



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

COMMUNICATING IDENTITY AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

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COMMUNICATING IDENTITY AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS



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COMMUNICATING IDENTITY AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

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February 2011

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This study explored communicating identity among Malaysian students in Universiti Putra Malaysia through various *communication forms*, as proposed by Mary J. Collier. The communication forms for this study included language, clothing and personal experiences. The study also incorporated cultural problems of ethnocentrism, discrimination, prejudice and bias and coping strategies of cultural relativity, cultural determinism, communication improvement strategies and awareness.

Experiences in life shape the communicating of identity. Without knowing these experiences, one may make generalizations and draw inappropriate conclusions leading to a communication breakdown where a person's identity is wrongly perceived. This would be a barrier in understanding the world as a whole.

The general objective was to determine the identification among Malaysian students in UPM and cultural problems in identification. The specific objectives were: 1) To determine how forms of communication (language, clothing and personal experiences) are incorporated into the identification process. 2) To determine the cultural problems encountered. 3) To determine how students cope with cultural problems in identification.

This study was conducted using the phenomenological approach consisting of 15 in-depth interviews and one by e-mail. Location of the study was UPM itself and the setting was one-to-one and informal. Each interview took around 15 to 53 minutes and questions were mostly open-ended. Subjects comprised of Malays, Chinese and Indians, both male and female between the ages of 18 to 50 years.

Purposive sampling was used and interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim and e-mailed to respondents for approval. The data was sorted using bracketing, coding and categorization and underwent phenomenological analysis. This involved *horizontalization of meanings, clustering of themes, textural description, structural description* and *essential description*. The theory was the Cultural Identity Theory by Collier.

Findings showed that students immediately mentioned their names when communicating identity and their age too. These revealed an increasingly

personalized and individualized identity. It was found that race was not a popular topic and students preferred a juxtaposition of national and ethnic labels. The overall language preference was Malay and the preferred clothing was “casual attire” where traditional clothes were worn only on occasion.

In conclusion, students were rather nationalistic in their outlook. Although students supported ‘one voice, one country’, there was a definite movement towards a personalized identity. The ‘one voice, one country’ mindset may be idealistic in one sense. It would be easier to create a deeper sense of unity if one is aware of one’s differences but not to lose sight of one’s identity in the process.

The study supported the cultural identity theory which indicated tolerance, change and better understanding between races which the theory also suggested. The contribution of the study was that it would reduce disparity among different cultures while increase the sense of belonging among similar cultures. It would equip one with the intercultural skills to settle and reach agreements in controversial cultural issues.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

MENYAMPAIKAN IDENTITI DI KALANGAN PELAJAR MALAYSIA

Oleh

REBECCA JOHN KOLETH

Februari 2011

Pengerusi: Prof. Madya Abdul Mua'ti @ Zamri Ahmad, PhD

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Kajian ini meneroka komunikasi identiti di kalangan pelajar-pelajar Malaysia di Universiti Putra Malaysia melalui pelbagai *bentuk komunikasi*, seperti yang dicadangkan oleh Mary J. Collier. Bentuk komunikasi dalam kajian ini termasuklah bahasa, pakaian dan pengalaman peribadi. Kajian ini juga menggabungkan masalah-masalah budaya seperti etnosentrisme, diskriminasi, prejudis dan kemiringan serta strategi-strategi menangani masalah dalam perkaitan budaya, penetapan budaya, strategi dan kesedaran peningkatan komunikasi.

Pengalaman dalam hidup membentuk identiti. Tanpa mengetahui pengalaman-pengalaman ini, seseorang mungkin membuat satu generalisasi dan membuat rumusan yang tidak lengkap, yang membawa kepada kesilapfahaman di mana

identiti seseorang itu disalahtafsirkan. Ini mungkin juga menjadi satu halangan dalam memahami dunia secara keseluruhannya.

Objektif umumnya adalah untuk menentukan identifikasi di kalangan para pelajar Malaysia di UPM dan permasalahan budaya dalam pengenalpastian ini. Objektif-objektif ini secara khususnya ialah : 1) Untuk menentukan bagaimana bentuk komunikasi (bahasa, cara berpakaian dan pengalaman peribadi) digabungkan ke dalam proses pengenalpastian. 2) Untuk menentukan masalah-masalah budaya yang dihadapi. 3) Untuk menentukan bagaimana pelajar menangani atau tabah menghadapi masalah-masalah budaya dalam identifikasi ini.

Kajian ini berasaskan kepada fenomena, terdiri dari 15 temuramah terperinci dan satu soalselidik melalui email. Lokasi kajian adalah di UPM dan caranya adalah dengan bersemuka dan informal. Setiap temuramah mengambil masa lebih kurang 15 ke 53 minit dan kebanyakan soalan adalah dari jenis soalan terbuka. Responden terdiri dari Melayu, Cina dan India, kedua-dua lelaki dan perempuan dalam julat usia 18-50 tahun.

Persampelan bertujuan telah digunakan dan temuramah telah direkodkan, dibuat transkripsi patah dempatah dan di-emailkan kepada responden untuk tujuan kebenaran dan kesahihan transkripsi. Data disusun menggunakan tanda

kurungan, kod dan pengkategorian dan juga analisa fenomena. Ini membabitkan *pelintangan makna, pengumpulan tema, penghuraian teks, penghuraian struktur dan penghuraian penting*. Teori yang telah digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah Teori Identiti Budaya oleh Collier.

Dapatan menunjukkan yang pelajar-pelajar segera menyebut nama mereka apabila cuba menyampaikan mesej tentang identiti dan usia mereka. Ini menunjukkan identiti yang bercorak peribadi dan individualistik. Telah didapati bahawa bangsa bukanlah satu topik yang popular dan para pelajar lebih menggemari perkaitan label-label kebangsaan serta etnik. Keseluruhan bahasa yang digunakan ialah Bahasa Melayu dan pakaian yang digemari ialah “pakaian kasual” di mana pakaian tradisional hanya dipakai dalam majlis atau keadaan tertentu.

Kesimpulannya, para pelajar bersifat nasionalistik. Walaupun para pelajar menyokong ‘satu suara, satu negara’, terdapat satu pergerakan yang pasti ke arah satu identiti yang berkeperibadian. ‘Satu suara, satu negara’ adalah sesuatu yang idealistik, dari satu sudut. Lebih mudah untuk mencipta satu rasa perpaduan yang mendalam sekiranya seseorang itu sedar akan perbezaan dirinya dari orang lain tetapi tidak lupa akan identiti dirinya pada masa yang sama.

Kajian ini menyokong teori identiti budaya di mana ia menunjukkan toleransi, perubahan dan kefahaman yang lebih baik di antara kaum yang turut disarankan oleh teori tersebut. Sumbangan kajian ini adalah supaya ia boleh mengurangkan perbezaan di kalangan pelbagai budaya yang berlainan, pada masa yang sama meningkatkan perasaan kekitaan di antara budaya yang sama. Ia akan melengkapkan seseorang itu dengan kemahiran-kemahiran antara-budaya dalam menyelesaikan dan mencapai satu persetujuan dalam isu-isu budaya yang penuh dengan kontroversi.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 14 February 2011 to conduct the final examination of Rebecca John Koleth on her thesis entitled "Communicating Identity Among Malaysian Students" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master Of Science.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is, not concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

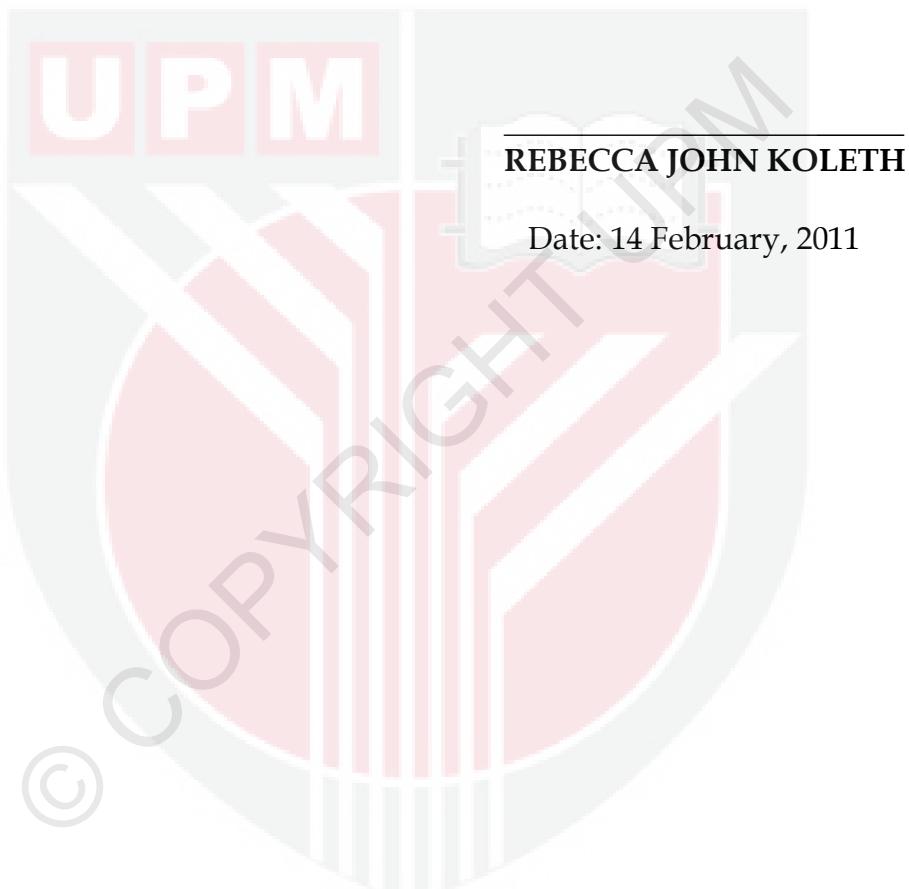


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