UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

PATTERNS OF ELECTRONIC MAIL DISCOURSE IN TWO MALAYSIAN ORGANISATIONS

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FBMK 2003 13

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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2003

UPM

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Haji Habil b. Haji Abdul Hamid and Hajjah Maryam bt Haji Jamaluddin, who have believed in me and loved me unconditionally.

Your encouragement and support have made me who I am today.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Chairman: **Associate Professor Shameem Rafik Khan, Ph.D.**

Faculty: **Modern Languages and Communication**

This study investigates the patterns of email discourse in workplace communication. Email exchanges are analysed in order to explicate how members of an organisation interact through email to meet the specific communicative needs of the organisation. It is the assumption of this study that email discourse represents social action of members in the organisation and it is part of a social practice.

The linguistic data for the study consists of email texts and the study emulates the language in context model. The three parameters of the field, mode and tenor that constitute register, are investigated to provide insight on what the participants are engaged in, the people involve in the interaction and on the role the language plays.

The data is analysed in two parts: text–based features and text in context. The text–based features is further divided into two: the micro and macro analyses.

The macro analysis involves looking at the surface and content structure of email messages. This analysis provides information on the generic structure of email. The micro analysis involves eliciting empirical evidence from the corpus by using concordancing tools. A textual analysis is also carried out to draw the textual features and lexical choices and expressions used by writers in the emails.

The text in context constitutes the interpretation and explanation of the reason why and the explanation of how certain linguistic features are adopted in some situation, when communicating with certain people to achieve certain communicative purposes.

Examples of email messages are discussed and the various strategies are explained based on the linguistic data, and the social context in which the emails are written. Reference to the specific organisational culture and practices are formulated.

The evidence shows that in the context of workplace communication, the available linguistic resources are used creatively and purposively via email in meeting the specific communicative purposes of members of organisations. The social, political and cultural aspects of the interaction influence the way emails are written and email writers are consciously aware of the available resources.

The study concludes that people in organisation adopt various discourse and rhetorical strategies to meet the specific communicative needs at the workplace. The strategies selected reflect the writers' interpersonal relationship with their email interactants while the linguistic realisation in the email texts manifest the values they hold as members of the organisation. Finally, a model of factors influencing the construction of the email messages at the workplace and a taxonomy of the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies in email as an institutional genre are posited which provide a framework for future research in the field.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

BENTUK WACANA MEL ELEKTRONIK DALAM DUA ORGANISASI DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

HADINA HABIL

Julai 2003

Pengerusi: **Profesor Madya Shameem Rafik Khan, Ph.D**

Fakulti: **Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi**

Kajian ini menganalisis bentuk-bentuk wacana komunikasi e-mel di tempat kerja. Interaksi saling berbalas e-mel dikaji untuk menghuraikan bagaimana ahli-ahli sebuah organisasi berinteraksi menerusi e-mel untuk memenuhi pelbagai keperluan komunikatif tertentu dalam sesebuah organisai. Andaian yang dibuat oleh kajian ini adalah bahawa wacana e-mel menggambarkan tindakan sosial ahli-ahli dalam organisasi dan justeru, ia merupakan sebahagian daripada amalan sosial.

Data linguistik kajian ini merangkumi teks-teks e-mel dan kajian ini mengguna pakai model bahasa dalam konteks. Tiga parameter iaitu bidang, cara dan tenor yang membentuk laras, dikaji untuk menghasilkan dapatan tentang perkara apakah yang mempertaut para peserta, orang yang terlibat dalam interaksi dan peranan yang dimainkan oleh bahasa.

Data-data dianalisis dalam dua bahagian: ciri-ciri teks dan teks dalam konteks. Ciri-ciri teks seterusnya dibahagikan kepada dua: analisis mikro dan analisis makro.

Analisis makro melibatkan pemerhatian terhadap struktur permukaan dan kandungan mesej e-mel. Analisis ini memberikan maklumat tentang struktur generik e-mel tersebut. Analisis mikro pula menghasilkan bukti empirikal daripada korpus menerusi penggunaan instrumen konkordans. Analisis tekstual juga dilaksanakan untuk memperoleh ciri-ciri tekstual dan pilihan leksikal serta ungkapan-ungkapan yang digunakan oleh penulis-penulis dalam e-mel mereka.

Teks dalam konteks membentuk penafsiran dan penjelasan tentang sebab mengapa dan penjelasan bagaimana ciri-ciri linguistik tertentu digunakan dalam sesetengah situasi, apabila berkomunikasi dengan orang tertentu untuk mencapai objektif komunikatif tertentu.

Contoh-contoh mesej e-mel dibincangkan dan pelbagai bentuk strategi dihuraikan berdasarkan data linguistik dan konteks sosial e-mel tersebut ditulis. Rujukan terhadap budaya dan amalan organisasi tertentu juga dikemukakan.

Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa dalam konteks komunikasi di tempat kerja, maklumat dan sumber linguistik yang ada adalah digunakan secara kreatif dan penuh objektif menerusi e-mel untuk memenuhi matlamat komunikatif tertentu ahli-ahli organisasi. Aspek-aspek sosial, politik dan budaya dalam interaksi mempengaruhi cara e-mel ditulis dan penulis-penulis e-mel sedar dan tahu tentang maklumat dan sumber linguistik yang ada.

Kesimpulannya, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa para pekerja dalam organisasi menggunakan pelbagai strategi wacana dan retorik untuk memenuhi keperluan-keperluan komunikatif tertentu di tempat kerja. Strategi-strategi yang digunakan menggambarkan hubungan interpersonal para penulis e-mel dengan penginteraksi e-mel mereka, manakala realisasi linguistik dalam teks-teks e-mel menggambarkan nilai-nilai yang dipegang oleh mereka sebagai ahli organisasi. Akhir sekali, dicadangkan sebuah model tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi sumbangan e-mel mesej di tempat kerja dan sebuah taksonomi bagi ciri-ciri linguistik serta strategi retorik dalam e-mel sebagai sebuah genre institusional yang membentuk sebuah rangka kerja bagi kajian seterusnya dalam bidang ini.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah, the Almighty, for the countless bounties bestowed upon me – that I manage to get through the four years of challenging yet rewarding academic journey. This doctoral thesis was made possible by the generous cooperation and moral support of many individuals to whom I would like to single out several of them to extend my thanks. They are:

- First and foremost, my heartfelt and sincere gratitude to the chairman of the supervisory committee, Associate Professor Dr. Shameem Rafik-Galea whose constructive criticisms, comments, suggestions and encouragement have helped the research to progress accordingly. Under her earnest supervision, I have been able to focus, refocus and constantly examine the research perspective. Thank you for the long hours of discussion, for the patience, great assistance and companion, which goes beyond the official duty, and most importantly for believing in me.

- My supervisory committee members, Dr. Mohd Faiz Abdullah and Associate Professor Dr. Ezhar b. Tamam, for the invaluable comments and insightful ideas and the encouragement. The brainstorming sessions I had with each of you helped me refine and improve the study.

- My employer and sponsor, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, Johor for the award of the scholarship and for the time away from work. I am indebted to the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development and the

Head of Department, Department of Modern Languages, for allowing me the time-off to pursue my area of interest and to complete what I have started. To all my colleagues at the department, thank you for the moral support extended during this challenging academic exercise. To Aby, Umul, Tim, Huda, Hiza & Faizah – thank you for the long distance support & help.

- The lecturers and staff, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM for the assistance – Khalil, thank you for the guidance on concordancing. My special thank to the WRT staff: Dr. Shameem, Kak Siti Ramnah, Sazali & Hasrul – for providing me with the technical support and assistance and for providing me with your friendly advice, and most importantly, for accepting me as part of the 'family'. To Syed Nurul Akla – thank you for your moral support and your kind words of encouragement.

- My grateful thanks to the management of Company A and Company B for allowing me access to their emails. A special thank you to my informants in both organisations, Che Khalid and Bahari, and all the staff who had assisted in data collection.

- My fellow friends – Rohaida, Mazalan, Mohamed, Suffian, Rosmah, Kamisah, Tryanna and all my graduate friends at the faculty – thank you for being so helpful and supportive. Rohaida, your feedback and comment greatly help and I appreciate your friendship. To Paul, thank you very much for your helpful comments and insightful feedback. I appreciate your time and effort spent in going through the draft.

- My friends who have directly or indirectly helped me get through the four 'challenging and lonely' years in KL: Kak Zah, Kak Has & Kinah – thanks for lending the ears and for the sisterly and friendly advice that helped keep my feet on the ground; Rosiah & Leck – thanks for your computer expertise & your friendship over the years; Sham, Nina, Xnorx & Liza – thanks for 'being there' when I needed you guys; all my 'KL and JB friends' who have stood by me over the years – thank you.

- Last but never least – to my family, Ayah & Emak, thank you for your Prayers, your undivided support, and your unconditional love that keep me going. Thank you also for trusting my judgements and for believing in me. There were times when I thought I could never conclude this distant journey but your confidence in me made me strive harder. To my sisters, Ida & Nani, and my brother Nit, thank you for putting up with me and thanks for taking care of my domestic needs whenever I needed you. To the rest of the family, a big THANK YOU for the unconditional love and countless things that you have done.

- To the many individuals who have not been specifically mentioned but who have singularly or collectively given their encouragement, ideas and support towards the completion of this thesis, I would like to express my profound thanks.

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