90% of the parents said that it helps to reinforce the learning that takes place in class. This was eloquently stated by a parent [PBFS3(SK)], who stated that *"homework is necessary for children as it provides them an opportunity to review and practice what they've covered in class especially for Maths, where you need a lot of practice"*. Another parent [PCFNS5(SKJC)] pointed out that *"Children do learn by doing homework as it reinforces their learning in classroom. As a parent, I get a better understanding of what topic my child is weak in"*. A parent [PAMM3(SK)] from Melaka added that homework *"helps my children to develop good study habits and positive attitudes. It teaches them to manage their time, especially if they want to watch their favourite TV program. However, the amount of homework should be reasonable"*. However, not all feedback is positive and a female parent [PCFT5(SK)] lamented that *"no doubt that homework is important but at times, there is too much homework given by the teachers. When is Jas (name of her child) supposed to do homework? She needs to have leisure time as well and homework is not everything in a child's education. She*

TABLE 1
Parents' Perceptions on the Importance of Homework

| Importance of Homework | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Do not know |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Children learn a lot by doing homework | 178 (24.8%) | 466 (64.8%) | 55 (7.6%) | 12 (1.7%) | 8 (1.1%) |
| Doing homework helps a child to be independent | 177 (24.5%) | 455 (63.1%) | 65 (9.0%) | 15 (2.1%) | 9 (1.2%) |
| Homework improves academic achievement | 240 (33.3%) | 404 (56.4%) | 69 (9.6%) | 3 (0.4%) | - |

is in the Girl Guides, on the prefect board, takes violin lessons, plays netball and helps with family chores. There's hardly any time left to study". On the whole, the 52 parents interviewed emphasized that homework is important for children's learning as it makes them practise and reinforce what they have learnt in school as it gives them an opportunity to understand what they are learning in school. However, the amount of homework given should not overburden the children.

Management of Homework

This section investigated parents' perspectives as to the management of their children's homework. One aspect explored was how often they monitored their

children's homework. The results in this study (Table 2) indicated that they always (42.7%) and usually (39.8%) monitored their children's homework. In other words, 82.5% of the parents in this study do monitor their children's homework on a regular basis. However, the remaining 17.5% appeared unconcerned, stating that they either did not know or never monitored their children's homework.

Parents were also asked to respond to the different approaches they took to assist and monitor their children's homework. The findings presented in Table 3 indicated that a total of 59.3% of the respondents stated that they often reminded their children to do their homework, whilst 48.9% highlighted that they often helped their children with

TABLE 2
Frequency in Monitoring Children's Homework

| Frequency in Monitoring Children's Homework | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Always | 295 | 42.7 |
| Usually | 275 | 39.8 |
| Don't know | 115 | 16.6 |
| Never | 6 | .9 |
| Total | 691 | 100.0 |

TABLE 3
Measures Taken in Monitoring Children's Homework

| Measures Taken in Monitoring Children's Homework | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Remind child to do homework | 240 (33.2%) | 189 (26.1%) | 243 (33.6%) | 51 (7.1%) |
| Help with the child's homework | 134 (18.6%) | 218 (30.3%) | 340 (47.2%) | 28 (3.9%) |
| Check child's homework | 147 (20.6%) | 266 (37.2%) | 262 (36.6%) | 40 (5.6%) |
| Leave child to get on with it | 73 (10.2%) | 244 (34.1%) | 296 (41.3%) | 103 (14.4%) |

their homework. However, 47.2% of the respondents admitted that they only helped their children sometimes due to the lack of time and other commitments. Slightly more than half of the respondents (57.8%) revealed that they often checked their children's homework. The remaining 44.3% stated that they often left their children to do their homework on their own.

These findings were supported by the data obtained from the interviews with parents. The majority agreed that it is their role to monitor their children's homework. A parent [PAFPP5(SKJC)] with a Primary Five child in a Chinese medium primary school had this to say: *"I make sure that my children complete their school homework every day as I always remind them especially my younger child (aged 11 years). I do check their homework diary quite often to see the homework given"*. Another male parent [PBMK3(SK)] from Kelantan added that he often reminded his son to do his homework as he *"quite often they got carried away by watching the television. Every night it's a struggle to get him to turn off the TV and do his homework. Nowadays I am quite strict with his TV time"*.

A mother [PDFNS3(SK)] from Negeri Sembilan stated *"I do monitor their homework from time to time as checking up on their work will remind them that the parents are monitoring their work and are thus serious about their progress. Sometimes, they need to be given an opportunity to be responsible for their own learning. Also, they learn from making mistakes."* Another parent with a Year Three

child from Selangor [PAFS3(SK)], who sympathised with teachers, stressed that *"I am my son's first teacher and they spend two-thirds of the time at home as compared as one-third in school. And furthermore, it is difficult for teachers in schools as there are about 35 to 40 students in each class. I make sure that my son does his homework and understands it as well"*. On the whole, parents interviewed do take their children's homework seriously and monitor their children's homework to ensure that their children complete the work assigned.

The parents were also asked whether they felt that they lacked the knowledge to help their children with their homework. Based on the data collected, 43.4% of the respondents agreed to this statement, while the remaining 56.6% felt that they possessed adequate knowledge to assist their children to complete their homework.

The findings in this study (Table 4) also revealed that it is the mothers who most frequently (68.8%) assisted and monitored their children's homework. This could be due to the fact that some mothers are full-time home makers and therefore have more time to spend on monitoring their children. The next person who frequently assisted children with their homework was the fathers who accounted for 18.9%, followed by siblings (6.9%), and others such as friends, relatives, and tuition teachers (5.4%). The following are some of the parents' (mothers) responses from the interviews:

- *"I am the one who monitors my children's homework. Husband is always too busy or away overseas"* PAFK3(SK).

- *“I usually oversee their homework. Husband does assist at times”* PBMPP3(SKJC) 1-2 hours daily on their school homework (Table 5). Another 27.2% of the parents stated that their children spent between 2 to 3 hours daily on their school homework, whilst 6.5% spent more than 3 hours daily to complete their homework, and 3.1% indicated that their children spent 0 to 1 hour on their homework.
- *“My husband takes care of their Science and Maths while I take responsibility for all other subjects”*. PBFM5(SK) (Twelve of the mothers interviewed gave similar responses as husband being responsible for Science and Maths) The data provided in Table 5 are in the ordinal scale of measurement. However, the calculated conservative average mean time spent on doing homework is shown.
- *“He is usually busy with work and comes home late. As a housewife, I spend more time with the children. We have to give and take”* PAFNS5 (SKJC). Mean = $1095/718 = 1.53$ hrs

Time Spent on Doing School Homework

Parents were also asked to state the amount of time their children spent a day doing school homework. According to the parents, close to 63.2% of the children spent between

The calculation in Table 5 reveals that the conservative average time spent by children doing school homework is approximately 1.53 hours a day. It must be noted that this is an average mean score due to the ordinality of the data and three hours

TABLE 4
Monitoring Children’s Homework

| Person/s Monitoring the Children’s Homework | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Father | 136 | 18.9 |
| Mother | 494 | 68.8 |
| Siblings | 49 | 6.8 |
| Others | 39 | 5.4 |
| Total | 718 | 100.0 |

TABLE 5
Amount of Time Children Spend on Homework

| Time Spent doing Homework | Mid-score X | Frequency f | fx | Percent |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|---------|
| *Three hours or more | 3 | 47 | 141 | 6.5 |
| 2 to < 3 hours | 2.5 | 195 | 487.5 | 27.2 |
| 1 to < 2 hours | 1.5 | 454 | 455.5 | 63.2 |
| 0 to < 1 hour | 0.5 | 22 | 11 | 3.1 |
| Total | | 718 | 1095 | 100.0 |

*Three hours taken as the conservative score

is taken a conservative time for the interval of three hours or more. These data show that the amount of time spent on doing school homework is much lesser than reported by Carr-Gregg in his report in the local daily (The New Straits Times, 2004).

This finding was triangulated from the interviews where the majority of the parents opined that their children spent about 1 to 2 hours daily to complete their homework. However, when queried on why he wrote 3.5 hours, parent SK12 explained that it included doing tuition homework and swimming lessons. The parents acknowledged that the time taken to do homework reduces when exams are around the corner.

Table 6 reveals that for this sample, 59.4% of their children attend tuition classes as compared to 40.6% whose children do not.

In terms of the time spent on completing the tuition homework as shown in Table 7, 57.6% indicated that their children spent

between 1-2 hours, followed by 20.2% who spent 2-3 hours, 17.5% who spent 3 hours and above, while 4.7% spent 1-2 hours.

$$\text{Mean} = 732.5/382 = 1.92 \text{ hrs}$$

From this calculation, the conservative average time spent by children on tuition homework is approximately 1.92 hours a day. Again, it must be noted that this is an average mean score resulting from the use of the ordinal scale to display the data and three hours is taken the conservative time for the interval of three hours or more. This average score is much higher than the time taken for the homework assigned by school (mean = 1.53 hours). In other words, a child who attends private tuition spends approximately 3.45 hours (1.53 school hours and 1.92 tuition hours) to complete their homework. This result seems to concur with the findings of Carr-Gregg (2004).

TABLE 6
Attending Tuition (n=712)

| Homework Management | Yes | No |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Attend Tuition | 423 (59.4%) | 289 (40.6%) |

TABLE 7
Amount of Time Children Spend on Homework

| Time Spent doing Homework | Mid-score X | Frequency f | fx | Percent |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|---------|
| *Three hours or more | 3 | 67 | 201 | 12.6 |
| 2 to < 3 hours | 2.5 | 77 | 2.5 | 14.5 |
| 1 to < 2 hours | 1.5 | 220 | 330 | 41.3 |
| 0 to < 1 hour | 0.5 | 18 | 9 | |
| Total | | 382 | 732.5 | 100 |

*Three score taken as the score

Subjects with the most homework in SK and SJKC Schools

Parents of children in national primary (SK) schools indicated that the subject with the most homework was Mathematics (54%), followed by Bahasa Malaysia (17.4%), and Science (12.4%). The findings presented in Table 8 also indicate that English accounted for 11.5% of the homework load, whilst other subjects amounted to 4.7%. Similarly, the subject with the most homework for the national-type primary schools (SJKC) was also Mathematics (46%). This was followed by Mandarin (29%), Science (8.5%), Bahasa Malaysia (6.4%), and English (5.8%).

The emphasis in both types of school is on Mathematics as the subject with the most homework. Following that are the language components with the emphasis on Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin respectively for the SK and SJKC schools.

These findings concur with the views of the parents who were interviewed. The parents of both the SK and SJKC schools acknowledged that Mathematics is the subject with the most school homework as the children need lots of practice to

improve their maths skills. They also indicated that their children spent at least 30 to 45 minutes on Maths homework daily as compared to other subjects. A parent [PCMS5(SKJC)] from Selangor indicated that, *“mathematics is a skill and they need to do lots of practice, and also I send my son to Kumon”*. Kumon refers to a technique popularized in Japan, where students are drilled to use mental computations by doing worksheets after worksheets. Similarly, another parent [PCFPP3(SK)] from Pulau Pinang, with a child in Year 3, said that *“the emphasis in my daughter’s school is a lot of drilling, worksheets after worksheets. This is necessary if they want to improve their maths”*.

On the language components, a father [PBMPP3(SKJC)] with a Year 3 child lamented that *“too much homework is given to Bahasa Malaysia and too little to English language which I believe is wrong; equal emphasis should be given to English language”*. Another father [PDMS5(SK)] with a year 5 child in Selangor felt that *“English language is being neglected and children are not able to converse. There must be something wrong with*

TABLE 8
Subjects with the most homework in SK and SJKC Schools

| Subject with Most Homework | SK | SJKC |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| Mathematics | 54.0 | 46.0 |
| Bahasa Malaysia | 17.4 | 6.4 |
| Science | 12.4 | 8.8 |
| English | 11.5 | 5.8 |
| Mandarin | - | 29.0 |
| Others | 4.7 | 4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

our education system". Another parent [PCFM3(SJKC)], in acknowledging the importance of Mandarin as the mother tongue, said "we need to give emphasis to Mandarin if not, children will never speak it. It's very important for them to be able to read and write in Mandarin". In general, parents from SK and SKJC schools agreed that after Maths, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin respectively are the subjects with the most homework assigned.

Parents' views on measures to be taken when children fail to submit their homework

The parents were also asked to give their views on the measures that should be taken if their children failed to submit their homework on time. Table 9 indicates that 40.0% of the parents stated that they would prefer being told immediately when their children failed to complete their homework. In the event that their children repeatedly committed the same offence, 53.9% of the parents stated that they should be informed so that they could take the necessary measures.

From the interviews, a parent [PAFT5(SK)] from Terengganu stressed that "Homework is part of learning. So

if a child does not complete homework consistently, I must be told, efforts must be taken to find out the reason. At times, too much homework is assigned by all the teachers and it is a burden for children. The child should not be punished straight away". This sentiment was also echoed by a mother [PDFPP5(SK)] with a Year 5 child who highlighted that "Parents should be told if it happens too often. I will talk to my child to see if there are problems which are preventing him from completing his work. Follow up with me through letter or calls (if the case is serious)". However, another parent [PDFM5(SJKC)] gave a different view and pointed out that pupils "have to be reprimanded if it happens often. I would gauge if the homework volume for the day is tremendous then the child should be excused. If the school only gives small volume of homework (e.g. 5 to 10 math for recap) then the child should be given detention". In general, the data from the interviews indicated that parents preferred to be told if their children did not complete their homework on a consistent basis.

However, when asked about the frequency of communication with their children's school teachers (refer table 10), 18.8 % indicated that they never

TABLE 9
Parents' View on Measures to be taken when their Children do not Complete their Homework

| Measures taken for Incomplete Homework | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Parents should be told if it happens repeatedly | 380 | 53.9 |
| Parents should be told immediately | 282 | 40.0 |
| There should be no further action | 29 | 4.1 |
| Something else | 14 | 1.9 |
| Total | 705 | 100.0 |

communicated with their children’s teachers, followed by 70.7% who said they sometimes did. A mere 8.1% indicated that they often, with 2.4% who said they did communicate with their children’s teachers very often. This finding seems to indicate that parents expect the teachers to initiate the communication process and call them if their children do not complete their school homework.

From the interviews, the majority of the parents said that they communicated with teachers only on formal occasions. A parent from Kelantan [PCFK5(SK)] said that she communicated with her children’s teachers “*about two times in a year when collecting their school exam results*”. This is common as many schools in Malaysia still do not have a well-established relationship with parents as compared to schools in developed countries in the west (Simon, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2007; Fan, & Williams, 2010). Nevertheless, some parents highlighted that they do communicate with teachers through their children’s homework diary. Another parent from Selangor (PCMS5(SK)] stressed that

“...so far there is not much of a need to do so” and since his children were doing fine in school, the need to consult teachers did not arise. The following are some of the responses received from parents, when asked how they communicated with teachers,

- “Rarely”
- “Regularly through homework diary”
- “Almost every day. I am a lucky mother as I work in school as the administrative staff”
- “Daily, if necessary by communicating with a homework diary”
- “School is doing good job, so I meet them during the open days they have for report cards”.
- “Seldom”

In other words, parents only meet the teachers during formal occasions like Open Day and Report Card Day. In some school, there exists written communication through the homework diary that they used to communicate with the respective teachers concerning homework.

Table 10
Communication with teachers (n = 714)

| Management of Homework | Never | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Communication with Teachers | 134 (18.8%) | 505 (70.7%) | 58 (8.1%) | 17 (2.4%) |

Table 11: Children recording homework in their homework diary (n=702)

| Homework Management | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|---|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| How often does your child record his/her homework in the homework diary | 32 (4.4%) | 93 (12.9%) | 397 (55.1%) | 199 (27.6%) |

However, using the homework diary as a mode of communication does not seem that successful as only 17.3% of the parents indicated that their children often recorded their homework in the diary (refer to Table 11). In fact, 82.7% of the parents indicated that their children hardly recorded their homework in the diary. The data indicated that although the homework diary was introduced in schools in 2005, it is currently being barely enforced.

Homework and Tension

Parents were asked their views regarding the issue of homework as a cause of tension at home. The data in Table 12 indicated that 82.7% reported that homework was sometimes or never regarded as causing tension. The following are excerpts from the parents who were asked if their children’s homework had caused tension and if so, why:

- “Yes, because my children sometimes end up spending the whole evening doing homework and have no time for revision.”[PDFK5(SK)]
- “Yes, when there is too much of homework and the child is unable to cope. There is also no time for revision.” [PBMT3(SK)]
- “Sometimes. When all the subject teachers for the day give too much

homework and you know the child cannot cope with this ridiculous volume.”[PDMS5(SK)]

- “Sometimes, when insufficient time is given by the teacher to complete it. Especially when there are other teachers from different subjects giving homework on the same day.” [PAFPP5(SJKC)]
- “Sometimes, when the child has homework but does not do it by herself and waits for the parent to instruct her to do it. Perhaps a study on why children like or dislike homework would help clarify the issue” [PAMM3(SK)].

The findings indicated that approximately 17.3% of the parents indicated that the voluminous homework given by teachers could cause a tension.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study investigated the organization of homework in Malaysian primary schools from the perspectives of parents. First and foremost, the findings indicated that homework is viewed as an integral part of schooling and it is essential in ensuring the enforcement of learning goals expected from previous lessons. The findings showed that the majority of the parents agreed that their children learn a lot by doing their homework (89.6%) and it helps them to be independent (87.6%). They also felt that homework

TABLE 12
Homework Management (n=721)

| Homework Management | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Homework causes tension at home | 32 (4.4%) | 93 (12.9%) | 397 (55.1%) | 199 (27.6%) |

is essential for academic achievement (89.9%), especially in helping their children to master specific knowledge and skills in class. The findings in this study are in line with a review of over 60 research studies (cited in Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006) which revealed that homework is important with a positive correlation reported between the amount of homework done and students' achievement.

The majority of the parents (63.2%) agreed that on average, a child spends 1 to 2 hours daily in completing their school homework as compared to 27.2% who said their children take about 2 to 3 hours. From the calculation of the average time taken to complete the homework, it was computed that the approximate time spent on homework is 1.53 hours. This duration of time is much lesser than what Carr-Gregg reported in a Malaysian daily that Malaysian students spent an average of 3.8 hours a day on homework (The New Straits Times, 2004). Further investigation revealed that approximately two-thirds of the parents stated that their children attend private tuition and the amount of time spent on doing their tuition homework is 1.92 hours. In other words, the children who attend tuition spend approximately 3.45 hours on doing homework. This finding concurs with the findings of Carr-Gregg (2004). There is a possibility that the time taken on doing homework in Carr-Gregg's report refers to both school homework and tuition homework.

Keeping in mind the guidelines offered by researchers (Cooper, 2001; Sharp *et al.*,

2001; Ofsted UK, 1997, as cited in Silvis, 2002), children at primary schools should get about 10 minutes of homework each night for each grade. Therefore, Primary Three and Primary Five pupils should not be doing homework for more than 30 and 50 minutes, respectively. This shows that currently, Malaysian primary pupils are being overloaded with school homework although measures have been taken by the Education Ministry to curb the situation by introducing new guidelines pertaining to school homework. Burdening the students, especially at the primary level, is detrimental to the children's well-being, especially physically, as it reduces their access to leisure which is vital for appropriate psychological growth in the early learning years. Supporting this view, Widdup (2008) stated in *The London Evening Standard* that Ofsted inspectors in the UK highlighted that one of the main factors that has made learning depressing for students is the extra evening homework. Rather than spending all their free time on homework, students should be encouraged to watch educational television programmes, listen to music, play games, and focus on extra-curricular activities during their recreational time.

The findings from this study also indicate that as a whole, Mathematics is the subject with the most homework in national (SK) schools, followed by Bahasa Malaysia, and Science. Mathematics was also found to be the subject with the most homework in National-type (SJK(C)) schools. This was followed by Mandarin, Science, Bahasa Malaysia, and English. In order to do well

in Mathematics, exercises and drills are essential parts of mastering the subject. Therefore, this may have resulted in the teachers routinely providing Mathematics homework to the students to enhance their “memorised” or instrumental understanding of particular mathematical concepts. The distinction of understanding was succinctly explained by Skemp (1976), whereby he refers to Instrumental understanding as involving knowing *what to do* to get an answer whereas relational understanding as involving knowing the *what* and the *why*. The former relates to memorize understanding whereas the latter refers to conceptual understanding. However, if children are spending too much time on Mathematics as compared to other subjects, then this notion may have to be reconsidered. Does the old saying “practice makes perfect” that is usually associated with Mathematics still prevail in today’s learning?

With regards to children completing their homework, the majority of parents emphasized that they should be told or consulted if their children did not complete their homework. This inclination towards getting feedback regarding their children’s behaviour indicated these parents’ concern over their children’s progress and performances in school. Parents want to be involved and look forward to feedback given by the teacher/school. However, the irony is that Malaysian parents hardly communicate or keep in touch with the school teachers. Mohamad (2008) also discovered a similar low level of *parental involvement in*

school activities and keeping in touch with the teachers. Similar findings were also indicated in previous research by Wee (1995) and Wee (1996) and, although 15 years have passed, the level of partnership between parents and teachers still appears to be in a sorry state.

One of the most common platforms to encourage parents’ involvement in Malaysian school matters is through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of the respective schools. The primary purpose of PTA is to get parents and teachers to cooperate in the best interests of the schools and students. Parental involvement needs to expand beyond the current platform (practices) if they are to be co-partners in the children’s educational progress. The PTA plays an integral role in bridging the gap between parents and teachers. The PTA could also take the initiative towards educating parents on the significance of parental involvement in children’s homework. Parental education could also highlight the parents’ role in promoting self-discipline and time management skills among the students to facilitate homework process (Tam & Chan, 2005). Parents could be informed that the limitation in interaction between parents and teachers influences the growth of the child. As this study has revealed, majority of interviewed parents are often concerned about and involved in their children’s education through homework. Whether children do their homework at home, complete it after school programmes, or work on it during the school day, homework can be a powerful

tool for (a) letting parents and other adults know what the child is learning, (b) giving children and parents a reason to talk about what's going on at school, and (c) giving teachers an opportunity to hear from parents about children's learning (Canadian Council in Learning, 2008).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated parents' perspectives of the organization of homework in selected Malaysian primary schools. It has brought to light a number of issues and concerns surrounding the implementation of homework in Malaysian primary schools such as the importance of homework in the life of school going children and how homework is managed in schools. This study also explored the amount of time primary school children spend on completing school and tuition homework and what parents' feel about homework as a whole.

At this juncture, it is perhaps pertinent to point out that this paper is part of a larger study on homework and thus, it is not without its limitations. Though effort was made to get more parents involved in this study, time and access to parents were our main constraints as the researchers had limited time in each state. These two constraints also limited the ability of the research team to explore in greater detail other variables such as gender and types of schools. Another limitation of this study is that the team did not have sufficient time to collect data in order to measure the different levels of family involvement and

the team did not seek parents' views for not interacting with teachers.

Nevertheless, the authors hope that this exploratory study has to a certain extent provided some insights for policy makers, school administrators, educators, and parents on the implementation and organization of homework in the Malaysian context. Further studies need to be undertaken to address these issues and how parents and families could be brought into the loop as many parents out there are "involved and concerned" about the children's education with or without homework. In addition, it is also hoped that this research will open new avenues for researchers to work with issues related to school homework in Malaysia.

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Impact of Chinese Vernacular Medium of Instruction on Unity in Multi-Ethnic Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is a multiethnic and multilingual nation. In order to meet this diversity, Malaysia has developed an educational system with different languages as the medium of instruction (MOI). From the Razak Report to the Rahman Talib Report and the 1961 Education Act, Malay or Bahasa Melayu (BM) has been instituted as the national language and the MOI in national schools, with the aim of promoting nation unity. However, in the case of the Chinese vernacular schools, Mandarin is the MOI. Such a difference in MOI for the two different school systems has allowed educationists and non-educationists alike to fault the Chinese vernacular schools as an obstacle to racial unity. How valid and reliable is this accusation? In contrast, Chinese educationists feel it is of utmost importance to preserve their mother tongue (Mandarin) based education. Therefore, this paper will unravel how Chinese medium schools impact on unity or the lack of it among the students via interviews and a questionnaire adapted from Fazilah, Noraziah, Zaharah, Mansor, and Azizah (2009). The findings have revealed that the students' ethnicity and national identity are best portrayed by Mandarin because of its strong association with their Chinese roots. In addition, Mandarin is also the students' language of choice both inside and outside the classroom, which seems to suggest the absence of a sense of unity among them.

Keywords: Chinese vernacular schools, mother tongue education, medium of instruction, unity, language policy

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INTRODUCTION

Malaysian schools, since pre-colonial period, have adopted different mediums of instruction (MOI) to accommodate the multiethnic communities comprising three major ethnic groups; Malays, Chinese and

Indians. Hence, the Malaysian education system today is made up of three different MOI's at the primary level based on the platform of multilingualism with equal treatment for the three major ethnic groups of the country. At the secondary level, Malay (Bahasa Melayu-BM) is the only official MOI. However, the Chinese community has another option – 'outside' the national education system to pursue their secondary education. They can go to Chinese independent schools, which are not sanctioned by the government but are still legitimate (Chong & Norsimah, 2007) as they are officially monitored by United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia. These schools¹ adopt their mother-tongue² as the MOI.

Given the existence of the different types of schools in Malaysia, this paper examines whether the MOI that is used in Chinese vernacular schools has been

beneficial or detrimental to national unity because vernacular medium schools have been criticized as one of the causes for disunity (Mior Khairul Azrin, 2011; Wan Norhasniah Wan Husin, 2011).

To achieve this purpose, the language practice of Chinese medium school students is examined. Hence the research questions of this study are:

1. How do students portray ethnicity and national identity via the usage of language?
2. Which language do students adopt in their interactions?
3. Which language has the greatest impact on national integration?

However, before this can be carried out, a brief historical background that led to the development of Chinese education in Malaysia has to be discussed.

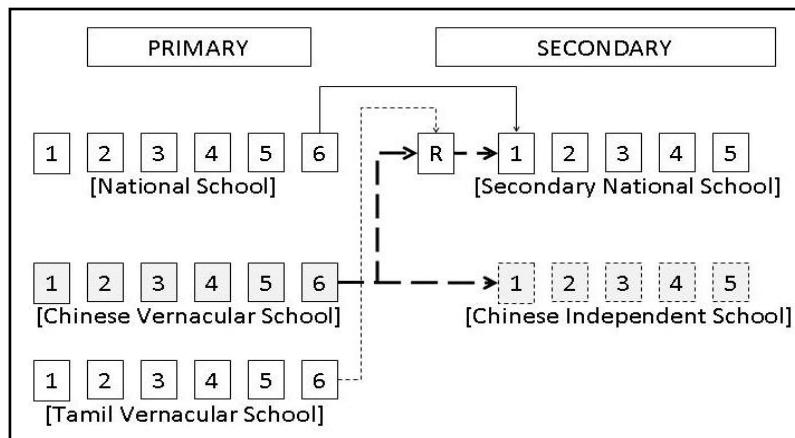


Fig. 1: The Malaysian Education System
(Source: Adapted from World Data on Education, 2006)

HISTORY OF CHINESE EDUCATION

The Chinese schools in Malaysia today are a result of the great efforts made by the Chinese community since the early 1800s. Their development can be traced from two different phases; British colonization and post-independence Malaysia.

Under the British colonial government, the Chinese were given the freedom to develop their own educational system because they were seen as birds of passage who would return to their country of origin after they had accumulated sufficient wealth (Gill, 2007). Once independence was achieved, the language policies in Malaysia focused on the development of BM because of the need for establishing a national identity, which was vital since “the language of a nation or an ethnic group is often a symbol of its identity and allegiance, and an embodiment of its values, culture and traditions” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004, p. 2). Following the realization of how significant a national language was to a country, legislations were introduced and acts were enacted to ensure uniformity in official purposes in education as well as for creating unity. The Razak Report, Rahman Talib Report, and Article 152 of the Federal Constitution had distinctly made provisions for the languages of non-Malaysians.

The Razak Report (as cited in Kua, 1999) stated that,

... the ultimate objective of education policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a

national education system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction... a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy the needs to promote their culture, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention of making Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country (p. 62).

Although the intention of the Razak Report was an endorsement for national unity, Yang (Chong & Norsimah, 2007) perceived it as of dual purposes. On the one hand, it was in-line with mono-ethnic culturalism because BM which is the language of Malays was implemented in many government educational acts such as the Education Act of 1996, despite the various school systems (Thock, 2009). On the other hand, the report accepted a proposal for a national education policy based on multiculturalism because of the need to preserve and sustain the growth of languages and cultures of other ethnic groups.

However, the dual purposes of the Razak Report were seen as an obstacle by the Rahman Talib committee, which recommended the elimination of communal secondary schools for the sake of national unity. They felt that “it is impossible,

within the framework of a policy which is truly national, to satisfy completely all the individual demands of each cultural and language group in the country” (Rahman Talib Report, as cited in Tan, 2009). Consequently, BM has become the main MOI for all types of national secondary schools at the expense of mother tongue education.

To further uphold BM, Article 152 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution states that BM is the national language but the citizen is free to learn and use other languages, except for official purposes, that is, any purpose with regard to the Government, Federal or State, and of a public authority.

Undeterred by the policies enacted, the Chinese community fought continuously for Chinese medium schools which led to an upsurge in enrolment in Chinese vernacular schools after 1969 (Kua, 1999). However, the Chinese were still doubtful about the various acts, particularly the 1996 Education Act which Yang (as cited in Gill, 2007, p. 114) says, “does not guarantee the permanent or continued use of mother tongue as the main medium of instruction in the existing Chinese vernacular primary schools”. Despite these challenges, there are approximately 1291 Chinese primary

schools (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan [EPRD], 2010) and 61 Chinese Independent schools (United Chinese School Committees’ Association of Malaysia, 2010) currently, as shown in Table 1 below. The relatively large number of Chinese schools compared to the national schools reveals that the Chinese resolve to keep the teaching of Mandarin relevant although the government has no intention of building new Chinese primary schools, as stated by the Minister of Education in 1999, Najib Tun Razak (Sin Chew Daily, as cited in Thock, 2009).

ISSUES FACING CHINESE VERNACULAR SCHOOLS

The dilemma of utilising language policies in guaranteeing vernacular education and the need for national integration is a constant challenge in a multi-ethnic country. To investigate whether Chinese vernacular schools MOI contribute to national unity, this section will examine three pertinent issues, namely: i) the voices for and against Chinese medium schools; ii) the loyalty of the Chinese community, and; iii) the proposal for the establishment of a single education system arising from the 1Malaysia concept.

TABLE 1
The Number of National and Chinese Medium Schools in Malaysia

| Types of Schools | Total |
|---|-------|
| Chinese Vernacular schools (Primary) | 1291 |
| National schools (Primary) | 5881 |
| Secondary National schools ³ | 1887 |
| Chinese Independent schools | 61 |

(Source: EPRD, 2010 & United Chinese School Committees’ Association of Malaysia, 2010, as of 30th June 2010)

There has been a strong view from some Malaysians, as reflected in the letters to the editors of mainstream newspapers, that the lack of Chinese students in national schools was because of the more favourable Chinese education and a growing number of vernacular schools which have adopted mother-tongue education. They were of the opinion that the use of Mandarin to teach all the subjects, except BM and English languages, in the vernacular school system works against the promotion of the national language. The fight to uphold BM can also be seen in the PPSMI⁴ case, where the main reason of its abolishment is because it contradicts with Article 152 of the Federal Constitution (Mior Khairul Azrin, 2011). These factors are deemed to have further hindered the Malaysian school systems in forging unity among its different races, as suggested by Norhashimah Jalaluddin (2011), President of the Malaysian Linguistic Society, when she raised the question of who is deemed more patriotic - citizens who wish for their own national language to be the MOI or the citizens who reject their country's national language. She further reminds the public that BM, as the national language, is the essence and soul of the national identity (Norhashimah Jalaluddin, 2011). Likewise, Khoo Kay Kim, an eminent scholar in education, is not in favour of the vernacular school system, too (Prof Khoo Kay Kim, 2009). He says:

Our education system must be restructured, to include the creation of single stream school to ensure the achievement of 1Malaysia.

The citizens have been segregated according to one's own stream and mother tongue since young, so when they grow up, it will be difficult for them to work together and achieve mutual understanding.

In contrast, Khoo Kay Peng (as cited in Gill, 2007), Executive Director of Sedar Institute, the think-tank of Gerakan, one of the multi-racial political parties in Malaysia, argues that children through their strong literacy skills access knowledge and information better in their mother-tongue. Similarly, Yoong (2010) states unequivocally that,

Whether done through parental choice or otherwise, forcing a child to accept instruction through a dominant language of instruction that is different from the mother tongue (either the dominant national language or an international language) is tantamount to immersion or submersion education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) because it is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim (p. 4).

These two differing views are described by Schmidt (as cited in Gill, 2007, p. 119) as the “advocates for minority language equality ... (who) speak in the language of justice, while proponents of national unity speak in terms of national good,” result in

one of the most challenging complexities of language policy conflict, which is “its partisans often appear to be speaking past each other — participating in parallel discourse — rather than to each other, seemingly motivated by differing concerns”. It is also seen as a struggle between the “warriors” of the national language, made up of politicians and advocators (Asmah Haji Omar, as cited in Chong & Norsimah, 2007) and the *hua jiao dou shi* (fighters of Chinese education) involving the defenders of mother tongue education system (Chong & Norsimah, 2007). The education system in Malaysia, summarized in the diagram below, is a reflection of Schmidt’s statement. Undeniably, the existence of two types of schools has led to the complexity of language policy depicted in the boxes on the right where on the one hand, BM is deemed as the tool to develop national identity by the proponents of national unity; hence, disregarding Chinese vernacular MOI due to the limited usage of BM in those schools. But the advocates for minority language see BM as another compulsory subject with little impact on national unity.

Besides the criticism made towards the vernacular school system, the status of the national language was raised in Malaysian mainstream media, which questioned the loyalty of Malaysian Chinese (Elias, 2008). The debate started when Toh (2010) commented that not being well-versed in BM would not make him less patriotic. Some agreed, for instance Chan (2010) who claimed to be comfortable speaking English and saw no reason for putting pride in culture and languages. However, Arbee (2010) believes that BM should be given the recognition befitting its status by all who professed to be citizens of this country. His view was echoed by Prime Minister Najib Tun Abdul Razak, who reminded Malaysians of the importance of speaking good BM as it is our identity at the inaugural 1Malaysia National Teachers Assembly (“*Help student learn,*” 2010).

Coupled with the above challenge is the 1Malaysia concept proposed by the current Prime Minister, who has promoted it as the essence of unity in diversity. He said that the key to achieving unity is the celebration of our diversity and his formula to accomplish

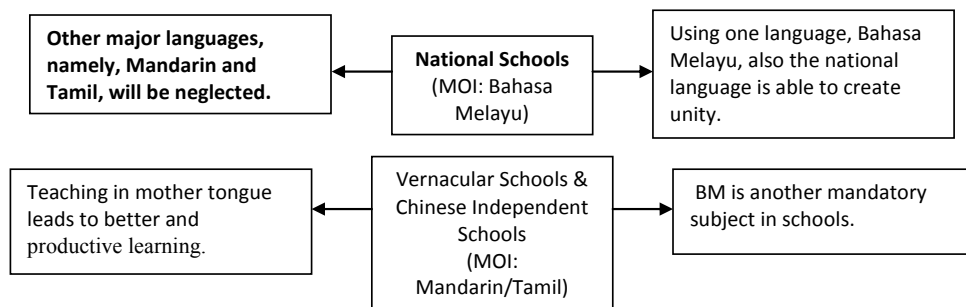


Fig.2: Two differing language policy views in Malaysia

it is: Unity = Diversity + Inclusiveness (Kee, 2010). However, the equation is open to huge intangible possibilities and to avoid Malaysia ending up just like other slogans that came before it, Kee suggested that:

... it could set a goal to build racial unity, complete with an action plan with detailed measures that would bring the different races together to learn about one another so they can accept their differences. It could entail – I'm merely quoting possibilities – the creation of a single-stream education system, even a reform of the entire education system in order to depoliticise it; the complete removal of the category of "race" in all forms, official and otherwise... the organising of projects to educate the masses on the celebration of diversity. Whatever fits the principles of acceptance and diversity.

Kee's proposal of having a single-stream school⁵ system in building a united nation is considerable. It implies that mother-tongue education system in general plays a part in racial segregation.

In order to identify whether Chinese medium schools are the cause of segregation and whether a single-stream education system will ensure unity, it is important to unravel the current situation of propagating unity in the Chinese school system.

METHODOLOGY

Unlike most people in Hong Kong, who are of Chinese descent, resisting mother-tongue education and preferring English, which is seen as the language of international commerce (Tsui, 2004), and Singaporeans who supported bilingualism due to investments of many multinational corporations (MNCs) in the 70s (Pakir, 2004), Chinese in Malaysia uphold Chinese-medium education intensely. It is so intense that opponents of Chinese medium education have attributed it as an obstacle to national unity. Therefore, to determine whether the usage of MOI in Chinese medium schools poses a threat to national integration, a questionnaire survey adapted from Fazilah *et al.* (2009) (see Appendix A) was used because the questionnaire dealt with the impact of language and social cohesion in determining national identity, where three most relevant aspects were investigated; a) the portrayal of ethnicity and national identity via the usage of language; b) the choice of language and its functions; and c) the extent of language influences on the integration and segregation of a community. These aspects were scrutinized because they intertwine with national unity and that language plays a pivotal role in providing a country the means of developing a national identity and "socio-cultural authenticity" (Gill, forthcoming).

In this current study, the objective is to determine whether the MOI used in vernacular schools and the students' attitudes in relation to the former result in unity or segregation in Malaysia. The

Chinese school responses to unity were analyzed based on the three categories parallel with the research questions namely: 1) students' perception of the usage of certain languages which depict either ethnicity or national identity; 2) their chosen language and its function inside and outside

of school; 3) along with their perception on which language has the greatest impact on national integration. Some of the questions asked according to the sections were shown in Fig.3 to Fig.5 (the complete questionnaire is found in Appendix B).

| |
|--|
| <i>Bahasa Melayu patut diselaraskan dan diwajibkan penggunaannya di mana sahaja supaya ia dapat menjadi identiti kebangsaan.</i> (The Malay language should be standardized and its usage must be made compulsory so that it will be the national identity) |
| <i>Saya mengiktiraf bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa rasmi.</i> (I acknowledge the Malay language as the national language) |
| <i>Saya takut untuk berbahasa Melayu kerana takut identiti saya terhapus.</i> (I am afraid to speak Malay due to fear of disengagement from own identity) |

Fig.3: Students' perception on the usage of certain languages depicting ethnicity or national identity

| |
|--|
| <i>Saya akan menggunakan bahasa Melayu ketika berjumpa dengan rakan dari etnik lain di kantin.</i> (I will use Malay if I met friends of different ethnicity in the canteen) |
| <i>Saya lebih suka menggunakan bahasa etnik saya ketika berinteraksi dengan rakan sesama etnik.</i> (I prefer using my mother tongue when interacting with friends of similar ethnic) |
| <i>Saya akan menukar penggunaan bahasa apabila berinteraksi dengan etnik lain.</i> (I will code-switch when interacting with friends of different ethnicity) |

Fig.4: Students' choice of language and its functions

| |
|---|
| <i>Saya rasa selasa kalau etnik lain dapat menggunakan bahasa etnik saya.</i> (I am comfortable seeing friends of different ethnicity using my mother tongue) |
| <i>Saya sedia untuk menukar bahasa yang sedang saya gunakan dengan rakan seetnik dengan saya jika bercakap dengan rakan dari etnik lain.</i> (I am ready to code-switch from my mother tongue to another language when speaking with friends of different ethnicity) |
| <i>Saya bersedia untuk menggunakan bahasa Melayu walaupun tidak sempurna.</i> (I am ready to use the Malay language even though it is not perfect) |

Fig.5: Students' perception on language that has the greatest impact on national integration

For validation, an interview (See Appendix C) was carried out to ensure the reliability of the responses obtained from the questionnaire. In addition to interviewing the students, teachers' perceptions on this issue were also obtained during an interview due to their personal experience at school and their engagement with students on a daily basis although they were not involved in answering the questionnaire.

Sixty students equally distributed between two, a Chinese vernacular school and a Chinese Independent school, were conveniently selected. Comparing the responses from these two schools was not the purpose of this study but they served as a fair representation of both government-aided and private Chinese schools in Malaysia adopting Mandarin as the MOI. It was also easier to obtain the consent from the students as well as permission of their principals before the study could be conducted, one of the requirements of convenience sampling adopted for this study.

After retrieving the questionnaires from thirty students each in the two urban Chinese schools, their understanding of the use of certain languages to unite a country and their preferred language as well as their perception on the impact of language on national integration was analysed. It was followed by an interview with four teachers and ten students equally distributed between the Chinese vernacular school and Chinese Independent school for triangulation purposes.

The limitations of this study are the small number of respondents (60 in all) and the two Chinese schools which do not represent the whole Malaysian Chinese community. However, this small scale study is conducted to obtain feedback on the real situation existing in Chinese vernacular schools with regards whether the adopted MOI contributes to unity or disunity. Another limitation is the partial involvement of teachers in contributing viewpoints which are significant in revealing the present picture in Chinese medium schools in propagating unity.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Chinese school responses to unity were analyzed in this section according to the three research questions. Fig.6 shows a sampling of the perceptions of students towards the usage of certain languages in depicting ethnicity or national identity (Research Question 1). A total of 78.5% of the Chinese education system students considered Mandarin to be more important than BM, while 95% believed that the constant usage of Mandarin guaranteed its survival and its importance would not diminish, and 99% of them preferred to use Mandarin more than BM for various purposes. In contrast, where BM is concerned, 13% chose to communicate in BM and it was for interaction with their non-Chinese friends. Moreover, 65% showed a less than desired attitude towards the national language, where 24% confessed having relatively low proficiency in BM, 11% were afraid their

Chinese identity might be devalued if BM was used and 30% had great appreciation for Mandarin.

For Research Question 2, where the students' choice of language in interactions was queried (see Fig.10), only 41.7% of the Chinese medium school students believed

that using a similar language (i.e. the Malay language) would reinforce integration among the school community. A majority of the students (86.7%) believed that English or Mandarin should be the national language and 83.3% thought English should replace BM as the unifying language as English is

| No | Item | Scale | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------------|----|
| | | Strongly Disagree (1) | | Disagree (2) | | Agree (3) | | Strongly Agree (4) | |
| | | C.I ¹ | V ² | C.I | > | C.I | > | C.I | > |
| 1 | <i>Saya suka menggunakan bahasa etnik/ dialek saya.</i> (I like using my mother tongue/ dialect) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 13 | 6 | 18 | 22 |
| 2 | <i>Saya perlu menggunakan bahasa ibunda saya supaya tidak lupus.</i> (I have to use my mother tongue so that it will not die out) | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 19 | 24 |
| 4 | <i>Identiti saya dapat dikenali dengan bahasa yang saya gunakan.</i> (The language I use represent my identity) | 4 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 17 |
| 8 | <i>Saya hanya akan menggunakan bahasa Melayu apabila berinteraksi dengan rakan berbangsa Melayu sahaja.</i> (I will only use the Malay language when interacting with Malay friends) | 3 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 12 |
| 10 | <i>Bahasa Melayu patut diselaraskan dan diwajibkan penggunaannya di mana sahaja supaya ia dapat menjadi identiti kebangsaan.</i> (The Malay language should be standardized and its usage must be made compulsory so that it will be the national identity) | 14 | 9 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 3 |
| 11 | <i>Saya mengiktiraf bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa rasmi.</i> (I acknowledge the Malay language as the national language) | 7 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| 13 | <i>Saya lebih mengiktiraf bahasa Cina berbanding bahasa Melayu.</i> (I acknowledge Mandarin more than the Malay language) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 18 | 19 |
| 15 | <i>Saya menghormati bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa rasmi Malaysia.</i> (I respect and value the Malay language as the official language in Malaysia) | 4 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 7 | 8 |

¹ C.I is the acronym for Chinese Independent Schools

² V is the acronym for Vernacular Schools

Fig.6: Perception of the usage of certain languages depicting ethnicity or national identity section

not the native language of any ethnic group in Malaysia. Fig.10 illustrates the students' choice of language and its functions in brief.

When the students were asked to choose their preferred language to converse with their teachers and school authority, 75.7% of them chose Mandarin (see Fig.7). Similarly, when they were again asked to choose between Mandarin and BM for leisure or

formal discussion outside and inside the school environment, it was apparent that Mandarin was their choice, as indicated in Fig.8 and Fig.9. In particular, they claimed that Mandarin was a simpler language to use compared to BM for communicative purposes.

It was confirmed in the interview that the students regarded BM as just a

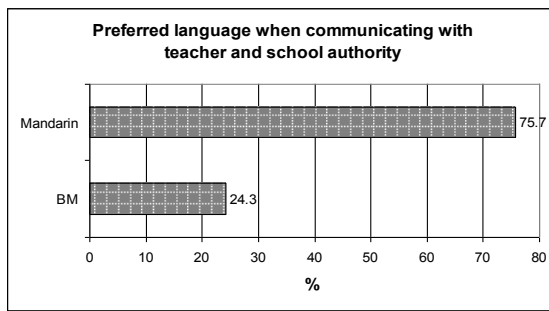


Fig.7: The preferred language when communicating with teachers and school authority

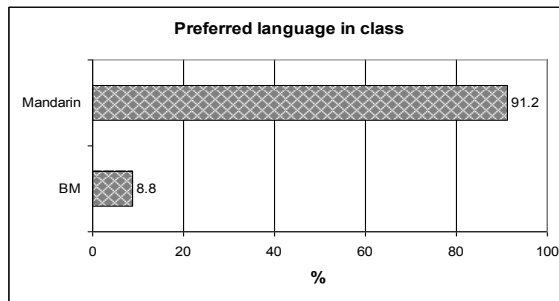


Fig.8: Students' preferred language in class

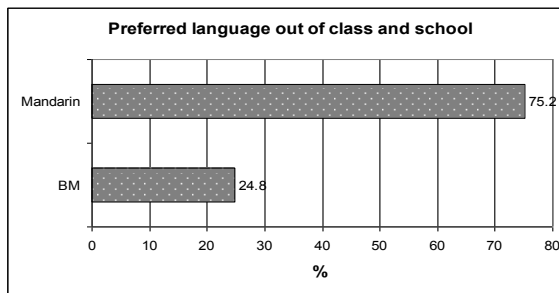


Fig.9: Students' preferred language outside classroom and school environment

compulsory subject in school, when they were asked if BM could be used to unite students in the Chinese medium schools. However, 66.7% of them were willing to use the Malay language even though they were not proficient at it. Below are samples of the students' responses.

... learning BM is a responsibility and it is compulsory. So I learn BM to pass the government exam

(Chinese vernacular school Student 4)

| No | Item | Scale | | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|----|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------------|----|
| | | Strongly Disagree (1) | | Disagree (2) | | Agree (3) | | Strongly Agree (4) | |
| | | C.I | > | C.I | > | C.I | > | C.I | > |
| 1 | <i>Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu ketika berinteraksi dengan pengurusan tertinggi sekolah dan juga pengetua.</i> (I use the Malay language when interacting with the school authorities and the principal) | 19 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | <i>Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu di luar bilik darjah.</i> (I use the Malay language outside the classroom) | 14 | 12 | 9 | 15 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | <i>Saya menggunakan bahasa Cina ketika berinteraksi dengan guru.</i> (I use Mandarin when interacting with the teachers) | 1 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 10 | 20 | 19 | 6 |
| 4 | <i>Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu semasa berinteraksi dengan rakan dalam bilik darjah.</i> (I use the Malay language when interacting with friends in the classroom) | 14 | 13 | 13 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 6 | <i>Saya lebih suka menggunakan bahasa Cina berbanding bahasa Melayu di luar kelas.</i> (I prefer using Mandarin more than Malay outside the classroom) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 24 | 24 |
| 7 | <i>Saya berasa bangga apabila bercakap bahasa Cina.</i> (I feel proud when I am speaking Mandarin) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 21 | 22 |
| 8 | <i>Saya fasih berbahasa Cina berbanding Bahasa Melayu.</i> (I speak Mandarin fluently as compared to Malay) | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 21 | 25 |
| 9 | <i>Saya berpendapat bahasa Inggeris/ Cina lebih wajar dijadikan bahasa kebangsaan.</i> (I think English/Mandarin should be made the national language) | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 17 | 19 |
| 12 | <i>Saya akan menukar penggunaan bahasa apabila berinteraksi dengan etnik lain.</i> (I will code-switch when interacting with friends of different ethnicity) | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 20 | 17 | 6 | 5 |
| 13 | <i>Saya sebolehnya mengelak dari bercakap bahasa Melayu apabila di luar kelas.</i> (I will avoid speaking the Malay language outside the classroom) | 6 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 14 | 4 | 4 |
| 15 | <i>Bahasa Melayu lebih penting digunakan di luar bilik darjah/sekolah.</i> (The Malay language is significantly used outside the classroom/school) | 10 | 8 | 16 | 14 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| 18 | <i>Bahasa Cina lebih digunakan daripada bahasa Melayu untuk tujuan komunikasi.</i> (Mandarin is used more than Malay for communication purposes) | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 17 | 21 |
| 21 | <i>Berbahasa Cina lebih mudah untuk berkomunikasi dengan etnik lain.</i> (Mandarin is a simpler language to be used to communicate with friends of different ethnicity) | 0 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 16 | 14 |
| 25 | <i>Penggunaan bahasa Inggeris melunturkan jati diri kebangsaan.</i> (Using English will diminish one sense of national identity) | 3 | 12 | 4 | 6 | 16 | 6 | 8 | 5 |

Fig. 10: The choice of language and its functions

We grow up in a Chinese environment, so using Mandarin is normal. I learn BM because I live in Malaysia and BM is our national language

(Chinese Independent school Student 2).

Finally for Research Question 3, where students were asked the language that had the greatest impact on national integration (see Fig.11), a total of 71.7% did not agree with the view that BM would enhance bonding among the different major ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians).

A majority (75.6%) of them agreed that segregation happened among students due to the frequent usage of one’s mother tongue. When they were asked whether they were comfortable seeing friends of other ethnic groups using their mother tongue, 85% showed acceptance. In addition, they felt at ease using Mandarin with their non-Chinese friends in school during the interview.

DISCUSSION

To ensure consistency with the data obtained from the questionnaire, the students’ insights to national unity were complemented by the teachers’ via interviews. Students’ choice

| No | Item | Scale | | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------------|----|
| | | Strongly Disagree (1) | | Disagree (2) | | Agree (3) | | Strongly Agree (4) | |
| | | CI | > | CI | > | CI | > | CI | > |
| 1 | <i>Saya rasa selasa kalau etnik lain dapat menggunakan bahasa etnik saya.</i> (I am comfortable seeing friends of different ethnicity using my mother tongue) | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 19 | 11 | 14 | 7 |
| 2 | <i>Saya sedia untuk menukar bahasa yang sedang saya gunakan dengan rakan seetnik dengan saya jika bercakap dengan rakan dari etnik lain.</i> (I will code-switch when interacting with friends of different ethnicity) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 3 | 11 | 16 | 7 | 11 |
| 3 | <i>Saya bersedia untuk menggunakan bahasa Melayu walaupun tidak sempurna.</i> (I am ready to use the Malay language even though it is not perfect) | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 20 | 13 | 2 | 7 |
| 4 | <i>Saya percaya penggunaan satu bahasa yang sama iaitu bahasa Melayu dapat mengukuhkan perpaduan di kalangan komuniti sekolah.</i> (I believe by using a similar language i.e. the Malay language can increase unity among the school communities) | 10 | 8 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| 5 | <i>Saya yakin penggunaan bahasa Melayu dapat merapatkan hubungan dengan etnik yang lain.</i> (I am certain that using the Malay language can enhance bonding among different ethnicities) | 8 | 7 | 17 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 5 |
| 10 | <i>Saya rasa tersisih apabila saya dikalangan rakan etnik lain dan mereka bercakap dalam bahasa etnik mereka.</i> (I feel marginalized if my friends of different ethnicity speak in their mother tongue when I am around) | 0 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 6 | 4 |

Fig. 10: Perception on language that has the greatest impact on national integration

of language was one of the major concerns, as shown in Fig.7, Fig.8, and Fig.9. It appears that students in Chinese schools preferred Mandarin as their language of choice because of their fluency in the language, the lack of interactions with other races in the school and its usefulness as a language of communication. The students were very comfortable using Mandarin to express themselves. There were limited opportunities for them to use BM with other races in a monolingual school and Mandarin could be used within Malaysia and internationally. Interestingly, most teachers agreed that the usage of Mandarin was a representation of what and who the students were. The strong preference for Mandarin showed the strong bond they possessed with their Chinese roots. The reasons given below as to why BM was not a preferred language revealed the underlying realities faced by the teachers in propagating unity in the schools:

We do not have many Malay friends so BM is used for communication purposes in the government sectors like when we want to renew our IC or passport.

(Chinese Independent school Student 2).

BM is a compulsory subject to pass in order to obtain the SPM result. We are learning it for the sake of passing the exam and to secure a scholarship or a place in

the matriculation, not because we like it.

(Chinese vernacular school Student 2).

BM or Bahasa Indonesia are generally used in South East Asia, specifically Malaysia and Indonesia; and it is not the language of trade and business.

(Chinese Independent school Teacher 2).

Presently, Chinese is growing economically but the market is very small for Malay. When you look at America, the former president of American, Mr. Bush said people should know China is one huge market by means of Chinese language.

(Chinese vernacular Teacher 1)

The above responses provided an overall picture of the Chinese medium school students' purpose of learning the national language as well as the teachers' view of the functions of BM. They regarded BM as a tool for personal enhancement ranging from business to education and communication purposes. This stand mirrors Gardner and Lambert's (as cited in Brown, 2007) instrumental motivation in learning a language where instead of wishing to integrate themselves into the culture of a language group in this case, the non-Chinese, they choose to acquire a language

as a means for attaining instrumental goals like furthering a career.

When teachers were asked the problems they face in trying to foster unity among the students, findings from the interviews conducted presented the following viewpoints:

In my school I can say 99% of the students are Chinese, so the problem of unity happens only when they are outside the school.

(Chinese vernacular Teacher 2)

I do not have this kind of chance to realize unity. I do not have any student from different races. Independent schools seldom have other races.

(Chinese Independent school Teacher 1)

The teachers' points of view, with regard to the mono-ethnic environment, were verified in the ratio of Chinese students and teachers to non-Chinese in both vernacular and Chinese Independent schools shown in the following table. Although there is a strong mix in the Chinese vernacular schools, the number of Chinese students still outnumbered other ethnicity by 7:1, whereas it is 68:1 in Chinese Independent schools.

Lee Lam Thye (as cited in Lim & Kang, 2010), the 1Malaysia Foundation trustee, stresses the same point when he says:

Students nowadays do not mix much with those of different races. It must also be remembered that students

who go to vernacular schools lack the opportunity to get to know friends from other races. This problem may not be so apparent in the remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak, even though there are many indigenous tribes, because all the students go to the same school (p. 10).

In addition to the above-mentioned realities, the teachers stressed on their main duty in school, which is to complete the syllabus assigned, i.e. Integrative Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM), has discreetly deterred teachers' initiative in propagating national unity. Some of them claimed that they did indirectly tell the students what was right and wrong when they brought up ethnic issues during class discussions. The efforts of these schools in promoting national identity via the national language were insufficient as a result of the struggle among the teachers to balance a variety of tasks and responsibilities at the same time. Since the implementation of KBSM by Malaysian Education Ministry, teachers according to Shahril@Charil Marzuki and Habib Mat Som (as cited in Idris Aman & Rosniah Mustaffa, 2006) have to plan numerous activities and teaching aids to enhance students' ability and interest. Additionally, they should produce individuals who are literate in Information and Communicative Technology and who are capable of exploring new knowledge so that they can communicate effectively in multiple socio-cultural conditions (Zahirah,

as cited in Idris Aman & Rosniah Mustaffa, 2006).

Another interesting phenomenon is the preference of more than half of the students choosing English over BM as the unifying language. No doubt English is not the native language of any ethnic group in Malaysia, thus known as 'neutral' (Ong, 2005), but it was once a colonizer's language. This fact, however, does not stop some Malaysians including the respondents of this study from appreciating its benefit. The students from Chinese vernacular MOI are aware that English will be used for more purposes in the future. This is substantiated by the fact that these students formed the majority group who agreed that English would remain the world language as in the British Council's English 2000 Global Consultation Questionnaire conducted by Graddol (2000).

In general, consideration of BM as a language of communication in Malaysia, the lack of interactions with friends from other ethnic groups in the Chinese medium school, the emphasis teachers placed on the efficacy in delivering the content of a subject and championing of English appear to have a negative effect on national unity.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of the small samples of subjects and schools, the current study was able to provide reasonable answers as to how students portrayed ethnicity and national identities via the use of Mandarin. They believe that the language used symbolizes their ethnic and cultural roots.

Besides, it also had social economic value. In terms of language choice, students prefer using Mandarin in their daily interactions while English in their opinion can be the ultimate language to unite Malaysians. The rationale of disregarding BM as a unifying language was because students had failed to understand the association between unity and the use of language. This perception was compounded by the realities teachers faced in trying to promote unity in the school into their teaching.

Shedding light on the issue of unity in Malaysia, this study has unravelled responses directly from the affected parties. However, issues brought up by other researchers regarding Chinese education in Malaysia must also be taken into consideration when considering national unity. Wong (2006) pointed out a profusion of benefits (for example, enhancing the competence of Malaysian student as being multilingual, promotion of Chinese culture and tradition to the others, broadening the opportunity to study abroad) that Malaysia can obtain by having Chinese language education in relation to globalization. Chong and Norsimah (2007) highlighted the Chinese's determination to strengthen their mother tongue through the institutionalization of Chinese education was a result of the fear of language assimilation under the national language policy as reflected in the responses obtained from this study when the students and teachers appeared to be holding strongly to their mother tongue.

To conclude, having a multi-ethnic environment in which students get to

study, play and progress together is an ideal school. Besides ensuring the development of national integration and national unity, the young may understand and appreciate their motherland as a whole. Many Malaysians have suggested a single-stream school system to achieve national cohesiveness but it is not politically feasible to eliminate Chinese-medium schools as this will lead to political chaos and instability for the nation (Gill, 2007). It is also not right to presume vernacular schools as the major contributing cause of disharmony as there are other causes of disunity among Malaysians. Therefore, attempts should be made to identify these causes. Meanwhile, the government should continue to provide access to maternal languages of the dominant ethnic groups besides encouraging actual interaction and engagement among the various races to learn the meaning of becoming a true Malaysian.

ENDNOTES

¹Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (ICSS) are not subsidized in any form by the government; therefore, these schools are funded by initiatives of various Chinese associations and community projects and relatively higher tuition fees (Chong & Norsimah, 2007). ICSS are grouped under the roof of Chinese Private Education System, monitored by The Private Education division (PED) also known as Bahagian Pendidikan Swasta (BP Swasta) (www.schoolmalaysia.com).

²Mother tongue, by definition is the first language of a particular ethnic group. In this sense, Hua Yu being a language that is taught formally in school may not be the mother tongue as per se, as these children may have been speaking some forms of mother tongue, which are the Chinese dialects. But it has been widely acknowledged that the mother tongue of the Malaysian Chinese is solely Hua Yu (Mandarin) (Chong & Norsimah, 2007).

³At secondary level, the only MOI is BM hence it is called National schools except private secondary schools.

⁴In 2002, the then prime minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad introduced a new policy called the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (Pengajaran Pendidikan Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris-PPSMI) where English is made the language of instruction of the mentioned subjects aiming to enhance students' English proficiency while learning the content. However, after 7 years of implementation, the Malaysia Ministry of Education (MOE) has decided to end the policy by 2012 (Norhashimah Jalaluddin, 2011).

⁵“One school system adopts Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. Pupils would then be given the option to study their mother tongues. Under this system, the Malays will also have the option of studying other languages like Mandarin and Tamil and this will further boost unity among them,” said Mukhriz Mahathir (as cited in Elias, 2008).

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APPENDIX QUESTIONNAIRE

A

Bahagian A

Latar Belakang Responden

| Bil. | Item | Jawapan |
|------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | Jantina | Lelaki Perempuan |
| 2 | Etnik | Melayu Cina India Bumiputera Lain-lain (Nyatakan): |
| 3 | Negeri Asal | |
| 4 | Agama | Islam Buddha Hindu Lain-lain (Nyatakan): |
| 5 | Bahasa Ibunda | |
| 6 | Nama Sekolah Rendah | |
| 7 | Nama Sekolah Menengah | |
| 8 | Kawasan Kediaman Keluarga | Kampung Pekan Bandar Bandaraya |

Bahagian B

Sila jawab pernyataan di bawah dengan menandakan \surd mengikut skala berikut.

1. SANGAT TIDAK SETUJU 2. TIDAK SETUJU 3. SETUJU
4. SANGAT SETUJU

Mengkaji bagaimana bahasa menggambarkan etnik dan identiti kebangsaan.

| Bil | Item | Skala | | | |
|-----|---|-------|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | Saya suka menggunakan bahasa etnik/dialek saya. | | | | |
| 2 | Saya perlu menggunakan bahasa ibunda saya supaya tidak lupus. | | | | |
| 3 | Saya perlu menggunakan bahasa ibunda saya supaya dapat diwariskan kepada generasi seterusnya. | | | | |
| 4 | Identiti saya dapat dikenali dengan bahasa yang saya gunakan. | | | | |
| 5 | Bahasa yang selalu saya gunakan melambangkan identiti saya. | | | | |
| 6 | Saya faham bahasa Melayu tetapi tidak fasih dalam bertutur. | | | | |
| 7 | Saya lebih kerap menggunakan bahasa Melayu di sekolah berbanding sebelum ini. | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| 8 | Saya hanya akan menggunakan bahasa Melayu apabila berinteraksi dengan rakan berbangsa Melayu sahaja. | | | | |
| 9 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu ketika berinteraksi dengan rakan saya dari etnik/dialek lain. | | | | |
| 10 | Bahasa Melayu patut diselaraskan dan diwajibkan penggunaannya di mana sahaja supaya ia dapat menjadi identiti kebangsaan. | | | | |
| 11 | Saya mengiktiraf bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa rasmi. | | | | |
| 12 | Saya takut untuk berbahasa Melayu kerana takut identiti saya terhapus. | | | | |
| 13 | Saya lebih mengiktiraf bahasa Cina berbanding bahasa Melayu. | | | | |
| 14 | Saya suka menggunakan bahasa Inggeris/ Cina apabila berinteraksi dengan rakan etnik kecuali etnik Melayu. | | | | |
| 15 | Saya menghormati bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa rasmi Malaysia. | | | | |

Bahagian C

Sila jawab pernyataan di bawah dengan menandakan \surd mengikut skala berikut.

1. SANGAT TIDAK SETUJU 2. TIDAK SETUJU 3. SETUJU
4. SANGAT SETUJU

Mengkaji pilihan bahasa dan fungsi bahasa tersebut di dalam dan luar kelas.

| Bil | Item | Skala | | | |
|-----|---|-------|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu ketika berinteraksi dengan pengurusan tertinggi sekolah dan juga pengetua. | | | | |
| 2 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu di luar bilik darjah. | | | | |
| 3 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Cina ketika berinteraksi dengan guru. | | | | |
| 4 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu semasa berinteraksi dengan rakan dalam bilik darjah. | | | | |
| 5 | Saya menggunakan bahasa Melayu dalam perbincangan tugas. | | | | |
| 6 | Saya lebih suka menggunakan bahasa Cina berbanding bahasa Melayu di luar kelas. | | | | |
| 7 | Saya berasa bangga apabila bercakap bahasa Cina. | | | | |
| 8 | Saya fasih berbahasa Cina berbanding Bahasa Melayu. | | | | |
| 9 | Saya berpendapat bahasa Inggeris/ Cina lebih wajar dijadikan bahasa kebangsaan. | | | | |
| 10 | Saya akan menggunakan bahasa Melayu ketika berjumpa dengan rakan dari etnik lain di kantin. | | | | |
| 11 | Saya lebih suka menggunakan bahasa etnik saya ketika berinteraksi dengan rakan sesama etnik. | | | | |
| 12 | Saya akan menukar penggunaan bahasa apabila berinteraksi dengan etnik lain. | | | | |
| 13 | Saya sebolehnya megelak dari bercakap bahasa Melayu apabila di luar kelas. | | | | |
| 14 | Bahasa Cina lebih penting digunakan di luar bilik darjah/sekolah. | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| 15 | Bahasa Melayu lebih penting digunakan di luar bilik darjah/sekolah. | | | | |
| 16 | Bahasa Cina lebih digunakan daripada bahasa Melayu di luar bilik darjah/sekolah. | | | | |
| 17 | Bahasa Melayu lebih digunakan daripada bahasa Cina di luar bilik darjah/sekolah. | | | | |
| 18 | Bahasa Cina lebih digunakan daripada bahasa Melayu untuk tujuan komunikasi. | | | | |
| 19 | Bahasa Melayu lebih digunakan daripada bahasa Cina untuk tujuan komunikasi. | | | | |
| 20 | Saya akan menggunakan bahasa Inggeris/ Cina terlebih dahulu untuk menegur tetamu sekolah. | | | | |
| 21 | Berbahasa Cina lebih mudah untuk berkomunikasi dengan etnik lain. | | | | |
| 22 | Berbahasa Melayu lebih mudah untuk berkomunikasi dengan etnik lain. | | | | |
| 23 | Saya akan berbahasa Cina apabila berurusan di kaunter perkhidmatan di sekolah. | | | | |
| 24 | Saya akan berbahasa Melayu apabila membuat panggilan kepada rakan etnik lain. | | | | |
| 25 | Penggunaan bahasa Inggeris melunturkan jati diri kebangsaan. | | | | |

Bahagian D

Sila jawab pernyataan di bawah dengan menandakan \surd mengikut skala berikut.

1. SANGAT TIDAK SETUJU 2. TIDAK SETUJU 3. SETUJU
4. SANGAT SETUJU

Sejauhmana bahasa terlibat dalam mengukuhkan dan memisahkan komuniti.

| Bil | Item | Skala | | | |
|-----|--|-------|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | Saya rasa sesala kalau etnik lain dapat menggunakan bahasa etnik saya. | | | | |
| 2 | Saya sedia untuk menukar bahasa yang sedang saya gunakan dengan rakan seetnik dengan saya jika bercakap dengan rakan dari etnik lain. | | | | |
| 3 | Saya bersedia untuk menggunakan bahasa Melayu walaupun tidak sempurna. | | | | |
| 4 | Saya percaya penggunaan satu bahasa yang sama iaitu bahasa Melayu dapat mengukuhkan perpaduan di kalangan komuniti sekolah. | | | | |
| 5 | Saya yakin penggunaan bahasa Melayu dapat merapatkan hubungan dengan etnik yang lain. | | | | |
| 6 | Penggunaan bahasa Melayu di kalangan pelajar sekolah dapat meningkatkan jati diri kebangsaan. | | | | |
| 7 | Saya berdebat bahasa Inggeris dapat mengukuhkan perpaduan di kalangan komuniti sekolah kerana Bahasa Inggeris merupakan bahasa yang tidak dipunyai oleh mana-mana etnik di Malaysia. | | | | |
| 8 | Saya berpendapat bahasa etnik lain harus dilarang penggunaannya dan semua pelajar dan staff sekolah mesti bercakap bahasa Melayu ketika di dalam sekolah. | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|
| 9 | Penggunaan bahasa mengikut etnik secara berleluasa oleh pelajar sekolah menanamkan sifat perkauman antara pelajar. | | | | |
| 10 | Saya rasa tersisih apabila saya dikalangan rakan etnik lain dan mereka bercakap dalam bahasa etnik mereka. | | | | |

Note: This questionnaire was adapted from Fazilah *et al.* (2009) *Bahasa dan Kejelekitan Sosial dalam Membentuk Jati Diri Kebangsaan* supported by UKM-GPP-PPKK-06-2009. However, we have significantly changed it to suit our research purposes.

APPENDIX B

Fazilah *et al.* (2009) Questionnaire

Fazilah *et al.* (2009). *Bahasa dan kejelekitan sosial dalam membentuk jati diri kebangsaan* [Language and social cohesion in forming national identity]. Unpublished manuscript.

(Please find the separate document entitled Fazilah *et al.* questionnaire)

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

| For Students | For Teachers |
|--|---|
| What does being a Malaysian mean? | Smith (1991) characterized national identity as a multidimensional concept, which also includes a specific language, sentiments and symbolism. What is your view on the definition of “national identity”? |
| What does being a Chinese in Malaysia mean? | To what extent do you agree that to belong to an ethnic group is to possess a common descent, cultural heritage, religion, language and a distinctive history and destiny and to feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity? |
| How do you identify yourself? Do you feel that you are Malaysian first and then Chinese, OR Chinese first and then Malaysian as in Malaysian of Chinese ethnicity OR Chinese Malaysian? Why? | Which do you emphasize in your teaching, “national identity” or “ethnic identity”. What are your reasons for doing so? |
| In a survey, 78.5% of the Chinese education system students consider Mandarin is more important than the Malay language (BM)? Why is this so? | In a survey, 78.5% of the Chinese education system students consider Mandarin is more important than the Malay language (BM)? Why is this so? |
| In a survey, only 28.3% of the Chinese students prefer using BM outside the classroom. Why is this happening? | In a survey, only 28.3% of the Chinese students prefer using BM outside the classroom. Why is this happening? |
| Do you think BM can be used to unite students in Chinese medium schools? Why? | The education policy has identified the undisputed role of BM as the medium of instruction (in SMJK to be specific) but in reality teachers and students converse in Mandarin and sometimes the teaching is also carried out in this language. In your view, how will the inculcation of national identity amongst these students be affected by this practice? |
| How do you think the school system can contribute to unity? | What can be done to help Chinese medium schools students respect and acknowledge BM.? |
| Do you learn about cultures and languages of the other ethnic groups in Malaysia? If yes, in what ways? | Do you think BM can be used to unite students in Chinese medium schools? Why? |
| | How do you use language to instil the values of unity among your students in school? |
| | Could you please share the problems you face in trying to instil unity among the students in your school? |
| | How do you think the school system can contribute to unity? |
| | Do the students learn about cultures and languages of the other ethnic groups in Malaysia? If yes, in what ways? |





Acquisition of Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Amongst Form 2 Students in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Science educators have strongly recommended that paper-and-pencil group testing format be used to measure process skills competency, which can be administered efficiently and objectively without requiring expensive resources. This paper reports the use of an author-developed psychometrically-supported Malaysian-Based Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Inventory (MB-BISPSI) to gauge the acquisition of science process skills amongst 1021 Form 2 students (548 girls and 473 boys) from seven (four rural and three interior) secondary schools in Kapit Division, Sarawak, exploring the interaction effects of gender, ethnicity, and school location. The findings indicated that the students achieved a mastery level which fell short of the two-third benchmark for the overall science process skills, basic and integrated science process skills, and also for each of the specific 12 science process skills. Additionally, gender-ethnicity interaction effect was found to be statistically significant; while female students generally achieved a markedly higher mean percentage score in the overall Science Process Skills than did the male students, and such a phenomenon was only observed amongst the Kenyah ethnicity. In terms of location, there was no significant difference in the acquisition of science process skills between rural and interior students. Implications for a more thoughtful inculcation of science process skills are proffered alongside recommendations for future research using a more

nationally representative sample to examine the validity of such generalisation.

Keywords: Practical work, basic and integrated science process skills, science education

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INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Science curricula, across disciplines and grade levels, place great emphasis on the acquisition of Science process skills (Curriculum Development Centre [CDC], 2002). Padilla (1990) defines Science process skills as a set of broadly transferable abilities, appropriate to many scientific disciplines and reflective of the behaviour of a scientist. Science process skills are categorised into basic Science process skills (BSPS) and integrated Science process skills (ISPS) (American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS], 1967). Using similar categories, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the Malaysian Ministry of Education has listed seven and five skills respectively for BSPS and ISPS in all of its Science syllabuses for both the primary and secondary levels. The skills listed under BSPS are: (1) observing, (2) classifying, (3) measuring and using numbers, (4) inferring, (5) predicting, (6) communicating, and (7) using space-time relationship. For ISPS, the skills are: (1) interpreting data, (2) controlling of variables, (3) defining operationally, (4) hypothesising, and (5) experimenting. Malaysian students are expected to be familiar with the language of science process skills right from the start as they experience the practical and theoretical aspects of Science.

The mastery of Science process skills is deemed crucial because these skills represent the rational and logical thinking skills in Science (Burns, Okey & Wise, 1985). For example, observing, a science

process skill, is related to the thinking skills of attributing, comparing and contrasting, and relating, whilst hypothesising, yet another science process skill, is related to the thinking skills of attributing, relating, comparing and contrasting, generating ideas, making hypothesis, predicting, and synthesizing (CDC, 2002). Accordingly, the acquisition of Science process skills enables students to operate within an enquiry manner and empowers them to act on information to produce solutions to problems.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Assessing students' acquisition of Science process skills is an important aspect in the teaching and learning of Science. Although Practical Work Evaluation, or its Malay equivalent, *Penilaian Kerja Amali* (PEKA) was introduced in 1999 across Malaysian schools, research has indicated that Science teachers face many problems while implementing the practical work that ranges from uncertainty or less confident in assessing practical work, insufficient time to assess accurately, to under-resourced large class size (Filmer & Foh, 1997; Noorasyikin Kusai, 2002). It was observed in Ong, Wong, Sopia, Sadiyah and Asmayati (2011) that when PEKA was done in groups and the assessment was based on group reports, there were bound to be cases in which some students had a free-ride or hitch-hike, only observing the experiments carried out by their group members. Yet, in another instance, when similar experiments are repeated yearly, students tend to submit copied or modified reports from their seniors

for assessment. As such, the assessment from the PEKA may not be a true and accurate reflection of the level of Science process skills acquisition of individual students.

To circumvent these problems, Science educators have strongly recommended that paper-and-pencil group testing format be used to measure process skills competency, which can be administered efficiently and objectively without requiring expensive resources (Dillashaw & Okey, 1980). Additionally, in view of the current scenario, where male students were markedly marginalised in terms of educational achievement (Demie, 2001; Wong, Lam, & Ho, 2002) and also of the Malaysian government's aspiration in closing the achievement gap between urban and rural students, as succinctly documented in the Education Development Master Plan, or *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan* (PIPP) (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2006), it follows that the developed Science process skills instrument could be used to illuminate the differences in the acquisition levels between gender and between location.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to determine the differential acquisition of Science process skills amongst Form 2 students by gender, location, and by ethnicity, as measured by the Malaysian-Based Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Inventory (MB-BISPSI). The development and validation of MB-BISPSI was reported in Ong *et al.* (2011).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In as much as the purpose of this study was to determine the differential acquisition of Science process skills amongst Form 2 students by gender, location, and by ethnicity as measured by MB-BISPSI, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the levels of Science process skills acquisition amongst the Form 2 students in terms of overall, basic, and integrated Science process skills achievement?
2. What are the levels of Science process skills amongst the Form 2 students in each of the 12 Science process skills: Observing, Classifying, Measuring and Using Numbers, Inferring, Predicting, Communicating, Using Space-Time Relationship, Interpreting Data, Defining Operationally, Controlling Variables, Hypothesising, and Experimenting?
3. Are there any main effects for gender, location, and ethnicity in terms of overall Science process skills?
4. Are there any two-way interaction and three-way interaction amongst gender, location and ethnicity in terms of overall Science process skills?

SCIENCE PROCESS SKILLS: LITERATURE REVISITED

Huppert, Lomask, and Lazarowitz (2002) reckon that science process skills are a "major goal of science education, since those skills are not only needed by scientists, but by every citizen in order to become a scientifically literate person"

that can function in global society (p. 807). Additionally, these skills, according to Huppert *et al.* (2002), are applicable to all elements of society and as such, people should know how to use them in their daily life. But then, what constitute the Science process skills?

In the Malaysian context, Science process skills are categorised into basic

Science process skills (BSPS) and integrated science process skills (ISPS), of which their precise definitions are given in Table 1.

Ismail (2001) investigated Forms 2 and 4 (14 and 16-year-old) students' performance on integrated Science process skills (ISPS) using the translated version of the instrument developed by Burns, Okey, and Wise (1985). This instrument,

TABLE 1
Definition of Basic Science Process Skills and Integrated Science Process Skills

| No | Science Process Skill | Explanations |
|----|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Observing | Process of gathering information about an object or phenomenon using all or some of the senses. Instruments could be used to assist the senses. The observation could be quantitative, qualitative or change. |
| 2 | Classifying | Observing and identifying similarities and differences between objects or phenomena, and gather them in terms of similar characteristics. |
| 3 | Measuring & using numbers | Observing quantitatively using instruments with standardised units. Ability to use numbers is central to the ability to measure. |
| 4 | Inferring | Giving explanation to an observation of event or object. Usually, past experiences and previously collected data are used as a basis for the explanation, and it could be correct or otherwise. |
| 5 | Predicting | Process of conjecturing a coming event based on observation and previous experience or availability of valid data. |
| 6 | Communicating | Presenting idea or information in varied modes such as orally, in written form, using graphs, diagrams, models, tables, and symbols. It also involves ability to listen to other's idea and respond to the idea. |
| 7 | Using space-time relationship | Describing changes in parameter with time. Examples of parameters are location, direction, shape, size, volume, temperature, and mass. |
| 8 | Interpreting data | Process of giving rational explanation of an object, event or patterns from the gathered information. The gathered information may come in different forms. |
| 9 | Defining operationally | Making definition of a concept or variable by stating what it is, and how it could be carried out and measured. |
| 10 | Controlling of variables | Identifying the fixed (constant) variables, manipulated variable and responding variable in an investigation. The manipulated variable is changed to observe its relationship with the responding variable. At the same time, the fixed variables are kept constant. |
| 11 | Hypothesising | Ability to make general statement that explains a matter or event. This statement must be testable to prove its validity. |
| 12 | Experimenting | This is an investigation that tests a hypothesis. The process of experimenting involves all or combination of the other processes. |

which comprises 36 items, measures five process skills: (i) identifying variables (12 items), (ii) operationally defining (6 items), (iii) hypothesising (9 items), (iv) experimenting (3 items), and (v) interpreting data and graph (6 items). Comparing the performance on ISPS by level, there was a statistically significant difference between Forms 2 and 4 students in hypothesising, operationally defining, experimenting, and interpreting data and graph. With respect to gender, statistically significant differences were found in hypothesising, identifying variables, and interpreting data and graph. However, the ISPS mean scores for Forms 2 and 4 students (i.e., 32.3% and 34.5%, respectively) and for boys and girls (i.e., 31.5% and 34.5% respectively) were considered low. In order to explain these low ISPS mean scores, Ismail (2001) points to the ubiquitous use of didactic teaching, note copying and ineffective laboratory teaching that does not relate theory with the practical work.

Abu Hassan and Rohana (2003) investigated the level of Science process skills acquisition within the context of Chemistry amongst 300 form four students drawn from seven secondary schools in Johor Baharu by means of cluster random sampling. However, only two basic Science process skills (i.e., predicting and inferencing) and four integrated Science process skills (i.e., hypothesising, identifying variables, interpreting data, and experimenting) were measured using an author-developed structured-item Science process skills test which has a reliability

of 0.90. The findings indicated that the students achieved an overall Science process skills mean of 54.26% and specifically, in descending order, 71.45% for hypothesising, 65.50% for interpreting data, 62.50% for predicting, 59.41% for identifying variables, 49.00% for inferencing, and 36.68% for experimenting.

Kiu (2006) conducted a study to determine the level of integrated science process skills amongst 100 second-year Science education undergraduate students who majored in Science, Chemistry, and Physics at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in Skudai, Johore. The five integrated Science process skills, namely, controlling variables, hypothesising, defining operationally, interpreting data, and experimenting, were assessed using an instrument, with a reliability of 0.85, which was adapted by Samini (1986) from the Test of Integrated Process Skills I (Dillashaw & Okey, 1980) and Test of Integrated Science Process Skills II (Burns *et al.*, 1985). The findings indicated that the overall acquisition of the integrated Science process skills were “moderate”, with a mean score of 20.21 (57.68%). Additionally, it was found that there were no significant differences between gender, and between the Malay and Chinese students in terms of overall integrated Science process skills.

In summary, the review of local indigenous studies on Science process skills acquisition indicate that students, be they secondary or undergraduate, have yet to achieve an acceptable level of mastery (i.e., at least 67% in overall mean percentage

score) in Science process skills, particularly those which are categorised as integrated science process skills. However, there has been no study conducted which investigates the interactional effects amongst gender, ethnicity, and school location.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In view of the purpose of this study, the appropriate methodology used was a causal-comparative research design. In the causal-comparative design, the existing groups of students of various ethnicities in their respective intact ecological locations were used in the quest to ascertain and gauge their acquisition of Science process skills. In other words, the existing differences between gender, location, and ethnicity in terms of their acquisition of Science

process skills were determined and the reasoning for the differences found was proffered. This is in line with the principles in the causal-comparative design where “investigators attempt to determine the cause or consequences of differences that *already exist* between or among groups of individuals” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 366).

Sampling

A purposive cluster random sampling was employed in this study, given that the cluster was the “divisions” in the state of Sarawak and these divisions constituted the “intact groups [that were] randomly selected” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p.129), while purposive was incorporated into the cluster random sampling on the basis that the sole criterion for selection within the intact

TABLE 2
Actual Number of Participating Students by Gender, Location, and Ethnicity

| Location/ School | Male | | | | | | | Female | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|----|-----|----|----|----|-------|--------|----|-----|----|----|----|-------|
| | M | C | Ib | Ka | Ke | O | Total | M | C | Ib | Ka | Ke | O | Total |
| Rural | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| School A | 0 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 8 | 6 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 70 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 86 |
| School B | 4 | 4 | 87 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 100 | 2 | 3 | 82 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 91 |
| School C | 0 | 1 | 82 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 84 | 1 | 0 | 109 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 110 |
| School D | 5 | 9 | 79 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 95 | 4 | 6 | 84 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 97 |
| Total (a) | 9 | 14 | 271 | 4 | 9 | 9 | 316 | 7 | 9 | 345 | 3 | 9 | 11 | 384 |
| Interior | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| School E | 1 | 0 | 25 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 35 |
| School F | 1 | 0 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 51 |
| School G | 3 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 17 | 31 | 77 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 26 | 22 | 78 |
| Total (b) | 5 | 5 | 83 | 13 | 19 | 32 | 157 | 4 | 4 | 87 | 14 | 31 | 24 | 164 |
| TOTAL (a + b) | 14 | 19 | 354 | 17 | 28 | 41 | 473 | 11 | 13 | 432 | 17 | 40 | 35 | 548 |

M=Malay, C=Chinese, Ib=Iban, Ka=Kayan, Ke=Kenyah, O=Others (i.e., other minority of indigenous tribes)

groups was Form 2 students. Note that in other states in Malaysia, “districts” were used instead of “divisions”. Table 2 shows the actual number of students by gender, location, and ethnicity who had participated in this study by responding to the Malaysian-Based Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Inventory (MB-BISPSI).

Instrumentation

The instrument used was the Malaysian-Based Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Inventory (MB-BISPSI), of which its development was characterised by two phases: Instrument development process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) as Phase One, and item analysis as Phase Two. The processes involved in Phase One were identifying the test objectives; specifying the content; forming test specification table; writing test items; checking items; and pilot testing. In the item analysis, only items that have difficulty indices between 0.25-0.75 and the discrimination indices of more than 0.40 (McBeath, 1992) were retained, while those items that did not meet these criteria were either rejected or modified. The final set of MB-BISPSI, an encompassing Malaysian-based science process skills test, consists of 60 questions. It has a KR-20 reliability of 0.88, difficulty indices ranging between 0.25-0.75 and discrimination indices which are above 0.4. These three test characteristics are within acceptable limits for a reliable test. The full account on the development and validation of MB-BISPSI was reported elsewhere (Ong *et al.*, 2011).

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the commencement of the study, permission was sought from the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD) of the MoE, as mandated by the MoE General Circular 112/86 on ‘Ministry of Education Research Coordination’ (*Penyelarasan Penyelidikan Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia*). Ethically and technically, upon gaining the approval from the EPRD, letters for permission with the attachment of EPRD approval letter, were forwarded to the Perak and Sarawak State Education Departments, given that the pilot study was conducted in Perak, while the main study of which its findings are reported in this paper, was implemented in Sarawak. Subsequently, the principals of the selected secondary schools were approached in person for the schools in Perak, and through a telephone conversation for schools in Sarawak.

In each school, the administration of research instruments was done simultaneously for all the classes under the supervision of teachers in school time. In administering the instruments, the teachers read the same researcher-prepared instructional script. In order to ensure high completion rate, teachers were asked to ensure that all the response sheets were collected at the end of the session.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data gathered from students’ responses to the Malaysian-Based Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills Inventory (BM-

BISPSI) would initially be subjected to data screening for normality which determines their suitability for parametric analyses. In determining the levels of Science process skills acquisition amongst the Form 2 students in the Kapit Division in terms of overall, basic, and integrated Science process skills achievement (Research Question 1), and in each of the specific Science process skills (Research Question 2), descriptive statistics were employed, and these included mean scores, percentages mean score, and standard deviations. A two-third rule or 66.67% (Mohd Najib & Abdul Rauf, 2011; Sharifah Nor Ashikin & Rohaida, 2005) was used as a benchmark to determine if a student achieved the desired acquisition level of Science process skills. It should be noted that, while one may choose a certain cut-off point such as 50% to determine a mastery level in Science process skills, the two-third rule was adopted simply because it helps to prevent making a decision that a person has “mastered” a certain skill with small majority of correct responses over a large minority of incorrect responses.

In determining the main effects for gender, location, and ethnicity, two-way interactions and three-way interaction amongst gender, location and ethnicity in terms of overall Science process skills (Research Questions 3 and 4), three-way 2 x 2 x 6 (Gender x Location x Ethnicity) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the overall Science process skills were computed. Such three-way analysis provides a better understanding of the variation in the acquisition of Science process skills by

gender, location and ethnicity, including the possible interactions among them.

RESULTS

This section begins by reporting the results from data screening. It then reports the quantitative findings when MB-BISPSI data were analysed to determine the level of Science process skills acquisition amongst Form 2 students in terms of overall, basic, integrated, and specific Science Process Skills, and subsequently, to determine the main effects for gender, location, and ethnicity, including the possible interactions among them (i.e., gender, location, and ethnicity), for the Overall Science Process Skills.

(a) Data Screening

The detailed preliminary data analyses for normality and other statistical characteristics for the Overall Science Process Skills, each of the specific 12 science process skills, and the composited basic and integrated science process skills are given in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, all the values of skewness, which ranged between -0.42 and 0.87 , fall within the acceptable range of not more than $+1.00$ or not less than -1.00 (Morgan, Griego, & Gloeckner, 2001), suggesting that none of the distributions was markedly skewed and consequently, none warranted the use of non-parametric statistics. Furthermore, all the dependent variables have acceptable kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of not more than $+1.00$ or not less than -1.00 (ibid.), suggesting they were neither too

peaked with long tails nor too flat with too many cases in the tails.

(b) Acquisition of Overall and 12 Specific Science Process Skills

As shown in Table 4, the mean percentage for the overall Science process skills acquired by the Form 2 students in Kapit Division was 47.38%, while the mean percentages for basic and integrated Science process skills were 49.47% and 45.30%, respectively. Using the two-third rule (Mohd Najib & Abdul Rauf, 2011; Sharifah Nor

Ashikin & Rohaida, 2005), the mastery levels in the overall, basic, and integrated Science process skills amongst Form 2 students in Kapit Division were below 66.67%, suggesting a weak acquisition of Science process skills.

As shown in Table 5, the mean percentages for the twelve science process skills range from 37.29% to 63.72%. While students achieved the mastery levels of, in descending order, 63.72% in observing, 57.86% in classifying, 53.34% in predicting, 50.03% in defining operationally, 48.93% in interpreting data, 47.85% in hypothesising,

TABLE 3
Test for Normality

| Science Process Skills | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Observing | -0.42 | -0.36 |
| Classifying | -0.23 | -0.67 |
| Measuring and Using Numbers | 0.38 | -0.56 |
| Inferring | 0.11 | -0.81 |
| Predicting | -0.06 | -0.54 |
| Communicating | 0.14 | -0.49 |
| Using Space-Time Relationship | 0.18 | -0.50 |
| Interpreting Data | 0.03 | -0.95 |
| Defining Operationally | -0.03 | -0.70 |
| Controlling Variables | 0.87 | 0.29 |
| Hypothesising | 0.09 | -0.77 |
| Experimenting | 0.15 | -0.76 |
| Overall Science Process Skills | 0.39 | -0.41 |
| Basic Science Process Skills | 0.02 | -0.36 |
| Integrated Science Process Skills | 0.50 | -0.46 |

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics of Overall, Basic and Integrated Science Process Skills

| Science Process Skills | Maximum Score | Mean Score | Mean Percentage | SD |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|-------|
| Overall Science Process Skills | 60 | 28.38 | 47.38 | 15.69 |
| Basic Science Process Skills | 30 | 14.84 | 49.47 | 15.65 |
| Integrated Science Process Skills | 30 | 13.59 | 45.30 | 19.18 |

46.31% in experimenting, 44.50% in inferring, 43.82% in communicating, 41.31% in using space-time relationship, 37.29% in measuring and using numbers, and 35.93% in controlling variables, these mastery levels, nevertheless, fell short of the two-third target (i.e., 66.67%).

(c) Overall Science Process Skills by Gender, Location and Ethnicity

Table 6 shows the three-way between-subjects ANOVA for the Overall Science Process Skills. As shown in Table 6, the main effects of gender ($F_{(1,997)} = 6.57, p = .011 < .05$) and of ethnicity ($F_{(5,997)} = 7.17, p < .0005$) were statistically significant and accounted for 0.7% and 3.5% respectively of the total variance in the Overall Science Process Skills. Meanwhile, the main effect of location was not statistically significant ($F_{(1,997)} = 0.38, p = .536$), suggesting that there was no markedly difference in the

acquisition of Overall Science Process Skills between the rural and interior students.

In terms of gender and possible maximum overall score of 60, female students (mean = 29.08, SD = 9.55) achieved a substantially higher in terms of Overall Science Process Skills than did male students (mean = 27.68, SD = 9.21), although the effect size of 0.15, calculated using (female mean score – male mean score) / (pooled SD of 9.42), according to Cohen’s (1988) interpretation, shows that the effect was small.

Analysing by ethnicity for the Overall Science Process Skills within the possible maximum score of 60, Table 7 presents the means and standard deviations while Table 8 shows the results of post hoc test by ethnicity for the Overall Science Process Skills. As shown in Table 8, statistical significant differences were found only between the Chinese and the Iban, the

TABLE 5
Descriptive Statistics for Specific Twelve Science Process Skills

| Science Process Skills | Max Score | Mean Score | Mean Percent | SD |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Observing | 5 | 3.19 | 63.72 | 23.38 |
| Classifying | 4 | 2.32 | 57.86 | 27.56 |
| Measuring and Using Numbers | 4 | 1.49 | 37.29 | 26.88 |
| Inferring | 3 | 1.33 | 44.50 | 30.24 |
| Predicting | 5 | 2.67 | 53.34 | 25.12 |
| Communicating | 5 | 2.19 | 43.82 | 23.81 |
| Using Space-Time Relationship | 4 | 1.65 | 41.31 | 25.21 |
| Interpreting Data | 5 | 2.45 | 48.93 | 28.88 |
| Defining Operationally | 5 | 2.50 | 50.03 | 25.89 |
| Controlling Variables | 7 | 2.52 | 35.93 | 24.43 |
| Hypothesising | 7 | 3.35 | 47.85 | 24.77 |
| Experimenting | 6 | 2.78 | 46.31 | 26.39 |

Chinese and the Kayan, and the Chinese and Others (e.g., other minority indigenous tribes), with the mean score differences of 8.36 ($p < .001$), 7.54 ($p = .014 < .05$), and 6.55 ($p = .012 < .05$), respectively.

However, some caution is needed in interpreting these main effects (i.e., main effects for gender, and ethnicity) given that the interaction effect for gender and ethnicity was significant [$(F_{(5,997)} = 2.24, p = .048 < .05)$] and accounted for 1.1% of the total variance in the Overall Science

Process Skills. Table 9 gives the descriptive statistics by gender and ethnicity for the Overall Science Process Skills.

Visual inspection of the profile plots in Fig.1 shows that, while the female students generally achieved a higher acquisition of the Overall Science Process Skills than did the male students, the mean score for each of the ethnicities amongst females was not uniformly higher than the corresponding ethnicities amongst males. Such interpretation, based on a visual

TABLE 6
2 x 2 x 6 (Gender x Location x Ethnicity) Between-Subjects Analysis of Variance for Overall Science Process Skills

| Source | df | SS | MS | F | p | η^2 |
|----------------------------|------|-----------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Gender | 1 | 560.43 | 560.43 | 6.57 | .011 * | .007 |
| Location | 1 | 32.69 | 32.69 | .38 | .536 | .000 |
| Ethnicity | 5 | 3061.52 | 612.30 | 7.17 | .000 * | .035 |
| Gender x Location | 1 | 127.89 | 127.89 | 1.50 | .221 | .002 |
| Gender x Ethnicity | 5 | 957.39 | 191.48 | 2.24 | .048 * | .011 |
| Location x Ethnicity | 5 | 610.09 | 122.02 | 1.43 | .211 | .007 |
| Gender x Location x Ethnic | 5 | 256.73 | 51.35 | .60 | .699 | .003 |
| Error | 997 | 85112.89 | 85.37 | | | |
| Total | 1021 | 915826.00 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 1020 | 90418.65 | | | | |

* Significant at $p < .05$

TABLE 7
Means and Standard Deviations by Ethnicity for Overall Science Process Skills

| Ethnicity | Overall Science Process Skills | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-------|
| | Mean | SD |
| Malay | 30.72 | 9.00 |
| Chinese | 36.13 | 9.72 |
| Iban | 27.76 | 9.16 |
| Kayan | 28.59 | 10.20 |
| Kenyah | 30.37 | 10.09 |
| Others | 29.58 | 9.43 |
| Total | 28.43 | 9.42 |

TABLE 8
Results of Post Hoc Test for Ethnicity

| Ethnic (I) – Ethnic (J) | Pairwise Comparisons | | E.S. ¹ |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | Mean Difference (I-J) | p ⁺ | |
| Malay - Chinese | -5.41 | .430 | |
| Malay - Iban | 2.96 | 1.000 | |
| Malay - Kayan | 2.13 | 1.000 | |
| Malay - Kenyah | 0.35 | 1.000 | |
| Malay - Others | 1.14 | 1.000 | |
| Chinese - Iban | 8.36 | .000 ** | 0.89 |
| Chinese - Kayan | 7.54 | .014 * | |
| Chinese – Kenyah | 5.76 | .056 | 0.61 |
| Chinese – Others | 6.55 | .012 * | 0.70 |
| Iban – Kayan | -0.83 | 1.000 | |
| Iban – Kenyah | -2.61 | .389 | |
| Iban – Others | -1.82 | 1.000 | |
| Kayan – Kenyah | -1.78 | 1.000 | |
| Kayan - Others | -0.99 | 1.000 | |
| Kenyah - Others | 0.79 | 1.000 | |

* Significant at p < .05 ** Significant at p < .001

⁺ Adjusted for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

¹E.S., Effect Size = (Absolute Mean Difference)/(pooled SD of 9.42)

TABLE 9
Means and Standard Deviations by Gender and Ethnicity for Overall Science Process Skills

| Gender | Ethnicity | N | Mean | SD |
|--------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|
| Male | Malay | 14 | 29.93 | 7.12 |
| | Chinese | 19 | 36.32 | 11.31 |
| | Iban | 354 | 27.20 | 8.69 |
| | Kayan | 17 | 27.06 | 10.19 |
| | Kenyah | 28 | 26.43 | 10.46 |
| | Others | 41 | 28.17 | 10.25 |
| | Total | 473 | 27.68 | 9.21 |
| Female | Malay | 11 | 31.73 | 11.25 |
| | Chinese | 13 | 35.85 | 7.21 |
| | Iban | 432 | 28.22 | 9.51 |
| | Kayan | 17 | 30.12 | 10.30 |
| | Kenyah | 40 | 33.13 | 8.96 |
| | Others | 35 | 31.23 | 8.23 |
| | Total | 548 | 29.08 | 9.55 |

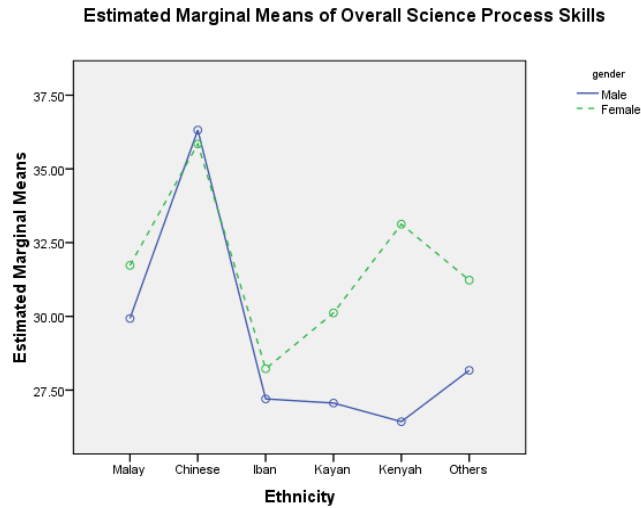


Fig. 1: Profile plots of gender and ethnicity interaction for Overall Science Process Skills

inspection of the profile plots, nevertheless, needs to be checked with inferential statistics.

Accordingly, to pursue and test this statistically, a new independent variable consisting of twelve new cell codes was computed. This was then followed by a one-way ANOVA and post-hoc tests. Given the non-significant of Levene's Test ($F=1.59$, $p=.10 < .05$), which shows that the assumption of equal variances is not violated, the Bonferroni Post-Hoc Tests were used in which the results indicated that, while the mean differences between female and male students at each level of ethnicity was not significant (e.g., Malay = 1.80, $p = .63$; Chinese = -.47, $p = .88$; Iban = 1.02, $p = .12$; Kayan = 3.06, $p = .34$; and Others = 3.06, $p = .15$), only the difference between female and male students of Kenyah ethnicity was statistically significant (Kenyah = 6.70, $p = .003$).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Using the two-third rule, the Form 2 students in Kapit Division failed to achieve the two-third benchmark in the Overall Science Process Skills, Basic Science Process Skills, Integrated Science Process Skills, and in each of the specific 12 Science process skills; namely, the skills of (1) observing; (2) classifying; (3) measuring and using numbers; (4) inferring; (5) predicting; (6) communicating; (7) using space-time relationship; (8) interpreting data; (9) defining operationally; (10) controlling variables; (11) hypothesising; and (12) experimenting.

Meanwhile, the findings from the quantitative analyses using the three-way ANOVA for the Overall Science Process Skills (OSPS) indicated that statistically significant differences were found in main effects for gender and for ethnicity, and in the two-way interactional effect between gender

and ethnicity. Specifically, female students achieved better than male students, and that Chinese students achieved better than Iban, Kayan, and Other students. Nevertheless, the interactional effect between gender and ethnicity indicated that while female students achieved markedly higher than male students, and such a phenomenon was only observed amongst the Kenyah ethnicity.

In terms of acquisition of the Overall Science Process Skills, the outcomes of this study indicated that the Science process skills achievement of Form 2 students in Kapit Division fell short of the two-third rule. Equally, they did not meet the benchmark for basic and integrated science process skills, as well as each of the specific 12 science process skills. These findings corroborated the findings of Ismail (2001) who found that Form 2 and 4 students in Simunjan, Sarawak, achieved mean percentages of 32.3% and 34.5% respectively in the integrated Science process skills as measured by the translated version of TIPS-II (Burns, Okey, & Wise, 1985).

Additionally, the outcome of this study in which the Form 2 students achieved a level that fell short of the two-third benchmark lends support to the findings of Kiu (2006), as well as Abu Hassan and Rohana (2003), albeit at different educational levels. In the former, second year Science-based undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia achieved a mean percentage of 57.7% in terms of the integrated Science process skills, as

measured by the combined use of TIPS I (Dillashaw & Okey, 1980) and TIPS II (Okey, Wise, & Burns, 1985), while in the latter, Form 4 students in Johor Baharu acquired a mean percentage of 54.3% in the Science Process Skills Achievement Test, a structured test that measures two basic science process skills (i.e., predicting and inferencing) and four integrated science process skills (i.e., hypothesising, identifying variables, interpreting data, and experimenting).

The findings from this study and other similar studies on students' acquisition of science process skills (e.g., Abu Hassan & Rohana, 2003; Ismail, 2001; Kiu, 2006), taken together, suggests that in general, Malaysian secondary students have not sufficiently acquired the science process skills as aspired by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Therefore, it is imperative for the Ministry of Education to seriously look into this phenomenon of fell-short-of-the-two-third-benchmark in the acquisition of Science process skills amongst Malaysian secondary school students, strategising Science teaching which inculcates the mastery of basic and integrated Science process skills. Additionally, the different ways in which science process skills could be tested in terms of the feasibility in administration and scoring for prompt teacher feedback, instead of relying solely on Practical Work Assessment (PEKA) which teachers face problems in its actual implementation (Filmer & Foh, 1997; Noorasyikin Kusai, 2002), should also be duly considered and swiftly implemented.

Knowing students' acquisition level in each of the Science process skills, appropriate interventions and Science investigative work could then be thoughtfully planned and judiciously executed in our quest to instil these Science process skills amongst the students who constitute the future generation of Malaysia to meet the demand of the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study are derived from lower secondary students in one district (or division) of a Malaysian state. As such, further studies investigating a similar acquisition of science process skills as measured by MB-BISPSI using a more nationally representative sample are recommended in order to examine the validity of such generalisation.

Further study is also needed to determine if similar results can be found at all grade levels across primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education, two-year sixth form education, undergraduate and postgraduate education. Equally, it would be beneficial to determine the progression in the mastery of science process skills by examining if students continue to show gains in successive years of secondary and tertiary education.

Additional research is needed to determine which science teaching methods (i.e., inquiry science, investigative science, cooperative learning, constructivist science teaching) have greatest effect on the acquisition of science process skills in

general, and each of the 12 science process skills in particular. Equally, given that the impact of various possible combinations of science teaching methods remains unclear, further study to isolate the relative impact, be it positive or otherwise, of these possible combinations would be illuminating and beneficial.

This study gauged the acquisition of science process skills amongst Malaysian secondary students through their responses on MB-BISPSI. It would contribute significantly to the research and literature if the future research could aim at uncovering by means of student interviews as well as school-based practical work, the understanding of, and mastery in, each of the 12 Science process skills by using suitable hypothetical and/or actual experimentation contexts. Besides, the various Science learning environments that could have led the female students to achieve a significantly higher level of Science process skills than the male students should be observed, documented, and analysed so that appropriate pedagogical support could then be provided.

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An Evasion Game Model for Duopoly Competition

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Bertrand and Cournot economic models, we develop an evasion game model for a duopoly market with two players competing on price and quantity. We show that if the total financial strength of first mover is greater than that of the second mover, and the first mover observes the second mover perfectly, our proposed optimal strategy can be followed by the first mover to remain the market leader ahead of all competition.

Keywords: Evasion game, optimal strategy, duopoly competition, Bertrand and Cournot economic models

INTRODUCTION

There is a vast body of literature on first- and second-mover competition in a duopoly market (Guth *et al.*, 2006; von Stengel, 2010). Dolores Alepuz and Amparo Urbano (1999) considered imperfect observation for firms in a duopoly market in real life to show that these firms were willing to learn

about their environment and competitors. This competition model is used mainly for competition among firms, but it is also applicable in solving individual financial decision problems (Masud *et al.*, 2012). The assumption of perfect observation in a duopoly market is considered by Anders Udo Poulsen (2007). There is also a trend to discuss and criticise the Bertrand and Cournot oligopolistic models; for a discussion on this see Hamilton and Slutsky (1990) and van Damme and Hurkens (1999).

A basic model of commitment is to convert a two-player game in strategic form to a leadership game with the same pay-offs, in which one player (the leader) commits to

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a strategy while the other player chooses the best reply. The recent paper by Bernhard von Stengel and Shmuel Zamir (2010) studies such leadership games for games with convex strategy sets. In this paper, we set the strategy as being that the first mover remains the leader in the market based on the evasion differential games with two other players. Firms can compete on many variables. Luca Lambertini and Andrea Mantovani (2006) considered competition on quantity and sticky price based on the Cournot and Bertrand models. Here we use the same variables and propose a model along with a strategy for competition on price and quantity based on evasion differential games. To gain the result, some basic assumptions are set in our mathematical model. Each player has its own constraint and the game is dynamic as in the games considered by Isaacs (1999).

The paper consists of four sections including introduction, statement of the problem, main result and conclusion. In the introduction, we discuss the Bertrand and Cournot duopoly models and show that their assumptions are mostly in compliance with our model. In the second section, we state the problem by integrating the Bertrand and Cournot models, and in the third section, we propose an optimal strategy for the first mover in three different time periods. Finally, in the last section, we summarise the whole paper.

The Bertrand competition model versus the evasion model

Based on Bertrand's classical oligopoly theory of price competition, there should be

at least two firms producing un-differentiated products in a market. It is assumed in this model that cooperation among firms is not allowed and market demand belongs to the firm which offers the lowest price. Marginal cost in the Bertrand duopoly model is assumed to be the same for all firms. This last assumption is not valid in our evasion model, in which the marginal cost for the first mover is less than that of the second mover due to greater financial strength of the first mover rather than that of second mover, which will be discussed later in this paper.

In Bertrand's model, the first mover enjoys a monopoly on price in an uncontested environment. As a result, the entire market share goes to the first mover, which means that there is no need for the first mover to set any strategies.

When the second mover happens to enter the market, a price war between the second and first movers ensues due to assumed homogeneity of the product. The Bertrand model illustrates that the Nash equilibrium point occurs twice during the competition. It happens once when the first and second movers try to collude to share the market equally (half-half), and again when both firms reach the same marginal cost below which competition causes them a loss.

In Bertrand's duopoly competition model, the players compete solely on prices above marginal cost rather than on monopoly price. As mentioned earlier, in our evasion model, the first mover has the advantage of a better market share, and will not let the second mover take over its place in the market. The first mover does what

it can to maintain its lead in the market. Therefore, the first mover tries to keep its price lower than the second mover's. If the second mover sets its price above the monopoly price, the first mover will capture the entire market demand, but if it sets its price below the monopoly price, then, assuming perfect observation, the first mover will reduce its price, and by doing so, maintain the bigger market share.

The Cournot competition model versus the evasion model

The Cournot model, named after Antoine Augustin Cournot, rests on quantity, where firms in the market are about to set the optimal quantity to maximise their profit. Homogeneity of product is assumed in this model. The duopoly competition that is considered in this model overlaps our evasion game in the following ways.

As the game is assumed to be sequential, the first mover enters the market and captures the entire demand. The quantity the product produced is based on the monopoly price until the second mover enters the market as well. When this happens, market demand will be shared between the first and second movers, while the first mover tries to remain the market leader with greater pay-offs. This makes evaluating the residual demand critical for the first mover, who needs perfect observation once again as assumed in our model.

In Cournot's model, it can be seen that the second mover has no output quantity before entering the market, and the best output is what the first mover assigns to

produce to serve the market demand. When the second mover comes in and produces an output quantity, the optimal output for the first mover must be decided from an estimate of the residual demand of the market. The first mover must then reduce its output quantity up to the level where together, both players are producing the same quantity of products as that used to be produced by the first mover originally. The second mover might try to increase output in the hope of edging out the first player or causing the first player's output to gradually decrease. As it is assumed in this paper that the first mover has the privilege of financial strength, the output quantity of the first mover is given as being greater than that of the second mover. Therefore, the first mover can maintain its lead by using our evasion model.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Competition in a duopoly market is seen mainly in benefits (price) and market share (sale quantity). The major difficulty with existing models of the duopoly market is that they are restricted to competition on one of the above factors. In the Cournot model, competition is based only on quantity, whereas in the Bertrand model it is solely on price. The problem is the lack of a hybrid model which can handle competition based on the coordinates of quantity and price simultaneously.

Setup of the model

We consider both the Bertrand and Cournot economic models to propose a mathematical model for the duopoly market where the two

players compete on both coordinates of price and quantity. As mentioned earlier, the first mover is assumed throughout the game to observe the second mover perfectly, so that it can set its price and residual demand based on data gathered through this observation of the second mover in order to find the optimal pay-off that will allow it to remain the market leader.

Our differential evasion game model assigns appropriate strategies in different periods of time to let the first mover take action based on the actions of the second mover to maintain its lead in the market with a pay-off. In our mathematical model, the first and second movers can take action or respond according to both the coordinates of price and quantity.

The first mover has to avoid being captured by the second mover. Based on the Bertrand and Cournot competition models, the two players (firms) might compete strategically on price and quantity in a duopoly market. As mentioned before, the Nash equilibrium in these economic models can be reached, but our mathematical model gives the first mover a maths-simulated strategy so that it can be ahead of the second mover all the time. The equilibrium point, in particular, never happens in this model, since the equilibrium is where the pursuer (second mover) catches the evader (first mover), which is prohibited in our model. In contrast to the usual firm competition models, here the aim is to simulate a mathematical model to show that it is possible for the first mover to remain the market leader considering better financial strength and our optimal strategy.

Restrictions of the model

Some of the standard assumptions of the Bertrand and Cournot models are assumed, as well as certain extra assumptions which naturally happen in the real market. These conditions are as follows: the firms are producing homogeneous products; the firms are not involved cooperation or joint ventures during the game; and the outputs affect the price i.e. each firm has market power. We only deal with two players (firms) and there are constraints both for the first and second movers which will be specified in the next section.

There are a few different games for duopoly competition including the sequential and coincidental games (Amir & Stepanova 2006). The sequential game fits with our evasion model. We assume that there are two players in our model to simulate a duopoly market, which consists of two firms. The most important assumptions are sequentiality as well as perfect observation of moves in the game.

Implications of using the model

We are not aware of any research that models the duopoly market by differential evasion game strategically in the vast amount of literature on game theory and the duopoly market. In the next section, we propose an optimal strategy for the first mover to remain advantageous over its competition. This model has a clear advantage to both the Bertrand and Cournot models as it allows change in both price and quantity during computation. Our model has some restrictions (mentioned above) but it

is still applicable in many real competition setups. The main implication of our analysis of competition in the duopoly market is the rigorous proof that even if both competitors are free to play over price and quantity, if the first mover is financially privileged at the beginning, it will remain the market leader.

MAIN RESULT

In this section we propose a mathematical model to simulate the integrated economic models of Bertrand and Cournot. This is a mathematical model of rivalry between the first and second movers in a dynamic market, which is a simple motion dynamic system based on the dynamism of a duopoly market.

The moves of the second mover, S , and the first mover, F , follow these equations:

$$\begin{aligned} S : \dot{x} &= u, & x(0) &= x_0, \\ F : \dot{y} &= v, & y(0) &= y_0, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $x, y, u, v \in \mathbb{R}^2$, $x_0 \neq y_0$, u is the control parameter of the second mover, S , and v is that of the first mover, F .

Definition 1

A measurable function $v : [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$ such that

$$\left(\int_0^\infty |v(s)|^2 ds \right)^{1/2} \leq \Omega_1,$$

is called an admissible control of the first mover, F , where Ω_1 is the financial strength of the first mover.

Similarly, a measurable function $u : [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$ such that

$$\left(\int_0^\infty |u(s)|^2 ds \right)^{1/2} \leq \Omega_2,$$

is called an admissible control of the second mover, S , where Ω_2 is the financial strength of the second mover.

Definition 2

By the strategy of the first mover, F , is meant a function $V = V(y, x, u)$,

$$V : \mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2,$$

for which the system

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= u, & x(0) &= x_0, \\ \dot{y} &= V(y, x, u), & y(0) &= y_0, \end{aligned}$$

has a unique absolutely continuous solution $(y(t), x(t))$, for arbitrary admissible control S of the second mover, S . The strategy, V , is called admissible if each control generated by V is admissible.

Definition 3

Evasion for the first mover, S , from the second mover, S , is possible if there exists a strategy, V , of the first mover, F , such that $x(t) \neq y(t)$, $t > 0$, for any admissible control S of the second mover, S .

In the above definitions, the positions of the first and second movers at time t are denoted as $y(t)$ and $x(t)$, respectively. In our problem the position of each mover is its market share, which is less for the second mover when competition starts. In this situation, the market share privilege for the first mover causes its successful evasion from the second mover.

Proposition 4

If $\Omega_1 > \Omega_2$, then the evasion for the first mover, F , from the second mover, S , is possible in the game (1).

We prove the theorem in three steps.

1°. Construction of the first mover’s strategy

Denote the first and second coordinates of the competition strategy on quantity and price by v_q (respectively, u_q) and u_p (respectively, u_p) for the first mover (respectively, second mover). We consider the vector $v = (v_q, v_p)$ of the first mover as a function of the vector $u = (u_q, u_p)$ of the second mover. Consider the parameter $0 < \delta < 1/2$ as a fixed threshold of the market share defined willingly by the first mover. In addition, the cost that is imposed on the first mover due to competing on quantity and price is denoted by ω , which will be specified later. We assume τ as the first time that the second mover takes over market share, δ .

Now, we construct the strategy of the first mover as follows:

$$v(t) = \begin{cases} (0, 0) & \text{if } 0 \leq t < \tau, \\ (\omega + |u_q(t)|, \omega + |u_p(t)|), & \text{if } \tau \leq t < \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}, \\ (0, |u(t)|), & \text{if } t \geq \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}, \end{cases}$$

where ω is chosen to satisfy the condition $\int_0^\infty |v(s)|^2 ds \leq \Omega_1^2$.

In the above-mentioned strategy, 0 implies the manual strategy of the first mover regardless of the move of the second

mover. In addition, $|u_q(t)|$ is the quantity that the second mover sets below that of the first mover because of its cost disadvantage. No matter how the second mover tries to increase its quantity, the first mover is able to observe the quantity of the second mover and produce the residual demand that was calculated by Cournot in his model. Moreover, $|u_p(t)|$ is price that the second mover sets below that of the first mover.

2°. Evasion is possible for the first mover

At the first, in our mathematical model we estimate $|y(t) - x(t)|$, $\tau \leq t < \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}$, which shows the difference between the position (market share) of the first and second movers in the given time interval. Since

$$\begin{aligned} \left| \int_\tau^t v(s) ds \right| &\leq \int_\tau^t |v(s)| ds \\ &\leq \left(\int_\tau^t |v(s)|^2 ds \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_\tau^t 1^2 ds \right)^{1/2} \leq \Omega_1 (t - \tau)^{1/2}, \end{aligned}$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned} &|y(t) - x(t)| \\ &= \left| y(\tau) + \int_\tau^t v(s) ds - x(\tau) - \int_\tau^t u(s) ds \right| \\ &\geq |y(\tau) - x(\tau)| - \left| \int_\tau^t v(s) ds \right| \\ &\quad - \left| \int_\tau^t u(s) ds \right| \geq \delta - 2\Omega_1 (t - \tau)^{1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

This inequality holds if $\int_\tau^t |v(s)|^2 ds \leq \Omega_1^2$, and $\int_\tau^t |u(s)|^2 ds \leq \Omega_2^2$.

On the other hand, for the points $x = (x_q, x_p)$ and $y = (y_q, y_p)$ as the positions (including quantity and price) of

the second and first movers in the market competition, we have

$$\begin{aligned} |y(t) - x(t)| &\geq |y_q(t) - x_q(t)| \\ &= |y_q(\tau) - x_q(\tau) + \int_{\tau}^t (\omega + |u_q(s)|) ds - \int_{\tau}^t u_q(s) ds| \\ &\geq |y_q(\tau) - x_q(\tau)| + \int_{\tau}^t (\omega + |u_q(s)|) ds \\ &\quad - \int_{\tau}^t |u_q(s)| ds \geq \omega(t - \tau). \end{aligned}$$

Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} |y(t) - x(t)| &\geq \max\left\{\delta - 2\Omega_1(t - \tau)^{1/2}, \omega(t - \tau)\right\} \\ &> \frac{\omega \delta^2}{9\Omega_1^2}, \quad (\tau \leq t < \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}). \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, if $t \geq \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}$, then

$y(t) \neq x(t)$, and

$$\begin{aligned} x_p(t) - y_p(t) &\leq \delta + \int_{\tau}^{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}} \omega u_p(s) ds + \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t u_p(s) ds \\ &\quad - \int_{\tau}^{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}} \omega v_p(s) ds - \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t v_p(s) ds \\ &= \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t u_p(s) ds - \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u(s)| ds \\ &\leq \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_p(s)| ds \\ &\quad - \left[\left(\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_q(s)| ds \right)^2 + \left(\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_p(s)| ds \right)^2 \right]^{1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

In the above estimations, we used the following calculations.

$$\begin{aligned} &\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u(s)| ds \\ &= \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |\phi(s)| ds \geq \left| \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t \phi(s) ds \right| \\ &= \left| \left(\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_q(s)| ds, \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_p(s)| ds \right) \right| \\ &= \left[\left(\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_q(s)| ds \right)^2 + \left(\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_p(s)| ds \right)^2 \right]^{1/2}, \end{aligned}$$

where $\phi(s) = (|u_q(s)|, |u_p(s)|)$.

If $\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_q(s)| ds > 0$, then it is clear from the above result that $x_p(t) - y_p(t) < 0$.

If $\int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t |u_q(s)| ds = 0$, and for some

$t \geq \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}$, then $u_q(s) = 0$ almost everywhere on $[\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}, t]$. In this case,

$y_p(t) \geq x_p(t)$, $t \geq \tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}$, and

$$\begin{aligned} |y(t) - x(t)| &= \left| y\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) + \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t (0, v_q(s)) ds \right. \\ &\quad \left. - x\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) - \int_{\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t (u_q(s), u_p(s)) ds \right| \\ &= \left[\left(y_q\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) - x_q\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) \right)^2 \right. \\ &\quad \left. + \left(y_p\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) - x_p\left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega}\right) \right)^2 \right]^{1/2} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 & + \int_{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}}^t (v_p(s) - u_p(s))^2 ds \Big]^{1/2} & + \left(\int_{\tau}^{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}} |u_p(s)|^2 ds \right)^{1/2} \\
 & \geq \left[\left(y_q \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) - x_q \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) \right)^2 \right. & \cdot \left. \left[\int_{\tau}^{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}} 1^2 ds \right]^{1/2} \right\} + \int_{\tau}^{\infty} (u_q^2(s) + u_p^2(s)) ds \\
 & + \left(y_p \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) - x_p \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) \right)^2 \Big]^{1/2} & \leq 2\omega + 4\Omega_1 \sqrt{\omega} + \Omega_2^2 \leq \Omega_1^2, \\
 & = \left| y \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) - x \left(\tau + \frac{\delta}{\omega} \right) \right| > \frac{\delta \omega^2}{9\Omega_1^2}.
 \end{aligned}$$

Consequently, the absolute value of difference between market share of the first and second movers remains always positive in the given time periods. In other words, there is no time, t , in the intervals in which the difference becomes zero. As a result, the market share of the second mover will never be greater than or even equal to that of the first mover.

3°. Admissibility

The admissibility of the proposed strategy means that it should satisfy the integral constraint, which is estimated using the Cauchy-Schwartz inequality as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \int_0^{\infty} |v(s)|^2 ds \\
 & = \int_{\tau}^{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}} \left(\omega + |u_q(s)|, \omega + |u_p(s)| \right)^2 ds \\
 & + \int_{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}}^{\infty} \left(0, |u(s)| \right)^2 ds \\
 & \leq 2\omega \delta + 2\omega \left\{ \left[\int_{\tau}^{\tau+\frac{\delta}{\omega}} |u_q(s)|^2 ds \right]^{1/2} \right.
 \end{aligned}$$

where $2\omega + 4\Omega_1 \sqrt{\omega} \leq \Omega_1^2 - \Omega_2^2$ which shows a relationship between ω , as the cost that is imposed on the first mover due to competing on quantity and price, and the financial strength of both players.

Therefore, the first mover remains the market leader in a duopoly competition throughout the game, and the proof of the proposition is complete.

CONCLUSION

In the duopoly market, there are many uncontrollable conditions which make the rivalry game somewhat unpredictable. However, investigating a two-player game in real-life business needs some assumptions, such as perfect observation of both players and sequentiality of moves. Still, in reality, regardless of which strategy a firm might embark on, nearly all of the strategies are based on competing on quantity and price of products or services offered by the firms. Bertrand and Cournot were two researchers with different models about competition on price and quantity along with some assumptions as mentioned in this paper.

In this paper on duopoly competition, the privilege of the first mover in financial strength is assumed and an optimal strategy is set, such that the first mover remains

ahead of the game throughout. However, it needs to bear the coordination of cost to do so and enjoy uncontested competition. We proposed here a mathematical model, in which duopoly competition was simulated, optimal strategy of the first mover was constructed and admissibility of the strategy was proved.

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Building Rapport with Pupils to Enhance Teaching: Implications from Observing Three Primary Excellent Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a social cultural activity. Studies show that good rapport between teachers and pupils may enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. A study has been carried out to identify the characteristics of effective mathematics lessons as valued by teachers and pupils in three different types of primary schools in Malaysia. The study involved six primary teachers who were awarded as “Excellent Mathematics Teacher” and their thirty six primary pupils. While analysing the data, we observed building good rapport with pupils emerged to be a significant characteristic of effective teaching. Out of the six participating teachers, three were observed to have built good rapport with their pupils. Therefore, this paper focuses on discussing the strategies and skills of building rapport with pupils by these three teachers. Qualitative data were collected through video-recorded lesson observations, in-depth interviews with the teachers and photo-elicited focus group interview with the pupils. Analysis of the data indicates that various skills such as using non-verbal gestures, act as a playmate, show full concern, understand pupils’ background as well as showing patience and care were used to build up good rapport with pupils.

Keywords: Effective teaching, excellent teacher, primary education, rapport, strategies and skills

INTRODUCTION

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2010), the word “rapport” is defined as relation, especially the relation that is marked by harmony, conformity, accord or affinity. Likewise, the Random House Dictionary (1987) defines rapport as an especially harmonious or sympathetic connection. In fact, rapport has been found to be one of the most essential characteristics

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of unconscious human interaction. It is akin to being on the same wavelength as the people you are interact with. McLaughlin and Carr (2005) reckon that rapport is best discussed in terms of the quality of the relationship between two people. Therefore, Spencer-Oatey (2002) conceptualizes rapport as social interaction with a particular noticeable impact on a relationship with another person.

Classroom teaching is a cultural activity that involves social interaction between two parties, which are teacher and his/her pupils. Buskist and Saville (2001) argued that subject matter is also an important element in the social interaction. Hence, they define rapport as “a positive emotional connection among students, teacher, and subject matter that emerges from the manner in which the teacher constructs the learning environment” (p. 2). Therefore, in this study, we define rapport as a harmonious relationship that can be built by creating emotional connections between teacher and student and between student and subject matter. Building a good relationship, especially positive and harmonious rapport between teacher and students, is clearly important and helpful in resulting effective interaction and hence effective teaching. Indeed, Buskist and Saville (2001) proposed that rapport could be thought of as an emergent property of teaching, or, for that matter, any kind of social relationship. According to them, rapport should be developed since the very first day of the class, where the teacher welcome his/her students warmly to join in the learning community that is to be

established in the classroom. Then, teacher needs to continue this effort every day, regardless inside or outside classroom, as well as during the whole learning process.

Kyriacou (1997) wrote that “good rapport between the teacher and pupils involves their having a harmonious understanding of each other as individuals and is based on mutual respect and esteem” (p. 109). He further illustrates that there are three qualities in the teacher’s interaction with pupils that can help to develop good rapport: a) teacher’s genuine care for each pupils’ progress; b) teacher’s respect for pupils as learners; and c) teacher’s respect for pupils as individuals.

Past studies (e.g., Bernieri *et al.*, 1996; Hunt & Price, 2002; Buskist & Saville, 2001) have shown that there are many techniques that can help in building good rapport between teachers and pupils. These techniques include matching the body language, such as eye blinks, head nods and finger movement. Other techniques, such as eye contact and matching breathing rhythm, are also found to be effective in building rapport during conversation. Generally, some studies (such as Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990; Buskist & Saville, 2001) have observed that the more in tune between the teacher and pupils, the more synchronize will be their movements; therefore, a stronger rapport between teachers and pupils.

There are benefits obtained based on a good rapport between teacher-students relationship as stated by the past researchers. Among other, Buskist and Saville (2001)

mentioned that rapport is able to facilitate both student motivation for learning and their enjoyment of the class, and enhance student receptivity to what is being taught. In other words, rapport-building contributes to creating a context for establishing a positive emotional classroom atmosphere which helps students to learn better.

Gremler and Gwinner's (2000) study suggests that rapport has a positive relationship with students' perceptions of satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth communication in a school context. Such imitative behaviour like rapport may be useful in interactions with students because students tend to gravitate toward and become more comfortable around those similar to themselves (Thompson, 1998).

Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) describe three components that characterize relationships with a high level of rapport. Their "mutual attentiveness" and "positivity" components suggest rapport is higher in interactions in which the students are interested in each other and share a feeling of caring or friendliness.

AIMS OF THIS PAPER

In view of the strong relationship between good rapport and effective teaching, it will be beneficial to examine how these *Excellent Teachers* build up rapport with their pupils. Strategies that are identified might help other teachers especially novice teachers to enhance their relationship with pupils and consequently resulted in better teaching and learning. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to highlight the techniques and skills used by these teachers in building

good rapport with their pupils.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON BUILDING RAPPORT

A review of related studies on rapport (e.g., Buskist, & Saville, 2001; Davis, 2006) indicates that a good rapport between teacher and students relationship can be developed based on the following five criteria: *trust, connectedness, enjoyable atmosphere, attraction and positive emotional response*. For instance, Buskist and Saville (2001) proposed that there are five key elements of quality relationship. These are: (a) the degree of students' acceptance towards the objectives defined by the teacher; (b) the ability of the students to achieve these objectives; (c) the ability of the teacher to care about his/her students and to cultivate their learning; (d) the extent of emotional "connection" between teacher and students; and (e) students' motivation to participate actively. As such, rapport is both a process (as it requires various steps to develop) and an outcome (as it only appears when all sufficient key elements are present).

Trust is the most important component in building rapport between teacher and students relationship. Brookfield (1990) contents that:

Trust between teachers and students is the affective glue that binds educational relationships together. Not trusting teachers has several consequences for students. They are unwilling to submit themselves to the perilous uncertainties of new learning. They avoid risk

and keep their most deeply felt concerns private. They view with cynical reserve the exhortations and instructions of teachers (p. 162).

In teaching, such trust contributes to building good rapport, enhancing motivation, and stimulating learning. Therefore, for teachers who wish their students to join them as members of the community of learning, it is vital for the teachers to demonstrate to their students that they are trustable.

Connectedness is another significant component in building rapport. Buskist and Saville (2001) cited that “good teachers strive to forge connections between themselves and their subject matter and between themselves and their students” (p. 2). They argued that “rapport is a positive emotional connection among students, teacher, and subject matter” (p. 2). Therefore, if a teacher

wishes to “connect” with his/her students or to establish good rapport with them, the teacher must expose at least part of himself/herself to his/her students. It is only when teachers are successful in making this “connection” that a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning can be constructed.

The third component is **an enjoyable atmosphere**. The enjoyable interaction component is an affective assessment of the actual interaction between the two parties and captures what some have described as “positivity” (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Rapport is also characterized by a certain level of coordination or feeling of being “in-sync” with one another (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990).

The fourth component is **attraction**. Attraction is the force that bonds two parties together in a relationship. Attraction in a relationship is based on a reward versus

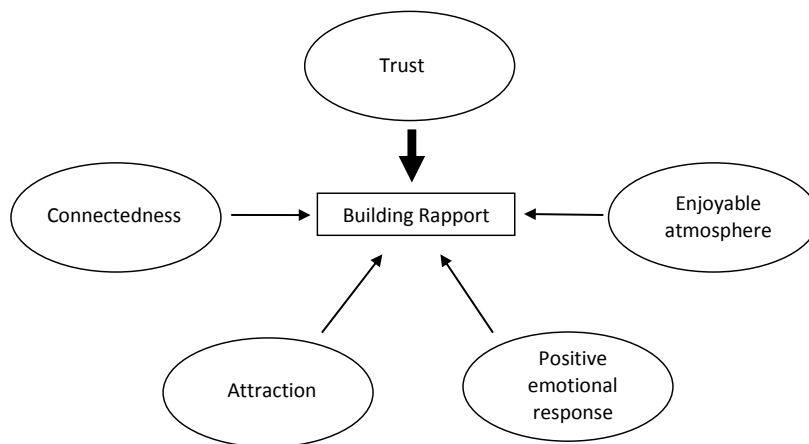


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework of Building Rapport

costs assessment that exceeds a minimum threshold (Secord & Backman, 1974).

The fifth component is *positive emotional response*. Price, Arnould and Deibler (1995) found that there are three factors which had the most significant impact on positive emotional responses. The three factors are mutual understanding, extra attention and meeting minimum standards of activity. In addition, familiarity, which is defined as “knowing the student” also, has a positive impact on rapport. Familiarity will enhance teacher’s ability to provide rewards which will strengthen the sense of connection and consequently foster more positive interactions (Macintosh, 2009).

PARTICIPANTS

The main study involved six mathematics teachers who were awarded as “*Excellent Teacher*” and their thirty six pupils. In Malaysia, “*Excellent Teacher*” is an award honoured to teacher who are “regarded as experts in their field of teaching and subject matter” (Ministry of Education Malaysia’s Official Portal, 20.9.2009, Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=36&lang=en>). Therefore, we assumed that mathematics *Excellent Teacher* conducted effective Mathematics lessons. Six *Excellent Teachers*, two each from national school

(SK), national type Chinese school (SJJC) and national type Tamil school (SJKT) were selected. Each teacher was then asked to select six pupils from his/her class to participate in the study. These pupils were selected based on their teacher’s discretion on their general academic performance. Two pupils were selected each from the three groups of high performing, average and low performing.

However, in this paper, our discussion was mainly based on the analysis of data collected from three out of these six *Excellent Teachers* as they were observed to build good rapport with their pupils. The demographic information of these three teachers is presented in Table 1.

These three teachers were observed to have the following characteristics: (a) they took good care of their pupils and appeared to know their pupils very well, including the pupils’ family background, attitude, difficulties in learning mathematics and so forth; (b) there was an observed harmony relationship between the teachers and their pupils. The pupils showed respect to their teachers and did not hesitate to approach the teacher whenever they faced problems. The teachers also always encouraged their pupils to come up to them whenever they did not understand. The teachers showed

TABLE 1
Demographic information of Excellent Teachers

| Teacher | Type of school | Years of teaching experience | Year awarded as Excellent Teacher |
|---------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Madam C | SJJC | More than 30 | 1998 |
| Madam R | SK | About 10 | 2009 |
| Mr K | SJKT | About 10 | 2008 |

willingness to teach the pupils when the pupils approach them; (c) Both teachers and pupils showed a close relationship. Besides academic conversation, there were many informal conversations between the teachers and their pupils. For example, Madam R was praised by her pupils when she wore a new skirt to the class. Mr. K's pupils told him that they missed his lesson when he was absent; and (d) there was a mutual respect between teacher and pupils in the classroom. While the teachers always encouraged the pupils to participate in the classroom teaching and activities, the pupils were eager to respond and their responses were highly appreciated by the teachers.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study employed three methods to collect data, namely, lesson observation, photo-elicited focus group interview with pupils and in-depth interview with teachers. Briefly, the procedure of data collection was carried out in the following manner:

a. Video-recorded Lesson Observation

All the participating teachers were observed for three lessons. Each lesson lasted about 50 minutes to one hour. Three researchers were involved in collecting data during the lesson observation. One of them sat behind the class, observing the lesson and took down field notes, particularly episodes or phenomena that may be raised for discussion during the in-depth interview. The other two researchers were in charge of video recording. Two video cameras were used. One focused on the teacher while the other

focused on the pupils. The video cameras that focused on the teacher aimed to record the teacher's teaching steps, including his/her expression, body language, response to the pupils and interaction with the pupils. While the other video cameras aimed to record the pupils' interaction in the classroom and their responses to the teacher. For example, when the teacher posed a question, some pupils raised their hands immediately. This kind of pupil reaction was taken to indicate the pupils' keenness in participating in the classroom activities. By focusing the video camera on both teacher and pupils, we hoped to get a holistic view of the progress of the whole lesson. The videos recorded lesson also allowed the researchers to review the lesson several times, as well as to avoid missing some phenomena that might have been overlooked during the lesson observation.

b. Photo-elicited focus group interview with the pupils

During each lesson observation, the six selected pupils were provided with a digital camera each to capture any moment that they reckoned their teacher was teaching effectively. Immediately after each observation, these pupils were gathered in a quiet room, normally in the library or the resource room in the school. All the photographs taken were downloaded onto a laptop computer, and shown onto an LCD screen. Taking their turns, these pupils were asked to elaborate their opinions based on the photographs that they had taken. The aim of this focus group pupil interview was to

explore the pupils' perspective about what constitute as the characteristics of effective mathematics lessons.

c. In-depth interview with the teachers

Immediately after each classroom observation and after the photo-elicited interview with pupils, an in depth interview was carried out with the participating teacher. The interview began with the teacher reflecting on the lesson just taught. He or she was asked to highlight and elaborate any teaching steps or activities that they had planned or practiced to show effective teaching. For example, a particular kind of teaching tool, such as 'talking board', was used or certain kind of questions was asked. Likewise, significant phenomena that were observed by the researchers during the lesson, such as the teacher's effort to build good rapport with the pupils, would be brought up and discussed with the teachers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

Both interviews with pupils and teacher were also video recorded for analysis. All the videos recording taken during the observed lessons and interviews were imported into NVivo and transcribed verbatim. The videos of lesson observation were coded for emerging themes, and then the nodes were explored to search for patterns and characteristics. While the interview transcripts were read several times to gain emerging themes. The themes were then categorised into related groups.

This study employed three types of triangulation: data triangulation, method triangulation and investigator triangulation. Data collected from the teacher interviews were triangulated with the data collected from the pupil interviews. Besides, the field notes written during the lesson observation, interview transcripts and the videos were also systematically triangulated. In term of investigator triangulation, there were three researchers involved in gathering the data and interpreting the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For this paper, we focused our analysis mainly on qualitative data collected from both classroom observations and interviews showing how these teachers building rapports with pupils. Analysis of the nine lessons gave us great insight into how these *Excellent Teachers* conducted their Mathematics lessons, and also how they managed to build up good rapport with their pupils. In the following section, we will highlight some techniques used by these three teachers as featured in their classroom teaching:

a. Teacher acts as a partner and a playmate to the pupils

This technique was explicitly pointed out by Madam R during her interview, as well as observed in the classroom teaching of Madam C. In the interview, Madam R highlighted that one of the best ways to build up rapport with pupils is to be a playmate to the pupils:

“When they (the pupils) play, I also join (them). I have to put myself as if I am also a child, just like them.”

Madam R also emphasized that a teacher needs to be friendly and “be their friend” so as to build up good rapport with pupils.

Likewise, we observed that Madam C’s lessons were always filled with fun and game-like learning atmosphere. Even though we were non-participatory observers, we also felt the fun and enjoyment of the lessons. Most learning activities that Madam C planned were like playing a game which involved both teacher and pupils as teammates. For example, when Madam C was assigning a question to each group, one of the groups requested her to give them an easier question. She acknowledged to their request. However, when the pupils asked her how to do it, she replied as “I don’t know, you have to try it out first. Don’t ask me.” Her tone of answering their questions did not reflect anger but instead more like a teammate. As a result, it was not surprising that her pupils reported in the interview that Madam C’s lesson was fun, interesting and like playing a game.

b. Showing full concern and care to every pupil

Everybody likes to be cared for and loved, especially children. Madam C contented that many of her pupils lacked concern, care and love from their parents. According to her, most of the pupils’ parents were working and some were from lower income

groups. Therefore, as a teacher, she feels that she needs to always show her care and love to her pupils, especially for the weak pupils. She further espoused that different pupils have different needs and, also every pupil is unique and having different personality. Hence, a teacher must use different techniques to build rapport with different pupils. For instance, to pupils with good ability, they need praises and encouragement, but for those pupils who are good academically but with negative attitude (such as lazy to do their homework), the teacher will need to be strict with them.

Madam C’s emphasis on showing concern and care for pupils is agreed fully by Mr. K whose pupils were also from low income families. Mr. K explained that his way of showing concern in this manner:

“for pupils who did not do their homework, I will not scold them straight away, but I will ask for their reasons. If they said they did not do because they did not understand, I will coach them; if they said they knew how to do but forgot to do, I will ask them to stay back during recess or after school hours, and get them to finish it.”

c. Having full understanding of pupils’ background

This was specifically mentioned by Madam C in her first interviews. She believes that to build positive rapport with pupils, a teacher needs to invest some time to get

to know his/her pupils' background. From her experience, it needs approximately two months to explore and build up a solid relationship with pupils from the time she took over a class. Her following sharing shows her understanding of her pupils:

"I just took over this class at beginning of this year. They were actually from quite a poor class. I have to first get them to be interested in mathematics before I can get them really want to learn mathematics. Unlike the good class pupils, we cannot force them to learn. They will get scared. Their foundation is not so good ..."

Likewise, Madam R echoed the importance of having full understanding about her pupils' background. For instance, she elaborated that she knew one of her pupils who came from a one-child family. The child tended to work alone in class. During group activity as in the third observed lesson, she also tended to stay alone and passively waited for other pupils to invite her to join. Knowing her situation, Madam R came forward to encourage her to join one of the groups. She explained,

"May be she is the only child in the family, she has a lot of family members. ...May be at home, she is used to be given instruction. When I say join, then only she join. Other pupils, like people say, they are independent, they can do."

The above examples clearly showed that both teachers took time to understand their pupils' academic and family background, so that they can plan the best action for their pupils.

d. Through non-verbal gestures

Close analysis of the classroom teaching indicated that all these three teachers displayed some similar gestures when dealing with their pupils. The non-verbal gestures which are observable and obvious include smile, eye contact and gentle touch on the shoulder. All these teachers were seen to always put on a smiling face even when the pupils did something wrong or answered wrongly. Their smiles looked encouraging and comforting to their pupils. They also kept close eye contact with their pupils, with a feeling of reassurance and full attention. Particularly Madam C liked to pat on her pupils' shoulder to show her support. The following pictures (Fig.2 to Fig.4) depict some of these gestures.

e. Always keep the promises

Keeping promises made was another important way of building positive rapport with pupils. This was highlighted by Madam R in the interview: "promise with children, the promise must be fulfilled." For example, if she promised her pupils that she would give them a treat when they score A in their examination, then she would really give them a treat. She further elaborated that "I promise to do what, I keep it. Children hold on to the promises. They remember, they

don't forget. We may forget." She added that even though the gift may be very small in value, the children would appreciate and feel happy when receiving it.

When the researcher asked, "If you promise to punish them?" Madam R replied that she would also honour the promise. Her reply (in verbatim) is shown below:

"Do too. If we promise that if we can't finish the homework today, then we have to do the homework together. So together we do it. When there is a person not yet finish, everyone must be responsible."

f. Being loving and patience

Although the characteristics of being loving and patience were mentioned by Madam C only in her interview, it was observed to have been demonstrated in all the three teachers' classroom teaching. For example, in the second lesson observation of Madam R (Time: 13:18 till 14:40): She called up one pupil to come in front of the class to show his working on one given problem. She was observed to have given full attention to him for the whole one and half minutes. The pupil worked out the answer, wrote the answer on the board but then looked up at her to wait for her confirmation.



Fig.2: Eyes contact



Fig.3: Eyes contact



Fig.4: Pat on the shoulder and smiling

She smilingly pointed to him that, “31 + 15 get 92?” The pupil quickly rubbed off his answer and rewrote it as “31+ 15 + 31 + 15 = 92”. In the mean time, Madam R commented that “It is ok, he is fasting today.” [Note: it was a fasting month for the Muslims when we collected the data]. Later, she led the whole class to check and confirm if the answer was really 92 cm.

Later in the post-observation interview, Madam R mentioned that she knew that he was a weak pupil who was not confident. Therefore, she always gives him more attention and encouragement by calling him to come in front to try and guide him. Madam R’s reply is shown below:

“Most of the time I choose the weak pupils, like him, he is really weak. The clever pupil, I also call them, but mostly the weak one. Give him a bit more confidence to answer. If the teacher does not choose him, he is already not good, right! Teacher also did not give him attention, so he is surely not to have self confidence.”

Similarly, we observed that Madam C was also inclined to call a few pupils whom she recognized as weak students to demonstrate their solution in front of the class. Like Madam R, she was seen to patiently guiding them to solve the problem step by step, and constantly giving them encouragement. Her kind action was recognized by her pupils as helping them to learn from other pupils’ mistakes. This

was evidenced in the pupils’ interview conversation:

A2: “This photo shows that a pupil has done wrong. The teacher patiently teaches him”.

R: “Do you feel that teacher (who) calls weak pupils to show their answers on the board will affect the learning process of the pupils?”

B1: “No, very interesting”.

R: “Why interesting?”

B1: “Can come out to do and see if you have done wrong.”

Hence, Madam C’s pupils’ comments seem to imply that she has successfully built up positive rapport with her pupils as they seem to understand each other very well, and they both share a common bond and understanding.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper, we attempted to analyze the various strategies and skills used by the three *Excellent Teachers* to build good rapport with their pupils. The aim of our main study was to explore the characteristics that were valued by teachers and students as components of effective Mathematics lessons. We chose *Excellent Teachers* as our participants as we assumed that these *Excellent Teachers* produce excellent or effective lessons. It was during the classroom observations that we noticed the strong

rapport between pupils and their teacher. Nonetheless, not all the six participating teachers showed similar degree of rapport with their pupils. We found the strongest rapport between the three of them – Madam C, Madam R and Mr. K, as discussed in this paper. We recognized that having good and positive rapport with pupils might be one of the significant characteristics of these teachers’ effective lessons. Hence, in the post-observation interviews with the teachers, we further clarified with them and discussed the possible strategies and skills in developing good rapport with pupils.

Our findings showed that there are six ways the three excellent Mathematics teachers have used to build good rapport with their pupils: (i) teacher acts as a partner and a playmate to the pupils; (ii) showing full concern and care to every pupil; (iii) having full understanding of pupils’ background; (iv) through non-verbal gestures; (v) always keep to the promises; and (vi) being loving and patience. These imply that good rapport needs to be established from day one and continued to make the effort as the year proceeds. Taking a genuine interest in their pupils, knowing more about them and their families, asking how they are, listening and being approachable are important elements for building good rapport between teachers and pupils.

Linking these six strategies to the theoretical framework (see Fig.1), we observed that strategy (v) “always keep to the promise” is related to building “**trust**”, while strategy (ii) “Showing full concern and care to every pupils” as well as strategy

(iii) “Having full understanding of pupils’ background “will clearly help to make “**connections**” between teachers and pupils. In addition, strategy (i) “Teacher acts as a partner and a playmate to the pupils” may help to create a “**positive and enjoyable atmosphere**” for learning. Finally, strategy (vi) “being loving and patience” clearly enhance the “**attraction**” of the teacher to the pupils. In addition, showing non-verbal gestures such as smiling face, eye contact and patting on the shoulder are clearly **positive emotional responses** from the teachers that can help build better rapport with his/her pupils. In brief, we conclude that our findings have supported the proposed theoretical framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study show that teachers can use good rapport with the students as a way to solve classroom discipline problems. Further study can then be conducted to explore the methods of utilizing good rapport in resolving the discipline problem and effective classroom management.

This study focused only on building rapport between teachers and students. Monroe (2010) stated that rapport among the students is crucial. He further remarked that students who feel comfortable to articulate in the class are more engaging and motivated to participate in the class compared to those who are afraid of being scorned by their peers. Therefore, future research may look into how to develop rapport among peers in the classroom.

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Syntax of Wh in Mendriq

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ABSTRACT

Mendriq is one of the Austroasiatic stocks spoken by only 300 people who populated the small part of South East Kelantan. It is an endangered language. These people dwell in an area called Pos Kuala Lah. This article analyses the wh-question words, *naken* and *luk ai*, in Mendriq language using the Minimalist framework. These wh-question words will be analyzed using the Minimalist Program to clarify whether the inherent nature of these wh-question words are *in situ* or moved wh-question words. We found out that the nature of these question words are not influenced by any other words in their respective sentences. Therefore, syntactic analysis will be the best analysis to explain these complex phenomena. Syntactic analysis found out that C (Complementizer) has a strong [uw] feature but the strength does not require the word to move to the scope position. Instead, this analysis claims that the scope position Spec CP (complementizer phrase) is attended by *Op* (empty category) in order to check the strong uninterpretable feature (uw) at C' (komplementizer bar). At the same time, the presence of *Op* prevents the movement of the question words to the scope position. We hope that this article will contribute to both the theoretical syntax and the preservation of an endangered language.

Keywords: Syntax, wh, Mendriq, Austroasiatic, endangered language, Malaysia, features

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of a question word in a sentence changes a particular sentence into an interrogative sentence, which can be further divided into two types; open-ended and close-ended question. The type of interrogative sentences can be easily identified because each type of sentence

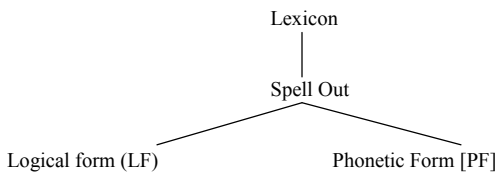
requires a different answer. A close-ended question only requires ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer, while an open-ended question requires its answer to be in at least a few words which can consist of various types of phrase. The open-ended question is an interesting scope to be studied as the wh question words can be divided into wh-argument or non-wh-argument words, in which the former is a wh-question word that occupies a complement position, while the latter occupies an adjunct position. Mendriq, one of the languages in the Austroasiatic family, has both the argument and non argument wh-question words. It is a SOV language (Fazal Mohamed Sultan, 2009b, p. 48). This paper is an attempt to study and analyze the wh-question words of Mendriq. This study focused on the wh-argument only due to data that are available at this moment. The wh- arguments in this language are *naken* ‘who’ and *luk ai* or *alow* ‘what’. These wh-question words were analyzed using the Minimalist Programme to clarify whether the inherent nature of these wh-question words are *in situ* or moved wh- words. This is due to the nature of Austroasiatic languages which have displayed both these phenomena. Therefore, we hope that this paper will try to clarify the differences that are displayed by these wh-words in Mendriq through a theoretical analysis.

MINIMALIST PROGRAMME

Minimalist Programme (Chomsky, 1995) assumes that the morpheme formation of a word is characterized in the form of grammatical features and these features

must be checked accordingly. The main assumption is that the syntactic structure of a sentence is formed through a combination of a continued merge operations and eventually mapped into two structural representations that determine the Phonetic Form (PF) and the Logical Form (LF), where the meaning of a sentence is determined. Therefore, each sentence must achieve the PF representation and LF representation. The assumption is that our grammar has two output levels: PF and LF. Next, the derivation of a sentence formation is an operation that involves the formation which entails a set of operations in the computation that generate syntactic structures, along with a set of operations that change the structure of PF syntax representation to a set of PF and LF operations that change the syntactic structure of representations of LF. LF and PF are said to be a two level intermediary in the grammar because both are connectors to other systems outside the domain theory of a grammar; for example, the PF representation serves as an input to the articulatory-perceptual system, while LF representation serves as an input to the conceptual-intentional system. Next, a phonetic content of a word is outlined in a set of features. Hence, PF representation only consists of the features that can only be interpreted phonetically, while LF representation comprises features that can only be interpreted in terms of its meaning only. This condition set by the constraints of universal grammar is known as Full Interpretation Principle (FIP). Therefore, if a derivation produces PF/ LF that meets

the FIP (must only contain features that can be interpreted), it is said to have converged. If the two representations for a PF and LF derivation meet FIP, then the derivation is said to converge. If the PF expression or LF expression violates the FIP, the derivation crashes. There is another level, known as Spell out, which divorces the PF and LF. The derivational process of a sentence goes through few steps. Firstly, through the operation of selection, each lexical is taken from the lexicon (each lexical has a set of phonetic, semantic and grammar features); secondly, through a process of merging, constituents are combined in pairs to form tree structure diagram (each word in the tree diagram contains a set of phonetic, semantic and grammatical features); thirdly, after the spell out, phonetic and semantic features are processed separately. The phonetic features are processed by PF operations that subsequently produce PF representations, while the semantic features are processed by LF operations that subsequently produce LF representations. This process is summarized as below:



Naken ‘who’

Mendriq language which is spoken by the aborigines residing in Kuala Lah, Kelantan, and it is from the Negrito stock. The base structure of this particular language is similar to the other Negrito languages such as Kensiu, Bateq, etc. (Fazal Mohamed

Mohamed Sultan, 2009b, p. 50; 2009c, p. 160). Interestingly enough, it has several question words which are similar to the Malay language like *apa* ‘what’ and *siapa* ‘who’. The question words in Mendriq language are *naken* ‘who’ and *luk ai or alow* ‘what’. In general, the question words may exist at the beginning as well as at the end of the interrogative sentence as in the Northern dialect of the Malay language (Fazal Mohamed Sultan, 2009a). The usage of the question word *naken* ‘who’ is exemplified in (3):

- (3) (a) **Naken** bek¹?
who you
‘Who are you?’
- (b) Bek **naken**?
you who
‘Who are you?’
- (c) **Naken** the?
who this
‘Who is this?’
- (d) Bek teh **naken**?
You this who
Who is this?’
- (e) **Naken** ton?
Who that
‘Who is that?’
- (f) **Naken** bek bentek?
who you married
Who did you marry?
- (g) **Naken** saket?
who sick
Who is sick?

¹Sometimes *bek* can be represented as *bem*. This article will not discuss the differences.

- (h) Bek bekchip lo **naken**?
 you went with who
 You went with whom?
- (i) **Naken** meyen la hep tun?
 who came at out there
 Who is out there?

The occurrence of *naken* shows that the word can be present at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. The position of *naken* depends on the NP which is being questioned. If a sentence questions the NP in the object position then, *naken* will be in the object position as in (4):

- (4) (a) Bek **naken**?
 you who
 'Who are you?'
- (b) Bek bentek **naken**?
 You married who
 Who did you married??
- (c) Kenmoh teh **naken**²?
 Name you who?
 What is your name?
- (d) Bek anak **naken**?
 you son who
 Whose son are you??
- (e) Bek bekchip lo **naken**?
 you went with who
 You went with whom?

Every *naken*, as illustrated in the instances above, is in the final position because it is questioning the object position. This phenomenon is often known as *in situ*.

²Even though the translation of *naken* is what in this sentence but the speaker refer to this *naken* as who.

Hence, the question word *naken* in Mendriq is claimed as *in situ*. This type of behaviour is not only obvious in the Austroasiatic languages such as Kensiu, Bateq and other languages of the aborigines in Malaysia but it can also be observed in other languages in the Austronesia family such as Malay and Indonesia.

This phenomenon as discussed is not only demonstrated by *naken* which is questioning the object position but it is also apparent in *naken*, which is questioning the subject position as in (5) below:

- (5) (a) **Naken** saket?
 who sick
 Who is sick?
- (b) **Naken** meyen la hep tun?
 who came at out there
 Who is out there?

The phenomenon of *in situ* is similar all the time. If *naken* questions object position, it occupies the object position, but if it questions the subject position, it occupies the subject position. This proves that *naken* has the *in situ* phenomenon. The intriguing question that has begun to surface is whether this phenomenon exists for all the languages in Austroasiatic. This question will be left unanswered and hopefully be reserved as a subject for further studies as this paper only concentrates on the study the syntax of Mendriq's question words.

However, the nature of *in situ* in this language is not constant. Data on Mendriq show that there are variations in the use of question words because the question word

naken can also move to the initial position. Some of the data in (3) are renumbered as in (6):

- (6) (a) **Naken** bek?
 who you
 Who are you?
- (b) **Naken** the?
 who this
 Who is this?
- (c) **Naken** ton?
 who that
 Who is that?
- (d) **Naken** bek bentek?
 who you married
 Who did you marry?

The position of the question words in (6) shows that the question words which question the object position are at the initial position now. This is the new position after the movement. This position displays a phenomenon, as opposed to (4), where *naken* does not move and is known as *in-situ*. One conclusion that can be made about *naken* is that this question word has two properties, namely, *in situ* and movement. However, this situation does not exist for the question words that question the subject because they are already in the subject position. Nonetheless, there will not be any discussion on the question word in the subject position. Hence, it is claimed that question word *naken* is free. Moving on is the discussion about the position of another question word which is *luk ai* ‘what’.

LUK AI OR ALOW ‘WHAT’

The question word *what* in this language is represented by two words, namely, *ai luk* or *alow*. Both are free in a sense that they can question the position of a complement in a transitive verb or the subject position. Therefore, this question word is known as an argument question (Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan, 2011). From the discussion above, we are aware that the question word that questions the subject position is not appealing in this SVO language due to the nature of movements or the *in situ* cannot be proven in this case (Haegeman, 1994, p. 239). Therefore, the question words like *luk ai* or *alow* which question the object position are discussed here. In order to facilitate the discussion, the question words will be divided into two parts as in (7) and (8):

- (7) *luk ai*:
- (a) Muk chitoh **luk ai**?
 You cook what
 What did you cook?
- (b) Bek tanem **luk ai**?
 You plant what
 What did you plant?
- (c) **Luk ai** tun?
 what that
 What is that?
- (d) **Luk ai** bedik?
 what do
 What did you do?

- (8) *alow*:
- (a) Bem dike **alow** key the?
You(sing) do what in here
Why did you come here?
 - (b) Bek carjack **alow**?
you work what
What is your occupation?
 - (c) **Alow** bek kerjak?
what you work
What is your occupation?
 - (d) **Alow** the?
what this
What is this?
 - (e) Becew badai **alow** bem dik?
to here what you do
What do you do here?

Both these argument questions have the same properties. In particular, both characterize *in-situ* (7a-b; 8a-b) and movement (7c-d; 8c-e) simultaneously. Meanwhile, the interrogative sentences in 7a-7d; 8a-e demonstrate that these question words, *luk ai* and *alow* can question the object position in a sentence. Nonetheless, it is quite interesting when (8b-c) illustrate that the question word *alow* has the freedom to be in the final or initial position of a sentence. This phenomenon is also supported by the data (7c-d) that portray the nature of *luk ai*, in which it has the freedom to move to the initial position or stay *in-situ*. Therefore, the syntactic structure of *luk ai* or *alow* is analysed using the Minimalist programme.

THE SYNTAX OF *NAKEN* AND *LUK AI/ALOW*

Up to this point of discussion, it is rather clear that both argument question words are free to move either to the initial position or stay *in situ* in the object position. Hence, the question words that question the object do not necessarily stay in the object position. Instead, they can also move to the initial position of an interrogative sentence. This free state of movement could be done by a special feature, which will be discussed below, that comes available with the question words.

Earlier discussions have explained that the question word *naken* is *in situ* or move to initial position in a question sentence. Both phenomena were not influenced by any word that follows or precedes the question words, as has been discussed in sub-sections 4 and 5. As a mean to ease the discussion, the *in situ* phenomena are analyzed using the syntactic analysis. Therefore, the question of sentence as in (6d) is repeated as (9):

- (9) **Naken** bek bentek?
who you married
Who did you married?

The syntactic structure of question sentence (9) is illustrated in (10)³.

Bentek is a transitive verb that is also known as a two-argument verb. Both arguments of the verb have been filled

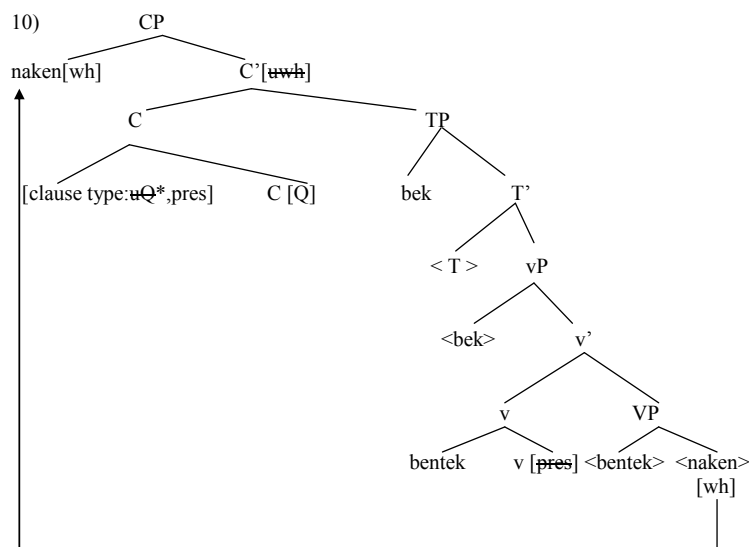
³CP(for Complementizer Phrase), C'(for Complementizer bar), C(for Complementizer), TP(for Tense Phrase), T'(for Tense bar), T(for Tense), vP(for small verb Phrase), v'(for small verb bar), v(for small verb), VP(for Verb Phrase).

in (9). The arguments have been met by *naken*, while the second argument is occupied by the pronoun *bek* in the subject position. This shows that this sentence is grammatical. However, the question word *naken* has moved to the scope position [Spec CP]. Adger (2004, p. 341) claims that if the feature of [uclause] on Tense (T) is assessed as [DECLARATIVE], the Tense is weak. Therefore, T will not move to the position and merge with C. Instead, if the feature [uclause type] on T is assessed as [INTERROGATIVE], T is strong. Therefore, T must move to the C position and the uninterpretable feature [uclause type] will be checked locally. This is because a strong feature can only be checked at a local position (Adger, 2004). This signifies that the feature will be checked by T through C-command. In the structure given in (10), the T node has an uninterpretable [uQ] which is strong. Therefore, in order to check this strong feature, it needs to move and merge with C. As a result, the feature is

checked locally.

Chomsky (1986) stated that C has a feature that gives an indication that a sentence is a statement sentence or interrogative sentence. Sentence (9) is a interrogative sentence. Therefore, we proposed that the C in (10) would have a strong but uninterpretable [uw] feature. Hence, these features must be checked. However, a strong feature can only be checked locally according to Adger (2004, p. 179). In order to achieve locality, the feature [uw] needs to be moved to the C ' position, as in (10). This forces *naken* to move to Spec CP in order to check the uninterpretable feature [uw] feature. All the processes of feature checking take place before Spell out. Eventually, this sentence is marked as grammatical. Therefore, the Minimalist Programme has successfully analyzed the movement of the wh-question in Mendriq.

However, this is not really highlighted by this language. Instead, this language has the option of not moving the question word

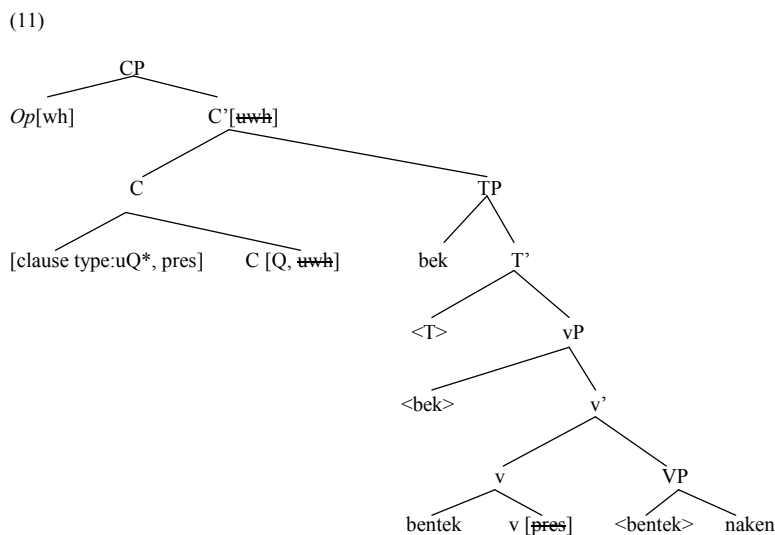


to the scope position. This clearly illustrates that this question word is *in situ*, as in (6d). However, this phenomenon causes the uninterpretable [uwh] not to be checked before Spell Out. Thus, this sentence should be marked as ungrammatical because the sentence crashes at LF. Instead, the sentence is acceptable to the native speakers of Mendriq. In order to solve this problem, we proposed that (4b) be marked, as in (11).

(10) and (11) explain why *naken* can stay *in situ* or move to the initial position. However, we need to solve the uninterpretable feature [uwh] on C. For this reason, we adopted Adger’s analysis (2004, p. 354), in which it is claimed that there is an empty operator *Op* on the Spec CP for yes/no question. Therefore, we prolonged this analysis on the wh-questions of Mendriq. This is important because we need to fulfil the nature of a strong uninterpretable feature which requires a local position in order to check the feature. It is because there is an empty operator *OP* in the CP spec checking

the [wh], resulting in *naken* to stay *in situ*. We also proposed that the empty category *Op* is covertly presented at Spec CP in this language at all time, but it only becomes overt when the question word does not move to Spec CP. Therefore, the presence of *Op* provides the place for the uninterpretable features [uwh] to be checked before Spell Out and a strong full interpretation can be obtained, as in (11).

We claim that this language has a unique nature where the arguments do not need to move to the scope position. If a speaker chooses to move the question word, then the empty operator *Op* does not exist. Therefore, *Op* is at the CP to meet the checking criteria. Otherwise, this sentence will crash because the feature [uwh] is not checked and the structure cannot be interpreted at LF. In fact, this analysis also claims that this language has an *Op*. The presence of *Op* in this language has led to an alternative movement, either in the scope position or remains *in situ*. This phenomenon can be



observed in the northern dialect of Malay language (Asmah Haji Omar, 1986; Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan, 2009d, p. 239).

Naken is not the only argument question word in the language. In fact, two more questions, known as *lok ain* and *alow*, do exist in the language. Discussion in the early part of this illustrates that both these question forms have two properties, namely, *in-situ* and movement. These properties can be seen below:

- (12) Bem dik **alow**?
 you do what
 What did you do?
- (13) **Alow** bem dik?
 what you do
 What did you do?

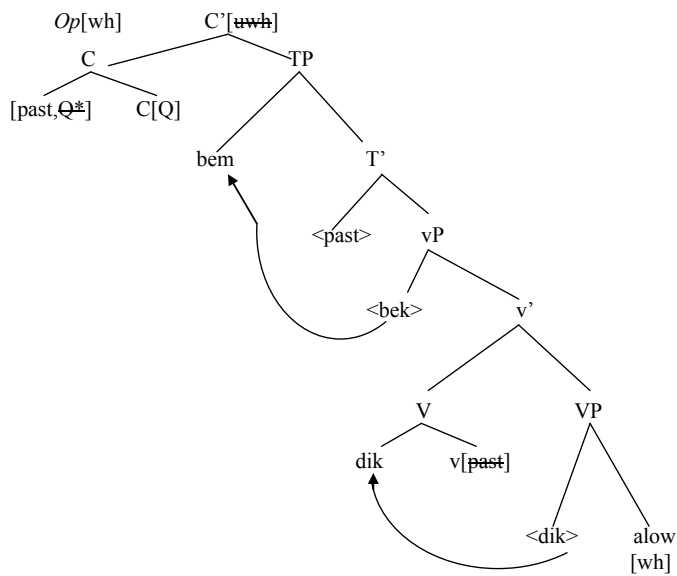
Based on the discussions above, the question word *alow* in (12) can be marked as (14), while the interrogative sentence in

(13) is indicated in (15).

The structure in (14) shows the presence of an uninterpretable feature [uw] that requires local checking. However, the question word does not move and merge to Spec CP in order to check the uninterpretable feature at C' CP. Nevertheless, this sentence is still marked as grammatical because it is saved by the presence of an empty operator [*op*]. This analysis is akin with the structure in (11). The next sentence (13) shows that there is a movement, which is marked as (15).

The structure in (15) is the same as the structure in (10). The question word *alow* also has the advantage of moving to the scope position: Spec CP. The presence of a question word leads to the disappearance of *Op* at the scope position. This has further strengthened the claim that the uninterpretable feature [uw] is strong but its strength does

(14) CP

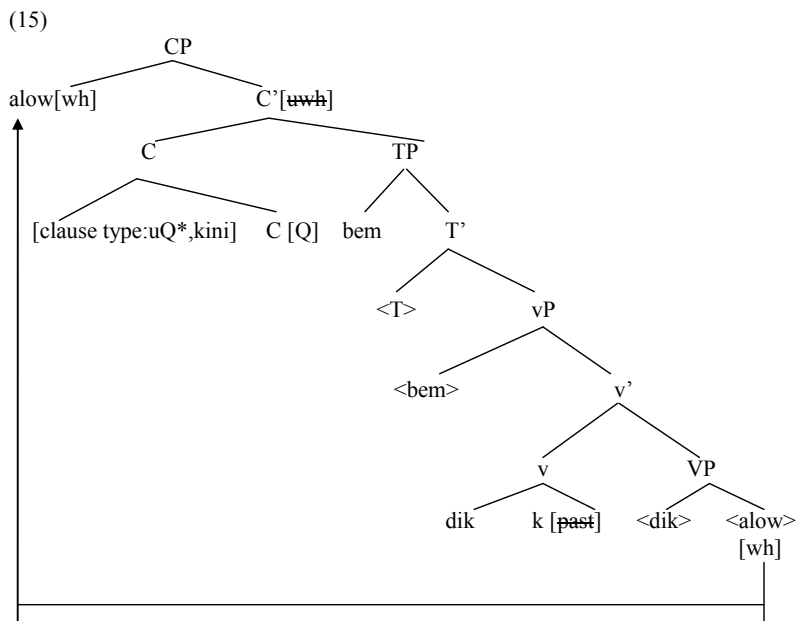


not require the movement of the question due to the presence of *Op*. This claim is parallel with Chomsky’s claim which suggests that the uninterpretable feature [uwh] is universally strong. However, we argued that the movement of wh-question to the scope position is due to the lack of *Op*, as this causes the question word to move to the scope position. Meanwhile, the presence of *Op* causes the wh-question to remain *in situ*. This analysis claims that languages which observe optional movement have an optional empty operator which is able to fulfil the *in situ* or movement requirement. We also claim that *Op* does as well possess strength. The strength of *Op* is rather weak in this language. This particular weakness contributes to the optionality of movement to the scope position in order to fulfil the strong uninterpretable feature to be checked before the spell out. This is deemed as a

comprehensive analysis on all the question words in the Mendriq language.

CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the argument question words *naken*, *alow* and *lok ai* and the analysis is divided into two different aspects; the first aspect deals with the descriptive analysis. This analysis has debated that these three question words have an alternative choices either *in situ*, which means staying in the position of the answer, or moving to a different position. We found out that the nature of these question words, being *in situ* or moved, is not influenced by any other word in their respective sentences. Therefore, a syntactic analysis is the best analysis to explain these complex phenomena. The syntactic analysis revealed that C has a strong [uwh] feature but the strength does not require the word



to move to the scope position. Instead, this analysis claims that the scope position Spec CP is attended by *Op* (empty category) in order to check the strong uninterpretable feature (uw_h) at C'. At the same time, the presence of *Op* prevents the movement of the question words to the scope position. On the other hand, the absence of *Op* requires the movement of the question words. The presence and absence of this particular operator, *Op*, are due to its strength. When the *Op* is strong, the wh-question will remain *in situ* but when the *Op* is weak, the wh-question will move to check the strong uninterpretable feature before the spell out. This analysis suggests that the question words that are *in situ* or moved are not a problem for this language. The main objective is to check all the uninterpretable features before the spell out in order to indicate that an interrogative sentence is grammatical.

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Students' Satisfaction on Blended Learning: A Preliminary Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights students' satisfaction towards blended learning in a tertiary course in Malaysia. Since it is a relatively new area in the Malaysian education system, there is a scarcity of research in this related field. The aim of this study is to examine the students' perception of the blended learning approach conducted in a course in a Malaysian university and to examine future directions in the application of blended learning. A one-to-one interview was conducted with 13 respondents who were chosen for this study. The results indicated more negative than positive responses. However, this should not hinder further implementation of blended learning. This study also discusses several recommendations in this paper.

Keywords: Blended learning, students' perception, future directions

INTRODUCTION

There are benefits of using online learning in many educational courses (Mat, 2000). The major advantage of using technological instructional tools such as online discussion has been widely recognised (Hanna & De Nooy, 2003; Shanaa, 2009). Berge (1995) introduced the use of computer-mediated

communication (CMC). It provides an environment for various opportunities, such as interaction among instructor and students, independent of time and place, besides facilitating the interaction with content. In recent years, Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, My Space, and Facebook have been extensively integrated in the teaching and learning process for the delivery of educational content in various fields, such as dentistry (Salajan & Mount, 2012) and English Language (Warschauer, 2000). Sikora and Carrol (2002) conducted a comparison between fully online learning and traditional face-to-face learning, but the

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result showed that students who engaged in online learning did not differ in their levels of satisfaction compared with those who engaged in traditional learning approaches. The students who engaged in online learning liked to participate in the learning, but the level of satisfaction was not significantly different compared to the level of satisfaction of students who used traditional methods. This was due to reasons like lacking in computer skills, poor quality of online discussion, lack of participation among learners and discussion content that was too broad (Wood, 2010). There were indications that the integration of the technological tools in traditional teaching and learning was an alternative approach to foster students' competencies in learning (Shanaa, 2009). Integrated modes of learning based on different learning environments combining face-to-face learning and online learning is called blended learning.

Blended learning as a concept arose due to the weaknesses and advantages of online and traditional learning approaches. Students who learn in a blended learning environment involve themselves in classroom lessons and also online learning (Tabor, 2007; Farahiza, 2010). Kim (2007) defined blended learning as "the mixing of traditional face-to-face approach with online approach" and Singh (2003) defined blended learning as the combination of two delivery methods, traditional and online learning methods, designed in such a way as to complement or blend with one another to promote learning upbringing.

Blended Learning incorporates online

learning, or as it is commonly known, learning management system (LMS). Many universities in Malaysia have their own LMS. For example, University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) uses SalMas, Multimedia University (MMU) uses MMLS and University Tun Abdul Razak (UniTAR) uses VOISS in their blended learning courses (Goi & Ng, 2009). In University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), the LMS that is used for blended learning is known as iLearn. Since blended learning is relatively new to UiTM, this study aims to determine students' satisfaction in using blended learning in UiTM.

Student satisfaction is important in higher learning institutions since it influences students' response to their learning and impacts their decisions whether or not to remain in their field of study (Roberts & Styron, 2011). Student satisfaction is defined as a certain level of expectations and experiences of a subject or course (Macquarie & Macquarie, 2010). Another definition of student satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of various outcomes and experiences gained based on the students' participation in learning and their campus life (Elliott & Shin, 2002). Universities are paying serious attention to low satisfaction among students because it may give universities a negative image and indirectly affect enrolment at that particular university. This is one of the reasons why student satisfaction has received so much attention recently in academic literature. In terms of blended learning courses, it is important to determine student satisfaction

in using LMS as lower expectations may cause students to discontinue the use of .

Therefore, this study focusses on student satisfaction towards blended learning that is being used in tertiary education in Malaysia. The study was held in University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Shah Alam and the targeted students were Master's students who use blended learning. Interviews were conducted as the main method of this study.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Blended learning is one effort by educators to promote effective learning strategies in higher education. Blended learning programmes as conducted in different universities vary. However, the programmes are based on a common framework. One of the common frameworks for a blended learning programme is Khan's Octagonal Framework (Singh, 2003). Many higher-learning institutions use this framework as a guide or plan to come up with blended learning programmes in their respective organisations. However, this contradicts what Martyn (2003) has put forth. According to Martyn, there is no structure or framework in blended learning. Thus, it is important to organise a structure which can be accepted by the respective learners. In addition, there is limited research conducted that contributes to the knowledge of blended learning. Nevertheless, some reports indicate that the reasons that many students do not prefer to use blended learning may include insufficient scaffolding; the server is not always accessible; problems with internet connectivity; it is time consuming;

server inconsistencies; tools interaction and stabilities (Blended Learning Institute for Quality Management, 2009).

Currently, educators in UiTM use the blended learning approach in some of the programmes and in some of the courses offered by the university. Since blended learning is new to the education system in Malaysia, not many studies have been conducted to investigate the challenges that can be faced by students who engage in blended learning. Student satisfaction can reflect the challenges faced by students in the blended learning environment. One study that surveyed these challenges was done by Zhang *et al.* (2011). They investigated student satisfaction in order to explore the challenges students faced in blended learning. It is crucial to determine student satisfaction in using blended learning; here, the challenges are highlighted for further improvement and refinement of blended learning programmes.

One of the main challenges in blended learning is the participation of students in the online activity. Despite putting up announcements reminding students to contribute, there are still students who contribute the minimum level of work or who do not contribute at all. Zhu *et al.* (2009) commented that participation rates differ between different cultural groups in e-learning. The cultural background of a learner shapes his or her values, perceptions and goals and response towards e-learning and blended learning. Zhu *et al.* (2009) further stated that American students performed better than their Chinese classmates in an

online learning environment. The Chinese students preferred the teacher-centred approach and they seemed to be more silent, passive, diligent and formal despite possessing sufficient computer skills. On the other hand, the American students seemed to be more confident and accustomed to student-centred online-learning.

Sometimes, participation does not differ not because of cultural influences, but for other reasons such as finding the topics in the forum boring or simply preferring the conventional face-to-face approach. Pape (2010) stressed that not all students may feel comfortable with new learning environments and may prefer lecturers to hand-feed them what they need to learn, instead of finding information for themselves. Brandon (2004) believes that a constructive learning environment should provide a supportive and motivating environment in which learners support each other by providing ideas on certain issues, find solutions to problems and interact with coursemates and lecturers.

Collaborative or cooperative learning plays an integral part of student learning nowadays as the role of the lecturer moves towards facilitating rather than providing information. Dillenbourg (1999) believed that theoretical influences of collaborative learning mainly draw on social-cultural theory put forward by Vygotsky. Vygotsky suggested that social interaction is important for learning because higher mental functions such as reasoning, comprehension and critical thinking originate in social interaction among peers. In order for

groups to cooperate, all members must participate actively by contributing ideas and constructive feedbacks. Unfortunately, this sort of situation does not happen all the time when e-learning is concerned as part of integrated learning. Allan (2007) stressed that students will participate in online activities if they feel that the activities are of benefit to them. As discussed above, some students simply find the topic boring and contribute only the minimum required in order to pass the module. As stated by Wood (2010), some students consider e-learning activities as “page turners” or “a little boring”. Sometimes, when there is an individual sharing knowledge in the forum, there seemed to be no comments or constructive feedback from the others in the group. When these sorts of scenarios arise, it reflects one-way learning. To overcome such problems, it is the lecturer’s role to remind students to contribute to online discussions. Another problem is that some students find that the topics being discussed are criticised but no solutions or alternatives are provided, unlike face-to-face interaction, where the lecturer not only provides a topic for discussion, but also becomes an active moderator at the time of discussion. This is supported by Gunawardena, Plass and Salisbury (2001) who commented that when a lecturer decided to implement online learning alongside face-to-face interaction, it required a heavy time commitment from the lecturer-cum-online instructor.

Thorne (2003) states that blended learning can be a problem unless the individual’s irresponsible provides

infrastructure of appropriate technological support. Lack of internet connectivity does not only affect those who are living in the rural area, but also those living in the urban areas. This could mainly be due to "internet traffic" which happens when there are a large number of users online at the same time. Hence, it is important for lecturers to be more considerate by providing reasonable deadlines.

When a lecturer decides to conduct blended learning she needs to work with the respective IT department in a higher institution which is responsible to ensure the server to upload the content of the module is working well. Hence, the lecturer has no full autonomy towards the e-learning environment. For instance, if a lecturer wishes to conduct an online quiz but cannot do so because the server is down, she might have to run the quiz face-to-face. Graham (2004) highlighted that students and online instructors themselves face technical difficulties in accessing learning websites. These technical difficulties usually involve internet connectivity and server problems. One of the main reasons is limited technology available depending on the strength of coverage which varies according to different places. In addition, connectivity problems may also be due to the individual's inability to afford the best internet connection service. As for server problems, these may happen due to security issues or the server being overcrowded. As such, the technical support system of a university should ensure constant maintenance of the server and should

expand the server's capacity or provide a backup server so the students will be able to log in anytime.

Just as online and face-to-face teaching are recognised as methods of teaching, blended learning is also required as a set of instruction methods with the combination of content development and professional development so that it can be recognised as a new set of teaching methods. Face-to-face and online teaching methods cannot be used interchangeably to deliver lessons. Thorough planning is needed before any teaching method is used. In online courses, since a lot of the content is published on the internet, the content should be first verified for validity by content experts.

The purpose of this study is to examine student satisfaction towards blended learning conducted in a public institute of higher learning in the Klang Valley. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to examine student satisfaction towards blended learning and to examine overall student perceptions of blended learning approaches used in higher education.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do students perceive blended learning in terms of difficulties?
2. How do students perceive blended learning in terms of advantages?
3. How do students perceive blended learning in terms of the prospect of blended learning?

METHODOLOGY

Students from Semester 3 of the Master of Education (Educational, Leadership and Management) programme were selected as samples for this study. All the students from a class that consisted of 13 students took part in this interview session. The interview session was conducted at the faculty. Before the interviews began, the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the interviews to ensure that the respondents had a general idea of what questions would be asked during the interview. The questions were mostly close-ended with one or two open-ended questions to allow researchers to explore further issues raised by the respondents. The interview session were carried out one-to-one in a private area so as to encourage the respondents to express their thoughts openly and honestly and at the same time to ensure confidentiality of their responses. A set of questions were asked by the interviewer. The interviewee had to respond orally to all the questions asked. The duration of each interview was about 15 to 20 minutes. The sessions were conducted in Bahasa Melayu and English; explanations mentioned in Bahasa Melayu were translated in English before data analysis was conducted.

RESULTS

The findings of the survey reflect the students' perceptions of blended learning components in terms of online learning.

The difficulties/problems/limitations in using blended learning

Eight respondents voiced out their frustration due to slow connectivity and the server being down. When they tried to log in to the system, the internet connectivity was found to be slow and it became worse when the system could not be loaded. Nine respondents stated that they were frustrated when the i-Learn system was down and the broadband or wireless internet connectivity was very slow. Three respondents stated blended learning could be relevant to the learning process but it depended on the subjects and learning tools. Blended learning was not suitable for subjects that involved calculation and technical explanation. Calculation subjects involve formulas and special characters or symbols that were not found on a standard keyboard. Furthermore, technical subjects that involved practicals and that were hands-on were better delivered face-to-face approach rather than online. One respondent stated that the computer or laptop malfunctioned:

Sometimes my computer is affected by virus and the computer is not functioning as it is and sometimes the coverage for the internet access is not available at my place and it is very hard for me to participate in the online discussion.

(Respondent 4)

Another respondent pointed out student attitude and mentality towards blended learning. The respondent claimed that most

students were familiar with the traditional methods that they had been exposed to since their primary school days. Changing learning styles now from the traditional method to blended learning was a huge challenge for them. This interviewee also did not seem comfortable with participating in online learning. Seven respondents stated that the learning environment in the i-Learn portal was boring and confusing. This led to stress and rigid learning. Some highlighted that there was no video or images. Yet, this phenomenon is very much a text-based discussion board. Some respondents who were married perceived online learning as a burden that ate into family time. Three respondents stated that time management was crucial as there were too many posts in the forum to read and respond to.

The advantages of using blended learning

Four respondents stated that blended learning promoted deep reading. Respondents found that they had to conduct some amount of research before they had sufficient information to post in a forum, and this widened their knowledge and deepened their understanding of a subject. In terms of availability, blended learning does indeed promote learning 24x7. Three respondents agreed that blended learning offered convenient all-day-long access to self-paced learning. In addition, five respondents mentioned that this learning approach could be conducted anytime and anywhere as they wished. They claimed there was no need to depend on classes only as they could access information

online. In addition, three respondents stated that all students had equal opportunity to contribute ideas in the forum compared with traditional classroom sessions bound by time constraints. Blended learning also enabled the students to interact with peers in discussing ideas. Three respondents stated that blended learning allowed them to gather more knowledge in particular subjects and indirectly enhanced their ICT skills.

Student perception of prospects of blended learning

When asked about the future prospects of blended learning, two respondents suggested that blended learning would contribute benefits to society. Many advantages could proceed from using blended learning in education, such as that it promotes further reading, acts as a platform in sharing ideas, is accessible anytime and anywhere and enhances knowledge, among others. Therefore, the use of blended learning in the future ought to be encouraged, the students felt. In addition, when the interviewer asked whether blended learning could be infused in the future in the Malaysian education system, all the respondents answered in the affirmative.

DISCUSSION

Interview data revealed three critical factors that affect student satisfaction towards blended learning: a) Difficulties in using blended learning; b) Advantages in using blended learning and c) How students perceive blended learning in terms of the future prospects of blended learning.

Difficulties in using blended learning

Ten of the respondents stated that the forum used in blended learning in Policy and Educational Planning subjects was stiff, boring, not interesting, rigid and too academic. This suggests that motivational practices are important. Interesting educational elements can be considered for inclusion in blending learning programmes. This effort is also encouraged by other educators such as Andres *et al.* (2009). Andrew *et al.* (2009) recommended that “online participation marks” could be awarded to the students when they contributed even a single sentence. In addition, where there is integration of e-learning, students have the opportunity to practise using a variety of features, in particular, software, since the medium of interaction is in written form. For instance, emoticons, different colours, shapes, font and font size can be played with to make student-centred learning more interesting..

Respondent 3 stated that she was stressed when having to use blended learning because the forum interaction was very boring and stiff. During the interview, she stated that:

How I felt using blended learning, I felt stress and so stiff compared to the blended learning that I used in my bachelor time.

(Respondent 3)

Since lecturers, as facilitators, meaningfully engage in online discussion, they engage in the interactive peer learning

of students. Hence, pedagogical strategies in facilitating online discussion are necessary. In addition, various roles that online facilitators can play can be identified to promote peer learning in online discussion fora.

Advantages of using blended learning

Eight respondents stated that the advantage of using blended learning was in its easy access. The materials could be accessed anywhere and at any time. The students could also download materials and notes provided by the lecturer at any time and in any place. Respondent 13 stated that:

I found out blended learning is good and easy especially when face-to-face meeting is one hour and we can do online learning at home.

(Respondent 13)

The students are comfortable with getting involved in obtaining the online materials for their learning. Thus, more related materials should be prepared by lecturers to assist students. The materials will be helpful in guiding the students to explore more related materials. Having content-specific materials that are uploaded by the course lecturers will save students the vast amount of time they would otherwise have to spend looking for materials. Looking for the right materials can also overwhelm them because of the sheer quantity of information available today. There is also the possibility that the students, because of their lack of exposure to the subject, may not find the

content that is deemed crucial or core to the subject. Thus, guided reading is necessary. It will also ensure that students do not leave materials unread simply because there is so much to read. It should be pointed out that these are some of the reasons why students who are well organised in approaching their studies are the ones who succeed in online courses.

How students perceive blended learning in terms of the future prospects of blended learning

All the students who participated in the interviews agreed that blended learning should be incorporated in the delivery of lessons in the future. This could be due to the fact that students see the advantages of blended learning for adult education. Poirier (2010) supports this view when he states that blended learning provides flexibility and convenience to the diverse student population. The use of technology offers advantages to the students especially those who are unable to attend classes due to work, distance, physical disability or being in a different time zone. This is affirmed by Munro and Munro (2004), who attest that the common benefits of blended learning are time saved and reduced travel cost.

Eight of the respondents did not like to use blended learning in their learning process. They preferred traditional methods such as the face-to-face meeting. Respondent 6 expressed that she preferred face-to-face meetings rather than blended learning.

At first I was very excited. I can 100% say that I am very eager to

log in to join in the forum...but at one point I feel kind of lost... Based on the topic itself, based on the ideas given by the other users and based on the experience, based on the course itself, some courses might be very helpful when using blended learning and some courses are very dull when using blended learning. That is why I prefer to be in face-to-face rather than online mode. I think I am more productive when talk to people directly.

(Respondent 6)

Some of the students recommended that blended learning be used in higher learning but not for all subjects. Some suggested that blended learning ought to be incorporated in the delivery of lessons as early as the primary-school years.

Not all the subjects can be implemented in blended learning modes. In terms of subjects such as logic thinking, critical thinking, where the subject are not too much on practical like science and math, these type of subjects can apply blended learning. But for science and math I don't agree in using blended learning approach.

(Respondent 5)

RECOMMENDATION

There are difficulties raised by the respondents such as the server being down and connectivity issues. These issues are

common grievances that have also been highlighted by other researchers. For instance, in Mungania's (2004) study, 88% out of the 875 respondents reported experiencing server and connectivity issues. As these two difficulties are common problems in online learning, they should be addressed by the online-learning developer first before any online modules are launched. This will ensure smooth flow of the programme.

In order to obtain a more varied sample, it is recommended to choose more respondents from other courses or faculties or local universities who participate in blended learning. As supported by Bollinger and Martindale (2004), replicating a study with a larger sample in the future will help to validate the findings of a study. Besides obtaining a more varied sample, the study should also be done in quantitative research mode. Varying the research mode will assist researchers to compare and contrast the results to provide a wider picture of students' perception of blended learning.

The next recommendation is to start blended learning from young. Mindset plays a vital role in acceptance of change. This is supported by Arbaugh (2004) and Flower et. al (2008) who stated that students with previous exposure to e-learning settings were more likely to express greater satisfaction. As mentioned by one of the respondents:

I prefer face-to-face interaction because since young we are exposed to that type of learning method.

(Respondent 4)

Since blended learning is relatively a new teaching methodology, it is essential for the instructor and students to obtain feedback from time to time in order to make improvements as and where needed. This is supported by Andrew *et al.* (2009) who stated that continuous feedback on blended learning helps to improve the system and simultaneously increase student participation and interest in blended learning. Research should also focus on student adaptation to different learning styles with the implementation of blended learning. Inevitably, with the implementation of blended learning, students need to integrate e-learning with their conventional face-to-face learning style. Adult learners who are comfortable with face-to-face learning may find it a great challenge. Hence, such a study would be beneficial to guide and assist adults who are engaged in or will be engaged in blended learning. As Singh (2003) elaborated, blended learning has the potential to balance out and optimise the development of learning programmes.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further study in this area should look into instructor perception of blended learning. This is to facilitate a compare-and-contrast study to explore the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning for lecturers and students. Besides looking into instructor perception, materials or content chosen for inclusion in hybrid learning plays a vital role in determining student involvement in a course (Farahiza, 2010, Dalsgaard & Godsk, 2007). The focus of

materials should facilitate individualisation to allow students to work in different ways with different materials, depending on individual understanding. Hence, for future study, it is recommended that materials for further improvement of blended learning be explored. In order to successfully implement a methodology or teaching method and to create materials for a particular course, a carefully planned and organised framework is pivotal. Such frameworks are presently available as have been published in several overseas journals. However, to suit the Malaysian context, these frameworks, if used, would need to be adapted to suit the learning style and mindset of Malaysian students as well as the courses they tend to prefer. The website of the North American Council for Online Learning and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006) states that the best framework or model is one that works best for students and instructors in the particular environment and which addresses their specific needs at any one time.

Having a good framework for blended learning is essential to ensure students are satisfied and achieve good grades. This leads to the next recommendation, which is to conduct a study on whether there is significant relationship between student achievement and blended learning. Student achievement plays an integral role in the teaching and learning process. No doubt, good student achievement helps to increase the instructor's reputation as well that of the institution. As such, university management should encourage more lecturers to apply

blended learning as the main teaching method of their institution. When the management of a university take such efforts to implement more blended learning courses, they will also open opportunities to students to familiarise themselves and be comfortable with blended learning.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided insights on the advantages, disadvantages and future prospects of blended learning from the view point of a group of Malaysian students who are pursuing their Master's degree in a local Malaysian university. The discussions have been directed to view the prospects of blended learning for future implementation. The bright prospect of blended learning is concerned, then some others pedagogical issues should be concerned for the implementation of blended learning approaches, such as the structure of making up environment of dominantly asynchronous and partially synchronous mode, in terms of the student attendance at face-to-face learning sessions. On the other hand, the design and delivery of course content are the main focus of the learning. Although the researchers discovered that there were more negative responses compared to positive ones in student perception of future use of blended learning, this should not hinder further implementation of blended learning.

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Kate Chopin's Early Fiction as a Prologue to the Emergence of the New Woman

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ABSTRACT

Despite the revival of interest in Kate Chopin's works during the twentieth century, her early fiction has not yet elicited as much critical appreciation as *The Awakening* has. The aim of this study is to show that Chopin's first novel, *At Fault*, and the tale, "Lilacs", exhibit the same genius and modern forms and features of her later fiction. Chopin's authorial voice, strongly but covertly, addresses society's flaws which are rooted in the illogical demands of the Christian religion and male moral philosophy. This study attempts to demonstrate that Chopin's hidden anti-religious sentiment is one of her earliest attacks on the role of the Church in prescribing religious codes and social mores and that Chopin blames the Church for being indifferent to women's needs. Although Chopin portrays female characters who feel constrained by the societal definition of their duties and responsibilities, she shows them enjoying various means of satisfaction and fulfilment. In spite of that, however, they experience a decisive transformation in their religious lives and mentality. The protagonists that Chopin depicts share some traits, ideals and visions of the New Woman, but their interests diverge according to their different needs. This study attempts to introduce Chopin's portrayal of her protagonists as early versions of the New Woman that can promise fuller and a more complex emergence in her later fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

Chopin wrote *At Fault* in April 1890 but she was not able to find a publisher and

had to print and distribute her first novel at her own expense. She sent a few copies of it to “some periodicals and newspapers in New York and Boston in hope of gaining the attention of nonlocal reviewers” (Toth, 1990, p. 189). Except for a brief review in the *Nation*, *At Fault* received attention only from newspapers in towns where Chopin had lived. *At Fault* is set in the Cane River district of northern Louisiana. *At Fault* is a book about the “changing social world of the post-Reconstruction South and its effect on the people who inhabit it” (Ringe, 1987, p. 28). The major change is the intrusion of modern industry into the agricultural world of the plantation. Donna Campbell, also views *At Fault*, like many social-problem novels, as a tale about change and resistance to change.

This article tries to show Chopin’s latent intention to develop female characters who feel constrained by the societal definition of their duties and responsibilities. Along with *At Fault*, “Lilacs” (1894) is discussed in order to explore the function of religion in the protagonists’ lives and destinies. The feminist subtext of her early fiction is a kind of critical protest against society’s flaws, which are rooted in what appears to her to be the illogical demands of the Christian religion and male moral philosophy. *At Fault* and “Lilacs” are undoubtedly part of a series of texts challenging women’s position within marriage and society. With the advent of industry and modernity, Chopin attempts to view the Church from a different perspective, and she combines her hidden anti-religious stance and undertones with modernism to awaken women to what she

sees as the oppressive agenda of organised religion. Perhaps Chopin intends to inculcate a more liberal belief in her characters’ minds, that the rapid technological changes require social change and, eventually, changes and updates to their mindsets. Yet in this selected fiction, Chopin tries to create female characters who experience the dilemma of whether to stick to or depart from Victorian propriety and the religious code. Much of Chopin’s short fiction that was published throughout the mid-1890s tends to portray varieties of female experience. In “Lilacs” Chopin compares the protagonists’ ideals, satisfaction and fulfilment through erotic desire and frequent religious rituals. The protagonists that Chopin depicts share some traits, ideals and visions of the New Woman¹, but their interests diverge

¹In 1894, Sarah Grand published an essay entitled ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’ in the *North American Review* to “mark a sense of modern discontent with the traditional stay-at-home life of marriage and motherhood deemed appropriate for middle-class women” (Gamble, 2006, p. 259). According to Grand, the New Woman had solved “the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy” (p. 271). Even in terms of physical appearance the New Woman bears a different image from contemporary women. She goes for solitary urban walks, she smokes cigarettes, she rides a bicycle in public, she likes to travel, she explores her sexuality and she has no nostalgic feeling of maternity. She rejects the confinement of marriage and the renunciation of sex. Irrespective of stereotypes, the New Woman rejected the dominant ideology that insisted men and women were meant to occupy different spheres based on gender. “She insisted that the separate spheres ideology was a societal construct as opposed to

according to their different needs. They may not represent the full-fledged manifestation of the New Woman's attributes, but Chopin portrays them as early versions that can promise fuller and more complex emergence in her later fiction.

DISCUSSION

Part one of *At Fault* begins on the Place-du-Bois plantation. The narrator introduces Thérèse Lafirme as the "Mistress of Place-du-Bois," who has recently lost her husband, Jérôme Lafirme. The neighbours are curious to learn about the fate and management of the plantation of four thousand acres at the hands of a young widow. However the only wonder is that Thérèse takes on the responsibility to own and to manage the plantation using the "methods of her departed husband ." As Thérèse, now chatelaine of the plantation, is close to fulfilling the pastoral role, her black servant, Uncle Hiram, informs her that "things is a goin' wrong" (Chopin, 1969, 741). She

a biological imperative, and demanded women be given the same opportunities and choices as men" (p. 26). Ostman sees "a shift from the angelic, domestic woman of the Victorian age to a more independent, self-sufficient woman for the new age" (Ostman, 2008, p. 6). The New Woman rejects traditional stereotypes of women as being delicate, passive and domestic. She saw in higher education an opportunity for intellectual fulfilment and for an autonomous role outside the patriarchal family. The New Woman (fictional or real) challenged prevailing *Victorian attitudes* and posited an alternative to the accepted and acceptable True or Ideal Woman. Her claims are for self-ownership and she considered matrimony and maternity to be decisions, not duties.

soon recovers her equanimity and, in an effort to regain control of the plantation and its workers, she quickly moves into action and assumes the role of the traditional plantation owner and pastoral master. The narrator details the many social, cultural and technological changes facing the Cane River community. Thérèse discovers that the war has irrevocably changed the genteel orderly plantation life to which she is accustomed. Industrialisation, modernity and the consequent advent of the railroad have also brought changes and she views these as a threat to her old way of life and her property. Although Thérèse desires to dominate her surroundings, by clinging to tradition and resisting change, she grudgingly recognises the inevitability of change to the domain of her plantation. Chopin describes that the technological changes force Thérèse to accept the encroachment of the railroad upon her "serene existence" and that this requires her to surrender a portion of her land. She decides to abandon the old plantation homestead near the river and the railway tracks and rebuild a new home far from "the inroad of progressive civilization".

In constructing her new abode, "she avoided the temptations offered by modern architectural innovations, and clung to the simplicity of large rooms and broad verandas: a style whose merits had stood the test of easy-going and comfort-loving generations" (p. 742). From the early descriptions of the narrator the reader notices Thérèse's initial tendency to resist change and modernity and her adamant wish to hold onto her settled life-style of

the past. The reader also discovers that she exerts her great ability to preserve her sense of personal control over the environment. In contrast to her view of retaining her old mode of life, once she is seen to have succumbed to the allure of progressive civilisation and modern tools. Here it appears that she develops an ambivalent or dual perspective, both resisting modernity and embracing it. In her reluctance to accept change she feels “comfortable satisfaction,” surveying her land, when she is armed with an instrument of technology, a field-glass. With this instrument she can not only sweep her “gaze from cabin to cabin; from patch to patch; up to the pine-capped hills” (p. 742), but also monitor an “endless procession of intruders forcing themselves upon her privacy” (p. 742).

Part one of the novel progresses by showing Thérèse’s success in upholding the prevailing order and stability in her plantation and establishing happiness and comfort for her community and for her nephew. However, the limitations of Thérèse’s rigid control and dominance over her plantation become apparent when David Hosmer presents a contract paper from his St. Louis firm to build a saw-mill two miles into Thérèse’s woods. David offers her a large sum of money “for the privilege of cutting timber from her land for a given number of years” (p. 744). Thérèse does not wish to change her philosophy or old ideals but does realise the stark reality that Place-du-Bois can no longer remain a traditional pastoral setting, free from industry and outside influence. A shrewd businesswoman,

Thérèse, ultimately agrees to David’s proposal and welcomes the technological changes that will affect her land.

There are some external factors that put Thérèse in a dilemma of whether to stick to her Creole heritage, which positions her as a figure of the South’s old order, or to adopt the new modern order. The demise of Jérôme Lafirme who represented the old South order contributes to the advent of the new North order represented by David. This enables her to step aside from her former domestic vocation and successfully perform a masculine role. She enters into the job sphere which formerly belonged to and was occupied by males and did not welcome women to assume such professions. Along with rapid industrialisation, now David introduces another modern external influence to Place-du-Bois that perpetuates change in the setting and its characters. His lucrative proposal for a timber industry enables Thérèse to develop her business acumen and helps her to overcome the conflict between resisting change and embracing modernity.

Chopin does not suggest that Thérèse’s deceased husband left any male heirs to claim or assume the responsibility of his plantation; however, by doing so she automatically makes Thérèse be the sole owner of the plantation and this ownership allows her to sign a commercial contract with David’s firm. She views another fruitful dimension of modernity that allows her to work and to be her home breadwinner. Thérèse’s acute sense of provision, to expand her source of income and ensure

the financial prosperity of her plantation, helps her to allay the anxiety of future sustenance, and she establishes the means of her independent maintenance without the presence and support of her husband. Chopin creates a female character at a time when employment discrimination based on sex still prevailed in Louisianian society. In this sense Thérèse emerges as a version of 'New Woman' who rejects the dominant ideology that insists that men and women are meant to occupy different spheres of activity according to their biological sex. Thérèse is childless and it seems she is unencumbered with motherly duties and domestic upkeep, but the interest of 'New Woman' diverges according to different needs. She is about to contest traditional stereotypes of women as delicate, passive and domestic. She paves the way to exit from domestic space and transcend gender boundaries. Thanks to the demise of her husband she has no wifely demands on her to inhibit her progress towards entering a masculine space and profession. In this context a woman who questioned the traditional female role was tagged a 'New Woman'.

David's sister, Melicent, visits him to spend the summer in Louisiana. She is twenty-four years old, tall, slender, attractive and "conscious of the impression she makes upon others, knows well how to attract men" (Skaggs, 1985, p. 78). The narrator describes how she has lived "an unstable existence, free from the weight of responsibilities" (Chopin, 1969, p. 748) and enjoyed uninterrupted summer sojourns from North to West or East as an "alternating

caprice prompted" her. However, her extensive travel and independence have been assured by David's lavish financial help. At the plantation she meets and befriends Thérèse's nephew, Grégoire Santien who takes her for a stroll in the woods. One day in the pirogue, Grégoire tells Melicent, "you got to set mighty still in this pirogue" (p. 748), but since it is not Melicent's "fashion to obey a word of command" (p. 749), she ignores him until she sees the reason for the order: an alligator that Grégoire promptly shoots. A few minutes later, he warns her to pull down her veil without explaining that a gray swarm of mosquitoes is about to attack. Declining for the second time to obey without questioning, Melicent is bitten by mosquitoes and, symbolically, by the reality that she refuses to accept. From this scene the reader senses that Melicent is capricious, selfish and adventuresome and that she refuses to obey or accept her male companion's commands or advice at the first time of asking. She resents being defined and positioned like the stereotypical passive and meek women who are expected to be fully obedient to their husbands or male chaperons. She tries to portray the features of a modern American woman who relies on her own choices and decisions.

Grégoire has fallen in love with Melicent and as the novel progresses the narrator describes further Thérèse's gracious and kind personality. Thérèse shows a warm interest in the concerns and problems of other people and wants everyone to feel her own pleasure in the "good things of life". She has established

herself as a self-appointed moralist and an autonomous woman, who “requires certain conduct from others” (p. 754). Thérèse extends her generous hospitality and care to David, and the attraction between them grows steadily though it is not surprising to notice that Thérèse’s relationship with David is conducted entirely on her own old ethical terms.

In chapter four, we see Thérèse riding Beaugard, her beautiful bay mare, to inspect and control the territory of her plantation. David meets her at the cottage of Jocint’s old father, Morico, and informs her that he had almost dismissed Jocint for deliberately mishandling logs. Then they ride their horses together. During their ride through the woods David says he prefers living in the country to city life, and hints at liking her, but she rebuffs his impulsive declaration of love by spurring her horse forward and then monopolising the conversation. Later, when she accidentally learns from Melicent that David is divorced, she decides that their relationship is “simply a thing to be summarily dismissed and as far as possible effaced from her remembrance” (p.764) before ever hearing his side of the story. David decides to go and talk to Thérèse and finds her in her secluded parlour, whereupon he is rebuked for being reticent about his divorce and is demanded not to ever repeat his declaration of love for her . Thérèse’s Catholic upbringing prompts her to object to his divorce, which her religion forbids, and she emphasises that “love isn’t everything in life; there is something higher” (p.769). She specifies that religion does not

influence her reason and she does not want to base her “prejudice” on religion but on her own personal moral principles. Thérèse’s reaction to David’s account of the cause of his marriage failure reveals her staunch adherence to her religious temperament.

Despite Thérèse promises not to misjudge him, she declares that he has failed in his duty to his wife and has disrespected the sanctity of the institution of marriage. She adds, “You married a woman of weak character. You furnished her with every means to increase that weakness” (p.768). Thérèse speaks the last words with intensity, calling him a coward for having ended his first marriage rather than living up to his vows at the altar. She blames him “for not providing his wife better moral support and for not being man enough to face the consequences of his action” (Gale, 2009, p. 13). Obedient to his lady’s precepts and believing in her moral superiority, David pleads with her to tell him “what is right” . Her remedy is to resolve social disunity by reuniting David and Fanny and, in a twinge of conscience, he agrees to remarry Fanny and bring her back to live on the plantation. Thérèse’s world is within the context of the nineteenth-century Southern rural life of Roman Catholics who are known to be conservative and attached to their religious code. This world shapes her strong moral and religious conviction, which deters her from accepting the marriage proposal of a divorced man whose wife is still alive. Maureen Anderson also refers to her Catholic education and her impeccable adherence to the morals of her culture, and

the "old world ethics and [her] position as a pastoral master which prevent her from pursuing a relationship with the divorced David" (2001, p. 10). The reader senses the protagonist's awareness of a social problem and her idealistic programme of reform according to her own religious doctrines. Batinovich also stated that *At Fault* is about "Thérèse's determination to set her lover straight with church, to cleanse his soul and to help him to see where he went wrong in divorcing his wife" (2008, p. 75). David's "blind submission" to Thérèse's interpretation of moral duty emanates from his perception that she has keener moral observation than he does and, more powerfully, from the romantic love he harbours for her.

On the surface, the novel mirrors sentimental romance and the denial of love, but Chopin aptly uses the form of the sentimental novel to express her message that questions the Catholic Church's stance against divorce as a moral means of solving marital problems. In fact, Chopin creates what Per Seyersted recognises as "the first American novel to treat divorce amorally" (as cited in Hotchkiss, 1994, p. 32). The subtext of the novel is an apparent criticism of women and men who blindly accept the illogical demands of the Church and allow societal expectations and religious codes to govern their judgment. "Thérèse is the personification of the church; she is inflexible and demanding of those over whom she has power" (Batinovich, 2008, p. 75). But "eagle-eyed readers" will question the legitimacy of Thérèse's role as a moral

arbiter who appropriates the traditional male prerogative realm of making judgements. Although in her condemnation of divorce in this scene Therese "echoes the prevailing view of the Catholic Church, her spirited defense of an alcoholic wife runs counter to the prevailing cultural views of the time" (Boyd, 1995, p. 22). Thérèse does not perceive his wife's alcoholism as a sufficient reason to put an end to their conjugal ties. She emerges with dual perspective, because although she struggles to establish the prevailing view of the Catholic Church regarding the sanctity of marriage, her defense of David's inebriated wife runs counter to the dominant cultural view of the time. A 'True Woman' at that time was deemed not to consume alcohol and so a woman who drank heavily was labelled as one demonstrating unwomanly decorum. Here she appears liberal and it seems she advocates some of the traits of New Woman. She does not see such a habit as immoral or a real threat to the institution of marriage, rather, particularly for this matter, she tends to be indifferent to tradition and the cult of religion.

Part Two of the novel introduces Fanny's first night at Place-du-Bois. Meanwhile Grégoire and Melicent's romance fades and Thérèse, recognising his unrequited love, advises him to leave the plantation temporarily. Despite Thérèse's "watchful supervision of her comfort" (Chopin, 1969, p. 798) Fanny remains aloof and miserable, and soon tires of the isolated country life; she makes no effort to revive her life and continues to lie, to be unpleasant to David

and eventually finds Marie Louise's home a place of succour in which to relapse into alcoholism. In the course of the novel, as Thérèse gains in "knowledge of life as it is" (p. 875), and as she observes their remarriage deteriorating, her thinking process begins to change.

Also, as the novel progresses, the reader discovers that Thérèse gradually fails to control and dominate her environment or maintain the happiness of and stability among the members of her plantation. She also comes to realise that Fanny's innate insolence doubled with her drinking makes her one of the few people on the plantation who cannot be dominated. Jocint rebels against the job Thérèse has found for him in the saw-mill and "protest(s) the mill's regimentation by burning it to the ground" (Campbell, 2008, p. 29). Jocint's sabotage stems from his dislocation from the land caused by David's new intrusion. With Jocint's death the primitive past is dismissed, the mill is rebuilt and change continues at Place-du-Bois. Chopin hints that Jocint could not stop the advance of modernity, and she suggests that this continuation should occur in order to dismantle the vestiges of the old order and help foster change in the mindset of the people.

In Chapter Ten, when Thérèse is left alone, growing self-doubt develops and she wonders how "right" her order was that culminated in David's obvious wretchedness and unhappiness. Thérèse's emerging awareness of his melancholy and her own pain at being apart, as well as her slow recognition of the hollowness of David's

marriage, erodes her confidence in the moral rightness of her decision. In St. Louis, Melicent reads her "visiting book", recalls a euchre party with several "cackling" women, and instructs her maid to tell Mrs. Van Wycke, an unpleasant cheating visitor, she is not at home. Such "people whom she frequented were all very tiresome" (Chopin, 1969, p. 855). Melicent attends women's Guild meetings and dislikes most of the members. This scene foreshadows Edna Pontellier's desire to disregard social convention and disengage from the routine of callers. In Louisiana most people know about the couple's "misery" and David, who is inured to this deteriorated marriage and who has been "stoically suffering for his sacrifice, reacts impetuously, which causes Fanny to flee to Marie Louise's cabin during a storm" (Witherow, 2006, p. 109). There, Fanny again revels in a drinking binge and refuses to return with Hosmer. The climax of the novel occurs when the cabin, "precariously poised on the eroding river's edge", is submerged in the raging river by the storm, and when David swims to rescue her, a house beam knocks him unconscious and Fanny drowns.

One year later, Thérèse returns from Paris and she stumbles upon David at the train station. Chopin reunites them on the train returning to Place-du-Bois, thus reuniting them on the instrument of modernity and progress – the railroad – that brought David and his business to the region. The narrator opens the chapter in the symbolic season of spring and all its promise of rebirth and new life. It signals

renewed hope for a relationship to finally bloom between Thérèse and David now, after Fanny's death.

In this scene, Thérèse is shown alone, wearing a stylish Parisian attire and gloves, and unescorted by any male chaperon. She has travelled to Paris, a city which is known as the centre of the Enlightenment movement and a place for individuals seeking intellect, art and fashion. Her solitary travel and new stylish dress, brought from a worldly city such as Paris, mark her cultural and social change, and the reader may assume that the cultural and intellectual ambience of Paris could help her modify her inflexible religious idealism and emerge as a New Woman by adopting a more realistic perspective. She adopts one of the New Woman's features by embarking on a trip independently, with no male chaperon. While she is on the train with David, returning to Place-du-Bois, Thérèse holds his hand and confesses that she has been "at fault" in "following what seemed the only right", she tells David. "I feel as if there were no way to turn for the truth. Old supports appear to be giving way beneath me. They were so secure before" (Chopin, 1969, p. 872). Chopin suggests that Thérèse has learned a lesson about the perils of relying too heavily on social convention and moral etiquette to determine one's personal beliefs. She has now developed some insight into how one evolves from a "staunch believer" to a liberal thinker. As she listens to the voice of her heart she learns that it has its reasons too. Thérèse's warm heart and her "clear mental vision," not to mention her sexual and emotional needs, are no longer at odds.

In no time they get married. Of significance in the discourse of their reunion is David's recognition and acceptance of Thérèse's role in overseeing her plantation. Contrary to cultural dictates concerning a woman's place and role, he does not want her confined to a solitary domestic sphere after their marriage. When she invites him to help with the plantation, he responds: "I'll not rob you of your occupation" (p. 874). Chopin hints that their reunion should not demand that she relinquish her autonomy for the sake of a happy marriage, relegating her to the traditional female realm of domesticity. While their love is still in a state of "overmastering happiness", David receives a letter from Melicent asking him to finance a scientific trip for her to California. She also reveals the scandal that Fanny's friend Lou Dawson has been caught out in an affair with Bert Rodney, but her compassion goes to "poor, poor Mrs. Rodney, who is after all the one to be pitied". She does not condemn Lou Dawson's betrayal and it seems she is foreshadowing one of the New Women's credos of free love. Earlier, we learnt that Melicent had had five broken engagements and her rejection of Grégoire portrays her as a modern woman desiring a perfect union with a man on par with her sociocultural level. She is not a docile and traditional homemaker, rather she travels extensively and wishes to explore and make new scientific discoveries. Although Chopin does not fully develop Melicent's personality and her true needs in detail, a discerning reader can detect her interest in learning new knowledge by planning adventurous trips under the

bright Mrs. Griesmann's supervision, which is one of the New Woman's demands, that is, education. "Melicent, restless and emotionally detached where Thérèse is calm and emotionally engaged, is an example of the New Woman who seeks social and intellectual parity with men. She lives by her ideas of freedom" (Campbell, 2008, p. 35).

The reader learns that Thérèse's initial reception of and reaction to modernisation is unpleasant; on the other hand, we notice that Thérèse has successfully entered into the modern male cultural and economic zone. Wintle states that in the fin-de-siècle the riding of horses was implied as being absolutely masculine; horses, after all, belong primarily to the worlds of work, military action and ceremony, and to the masculine sports of racing and hunting. By the early nineteenth century, "writing about women riding horses for pleasure, already offered a fruitful way of registering female physical energies" (Wintle, 2002, p. 67) but Thérèse is riding her horse, Beauregard, as a means of transportation to supervise her plantation and monitor the workers. Mastery of horses was generally associated with power, status and masculinity. "Although women and horses figured significantly in pre-New-Woman nineteenth-century fiction, New Women themselves were much more likely to ride bicycles as an individualised mode of transport" (p. 66). From the setting of the novel the reader can understand that the bicycle was still less readily available for female use in that particular time and place of Louisiana. Women usually rode in a one-horse carriage but, in rare instances, rode horses. In one scene, while Thérèse and

David are riding their horses towards the hill side spring, David takes the opportunity to express his love for her but we observe Thérèse's mastery of horse riding when she makes Beauregard spur forward into a "quick canter, leaving Nelson and his rider to follow as they could" (Chopin, 1969, p. 758). She not only flaunts her power in horse control but also changes the subject of conversation by monopolising and dominating the talk during the remainder of the ride. The reader observed how Thérèse was physically active in managing and supervising the plantation. Also, in the Victorian era, riding horses was associated with the idea of physical freedom. Melicent's five failed betrothals also reflect her worry about the entrapment of traditional marriage and the loss of individuality.

The short story "Lilacs" unfolds an "ocean away from Louisiana". It is set alternately in Paris and in a nearby cloistered provincial convent. "Lilacs" concerns Adrienne Farival who, each spring when the lilacs are in bloom, returns to the convent where she was raised and educated. Adrienne Farival is an actress, opera singer and career-orientated New Woman who lives a glamorous and secular life in Paris. She has several discouraged suitors who are still struggling to win her heart. Although Adrienne is largely happy with her frivolous life, she lapses into a "heaviness of heart" and "despondency" (p. 357-358). One day when she is feeling disconsolate on a noisy Parisian boulevard, a girl comes past with blooming lilacs, the fragrance and aroma of which "buoyed her and made her think of the convent- sunlight on stone wall, bird notes,

humming insects and especially lilacs in thick-leafed branches" (Gale, 2009, p. 94). In fact, it is the scent of lilacs and the lure of nature that draw her to the convent. Her visits over four consecutive years to the nunnery afford her a peaceful atmosphere in which to relieve her depression and rejuvenate her soul, especially in the company of Sister Agathe. Koloski argues that "it is the pull of an individual nun as much as the appeal of the communal life that impels Adrienne to seek out the convent each spring" (Koloski, 1996, p. 59). The convent sisters eagerly anticipate Adrienne's fortnightly visits from Paris. She arrives with a bunch of lilacs and generous gifts for the convent. She pays her formal respects to the Mother Superior who is rigid, unaffectionate and cold.

By and large, "Lilacs" explores the relationship between two women, Adrienne and Sister Agathe, her old school friend. It seems Sister Agathe is trying to establish a kind of sisterly bond between Adrienne's secular perceptions and her religious obligations; however, "her joy at the light and life associated with Adrienne reveals the incompleteness of convent life" (Skaggs, 1985, p. 42). Both of them need to maintain their "nourishing contact" with each other's world to fill the void that each feels in her life. Adrienne seems to find some sort of spiritual satisfaction and fulfilment in the convent and during her stay, she follows the convent regulations, for instance, folding her simple clothes "with great care, placing them on the back of a chair as she had been taught to do when a child" (Chopin, 1969, p. 360). However, this religious obedience

and tendency cease when she leaves the convent. As the largest part of her life is "engulfed" by the secular world of Paris, she must leave temporary spiritual fulfilment behind. She is accustomed to the luxurious armchair and "picturesque disorder" of her apartment in Paris where her "charming négligée, puzzling and astonishing-looking garments" are "thrown carelessly around" (pp. 360-361).

The reader can sense Chopin's hint that while Adrienne goes to the convent to seek spiritual fulfilment within its convent, her annual commute also carries a message for the convent denizens to be aware that life can offer fulfilment other than that which comes from being devoted to convent life. Her dual paths suggest that the New Woman can also cross the borders between secular life and religious life and show the emulative method to acknowledge both spiritual and physical desires. After a fortnight's stay Adrienne returns to her sumptuous apartment in Paris to resume her trendy life. Once in her room, and "reclining indolently" on her armchair, surrounded by musical scores, disordered garments and an open piano, Adrienne receives her maid's complaint. Sophie informs her that her manager was annoyed at her mysterious departure. But Adrienne is indifferent to her career demands and domestic obligation and orders Sophie to fetch her wine, crackers and cigarettes to perpetuate the leading of her dual life.

Charlotte Jennifer Rich has made an extensive study of Chopin's short fiction and novels to reveal "her preoccupation with the

themes of female agency and independence that were the touchstones of the New Woman's [quests]" (1998, p. 97). She traces Chopin's portrayal of many female characters, seeking modes of independence and types of fulfilment that draw the New Woman's vision or ideals. In each short story she examines the heroine's different methods of fulfilling the New Woman's aspirations. In examining Chopin's story "Lilacs", she discusses the condition and licentious lifestyle of Adrienne Farival, a successful artist and entertainer. She finds that Adrienne's luxurious lifestyle, her routine travel to Paris, her "charming négligée" and her habit of drinking and smoking a cigar before her male admirer position her as one of "the racy New Women of the decadent 1890s" (Rich, 2010, p. 161).

A year later, Adrienne returns to the convent with her newly fashionable puffed sleeves, anticipating happily "the warmth and tenderness" of Sister Agathe's embrace. But to her surprise she sees the gate is closed and no nuns waiting to greet her, except for a lay sister who delivers a package containing the gifts she has given the convent during her previous visits and a letter full of "bitter reproachful lines that banished her from this haven of peace" (Chopin, 1969, p. 365). While Adrienne is stunned by the Mother Superior's mysterious order, the lilacs fall from her arms onto the stone portico; she weeps and walks away. The narrative ends with Sister Agathe sobbing and kneeling beside Adrienne's empty convent bed and a lay sister sweeping the lilacs from the convent door step. It seems someone has

revealed Adrienne's exotic and scandalous city lifestyle to the Mother Superior and this news prompts her to bar Adrienne from the convent. She discovers Adrienne's hidden identity as a modern and urban female dancer and singer and perceives her presence as an intrusion that might affect and change the nuns' routine of rituals.

It is not going too far to suggest that the Mother Superior sees Adrienne as a threat and source of potential corruption to the pious and obedient nuns, particularly Sister Agathe, who has been so affectionate towards Adrienne. The Mother Superior's letter of dismissal, the return of her annual gifts and the act of the lay sister in removing the lilacs from the convent entrance are all symbolic of the intention to eliminate all vestiges and marks of Adrienne's presence and memory from the convent. Adrienne's dichotomy lies in her worldly sophistication and her urge to maintain the duality of her paths, but the language of the Mother Superior who represents the Church's ideology determines that Adrienne's two paths are incompatible and so she is ultimately forced to choose only one direction that the Church has imposed on her. Howell says that Mme. Farival grieves at the end, when she is turned away from the convent, for "her failure to incorporate and possess two forms of experience that are not compatible" (1979, p. 108).

Adrienne's problem is that she attempts to simultaneously reassimilate into a culture that cannot accept her privileged secular language while wanting to keep her licentious city lifestyle neatly apart. Even

when she returns to the convent she does not try to digest the religious language of Sister Agathe; she simply ignores her words by changing the subject.

Women in Chopin's era were expected to cherish and maintain the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity in order to be a True Woman. These virtues were also applicable to the nuns but to a stricter degree. The first virtue is religious piety, which is not Adrienne's ideal in her worldly life in Paris. The narrator hints that Adrienne is a widow and is surrounded by a parade of lovers and men. It seems she is unchaste and does not possess the second virtue, purity. She also fails to adopt the third virtue, which is submission to the authoritative religious centre. The language of the Church is foreign and outside her worldly discourse. Domesticity was the fourth virtue of the angelic True Woman. Women's silent work was to be done in the home or in the domestic sphere. Instead, she adopts a vocation outside her domestic realm. The "picturesque disorder" of her room indicates that she is not the "older and wiser" widow performing the "household duties" that the nuns had thought she was. In a way, the story of "Lilacs" deplores the inflexibility of the Church that exerts its dictates and expects certain choices of human beings, rather than granting each individual the freedom to make them on their own.

CONCLUSION

The subtextual or underlying meaning of *At Fault* addresses the issues of marriage

and divorce and the role of the Church in prescribing religious codes and social mores. *At Fault* seems to echo John Milton's fervent plea to the Church authorities to approve divorce. Similarly, Chopin's early novel strongly but insidiously implies that divorce should be legally granted, not only on the grounds of the partners' incompatibility but also as a legitimate alternative when the marriage is simply bereft of mutual love and respect between the couple.

The evolution of technology and David's timber industry are the purveyors of change and insight into the sociocultural setting of the Cane River settlement. Chopin's novel addresses society's flaws and thus invites her contemporary readers to view the Church from a different, realistic and more liberal perspective. Chopin indirectly attacks the inflexible agenda of organised religion that creates staunch believers such as Thérèse, whose strong moral and religious conviction against divorce prevents her from marrying a divorced man. Her ideal programme is to reform the social problems among her community and cleanse her lover's soul by dictating that David remarry his wife and resurrect the institution of the American family. Chopin blames the Church's strictures in inculcating false religious idealism in Thérèse.

As long as Thérèse is physically and mentally located in her plantation setting and clings to her old past beliefs, her reasoning capacity remains tenacious and undeveloped. Thérèse exemplifies many traits of the traditional Southern belle, yet she capably runs her plantation and tries to direct her community people along the

right path. Thérèse's return from her trip to Paris marks her cultural and social change and evolution. The cultural and intellectual ambience of Paris leads her to moderate her inflexible religious idealism, and the reader senses that in an epiphanic moment she has realised her mistake.

Thérèse shares some features or traits of the New Woman such as the tendency to embrace modernity and occupy a different job sphere, her independent management of her deceased husband's plantation, riding a horse, embarking on a trip to Paris without a male chaperon and wearing stylish Parisian clothing. However, her religious upbringing thwarts other aspects of New Woman ideals, such as being a free thinker. Thérèse's relocation from her old ethics to a city known for its intellectual and artistic pursuits awakens her to adopt a set of new ideas and to be more open to the New Woman's visions that have been suppressed by her religious ideology.

Melicent does not represent the cult of the traditional woman and relies on her own choices and decisions. Melicent is wary of marriage and tends to prioritise her intellectual and recreational aspirations and scientific exploration over traditional marriage and domestic concerns.

"Lilacs" introduces Adrienne Farival, an opera singer and actress in Paris, who annually retreats from her secular and glamorous Parisian life to the convent in order to alleviate her boredom and seek another option for satisfaction and fulfilment at the nunnery. Her annual pilgrimage may carry the message that the nuns should

not necessarily dedicate their whole lives to the ideals of convent and that they can cross the border and at least emulate her dual path. Adrienne has adopted a language and a type of conduct which are a foreign discourse and not permissible in the convent. In her Paris apartment she leads a luxurious and independent life and does not wish to sacrifice her autonomy, freedom and unconventional lifestyle for a life of domesticity. Her routine commute to the convent without the escort of any male chaperon and her habits of drinking and smoking cigars in Paris position her as an indecorous New Woman.

Chopin wrote her early fiction as a prologue to pave the way for the fuller and more complex emergence of her heroines who could challenge the institutions of marriage, domesticity and motherhood and the religious and societal codes of South America. Chopin's anti-religious sentiment is mysteriously reflected in this fiction, and foreshadows the religious conflict and discontent of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*. These protagonists stand as harbingers or precursors to Chopin's other long and short fiction.

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Examining Factors Affecting Language Performance: A Comparison of Three Measurement Approaches

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of three approaches, namely, Classical Test Theory, Generalizability Theory (Brennan, 2001; Shavelson & Webb, 1991) and Multi-facet Rasch Analysis (Linacre, 2004; McNamara, 1996) in examining the effects of different factors on language test performance. Through these approaches, the investigator sought to determine the extent test takers, raters, and test tasks contribute to the source of variance in performance on writing. Additionally, the investigator also examined whether raters' severity and task difficulty affect the reliability and dependability of the observed language performance scores. The purpose of using these measurement approaches was to determine whether findings could be integrated so as to strengthen validity arguments for test score dependability and generalizability.

Keywords: Classical test theory, generalizability theory, multi-facet rasch analysis, score reliability and dependability, writing assessment

INTRODUCTION

Measurement Approaches for Reliability and Score Dependability

The use of measurement approaches such as Classical Test Theory (CTT), Generalizability Theory (G-Theory) (Brennan, 2011; Shavelson & Webb, 1991)

and Multi-facet Rasch Analysis (Linacre, 2004; McNamara, 1996) in estimating the effects of different factors on test performance has been explored in many in language testing situations. This is evident in the numerous studies reported in previous literature. In performance-based language testing, the reliability of ratings is a major issue in ensuring the dependability of scores. This dependability of scores can be attributed to many factors

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such as the ability of the test-takers, the difficulty of the test-tasks, the reliability or severity of the raters and others. Looking at the complementary roles of the different measurement approaches, the study opted for the use of the different approaches to strengthen the validation argument put forward for test score reliability and dependability.

Classical Test Theory

Classical Test Theory (or CTT), a body of theory that rests its foundation that variation in performance is decomposed only in terms of true and observed scores and any other source of variation, is simply labelled as “error.” The theoretical definition of reliability (which refers to the proportion of true score variance to that of observed scores) is further operationalised as the correlation between two sets of parallel tests providing the basis for all estimates of reliability (Lord & Novick, 1968). Hence, the overriding concern of CTT is to cope effectively with random error portion (E) of the raw score. The less random error in the measure, the more the raw score reflects the true score and hence, increases reliability and score dependability.

In CTT, several types of reliability estimates can be used depending on whether the tests are norm or criterion referenced tests. The first, which is the Cronbach’s Alpha, is more suitable for norm-referenced tests for dichotomous test data. The other is more appropriate for criterion-referenced tests (Bachman, 2004; Lynch, 2003). In a criterion-referenced performance-

based testing, this is achieved through ensuring consistency across tasks, raters, and occasions as these variables can affect the validity of inference. More importantly, rater characteristics such as consistency or severity in ratings as well as task variability have been researched as the major sources of measurement errors in the context of performance-based assessment (Bachman, Lynch & Mason, 1995; Fulcher, 2003; Lynch & McNamara, 1998).

Various methods have been proposed to identify and quantify the extent of disagreement between raters and to reduce it to acceptable levels through proper rater training and monitoring procedures (McNamara, 1996). McNamara further suggests that fairness in rating practices can be enhanced by rating scales which are defined and described carefully for different levels of the scales, having raters who have been trained and can demonstrate the required level of agreement, and, finally, by the practice of double ratings to check for inter-rater consistency as well as agreement between raters.

Generalizability Theory (G-theory)

G-theory extends CTT by allowing researchers to further decompose and estimate the variance associated with the errors, and therefore, address the issues of score generalizability and dependability. Multiple sources of errors in a measurement can be estimated separately in a single analysis and allow decision makers to determine the number of occasions, test forms, and raters required in order to

maintain a dependable score through G and D studies. Findings from the generalizability analysis or GENOVA will provide evidence in the form of the magnitude that the different facets contribute to the source of variance in a test.

Rasch Multi-Facet measurement (FACETS)

Rasch Multi-Facet measurement is an extension of the Rasch-model, a one-parameter Item Response theory (IRT) model which was traditionally used for the analysis of multiple-choice examinations where the parameters involved are the difficulty of the test items and the ability of the examinees. Meanwhile, estimates of each examinee's ability and each item's difficulty are reported on a common log-linear scale. The probability of a correct response to an item is simply a function of the difference between examinee's ability and item's difficulty. Now, Multi-Facet Rasch analysis provides the capability to model additional facets of interest making it particularly useful for analysis of subjectively rated performance tasks. Using this method, the chances of success on a performance task are related to a number of aspects of the performance setting itself. These aspects (i.e., facets) include the test taker's ability, the difficulty of the performance task, and the characteristics of the raters themselves (i.e., rater severity/leniency). These facets are related to each other as either increasing or decreasing the likelihood of a test taker of given ability achieving a given score on a particular task.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of using three different approaches in examining the relative effects of persons, items, raters and test tasks on the writing component of the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) assessment. To that end, the following three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the inter-rater reliability estimates according to CTT across two writing tasks?
2. To what extent do test takers, raters, and test tasks contribute to the source of variance in writing performance?
3. To what extent do raters' severity and task difficulty affect the reliability and dependability of the observed scores on the writing tasks?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The Test

The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) was developed for the Malaysian Public Service. This assessment, which was introduced in 1998, has been used to assess the proficiency of officers in the Public Service from various schemes. Test scores were used to determine follow-up training as well as job placement within the service.

The assessment consists of reading, writing and speaking components. For the purpose of the current study, only the writing component was addressed. The writing component consists of two tasks. For task 1, the officers are required to write a formal

letter and for task 2 a formal report. Both tasks are rated on a six criteria analytical rating scale comprising task fulfilment, organization, grammar, vocabulary, style, and mechanics. A composite of their writing ability score, ranging from bands 1 to 5, is obtained by averaging the scores on both the tasks.

Test Data

The data for the analysis included selection of random writing scripts from previously administered ELPA. Eighty sets of the writing scripts for both the writing tasks were used for the analysis. From a pool of 7 raters, 3 raters per group were randomly assigned to re-score each of the writing tasks. The rationale for having a minimum of 3 raters was to ensure that the data matrix conformed to the Generalizability as well as Rasch models, while better estimates could also be derived from the analyses (McNamara, 1996). To maintain consistency, the original ratings for both the writing tasks were excluded from the analyses as they were rated by different individuals.

Analysis

As explained in the earlier part of the paper, three different approaches were used to analyse the test data. For the CTT approach, due the criterion-referenced nature of the writing tasks and therefore subjectively scored, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine inter-rater reliability. Since the writing tasks used a criterion-referenced scale, the estimates of inter-rater

reliability are not as straightforward as determining the internal consistency of test items. The procedures included getting the Pearson's correlation between the pairs of raters and transforming them using Fisher's z . The values obtained from the Fisher's z were then converted back to Pearson's r . This was done to correct the analytical and holistic rating scale, which reflected a more ordinal rather than continuous nature of the data. The formula for z transformation is produced as follows:

$$r_{tt} = n r_{AB} / 1 + (n - 1) R_{AB}$$

Where:

n = number of raters

r_{AB} = the average of the corrected (Fisher's z transformation) correlations between the raters

r_{tt} = the inter-rater reliability estimate, after it is transformed back to Pearson.

For the Generalizability analysis, several different analyses were carried out to determine the magnitude of variance for each of the facets considered in the design. These facets included the following: (a) test tasks (i), (b) raters (r), (c) and test takers (p).

The analyses examined the source of variance when raters, test takers, and tasks or items were included. The results of the G-studies can be used to optimize the number of conditions for each facet as in this case the number of raters so as to obtain the desired index of generalizability (reliability). The two indexes of reliability used in G-theory are: (a) G or generalizability

coefficient (ρ) and (b) dependability or phi coefficient (ϕ). The G coefficient is used for decisions based on relative standing or ranking of individuals whereas the phi coefficient is based on the absolute level of their scores. For this study, since the writing scores were used for both relative and absolute decisions, both coefficients would therefore be reported. For the G and D-studies, the researcher used the GENOVA programme to conduct all the analyses.

Further investigation of the effects of test-takers abilities, task difficulties, and rater-severity using Multi-Facet Rasch analysis was carried out. All the analyses were carried out using FACETS (2007; Linacre, 2004) computer software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the three different approaches are organized to address the research questions posed at the beginning of the paper, as follows:

1. The first section discusses the classical theory reliability estimates for the writings tasks;

2. The second section presents the G and D-studies to examine the relative contribution to test variance of persons, raters and test tasks and their interactions; and
3. The third section will show whether rater severity and task difficulty affects reliability and test score dependability.

Classical Theory Reliability Estimates

Table 1 reports the inter-rater reliability estimates denoted by the Pearson's r for the writing tasks, before and after transformation for two separate groups of raters. It can be noted that the average inter-rater reliability estimates for group 1 raters was slightly lower than for group 2 ($r_{t11} = .77, r_{t12} = .80$); this means the groups had 59.0 percent and 64.0 percent respectively due to true score variability. These are moderate estimates, especially for a complex performance-based assessment, as reflected in the analytical rating of the writing tasks. Within group 1, some differences existed among the pairs of raters, with R2R3 ($r_{23} = .81$) showing the highest estimates, while paired rater R1R3 ($r_{13} = .72$) the lowest. Similar differences in

TABLE 1
Inter-Rater Reliability Estimates for the Writing Tasks

| Paired raters (Group1) | Task 1 (Letter) | | Paired raters (Group 2) | Task 2 (Report) | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Pearson's r (r_{t11}) | ^a Pearson's r | | Pearson's r (r_{t12}) | ^b Pearson's r |
| R1R2 | .78 | | R4R5 | .74 | |
| R1R3 | .72 | .77 | R4R6 | .78 | .80 |
| R2R3 | .81 | | R5R6 | .87 | |

Note. $n = 80$. ^a Average Inter-Rater reliability for group 1 after z transformation. ^b Average Inter-Rater reliability for group 2 after z transformation.

the paired raters can also be noted for group 2, whereby R5R6 showed the highest inter-rater reliability ($r_{56} = .87$), and R4R5 had the lowest ($r_{45} = .74$).

As for the writing tasks, on the whole the estimates of inter-rater reliability (which ranged between .72 and .87) were considered moderate with raters overlapping or agreeing between 52% to 76% percent of the time. The average estimate for the inter-rater reliability for the paired raters was higher on Task 2 (report) than Task 1 (letter). This indicated that on average, the raters agreed at least 61% on their ratings. Another interesting point is that the estimates of reliability were higher on the longer task (i.e. task 2), suggesting that raters performed better or were more accurate in their judgment if they were provided with longer test-taker responses. Although this assertion needs further study, the findings thus far do suggest this.

Such is the only conclusion one can make when using the CTT. The use of correlations as estimates of reliability has come under scrutiny for it is sample-dependent. Weir (2005) and Fulcher (2003) warned that certain rater behaviour such as the extent to which the raters actually use the entire range of the rating scale as well as distortions in the correlation when there exists either very high or low scores cannot be entirely captured by correlations. In addition, even if raters were found to be consistent in their ratings and the inter-rater correlations were high, this still did not reveal information about rater severity or other source of variance. It is also difficult to ascertain as

to what is acceptable reliability although in the literature, estimates ranging from .60 to .90 have been described as acceptable (Lynch, 2003). The use of multiple methods, including generalizability analyses as well as multifaceted Rasch analysis, was to factor in the limitations of using only correlations as a measure of rater reliability. These limitations include the inability for CTT to address different sources of error and to distinguish systematic measurement error from random measurement error (Bachman, 2004).

Generalizability Theory Analysis (GENOVA)

Findings from the GENOVA reveal a very different kind of information from that of the CTT approach. The generalizability analysis carried out provided a deeper understanding as to what is really at play when assessing language performance. The first finding when average scores of the writing tasks were used as a facet in the ($p \times i$), the GENOVA output as in Table 2 suggests that the largest source of variance was from test takers (90.61%), whereas test tasks had only 0.45%. This small variance component suggests that the two writing tasks remained stable across the test takers and were of the same difficulty level for this particular group. However, the moderately large residual effects suggest a large persons-by-items interaction, unmeasured sources of variation, or both. As in any complex performance based assessment, averaging scores on the writing tasks also provided a reliable estimate of ability for operational

purposes, as reflected in the large test takers variance (90.61%).

When raters are introduced as facets for the analyses, the results of $p \times r$ analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The magnitude of variance contributed by raters for both Tasks 1 and 2 is 6.77% and 4.16%, respectively. This suggests that on the whole, the variability in test scores is largely due to test-takers' abilities rather than rater's behaviour. However, the interaction between test-taker and raters seemed quite high, with 21.50% and 20.18% for Task 1 and Task 2, respectively. If average ratings were used for each of the three raters for Task 1 and Task 2 writing variability due to test takers (71.73% and 75.65%) contributed more than rater variance (6.77% and 4.16%) once

again. In other words, the groups of raters were quite consistent in their ratings of the writing tasks.

Table 5 presents the results of the D-study for the same number of conditions for the different facets used in the analyses. This was done to compare with the estimate of inter-rater reliability obtained using the CTT approach. As can be noted for the observed data in the table, both the G and ϕ coefficients were substantially high for all groups of raters and test tasks.

Given that the writing component is reported using the average score of both tasks, both the G and ϕ coefficients for Task 1 were .91 and .88 respectively when three raters were considered. The coefficients dropped to .86 and .83 respectively for two

TABLE 2
Variance Components for $p \times i$ Design for the Two Writing Tasks

| Source of variance | Variance | Percentage |
|--------------------|----------|------------|
| Persons (p) | 49.90 | 90.61 |
| Items (i) | 0.25 | 0.45 |
| pi, e | 4.92 | 8.93 |

TABLE 3
Variance Components for $p \times r$ Design for Writing Task 1

| Sources of variance | Variance | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|------------|
| Persons (p) | 54.05 | 71.73 |
| Raters (r) | 5.10 | 6.77 |
| pr, e | 16.20 | 21.50 |

TABLE 4
Variance Components for $p \times r$ Design for Writing Task 2

| Sources of variance | Variance | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|------------|
| Persons (p) | 45.40 | 75.65 |
| Raters (r) | 2.50 | 4.16 |
| pr, e | 12.11 | 20.18 |

raters. The G coefficient and ϕ coefficients for the operational single rater setting dropped to .76 and .71, respectively. These values are still considered within the range of acceptability. Similar trends can be noted for Task 2, where the values of the G and ϕ coefficient dropped from as high as .92 and .91 with three raters to a moderate .78 and .74 for only one rater. From these results, it is best that double raters are used as opposed to the operational single rater setting that is currently practiced for a moderately high generalizability and dependability of the writing scores.

Multi-facet Rasch Analysis

As in the G-study, raters, test-tasks, and test takers can be viewed as a source of method variance. In Rasch analysis, the effects of the different facets can be further explained at a much deeper level. Fig.1 and Fig.2 provide the relative abilities of the test takers, the severity of the raters, and the relative difficulty of the different criteria (1 = task fulfillment, 2 = organization, 3 = grammar, 4 = vocabulary, 5 = style, and 6 = mechanics) on the two writing tasks. For Task 1, as noted in Fig.1, there was a considerable variation in the abilities of test takers (i.e. ranging

approximately between -6.00 and $+4.00$ on the logit scale). The majority of the test takers, however, were placed between 0.00 and $+4.00$ on the scale, suggesting that most of them demonstrated average and high performances on Task 1. As for Task 2, the facet map (see Fig.2) shows that for the same group of test takers, the writing ability ranged from -6.00 to $+5.00$ on the logit scale, indicating a slightly wider range of abilities. Unlike Task 1, there was more variability in the abilities for the majority of the test takers, as indicated by the clustering between -1.00 and $+5.00$. Unlike the wide variation in test-takers' abilities, Fig.1 and Fig.2 show that the estimates for the group of three raters for each of the task seemed to cluster around the mean on the logit scale, with slightly more variability among the raters for Task 2. As for the estimates for the six criteria used for assessing the writing tasks, similar trends can be noted for both tasks.

A more detailed record of rater severity and difficulty estimates of the criteria as well as comparisons between the groups of raters on the two writing tasks are reported in Table 6. As can be noted, the two groups of raters assigned for the two tasks differed

Table 5: Generalizability and Phi Coefficients for Writing

| Type of analysis | Design | Number of raters | | | | | |
|--|--------------|------------------|--------|----------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | 3 Raters | | 2 Raters | | 1 Rater | |
| | | ρ | ϕ | ρ | ϕ | ρ | ϕ |
| Average scores of each rater on Task 1 | $p \times r$ | .91 | .88 | .86 | .83 | .76 | .71 |
| Average scores of each rater on Task 2 | $p \times r$ | .92 | .91 | .88 | .88 | .78 | .74 |

Factors Affecting Language Performance

| Measr +test-tsker | | -rater -criteria Scale | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| + 5 + | | + | + | + | (50) + |
| | | | | | 45 |
| | 10 11 37 | *** | | | |
| + 4 + | 4 6 36 | + *** | + | + | + + |
| | 29 | * | | | --- |
| | 7 45 73 | *** | | | |
| | 5 14 31 56 57 60 | ***** | | | 40 |
| + 3 + | 9 16 32 44 | + **** | + | + | + + |
| | 2 8 15 19 52 63 69 71 74 | ***** | | | --- |
| | 17 18 41 68 72 75 76 | ***** | | | |
| | 1 12 33 34 77 | ***** | | | 35 |
| + 2 + | 50 62 78 | + *** | + | + | + + |
| | 24 38 42 49 54 59 61 | ***** | | | --- |
| | 3 35 70 | *** | | | |
| | 64 67 79 | *** | | | 30 |
| + 1 + | 13 20 43 48 51 53 58 | + ***** | + | + | + + |
| | 46 47 55 80 | ***** | | | |
| | 40 66 | ** | 3 | 3 | --- |
| | 28 39 | ** | * | * 2 | * 25 * |
| * 0 * | | * | 1 2 | 4 5 | |
| | 65 | * | | 1 6 | |
| | | | | | --- |
| + -1 + | 30 | + * | + | + | + 20 + |
| | 26 | * | | | |
| + -2 + | 27 | + * | + | + | + --- + |
| | | | | | |
| | 22 | * | | | 15 |
| + -3 + | | + * | + | + | + + |
| | 23 | * | | | --- |
| | | | | | |
| + -4 + | | + * | + | + | + + |
| | | | | | |
| + -5 + | | + * | + | + | + + |
| | 21 | * | | | 10 |
| + -6 + | | + * | + | + | + + |
| | 25 | * | | | |
| | | | | | |
| + -7 + | | + * | + | + | + (5) + |
| Measr +examinee | | -judge -criteria Scale | | | |
| | | * = 1 | | | |

Fig.1: Facet map for writing task 1

| Measr +examinee | | +examinee | | -judge | | -criteria | | Scale | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|--|--------|--|-----------|--|----------|--|
| + 5 + | 37 | + * | | + + | | | | + (50) + | |
| | | | | | | | | 45 | |
| | 11 36 | ** | | | | | | | |
| | 4 | * | | | | | | | |
| + 4 + | 7 | + * | | + + | | | | + --- + | |
| | 5 31 | ** | | | | | | | |
| | 8 10 | ** | | | | | | | |
| | 2 6 16 29 32 | ***** | | | | | | 40 | |
| + 3 + | 56 | + * | | + + | | | | + + | |
| | 41 63 74 | *** | | | | | | --- | |
| | 9 18 35 57 72 76 | ***** | | | | | | | |
| | 14 17 19 38 44 68 75 | ***** | | | | | | 35 | |
| + 2 + | 3 69 73 | + *** | | + + | | | | + + | |
| | 15 33 45 52 59 61 67 77 | ***** | | | | | | | |
| | 50 60 62 70 71 | ***** | | | | | | --- | |
| | 1 48 49 | *** | | | | | | | |
| + 1 + | 34 40 78 79 | + **** | | + + | | | | + 30 + | |
| | 20 | * | | | | | | | |
| | 12 42 43 51 64 66 80 | ***** | | 5 | | 3 5 | | | |
| | 39 47 54 58 | **** | | | | 4 | | --- | |
| * 0 * | 28 46 53 65 | * **** | | * 6 | | * 2 | | * * | |
| | 13 | * | | | | 1 | | | |
| | 30 55 | ** | | 4 | | | | 25 | |
| | | | | | | 6 | | | |
| + -1 + | 24 | + * | | + + | | | | + --- + | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | 22 27 | ** | | | | | | 20 | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| + -2 + | | + * | | + + | | | | + --- + | |
| | 23 | * | | | | | | | |
| | 26 | * | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | 15 | |
| + -3 + | | + + | | + + | | | | + + | |
| | | | | | | | | --- | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| + -4 + | | + + | | + + | | | | + + | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| + -5 + | 21 | + * | | + + | | | | + + | |
| | | | | | | | | 10 | |
| | 25 | * | | | | | | | |
| + -6 + | | + + | | + + | | | | + (5) + | |
| Measr +examinee | | * = 1 | | -judge | | -criteria | | Scale | |

Fig.2: Facet map for writing task 2

very little in their ratings. Both groups had means of .00 and the standard deviation was between .17 and .23, suggesting very little variability in terms of rater severity across the two groups. Comparing both groups of raters across the two tasks, the most moderate raters were Rater 1 and Rater 6, with estimates of -.23 and -.03 on the logit scale, respectively. This changed, however, when the estimates within each group of raters for each task were examined. For Task 1, the estimates of severity ranged between -.37 to .60 on the logit scale. Meanwhile, the reliability of the separation index was .97, indicating that the raters in this group consistently differed from one another. Meaningful variation in harshness did exist among the raters, with the most lenient rater estimating -.37 on the logit scale and the most severe .60. The infit values of the raters were between .85 and .94, suggesting that Rater 2 for Task 1 seemed to be the most consistent rater. Rater 1, on the other hand, seemed to have more variations in her ratings with the infit values of 1.19, whilst raters 2 and 3 varied less in their ratings. However, no raters for this group

were identified as misfitting as the infit values were within range of two standard deviations around the mean [$.99 \pm (.17 \times 2 = .34)$].

For Task 2, the severity gap was between -.42 to and .44 on the logit scale, which also suggested that for this group, there existed differences with a reliability of the separation index of .98. Rater 5 seemed to be the harshest with an estimate of .44 on the logit scale with Rater 4 being the most lenient. For Task 2, rater 4 seemed to be less consistent as compared to raters 5 and 6 who were closer to the mean infit value of 1.00. Like the raters for Task 1, none was identified as misfitting as the infit values were within the range of two standard deviations around the mean [$1.00 \pm (.23 \times 2 = .46)$].

Table 7 reports the difficulty estimates of the six criteria on both tasks. It indicated that for both the tasks, the most leniently scored was mechanics, whereas for Task 1 and Task 2, grammar and style respectively were the most harshly scored. The difficulty span for Task 1 between the most leniently and the most harshly scored criteria was 1.01

TABLE 6
Estimates of Rater Severity for the Writing Tasks

| Rater | Task 1 | | | Rater | Task 2 | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|
| | Severity estimate | SE | Infit | | Severity estimate | SE | Infit |
| 2 | -.37 | .05 | .94 | 4 | -.42 | .05 | 1.25 |
| 1 | -.23 | .05 | 1.19 | 6 | -.03 | .05 | .81 |
| 3 | .60 | .05 | .85 | 5 | .44 | .05 | .94 |
| <i>M</i> | .00 | .00 | .99 | <i>M</i> | .00 | .00 | 1.00 |
| <i>SD</i> | .53 | .00 | .17 | <i>SD</i> | .43 | .00 | .23 |

Note. Reliability (not inter-rater) for Task 1=.99. Reliability (not inter-rater) for Task 2=.99. Inter-Rater agreement for Task 1 = 30.5%; Inter-Rater agreement for Task 2 = 30.6%.

on the logit scale, suggesting that there was a considerable difference in scoring of these two criteria. As for Task 2, mechanics was $-.83$ whereas style was $.51$ on the logit scale. Both groups of raters, however, showed considerable differences in the way they used the rating scale. Clearly, the groups of raters assigned varied considerably within and across both tasks, with the rater group assigned to rescore Task 2 demonstrating more variation. Mechanics was found to be misfitting on Task 1 as the infit values exceeded the acceptable range of two standard deviations [$.99 \pm (.15 \times 2 = .30)$], whereas for Task 2, none of the criteria was found to be misfitting [$1.00 \pm (.13 \times 2 = .26)$].

In summary, the multi-faceted Rasch provided estimates of rater severity on a linear scale as well as fit statistics, which are indicators of rater consistency. Aside from rater severity, two different sets of estimates of difficulty were also provided. The first set was for the six criteria (task fulfilment, organization, grammar, vocabulary, style, and mechanics) of the analytical rating scale and the second were estimates of difficulty

for the two speaking tasks. Overall, the findings revealed that both groups had raters who were either considered lenient or severe although the estimates on the logit scale were not that extreme. The second group of raters, who scored in Task 2, was slightly more lenient than those who scored in Task 1. Both exhibited fairly consistent ratings with each group having at least one rater with slightly high infit values. Rater 1 of Task 1 and Rater 4 of Task 2 had the infit values of 1.19 and 1.25 respectively. Rater 4 was also considered the most lenient amongst all the six raters. The most severe rater was Rater 3 who scored Task 1.

The findings also revealed that the raters who scored the writing tasks used the criteria or dimension of the analytical scale differently. Overall, raters were more lenient on the mechanics and task fulfilment than on the other dimensions. The infit values of 1.29 and 1.19 for tasks 1 and 2 respectively were within the acceptable range. As for consistency, it was difficult to see any kind of pattern to suggest whether raters were more or less consistent in their ratings of

TABLE 7
Estimates of Criteria Difficulty for the Writing Tasks

| Criteria | Task 1 | | | Task 2 | | |
|------------------|----------|-----|-------|----------|-----|-------|
| | Estimate | SE | Infit | Estimate | SE | Infit |
| Task fulfillment | -.39 | .07 | .88 | -.13 | .07 | 1.10 |
| Organization | -.07 | .07 | .91 | -.08 | .07 | 1.00 |
| Grammar | .62 | .07 | .92 | .41 | .07 | .95 |
| Vocabulary | .19 | .07 | 1.01 | .22 | .07 | .83 |
| Style | .14 | .07 | .96 | .51 | .07 | .93 |
| Mechanics | -.49 | .07 | 1.29 | -.83 | .07 | 1.19 |
| <i>M</i> | .00 | .07 | .99 | .00 | .07 | 1.00 |
| <i>SD</i> | .41 | .07 | .15 | .47 | .07 | .13 |

the different criteria although the infit values showed that they were more consistent on grammar and style.

CONCLUSION

From the use of the three measurement approaches, one can ascertain the different kinds of information that would provide test developers and administrators in ensuring that the reporting of test scores is valid for the intended purpose. Using CTT, two types of information can be ascertained from the analysis. The first are the estimates of inter-rater reliability as suggested in the findings. The second is the percentage of the agreement between the raters. For the subsequent approaches using both GENOVA and FACETS, the analyses revealed different kinds of information. The difference in GENOVA and FACETS appears to be akin to using a microscope - as the level of magnification increases, the details can be seen much clearer (McNamara, 1996). The GENOVA output provided information on the source and magnitude of variance, as well as an estimate of score dependability when changes were made to the number of raters and test tasks. The FACETS analysis, on the other hand, revealed information that could be useful for the test revision process and in the training and certification of raters. From the FACETS analysis, raters' severity and item difficulty may affect the rating of test tasks which are subjectively rated using criterion-referenced marking and such information can be used to prompt test administrators to provide further training. As such, the evidence suggested that on the

whole, the ELPA raters were experienced and therefore resulted in fewer occurrences of inconsistency and severity. On the other hand, evidence from using FACETS points to the need for the test administrators to relook at how the ELPA raters use and interpret the rating scale, especially for the analytical scale. Such counter-evidence can affect the validity argument for test score dependability and generalizability. Finally when used appropriately, these three approaches can strengthen the validity argument for score dependability and generalizability.

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The Viability of Six-step Method in Teaching Academic Writing in EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

EFL learners, especially from an Arabic background, face many challenges in writing, which among other reasons can be attributed to a different orthography. For this reason, many approaches and methods have been adopted in order to facilitate the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language. One such method is a six-step method, which is also called Blank Page Method (BPM). This method is used in Caledonian College of Engineering among Foundation students who have enrolled for an Academic Writing course. As this method literally consists of six steps: thinking, researching, planning, writing, editing, and presenting, students are expected to master all the steps that are considered as logical strategies that will help them to successfully respond to any academic task. Therefore, this paper concerns with the viability of the six-step method in an EFL context. Interestingly, findings, indicate that this method helps learners to acquire soft skills. On the other hand, due to the assumption implied by the method, i.e., students only need a strategy through which they can organize their work effectively, their writing skill needs much more attention as they struggle to express what they should have achieved through the method. It is in this light that a strategy focusing on the development of a writing skill that will help learners realize the logic of the six-step method is proposed.

Keywords: Academic writing, EFL/ESL, process writing, Six-step method, soft skills

INTRODUCTION

It would perhaps be appropriate to note that learners of English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) face deep challenges, particularly the acquisition of writing skills in the target language. The Omani EFL learners in particular, though are better in speaking skills, find it more challenging to write in the target language (English), which, among other things, should be attributed to the Roman script being different from

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the Arabic one (Swan & Smith, 2008). There have been many measures aimed at fostering the acquisition of a writing skill. Although contemporary methods of teaching EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) adopt the integration of four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking), such as the Grammar-Translation method in the past emphasized writing and reading skills exclusively. These skills were deemed necessary in translating, initially, classic languages: Greek and Latin into the mother tongue, which resulted in inability for learners to communicate in the target language, probably because the mother tongue dominated classroom interaction (see Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989, p. 8, cited in Gazu, 2006, pp. 44-45). In reaction to this failure, many methods and approaches have been adopted in EFL and ESL teaching such as Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, and Communicative approach (Gazu, 2006). In this light, this paper investigates the adoption of the six-step method in the teaching and learning of Academic Writing at a University College in Oman. The study looks into students' essays that were produced following the six-step method. The paper first presents the six-step method and thereafter looks into students' essays results, explaining some benefits and challenges that students faced during the application of the method. However, it is expedient to consider the EFL context that characterized the teaching and learning situation where the study was conducted.

The EFL Context

The majority of students in Oman colleges are native to Oman with a few from other Gulf regions; therefore, they speak Arabic as their first language (Ntombela & Dube, 2010). In other words, Arabic is the dominant language in the community and in the classroom. Although students are generally positive about learning English, they do not find it immediately practical to speak it among peers because Arabic is their common language. English, therefore, acts for instrumental purposes, and is limited within a classroom during the English period. This poses challenges in the speed with which they acquire English language. This is even more serious in writing as they would normally first think in Arabic, translate it into English and change the script that reads from right to left in Arabic to the one that reads from left to right in English. The main reason that students learn English is to be able to cope with tertiary education, where courses are offered exclusively in English. This is unlike the ESL situation where learners need the language to communicate with each other either in class or outside the class. In the Oman EFL context, communication in English is limited to teachers who do not speak Arabic and to expatriate community outside the classroom (Ntombela & Dube, 2010). Given this reality, students therefore have inadequate chances to practice English, both orally and in writing. This has necessitated novel approaches and methods to expedite the acquisition of the target language, the example of which is discussed below.

Rationale of the Six-step Method

The six-step method was developed by the personnel in the Caledonian College of Engineering, Oman. It is claimed to have been successfully applied in one other Higher Education Institute in Oman. The development of this method was largely a reaction to the feedback from Industry Interaction Group (IIG) that highlighted the lack of demonstrable soft skills among graduates of the institution where the study is based (Ntombela, 2010). The lack of soft skills among undergraduate students in the institution in question was further confirmed by Sivaraman *et al.* (2012) in a research where they studied differences between direct entry students and those who went through a Foundation programme prior to the introduction of the six-step method. In this regard, soft skills should be understood to mean the same thing as the generic skills that encompass such terms as core capabilities, key skills, transferable skills, essential skills, professional and personal skills (Ali, 2012). Moreover, these generic skills are regarded to be consisting of teamwork, communication, problem-solving, analytical and critical skills, etc., according to McLean (2010, as cited in Ali, 2012).

The six-step method (literally consisting of six steps: think, research, plan, write, edit, and present) rests on the premise that students need a strategy with which they can approach any academic work. Its application generally and particularly in the Academic Writing course is based on the belief that when students approach any academic work systematically, they will be able to master all

other tasks even in real life. Thus, there is a great emphasis on preparation, which occurs mainly during the thinking stage; in fact, the principal aim of the course that follows this six-step method is to have students think for themselves (Walker, 2009). This is because it is believed that many students fail by virtue of failing to think. The six-step method is therefore not much regarded as a teaching strategy, but a learning strategy; needless to say that students have to be taught and exposed to that strategy prior to applying it. In other words, since the six-step approach is only used in teaching English language modules at Foundation level in the institution where the study is based, a need has been identified to train other staff members who are teaching other modules so that they can use the same method (Caledonian College of Engineering, 2010). Thus, the success in using the six-step method relies on repeated exposure and practice (Caledonian College of Engineering, 2010). In fact, by the time students enrol for an Academic Writing course in Foundation 2, they would have been exposed to the six-step approach from Foundation 1. For instance, Ntombela (2010) conducted a similar study where the six-step method was used in teaching Project component offered at Foundation 1 level at the same institution.

In order to locate the six-step method within the approaches that are generally adopted when teaching writing, it is vital to note that writing approaches can be categorized into four schools: (1) product oriented or form-focused approach; (2) the reader focused approach; (3) the content-

focused approach; and (4) writer-focused or process writing approach (Canagarajah, 1999). For the purposes of this study, the form-focused and process writing approaches were taken into consideration. Whilst the form-focused approach, on the one hand, was characterized by activities such as sentence-combining activities and model essays; on the other hand, the writer-focused approach comprised of exercises such as generating ideas, organization, revision, etc. (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 148). However, both the approaches have their own criticisms. One of the criticisms of the process writing approach is that it tends to focus more on 'how' at the expense of the 'what' of writing (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 151). Similarly, the form-focused writing reduces writing into mere acquisition of the correct grammatical forms that through teachers' vigorous error correction may stifle "students' different rhetorical traditions" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 150). It must be emphasized that these are mere approaches adopted when teaching writing, i.e. students would still be expected to produce a piece of writing to be graded regardless of which method of teaching was adopted. For example, Hedge (1988), following a process writing approach, contends that when teachers look into students' writing, they need to ask questions such as "Is this a good piece of writing? What makes a good piece of writing? What skills do students demonstrate in their written work?" (p. 145). Therefore, the principal focus of this study was to analyse the impact of the six-step method as evidenced in

the analysed students' essays that were produced following the same method, and not necessarily looking at the development of students' essays throughout the process of writing which would warrant a different study on its own. That being said, it is imperative in the present study to ground students' academic writing essays that were analysed to the six-step method that falls within the ambit of one of the writing approaches discussed above.

The six-step method is thus located within the approaches to writing that pay attention to the process of writing, whereby students go through various stages such as pre-writing, editing, redrafting, and finally 'publishing' (Harmer, 2006, p. 257). White and Arndt (1991), for instance, advocate six processes that students go through during the act of writing - "generating, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating, and reviewing" (p. 6). Furthermore, it should be noted that this approach, which is also writer-focused - employing such pedagogical strategies as brainstorming, planning, and revising - has its roots in First Language pedagogy, which poses challenges and difficulties in its application and success in ESL/EFL context (Canagarajah, 1999). Notwithstanding, Harmer (2006) and White and Arndt (1991) notably agree that the process of writing is more complicated and may not sequentially follow the steps suggested. In fact, the main difference between the six-step method and the process writing model suggested by White and Arndt (1991) is that whilst these writers acknowledge the cyclical nature of the

process of writing, the six-step method is linear and expects students to apply it in the same sequence for it to succeed.

The Six-step Method

As mentioned earlier, this method literally consists of six steps, namely, think, research, plan, write, edit, and present that students employ in writing a 1500 word essay. Another term for this method is Blank Page Method (BPM), which denotes the blank page that students begin with that must ultimately be filled with, in this case 1500 words – hence, the terms six-step method and BPM are interchangeably used to mean one and the same thing. The following discussion looks into each step and explains what students do in each.

Thinking

Thinking is considered as an important stage as students only begin with a topic, which they must brainstorm. They are given a thinking strategy, which mainly teaches them how to break down a question into manageable elements. There are, in fact, six parts of the thinking strategy, and these are understanding the question where students must make sure unfamiliar words are checked using a dictionary; breaking down the question where students identify the two parts of a discursive essay being counter-argument and argument; thinking freely where students, using a spider diagram, brainstorm the ideas they consider relevant to the topic; limiting the scope where students consider the angle of focus by deleting elements they consider either too

wide or too narrow for their essay; grouping ideas under headings, where students use the ideas from the spider diagram to group them into introduction, counter-argument, argument and conclusion; and writing the summary of the answer where students re-consider the question and summarise the information they have gathered so far in, say four sentences, in which ideally the four would consist of introduction, counter-argument, argument, and conclusion (Walker, 2009). It should be mentioned that the Academic Writing course offered in the college where the research was carried out emphasized on the discursive type of essay as opposed to the descriptive one.

Researching

The main questions answered in the researching stage are why, where, and how students are to look for information. By going through reasons why they should look for information, the importance of substantiating information is pronounced – showing them that even their own ideas (gathered during a brainstorming session) are likely to be supported or refuted by other writers. Students further learn about different resources that range from workshops, library, Internet, newspapers to journals, general public, conferences, and site visits that will help them gather information. The emphasis is made to the fact that a “resource can be a person as well as a place” (Walker, 2009, p. 3). More emphasis in this stage is also put on how students could use books in the library to find information. Different reading strategies such as skimming,

scanning, scrutinizing and reading for gist are discussed so that students would apply the appropriate reading strategy for the kind of information they are looking for. For example, they will need to skim the inner cover of a book to get publication details, and to browse the outer cover, i.e. front and back of the book for information such as why the book was written, etc. This stage includes how students could make notes once they have located the desired information and how they could record the source of the information, which is necessary in avoiding plagiarizing essays (Walker, 2009).

Planning

The planning stage follows after students have gathered information from all the sources during the researching stage and they now need to organize it, i.e. how they will put it in writing. Therefore, this section details the need for a plan in order to avoid situations where later on the students realize that the information gathered during the research stage is either one sided or simply not enough. Therefore, this stage deals with the writing structure where different parts of an essay, such as title, introduction, counter-argument, argument, and conclusion, are identified. It is important that they identify these parts because there are signal words and appropriate punctuation associated with each part that they must use in order to maintain the academic flow of writing. Students are taught two kinds of plans - broad plan and detailed plan. The former one, on the one hand, requires students to

write in point form the information under the headings: title, introduction, counter-argument, argument, and conclusion; on the other hand, the latter expects them to incorporate all the information they have gathered during the research stage. This information must correctly appear under the appropriate heading, where each piece of information belongs, say introduction, counter-argument, etc. In addition to planning how they will write the information, they also plan the schedule that guides them in how they will complete all the assignments that are building up to the final essay, that is, they timetable all the tasks, complete with dates, days and timings (Walker, 2009).

Writing

The next stage in the BPM is writing where students write the first draft of the final essay. Since the emphasis is on writing a discursive essay, students are guided in finding the right tone befitting the discursive type of writing. Also, because the institution where the study was conducted is an engineering one, students are expected to adopt a tone reminiscent of a scientific writing. This is why, among other things, the use of passive voice that promotes writing objectively is revised so that students could adopt it in their first draft. Along with the use of the third person, passive voice shifts focus from the 'actor' to the 'action'. In other words, students are encouraged to adopt a scientific writing style, as stated by Allen and Widdowson (1979), "the impersonal passive is very common in

scientific writing” (p. 17). The other element that is considered in this section is the effectiveness in communicating ideas which includes appropriate vocabulary and straightforward language, i.e. avoiding unnecessary repetition and redundancy. Due to the fact that most of the preparations would have been carried out during the three preceding stages, students are expected not to find it too daunting to write the first draft (Walker, 2009). Once they complete the first drafts, they must proceed to the next stage.

Editing

During the editing stage, students correct their first drafts, but most importantly, they must attend to referencing. As it is normal that students will feel that the first drafts have everything they wanted to write and therefore do not need further editing, it is important at this stage that they are reminded of the reasons to edit, chief among which, are accuracy, meaning, length, relevance and references. They are not only given reasons for editing but strategies on how to edit. The key is that they should not rely on someone else for editing, although it should be utilized after they have done own editing. As mentioned, they are expected to correctly source all the information gathered from elsewhere so that they are not caught up in plagiarism. During this stage, therefore, students are given ways on how to do in-text referencing and bibliographic entries (Walker, 2009). Students should be aware that success on their final drafts relies on how careful they have attended to editing first drafts, which if done meticulously,

should make them ready for the next and final step, i.e., once a student has edited his or her first draft, he/she should be ready to present the final draft.

Presentation

The main concern in the presentation stage is the layout of the essay. As per the remit, all elements must be laid out with appropriate font types, sizes, alignment and justification. That is, essays must retain the visual appeal. Moreover, since at this stage students are working on the final draft, they must see to it that all the elements picked up during the editing stage are attended to accurately. As students are expected to conduct an ‘oral defence’ for their final essay, they are given tips on how to make their essays presentable before the audience; however, this constitutes another element of the essay - it employs a BPM strategy on its own. In other words, students must use the BPM strategy to come up with an oral presentation of their essays.

The six steps presented above were the strategy used in delivering Academic Writing course for Foundation students in Caledonian College of Engineering. The next section discusses the findings from the students’ essays which were produced following the six-step method.

FINDINGS

The findings reported in this section are presented according to each stage of the BPM. A total of 32 students’ assignments from full-time and part-time candidates were sampled. These assignments were

analysed according to the extent at which each BPM stage had been achieved. Each stage had specific items that students must achieve in the final essay; some stages had more items to be attended to than others and thus the weightage differed at each stage. Table 1 summarises the distribution of scores that students attained for each BPM step in their final essays. Each step shows the maximum points that a student could get down to the minimum, versus the number of students who got a particular score.

Thinking

As mentioned, in this stage students used the thinking strategy, which they utilized in brainstorming for their final essays. In the completed essays the thinking stage would be demonstrated firstly by whether the title is eye-catching and appropriate. The second part would be whether a student managed to answer the question posed by the title. The last part would be whether a student's

essay has plenty of ideas and whether those ideas are interesting. These points carry a weightage of six marks in total. The above table shows that out of 32 students only one got 6 marks; four students got 5 marks; 11 students got 4 marks; 13 students got 3 marks; three students got 2 marks; and there were no students that got either 1 mark or zero.

Researching

During the researching stage, students had to find information that would substantiate ideas generated during the thinking stage. Therefore, they needed to use resources such as the library and the internet where they would access books, journal and internet articles. This stage would be demonstrated in the completed essays firstly by whether they have made the most of their resources; secondly, whether they managed to exemplify meaningfully the major parts of the essay; and lastly, whether their

TABLE 1
Students' essays marks distribution

| BPM | Marks & Distribution | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thinking | Marks | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | |
| | Distribution | 1 | 4 | 11 | 13 | 3 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Research | Marks | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | |
| | Distribution | 1 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 0 | | |
| Planning | Marks | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | Distribution | 2 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Writing | Marks | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | | | |
| | Distribution | 1 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 5 | | | | |
| Editing | Marks | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | | | | |
| | Distribution | 1 | 10 | 13 | 8 | | | | | |
| Presentation | Marks | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | | | | |
| | Distribution | 2 | 10 | 16 | 4 | | | | | |

opinions are backed up with reasons and own experiences. Similarly, this category carries six marks in total. The table above indicates that only one student got 6 marks; six students scored 5 marks; three had 4 marks; seven got 3 marks; nine got 2 marks; three got 1 mark; and the other three without any mark.

Planning

Once the information from research is collected, it needs to be categorized accordingly. It is during the planning stage that students organize the information, in which success in the completed essay is evidenced by whether there is a clear structure; whether the essay shows any sense of argument with points firstly against and then for the student's opinion; whether the student's opinion is obvious; and whether the points are organized into meaningful paragraphs. Unlike the previous categories, this stage carries 8 marks. The table above demonstrates that out of 32 students, only two scored 8 marks; three had 7 marks; nine obtained 6 marks; seven got 5 marks; eight got 4 marks; two got three marks; one student got 2 marks; and no student scored either 1 or zero.

Writing

The writing stage means bringing together the information according to the structure envisaged in the plan. Most importantly, it is the stage at which students bring the language elements that will make the type of writing fit the scientific one. This will be demonstrated in the completed essays by

whether the language is clear without the reader having to work at understanding the meaning; whether the writer has a 'voice', i.e. whether a student managed to express information from other sources in their own words. The other aspect is whether the student attended to grammar expected in the type of essay they are writing and whether they had satisfactorily expanded the vocabulary. This stage carries a weightage of 4 marks in total. As indicated in the table above, out of 32 students, only one got 4 marks; seven got 3 marks; eight got 2 marks; eleven got 1 mark; and five students were without any mark.

Editing

Prior to submitting the final essays, the students were expected to submit their first drafts where mistakes and errors were pointed out so that they could work on them before submitting the final essays. Whether students had managed to attend to editing issues in their final essays, it would be shown by whether they had made sufficient attempts to correct the mistakes and errors, be they grammatical or spelling. The other aspect was whether they had used a range of punctuation marks; and most importantly whether their essays had been properly referenced. This category carries the weightage of three marks in total. The results in the table above show that out of 32 students, only one scored 3 marks; ten had 2 marks; thirteen obtained 1 mark; and eight students were without any mark for this section.

Presentation

Before a student submits an essay, it is important that the layout of the essay is according to the expected prescribed format. The conventions of writing an academic work need to be meticulously followed. The rate of success in doing that is evidenced in the completed essay by whether the essay meets the required length, i.e. whether the bibliographic entries are correct and whether the whole essay looks good or with appropriate margins and paragraph breaks. Like the previous category, this stage also carries maximum three marks. The results tabulated in the above table show that out of 32 students, two got three marks; ten had 2 marks; sixteen scored 1 mark; and four students got no mark.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The students' assignments indicated that they did better in the thinking stage, with most students scoring 50 % and above in this category. This could be attributed to the thinking strategy that enabled them to break down the question, allowing them to generate ideas using a spider diagram. Since this is the initial stage, the students could come up with as many ideas as possible without, for instance, having to worry about whether there is any support for those ideas. This is important as it shows them that anyone can think, and in fact, they have already had many ideas relating to whatever topic they come across. The thinking strategy particularly allows them to think about what they are brainstorming, i.e.

even though they may have multitudinous ideas, they will have to realize sooner that some are not worth pursuing. Therefore, they learn to think critically, which is an important soft skill, arguably transferable to other areas of study.

On the other hand, the findings indicate that although just above 50% students scored 50% and above in the researching category, little less than 50% students scored below 50%; more disturbingly is the fact that the score attained by most students as compared to other scores is 2 out of 6. This tells us that many students' essays were poorly researched. This is a skill that is surely transferable to other areas of study and in academic writing, it is important in supporting arguments for or against the author's opinion. Students might have struggled with this stage because it required that they found information matching with the brainstormed ideas. In fact, it can be argued that the depth of each student's essay depends on how much research there is.

Nonetheless, students seem to have done quite better in the planning stage. There were fewer students who scored below 50%, with the highest number of students obtaining 6 marks out of 8. Planning is an important skill in any area of study, which in the Academic Writing course in this study is realized by the structure of a discursive essay (introduction, counter-argument, argument, and conclusion). All that students needed to do was to adhere to that structure and make sure that there is no mixing of argument points with those belonging to counter-argument or any

other sub-section. Therefore, planning in this case meant that students were dealing with information they already had at hand; slotting it into appropriate sections, which differed from the previous sections that were actually concerned with generating information.

However, the stage at which all preparation culminates proved somehow challenging for students as half the total number scored below 50%. In fact, the score that was received by most students as compared to other scores is 1 out of 4. If we are to go by the axiom that good preparation results in successful writing, then this situation does not support it. It seems that students lacked the language to express what they had achieved in the preparation stages. In fact, they struggled to attain a

'voice' in communicating their arguments. In order to demonstrate the extent at which students failed the writing part, we shall look at a sample of some paragraphs taken from some essays that scored 3, 2, 1 and zero respectively in the writing category.

Although there are obvious errors in the above extract in Fig.1, the message that the student is conveying can be understood. Perhaps, this student's drawback, other than grammatical incorrectness, is the limited range of vocabulary.

Whilst this paragraph poses itself as an example of a perfect one in Fig.2, it appears that it has been lifted verbatim, with no evidence of paraphrasing. Therefore, it lacks 'voice' and in fact does not support the claim that the student made prior to this paragraph that nuclear power plant is a clean

3

People should use antivirus to keep their computer away from trouble. Do not put your laptop in your lap without any protector because its damage for the health and it is also send electrical charges that affect to the human. Another thing put a protector to the monitor to keep your eyes safe and to do not lose your eyes. They should do or but antivirus for computer to be save from troubles.

Fig.1: Extract from an essay that scored 3 in the writing element

2

Some of the most serious impacts linked to the generation of electricity on land can also be attributed to nuclear plants. Whereas the amount of solid wastes generated at nuclear plants is relatively small, these radioactive wastes pose health risks that exceed that of any other source of electricity. It is quite possible that these radioactive wastes will be stored for a century or more at existing nuclear plant sites, a prospect that may preclude any re-uses of these contaminated lands. (Anon. 2011)

Fig.2: Extract from an essay that scored 2 in the writing element

electricity source. It looks like a classic case where a student came across information that is related to the topic and simply used it without considering its relevance.

The paragraph in Fig.3 shows a range of inaccuracies. The student seemingly did not successfully attend to editing prior to submitting, as there are incorrect punctuation and inaccurate sentence breaks. The first point in the topic sentence is immediately abandoned and another one unrelated to it is introduced and developed. It seems that the student copied information elsewhere related to the topic but failed to use it successfully in support of argument raised.

The paragraph in Fig.4 is a classic example of copy and paste without acknowledging the source from where the material has been copied. This was detected through Turnitin – a plagiarism detecting software used in the institution where the study was conducted which when the paragraph was uploaded received a 94% plagiarism score. Therefore, the student does not have his own ‘voice’. This is the

usual way out that students opt for when they find the writing task daunting or when they lack the necessary language to express what they should. However, the preparatory steps in thinking, researching and planning are meant to alleviate this problem which unfortunately persists. Part of the reason for that, as noted above, could be because of low linguistic proficiency that makes it difficult for students to accurately present what they have brainstormed, researched and planned.

Furthermore, the results show that majority of the students scored below 50% in the editing stage. This should not be too surprising as the quality of writing depends on the attention paid to it prior to submission. In fact, the underpinning theory in process writing, according to Maley in Hedge (1988), is that good writers go through processes such as “jotting down ideas..., organizing them, writing first drafts and revising” (p. 3) them which ultimately make the finished writing look as good as it could be. It should therefore be expected that students who have gone through similar processes should produce a somewhat good

1

Fossil fuels also cause air, water and soil pollution, and produce greenhouse gases that contribute to globalwarmingAlso, the initial cost is quite high. Most of solar cells require large areas of land to achieve the average efficiency. Other solar techniques are passive. For example; big windows placed on the sunny side of a building allow sunlight to heat absorbent materials on the floor and walls. These surfaces then release the heat at night to keep the building warm. Similarly, absorbent plates on a roof can heat liquid in tubes that supply a house with hot water.

Fig.3: Extract from an essay that scored 1 in the writing element

piece of writing. Nonetheless, it should be reiterated that this approach has its roots in the teaching of mother tongue which some writers and researchers such as Hedge (1988) started applying it to the EFL/ESL context. Perhaps such a move was influenced by Krashen (1984) who prior to that had theorized that the processes in first and second language writing are similar; suggesting that the only challenge faced by writers in both contexts is the insufficient acquisition of the English language writing code. As it is, most students did not wholly attend to editing issues. In fact, there was an increase of students scoring zero. Also, in comparison to other scores in this category, most students scored 1 out of 3. One logical explanation to that is that if students found it hard to master the writing part, they would be at pains to edit the writing. It is crucial to note that editing these essays was based on the first drafts teacher's feedback. The

example below indicates how much editing a student failed to address

In this extract (see Fig.5), the student committed grammatical errors, did not appropriately attend to punctuation and failed to reference the source of information. Similarly, the students did badly in presenting their essays, with more than 60% scoring below 50%. Just like in writing and editing, most students scored 1 out of 3. The common problems in this category include inappropriate bibliographic entries, failure to fulfil length requirement and uneven paragraph breaks. Below is an example of an inappropriate bibliographic entry that many students adopted.

Such mistakes and errors in Fig.6 were prevalent despite input sessions that addressed them. That is, students were *inter alia* apprised with the appropriate methods of acknowledging materials according to the conventions adopted by the college

0

First, the engineering before the scientific revolution the forerunners of engineers, practical artists and craftsman, proceeded mainly by trial and error. Yet tinkering combined with imagination produced many marvelous devices. Many ancient monuments cannot fail to incite admiration. The admiration is embodied in the name "engineer" itself. It originated in the eleventh century from the Latin inseminator, meaning one with ingenious, the ingenious one. The name, used for builders of ingenious fortifications or makers of ingenious devices, was closely related to the notion of ingenuity, which was captured in the old meaning of "engine" until the word was taken over by steam engines and it is like. Leonardo da Vinci bore the official title of Ingegnere General. His notebooks reveal that some Renaissance engineers began to ask systematically what works and why.

Fig.4: Extract from an essay that scored 0 in the writing element

Medical field is more benefit that engineering in our life , it can make our life possible and save humanity from extinction , also it is very important in the communal life and it make our humanity continuation long time on this surface.. It encompasses a variety of health care practices evolved to maintain and restore health by the prevention and treatment of illness.

Fig.5: Extract indicating editing issues

| | | |
|----------|------|---|
| Internet | 2010 | Available at http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%D9%83D8%AAD8%AA%D8AD% Access 2011 |
|----------|------|---|

Fig.6: Extract showing inappropriate bibliographic entry

where the study was conducted. The six-step method was also adopted to alleviate such problems, but since they persisted, there is a need to reconsider its application in the context of the type of students engaged and their linguistic background.

CONCLUSION

The BPM in this study proves to have many benefits for students. In specific, it allows them to systematically approach their academic work which helps them gain necessary soft skills such as critical thinking, research skills, and planning (including time management). These skills that are undoubtedly useful in the Academic Writing course are immediately transferable to other areas of study. In fact, these findings bear similarities with those reported by Ntombela (2010) in a study regarding the offering of a Project course in Foundation 1 (in the same institution) following the six-step method, where the acquisition of soft skills such as team-work, time-management

and critical thinking were reported to have been promoted by the method.

However, the six-step method does not seem to be very successful in the Academic Writing course in enhancing proficiency in writing. Although students appear to convincingly go through all the six steps in planning, executing and polishing up their essays, there is not much progress made in the actual writing, which is crucial in expressing what they have prepared. Students have a language barrier that needs to be dealt with explicitly. The six-step method seems viable in cases where students have already acquired a working command of the target language. Perhaps the fact that the six-step method emphasizes the process that students go through as they produce academic work, there is not enough attention devoted to the product and that does not help them improve linguistically.

In the light of the conclusion, it is appropriate to suggest a balance between process and product oriented approaches, given the fact that in EFL context there is

less exposure to the target language which limits acquisition of the target language. Hedge (1988, p. 8), for example, suggests that teachers could come up with check lists that show the forms and functions of written texts and demonstrate to students how the features of these different texts vary from each other. Teachers would then be able to focus students on one or on the number of skills that would give them practices to produce a similar written text (Hedge, 1988, p. 9). The adopted approach or method should acknowledge students' limitations in writing skill and then works towards reducing those limitations whilst gradually exposing students to the process they must go through when attempting an academic piece of writing.

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“READS” Feedback on Tri-Component Skills in Resuscitating Learners’ Reading Ability

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ABSTRACT

This article reports the findings of a reading comprehension test (pre-test) consisting of the tri-component skills namely literal, reorganisation and inferential, conducted among students of a public secondary school in the central state of Malaysia. READS (Reading Evaluation and Decoding System) was utilised to capture students’ reading ability and comprehension skills and introspectively made sense of students’ actual reading ability in terms of what they could and could not do. Precisely, with a standard Reading Matrix table which was previously developed, the English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers were able to tell their students’ reading abilities by conveniently referring to the Performance Standards of READS so to ascertain whether their students were at *meet standard*, *below standard*, *above standard* or at *academic warning* status in terms of the tri-component skills. Subsequently, a series of intervention lessons were developed based on the READS feedback and immediately conducted to resuscitate and revive the learners’ shortcomings. Results of the post-test indicated an increase in students’ overall test scores. Consequently, the findings suggest that the deployment of READS has the potentiality in improving students’ reading and comprehension ability.

Keywords: ESL teachers, performance standards, reading comprehension, reading matrix

INTRODUCTION

“The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate ‘apparently ordinary’ people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people.”

K. Patricia Cross

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Indeed, it is a tough problem to transform ordinary students to winners. We believe the first step in trying to do so is to make sense and predict students' ability. The essence of making people winners is reading; and consequently reading ability among language learners have become an important element of concern in recent years. In line with a country such Malaysia, as pointed out by the previous premier; Malaysian is born today and in the years to come will be the last generation who will be living in a country that is called 'developing' as we are embarking to be a fully developed nation by the year 2020 (Mahathir Mohamad, 1991). A quick review of the Vision 2020 document, it was found that the development that Malaysia is striving to achieve is not primarily developed in the sense of infrastructural but rather taking into account other humanistic elements such cognitive, social and affective aspects.

It is apparent, in our views, that the need to celebrate and enhance reading is no longer important but necessary. Why reading? Ultimately, reading is an essential part of everyone's life in order to survive and participate in daily worldly affairs. In addition, reading itself is a complex cognitive skill (Dubin *et al.*, 1986), which requires a great deal of cognitive interactions. Reading is a matter of fact an active and purposeful endeavour which is dependent on the prior knowledge and expectations of the reader (Nuttall, 1982; Eskey & Grabe, 1986; Goh & Wee, 2002). Reading complexity is further substantiated by Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension (Barrett, 1972;

Barrett & Smith 1974, 1979, as cited in Dechant, 1982 & in Alderson & Urquhart, 1984) which classified the comprehension skills required by reading into five important reading skills such as literal comprehension, reorganisation comprehension, inferential comprehension, evaluation and appreciation. Precisely in this study, the researchers focused on three sub-skills of reading, namely, literal comprehension, reorganisation comprehension and inferential comprehension, in conjunction with the Malaysian public examination requirements for the section on reading comprehension.

Many secondary school teachers assume that students who can read words can also comprehend from text simply by reading. ESL teachers often neglect teaching students how to approach text to better understand it using the correct reading strategies. In the conventional reading lesson, the teacher basically selects a passage for the students to read, introduces the reading selection to the students, gets the students read it, and then questions them to see if they have understood it (Croft, 1980, p. 348).

According to Edmonds *et al.* (2009), reading instruction for secondary students with reading difficulties is rarely provided, and this has widened the gap between their reading achievement and that of their grade-level peers. As such, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) has triggered schools to improve reading instruction for all students, including students in middle and high schools.

According to Allerson and Grabe (as

cited in Dubin, Eskey & Grabe, 1986), accurate assessments have to be carried out to identify the reading difficulties that students face. The urgency in identifying students with reading difficulties is further stressed by Stanovich (1986) who feels that children who face reading difficulties early in the learning tend to slack behind their peers with the passing of time. As such, early detection would enable teachers to predict current and latent reading achievements as well as to find out the students who need help in reading. Consequently, a quick care step to resuscitate students and revive them needs to be taken so that they can survive in an inclusive classroom along with their other peers. Recent research also suggests that majority of children's reading problems are preventable if they receive additional support in the form of intervention (Pikulski, 1994; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). School-based preventive efforts should be engineered to maintain growth in reading skills throughout the schooling period. Due to the importance of reading abilities to succeed in life, both during and beyond school, it is important for school systems to conduct reading intervention programmes. Similarly, based on the principles of management as advocated by management gurus (such as Dessler, 1998, pp. 528-529), those who fall below standards can be given remedial or corrective actions in order to ensure improvement of their abilities.

In daily English as Second Language classes in the Malaysian context, it is an uncontested matter that English language teachers may have sufficient knowledge

of their students' different reading abilities based on the comprehension tests they conduct either formatively or summatively. Consequently, from the test grades data, teachers can easily identify their learners' reading comprehension ability in terms of their normative standings. However, teachers may have difficulty to precisely identify the kinds of weak readers in the pool of students they are dealing with.

At this point, teachers may have the passion to design appropriate intervention classes to assist students and consequently elevate them to be better readers. The first step is to comprehensively make sense and predict reading ability among second language learners by administering a standardised generic reading comprehension test (pre-test) that has carefully been constructed by taking into account the requirements of the Malaysian English Language curriculum, syllabus, textbook, workbook and the relevant theories underpinning the construction of any reading comprehension test instrument.

In addition, teachers will probably need to collaborate and plan, organise, review, implement and reflect on the reading instructions for the intervention activities to bring about the desired and required changes in the students' reading ability. According to Mokhtari, Thoma and Edwards (2009), teachers' collaboration, analysis and all the efforts based on the data and information collected normally lead to substantive change in reading instruction, as suggested by the researcher in which the students are categorised into groups, time-table being

blocked to enable the interventions to be implemented.

Consequently, this study aimed at incorporating READS (Reading Evaluation and Decoding System) developed in an earlier study (Abdul Rashid, Lin & Shaik Abdul Malik, 2010) to provide teachers with students' true reading ability in terms of their apparent weaknesses. Accordingly, with a single Reading Matrix table, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers would be able to understand their students' reading abilities and to be informed whether their students are at *meet standard*, *below standard*, *above standard* or at *academic warning* status in relation to three out of the five areas of reading comprehension skills; namely literal, reorganisation and inferential. Subsequently, a series of intervention classes was conducted over a period of 5 months for all the students from Form 1 to Form 5. A post-test was also conducted afterwards to gauge the students' progress. Additionally, the purpose of the study was to investigate the practical ways of helping secondary school students' reading skills. Thus, the interventions were conducted in the selected school after the ESL teachers had identified the specific reading ability of the students. In order to achieve the research purpose, a research question was raised, i.e. 'How did the students perform in the posttest after the interventions?'

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design of the study involved two tests, which were conducted before and after the interventions, and respectively referred to

as the pre-test and post-test. The findings of both the tests were analysed using SPSS version 16.

The Participants

The researchers conducted the intervention in a semi rural school in Perak. A total of 1430 students from Form 1 to Form 5 participated in this Reading Initiative Programme. In specific, 307 students were from Form 1, 298 students from Form 2, 332 students from Form 3, 248 students from Form 4 and 245 students from Form 5.

Procedure

The reading abilities of all the students in the school were assessed using the Standardised Generic Reading Comprehension Test (SGRCT) at the beginning of the year (February) as the pre-test. Based on the test scores obtained from the SGRCT, the researchers developed Reading Initiative Programme as an intervention to help the students improve their learning. After 5 months of carrying out the intervention, the students were retested in July.

The researchers administered the SGRCT as the pre-test to determine where to begin instruction. According to Morris (2008, p. 72), "the pre-test establishes the child's starting rung on a ladder, and the post-test shows how many rungs he or she has been able to climb up". At the beginning of the school year (February), the students from Form 1 to Form 5 sat for the pre-test at the same time on the same day as it was a closed test to identify the students' reading ability. The time allocated for the test was

70 minutes. This test provided information about students' approximate reading ability and allowed us to group students according to their reading needs.

The Reading Evaluation and Decoding System (READS) was used to identify the students' reading ability. The system comprises of three components, namely, the Encoder (Test Instrument), the Analyser (Reading Matrix) and the Decoder (Reading Performance Indicators). The main instrument of data gathering was the SGRCT. The Test Instrument or Encoder is a generic test which can be used to measure the ESL reading performance of secondary school students from Form 1 to Form 5. The test items of the standardised reading comprehension test were 60 multiple choice questions which comprised of literal, reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions set at different levels of difficulty, i.e., Primary School Assessment (UPSR) level, Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR) level and Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) level, as shown in Table 1.

The test comprised of 3 parts. Part A consists of 15 UPSR level questions constituting 25% of the test questions, Part B consists of 30 PMR level questions

constituting 50% of the test questions and Part C consists of 15 SPM level questions constituting 25% of the test questions, as stipulated by Mok (2000). According to Mok (2000), the distribution of the difficulty of test should be 25% easy, 50% average and 25% difficult. The time allocated for the standardised reading comprehension test is 70 minutes.

Specific sub-skills of reading required to answer the reading comprehension questions were selected from the Malaysian English Language syllabus in the light of Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension. Five content experts examined each item based on a scale of 1 (least suitable) to 5 (most suitable). The findings indicated that the content validity of the test questions is high and thus the questions were appropriate. A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the test instrument. The KR20 of the instrument was found to be within the range of 0.78 to 0.85 for all the educational levels (Form 1 to Form 5 students).

After the students had completed the tests, the ESL teachers analysed the results. The researchers used the test results to categorise the students into Performance Bands (Band 1 to Band 6). The cut scores for the Performance Bands were developed

TABLE 1
Number of Literal, Reorganisation and Inferential Comprehension Questions

| Classifications of comprehension abilities | Number of UPSR level questions | Number of PMR level questions | Number of SPM level questions |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Literal Comprehension | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Reorganisation comprehension | 6 | 12 | 6 |
| Inferential comprehension | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Total number of questions | 15 | 30 | 15 |

based on z-scores. Negative z-scores indicate that the students scored below the mean, whereas positive z-scores indicate that the students scored above the mean. The students were classified into the various Performance Bands according to their reading performance, as shown in Table 2.

After the pre-test, every ESL teacher completed a form to tabulate the results of the test scores. An analysis was carried out to tabulate the results at the macro level, which included class level and school level. At the micro level, the ESL teachers could match the test scores to the Reading Matrix to identify the individual student's level of reading ability. In the development of the reading matrix, the cut scores for the Performance Bands needed to be determined. The scores cannot be constructed arbitrarily as it will not reflect the precise reading ability of the students. Consequently, we looked at several ways of establishing the cut scores for the reading matrix. Finally, the z-score seems to be

fitting with this kind work that we are doing as z-score is capable of transforming a raw score into a standardised score that provides useful information about how far the raw score relates to the mean (Gronlund, 2006).

The results provided the teachers with an idea about students who needed help, and consequently the ESL teachers could tailor their teaching materials and instruction to meet their students' needs.

The respondents' reading scores were matched against the Reading Matrix or Analyser which acted as a reading indicator to indicate the reading abilities of the learners at a particular educational level, i.e. from Form 1 to Form 5 and then correlated to the Performance Standards and Reading Performance Indicators ranging from Band 1 to Band 6.

Table 3 illustrates the mechanics of the Performance Standards. For example, students in Form 4 who are in Band 5 would be classified as 'meet standard'. If a Form 4 student is in Band 6, he would be classified

TABLE 2
Range of Scores for the Performance Bands

| Bands | Band 6 | Band 5 | Band 4 | Band 3 | Band 2 | Band 1 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| Scores | 54 - 60 | 42 - 53 | 30 - 41 | 19 - 29 | 7 - 18 | 0 - 6 |

TABLE 3
Working of Performance Standards

| Education Levels | Performance Standards | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | <i>Exceed Standard</i> | <i>Above Standard</i> | <i>Below Standard</i> | <i>Academic Warning</i> |
| Form 5 | | Band 6 | Band 5 | Bands 4,3,2,1 |
| Form 4 | Band 6 | Band 5 | Band 4 | Bands 3,2,1 |
| Form 3 | Band 5,6 | Band 4 | Band 3 | Bands 2,1 |
| Form 2 | Band 4,5,6 | Band 3 | Band 2 | Band 1 |
| Form 1 | Band 3,4,5,6 | Band 2 | Band 1 | |

as 'above standard'. Students in Form 4 who are in Band 4 would be classified as 'below standard' and students who are in Band 1, Band 2 and Band 3 would be classified as at 'academic warning'. This also applies to other educational levels as shown in Table 3.

There are four levels of reading performance that were specifically developed to suit the Malaysian secondary school students adapted from the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).

The idea of Progression through the levels advocated by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) Report (1988, cited in Horton, 1990 & Masters, 2006), in which the criteria of levels of proficiency and age were taken into consideration in gauging the learners' progress, was adopted to develop the Reading Matrix.

The Reading Performance Indicators or Decoder acts as the indicators to inform the teachers which reading sub-skills the learners can or cannot do. North's 'Reading Scale for the Council of Europe Framework' cited in Alderson (2000, pp. 132-134) was adopted as the model to develop the

Descriptors of Reading Abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How did the students perform in the pre-test?

Table 4 displays the analysis of the pre-test results at the macro level, i.e. students' reading ability at school level from Form 1 to Form 5. The data showed that majority of the students in each educational level were either *below standard* or *academic warning*.

Interventions

Based on READS feedback, a series of intervention classes were then conducted to students of all levels. The intervention, teaching instruction and reading materials to meet the needs of the students were conducted for a period of 5 months (February to June). The students were streamed according to their reading abilities, i.e. according to their Performance Bands (Band 1 to Band 6). The researchers used two structures in conducting the intervention programme. The first structure was named as Reading Lessons Structure A and the second structure was named as Reading Lessons Structure B.

TABLE 4
Analysis of the Pre-test of Secondary School Students' Reading Ability

| | Band 1 | Band 2 | Band 3 | Band 4 | Band 5 | Band 6 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Form 5 | 22.2% | 18.1% | 12.7% | 24.3% | 13.3% | *9.4% |
| Form 4 | 43.3% | 22.3% | 6.4% | 15.5% | *6.9% | 5.6% |
| Form 3 | 39.3% | 21.5% | 10.9% | *15.9% | 7.2% | 5.7% |
| Form 2 | 47.0% | 23.0% | *12.7% | 15.6% | 0.2% | 1.5% |
| Form 1 | 60.2% | *11.8% | 12.1% | 11.1% | 0.9% | 0.9% |

READING MATRIX

key: * = meet standard

Reading Lessons Structure A: Precise Level

In Reading Lessons Structure A, the reading comprehension lesson for all Form 3 students was conducted once a week, double period (70 minutes) at the same time on the same day. The Form 3 students had their reading lesson from 8.10 am to 9.20 a.m. every Wednesday. Six ESL teachers taught at the same time. All the students in each Performance Band were taught by an ESL teacher using reading materials suitable for students of that particular level. In this case, all the students who were classified as in Band 1 to Band 6 were placed in different classes. Form 3 students were selected for Structure A as the school made special request due to classroom organisation and the number of English language teachers in that school.

Reading Lessons Structure B: Main Stream Level

In Reading Lessons Structure B, all the students in the other educational levels (Form 1, 2, 4 and 5) had their reading comprehension lesson once a week, double period (70 minutes), but these students followed the normal timetable (whereby not every class had the reading comprehension lesson at the same time on the same day). The reading comprehension lessons were taught by their respective ESL teachers.

Just like the Reading Lessons Structure A, the ESL teachers used the reading materials according to the students' reading ability. The only difference was that due to the varied reading ability of the students

in each class, the teachers therefore taught based on the reading level of the majority of the students in their class. For example, if the majority of the students in a Form 2 class were classified as Band 1, the teacher would then use the reading materials suitable for Band 1.

Ideally, teachers should use texts suitable for Form 2. However, in this case, since Band 1 students could/can hardly comprehend UPSR text, logically the teachers might want their students to have a strong grasp of UPSR texts prior to moving forward to higher level texts. As for the students in other Performance Bands (such as Band 4) in the same class, the teacher could provide those students with PMR texts. The teacher used UPSR texts to teach students who were classified as Band 1, while the other students with better band levels were given guidance to work on higher level texts.

Reading Materials

The tasks of preparing the reading texts and the reading comprehension questions were divided equally among the ESL teachers. The ESL teachers in the school prepared three categories of reading materials comprising of reading texts and reading comprehension questions at UPSR, PMR and SPM levels. Form 1 ESL teachers prepared the reading materials for UPSR levels, while Form 2 and Form 3 ESL teachers prepared reading materials for PMR level and Form 4 and Form 5 ESL teachers prepared reading materials for SPM level. Each level of reading text consists

of three levels of reading comprehension questions of Barrett’s Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension, i.e. literal, reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions in line with the sub-skills of reading stated in the Malaysian English Language syllabus. Table 5 indicates the reading texts allocated for each category of students who had been classified according to their Performance Bands.

Reading Comprehension Lessons

As part of the intervention programme, the ESL teachers in the school attended a series of workshops on how to execute the intervention programmed and integrate assessment into instruction (formative assessment). Besides, the ESL teachers were also trained to teach the reading skills and reading strategies involved in comprehending the texts as well as how to use the relevant reading strategies to answer the reading comprehension questions. The students were taught the sub-skills of reading involved in answering the literal comprehension questions such as scanning for details, identifying main ideas in a simple text and identifying supporting details in a simple text. As for answering reorganisation comprehension questions, which include analysing, synthesising and organising information that has been stated explicitly, the students were taught

how to extract supporting details, acquire the meaning of words by understanding contextual clues and identify simple cause and effect . The students were also taught the sub-skills of reading required to answer inferential comprehension questions such as making inferences and drawing conclusions.

From the analysis of the pre-test results, many students from Band 1 to band 5 had difficulty answering inferential comprehension questions. For reinforcement activities, teachers can use various texts to help students make inferences. Below is a sample of how students can be guided to make an inference by reading a short text. Get students to read the following text:

“When Fatimah’s mother returned home after working overtime, the only light that she saw in the hall was from the television. From the porch, she could hear Fatimah’s grandfather’s snores coming from his favourite rocking chair.”

Next, get students to identify the details in the text. Details from the text include:

Fatimah’s mother came home late. The television is still on. Fatimah’s grandfather’s is asleep on his rocking chair.

TABLE 5
Reading Materials

| Performance Bands | Band 1 | Band 2 | Band 3 | Band 4 | Band 5 | Band 6 |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Difficulty level of Texts | UPSR | UPSR/PMR | PMR | PMR | SPM | SPM |

Then, ask the students to relate the details to their experiences. Details according to students' experience:

Usually people will sleep on their rocking chair with the television still on because they are tired.

Finally, ask the students what they can infer from the text. Students' inference from text:

Based on the text and their experiences, they concluded that Fatimah's grandfather may have fallen asleep while waiting for Fatimah's mother to come back.

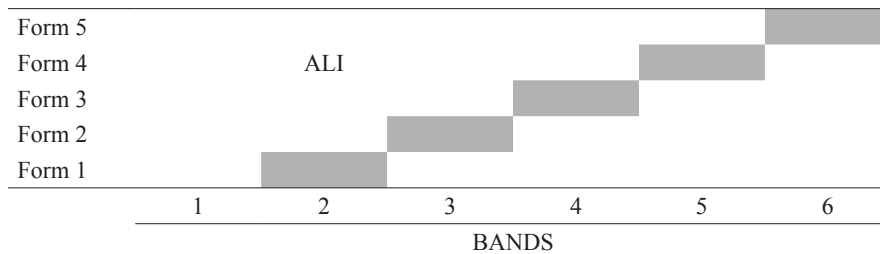
Besides reading the texts carefully selected for students in the various bands, the teachers can include different types of text for teaching different sub-skills of reading. Not all texts can develop all the different types of sub-skills of reading. The following section explains a sample of a case description based on READS feedback.

Initial Diagnostic Results

As disclosed in Table 6, Ali was in Band 2. Based on the reading matrix, students in Form 4 should correspond to Band 5 to 'meet standard'. This denotes that Ali is at 'academic warning' status.

Ali was a Form 4 student who struggled with reading comprehension. He obtained a low score in the pre-test. Even though he was in Form 4, he managed to correctly answer only 2 out of 30 comprehension questions at the PMR level (see Table 7). It appeared that he could not answer the reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions correctly even at the UPSR level. Based on the findings of the 'Structured Interview', he said that he had guessed the answers for the comprehension questions which he could not understand. It was evident that he lacked the sub-skills of reading to answer the reorganisation and inferential comprehension questions at the PMR level. As a Form 4 student, he should know how to apply the appropriate sub-skills of reading to answer the comprehension questions at SPM level. In this case, the English teachers should only expose him to Form 4 reading

TABLE 6
Ali's Reading Performance (Form 4)



Key: shaded area indicates 'meet standard' for that educational level

materials when he is ready. A closer look at Ali's reading performance in Table 8 will inform us the sub-skill of reading that Ali needs more guidance with.

Analysis of Post-test

Table 9 indicates the analysis of the students' results of the post-test after the interventions. How did the students perform in the post-test?

According to the results of the post-test in Table 8, there was an increase in the students' test scores and their ability

to handle the three reading comprehension skills amicably. The percentage of the students who *meet standard* at each educational level increased in the post-test. The percentage of the students who were *above standard* also increased slightly after the interventions in July when compared to the percentage of the students at *meet standard* and *above standard* in the pre-test conducted in February. On the other hand, the percentage of students at *below standard* and *academic warning* decreased. This probably shows that the interventions have

TABLE 7
Number of Questions Answered Correctly

| Types of questions | Levels | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----|-----|
| | UPSR | PMR | SPM |
| Literal | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Reorganisation | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Inferential | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Scores:

UPSR: 4/15 PMR: 2/30 SPM: 1/15

Total Score: 7/60

TABLE 8: The Analysis of Ali's Reading Performance

| Correct Question | Content | sub-skills | answer | student X |
|------------------|--|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 1 | Identifying main ideas in simple texts. | literal | B | / |
| 2 | Read and understand simple texts for supporting details. | reorganisation | B | A |
| 3 | Read simple texts and make inferences. | inferential | A | C |
| 4 | Read and understand simple texts for supporting details. | reorganisation | C | B |
| 5 | Draw conclusions in simple texts. | inferential | C | D |
| 6 | Identifying supporting details in texts. | literal | D | A |
| 7 | Read and understand cause and effect relationships. | reorganisation | C | / |
| 8 | Identifying supporting details in texts. | literal | D | / |
| 9 | Read and understand simple texts for supporting details. | reorganisation | C | D |
| 10 | Read simple texts and make inferences. | inferential | A | B |

Total Score of student (Ali: 7/60) Performance band: 2

a positive impact on the students' reading performance. There was some improvement when compared to the performance in the February pre-test.

A review of the data obtained from READS, following the reading lessons from a school's initiative to improve the reading scores, showed some improvements in the students' reading performance from Form 1 to Form 5. An analysis of the data describing improvements in students' reading performance is as follows:

The percentage of Form 1 students who *meet standard* on reading comprehension rose to 14.3% in the post-test (July) from merely 11.8% in the pre-test (February). Meanwhile, the percentage of Form 2 students who *meet standard* on reading comprehension rose to 14.0% in the post-test from 12.7% in the pre-test. As for those in Form 3, 26.2% of the students who sat for the post-test *meet standard* on reading comprehension as compared to 15.9% in the pre-test. In Form 4, about 9.1% of the students who sat for the post-test *meet standard* on reading comprehension as compared to only 6.9% in the pre-test. In Form 5, about 12.5% of the students who sat for the post-test *meet standard* on reading

comprehension as compared to 9.4% in the pre-test.

Overall, there was a slight improvement in the reading performance of Forms 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 students. Some factors that might have contributed to only a slight improvement were that the teachers were not ready to teach the different sub-skills of reading and some of them had the tendency to use the traditional method of teaching reading where the teachers asked their students to take turns to read, followed by merely giving answers to the comprehension questions. However, it was interesting to note that there was a significant improvement in the reading performance of the Form 3 students. The percentage of Form 3 students who *meet standard* in the posttest increased by 10.3% as compared to the pre-test. One of the possible factors the researchers predicted contributed to the significant changes in Form 3 students' reading performance was by teaching students who were classified in the same performance band in the same class via Structure A. Accordingly, teachers can teach the students using the relevant materials for that particular level and at the same time, focus on the sub-skills of reading that they are lacking. However, in

TABLE 9: Analysis of the Post-test of Secondary School Students' Reading Ability

| | Band 1 | Band 2 | Band 3 | Band 4 | Band 5 | Band 6 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Form 5 | 19.1% | 14.8% | 12.1% | 27.1% | 14.4% | *12.5% |
| Form 4 | 35.7% | 16.1% | 10.8% | 19.0% | *9.1% | 9.3% |
| Form 3 | 33.4% | 13.8% | 10.1% | *26.2% | 8.1% | 8.4% |
| Form 2 | 40.1% | 19.7% | *14.0% | 18.5% | 5.5% | 2.2% |
| Form 1 | 41.2% | *14.3% | 17.1% | 19.7% | 4.4% | 3.3% |

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key: * = meet standard

the Reading Lessons in Structure B, the teacher had to cater to the students in the other performance bands as well. The only problem in the Reading Lessons in Structure A was that there were too many students in Bands 1, 2, 3 and 4. Therefore, it was quite difficult for respective teachers to teach such a large group. Predictably, there were only a small number of students in Bands 5 and 6.

CONCLUSION

As it was intended, READS potency was put to test to tackle reading instruction for secondary school students with reading difficulties and consequently, instructional plans were designed to improve reading instruction for students. In more specific, students who were identified as below standard or at academic warning were administered the right intervention to avoid further disparity in relation to their reading proficiency. After completing the intervention process that was administered by ESL teachers, the overall results showed some impressive improvements in the reading performance of all the secondary students tested. Apparently, READS, used in combination with the Reading Matrix, Performance Standards and Descriptors of Reading Abilities, can provide a potent and accurate account of learners' reading proficiency. It is believed that this minor innovation that ESL teachers may now add to their daily reading comprehension instruction and testing initiatives can make a difference in the lives of students' and their reading skills development.

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English Language Educators' Professional Learning as a Site of Identity Struggle

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ABSTRACT

This study explored teacher educators' account of how they make meaning of their professional learning. The study aimed to understand how they conceptualize their "professionalism" as English language teacher educators, particularly within the context of Indonesia. The research participants were four English language teacher educators of a pre-service teacher education programme. The data were collected using in-depth interviews. In the interviews, the teacher educators were involved in reflexive accounts of their professional work and lives. The narrative data depict how the sense of "struggle" is an important part of the teacher educators' process of learning. Therefore, in this article, I chose to further explore the notion of "struggle" in living with various discourses of professionalism in English Language Teaching (ELT) as brought up by the teacher educators through their teaching narratives. Their narratives display tensions, paradoxes, transformations, and (re)negotiations of beliefs, values and conceptions of teaching-self within overlapping dimensions of their teaching professional landscapes (historical, social, political, and institutional). Their narratives illustrate how their professional learning is closely related to their process of learning and re-learning their identities and the "struggle for voice" (Britzman, 2003) in interacting with various discourses of professionalism they encounter in their teaching works and lives.

Keywords: English language teaching, narrative-based inquiry, professional learning, teacher identity, teacher educators

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on teachers' learning have mentioned the importance of understanding how one *learns* to become a teacher (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Cohen, 2010; Danielewicz,

2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Palmer (1998, p. 4) suggests that good teaching involves knowing “the self that teaches”. In this view, learning about how people become teachers brings a great contribution to how they teach and affect their learners. “Becoming a teacher,” as Danielewicz (2001, p. 3) puts it, “is an identity formation process whereby individuals define themselves and are viewed by others as teachers”. She believes that a good teacher is someone who invests in teaching, or someone who identifies his or her self in teaching. Both Palmer and Danielewicz suggest that identity is an integral part of professional learning. As Danielewicz points out that:

If we need teachers who effectively educate (a fundamental requirement for any optimism about the future), then we need to know how the best teachers have become themselves. What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving.
(2001, p. 3)

Therefore, professional learning requires more than mere acquisition of professional knowledge and practice as it is imposed on teachers through discourses of professionalism and professionalization (by governments, by systems, by individual

schools, and even by universities and teacher education institutions). Carter and Doyle (1996) provide a more detailed description of learning to become a teacher as “(a) transforming an identity, (b) adapting personal understandings and ideals to institutional realities, and (c) deciding how to express one’s self in classroom creativity” (p. 31). Therefore, the process of learning to become teachers (or identity formation) can be thought of as personal, emotional, relational, and contextual in nature. Identity formation has strong personal dimensions since learning, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), involves the person’s full participation becoming a kind of person in relation to specific activities and community.

Professional Learning: Discourses of Professionalism and the “struggle for voice”

Teaching as a social practice has its own range of discursive practices (c.f. Lave *et al.*, 1991). In what Lave *et al.* call a “community of practice”, the members may be engaged with multiple discourses. These discourses may shape and they may be shaped by teachers actively and in ongoing ways in the process of identity (trans)formation (Lave *et al.*, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Danielewicz, quoting Raymond Williams (1983), refers to discourse as “ways in which language functions in specific social or institutional contexts and on the social and ideological relations which are constructed in and through language” (2001, p. 11). Danielewicz further explains that “individuals are constituted

subjects; their identities are produced through participation in discourse” (p. 11). When people are participating in a discursive practice in a specific context, particular language practices will tend to shape and reshape their individual identities. In this way, language and language practices can have an important role in the process of developing meaning in an individual’s interaction or learning in a particular social setting. At some point, teachers need to choose between these competing discourses, and hence, their identity development also depends on their social interaction through engagement in multiple discourses (Danielewicz, 2001). Language, therefore, can be seen as a mediational tool for (re) constructing and negotiating identities.

Britzman (2003) uses the metaphor of “voice” and the development of a distinctive “voice” to explain teachers’ engagement in multiple discourses in their work and lives, and she views this engagement as a continuing “a struggle for voice.” In learning to teach, a student teacher or a newcomer teacher encounters discourses of the past which may sound prescriptive and authoritative (cf. Bakhtin, 1981); and these discourses may lead the early career teacher to certain expectations, beliefs, and practices in a particular teaching setting. Invariably, the early career teachers may find it problematic to find a voice when they encounter contradictory and conflicting practices during their learning. Britzman further describes this struggle for voice as “finding the words, feeling heard, understanding one’s practical constraints,

learning from negative experiences, speaking one’s mind, and constructing a new identity from speaking differently the language of education” (p. 18). In relation to this, Rodgers and Scott (2008) add that “identities form and develop as a result of interactions, but not necessarily as a result of awareness” (p. 737). Therefore, there is a need to help teachers, both graduate teachers and educators in any stage of their career to enrich their awareness of the various intellectual and emotional dimensions in their teaching and learning and the need to talk about them. The same might be said to apply to teacher educators. It is this awareness, echoing Zembylas’ argument (2002, 2003), that “prepares the road to voice, agency and self-transformation, especially when done in the company of others” (Rodgers *et al.*, 2008, p. 737). This idea suggests that identity concerns the process, effort, negotiation, construction and reconstruction of meaning as an interaction with the pre-existing discourses to produce a distinctive personal/professional meaning. The meaning making activity, from Britzman’s perspective (2003), is best done through narrative. Unfortunately, narrative-based research that seeks to understand teacher learning has been less favoured by governments (in the west and the east). In the case of Indonesia, the studies that have often been the dominating decision making are those of quantitative kinds, especially survey. Statistical studies of teachers’ performance, qualification, and capacity are the preferred references. This thinking paradigm keeps

teacher voice unknown and unheard by the policy decision-maker, creating a uniform sense of teaching practices, needs, and contexts across Indonesia. Hence, exploration of teacher learning and teacher identity in Indonesia remains an under-researched topic. My study seeks to address this 'deficit' in the literature.

Narrative-based Inquiry in Teacher Research

Research into teaching has often shown the use of narrative as a reflective thinking tool for professional learning purposes. Moss, Springer, and Dehr (2008) use narrative as a reflective thinking tool through guided reflection protocols as a process of teacher inquiry and development. In their study, a group of teachers were asked to reflect on their learning, the impacts of their learning to their practice and their development in their profession. Other studies (see Beattie, 2000; Doecke, Brown, & Loughran, 2000; Doecke, 2004; Nuttal & Doecke, 2008; Preez, 2008) show how teachers use narratives as a means to explore the complexities and multifaceted elements in their professional lives. In these studies, teachers reflect on their experiences and are involved in active critical thinking about their professional practice, knowledge, and professional standards through narrative writing. A similar idea is also voiced by Johnson and Golombek (2002, p. 6) who view "narrative inquiry as systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language". The importance of language

as the mediator of experience or learning has also been emphasized by Doecke and Parr (2009) in their review on Harold Rosen's essays on narratives. They describe how teachers learn through writing their own narratives – autobiographical writing as a form of inquiry. Rosen's autobiographical writing shows how narrative can assist an educator to "understand the nature of his own education, the conditions of his own making" and how narrative is used to investigate the values that have impacts on his life (2009, p. 67). Doecke *et al.* (2009) propose the importance of reviving Rosen's "fundamental" valuing of narrative in professional learning. Not only is narrative reflective in nature, it also has the potential to be powerfully reflexive. Narrative is reflexive in nature when a teacher is engaged in a "reflective inquiry situated within the context of personal histories in order to make connections between personal lives and professional practice" (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 2).

Many studies in the discipline of education area (see Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; Hay & White, 2005; McCallum & Prosser, 2009; Nelson, 2008; Ovens, 2009; Søreide, 2006) show how narrative is used as a means of exploring teachers' professional identity. Meanwhile, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) view teacher identity as a 'storied identity' in which teachers construct or reconstruct their professional identity through stories they tell at particular time, place, and to particular audience. These narratives provide continuous material for the processing of

teachers' professional identity formation and development through time. As Doecke *et al.* (2009, p. 66) say "narratives in all their diversity and multiplicity make up the fabric of our lives; they are constitutive moments in the formation of our identities and our sense of community affiliation." This is in line with Bakhtin's (1973, 1981) concept of 'dialogue' which highlights the complexity and diversity in the meaning-making process. Bakhtin describes how all individuals have a choice to reveal or communicate to others certain parts of themselves. This openness or self-revelation can be viewed as a "free act of consciousness" (Shields, 2007, p. 37). In this sense, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism also touches upon identity work as narrated by the individual, or what Shields (2007) calls as "narratives of identity". It is an ongoing process of grappling with and making meaning from stories, experiences, and what we read and hear from others (corresponding or interacting with other narratives of identity). In this study, I listened to teachers who talked about their narratives of identity that have helped them understand their professional works and live as English language teacher educators in an Indonesian context.

METHOD

The study is a part of a larger study. The general aim of the study was to gain teacher educators' understanding of their profession and the factors (e.g. educational, social, economical, political, cultural, and others) which contribute to the constructions of their

professional identity. It also sought to find out the various ways of understanding and conceptualizing teacher 'professionalism' within the context of Indonesian society and culture. The study, therefore, adopted qualitative and narrative-based inquiry research framework. Broadly speaking, qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals make meanings in their interaction with their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) explains that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how individuals interpret their world (and their understandings of reality) and what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Their reality is, therefore, not fixed or single, but a multiple and dynamic one that changes through times. I am very interested in how these teacher educators make sense of their teaching and their own learning experiences with respect to the various discourses of professionalism that surround and inform their day-to-day work. It is therefore my intention to explore how English language teacher educators of Indonesian nationality construct their professional identities through language and through narratives. This exploration seeks to understand their perceptions, professional discourses around them, any tension between these discourses, and their stories of "becoming" in their profession (Britzman, 2003, p. 31). However, due to the limited space of discussion for this article, it is impractical to present all the narrative accounts of these teacher educators. Therefore, this paper

focuses on peeling one recurring issue in four teacher educators' professional learning accounts: the sense of "struggle". Therefore, this article is dedicated to explore this sense of struggle in English Language Teaching (ELT) profession that the four teacher educators shared in the interviews.

The data of this study came from in-depth and individual narrative interviews. In the larger research project, the interviews were conducted in three sessions based on three main topics. The teacher educators were interviewed two to three times (approximately 60 – 90 minutes for each interview). The interview responses were approached as the narrative accounts (Mishler, 1986). The interviews were started with some general questions such as: "How did you join the English teaching profession? What is your story?" The conversations continued to more specific questions that seek to explore their professional learning by asking "What does English mean to you personally and professionally? What does it mean to be an English language teacher educator? What sort of matters that have been big contributions (and challenges) to your process of growing in your profession?" The interviewing process in this study was underpinned by Mishler's (1986, p. 52) concept of "joint construction of meaning". In this study, I saw my role in the interviews as enabling myself as interviewer and my interviewees to work together to achieve "reciprocal understanding of meanings" (1986, p. 52). A mutual understanding of meanings was achieved through variations in how I asked the questions. Mishler also

explains that as the interviews unfold, the interviewer and interviewee need to be given space and scope for reformulating or specifying questions in and ongoing process of making sense of what they are saying to each other.

The four teacher educators who participated are lecturers of a university-based pre-service teacher education programme of a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. The teacher education programme specializes in preparing student-teachers to be English language educators in primary and secondary educational settings. Considering the narrative and reflexive characteristics of this study, I did not set any strict criteria for participating in the study. The willingness of the teacher educators to participate is very important in the gathering of the data (i.e., in the interviews) since this helps to avoid any uneasiness and potential reluctance of sharing their stories. Thirteen (13) teacher educators responded to my invitations. All of these educators are multilingual speakers and of Indonesian nationality. I interviewed and transcribed all of them. As I was listening and transcribing the interviews, I was mostly drawn to these four teacher educators' accounts for the issues that they raised which stood out and the clarity with which they articulated these issues. However, I do not mean to imply that the other nine participants' narratives were in any way less important compared the four I chose to focus on detail. Rather, I think that the four educators' accounts echo and share most of the issues and concerns that the other nine educators' raised in their

accounts. The four teacher educators have been teaching in the teacher education programme for more than 10 years. I present and discuss their accounts using pseudonym that they chose. In the following paragraph, I provide brief information of the teacher educators involved in this study.

Daniel is a young early career teacher educator in Dharma University (pseudonym), the institution where he has been teaching for 10 years. His MA degree in Applied Linguistics was obtained from a university in Australia. He is currently pursuing a PhD degree in the US. *Sukiyem* holds a BA degree in ELT from Dharma University and an MA degree in the same area from a university in Thailand. *Sukiyem* just recently obtained her PhD degree in Composition and TESOL from a university in the US. She has been teaching in Dharma University for more than 10 years. She is an active researcher who has published in local, national, regional, and international journals. *Tuti* is a senior lecturer who is near to retirement. She has been teaching in the university for more than 30 years. Her MA degree in ELT was obtained from a university in the UK in 1992. Teaching, to *Tuti*, is only one dimension of her professional work in education; she has carried out several academic roles in the university including the Secretary of the ELT Department, Head of the ELT Department, and Deputy Rector for external networking. *Ucoq* is a part-time lecturer in the ELT Department in Dharma University. She also holds a tenured teaching post in another institution nearby, the Bakti University (pseudonym). Her MA degree

in ELT was obtained from a university in Thailand. *Ucoq* has also recently received the Indonesian Government's acknowledgment as a "Certified Lecturer" which certainly affected her professional status in her home-based institution.

DISCUSSION THE STRUGGLE OF IDENTITIES

During my conversation with each participant, I cannot help but notice that *struggle* is a significant part of the educators' learning journey. They experienced these struggles from their early English learning to their current teaching learning and practice experiences. It is through these struggles that the teachers construct and reconstruct their identities and discourses in their professional works and lives. In what follows, I would like to tease out this aspect of learning as told by the four teacher educators in their teaching and learning narratives.

Early Struggles as an English Language Learner/Student-Teacher

The struggles that teacher educators put forward are quite intricate concerning language, culture, and their professional identities. It is intricate since they are educators who are teaching English (the language) and pedagogy (preparing teacher-learners to teach the language). From the teacher educators' accounts, the discourses of professionalism are still dominated by, as Phillipson (1992) describes it, the discourses of language and culture (the practice of judging other cultures by the standards of a

dominant Anglophone culture) and pedagogy (concept of professionalism) constructed by the West. Teacher educators have been going through these struggles since their past English learning experiences to their today's teaching and academic experiences. The early struggle they experienced during their English learning (most of them in the mid 1980s) is their effort of becoming a member of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) of English users which at that time was oriented to the so-called "native speaker of English community" (Anglophone countries) instead of, for example, multilingual and multi-competence English user community (Cook, 2001). During this process of assimilation to the Anglophone language and culture, they were conditioned to navigate with one-dimensional self (a non-native English learner). Therefore, they consciously and subconsciously suppress or silence their multi-dimensional selves (multilingual and multicultural English learner) – a latent struggle. To some extent, they were affected by these ideologies from the education institutional practices: the curriculum, divisive teaching allocation of native and non-native English teachers, required textbooks (published in Western countries), the positioning of American English and British English as 'the' standard and model to follow, Anglophone cultural literacy teaching, the English-only policy, and the language assessment orienting to the believed "Standard English".

Ucoq's account shows an example of how the act of standardization and the confinement of multi-dimensional identities

by this act of standardization. Ucoq shared that she felt uneasy while studying English, especially in the *Pronunciation* course. In Indonesia, the teaching of English still follows two models of, what is believed to be, the "Standard English": the Received Pronunciation of the British English and the General American of the American English. In an English Department, the *Pronunciation* course is usually being offered to and mandatory for students studying English. Ucoq, at that time, felt disturbed when she was taught to follow these two accent models as the "correct" ones instead of her variety of English accent:

*It's hard for me to understand why,
I mean it's my English ...it's not
oriented to that kind of English
there [English-speaking West]...
or to meet a certain standardized
accent like that, I can't do that.
Sometimes I felt like I want to create
my own English, a la me. I mean it
was torturing for me. ...I mean I
have my own English.*

(10/16/09)

The English teaching and learning activities during her university year were using the traditional perspective and singular norm of the so-called "Native Speaker Standard." Differences from this standard have often been perceived as "failure" in acquiring English (Cook, 2001). Ucoq, here, struggles with the issue of ownership of English as one language in her polylinguistic language repertoire. The lecturer's act

of correcting her pronunciation creates a feeling of rejection of her English speech variety, or her Indonesian-Javanese trace of self as an English user. In other words, this act also represented a rejection of her multilingual and multicultural identities. Ucoq felt uneasy for being assessed to follow this phonological norm. However, since she was learning English within a formal education framework in a formal class with its system of assessment, Ucoq had little choice but to follow the norm. Unable to speak of her objection, Ucoq struggled with this standardization act privately. The practice of standardizing the way the learners acquire and use English can be viewed as a centripetal force (Bakhtin, 1986) that these teacher educators felt as learners of English at that time. This private and quiet struggle also reflects the issues of uneven power-relation and control between Ucoq as a student and the teacher as the authority in the classroom; Ucoq and the education system; and Ucoq's variety of English and the ELT practice and competence as constructed by the West.

Similarly, Sukiyem talks about how her past learning experience in Indonesia "conditioned" learners to position native speaker of English (Anglophone countries) to be the "correct" model to follow and imitate and the definite sole-owner of English. This attitudinal and behavioural conditioning through ELT practice in her past learning experience deeply affects her emotion and perspective of her teaching self later on:

We are conditioned to believe that [the traditional paradigm]... So, in a way, the English education [in my institution]... is, like, marginalizing non-native, marginalizing the Indonesian [English educators]. ...the way they [my previous English teachers] teach English back home is like that. They always give examples of native speaker's English. So we have to speak like them. If we don't speak like them, we feel different. We feel like a second class citizen. We feel inappropriate, all sort of things. Even people always refer Singaporean English as not English. So, in a way, we keep on being given this kind of model [British or American English]. We position ourselves this way. We cannot help it... when you speak English differently from this model... seems like 'different equals wrong, mistake, or bad'. They [English teachers] didn't say different as something needs to be celebrated. NO! [They see] different as something wrong, something bad, as something that you have to change.

(09/07/10)

This behaviour formation, as Sukiyem sees it, has emotional and attitudinal implications to the student-teachers who were studying under this monolithic and Anglocentric ELT paradigm. Sukiyem's

account manages to describe how student-teachers subconsciously implanted this traditional paradigm into their system of belief through consistent and continuous practice of image building (British and American English as “the standard English” or “the best model” and English competence equals to being a native-speaker of English). Learning in such condition, Sukiyem felt confused, unappreciated, unacknowledged, and rejected as a multi-dimensional student-teacher of English. This kind of practice silences her learner’s voice as a unique learner with multicultural and multilingual background.

The Struggle for Professional Recognition

This sense of struggle is very apparent in, specifically, Sukiyem’s teaching narratives. Sukiyem’s accounts are very rich in discussing the struggle of working and living in a teaching context that still believes in native-speakerism, Western cultural literacy, and other exclusive practice of ELT (such as positioning one variety of English as ‘the’ correct model and marginalizing other varieties, reinforcing Western-English teaching methodologies to all teaching contexts, and confining English learners and users’ identities into one-dimensional self, a non-native learner/speaker of English). In particular, Sukiyem describes how she felt uncertain about claiming herself as a “teacher of English” due to the professional practice in her Department. In her personal reflective note on her professional journey, Sukiyem writes:

If I was certain of my teacher identity, I was not sure of my English teacher identities. This was because there was a clear division of labor between native and non-native teachers. Native speaker teachers taught courses dealt more with language production such as pronunciation, speaking, and writing. Only very few non-native speakers taught pronunciation; those who spoke like a native speaker. In addition, native-speakers were treated as language consultant and expert. Each time I wrote tests or handouts, they needed to go through the screening process conducted by native-speaker teachers to make sure they illustrated ‘perfect’ English and did not expose students to bad model of English use. Although this was a good practice of proof reading, I later learned that the native-speaker themselves, perhaps due to their varying expertise and degrees, were inconsistent in their language feedback. What appeared to be appropriate language use for one native speaker was not shared by other native speakers. The unidirectional relationship, instead of a bidirectional one, between native speaker and non-native speakers has cultivated the belief that non-native speakers needed to be ‘corrected’ to enter the professions. Such practice has

foregrounded my identities as a non-native speaker rather than a teacher of English.

(emphasis original, 02/17/11)

Here, Sukiyeem is reflexively involved in a dialogue with her past sense of self, the practice of English teaching in her context, her understanding of the socially constructed discourse of native speakerism in ELT, and her current teaching experience in the US while pursuing her PhD degree. Having her written teaching materials being checked and corrected by “native-speaker”, Sukiyeem felt that this practice did not recognize her linguistic competence as an English user in a professional context and her professional knowledge and identity as an English teacher. In her early years of teaching, this practice of treating “native speaker of English” (NSE) as the “expert” of English and teaching English has led Sukiyeem to question or doubt her position as an English teacher in the Department – a conflicting struggle of seeing herself as a “non-native” English user and a qualified English language teacher educator. She felt that this practice confined her identity into a restricted and condescending sense of learning that does not appreciate the expertise of a professional – “a learner of English instead of a *teacher* of English”.

Similar to Sukiyeem, Tuti also points out this issue of native-speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) in her teaching accounts. Despite her belief in a monolingual approach in ELT, Tuti is particularly critical of Indonesian professional teaching

qualifications. Tuti sees the division between native and non-native speakers of English teachers that still exist in her institution. She strongly disagrees with her institution's loose criteria for employing monolingual Western English speakers (with no teaching qualifications):

I think they [native-speaker of English teachers] have to have qualifications, at least DipEd, I mean, Diploma of Education, who knows how to teach. ...because they are teachers and they teach in classroom therefore they have to know how to teach well.

(09/24/09)

To Tuti, teaching requires specific pedagogical knowledge and competence to support effective learning in teaching and learning activities. She does not conform to the institution's unproblematic view of “native-speaker of English is the ideal teacher to teach English”. Tuti's concern shows a common practice in most language institutions in Indonesia to employ backpacker foreigners or foreigners [usually Caucasian-like foreigners] without teaching qualifications to teach English short-term in their institution. There have been many flyers with pictures of Caucasian-like teacher surrounded by Indonesian students in a classroom. English language schools, faculties, or institutions are put into pressure to provide NSE teachers in order to gain prestige and get more students to enrol. Tuti, in this case, is quite critical with this

issue. She describes the need to be selective in employing NSE to teach in the faculty instead of employing NSE without the necessary qualifications. She puts emphasis on teacher's language teaching competence and English language knowledge as basic criteria for recruitment. Tuti, therefore, suggests the institution apply strict criteria for employment with no exception to the monolingual English speakers. Yet, at this point in time, the institution has not given any response to Tuti's suggestion.

Another form of compliance towards the traditional paradigm of ELT is the institution's curriculum orientation to, what they believed to be, "The Standard English" (British English and American English). This issue was brought up by Sukiyem in her narrative. Sukiyem describes how the curriculum is designed by following the textbooks produced by publishers from Western countries. This type of textbooks claims to give "Standard English" models necessary for learners' linguistic knowledge and competence. Sukiyem's narrative shows how the professional practice of the institution still works under the ideology of native-speakerism (Phillipson, 1992). Holliday (2005) defines native-speakerism as "an established belief that 'native speaker' represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (p. 6). The exclusive use of Western textbooks had led Sukiyem to see herself as having no capacity of producing her own textbooks or teaching materials. "Before I studied [for my MA degree], I

thought we just suck up all the knowledge from the West, so we just teach the textbooks. We couldn't do anything else", explained Sukiyem about her teaching practice in the past. This practice, again, positions the English-speaking West (Holliday, 2005) as the sole-owner of English and the source of English language and knowledge. Sukiyem, in the past, believed that her role as an English teacher was to teach and used ELT materials produced by the West. Teacher's identity was restricted to teacher as a consumer of (imposed) knowledge and a transmitter of the prescribed norm.

The monolithic and Anglocentric ideology in ELT professionalism in Indonesia continues to be preserved through different forms of standardization instruments. One of them is the legitimized testing system such as TOEFL and IELTS that are often used as one determining qualification to define English language educator's professional competence. Daniel brings up this issue in his narrative. Daniel objected to this restricted standardizing act of professional competence. The legitimization of this test into the professional quality system overlooks other aspects of his professional life as an academic (namely, researching and publishing). Moreover, according to Daniel, these standardized tests do not accommodate multi-dimensional perspective of language in which all individuals are regulated to speak, think, and use English in the same way and for the same purpose:

It's an integrationist approach: how people from different countries were

forced to integrate their mind set in order to fit their context [English-speaking West]. ...instead of acknowledging ... multiculturalism, how international English users have to have the same mindset with the TOEFL or IELTS test-developers.

(11/04/09)

Daniel views these standardized tests as a form of assimilation, forcing varieties to be integrated into one linguistic and cultural norm. "I can share with the world in whatever Englishes that I write", claimed Daniel, objecting to the "integrationist" perspective of language and culture and taking ownership of his English variety. Daniel considers these standardized tests of English as not acknowledging other varieties of English and English users' multiple set of identities. Moreover, promoting high score of TOEFL and IELTS as the determining criteria of an English language educator's competence ignores a holistic view of professional competence and capacities.

The construction of professionalism orienting to the English-speaking West can again be seen from Sukiye's account of professional learning. When Sukiye received a scholarship to study for an MA degree in Thailand, her colleagues questioned her decision to go. Some advised her to reject the scholarship and to wait for other scholarship to study in English-speaking West countries such as the US, UK, or Australia. Her colleagues, as Sukiye describes, still "equate *learning*

to teach English with learning English". This condition made her feel as if she is a "second class citizen" compared to those who were studying in the English-speaking West countries. Yet, Sukiye is very passionate in describing how her learning experience in Thailand has contributed to her professional identity transformation. She confidently claims her teaching identity as a multilingual, multicultural and multicompetence English educator. She is well-informed of the growing English as an International Language (EIL) paradigm and critical pedagogy in ELT. Nevertheless, living alongside the deep-rooted traditional paradigm in her working environment, Sukiye sometimes feel the weariness of going against this long preserved current of professionalism. She realizes that this long and intensive conditioning (since the beginning of her English learning experience) sometimes leads her to operate within this dichotomous mindset of Native and Non-native speakerism. It has been Sukiye's long desire to see a new paradigm of professionalism emerge – one that breaks the vicious cycle of native-speakerism and monolithic and Anglocentric ideology in ELT professionalism. "I really want us, English language teachers, not to be defined by nativeness," said Sukiye, hoping for a new image and practice of English language educators in her teaching setting. Despite her frustration towards the well-preserved monolithic and Anglocentric perspective of ELT, Sukiye turned this dominant ideology into a way of understanding the need to continuously develop in her career.

“In a teacher’s life, I think everything is a struggle. If you are not struggling, then there’s a problem. Then you will live in your comfort zone which I think it’s a problem”, said Sukiyem explaining her way of living with this discourse. Sukiyem interprets this experience as the necessary struggle to develop.

Re-learning Professional Identity

The teacher educators’ narrative of learning involves re-learning their teaching self. When the teacher educators first entered the teaching profession, there was no formal mentoring program provided for beginning teacher educators. Their knowledge from their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) when they were learners is the immediate available resources that inform their early years of teaching practice and identity. Lortie (1975) explains that students’ learning about teaching is quite limited to the imagination of their student – teacher relation in the classroom. Their learning is, therefore, “intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical” (p. 62). During their early years, teacher educators tend to teach the way they were taught. Their understanding is a mixture combination of their apprenticeship of observation and their affiliated institution’s professional culture and practices that are heavily dominated by English-speaking West discourses of professionalism in ELT. These discourses of their past learning and their perceptions as the Other (c.f. Said, 1978) in the institution led or predisposed them to certain expectations, beliefs, and practices. In their early years

of teaching, the educators seemed to be accepting of these one-dimensional norms (Standard English, native-speakerism, monoculturalism, and monolingualism) and systems (the institution’s educational beliefs and policies, and perception and expectation of a new arrival lecturer) due to their urgent needs to fit in to this institution.

Freire (1998) speaks about education as a form of intervention. In his view, it implies “both the reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking. The dialectal nature of the educational process does not allow it to be only one or the other of these things.” (p. 91). Just as the ideology of linguistic standardization, native-speakerism, monolingualism, and monologic teaching practices had been introduced to the teacher educators in their past undergraduate education, so also it was through further academic education that they learned to unsettle or challenge them to some extent.

During their formal academic education, the educators experienced early socialization into a richer academic community in which they were encouraged to conduct research, to generate publications, and to participate in conferences as presenters, all of which were more richly dialogic than their rather ritualized practices in their teaching up till then. An alternative learning and research culture opened the eyes of the educators to other roles and dimensions in their teaching profession. They have begun to (from the previously limited understanding of teachers as performing teaching in the classroom and other task-based work) view themselves as

a hybrid of researcher and teacher. They have tended to question their past monologic understanding (Bakhtin, 1981) of teaching roles, practices, and ideology as a one way process of “transferring knowledge to the learners”. The educators have started to appreciate the various relational teaching aspects with students in their classroom, with curriculum, with colleagues, with elements of their institution, even with the national education system and what they now recognize as multiple ELT ideologies, and certainly with a wider teaching professional community, and with other stakeholders.

To Sukiyem and Ucoq, their further study experiences in Thailand (significantly in a cultural thirdspace that their colleagues felt to be Other and therefore deficient) had transformed their previous lack of motivation in teaching, their view of teaching as a “bus stop” profession (on the way to somewhere else more significant), into having teaching as an intellectually and professionally rewarding solid career. “I found my niche”, said Ucoq, explaining her desire to stay in the teaching profession. Sukiyem and Ucoq, too, developed and became more aware of their own teaching selves, capacities, and practices and felt more confident as educators. “I perceive my role as an agent of change”, stated Sukiyem, explaining her perceptions of her transformed teaching self. It was during this further study, that the teacher educators also began to see the multiple set of identities that an English language teacher educator often is called upon to live out. The teacher educators began to recognize the various

parts of their personal and professional identity in different times intermingled in their understanding of teaching. This might be a reaction to their previously urgent feeling (as newcomers to the institution) that they needed to “align” themselves to the institution’s cultural and discursive practice (Wenger, 1998).

The teacher educators’s narratives also illustrate how different and particular courses they took during their further study have influenced their current beliefs and their perspectives on teaching and professional learning. Daniel, for example, was particularly drawn to Critical Pedagogy that raised his awareness to the issue of ideological and political privileging and marginalization in ELT and in a wider socio-cultural scope. Daniel felt the necessity to share his interest and passion for these issues with his students and suggested a Critical Pedagogy course to be included in the curriculum of the institution as an elective course:

...after I got more familiar with Critical Pedagogy theories, I realized how naïve I was before I knew Critical Pedagogy. ...One of the values that I would like to impart to my students is that they do not take things for granted. They will learn many discourses, at least, they know how to raise their own voice... or by adapting to some discourses that they agree with, and to challenge the dominant discourse.

(Daniel, Interview 2, 05/10/09)

Daniel's goal is to raise learners' awareness of the power-relation issues in education and to enable learners to critically scrutinize discourses that exist in their surroundings. Daniel's highest hope for his students is for them to have and raise their own "voice" within these existing discourses.

To Sukiyem and Ucoq, through their "World Englishes" course, they have become more aware of the issues of linguisticism and culturalism in ELT (c.f. Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005; Philipson, 1992) and the importance of pedagogy that takes into account the learners' multi-dimensional identities in ELT. Sukiyem and Ucoq have adopted English as an International Language (EIL) paradigm, which is not the preferred ELT ideology of their institution, in their teaching practices and contextualized it to suit their teaching contexts (developing their own contextual teaching materials, assessment systems, and EIL topic discussions). Working under the traditional and monolithic ideology of ELT has certainly been their biggest challenge. Yet, these educators learned to find a way of living and working with the existing and sometimes conflicting discourses of professionalism. This, again, is another struggle for voice as a member of the teaching community (the institution) who desire to contribute to the institution by proposing alternative paradigms of and discourses of professionalism in ELT. As Sukiyem puts it, it is "a necessary struggle".

CONCLUSION

The four Indonesian teacher educators' accounts of learning in this study do not tell a smooth journey of learning as one might imagine. Learning for them happened in contradictions, tensions, dilemmas, and paradoxes that the teacher educators' experienced in their professional works and lives. Learning or meaning-making, as Bakhtin (1986) views, is a site of struggle between centrifugal forces and centripetal forces. The centrifugal forces is a dynamic forces which "whirl it apart into diversity, difference, and creativity, and the centripetal forces which strive to normalize, standardize, and prescribe the way language [or discourse] should be" (Bell, 2007, p. 9). Bakhtin sees struggle as a necessary process in arriving to new meaning (Freedman & Ball, 2004). Similarly, the teacher educators in their learning journey experienced struggle between discourses that pull them to a unified, standardized, and prescribed way of thinking, knowing, practicing, and speaking one's mind on one side and discourses that embrace diversity, creativity, and particularity on the other side. These discourses work in various relational and overlapping dimensions in the teacher educator's works and lives – institutional, national system, stakeholders (students, parents, schools, and potential employers), collegial culture, and English language teaching communities (local, national, and international).

The professional learning of these teacher educators is closely related to learning and re-learning their identities

(linguistic, national, cultural, social, personal, or professional identities). Their 'identity work' started early on, i.e. from the very beginning of their English language learning, as they began to make sense of the interrelation of their L1 (and first culture), L2 (and target culture) and their "thirdness" (Kramsch, 2009; Kostogriz, 2002), the ideological implications of their L2 learning and the complications it creates to how they see themselves, the socio-historical perception of language teaching and learning in their immediate context in Indonesia, the struggles for meaning that continuously developed as they encounter other discourses in their professional lives and how they dialogically interact with these discourses and perform their professional identity in their work. For them, learning does not occur in a linear, universal and monologic way (Britzman, 2003; McKnight 2004). As the teacher educators' narratives demonstrate, some of the richest learning occurs in their consciously experiencing the Othering in their learning and teaching lives, in questioning the traditional paradigm of learning and teaching English, in resisting certain ideological impositions in their educational experiences, in claiming and in negotiating their professional identities, in acknowledging contradictory beliefs and feelings, in building their knowledge in dialogue with their teaching context and in seeking to understand their teaching work and lives.

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The Effect of Teacher-directed Internet-based Extensive Reading Materials on Intermediate Students' Reading Self-efficacy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to find out whether students' reading self-efficacy can be enhanced by using Internet-based extensive reading materials. A pretest-posttest control group design was employed. A sample of 60 intermediate EFL learners from an Institute in Boukan, West Azerbaijan, Iran was selected randomly and their level of reading self-efficacy was measured through Seeger's Self-Efficacy Scale in Reading (2009). In addition, a preliminary test of proficiency was conducted. For a period of two months, the experimental group was supplied with stories through a weblog designed by the researcher, whereas the control group was provided with the same stories printed on paper. The experimental group was connected to the Internet, while the control group was instructed as traditional reading classes are. After the treatment, the learners' level of self-efficacy was again measured with the same scale as in the pre-treatment. Results of the Paired and Independent samples t-tests revealed a significant difference in the reading self-efficacy of both groups, with a higher increase for the experimental group. Discussion and pedagogical implications will also be presented.

Keywords: Extensive reading; Internet-based extensive reading; reading self-efficacy; weblog

INTRODUCTION

Reading in second language (L_2) has been deemed one of the best and most important practices for the reason that it provides

students with a great opportunity to learn the L_2 grammar, vocabulary, and structure (Gillet & Temple, 2000). Bearing in mind this importance, researchers have always looked for new and effective methods to teach students how to read. However, a lack of motivation, interest, and reading self-efficacy has been reported as the main obstacles for L_2 learners (Katz, 2004).

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Among these three, self-efficacy has drawn more attention inasmuch as it has been considered a reliable predictor of students' success (Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, 2000). In this regard, Tilforlioğlu and Cinkara (2009) found that those students at Gaziantep University's School of Foreign Languages who had high levels of self-efficacy for English were more successful in learning English. Therefore, investigating methods to enhance students' reading self-efficacy can be a great help to both teachers and learners.

Considering the importance of reading in L₂, it comes as no surprise that there is a huge body of literature behind it. Various researchers have carried out different studies and investigated a vast array of topics concerning reading in L₂. These topics include reading strategy and comprehension (e.g., Aghaie & Phillaie, 2009; Bang & Zhao, 2007; Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008; Karbalaei, 2010; Li & Wilhelm, 2008; Razi, 2008; Ruffin, 2009); hypertext (e.g., Ariew, 2006; Konishi, 2003); extensive reading (e.g., De Morgado, 2009; Poulshock, 2010; Powell, 2005; Takase, 2007; Shen, 2008); online reading (e.g., Anderson, 2003; Huang, Chern, & Lin, 2009; Murphy, 2007; Rahimi & Behjat, In Press; Tseng, 2010); technology in reading (e.g., Behjat, Bagheri, & Yamini, 2012; Kocoglu, 2010; Marzban, 2011); reading motivation (e.g., Guthrie, , Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, & Littles, 2006); reading and vocabulary learning (e.g., Huang & Liou, 2007; Shen & Wu, 2009; Wan-a-rom, 2010); L1 and L₂ reading relationship (e.g., Kong, 2006); teaching

reading through stories (e.g., Loukia, 2006) and so on.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the numerous attempts to find effective ways to teach students how to read, there is still a great gap in students' ability to read. Some authors have referred to this gap as lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and interest in reading (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2009; Katz, 2004). Bandura (1994) and Zimmerman (2000) introduce lack of self-efficacy as a great obstacle for the students, its very existence being one of the best predictors of student achievement. In light of this, filling in the gap of a self-efficacy deficiency can be enhancing tremendous boon to students' reading capabilities, thereby making them better L₂ learners. In an attempt to fill in the gap between the deficiencies, different studies have been conducted. Some authors like Katz (2004) proposed using strategy training along with self-efficacy enhancement through reflection questions, while others like Day and Bamford (2009) have proposed making use of extensive reading (ER) to fill in the gap.

Due to such great features as being interesting, making students feel confident in dealing with reading, motivating them to read, helping them read at an appropriate rate and fluently, and so on, ER programs have been considered an effective way of teaching L₂ reading (Day & Bamford, 2009). It has also been introduced as the easiest way to provide students with a large amount of

the L₂ input they vitally need for language acquisition (Jarrell, 2003).

Since the authenticity of the materials is one of the most important criteria in ER programs (Day & Bamford, 2009) and the Internet has been introduced as one of the main sources of authentic materials (Berardo, 2006), some researchers (Silva, 2006) have decided to set up Internet-based ER programs. Silva (2006) claims that the Internet-based form of ER programs is more effective than the paper-based ones. This is due to the great features and capabilities of the Internet along with the wide availability of authentic materials (Dong-lin, 2008; Silva, 2006). Therefore, in this study, a teacher-directed Internet-based ER program is designed and its effect on the students' reading self-efficacy is investigated. To fulfill this aim, the following questions are posed:

1. Is there a significant difference between the reading self-efficacy pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group?
2. Is there a significant difference between the reading self-efficacy pretest and posttest scores in the control group?
3. Is there a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' reading self-efficacy pretest and posttest scores?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-efficacy: Definition and Theoretical Foundation

Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their ability to perform at a specified level. It is believed that such beliefs affect how people feel, think, get motivated, and behave (e.g., Katz, 2004; Pajares, 2007; Schunk, 2003; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-efficacious people, therefore, consider difficult tasks as challenges to be tackled rather than threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1994; Schunk, 2003). As a result, such persons have high intrinsic interest and are deeply engrossed in activities (Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, 2000). That is why Hamill (2003) concludes that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and resilience — the ability to persist until one attains favorable results and outcomes, and that self-regulation and self-efficacy facilitate the development of coping mechanisms in resilient children.

Methods of Enhancing Self-efficacy

Bandura (1994, pp. 2-3) introduces four ways to raise self-efficacy beliefs: (1) experiencing success: if people experience overcoming obstacles through perseverance, a strong sense of self-efficacy will be engendered; (2) having vicarious experiences provided by social models: people will come to believe that they themselves possess the same capabilities of those whom they have observed persevere in the face of adversity; (3) being socially persuaded: convincing people verbally that they are capable of succeeding encourages them to

try harder than ever; and (4) being involved in successful self-efficacy builder situations: providing students with situations that bring them success and prevent them from engaging in situations that are likely to result in failure can enhance their self-efficacy beliefs. Li and Wang (2010), Pajares (2007), and Schunk (2003) also put emphasis on these four methods of enhancing learners' self-efficacy. Schunk and Meece (2005) believe that individuals' self-efficacy will increase if they are motivated to achieve, exposed to positive academic and social models, and taught strategies that they can use to overcome obstacles.

Reading Self-efficacy

Li and Wang (2010) define reading self-efficacy as, "learners' perceptions of their reading abilities to perform various reading tasks" (p. 146). These reading abilities include comprehending the gist, guessing the probable meaning of unknown words, and inferring the writer's attitudes. Students' beliefs and perceptions in their abilities help them achieve higher results in their reading tasks. In their study, Li and Wang found that the reading self-efficacy of sophomore Chinese students majoring in English at a university was significantly related to their use of reading strategies. In the same vein, Aghaie and Pillaie (2011) concluded that strategy instruction helps students enhance both their reading comprehension and self-efficacy.

To overcome the barriers posed by lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and interest, Katz (2004) says that students should be

taught reading skills and strategies while being helped to raise their self-efficacy beliefs in reading through reflection during reading tasks. Since self-efficacy is a metacognitive process (Bandura, 1994; Pajares, 2007), and reflection increases such processes, Katz (2004) uses this technique to enhance her students' self-efficacy. Another solution that may help overcome the problem of students' lack of interest and motivation in reading, as proposed by such authors as Day and Bamford (2009), is conducting extensive reading to enhance students' interest in and fondness of reading.

Extensive Reading (ER)

The term extensive reading refers to reading books quickly while seeking the meaning instead of the language (Day & Bamford, 2009). In ER, the reader tries to discern the whole meaning (Gillet & Temple, 2000). In such reading, the purpose is to acquire information and gain pleasure (Day & Bamford, 2009). This type of reading has also been called "uninterrupted sustained silent reading" and "drop everything and read" (Farrell, 2009, p. 83). Here, using dictionaries is not common, readers hardly analyze the structure of the sentences and since such reading puts no assignment on students' shoulders and occurs for the purpose of pleasure and general understanding, it enhances students' interest, willingness and confidence in dealing with reading tasks (Day & Bamford, 2009).

Different benefits and aims are mentioned for ER. For example Day and Bamford (2009) believe that such readings

build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation. Therefore, applying such programs in L₂ classes can be of great advantage and help to both teachers and learners.

Yamashita (2008) concludes that administering ER programs for a short period of time can affect students' reading comprehension and interest rather than their grammatical competence. He calls the former (i.e., reading comprehension and interest in reading) "general reading ability" and the latter (i.e., grammatical competence) "lower-level linguistic ability" (Yamashita, 2008, p. 661). The reason for this, as Yamashita points out, is that when students have already developed skills and strategies in reading their L₁, and are subsequently given opportunities to activate their effective strategies in L₂ reading by reading texts of their interest within the level of their L₂ linguistic resources, it is possible that they can quickly learn to apply their effective strategies to L₂ reading.

Shang *et al.* (2007) suggest ER as an effective way of teaching reading to L₂ students, which can enhance students' motivation in terms of learning, vocabulary, reading speed, and comprehension. Powell (2005) characterizes ER as fast reading of a large amount of longer, easy-to-understand materials, with little or no follow-up written work or testing. In ER, since students are provided with materials which are at their level of competence and interest, they will never get bored or frustrated with

reading (Shang *et al.*, 2007). In addition, ER enhances students' vocabulary recognition ability and personal reading strategy use (Powell, 2005). Waring (2006) introduces ER as an ideal complement to any kind of language study. Extensive reading provides students with a great amount of exposure to the target language and integrates the learner's growing sense of the language. Bell (2001) indicates that ER enhances students' reading speed and reading comprehension abilities better than intensive reading does. Tudor and Hafiz (1989) also propose ER as a means of input to L₂ learning, input which can influence learners' reading and writing abilities.

Internet-based Extensive Reading

Extensive reading has been administered for many years in a paper-based format. Its Internet-based version has recently been introduced, which is called web-based extensive reading, or W-ER for short (Silva, 2006). Silva prefers an Internet-based ER program to a paper-based one because the Internet-based ER program boasts some important advantages (e.g., students become more autonomous, motivated, and self-empowered). Brandl (2002) supports integrating the Internet into a language curriculum and mentions four advantages for that. The first advantage is the universal availability of authentic materials; the second is communication capability through networking, the third, multimedia capability, and the fourth, non-linear (hypermedia) structure of the information. Brandl also mentions the broad amount of information

that causes students to get lost and the lack of control over the quality and accuracy of the contents as some of the disadvantages of using the Internet in education. To tackle the disadvantages, Brandl suggests that the online materials be teacher-directed. In this way, both the amount and the quality of the materials can be guaranteed. Behjat, Bagheri, and Yamini (2012) studied web-assisted language learning in the EFL context of Iran and found that reading on the Internet can significantly foster students' reading comprehension.

In this regard, the aim of this study was to figure out an effective method of enhancing intermediate students' reading self-efficacy by combining the best features of extensive reading, the Internet, modeling (i.e., providing students with effective procedures to comprehend a given text either through explanation or live models), and strategy training.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A true experimental randomized subject, pretest-posttest control group design was employed in this study, in which the participants were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The independent variable of the study was the teacher-directed Internet-based extensive reading materials and the dependent variable was the reading self-efficacy of the students.

Participants

The participants of the study ($N=60$) were selected from among 83 would-be-intermediate participants who attended an Institute in Boukan, West Azerbaijan, Iran in the summer term of 2011 after having been administered a placement test called Nelson English Language Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976). They were all Kurds whose mother tongue was Kurdish. They also knew Persian as their L2 and they studied English as a foreign language (EFL). By the time this study started, the average time they had spent studying English was about 2 years with a minimum of 216 hours of formal instruction. These 60 participants included both sexes with a proportion of 60 % girls and 40 % boys (36 girls and 24 boys). Their ages ranged from 16 to 20, with an average of 17.5. The participants were randomly assigned to the experimental ($n=30$) and control ($n=30$) groups. The experimental group included 11 boys and 19 girls, while the control group consisted of 14 boys and 16 girls.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study include: (1) Nelson English Language Tests (Fowler & Coe, 1976) to determine participants' proficiency level; (2) Self-Efficacy Scale in Reading taken from Seeger (2009) to assess participants' reading self-efficacy before and after the study; (3) the Internet and a researcher-designed weblog to provide participants with extensive reading materials; and (4) a researcher designed

semi-open-ended questionnaire to determine participants' favorite type of stories.

Nelson English Language Tests

Since participants in the present study were supposed to be at an intermediate level of proficiency, the tests assigned for participants with 200 hours of instruction were chosen. Test 200 B was selected to be administered. This test consists of 50 items, including 36 structural questions in single-item format and 14 structural questions in continuous-prose format (cloze test). According to Fowler and Coe (1976), all the items in this battery of tests have been carefully pre-tested. This placement test has also been introduced as a valid and reliable one in the present context (Jalilifar, 2009). However, the reliability of this test was checked in the present study by employing the Kuder-Richardson 21 (KR-21) formula and a very high reliability ($r = 0.93$) was obtained for the test.

Self-efficacy Scale in Reading

The scale used to measure the participants' level of reading self-efficacy before and after the study was adopted from Seeger (2009). This scale consists of 20 items which measure participants' ability, interest, and confidence in dealing with reading materials. Participants needed to determine their confidence in any of these 20 items by writing values from 0 to 100. The scale's reliability calculated through Cronbach's Alpha was 0.98 and 0.94 in pre-administration and post-administration of the study, respectively, with an average

of 0.96, which shows a very high reliability of the scale and its items in this study.

The Internet and the Researcher-designed Weblog

The medium of instruction for the experimental group was a researcher-designed weblog (www.enjoyreading.loxblog.com) (see the Appendix for a sample of this weblog). Following Brandl's (2002), the designed weblog was created and managed in a way that the teacher (i.e. the researcher) assigned the materials and provided them beforehand. As Brandl explains, for intermediate participants or lower learners, the online materials should be assigned and provided by the teacher due to the fact that providing intermediate participants with the opportunity to choose their own learning materials results in their confusion and bafflement. In putting the selected stories on the weblog some delicate points were considered. First, a nice theme with beautiful background colors was selected (as suggested by Tseng, 2010). Second, the writing font of the stories was assigned to be 12-point and all of the stories were assigned headings as advised by McCabe, Kraemer, Miller, Parmar, and Ruscica (2006).

Semi-open-ended Questionnaire

In this researcher-designed questionnaire, six types of stories, including biographies, funny stories, romance, legends, horror stories, and detective stories (these stories were selected based on the researchers' own experiences and knowledge in ER),

are provided in the left column of a table. In the right column, a space is provided for those six types of stories to be sorted out from the most to the least liked. There are also two blank spaces on both columns for the participants' other preferences, if they have any.

Procedure

Before the treatment

After the permission of the subjects' parents was obtained, participants were given Nelson English Language Tests (Fowler & Coe, 1976) in order to determine their proficiency level. Then, those who scored at the intermediate level were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The semi-open-ended questionnaire was given to the participants to find out their favorite type(s) of stories. The most liked type of story among the majority of the participants (nearly 75 %) was reported to be funny stories, including daily jokes, real funny happenings, etc.; therefore, these kinds of stories were used in this study. Afterwards, participants were given the Reading Self-Efficacy Scale.

Treatment

Experimental group

After the participants' level of self-efficacy was determined, they were called to attend two separate classes in which they were given the required instructions. In these sessions, the experimental group

was required connect to the Internet at their homes on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays between the hours of 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. They were also reminded that, should they fail to connect to the Internet at the assigned times, they would lose their final score for the reading part, which was 20 points out of 100. In this session, they were also given instructions on how to use the weblog. They were asked to read five short stories and, after reading them, they were asked to write their comments by sending phrases like **great**, **good**, **so-so**, and **not good** through the system of commenting. Therefore, during the two month treatment, the experimental group, which had access to the Internet at their homes, connected to the Internet and read the extensive reading materials provided through the researcher-designed weblog.

Control group

The control group was asked to attend the classes at the Institute at the same times as the experimental group did, i.e. on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 6 to 7 p.m. They were also warned that their absence from the class would result in the loss of their reading score, which was 20 points out of 100. They were also required to have pieces of paper in each session in order to write in their comments about the stories. The control group was provided with the same materials on paper with the same font and size but not in color and the same features, which could be found in the online version of the stories

Justification for holding simultaneous classes

The reason for holding the two classes simultaneously on the three specified days was that many of the participants were friends; therefore, the participants of the control group were in touch with the experimental group. So, if the classes had been held at different times or days, there would have been this possibility that the control group would get access to the Internet and use the online materials, too. As a result, they would have extra exposure to the materials and this issue would diminish the reliability of the final results. Another consideration which was taken concerning the online materials was that the extensive reading materials were put on the weblog only a quarter before the class and immediately after the class the materials were taken off by the researcher, so neither the experimental group nor the control group had any extra exposure to the reading materials. There was a concern that some participants from the experimental group would copy the materials; therefore, the possibility of copying the materials was obviated through the available options of the blog provider.

Reading Strategies

Both groups were provided with useful strategies in dealing with the stories. These strategies included: (a) guessing the probable content of the stories based on their titles; (b) trying to guess the approximate meanings of the unknown words using

the contextual clues and avoiding using dictionaries; (c) trying to get the whole meaning of the stories without worrying about the details; and (d) asking themselves questions concerning whether their guesses about the probable content had been true or not while reading the stories.

Extensive reading materials

The stories used as extensive reading materials were taken from an entertainment website (www.surfersam.com). These stories all had the required criteria to be used as extensive reading materials. They were funny stories and jokes not specifically written for educational purposes; therefore, they possessed authenticity (Berardo, 2006). Authentic materials are strongly preferred as reading materials in English extensive reading classes (Day & Bamford, 2009). In addition, these stories were easy and of participants' interest so they were highly motivating for the learners (Day & Bamford, 2009; Gillet & Temple, 2000). The length of the stories was between 120 to 230 words. Therefore, in each one hour session, participants in both groups were provided with five stories, about 800 words in total.

After the treatment

After two months of treatment, participants were asked to gather in the Institute, where they were given the Reading Self-Efficacy Scale again. They were asked to give their scores from 0-100 to each question of the reading self-efficacy scale.

Data Analysis

To determine the participants' self-efficacy before and after the study and also to compute the reliability of the reading self-efficacy scale, values 1-4 were given to the scale's scores, which ranged from 0-100. The value of 1 was given to the numbers from 0 to 20, which means "I'm unable to do this"; numbers 21 to 49 were taken as 2, which means "I might be able to do this", numbers 50 to 70 were encoded as 3, which means "I'm **pretty** sure I can do this", and numbers 71 to 100 were considered as 4, which means "I'm sure I can do this". These four sentences (i.e., "I'm unable to do this", "I might be able to do this", "I'm **pretty** sure I can do this", and "I'm sure I can do this") are provided in the scale to help participants estimate their reading self-efficacy.

The collected data were entered into the SPSS 17.0 for further analysis. To answer the first and second research questions, a Paired Samples t-test was carried out, and to answer the third research question an Independent Samples t-test was carried out. The criterion for significant value was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

First and second research questions

Table 1 indicates the means and standard deviations for the reading self-efficacy scores of the experimental and control groups in the pre-study and post-study stages. The average level of self-efficacy after the study for the experimental group ($M = 3.43, SD = .21$) showed an increase of about 1as compared to the pre-study ($M = 2.43, SD = .36$), meaning a change from the range of 21-49 (i.e., I might be able to do this) to 50-70 (i.e., I'm **pretty** sure I can do this). However, the post-study of the control group ($M = 2.96, SD = .25$) reflected an increase of 0.60 from the pre-study ($M = 2.36, SD = .31$), meaning a minor change in the same range of 21-49 (i.e., I might be able to do this). This revealed a small change in the control group's level of reading self-efficacy.

To come up with a better comparison of the results in both groups and to see whether the obtained changes from the pretest to the posttest within the experimental and control groups were significant or not, a Paired Samples t-test was run (see Table 2).

As Table 2 indicates, significant differences ($p = .000$) were found between the pretest and

TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the pretest and posttest reading self-efficacy scores in the Experimental and Control Groups

| | Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------------|--------------|----|------|----------------|
| Pretest for reading self-efficacy | Experimental | 30 | 2.43 | .36 |
| | Control | 30 | 2.36 | .31 |
| Posttest for reading self-efficacy | Experimental | 30 | 3.43 | .21 |
| | Control | 30 | 2.96 | .25 |

posttest reading self-efficacy mean scores of both the experimental and control groups, with an increase in their posttest scores. This implies that both the teacher-directed Internet-based ER and the paper-based ER had significantly increased the reading self-efficacy of the experimental and control groups. However, in order to determine which group's reading self-efficacy level was significantly higher, the third research question was investigated.

Third research question

In order to find out whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the experimental and control groups in their levels of reading

self-efficacy, an Independent Samples t-test was employed (see Table 3). A preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality and equality of variances with no serious violation noted.

The results revealed that the difference between the reading self-efficacy mean scores of the experimental group ($M= 2.43, SD= .36$) and the control group ($M = 2.36, SD = .31$) before the treatment was insignificant, $t_{(58)} = .774, p = .442$, which means that the two groups were not different regarding the level of their reading self-efficacy at the beginning of the study. However, after the study, the result showed a significant difference, $t_{(58)} = 7.814, p = .000$, between the mean reading self-efficacy

TABLE 2
Paired Samples t-test between the pretest and posttest reading self-efficacy mean scores for the Experimental and Control Groups

| | Paired Differences | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | | | |
| Mean Posttest–Mean Pretest (Experimental Group) | .99 | .38 | .069 | 14.313 | 29 | .000 |
| Mean Posttest–Mean Pretest (Control Group) | .60 | .18 | .033 | 17.558 | 29 | .000 |

* $p < .05$

TABLE 3
Results of the Independent Samples t-test for the participants' reading self-efficacy before and after the study

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|----|-----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pretest for reading self-efficacy | Equal variances assumed | 2.656 | .109 | .774 | 58 | .442 |
| Posttest for reading self-Efficacy | Equal variances assumed | 6.326 | .015 | 7.814 | 58 | .000 |

* $p < .05$

scores of the experimental group ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .21$) and the control group ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .25$). This implies that, compared to the control group, the experimental group's reading self-efficacy significantly increased after the experiment.

The results showed that, although both groups showed an increase in the mean reading self-efficacy scores after the treatment, the amount of increase was significantly higher in the experimental group. In other words, the effect of teacher-directed Internet-based ER materials was significantly higher in increasing the reading self-efficacy of the participants compared to the paper-based ones.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to propose a method by which the best characteristics of extensive reading and online education were combined through a researcher-designed weblog. In order to determine the effectiveness of this method, a sample of 60 intermediate students was chosen by administering the Nelson English Language Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976). These 60 students were randomized into two groups. The control group was provided with extensive reading materials taken from the Internet on paper in a traditional reading class, while the experimental group was given the same materials through a researcher-designed weblog.

Both versions of extensive reading were found to be effective in terms of students' reading self-efficacy. The Internet-based version, however, was found to have more

significant effects on the students' reading self-efficacy. In addition, the Internet-based version of extensive reading boasts more advantages in that it can finally lead to more autonomous learners (Brandl, 2002; Ohm, 2007; Silva, 2006; White, 2004).

The findings of the study are in agreement with other researchers' findings that introduce extensive reading as an effective method of teaching the L₂ reading to EFL participants (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2009; Gillet & Temple, 2000; Jarrell, 2003; Shang *et al.*, 2007; Yamashita, 2008). The findings also verify the significant role of the Internet in L₂ learning process (e.g., Brandl, 2002; Silva, 2006) and its integration into the L2 pedagogy (Abbitt & Klett, 2007; Brandl, 2002; Hsu & Sheu, 2008; Li, 2009; Ohm, 2007; Prapinwong & Puthikanon, 2008; White, 2004).

Many scholars and researchers have introduced extensive reading as an effective method of teaching L₂ reading to beginner and intermediate students (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2009; Gillet & Temple, 2000; Jarrell, 2003; Shang *et al.*, 2007; Yamashita, 2008). Likewise, this study revealed that extensive reading, whether Internet-based or paper-based, can be considered an effective way through which students' interest, motivation, and reading self-efficacy would be enhanced. Furthermore, the advantage of teacher-directed online extensive reading was demonstrated over the paper-based version of it (Brandl, 2000; Silva, 2006). The results of the study also showed the usefulness of the extensive reading materials in enhancing non-native readers' interest and

confidence, or more technically, their self-efficacy, in English texts, especially funny stories and jokes.

CONCLUSION

As the literature indicated, reading researchers have suggested different ways of promoting the reading ability of the EFL/ESL learners. In this regard, some researchers (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2009; Bandura, 1994; Katz, 2004) refer to the lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and interest in reading as great obstacles for increasing the reading skills of the learners. This study was an attempt to propose a way to solve this problem through the introduction of the teacher-directed, Internet-based extensive reading that turned out to be an effective alternative which increased the students' reading self-efficacy. Despite all of the attempts in this area, reading research still requires different innovative challenges to improve EFL/ESL learners' reading skills.

In this study, the effect of the treatment on students' reading comprehension ability was not taken into consideration. Therefore, a further study is needed to determine the effect of internet-based extensive reading on the reading comprehension of intermediate L2 learners; such a study can be conducted on other proficiency levels as well. Moreover, a further study can be carried out on the correlation between the self-efficacy of the students in reading and their reading comprehension.

The variables of first language (i.e., Kurdish) and cultural background of the participants, who were from Boukan, West

Azerbaijan in Iran, were not considered in this study, a fact which proves to be a limitation that might reduce the generalizability of the results to students with other first languages and cultural backgrounds. It might yield further results if the effect of teacher-directed internet-based ER materials were studied on the students with different first languages and cultural backgrounds.

The findings of the study can be useful for the pedagogical purposes in L2 learning/teaching situations. In this regard, the results of the study can be used by materials writers, universities and L₂ institutes, L₂ teachers, individual students, and online language teaching websites.

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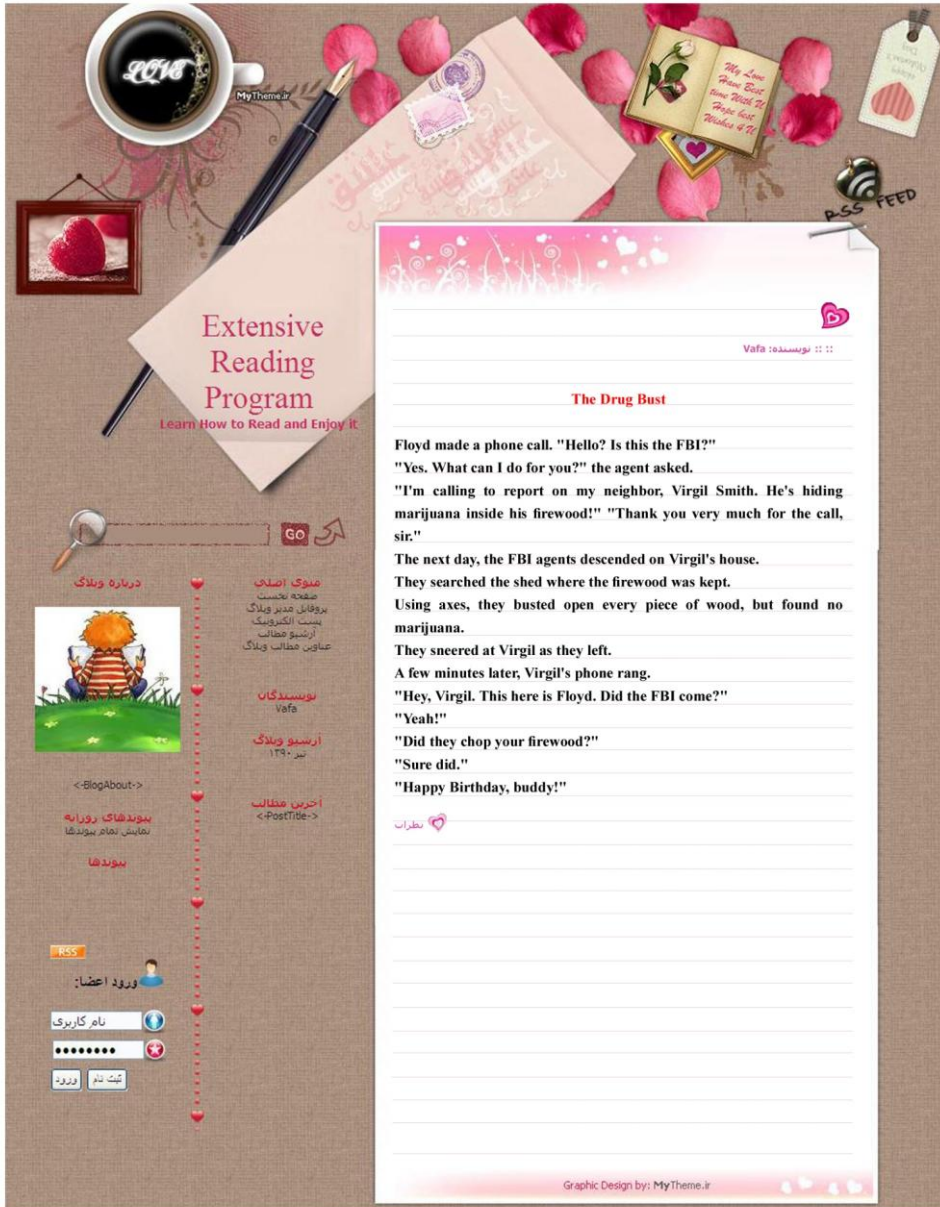
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APPENDIX

A SAMPLE OF THE RESEARCHER-DESIGNED WEBLOG





The Integration Myth: Reading and Writing

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ABSTRACT

There has recently been an increasingly widespread demand for integrated skills materials among ELT practitioners and institutions. This trend has evolved from the communicative language teaching movement that emerged in the 1970s. Skill integration has been seen as an effective way to engage learners as it reflects the natural use of the target language. Integration was first realized in teaching methodology before it started to influence material writing. However, in many cases, integration has become more like a fashion, with no clear understanding about how two skills or more can be integrated in one textbook or whether such integration has made language learning and teaching more effective. This article examines the integration of reading and writing skills in a number of commercial English language teaching (ELT) materials. It first reviews the literature on the integration of these two skills, focusing on the underlying principles and sub-skills. It then reports the findings of an analysis of integration of reading and writing in selected English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) textbooks. Finally, it offers some guidelines and suggestions for how skill integration can be handled more effectively.

Keywords: Integrating reading and writing skills, English language textbook evaluation

INTRODUCTION

This article looks into the integration of reading and writing skills. However, before I describe the literature on how these two skills can be integrated, I shall first describe each skill separately.

What is reading?

Reading can be best seen as a multifaceted skill starting with the decoding of text to the construction of meaning. People often have a purpose for reading. Some people read for fun while others read for information. Regardless of the purpose, good readers engage with what they read. When reading, readers bring with them their knowledge of the topic and the situation. They also use what they know about the language to

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help them parse and comprehend the text. The reader's knowledge of the content and the language certainly facilitates his/her construction of meaning. Readers normally engage with the text and react to the ideas presented by the writer.

Reading specialists have identified sets of skills and sub-skills readers need to have to be able to read effectively. Examples of these skills are skimming, scanning, guessing word meaning and predicting.

What is writing?

Similar to readers, writers also often have a purpose for writing. There is usually specific readership for the text that is composed. The reader could be the writer himself or herself as in the case of diaries. It is strongly argued that writers produce their best texts when they are engaged in what they produce. When engaged, writers communicate their thoughts more effectively and choose their words more carefully.

Writers go through a process that normally starts with brainstorming then planning and then goes through stages of drafting and revision before the text is finally produced. Some writers go through these stages internally while others, as in the case of foreign or second language learners, are asked to consciously show evidence of the completion of each stage for the purpose of training them in the process of effective writing.

When writing, writers have to be aware of not only the purpose but also the reader and the genre. Different readers and contexts require a certain text type. There are certain

established conventions for different types of texts. Writers are expected to observe and adhere to these standards.

Integration of Reading and Writing

It is clear from the discussion in the two sections above that there are many commonalities between reading and writing. There are many reasons for integrating these two skills. First, reading and writing are both acts of active engagement through which meaning is made (Zamel, 1992). In more specific, they involve active participatory processes between the reader or the writer and the text. Second, both reading and writing are personal in terms of the reader or the writer. The reader and the writer form and communicate their thoughts based on their own knowledge and experience. Third, integration reflects the **natural use** of language (writing based on a stimulus). There is evidence showing that an interrelationship between the four language skills and that instruction in one skill can enhance the growth of the other skills. For example, reading promotes the growth of vocabulary and language structures that consequently help improve writing. People who write after reading tend to be more engaged in the writing task (writing as a response) (Tierney *et al.*, 1989, as cited in McGinley, 1992).

At the pedagogical level, reading texts can serve as a **model** for writing and as a stimulator and a generator of ideas for pre-writing tasks. Beginner writers who may not be able to compose their own texts normally use the structure of the reading texts for

guidance to present their ideas. The readers' immersion and involvement in the reading text can help transfer some of the 'good' characteristics of good prose to their writing.

Another benefit for learners is that integration can help foster **positive attitudes** towards reading and writing as writing stems from reading and supports it (Smith & Hansen, 1976). If learners see the interrelationship between the two skills and engage in more reading and writing their overall language proficiency is likely to develop.

Furthermore, the activities that accompany reading and writing texts can function as a **vehicle** for helping students shape their thinking and ideas about the topic and the writing task. When students are involved in higher order **thinking skills** such as judging their own thoughts, analyzing and synthesizing ideas in the text, paraphrasing and summarizing, they develop intellectually and become more critical users of the language.

The interaction between the two skills is evidently strong and it should pave the way for integration. In the related literature, there is an emphasis on integrating reading and writing. Campbell (1998), for example, proposes that this can be done in several ways. In academic writing courses, reading activities can be assigned that encourage students to interact with written text. She also suggests that in creative writing, courses exposing students to interesting texts can inspire them to write. In English language teaching (ELT) material evaluation, however, this important issue seems to

have been overlooked. English language teaching textbooks are often evaluated using checklists. Many old and new evaluation checklists are available in the literature (e.g., Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, & Nimehchisalem, 2011; Sheldon, 1988; Skierso, 1991). Mukundan and Ahour (2010) provide an extensive review of these checklists across four decades (1970-2008). A review of these evaluation checklists indicates that the integration of reading and writing skills has been neglected in them.

In the absence of clear guidelines for integrations, materials writers use their discretion as how the two skills should best be integrated in the same materials. This indeed poses a huge challenge for authors as they have to balance several factors, among which are:

1. Finding authentic texts and dealing with text difficulty and copyright issues.
2. Designing authentic tasks: time and audience.
3. Balancing engagement and accessibility level of texts.
4. Balancing engagement and practice.
5. Balancing time for reading and writing.
6. Assessment (backwash effect): time and task.

Yoshimura (2009) developed a checklist for helping learners integrate reading and writing processes. The checklist contains questions that guide students through various stages of reading. According to Yoshimura, "[t]he main role the checklist should play

is to guide learners' reading process so that they can learn about English writing from reading" (2009, 1972). The researcher used the checklist to create writing tasks based on reading. The learners in Yoshimura's study found the list useful in improving both their reading and writing abilities.

Smith and Hansen (1976) studied the relationship between reading and writing tasks. Among other things, the researchers found that students showed more interest in reading a text about a particular topic than writing about it. The researchers warned that if learners develop a negative attitude towards writing, this may transfer to reading and that it may not be always advisable to ask students to write about what they read. However, the researchers admitted that task type plays a key role in determining students' engagement. In a more recent study, Mo (2012) investigated the teaching of writing in five colleges in China. The researcher reported many problems in the system and recommended integrating reading with writing as a way to improve students' writing skills.

The objective of the present study was to evaluate five English language textbooks regarding how the integration of reading and writing skills was promoted in them. In order to meet this objective, a list of questions was developed:

1. Are the learners actively involved in reading?
2. Are the learners actively involved in writing?
3. What purpose do the reading texts

serve?

4. Do the reading texts help stimulate and generate ideas for writing?
5. Do the activities help learners notice and transfer the good characteristics of good prose into their writing?
6. Is writing presented as a meaningful activity (i.e. writing as a response)?
7. Are the writing activities based on reading?

These questions would help the researcher as a set of criteria according to which the integration of reading and writing skills in some English textbooks could be evaluated.

METHOD

This study involved a qualitative analysis of some English textbooks based on the list of questions mentioned in the previous section. Five EFL/ESL textbooks were analyzed for integration (see Table 1 for the list of books). The materials were at the intermediate to upper intermediate levels. The units in all the textbooks tended to be quite lengthy. They were around 40 pages long with two or more long reading passages. The pages were crammed text and exercises with insufficient white space for note taking or glossing on the margins.

RESULTS

I shall now move to how the five textbooks have attempted to integrate the two skills. As the results of the analysis revealed, in all the textbooks, reading and writing tend to be separated. Each unit consists of one

section for reading and another one for writing. They appear to be like two books bound together without much interaction between them. Moreover, there is usually a long wait between the students' first encounter with the reading text and the writing task. The gap can be 30 pages in some cases. At the outset of each unit, there is usually a set of discussion questions that are used to set the scene and activate the learners' schema in the topic. However, it seems that this engagement is suspended by language-related exercises. The students do a series of vocabulary exercises that aim at pre-teaching some of the vocabulary in the text. Moreover, these vocabulary exercises sometimes appear after the students have read the text. In some cases, students have to wait a long time before they actually see or read the text again.

Comprehension questions take precedence over discussion/reflection questions. Understanding of texts is often oversimplified at the level of answering comprehension questions (multiple choice questions, true/false, short answer). This can make students feel that meaning is something that only exists in the text rather

than something that the reader makes from the text.

When the texts in the reading section are referred to in the activities, the focus is mainly on the word or sentence level (e.g. adjectives, word formation, and word order). There is very little work at the discourse level, something that is essential for the transfer of skills from reading to writing.

In many cases, the students are not given a good or genuine purpose for reading texts. The example below illustrates this particular point:

Instructions for reading:

"This essay was written by Kristin Hunter, a novelist and playwright. It was published in a book of essays in which well-known people wrote about teachers whom they admired and who had influenced them."

The text

Comprehension questions:

Answer the following questions.

TABLE 1
A list of the textbooks reviewed

| Title | Publisher | Year |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Academic Encounters: Life in Society. Reading, study skills, writing | Cambridge University Press | 2002 |
| 2. Northstar Reading and Writing – Intermediate | Longman | 2004 (2 nd ed.) |
| 3. Quest: Reading and writing – Book 3 | McGraw Hill | 2007 (2 nd ed.) |
| 4. Developing Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar | Heinle and Heinle | 2003(2 nd ed.) |
| 5. Tapestry Writing 3 | Heinle and Heinle | 2005 |

The writing section tends to be considerably short. In some of the textbooks, writing is dealt with on one page. The approach that many of the materials tend to adopt in teaching writing is by first preaching to the students about writing skills and mechanics. This is then followed by practice. In addition, there is a lack of consolidation and direction. In most cases, the students do not know what they will be writing about until they see the writing task. The students do not get enough support for writing except on grammar items. This might be due to the lack of space!

Once in the writing section, the students do not usually go back to the reading except in *Northstar*. The main reading text seems to become distant after it has been discussed in the reading section. The use of the input text is limited to the initial discussion, reading practice and language-based activities.

Shorter texts other than the main text are sometimes used in the writing practice

section. These texts are often not related to the main topic of the unit. In the writing section, students read these texts either to practice writing skills (e.g. main idea and supporting details, topic sentence, conjunctions) or to use as models but not for content and information. In addition, the activities seem to be too diverse and too many. There is a constant shift of focus from discrete language items to discussion questions.

DISCUSSION

Based on these findings, it seems that the kind of integration that is adopted by these materials can be referred to as *linear sequencing* of tasks and activities (see Fig.1). That is to say, the tasks and activities are presented in a series without much interaction between them.

Most of these textbooks seem to have followed the “transmission model” of reading in which reading is seen as

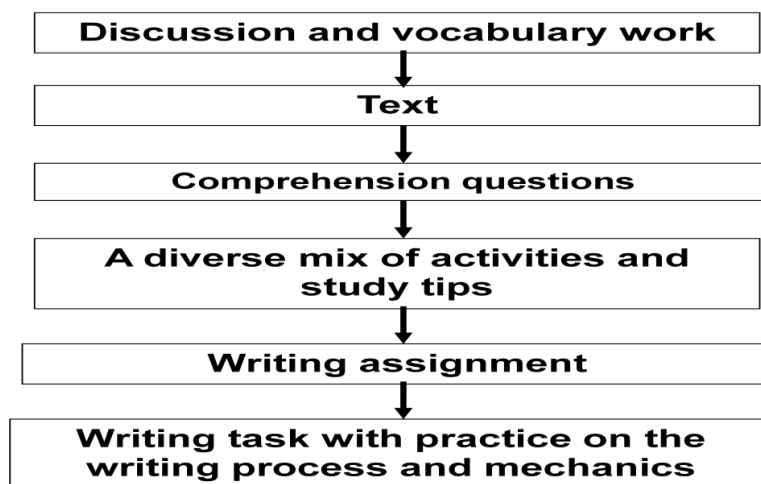


Fig.1: Linear sequencing of tasks and activities

retrieval of facts from a text through a set of “ritualized activities” rather than the interaction between the reader and the text (Zamel, 1992, pp. 463-4). This approach to reading will naturally transfer to writing. Students are led to believe that writing is a matter of putting a set of ideas on a page for the teacher to read and approve. Material writers seem to ignore the fact that the effectiveness of integration primarily depends on the orchestration between the reading and writing.

The way reading and writing materials have addressed integration does not seem to be effective and it might be due to the lack of clear guidelines or criteria for integration. Integrated reading and writing materials, as they stand at present, may be doing more harm than good to both skills as there seems to be a tension between reading and writing development within the same unit.

As Zamel (1992, p. 468) succinctly puts it,

When written assignments are included in reading textbooks, they invariably appear at the ends of units or chapters, thus reinforcing the notion that writing is done as a final activity after the text has been read, analyzed, worked through, rather than used as a means for understanding the text. We seem to assume a static and unidirectional effect for reading and writing, believing that exposure to reading texts provides models, that reading provides so-called comprehensible input which, if

acquired, will later be displayed in the writing produced, that reading provides ideas that can be used as a basis for writing one’s own text.... Thus, reading continues to be viewed as necessarily preceding writing, to offer a paradigm to internalize, to act as a stimulus for writing, or to provide subject matter to write about. With any of these situations we assume that if students read, they will become adept at putting their thoughts on paper. Reading and writing are thus not fully integrated, and reading controls the writing.

The integration of reading and writing has also been extended to tests. In a very recent study, Yang and Plakans (2012) investigated the integration of writing with listening and reading on an integrated reading-listening-writing test task. The researchers found that learners need to employ a range of complex text processing and text development strategies for successful of the task.

CONCLUSION

Integration of language skills reflects the natural learning process. There have recently been a plethora of integrated reading and writing materials as an outcome of the emphasis on communicative methodology in language teaching. However, there is disparity in the way materials writers have attempted to address this, stemming from the lack of direction about how skills should

be integrated. With the growing publication of commercial ESL/EFL textbooks, there is a dire need for a clearly defined set of criteria for efficient integration of reading and writing skills.

The present study can have insightful implications for ESL writing research and practice. For example, there are studies in the area that have indicated insignificant effects of peer review on students' writing performance (e.g., Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2011). It would be really interesting to conduct an experimental study which involves peer feedback as well as integrating reading and writing skills in its treatment and then investigating whether a mixture of both treatments can improve learners' writing performance. It seems logical to assume that integrating the two skills could result in different findings in such studies.

Furthermore research findings indicate ESL learners commonly commit word choice errors in their writing. In their study of errors and variations in Malaysian English learners' written descriptions, Ahour and Mukundan (2012) revealed that while Malay and Indian learners employed the specifically relevant terms (e.g., daughter), the Chinese students used more general words (e.g., girl) for similar referents in the pictures. It seems true to assume that exposing learners to reading passages in their writing courses will provide an opportunity for them to expand their vocabulary and thus avoid word choice errors.

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Incidental Focus on Form and Learner Uptake in Iranian EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the connection between teachers' incidental focus on form, namely, corrective feedback and learners' uptake and immediate repair of errors in communicative English as a Foreign Language classrooms for adults. The data was drawn from the transcripts of oral corrective feedback moves of six audio and video-recorded classrooms at an intermediate level totaling 9 hours. Corrective feedback moves were coded based on Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Panova and Lyster (2002) models. This study investigated the integration of incidental focus on form into six intact communicative EFL classes. A descriptive design which employed qualitative data collection procedure was adopted. The results revealed a significant difference in the ratio of uptake following certain corrective feedback types, which was in sharp contrast to the findings of Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Panova and Lyster (2002). Possible reasons are discussed from different aspects of learners' age, their motivation, and instructional settings.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, incidental focus on form, uptake

INTRODUCTION

As the focus of classroom instruction has shifted over the past few decades from an emphasis on language forms to functional language within communicative context,

the question of error correction has become increasingly significance (Brown, 2004). In studies of classroom-based second and foreign language learning, the concepts of repair and correction are considered as instructional components which facilitate language learning. According to Wells (1996), the most common interaction exchange in the studies on classroom discourse consists of moves, which are normally classified as one of the following:

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(1) Initiate, (2) Response and (3) Follow-up (IRF). The follow-up move refers to all the moves following a student's response, whether they are corrective, negative, or affirmative in nature.

Askew and Lodge (2000) state that the relationship between teaching and learning should be considered a dynamic process, rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge. Most of the interaction that takes place during EFL classrooms is guided by teachers; thus they have a significant role in how students learn and what happens in the classroom. Furthermore, if it is true that students can learn from their own errors, then correcting those errors is of crucial importance in learning. Accordingly, it is important to improve teachers' knowledge of their own actions, thereby necessitating that teachers be aware of the corrective feedback techniques they can apply in their classes.

The notions of corrective feedback and uptake have been developed through the theory of Output Hypothesis, as suggested by Swain (1985). Swain posited the Output Hypothesis, which claims that comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) cannot improve learners' language acquisition in terms of syntax; therefore, the production of output is a crucial factor in furthering language development. Swain proposed that the modified output may be the result of opportunities for output coupled with the provision of useful and consistent feedback from teachers and peers.

The version of interaction proposed by Long (1996) conceptualized the role

of negotiation as an entity responsible for facilitating conscious "noticing". In this version, interaction is taken into account both "interpersonally" and "intrapersonally". As for the former, the learner notices input, whereas in the latter, s/he processes information obtained through input.

Of noteworthy consideration are the notions of attention and noticing in relation to learner uptake. Schmidt (1990) proposed the Noticing Hypothesis, according to which the emergence of new forms should be preceded by their being noticed in the input.

Types of Focus on Form: Planned vs. Incidental

Several distinctions have been made regarding focus on form instruction. Ellis (2001) distinguishes between "planned" versus "incidental" focus on form. In planned focused on form (Ellis, 2001), the teacher decides in advance which linguistic features will be targeted within the meaning-focused settings in the lessons. In contrast, incidental focus on form (Ellis, 2001) occurs without any preparation during meaning-focused activities and covers various linguistic items.

Incidental Focus on Form Options: Preemptive vs. Reactive

Ellis (2001) distinguished between two types of incidental focus on form, preemptive and reactive, and pointed out that reactive incidental focus on form may be explicit or implicit. Pre-emptive incidental focus on form refers to any effort to draw learners' attention to a linguistic feature and

explain it before an error or breakdown in communication has a chance to occur.

Corrective Feedback Types

To investigate the relationship between error types and kinds of feedback, and learner uptake, Lyster and Ranta (1997) categorized error, feedback, and uptake. They developed an analytic model comprising various moves involving errors (phonological, grammatical, and lexical), corrective feedback (recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, clarification, repetition of error, and metalinguistic feedback, and translation), and uptake (self- or peer repair and needs-repair).

Using the framework set forth by Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Panova and Lyster (2002), teachers' feedback moves were coded into seven categories in the current study. The following explains each feedback type, along with examples from the actual data collected in the present study.

Recasts

Recasts occur when a teacher provides a student with the correct answer without trying to give more information about the error, or without trying to help a student produce the correct form. An example of recast found in the present data is as follows:

Example:

S: I was in a live [li:v] concert last month.
(Phonological error)

T: A live [laIv] concert. (Recast)

S: oh, yes. A live concert. (Uptake)

Explicit correction

When a teacher gives the correct answer and furthermore provides the student with a clear indication that his/her utterance was incorrect, the teacher is using explicit correction. Below is an example of an explicit correction move from the present data:

Example:

S: I am agree with my friend. (Grammatical error)

T: You agree with your friend, no need to say "am". (Explicit feedback)

S: I agree with her. (Uptake)

Clarification request

There are situations in which the teacher does not understand a student's utterance, and therefore a clarification request is in order.

Example:

S: If we can find the major, we can complain about the problem. (Lexical error)

T: What? (Clarification feedback)

S: Oh... I mean manager not major. (Uptake)

Metalinguistic feedback

Lyster and Ranta (1997) define Metalinguistic feedback as a type of feedback that contains comments, information, or questions which prompt students to correct the error.

Example:

S: Service agent compensates to the damage.
(Grammatical error)

T: You cannot use “to”, you should use another preposition. (Metalinguistic feedback)

S: Yes, service agent compensates for the damage. (Uptake)

Translation

According to Panova and Lyster (2002), translations occur when a teacher hears a student uses his/her L1 (first language), and, in the event that the use of L1 is not permitted, the teacher translates the student’s utterance from L1 to the target language.

Example:

S: As a good friend, we must be “roorast”
[in L1] (Lexical error)

T: Honest. (Translation)

S: Oh... We must be honest.

Elicitation

An elicitation is similar to metalinguistic feedback in that it also encourages the student to self-correct.

Example:

S: My brother had hurted his leg.
(Grammatical error)

T: He had (Elicitation feedback)

S: Sorry!... had hurt his leg. (Uptake)

Repetition

Another form of corrective feedback that is explicit and does not provide the student with the correct answer is repetition.

Example:

S: And I was wrotting another sentence about schooling system. (Grammatical error)

T: I was wrotting... (Repetition)

S: No, no!... I was writing another sentence about schooling system. (Uptake)

Learner Uptake

There are two types of uptake: “(a) uptake that results in “repair” of the error on which the feedback focused and (b) uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair (coded as “needs repair”)” (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 49)

Objectives and Research Questions

While learning the foreign language, the learner usually encounters varied linguistic problems that evidently handicap and hamper his/her learning and ultimately exert a detrimental impact upon his/her general proficiency. This phenomenon is also found in the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) among Iranian English language learners. One of the researchers who has worked as an English teacher and supervisor in one of the reputable English language institutes in Iran, where the instruction targets the L2 within the realm of communicative language teaching, has observed that learners at a high level of

language proficiency make grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors while participating in classroom discussions and activities; this resulted in learners producing more ungrammatical utterances in their oral output.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the provision of corrective feedback in the Iranian EFL classrooms. The contexts in which feedback was provided were also analyzed. Its secondary aim was to ascertain whether Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model of corrective discourse was applicable in a different instructional context. Lyster and Ranta's study was conducted with young learners in French immersion classrooms in meaning focused settings; in contrast, the present study involved adult learners of English as a foreign language in a mixture of meaning-focused and form-focused situations. The research questions that served to guide this study are as follows:

1. What kinds of corrective feedback do occur in EFL classrooms?
2. What types of corrective feedback do lead to more learner uptake?
3. To what extent does corrective feedback result in the repair of different kinds of learner errors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corrective Feedback and learner Uptake

The correlation between teacher feedback and learner uptake in different educational contexts has been investigated by many researchers. Lochtman (2002) concentrated

on how oral corrective feedback functions within analytic foreign language classroom interaction. The study showed that the highest rates of no learner uptake occurred after recasts and explicit corrections. Metalinguistic feedback and elicitations were the most effective corrective feedback types for eliciting learner uptake.

Tsang (2004) who studied non-native English lessons in Hong Kong concentrated on teacher feedback and learner uptake. The aim of the study was to show the correlation between corrective feedback and learner uptake - which feedback types resulted in learner repair. Tsang (2004) found that the most preferred corrective feedback types used by the teachers were recast, explicit correction and repetition.

A recent study on teacher-student interaction investigating the effects of corrective feedback moves on learner uptake was conducted by Lyster and Mori (2006). The researchers found that uptake moves were most frequently present in situations in which the teachers prompted an answer from the students. To investigate the connection between error types and kinds of feedback (as the independent variables), and learner uptake (as the dependent variable), Lyster and Ranta (1997) categorized error, feedback, and uptake. The findings showed that while recasts were the most widely used form of corrective feedback, they were the least likely to lead to successful uptake. It was also found that the most successful type of feedback leading to students' repair was elicitation. Panova and Lyster (2002) conducted a similar study

on corrective feedback and learner uptake. Panova and Lyster focused on learner error, teacher feedback, and learner uptake, and subsequently categorized corrective feedback moves under seven different terms: recasts, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, repetition, translation, clarification request, and explicit correction. Panova and Lyster (2002) concluded that the low proficiency level of the students may have been the reason that the teacher used recasts so frequently.

METHOD

The main goal of the present study was to show the different ways in which a teacher could correct a student's oral errors. Most teacher training programs fail to prepare teachers to handle the variety of errors which occur in student's output; it is therefore the aim of the current study to provide information about the connection between corrective feedback and learner uptake. This study involved a descriptive design which utilized qualitative data to address the research questions.

Context of the Study

The research was conducted at a private school in Iran. Six intact classes with six different teachers participated in this study. The instructional approach of the school was within the communicative orientation of language teaching, with a strong emphasis on vocabulary development, speaking and listening activities, and, to a lesser degree, grammar, writing and reading. Thus, activities that focus on linguistic form were

minimal, and the evaluation of the learners did not focus on the accuracy of learner language. This means that the teachers had to rely on personal choices as to whether and when to focus on formal features of the language, including provision of corrective feedback.

Participants

In order to find out reasonable answers to research questions regarding the use of different types of corrective feedback and the students' oral errors, 88 students and 6 teachers participated in this study.

Teachers

Six teachers (female & male) participated in this study, all of whom had the experience of teaching EFL in different language schools for 6 or 12 years. All of the teachers were Iranians whose mother tongue was Azeri and were fluent in Persian. The teachers' demographic information is provided in Table 1.

Following the ethical guidelines at the work site, the researchers approached the six teachers and asked them if they would be willing to participate in the study. The teachers were informed that the purpose of the research was to examine classroom interaction during meaning-focused lessons where there would be some focus on form; however, they would not be made aware of the precise focus of the study in order to minimize any effects relating to the observer's paradox. No effort was made to guide the teachers in their choice of lesson plans or to select any type of corrective

feedback. Teachers with different levels of experience were the participants in this research, all of whom were non-native speakers of English and used English as the medium of instruction.

Learners

The next group of participants consisted of intermediate level Iranian students at a private Language School in Iran. The EFL learners were female and at different ages (17-40). The number of students in each class ranged from 12 to 18, the total number being 88. They were fluent in Azeri (mother tongue) and Persian (official language). Students were seated in circles of chairs in such a way that teachers could walk in middle of the classes. According to the students' application forms collected upon their registration, they were interested in learning English for a variety of reasons including academic purposes, professional development, TOEFL or IELTS tests, to brush up on their English, and immigration to other foreign countries.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected from the six EFL classes at intermediate levels with six teachers. The data comprised 9 hours (540 minutes) of audio and video-recorded classroom talk from the classrooms. Each class was equipped with a wall-mounted mini-video recorder placed in the top corners of the classrooms which zoomed in on the frontal sections of the class. This procedure provided data relating to any interaction involving the teachers and the whole class. The school had a quality assurance department and the supervisory staff used these mini-cameras to monitor and optimize the quality of the ongoing instruction.

Coding System and Data Analysis Procedure

The categories used to code the data in the present study were adopted from the error treatment sequence from those developed by Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model and Panova and Lyster (2002). The main unit of

TABLE 1
Teachers' Demographic Information

| Class | Gender | Age | Teaching experience | EFL qualifications* | Time at school |
|-------|--------|-----|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| C1 | female | 40 | 12 years | MA in TEFL/CELTA | 10 years |
| C2 | female | 32 | 8 years | MA in TEFL | 7 years |
| C3 | female | 28 | 6 years | MA in TEFL | 6 years |
| C4 | male | 38 | 12 years | MA in TEFL | 10 years |
| C5 | male | 26 | 5 years | BA | 3 years |
| C6 | male | 30 | 9 years | BA | 8 years |

MA: Master of Arts

BA: Bachelor of Arts

CELTA: Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

analysis was the error treatment sequence, which went as follows: learner error, teacher feedback, and learner uptake consisting of either repair of the error by a student who made the error or needs-repair when no repair was made by a student and the teacher or other students repaired the error. This sequence commenced with at least one error in a learner's utterance. The non-target utterance was followed either by the teacher's corrective feedback or without it; if without, topic continuation was done. If the teacher provided corrective feedback, it was either followed by uptake on the part of the learner or without it. If uptake occurred, the learner's non-target utterance could be modified in two ways: repair or needs-repair. Each occurrence of either one of the techniques was referred to as *an episode*. This order reflected what actually happened when a teacher responded to an utterance containing an error and when the learner attempted to respond to the teacher's feedback moves. All learners' utterances with errors were counted. In the present study, three types of error were analyzed: grammatical errors, lexical errors, and phonological errors.

To explore the answers to the research questions, the researchers designed a checklist including different types of feedback, learners' errors, and learners' uptake. In order to gain the reliability of transcribed data and to check the inter-rater reliability in coding the data into reactive and the occurrence of uptake, one data analyst who was a PhD candidate in TESL was briefed about the aim and objectives

of the study. She was given the recorded DVDs from the classes, transcriptions of all of the classes which were written by the researchers and 6 checklists for 6 classes in order to record her own observation by marking on the checklists independently. The analysis of the current study focused on teacher-learner interaction only and the episodes involving focus on form were transcribed. The data analyst recoded 20% of the randomly selected data from the error sequences coded by the researchers. There was 90% agreement ($p < .05$) between the researchers and the third rater in the transcribed classroom interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yielded 106 error sequences; each error was initiated by a learner turn containing one error which was coded as lexical, grammatical, and phonological.

26 % were lexical, 42% were grammatical, and 32% were phonological. As for error types, it should be stated that all six teachers provided corrective feedback to grammatical errors with the highest rate of other error types.

Table 2 provides the distribution of corrective feedback types by six teachers in the current study, Lyster and Ranta's (1997), and Panova and Lyter's (2002).

According to the results, the teachers' most preferred type of feedback was recasts (56%), with the second most used method feedback being elicitation (11%) and the third being translation (10%). The order in the current study was the same as Lyster and Ranta's (1997) in the first and the

second type of corrective feedback. The fourth through the seventh were repetition, metalinguistic feedback, explicit correction, and clarification in the present study, whereas this order is different from the other studies. In Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Panova and Lyster (2002), the third most was clarification request (11%) in both and the least used type was repetition (5% and 1%), respectively. In this study, clarification request stands in the last part of the order (3%).

Table 3 displays the connection between error types and types of corrective feedback. In other words, it shows which type of error

led to which type of corrective feedback. As can be seen, all three types of errors led to recasts and, except for recasts and elicitation, other types of corrective feedback accounted for a small percentage of all error types. According to Table 3, lexical errors invite translation and recasts as much as (57%) more than other feedback types. Recasts and elicitation were given as corrective feedback (73%) to grammatical errors and (94%) to phonological errors. On the other hand, clarification requests, translation, explicit correction, and metalinguistic feedback were not used as corrective feedback to grammatical and phonological errors.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Corrective Feedback for the Current Study, Lyster and Ranta’s Study, and Panova and Lyster’s Study

| Feedback types | Current study | Lyster and Ranta | Panova and Lyster |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Recasts | 59 (56%) | 375 (55%) | 226 (55%) |
| Elicitation | 12 (11%) | 94 (14%) | 15 (4%) |
| Clarification request | 3 (3%) | 73 (11%) | 44 (11%) |
| Explicit correction | 5 (5%) | 50 (7%) | 9 (2%) |
| Repetition | 9(8%) | 36 (5%) | 6 (1%) |
| Metalinguistic feedback | 8 (7%) | 58 (8%) | 21 (5%) |
| Translation | 10 (10%) | - | 91(22%) |
| Total | 106 (100%) | 1686 (100%) | 412 (100%) |

TABLE 3
Connection between Error Types and Corrective Feedback Types in the Study

| Corrective feedback type | Error type | | | Total |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| | Lexical | Grammatical | Phonological | |
| Recasts 59 (56%) | 6 (21%) | 24 (55%) | 29 (85%) | 59 (56%) |
| Elicitation 12 (11%) | 1 (4%) | 8 (18%) | 3 (9%) | 12 (11%) |
| Clarification request 3 (3%) | 3 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (3%) |
| Explicit correction 5 (5%) | 1 (4%) | 4 (9%) | 0 (0%) | 5 (5%) |
| Repetition 9 (8%) | 4 (14%) | 3 (7%) | 2 (6%) | 9 (8%) |
| Metalinguistic feedback 8 (7%) | 3 (11%) | 5 (11%) | 0 (0%) | 8 (8%) |
| Translation 10 (10%) | 10 (36%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 10 (9%) |
| Total | 28 (100%) | 44 (100%) | 34 (100%) | 106 (100%) |

The result of the present study is in contrast with that of Lyster and Ranta (1997), where the recasts were used 55% of the time and repetition 5%. In this study, recasts and elicitation altogether accounted for 67% of all feedback moves given to the three types of errors, while other types of corrective feedback accounted for 33%.

In Table 4, there was 15% of *no uptake* in all the responses to corrective feedback. The highest rates of no uptake went to recasts (24%), metalinguistic (13%), and repetition (11%), respectively. This was very different from the study of Lyster and Ranta (1997), where the participants did not react to (69%) of recasts, (50%) of explicit correction, (22%) repetition, (14%) metalinguistic feedback, and (12%) clarification requests. Another remarkable difference in the current study and the one done by Lyster and Ranta (1997) was the ratio of repair and needs-repair. In this study, there were more uptake moves with repair (69%) than those in the need of repair (16%), whereas in Lyster and Ranta (1997) 28% was for needs-repair, which is a bit more than repair (27%). In the current study, the amount of repair belonged to translation (90%), elicitation (83%) and needs-repair

to repetition (67%) and clarification (33%) while this amount was (18%) for recasts, (46%) for elicitation and needs-repair to repetition was (47%), and (60%) for clarification in Lyster and Ranta's study.

The present study aimed to examine incidental focus on form on adult learners' oral errors and their uptake in EFL classrooms in Iran. The aforementioned results permitted the following answers to the research questions.

The study found that all six teachers used all the seven corrective feedback types; recast was the most frequent type of feedback (56%), a finding which paralleled the findings obtained from other observational studies with child and adult language learners (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, Panova and Lyster, 2002; Roberts, 1995).

According to the findings of this study, the type of corrective feedback that led to repair the most was translation (90%), with elicitation (83%), and explicit correction (80%) being the second and third most used feedback types. The corrective feedback types which led to needs-repair were repetition (67%), followed by clarification (33%) and metalinguistic feedback (25%). Among the corrective feedback types,

TABLE 4
Distribution of Uptake in Relation to Corrective Feedback Type in the Current Study

| Learner uptake type | Corrective feedback type | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| | Recasts | Elicitation | Clarification | Explicit correction | Repetition | Metalinguistic | Translation | |
| Repair | 41 (69%) | 10 (83%) | 2 (67%) | 4 (80%) | 2 (22%) | 5 (62%) | 9 (90%) | 73 (69%) |
| Needs-repair | 4 (7%) | 2 (17%) | 1 (33%) | 1 (20%) | 6 (67%) | 2 (25%) | 1 (10%) | 17 (16%) |
| No uptake | 14 (24%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (11%) | 1 (13%) | 0 (0%) | 16 (15%) |
| Total | 59 (100%) | 12 (100%) | 3 (100%) | 5 (100%) | 9 (100%) | 8 (100%) | 10 (100%) | 106 (100%) |

recasts (24%), metalinguistic feedback (13%), and repetition (11%) led to no uptake, whereas the other types led to learners' uptake.

As shown in Table 3, most phonological errors followed from recasts (85%) as did grammatical errors (55%), while lexical errors followed from translation (36%).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) conducted their study in a French immersion setting, in which the students were from varying backgrounds. Some of them excelled in their French language skills, since the language they spoke at home was French as well. The researchers found that of all the feedback moves provided by the teachers (55%) led to learner uptake of some kind, but only 27% of all the feedback turns resulted in learner repair. Additionally, in Panova and Lyster's study (2002), the students were rated to be at a beginner level in terms of language skills due to their limited oral and written production abilities with respect to vocabulary and sentence structure. Similarly, the results of Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study showed that 47% of all teacher feedback moves led to some sort of student uptake, but only a third of the learner uptake included repair moves. These two studies yielded similar results, although their participants were from dissimilar language backgrounds and language skill levels. There are major differences between Lyster and Ranta's study and the present study in the type of instruction that has been investigated; the classrooms in the present study were a mixture of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction, whereas

Lyster and Ranta's were meaning-focused.

The present study, therefore, had a higher percentage of learner uptake and learner repair than did some of the previous studies, and most of the previous studies showed that learner uptake was usually present in at least half of the feedback situations.

The significant difference between the present study and the previous corrective feedback studies is that the earlier studies were mostly conducted in adult ESL or immersion classrooms, whereas the present study concentrated on adults in an EFL settings in which the purpose of attending classes was to improve their use of English. In Lyster and Ranta's immersion classrooms, the focus was on acquiring general knowledge along with learning the French language, so the classes focused on content rather than the accurate use of French. As a result, the students in the immersion program did not react to some of the corrective feedback types as much as the EFL learners did in this study.

The difference in the ages of the participants might create dissimilarities in the results; the fact that the teachers needed to adjust their teaching methods according to the students' different language skills might have influenced the way teachers corrected students' oral errors. Lyster (1998) concluded in his study that young learners are not as sensitive to linguistic forms in learning their second language. This fact explains why the rate of uptake was higher in the present study than it was in the immersion classrooms.

The target language in the classrooms is another main difference between the current study and previous ones. In the previous studies, the target languages as well as the L1 of the participants varied considerably. Many of the studies were conducted in French immersion classrooms, or the participants had dissimilar backgrounds – some of the adult classrooms included students from different countries and from various language backgrounds, such as in Panova and Lyster's (2002) study, where the participants came from Haitian, French, Portuguese, and Spanish backgrounds. In the present study, however, all the participants had similar language experiences and were native Azeri and Persian speakers. Also, the teacher in their study was a French/English bilingual, whereas the teachers in this study were non-native speakers of English who have learnt English as a foreign language. It might be concluded that non-native English language teachers adopted different strategies in providing corrective feedback in the current study in comparison with other studies.

It could be speculated that the motivation for learning a new language might be higher for adult EFL learners. The difference could be attributed to the nature of learning programs; the immersion program was an obligatory curriculum for students, whereas in an EFL context students attended the course for a variety of reasons, such as obtaining TOEFL/IELTS certificate, migrating to other countries, or brushing up on their English skills. EFL learners were motivated to be corrected because

they believed that error correction was a way to enhance their English proficiency, a fact which was borne out by the high rate of uptake in EFL classrooms.

Overall, it is impossible to generalize the findings of this study to other, different research settings. However, it should be kept in mind that recasts were the most used corrective feedback types in this study. With respect to the connection between recasts and learners' uptake, the higher percentage of uptake following translation was observed in the current study, which was in sharp contrast to the findings of previous studies.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to describe the ways in which teachers corrected learners' oral errors in EFL settings. Additionally, the learners' reactions to the feedback moves were discovered by concentrating on learner uptake. The findings of the present study showed that there was a variety of feedback moves present during English lessons, and that learners were able to correct themselves effectively if teachers used feedback types that elicited answers from the learners.

This study identified similarities and differences in comparison to the studies by Lyster & Ranta (1997) and Panova & Lyster (2002). As was previously discussed, the instructional setting, L1 background, and learners' age and motivation might elicit various results from classroom observation. It should be noted that this study could be viewed from different striking aspects. In this EFL context, translation was effective in

eliciting uptake and learners reacted (90%) to any corrective feedback moves.

Swain and Lapkin (1995) state that feedback makes learners notice errors in their output, thereby impelling them to modify it. They suggest that what takes place between the first and second output is the part in which the process of L2 learning occurs. According to Swain and Lapkin (1995), cognitive processes can be activated between the first and second output through applying the appropriate feedback type.

In the study conducted by de Bot (1996), producing the correct forms by learners is emphasized. De Bot claims that language learners are likely to benefit more from being pushed to retrieve linguistic forms than from hearing them in the input. In relation to de Bot's claim, Clark (1995) and Groszofsky, Payne, and Campbell (1994) argue that participants remember items that they have generated in response to some kind of cues better than the items that have just been presented to them.

Ellis (1997) distinguishes between two types of acquisition: (a) acquisition as the internalization of new forms and (b) acquisition as an increase in control over forms that have already been internalized. It could be concluded that positive evidence like recasts facilitates the process of internalization of new forms; in contrast, negotiation of form techniques increases the control of forms which have already been internalized. Therefore, a balance of applying various types of feedback in relation to different instructional settings

should be selected by teachers and they should prevent overusing any one type of feedback.

This study did not consider the proficiency level of the learners at elementary and advanced levels; neither did it consider the teachers' beliefs towards the use of different corrective feedback types. As a result, further studies can investigate the aforementioned issues in EFL situations within form-focused and meaning-focused settings.

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Pertanika follows a **double-blind peer-review** process. Peer reviewers are experts chosen by journal editors to provide written assessment of the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of written research, with the aim of improving the reporting of research and identifying the most appropriate and highest quality material for the journal.

In the peer-review process, three referees independently evaluate the scientific quality of the submitted manuscripts. Authors are encouraged to indicate in the **Referral form** using the **Manuscript Submission Kit** the names of three potential reviewers, but the editors will make the final choice. The editors are not, however, bound by these suggestions..

Manuscripts should be written so that they are intelligible to the professional reader who is not a specialist in the particular field. They should be written in a clear, concise, direct style. Where contributions are judged as acceptable for publication on the basis of content, the Editor reserves the right to modify the typescripts to eliminate ambiguity and repetition, and improve communication between author and reader. If extensive alterations are required, the manuscript will be returned to the author for revision.

The Journal's review process

What happens to a manuscript once it is submitted to *Pertanika*? Typically, there are seven steps to the editorial review process:

1. The executive editor and the editorial board examine the paper to determine whether it is appropriate for the journal and should be reviewed. If not appropriate, the manuscript is rejected outright and the author is informed.
2. The executive editor sends the article-identifying information having been removed, to three reviewers. Typically, one of these is from the Journal's editorial board. Others are specialists in the subject matter represented by the article. The executive editor asks them to complete the review in three weeks and encloses two forms: (a) referral form B and (b) reviewer's comment form along with reviewer's guidelines. Comments to authors are about the appropriateness and adequacy of the theoretical or conceptual framework, literature review, method, results and discussion, and conclusions. Reviewers often include suggestions for strengthening of the manuscript. Comments to the editor are in the nature of the significance of the work and its potential contribution to the literature.
3. The executive editor, in consultation with the editor-in-chief, examines the reviews and decides whether to reject the manuscript, invite the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or seek additional reviews. Final acceptance or rejection rests with the Editorial Board, who reserves the right to refuse any material for publication. In rare instances, the manuscript is accepted with almost no revision. Almost without exception, reviewers' comments (to the author) are forwarded to the author. If a revision is indicated, the editor provides guidelines for attending to the reviewers' suggestions and perhaps additional advice about revising the manuscript.
4. The authors decide whether and how to address the reviewers' comments and criticisms and the editor's concerns. The authors submit a revised version of the paper to the executive editor along with specific information describing how they have answered' the concerns of the reviewers and the editor.
5. The executive editor sends the revised paper out for review. Typically, at least one of the original reviewers will be asked to examine the article.
6. When the reviewers have completed their work, the executive editor in consultation with the editorial board and the editor-in-chief examine their comments and decide whether the paper is ready to be published, needs another round of revisions, or should be rejected.
7. If the decision is to accept, the paper is sent to that Press and the article should appear in print in approximately three months. The Publisher ensures that the paper adheres to the correct style (in-text citations, the reference list, and tables are typical areas of concern, clarity, and grammar). The authors are asked to respond to any queries by the Publisher. Following these corrections, page proofs are mailed to the corresponding authors for their final approval. At this point, only essential changes are accepted. Finally, the article appears in the pages of the Journal and is posted on-line.

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Pertanika **emphasizes** on the linguistic accuracy of every manuscript published. Thus all authors are required to get their manuscripts edited by **professional English language editors**. Author(s) **must provide a certificate** confirming that their manuscripts have been adequately edited. A proof from a recognised editing service should be submitted together with the cover letter at the time of submitting a manuscript to Pertanika. **All costs will be borne by the author(s)**.

This step, taken by authors before submission, will greatly facilitate reviewing, and thus publication if the content is acceptable.

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BACKGROUND

Pertanika began publication in 1978 as the Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science (JTAS).

In 1992, a decision was made to streamline *Pertanika* into **3 journals**. i.e.,

1. Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science (JTAS)
2. Journal of Science and Technology (JST)
3. **Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (JSSH)**

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PROFILE: *Pertanika* publishes original academic articles rapidly. It is fully committed to the Open Access Initiative and provides free access to all articles as soon as they are published.

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- Name(s), Institutional affiliation(s) and email(s) of each author.
- The maximum length of your article must not exceed:
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 - 2000 words for short communication papers, or
 - 4000 words for review papers
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- ▶ An international multidisciplinary peer-reviewed leading Malaysian journal.
- ▶ Publishes articles in **English** quarterly. i.e., *March, June, September* and *December*.
- ▶ The elapsed time from submission to publication for the articles averages 5 to 6 months. A decision on acceptance of a manuscript is reached in 3 to 4 months (average 14 weeks).

- ▶ Indexed in **SCOPUS** (Elsevier), **EBSCO**, **DOAJ**, **CABI**, **Google Scholar**, **MyAIS** & **ISC**.

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- ▶ *Pertanika* JSSH aims to develop as a flagship journal for the Social Sciences with a focus on emerging issues pertaining to high-quality research related to the **social** and **behavioural sciences** as well as the **humanities**, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.
- ▶ Refer to our website for detailed scope areas. <http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/scope.php>

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 - methodology/ approach
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 - main findings
 - overall contribution
 - conclusions & suggestion for further research
 - acknowledgements (if applicable)

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