

## *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*

### **About the Journal**

*Pertanika* is an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to the publication of original papers, and it serves as a forum for practical approaches to improving quality in issues pertaining to tropical agriculture and its related fields. *Pertanika* began publication in 1978 as the Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science. In 1992, a decision was made to streamline *Pertanika* into three journals to meet the need for specialised journals in areas of study aligned with the interdisciplinary strengths of the university.

The revamped Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (JSSH) aims to develop as a pioneer journal for the Social Sciences with a focus on emerging issues pertaining to the social and behavioural sciences as well as the humanities, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Other *Pertanika* series include *Pertanika* Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science (JTAS); and *Pertanika* Journal of Science and Technology (JST).

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## **Preface**

This issue of *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* also contains five papers that were presented at the International Doctoral Education Research Network (IDERN) Conference hosted by Universiti Putra Malaysia from the 19th – 22nd April 2010. The event included an invitational research forum, conferences for supervisors and seminars for both supervisors and postgraduate students.

IDERN represents a group of researchers from around the world who are working to develop an international agenda for research in doctoral education. IDERN 2010 provided an opportunity for researchers and practitioners from Malaysia, the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world to share knowledge and perspectives in a trans-national forum and to work towards future international and regional research collaborations. IDERN 2010 focused on the changing international context for doctoral education; identified issues in undertaking doctoral research in cross-national and cross-cultural settings; critiqued theoretical and methodological perspectives and tools for addressing these issues, and provided opportunity for participants to explore the implications for their own research and publications.

The five papers on doctoral education presented in this issue provide insights into trans-national and trans-cultural issues, showcasing new dimensions of doctoral students' experiences in an international context of globally networked learning; new insights into power in supervision, through a study of bullying; renewed attention to questions of flexibility in doctoral pedagogy, formal and informal learning in networked environments and the nexus of creativity and reflective practice in scaffolding the entry of doctoral candidates into communities of research practice.

The timely publication of these selected papers that are published in this Issue would not have been possible without the full commitment of Dr Nayan Kanwal, Managing Editor and his dedicated assistant, Ms Erica Kwan Lee Yin, and the strong support from the *Pertanika* Editorial Office, UPM Press.

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## Editorial<sup>i</sup>

### ASEAN: Global-Local Networks in Emerging Regions through Knowledge Transfer



Global-local networks have been recognized by the ASEAN governments as being crucial in supporting the growth of local industry in the ASEAN region in tandem with booming FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) through Multinational Enterprises (MNEs). Given its strategic role as a strong player in a dynamic region, ASEAN is certainly poised for global prominence. This would be best achieved if the bloc does indeed keep a united stand in matters affecting regional policy. However, the 'glue' for SATU ASEAN (ONE ASEAN) comes from member countries' awareness of one another's culture.

Culture as a matter of course nurtures soundness and wealth of spirit. Given that it also encourages the kind of creativity that can boost SMEs and support economic vitality, it is key for the future prosperity and significance of ASEAN globally.

Secondly, in addition to promoting cultural heritage within ASEAN countries, awareness of one another's culture can only enhance regional co-operation among member nations in diverse areas.

Additionally, in terms of knowledge production, ASEAN can play a more active role in building up a resourceful cluster for innovation and technology through strong networks in various areas of expertise. Indeed, knowledge production through knowledge transfer is crucial within the ASEAN region. Even in a global economy, spatial proximity is highly relevant for networks and technology transfer. Although it is possible to transfer tacit knowledge over large distances, spatial proximity is beneficial in that it enhances the 'social depth' of communication. One example is the automotive cluster in Indonesia in which spatial proximity has helped knowledge transfer to some extent from Japanese companies and vice versa.

In the ASEAN region, knowledge production through knowledge transfer is no longer perceived as a linear process but instead as the result of the complex interaction between numerous actors and institutions. These actors and institutions and their interconnections together constitute a significant player in knowledge transfer. However, this process needs to be supported by a new kind of development policy from ASEAN governments.

The global economy is also very much a network economy. Therefore, ASEAN should be proactive and work towards being an international-local network that can provide constructive and efficient

opportunity for close linkages with business actors/investors, suppliers and other relevant institutions, not only for increased efficiency but also to boost the rate of improvements and innovation.

Location affects competitive advantage through its influence on productivity, particularly productivity growth. As a result of this, ASEAN can have:

1. Access to specialized inputs and skilled employees
2. Access to information, supply-chains and technological linkages
3. Access to the relevant 'actors', which include governments, university/R&D centres, business practitioners

Personally, I hope that ASEAN can be a significant player in bridging the global production networks and knowledge as well as contribute to local economic development in developing countries through investments and technology transfer. Therefore, the fundamental questions should be whether these global networks have a place in ASEAN for upgrading local innovation and technological capabilities. This, of course, is a question which at the same time poses a challenge for the region.

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<sup>1</sup> DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of, and should not be attributed to, the Pertanika Journal or the Pertanika Editorial Board.

## The Willingness to Generate Positive Word of Mouth Marketing: The Case of Students in Private Universities in Jordan

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### ABSTRACT

Word-of-mouth marketing is highly recognized as one of the most prominent and powerful tools affecting consumer decision making. This study attempts to examine the willingness of students in private universities to generate positive WOM marketing where inadequate research and literature in Arab countries about such issue is a major concern. The model for this study contends that satisfaction, incentives, experience, and the source has a significant influence on students' willingness to use WOM. These propositions are investigated using data collected from three private universities in Amman-Jordan. Empirical support was found for three of our hypotheses. A key finding is that satisfaction, experience, and the source have significant influence on students' willingness to use positive WOM. Thus, it is concluded that with a discussion of how to use those variables in fostering interpersonal relationships between the university and the students in order to increase the likelihood of students' positive WOM behaviour.

**Keywords:** Word of mouth, marketing, private universities, decision making, Jordan

### INTRODUCTION

Word-of-Mouth Marketing, or WOMM, is a term used in the marketing and advertising industry to describe activities that companies undertake to generate personal recommendations as well as referrals for brand names, products and services. This form of communication has valuable source credibility, as people are generally be inclined to trust someone's opinion if they feel that it is offered freely and without prompting, compulsion, or personal interest in communicating the information. In addition, people are more inclined to believe the word-of-mouth promotion than more formal forms of promotion (i.e. advertising) because it is assumed that the communicator is satisfied by

the goods or services provided and is unlikely to have an ulterior motive (i.e. they are not out to sell you something). Moreover, people tend to believe people whom they know. In brief, WOMM is a marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message voluntarily (Grewal *et al.*, 2003).

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is considered one of the oldest forms of marketing communication, whether from the vendor, experts, or social acquaintances including friends and family. It may also be one of the most powerful channels, particularly if the provider of WOM is someone known and trusted. WOM is considered as a key ingredient in the success or failure of a

new business, because it is very powerful in making decision easier and in accelerating decision process. Furthermore, WOM is the least expensive, yet at the same time, the most credible form of advertising (Clow & Baak, 2007). It is becoming clearer that marketing success is determined more by the time it takes for customers to decide on a product than by any other single factor.

According to Silverman (2001b, p.15) WOM accelerates the process of customer decision-making, from deciding to decide, asking for information, weighing options, evaluating a free trial, and then finally, becoming a customer and advocate. He maintains that:

- The best way to *increase profit* is to accelerate favourable product decisions.
- The best way to *accelerate product decisions* is to make them easier.
- The best way to make the *decision easier* is to deliver *word of mouth*, instead of confusing, low-credibility information in the form of advertising, or other traditional marketing.

In addition to this, most external search studies include WOM communication as one source of information on which consumers rely on, in addition to other forms of search to create an index of total external search (e.g., Blech & Blech, 2007). More importantly, WOM differs from other information sources in several important ways. WOM communications differ from non-personal sources of external information in that the WOM channel is immediately bi-directional and interactive. The importance of WOM has been confirmed by Donaton (2003) who concludes that one American in 10 tells the other nine how to vote, where to eat, and what to buy. He highlights research showing how influential WOM has become and focuses on the people most responsible for spreading it. His findings show the majority of people rely more than ever on friends and family, rather than advertising or editorial, to decide which restaurants to try,

places to visit, prescription drugs to purchase, hotels to stay in and videos to rent. "It really a critical shift point and marketers need to think about it fundamentally, not just think of throwing on a *word of mouth* element" to marketing plans.

Opinion leader group can play very important role as human information processors and it can help in generating WOM. It has been suggested that opinion leaders exert a "disproportionate amount of influence on the decisions of other consumers" (Flynn *et al.*, 1994). Thus, the opinion leader group has the potential to be very important to marketers in disseminating product and company messages and therefore, it is considered as an essential part of the overall communication strategy.

This study focuses on a very important sector in Jordan, which is higher education and in particular, private universities. In the years between 2000/2001 and 2006/2007, Jordan saw an increased demand for higher education with enrolments growing at an annual rate of 14 percent from 77,841 to 218,900 students. In specific, private universities have seen a rapid increase in their enrolments. From 2000 to 2006, the enrolments in 12 private universities grew by about 18 percent annually from 36,642 to 55,744. With an increasing number of students going for the attainment of higher education, the government needs to allocate greater resources in improving the current higher education system and to improve access of good universities for the rising population. In particular, private universities have to change some of their admission policies. The enrolment cap in the private universities restricts the ability of university to absorb increasing number of higher education students. Projection for the number of students entering university is 92,000 per year by 2013, up from 50,469 in 2005.

The paper begins with listing research objectives, followed by a detailed literature review that highlights key issues of WOM. Accordingly, the next section focuses on research methodology, while the final section provides conclusions and discussion.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There has been a lot of marketing research on WOM, but not many has focused on covering the willingness of students in private universities to generate positive WOM. This paper fills this gap with the main objectives of this research as follows:

1. To examine the willingness of the students to generate positive WOM in private universities.
2. To identify the most important sources of positive WOM which have more influence on students; and,
3. To explore the way in which WOM operates in the cultures other than the Western.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To clarify the distinctive features of WOM, this section will shed light on different issues which include definition of WOM, power of WOM, the levels of WOM and empirical research related to WOM.

### Definition of WOM

The most common definition used for WOM communication is that of Arndt (1967) who states that it is an oral person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator from whom the person perceives as non-commercial, regarding brand, product or a service. Meanwhile, Silverman (1997) defines WOM as informal communications about products, services, or ideas between people who are independent of the company providing the product or service, in a medium independent of the company. Patton (2000) defines it as a message about the products or services offered by an organization or about the organization itself, which involves comments about product performance, service quality and trustworthiness passed on from one person to another. Finally, Stokes & Lomax (2002) define WOM communications as all interpersonal communication regarding products or services where the receiver regards the communicator as impartial.

### Power of WOM

WOM is more credible than any most sincere salesperson. It is able to reach more people, is faster than advertising, direct mail, and even the Internet, because it can spread like wildfire. It breaks through the clutter and the noise better than anything (Silverman & Eve, 2000). Even more important than its credibility, reach, speed and ability to break through the clutter, is its ability to get people to act. People think that WOM is so powerful because of its objective, and independent nature. Why is that so important? This is because a decision maker is more likely to get the whole, undistorted truth from an independent third party who has interest in promoting your point of view. This unique credibility gives word of mouth much of its power. There are some other reasons why word of mouth is so powerful, and these include:

*It is more relevant and complete.* WOM is “live,” and not be canned like most company communications. That means it is custom-tailored to the people who are participating in it. People are not giving a pitch; they are responding to questions, though most important questions, the ones the decision-makers themselves are asking. Therefore, customers pay more attention because it is perceived as *more relevant* and *more complete* than any other form of communication.

*It is the most honest medium.* Because it is custom-tailored, and because people are independent of the company, it is the most honest medium, and customers know it. Advertising and salespeople are notoriously biased and not fully truthful. The inherent honesty of word of mouth further adds to its credibility.

*It is customer driven.* Closely related to the above, word of mouth is the most customers driven of all communication channels. The customer determines who he/she will talk to, what he/she will ask, whether he/she will continue to listen or politely change the subject, etc.

*It is a mysterious, invisible force.* Despite all of its overwhelming power, it is invisible. It is sometimes called “underground” communication, or the grapevine.

*It feeds on itself.* Word of mouth is like a breeder reactor. It is self generating, it feeds on itself. It does not use up anything. If 10 people have 10 experiences, there are 100 direct experiences. If each tells 10 people about their own experiences, that is an additional 1000 (indirect) experiences, which can be just as powerful as the direct experiences. If they each tell ten people, that is an additional 1,000 people who now have 10,000 experiences in their heads, and so on.

*Levels of WOM*

According to Silverman (2001) there are several levels of word of mouth that are quite different from each other and these vary both in nature and intensity. Nine levels of WOM, ranging from the “minus 4” level, where the talk about product is only negative, to the “plus 4” level, where every one is raving about the product.



*Level 1 (Minus 4):* People are taking about a product and complaining about it. It has reached to the level of public scandal. People are asking each other about it and actively dissuading other people from using it. If this is a short-term emergency, such as product recall that is reacted too quickly and responsibly, the product can survive.

*Level 2 (Minus 3):* Customers and ex-customers go out of their way to convince the other people not to use the product, but it has not reached the scandal proportions. Similar to level Minus 4, almost nothing can survive this level.

*Level 3 (Minus 2):* When asked, customers rant, although they do not go out of their way to badmouth the product. They go on and on about how terrible the product is. The product sales will slowly erode in this situation. The process will be slower because the people are not actively seeking each other out to spread negative WOM.

*Level 4 (Minus 1):* In this stage, people are not actively complaining about product, but when they are asked, they have relatively

negative things to say. Here, advertisement and other conventional marketing can sometimes provide a holding action, but very little progress will be made.

*Level 5 (Zero):* At this level, people use product, but are rarely asked about it. They do not volunteer their opinion. If they are asked, they will have little (good or bad) to say about it. This product is getting little or no WOM. It is probably going to cost a fortune to get such a product widely accepted. It is the level where most products are.

*Level 6 (Plus 1):* When asked, people have nice things to say about the product. For example, people may not necessarily go out of their way to tell anybody about a product or a service from local merchants, such as dry cleaners or restaurants; however, if asked, they will say it is good, reliable, or any of the other nice things that are true about the product.

*Level 7 (Plus 2):* When asked, customers rave. They go on and on about how wonderful the product is. Here, conventional marketing is almost completely wasted because it is much less powerful than what is sitting there for the talking. What is needed is for you to provide the channels and materials for your customers to rave.

*Level 8 (Plus 3):* At this level, customers go out of their way to convince other people to use the product. This is what people talk about at parties; the new movie, the latest restaurant, the latest book. Again, provide the encouragement and the channels, facilitate the process, and build a bigger plant.

*Level 9 (Plus 4):* Product is being talked about continually; people are asking each other about it. Experts, local influences, typical customers, and prospects are all talking with each other about the product or the service and raving about its virtues. It is getting a considerable amount of publicity. At this level, it is especially necessary to manage people’s expectations. Otherwise, people will expect much more than will be delivered, which is a sure recipe for disappointment. In this kind of a situation, sales are often growing at such a rapid rate that the company cannot maintain quality.

Once again, expectations must be managed. Some examples of the companies representing level Plus 4 are such as Lexus Automobiles, Harley-Davidson and Apple computer.

**EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

According to Nielsen Global Internet Survey (2007), consumers around the world still place their highest levels of trust in other consumers. Conducted twice a year among 26,486 internet users in 47 markets from Europe, Asia Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East (Egypt and UAE the only Arab countries who participated in this survey), Nielsen surveyed consumers on their attitudes toward thirteen types of advertising - from conventional newspaper and television ads to branded web sites and consumer-generated content. As shown in Table (1), the recommendation of someone else remains the most trusted sources of information when consumers decide which products and services to buy. Although consumer recommendations are the most credible form of advertising among 78 percent of the study’s respondents, Nielsen found significant national and regional differences regarding this and other mediums. In particular, word-of-mouth generates considerable levels of trust across much of Asia Pacific. Seven of the top ten markets which rely mostly on “recommendations from consumers” are in this region, including Hong Kong (93%), Taiwan (91%) and Indonesia (89%) (see Table 2). At the other end of the global spectrum, Europeans, generally, are least likely to trust what they hear from other consumers, particularly in Denmark (62%) and Italy (64%) (see Table 3).

TABLE 1  
To what extent do you trust the following forms of advertising?

Recommendations from consumers	78%
Newspapers	63%
Consumer opinions posted online	61%
Brand websites	60%
Television	56%
Magazines	56%
Radio	54%

Source: Nielsen Online Global Consumer Study April 2007

TABLE 2  
Word of Mouth is a powerful recommendation for Asians Seven of the top 10 markets who relied on it hailed from Asia

Hong Kong	93%
Taiwan	91%
Indonesia	89%
India	87%
South Korea	87%
Philippines	86%
UAE	84%

Source: Nielsen Online Global Consumer Study April 2007

TABLE 3  
Top five countries to rely on someone else’s recommendation

Hong Kong	93%
Taiwan	91%
Indonesia	89%
India	87%
South Korea	87%

\* Source: Nielsen Online Global Consumer Study, April 2007

Sweidan (2009) carried the only study on word-of-mouth in Jordan. This study attempted to examine the effect of the word-of-mouth communication on consumers' purchasing decisions concerning his/her selections and loyalty toward certain brand names. In addition, the study also tried to identify the effects of demographic variables on the consumers' selection. The major finding of this study indicates that there is a strong effect of the WOM on consumers' purchasing decision regarding the selection and loyalty to certain brand names. The study also reveals that friends and relatives are the most influential power prior to purchasing decision. Finally, the WOM communication influences male consumers more than the females.

Ying & Chung (2008) investigate how attitude towards purchase intention of a product is affected by involvement level and presentation order of positive and negative WOM information when presented in a single-message single-source context. Two studies were conducted with undergraduates of a top Asian university using experimental setups. It was found that the subjects tended to base their evaluations more on later information than earlier information regardless of the involvement level. Meanwhile, this recency effect was consistently found across the product categories of tourist destination and restaurant in both studies. Despite obtaining differences between high and low involvement levels in the pre-test for both products, the difference was found again in only the restaurant category in the manipulation check of both studies. Thus, the findings of this paper could be used to help companies to position messages in their favour when both positive and negative information needs to be presented.

The purposes of Ferguson's (2008) paper were to study word-of-mouth and viral marketing, and to determine their measurability in terms of return on investment (ROI). The study examined real-life campaigns from well-known companies and attempted to measure consumers' response beyond merely viewing or participating in the campaign. In more specific, the study looked into much of an actionable

response can be evoked and measured from viral and word-of-mouth campaigns. The paper explored some recognizable viral marketing campaigns and studied their effects on product sales, consumer advocacy and brand awareness. It also highlighted important factors to consider when developing word-of-mouth marketing, such as, who is doing it well, who is not, what lasting effects can a campaign deliver, and are there any effective ways to measure return on investment. The paper found that word-of-mouth or viral marketing efforts are not always a sure bet. However, a well-placed, calculated and provocative campaign can spark a firestorm of business that sometimes can be effective for years in non-terminal new mediums like the internet.

Meanwhile, in his study, Needham (2008) made an attempt to describe the ways word-of-mouth (WOM) could operate in social network platforms such as Facebook. Using Headbox, a research and seeding community for 30,000 16-25 year olds who share their thoughts, their opinions and their ideas and are rewarded for it, consumer insights on brands and how positive and negative WOM are described. The study revealed that the importance of co-creation is vital in diffusion. Co-creation implies that marketing happens with young people rather than it being directed at them. In addition to that, a new approach to marketing using social networking and a very large sample suggests that we are near to a clearer understanding of the complexities of diffusion by WOM.

According to Soutar *et al.* (2007), WOM represents an opportunity to organizations who continually seek new ways to achieve competitive advantage because it has a powerful influence on consumers' attitudes and behaviours. This study aimed to investigate the complexities of the WOM concept and simultaneously examine the triggers that motivate people to offer WOM and the conditions that enhance the chance of WOM occurring. The findings revealed two key WOM themes, termed as "richness of message" and "strength of implied or explicit advocacy", as well as various triggers and conditions which affect WOM occurrence. The study suggested

that the WOM activity is more complex than previous research has argued. Managers should consider various WOM facets and, in particular, recognize WOM will be most favourable when it is positive, richly described and conveyed in a strong manner.

The study of Fong & Burton (2006) was the first to examine WOM in online discussion boards and thus provided valuable insight for marketers into this growing source of WOM. It aimed to examine and compare the frequency and content of postings on digital camera electronic discussion boards within US and China based websites. The analysis showed quantitative and qualitative differences in the content across the two sites. There were differences in the pattern of brand mentions across the two websites, and the requests for information seeking behaviour also varied across the two sites; users of EachNet were more likely to request information, thus possibly increasing the likelihood of, and the influence of, OWOM on this website. There were also significant differences in term of content, with higher country of origin (CoO) effects on EachNet. CoO effects were largely and strongly negative, and in particular, they showed high levels of negative references to brands originating from Japan.

While the objective of Podoshen's (2006) article was to explore if there is a difference between American Jewish consumers and American non-Jewish consumers in the use of word-of-mouth and brand loyalty in response to the purchase of durable goods (automobiles). Additionally, this article also aimed to explore if there is a difference in the use of WOM and brand loyalty among American Jews with differing levels of acculturation. Nonetheless, the study showed no significant difference in brand loyalty and word-of-mouth between all American Jews and American non-Jews. However, a significant difference between highly acculturated American Jews and low-aculturated American Jews was found. The article helps firms plan their marketing strategy in terms of how they can utilize word of mouth where American Jewish consumers comprise a significant part of the target market.

The study by Wirtz & Chew (2002) examined how incentives would work to actively encourage WOM, and how incentives would potentially interact with other variables that have been shown to drive WOM. The results of the study show that satisfaction does not necessarily increase the likelihood of WOM being generated. It also shows that incentives are effective catalysts to increase the likelihood of WOM being generated by satisfied consumers and tie strength to be an important variable in explaining WOM behaviour. The findings suggest that satisfied customers are a necessary but not sufficient condition for getting positive WOM and those incentives may be an effective way to get satisfied customers to recommend a firm.

### THE PROPOSED MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

The proposed model is based on the above literature review, and it was found that satisfaction, experience, incentives, and the source are the most influential factors which boost the role of WOM in consumers' decision making. Some of those variables are also included in Wangenheim & Bayon's (2004) model.

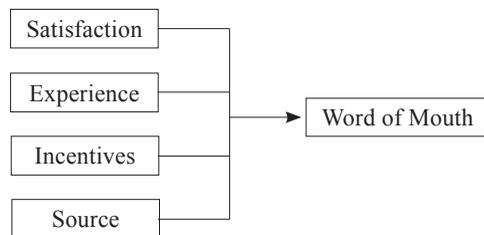


Fig. 1: Proposed research model

Abundant empirical studies have identified a positive association between customers' satisfaction and WOM. Evidence also indicates that WOM is often related to consumers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with previous purchasing experiences (Blodgett *et al.*, 1993). Richins (1983) found that the tendency to engage in negative WOM was positively related to

the level of dissatisfaction. Therefore, it was expected that:

*H1*: Satisfaction has a significant influence on students' willingness to use WOM.

*H1a*: Dissatisfied students are willing to use WOM more than satisfied students.

According to Gilly *et al.* (1998), someone who is an expert in a particular product category should dispose of more product or purchase related information in this field and therefore, his/her opinion will be sought more often than the opinion of others. Moreover, the greater knowledge base of experts should enable them to convince others more effectively of their opinion on products and brands. To Jacoby & Hoyer (1981), experts are more often opinion leaders in a product category than other is. Therefore, it was expected that:

*H2*: WOM from expert and opinion leaders has a direct significant influence on students.

Satisfied customers need to feel motivated to provide WOM. People who are rewarded for a particular behaviour are more likely to engage in that behaviour again (Buhler, 1992). A monetary incentive (reward) can be used as a reinforcer to shape behaviour (Gupta & Shaw, 1998). In other words, incentives can function as an extrinsic motivator, and this motivation may increase as the incentive increases. Therefore, it was expected that:

*H3*: Incentives provided by universities have a direct significant influence on students' willingness to spread positive WOM.

Consumers interact with people from a spectrum of various degrees of tie strength, ranging from strong primary (e.g. brother) to weak secondary (e.g. a seldom-contacted acquaintance). Strong ties have been shown to be more likely to be activated for information flow and are more likely to provide information (Brown & Reingen, 1987). In addition, the amount of WOM generated was higher within

groups with many strong tie relations than within the groups with many weak tie relations (Bone, 1992). This indicates that consumers engage in more WOM with strong than with weak ties. Based on that was expected:

*H4*: The source of WOM has a direct significant influence on students' willingness to spread Positive WOM

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire used comprised a five-point Likert-type format related to WOM. The first section contained questions about respondents' demographics, while the second section contained questions related to WOM. The statement "I am willing to inform other students my opinion about the university according to my experience" was used to measure WOM. The questionnaire was also pre-tested by asking 22 students to complete the questionnaire to discover any difficulty or ambiguous questions. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed through convenience sampling, out of which, 483 were returned. After checking the returned questionnaires, 33 were discarded due to incomplete responses. Thus, a total of 450 were used for the analysis. The questionnaire was distributed in Arabic language to undergraduate students enrolled in three private universities located in Amman-Jordan. To assure face validity of the translated version, the questionnaire was checked by experts in the relevant area to confirm the accuracy of the translation. A different statistical method such as Cronbach alpha, Factor Analysis, Multiple Regression, and descriptive statistics was also used to analyze the data and to test the hypothesis. In addition, the Cronbach alpha and Factor Analysis were used for testing reliability and validity, and Multiple Regression and descriptive statistics were utilized to test the hypothesis.

## RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

As shown in Table 4, the survey respondents came from a relatively broad cross-section of the students' population. Of the respondents,

TABLE 4  
Cross tabulation of the respondents' profile by university

	Philadelphia University	Applied Science University	Amman Private University	Total
<b>College</b>				
Business	49(10.9%)	46 (10.2 %)	49 (20.9 %)	189 (42.0 %)
Law	12 (2.7%)	6 (1.3 %)	2(0.4 %)	20 (4.4 %)
Arts	16 (3.6%)	30 (6.7%)	8 (1.8 %)	54 (12.0 %)
IT	15 (3.3 %)	26 (5.8 %)	6 (1.3 %)	47 (10.7 %)
Science	4 (.9 %)	-----	-----	4 (.9 %)
Engineering	19 (4.2 %)	26 (5.8 %)	8 (1.8 %)	53 (11.8 %)
Pharmacy	35(7.8%)	12 (2.7 %)	22 (4.9 %)	69 (15.3 %)
Others*	-----	4 (0.9%)	10 (2.2 %)	14 (3.1 %)
Total	150 (33.3%)	150 (33.3%)	150 (33.3%)	447 (100%)
<b>Age</b>				
Less than 20	37 (8.3%)	54 (12.1%)	56(12.5%)	147(32.9%)
21- 25	100 (22.4%)	82 (18.3 %)	88 (19.7%)	270 (60.4%)
26-30	9 (2.0%)	8 (1.8%)	4 (.9 %)	21 (4.7 %)
More than 31	1 (.2%)	6 (1.3%)	2 (.4%)	9 (2.0%)
Total	147 (32.9%)	150(33.6%)	150 (33.6%)	447 (100%)
<b>Academic Year</b>				
First year	6 (1.3 %)	18 (4.0 %)	30 (6.7 %)	54 (12.1 %)
Second Year	36 (8.0%)	24 (5.4 %)	18 (4.0 %)	78 (17.4 %)
Third Year	41 (9.2%)	48 (10.7%)	34 (7.6 %)	123 (27.5 %)
Fourth Year	52 (11.6%)	46 (10.3%)	64 (14.3 %)	162 (36.2 %)
Final year	13 (2.9 %)	14 (3.1 %)	4 (.9 %)	31 (6.9 %)
Total	148 (33.01%)	150 (33.5 %)	150 (33.5%)	448 (100%)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	113 (25.1%)	88(19.6%)	116 (25.8%)	317 (70.4%)
Female	37 (8.2%)	62 (13.8 %)	34 (7.6%)	133 (29.6%)
Total	150(33.3%)	150(33.3%)	150(33.3%)	450 (100%)
<b>Nationality</b>				
Jordanian	83(18.4%)	120 (26.7%)	78(17.3%)	281(62.4%)
Non Jordanian	67 (14.9%)	30 (6.7%)	72 (16.0%)	169 (37.6%)
Total	150(33.3%)	150(33.3%)	150(33.3%)	450 (100%)

32.9 percent were less than 20 years of age, 60.4 percent were between 21 and 25 years of age, and only 6.7 percent were 26 years of age or over. 70 percent of the respondents were males and 29.6 percent were females. About 12.1 percent

of the respondents were the first year students, 17.4 others in the second year, 27.5 percent in their third year, and the highest percentage (36.2) were in the fourth year, and the remaining 6.9 percent were the final year students. In term of

nationality, 62.4 percent of the respondents were Jordanian and 37.6 percent others were non-Jordanian. Colleges represented by the survey respondents were Business (42.0 percent), Law (4.4 percent), Arts (12.0 percent), IT (10.7 percent), Science (0.9 percent), Engineering (11.8 percent), Pharmacy (15.3 percent), and others (3.1 percent).

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics used to measure the WOM items. As shown in the table, all the statements are above the 3 levels, indicating a positive indication towards generating positive WOM. The first statement received the highest mean (4.36) which indicated that if students were satisfied, they would be willing to say positive things

TABLE 5  
Descriptive statistics

WOM item	Mean	Std. deviation
1. If I am satisfied, I will say positive things about my university	4.36	.912
2. If I am not satisfied, I will say negative things about my university	3.35	1.347
3. Information about financial incentives offered by the university is the most important thing for me	3.21	1.154
4. I consider senior level students as the best source for information about any university	3.41	1.967
5. When I get incentives such as scholarship, I will talk in positive way about the university	3.75	1.165
6. When I need information about a university, usually I ask my close friend	3.20	1.173
7. When I hear positive things about my university from expert people such as the Ministry of Higher Education, I will consider it	3.27	1.237
8. When I hear in the media positive things about my university, such as library, computer labs, I will consider it	3.14	1.178
9. If advertisement contains little information, usually I seek information from friends and relatives	3.87	.859
10. Information coming from the university employee's (registration dept.) highly influences my attitude towards the university	3.25	1.123
11. Information about the academic faculty highly influences my attitude towards the university	3.44	1.164
12. Even when I am not satisfied from the university, still I will say positive things about it	3.31	1.252
13. Information from experts and opinion leaders create positive attitude about my university	3.82	1.073
14. I am willing to inform other students my opinion about the university according to my experience	3.57	1.021
15. The information that I get from my friends is more valuable than different types of advertisement	3.95	1.035
16. I prefer to depend on various sources rather than relying solely on friend	3.77	1.228

about the university. With the second highest mean of 3.95, statement number 15 was ranked second and it indicated that information from the friends is more valuable than different types of advertisement. Meanwhile, statement 9 ranked in the third place with a mean of 3.87, and once again, it emphasized on the role of friends and relatives as information sources. On the other hand, statement 8 received the lowest mean of 3.14 among all the items used to check the WOM dimensions.

**INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

A principal component factor analysis with Varimax Kaiser Normalization rotation was conducted as an extraction method for the factors. An initial examination of Table 6 suggests a four-factor structure that accounted for 66.11% of the total variance. As presented in Table 6, the loadings for the items that consists the four factors in general are quite encouraging (> .50), with three factors generally loading quite strongly on their intended factor except for the

TABLE 6  
Factor analysis for construct validity

Statement	Factor loading			
	SAT	EXP	INC	SOU
If I am satisfied I will say positive things about my university	.826			
If I am not satisfied I will say negative things about my university	.642			
Even when I am not satisfied from the university, still I will say positive things about it	.586			
When I hear positive things about my university from expert people		.559		
When I hear in media positive things about my university such as library, computer labs, I will consider it		.844		
Information from experts and opinion leaders create positive attitude about my university		.692		
Information about financial incentives offered by the university was the most important thing for me		.909		
When I get incentives such as scholarship, I will talk in positive way about the university			.525	
When I need information about a university, usually I ask my close friend				.827
Information coming from the university employee's (registration dept.) highly influence my attitude towards the university				.816
Information about the academic faculty highly influence my attitude towards the university				.827
The information that I get from my friends is more valuable than different types of advertisement				.746
I consider senior level students as the best source for information about any university				.668

Total variance explained = 66.11

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

third factor, incentives with only two items. All the items (except two) have loaded on their hypothesized factors; therefore, convergent and discriminant validity for all constructs is supported.

**INSTRUMENT RELIABILITY**

All the scales (except one) performed well on the tests conducted to assess the quality of the measures used in the present study. The instrument for measuring satisfaction, experience, and source showed satisfactory internal consistency (all Cronbach alphas > 0.70) as suggested by Nunnally (1978). However, the instrument for measuring incentives performed poorly (alpha =0.62), although the scale had shown a good reliability in the pre-test (alpha =0.71).

TABLE 7  
Cronbach's alpha for the scales

Variable	No. of cases	No. of items	Alpha
Satisfaction	450	3	0.88
Experience	450	3	0.75
Source	450	5	0.83
Incentives	450	2	0.62

**DATA ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

To test the proposed model for this study, the Multiple Regression Analysis was used, as it allows the researchers to investigate a set of independent and dependent variables. As shown in Table 9, the Variance Inflation factor (VIF) indicates that Multicollinearity does not cause any problem since all independent variables

TABLE 8  
Model testing

	Unstandardized coefficients		Unstandardized t	Sig	Collinearity statistics		
	B	Std. error			Beta	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.412	.384	3.678	.000			
SAT	.245	.070	.164	3.506	.001	.938	1.067
EXP	.236	.063	.175	3.750	.000	.947	1.056
INC	3.369E	.058	.003	.058	.954	.945	1.058
SOU	.252	.086	.140	2.949	.003	.905	1.105

TABLE 9  
Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Waston
1	.532a	.310	.309	.8776	1.945

(Constant), SOU, INC, EXP, SAT

are below the threshold of 10 (Neter & Kunter, 1990). Furthermore, when the tolerance value is above .60, it is also considered as an evidence of the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables as indicated by Hair *et al.* (1995). Accordingly, the Durbin-Watson test statistic shown in Table 8 is very close to 2, indicating that the adjacent residuals are uncorrelated (Anderson *et al.*, 1990). In addition to that, Table 8 also indicates that three out of four casual of relationships between the variables proposed in our model are highly supported.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Sat} + \beta_2 \text{ Exp} + \beta_3 \text{ Sour} + \beta_4 \text{ Inco} + e$$

### HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The results for H1 show that satisfaction has a significant influence on students' willingness to use WOM (t = 3.50: sig = 0.001). As for H1a, the results have indicated that satisfied students received higher mean (4.13) which is definitely higher than dissatisfied students who got only 3.20. This result goes against H1a, suggesting that satisfied students are willing to use WOM more than dissatisfied students. Therefore, H1a is not supported. This also means that satisfied students are willing to spread positive WOM more than the dissatisfied ones.

As for H2, it was found that WOM from the expert and opinion leaders has a direct significant influence on students (t = 3.75: sig = 0.000). For H3, it was found that incentives provided by the universities did not have a direct

significant influence on the students' willingness to spread positive WOM (t = .058: sig = 0.954). Finally, H4 has proven that the source of WOM has a direct significant influence on students (t = 2.949: sig = 0.003). Table 9 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing. To achieve the second objective, it was found that statement 6 (friends) received the highest mean 3.87, while expert and opinion leaders came in the second position with 3.57. Meanwhile, the formal sources about academic faculty ranked third with 3.45.

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

First, this research has contributed to marketing theory by extending the concept of WOM in two areas; from traditional durable products into new service market (education) and from Western cultures to relatively conservative eastern culture (Jordan).

In this study, the researchers hypothesized and empirically tested the proposition that satisfaction, experience, incentives, and the source could significantly influence WOM communication. The results of the present study enhanced our understanding of how WOM influences students' willingness to spread WOM. In addition, the study has shown (as indicated in Table 8) that satisfaction, experience, and the source have a direct influence on the students. As for incentives, the result has shown no support for such a factor on the students.

TABLE 10  
Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Result
H1 : Satisfaction has a significant influence on students' willingness to use WOM	Supported
H1a: Dissatisfied students are willing to use WOM more than satisfied students	Not supported
H2 : WOM from expert and opinion leaders has a direct significant influence on students	Supported
H3 : Incentives provided by universities has a direct significant influence on students willingness to spread positive WOM	Not supported
H4 : The source of WOM has a direct significant influence on students	Supported

When students were satisfied, they generated positive WOM and more likely to make a recommendation, and this finding is consistent with that of Swan & Oliver (1989). The findings also show that source relationship affects WOM behaviour. Furthermore, it was found that when satisfied, consumers are willing make a recommendation to relatives and friends, which is consistent with Richins' (1987) findings. Therefore, ongoing market research in relation to the current student satisfaction should be undertaken to ensure that the needs of students are being continually met.

Due to the fact that most students search for information before making such a high-involvement decision as to which university to attend, simple strategies for universities interested in targeting new students would be to arrange to have opinion leaders within their reference groups talk with students. While having a weekend for friends or siblings might work quite well in targeting students, such a procedure would be prohibitively expensive as a strategy for enrolling students. Selecting "successful" graduates to speak to prospective students in their hometown has worked well in one strategy. Meanwhile, providing special activities at an Open Day just before graduation when younger siblings with parents of current graduates are present will also work. As many of the students indicated that they sought advice from their parents, it is important to schedule a special orientation mainly for them. In addition to these efforts, it is vital for the universities to position themselves in away that potential students who are seeking information can obtain such information from different sources. This effort may involve sponsoring or participating in seminars, workshops, and/or community events related to the university's offering of knowledge-based services.

One of the main contributions of this study is testing the effectiveness of incentive in increasing WOM. In practice, firms use gifts, discounts, credits, loyalty points, and outright cash to encourage their customers to recommend or sign up family members or friends for a service. The results of this study have shown

that such incentives can be less effective in the case of universities, and the success of the university is insignificantly dependent on financial incentives but is more dependent on the teaching quality and the reputation of the institutions involved.

Furthermore, as employers and academic staff are considered significant players in advising prospective students, targeting this group would also be a worthwhile endeavour. Fostering of interpersonal relationships between faculty and staff with students is important and may help encourage positive WOM behaviour. Enrolment administrators need to furnish the information that students needs. Deanship of students' affair can also contributes in providing assistance for students with all information and encouraging them to communicate and interact both formally and informally with university community. Thus, encouraging interpersonal bonds may be a strategy worth considering to increase the likelihood of students' WOM behaviour.

Universities can also use direct potential students to contact expert people such as those from the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure the superiority of the university image, services and facilities. Knowledge of this information will enable the universities to avoid significantly reducing its tuition fees while experiencing significant enrolments at higher fees.

It is especially important that universities routinely gather information from new students about the sources of information they used when selecting the university. This information, in turn, allows the university to target the specific WOM behaviour of potential students. Based on that, the Internet and World Wide Web offer unique opportunities to reach selected students searching for courses and university related information. For future research, it is also important to test how the Internet as a medium of communication boosts the effect of WOM on students.

Finally, this study further recommends that WOM marketing must form an integral part of a marketing strategy, rather than regarding it as an uncontrollable form of marketing. In

doing so, the existing strengths of progressive marketing can be further built rather than adopting more traditional marketing strategies to turn the uncontrollable into a more proactive, controllable form.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

Part One: Tick  $\checkmark$  in the box that reflects your answer

**1. University Name**

- Philadelphia       Applied Science       Amman Private University

**2. College**

- Business       Arts       Science       Law  
 Pharmacy       It       Others       Engineering

**3. Age**

- Less Than 20       21-25       26- 30       More than 31

**4. Academic Year**

- First Year       Second Year       Third Year       Fourth Year  
 Final year

**5. Gender**

- Male       Female

**6. Nationality**

- Jordanian       Non-Jordanian

Part Two :

*Choose the number that reflects your answer (1=Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)*

1. If I am satisfied I will say positive things about my University
2. If I am not satisfied I will say negative things about my University
3. Information about financial incentives offered by the university was the most important thing for me
4. I consider senior level students as the best source for information about any university
5. When I get incentives such as scholarship, I will talk in positive way about the University
6. When I need information about a university, usually I ask my close friend
7. When I hear positive things about my university from expert people such as Ministry of Higher Education, I will consider it
8. When I hear in media positive things about my university such as library, computer labs, I will consider it
9. If advertisement contains little information, usually I seek information from friends and relatives
10. Information coming from the university employee's (registration dept.) highly influence my attitude towards the university
11. Information about the academic Faculty highly influence my attitude towards the university
12. Even when I am not satisfied from the university, still I will say positive things about it
13. Information from experts and opinion leaders create positive attitude about my university
14. I am willing to inform other students my opinion about the university according to my experience
15. The information that I get from my friends is more valuable than different types of advertisement
16. I prefer to depend on various sources rather than relying on single friend



## Second Language Learner's Access to Parameters of Universal Grammar: A Syntactic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

In Universal Grammar, syntax is explained through X-bar theory. X-bar theory is the component of Universal Grammar which specifies the hierarchical structure of the heads of phrases, their specifiers and complements. Investigating the availability of this component in adults learning a second language can provide a better insight into the process of second language learning. This study attempted to find out if the X-bar theory is accessible to Malay speaking adults learning English as a second language and to investigate the possible developmental stages of syntactic knowledge, with regards to Malay adult second language learners writing in English. The data show that the learners can apply the word-order parameter and the null-subject parameter in their spontaneous writing at earlier stages. This implies the availability of the VP-related nodes of the X-bar tree at the first stage of learning grammar. The IP-related agreement parameter and the CP-related auxiliary movement emerge later as the learners become more and more proficient in the second language.

**Keywords:** Language acquisition device, syntax, universal grammar, X-bar theory, universal grammar accessibility

### INTRODUCTION

Grammar is an inevitable component of language, but learning grammar is an onerous task, especially when it comes to using the correct forms in the processes of speaking and writing. A lot of effort has been put to give an insight into the grammar learning process.

Thus, what is grammar actually? There are many definitions given by grammarians and linguists, among which, Noam Chomsky's description of grammar is in line with the objective of this paper. Chomsky (1965) defines grammar as the competence, or a set of mentally embodied rules, which are manifested by every individual's understanding of acceptable structures in a language. The actual language produced using the grammatical competence

is named performance. Language undergoes some processes to emerge from competence into performance. The Universal Grammar (UG) theory describes these processes in terms of principles and parameters (Chomsky, 1981; 1988; Cook, 2007), which explain that the speaker's knowledge of a language such as English is made of a number of general principles and a number of appropriate parameter settings. Investigating the nature of competence and the process of its manifestation in language performance can help to improve and facilitate this process for second or foreign language learners.

The component of UG which deals with the principals and parameters related to syntax is the X-bar theory which defines the internal structure

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of the sentence units. The original X-bar theory emerged from the phrase constituent rules. In this theory, variables are used to stand for particular parts of speech. Based on the X-bar theory, all the possible phrases in a language fit into a general phrase structural framework. In this schema or framework, X is a representation of a random syntactic category. X can be a Noun (N), Verb (V), Adjective (A), Preposition (P), etc., when in a zero-level or word-level category, it is combined with some other elements to form an X-bar level category; this X-bar level category can combine with some further elements to form an XP-level category (Chomsky, 1995; Kornai & Pullum, 1990). These categories are called projections. X is a variable that can stand for any category: N (noun), V (verb), A (adjective) or P (preposition) and XP is a general term to cover NP (noun phrase), VP (verb phrase), AP (adjective phrase), or PP (prepositional phrase). Similarly, X' or X-bar stands for N', V', A' or P', and X represents N, V, A, or P. The X label is what gives the theory its name. Using this variable notion, the generalization of the X-bar theory is captured (Collins, 2002).

Basically, the X-bar theory states that a lexical item X may have a complement and one or more specifiers. The complement and specifier are maximal projections. Chomsky's definition from the concepts of minimal, intermediate and maximal projections is that in the X-bar tree, a category that does not project any further is a maximal projection XP, and one that is not a projection at all is a minimal projection X, and any other is X-bar (or X'). The notion of projections is used in the explanation of certain parameters (Carnie, 2002). The combination of these levels in the X-bar Tree is illustrated in Fig. 1.

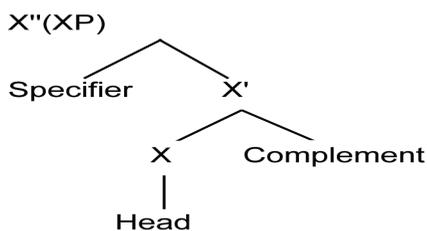


Fig. 1: X-bar tree

Chomsky (1965; 1981; 1988) introduced the notion that children are born with some special built-in ability to learn language. This innate ability is called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The terms LAD and UG are sometimes used interchangeably, although these two notions should be considered separately since UG is included within the structure of LAD. The LAD consists of UG and other elements, namely the triggering data, a regulatory mechanism to make parameters available for setting, and some sort of algorithm for mapping the triggering data onto parameter values (Hilles, 1991; Grimshaw, 1981).

This device supposedly contained the main rules for all possible human languages. All the child needs is a small sample from some specific language (e.g. English or Japanese) to be able to add a few language-specific rules. For example, English is said to be a "head first" language because it builds structures like:

The-> clever -> boy

Malay (Bahasa Malaysia), on the other hand, is called a "head last" language because it builds structures like:

anak<- yang <-cerdas

boy<- the <- clever

All a child needs to learn is whether the language is a head first or head last language. This would set a parameter in the LAD. The child only needs to set a finite number of parameters to learn the structure of the language (Chomsky, 1993; Cook, 2007).

Thus, the acquisition of a language is only achieved through given innate syntactic knowledge. Clearly, not all the elements of a language can be innately encoded; otherwise, there would be no cross-linguistic variation. In the principles and parameters theory, this variation is assumed to result from the setting of various parameters in response to the environment during acquisition. These parameter settings interact with an inventory of invariant principles which (in combination with a set of lexical items) make up the mature I-language of a speaker (Kirby, 1999). Hence, acquiring language means

learning how principles apply to a particular language and which value is appropriate for each parameter.

The present study was conducted to investigate the nature of the above mentioned parameter resetting for the adult Malay speakers. The parameters from the VP, IP, and CP projections were chosen to enable the researcher to comprehend the developmental stages of these projections as the proficiency level of the participants changed from low to intermediate and advanced. The parameters were chosen based on their projection level and their different settings in English and Bahasa Malaysia. To make it clear, each chosen parameter is explained in this part along with some examples from the two languages.

1. The Word Order parameter: this parameter occurs in the minimal projection and defines the order of the head, complement and specifiers in a phrase. English is considered a head last language in which the head of a phrase occurs after the complement, while Bahasa Malaysia is a head first sentence, in which the head of a phrase comes before its complement, as illustrated below:

The book  
\* Itu buku  
Buku itu

Green book  
\*Hijau buku  
Buku hijau

I bought the big green book on poetry.  
\*Saya beli itu besar hijau buku tentang puisi  
Saya beli buku besar berwarna hijau tentang puisi.

2. The Null Subject parameter: this parameter takes place in the minimal projection and differentiates between languages which allow a sentence without an explicit subject, like Bahasa Malaysia and languages which do not allow this setting. For instance in English:

It is cold  
\*Is cold  
Hari ini sejuk  
Sejuk

3. The Subject-Verb Agreement parameter: this parameter occurs in the intermediate or IP projection and stands for the explicit manifestation of the person's element. In some languages, including Bahasa Malaysia, this parameter has a neutral setting and is not seen in the performance, but in other languages, including English, it is explicit to some extent (third person singular in English), as exemplified below:

He/she goes (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular)  
They/I go (plural)

Perempuan/lelaki pergi (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular)  
\*She / he go

Saya pergi  
I go

Mereka pergi (plural)  
They go

4. The Aux Raising Parameter: this parameter explains the movement of the elements in a sentence (for example, when an auxiliary is moved to the beginning of a sentence to make a question in English). This is called 'raising' since this movement is allowed only from a lower to a higher projection. This parameter is not explicitly represented in Bahasa Malaysia since auxiliaries are not used; for example:

What is in the box?  
\*Apa (ada) --- dalam itu kotak?  
Apa dalam itu kotak?

How do you go to school every day?  
\*Bagaimana --- awak pergi ke sekolah setiap hari?  
Bagaimana awak pergi ke sekolah setiap hari?

In their work on X-bar theory and first language acquisition, Guilfoyle & Noonan (1992), Platzack (1990) and Radford (1990) argue that the first language learners begin the acquisition of syntax with the lexical projections (like the bare VP Tree shown in Fig. 2) and build their functional projections gradually, leading to more complete structures (IP projections and CP projections are illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4).

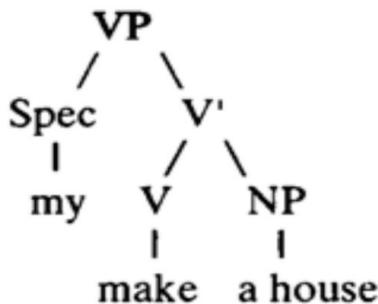


Fig. 2: VP level tree

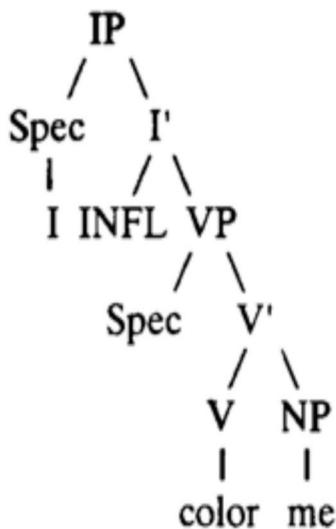


Fig. 3: IP level tree

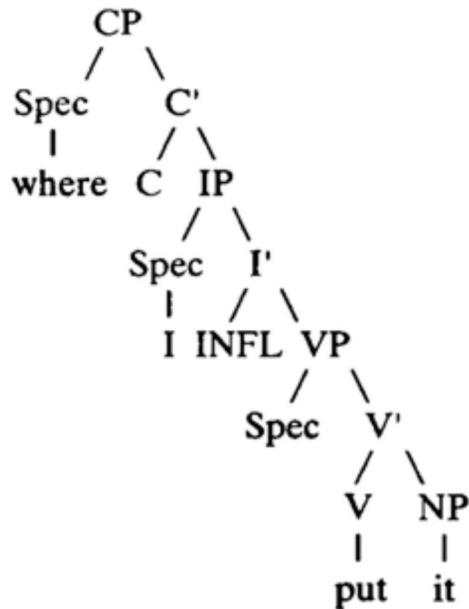


Fig. 4: CP level tree

On the other hand, Wexler, (1993), Hyams (1992) and Weissenborn (1990) are among the opponents who contradict this hypothesis and argue that WH-question formation and verb raising parameters are present from the beginning of acquisition. Therefore, the parallel functional projections are accessible from the very beginning of second language learning.

Later, another version of the original idea has emerged by Radford, and it suggests that functional projections develop one by one, as a result of sequential applications of the X-bar Theory. This approach, called the Weak Continuity Hypothesis, is presented for L1 German in Clahsen *et al.* (1994) and is further defined and developed for English in Vainikka & Young-Scholten (1996a, b; 1994) who introduced the three stages of development in English in early childhood, as shown in Figs. 2, 3 and 4.

*Previous Work on the X-bar Theory*

*Availability for Second Language Learners*

Many cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have been conducted by SLA researchers

with regard to X-bar theory and its principles. The main objective of all this research was to investigate the nature of language acquisition, its components and the way the principles of Universal Grammar are acquired and applied throughout the process of language acquisition in children learning their first or second language and adults acquiring a second language. A few of these studies, which are related to the subject of this research, are mentioned below.

*Schwartz and Sprouse (1994)*

This is a longitudinal study on word order and nominative case in non-native acquisition. The researchers try to exemplify one way in which the linguistic theory can be employed in SLA research to produce theoretically revealing results. The interlanguage data came from a longitudinal study of one adult native speaker of Turkish acquiring German. They argued that the displayed linguistic development followed a path that is intriguing in light work done in syntax related to word order and nominative case checking. They used the parametric values for Turkish and German as a base to show the interlanguage stages followed by their subject. This study aimed to determine whether it is possible to capture each intermediate phrase of the interlanguage system via the principles of UG. It finds evidence for the hypothesis that the L2er's linguistic knowledge is comparable – in terms of knowledge type - to that of the native speaker competence.

*Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994)*

This research proposed an analysis of German by adult Korean and Turkish speakers based on the weak continuity approach of L1 acquisition. The researchers claimed that L2 acquisition initially involved a bare VP whereby its headedness was transferred from the learner's L1, with functional projections evolving entirely on the basis of the interaction of X-bar theory with the input. Under this approach, they posited what they called as the "minimal trees" to account for the development of phrase structure. The claim is that utilizing X-bar theory in this fashion does

not involve or require maturity; and therefore, both children and adults are able to posit new maximal projections based on the input data. Vainikka and Young-Scholten also used the results of their study to claim that adults access to X-bar theory related parameters is gradual, beginning from lexical projections and moving towards the IP and CP functional projections.

*Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1996a and b)*

Vainikka and Young-Scholten conducted two other studies which are similar to their work in 1994. The first (1996a) is an attempt to extend the findings of the previous study to the data from other sources. The data for this study were taken from Korean, Turkish, Italian and Spanish speaking adults acquiring German without formal instruction. The findings of this study showed that these learners transferred their L1 VPs and then switched the headedness to the correct, head final value for German. Although functional projections in Korean and Turkish are head-final and these are head-initial in Italian and Spanish, all the four groups of learners subsequently posited head-initial functional projections in German. The researchers concluded that only lexical projections constitute the L2 learners' initial state. The development of the functional projections is driven exclusively by the interaction of X-bar theory with the target language input. The second study was done by the same researchers (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1996b) and it used the data collected from Italian and Spanish native speakers acquiring German. The findings of this study support the claims made in the previous work by Vainikka and Young-Scholten.

*Vainikka and Young-Scholten (2007)*

More recent work on parameter availability in adults was carried out by Vainikka & Young-Scholten (2007) under the notion of organic syntax. In their study, the researchers argued that the minimal projections are available for adults and the intermediate and maximal projections are built gradually as they learn more and their second language grows.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objectives of this study were to find out whether Malay adult second language learners of English have direct access to the X-bar theory and to identify the developmental stages of the phrase structure learning in these adult second language learners. To achieve these two objectives, a cross-sectional study was conducted and the occurrences of the parameters of X-bar theory were investigated in the participants' spontaneous writing in different levels of English language grammar proficiency.

### *Participants*

A total of 138 students from the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programme at University Putra Malaysia had participated in this study. All the participants were Malays; the Chinese and Indian students were excluded to control the variable of the first language. It is important to note that the age of the students was not considered as an intervening variable (their age ranged from 19 to 23 years). This group of students was divided into 3 English Grammar proficiency levels of low, intermediate and high, based on the results of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 1992). The wide range across the different proficiency levels in English can be attributed to their different family or educational background. They come from different educational levels; namely, *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* (STPM) or Matriculation Colleges, which present different language proficiency. Some communicate in English with their parents and family members at home. 15 participants were chosen randomly from each level (n=45) to participate in sentence eliciting tasks, the result of which was compared to their proficiency level.

## INSTRUMENTS

### *Proficiency Test*

The Grammar section of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 1992) was used to place the

participants in three different levels. The use of OPT as a L2 proficiency test has been justified in the research previously conducted by Wistner *et al.* (2009). To ensure the relevance of this test, the test items were analyzed. As the test included all the related X-bar theory parameters in a random order, it was considered relevant to the scope of this study. The test was conducted at Universiti Putra Malaysia at two separate times under similar conditions.

### *Pictorial Tasks*

The pictorial tasks were used as eliciting devices to collect the utterances from the participants. Eliciting written or spoken language via different kinds of pictorial tasks is elaborated in the literature. The work by Van Der Werff (2003), Hamyan (1995) and Pierce & O'Malley (1992) are among the studies done in this respect. In this study, three kinds of tasks were used, taking into consideration the suggestions made by Van Der Werff (2003). An example of each pictorial task is included in the appendix.

#### a. Story-telling

Each picture contained 5 or 6 sub-pictures depicting a simple short story. The participants were asked to write a story based on their own understanding following the sequence of the sub-pictures. This was a semi-guided task to ensure that the participants produce almost similar sentences but they were given the freedom to use any vocabulary or structure they preferred.

#### b. Caricatures

The pictures in this task contained one comic scene. The participants were required to express their own understanding of each picture in as many sentences as possible. This task was designed to encourage the participants to produce more sentences in a less restricted way than that of the story-telling task.

c. Pictorial Dialogues

This task is also known as text balloon. Each picture shows two people having conversation in different situations. One of the balloons was filled with a question or/and the participants were asked to imagine as if they were taking part in the conversation and to fill in the empty balloon. This task was designed to elicit questions and negative sentences which are less likely to emerge in the other tasks.

*Composition Task*

This task required the participants to write 2 or 3 paragraphs on a recent pleasant experience. This open-ended task was included to collect non- cliché sentences and to maximize the number of elicited sentences. There were no restrictions, such as word or time limit, for the participants to write as many sentences as they can under normal circumstances and with as little stress as possible.

*Data Collection*

The 45 randomly selected participants were asked to complete the writing tasks within 90 minutes. Instructions were written on the cover of the tasks folder and also given orally by the researcher. All the written sentences were analyzed. The details of the analysis are provided in the result section. For each participant, the number of relevant errors (violation of the Null Subject parameter, the Word-order parameter, Subject-Verb Agreement, and Auxiliary Movement) were calculated. The data were then incorporated into an implicational Table of developmental stages. The method of implicational scaling was used to divide the cross-sectional samples to developmental stages of acquisition. The table indicates that the presence of any higher projections in a syntactic phrase marker requires the prior acquisition of all lower ones (Lardiere, 1998). The path which was used by the Malay speaking English learners to master the English phrasal structures is indicated in the form of implications.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A total of 723 sentences were collected from the participants using the pictorial eliciting tasks and the composition, but only a proportion of these sentences were useful to investigate their linguistic behaviour related to the development of the X-bar theory. One-word utterances (like yes, no, or why), exclamations (such as Wow!) and repetitions were excluded from the analysis because they were not complete sentences to give any information about the four investigated parameters. Some of the remaining utterances were considered suitable to investigate one or two of the parameters but for other parameters. An example for this type of sentences is the imperative form which can show the cases of word-order parameter violation, but it does not determine the null subject parameter. These were excluded from the analysis of the unrelated parameters as described below:

- All the imperatives were excluded in the analysis of the Null Subject Parameter.
- Utterances such as “she is go to the park every day” and those without a verb were also excluded in the analysis of the Subject-Verb Agreement because it was not clear whether they were made in the Simple Present Tense or the Present Continuous Tense.
- As far as the auxiliary movement was concerned, only the questions and negatives were analyzed and all the other sentences were excluded because only questions and negative sentences could provide explicit information on the raising parameter.

Table 3 shows the number of the utterances analyzed for each case.

The implicational table shows the frequencies of syntactically incorrect features in the speech of which speakers were above a preset cut-off point. Following Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994), a cut-off point of 60 percent was employed as a general criterion for the acquisition of the parameters in question, and a parameter was judged to have been acquired if it was used correctly in at least 60

TABLE 1  
OPT placement results

	Participants	OPT score	Proficiency
1	49	30-60	Minimal users (Low)
2	57	90-110	Limited users (Intermediate)
3	32	130-170	Competent users (Advanced)

TABLE 2  
Average number of utterances

Level	Average number of sentences	Word order	Null-subject	Subject -verb agreement	Auxiliary movement
High	296.1	291.6	266.9	270.3	36.7
Intermediate	186.7	182.7	174.8	123.7	36.1
Low	184.8	168.2	108.8	87.7	28.8
Total	667.6	642.5	550.5	481.7	101.6

percent of the obligatory context. The data were then incorporated into the Implicational Table illustrated in Table 3.

The Guttman coefficient of reproducibility ( $C_{rep}$ ) and coefficient of scalability ( $C_{scalability}$ ) calculated for this scale were ( $C_{rep}=.975>.9$ ) and ( $C_{scalability}=.85>.6$ ) to ensure that the data were able to predict the participants' behaviour with regards to phrase structure parameters and to determine that the given set of variables (parameters here) were truly scalable and unidimensional (Hatch & Farhady, 1981).

The results shown in the Implicational Table, along with the X-bar theory based analysis of the sentences collected from the participants in each proficiency level, showed that the parameters related to the minimal projection (VP) were accessible even at the lowest levels of grammar proficiency. Nonetheless, the intermediate projection (IP) and maximal projection (CP) were not accessible at the lower proficiency level. The IP related parameter emerged in the intermediate proficiency level and the CP related parameter was accessible only for the participants in the higher proficiency levels. This evidence is compatible with the Radford (1990) and Vainikka & Young-Scholten's (2007) hypotheses which state that there is a partial

access to the X-bar theory at the beginning of second language acquisition and the higher projections can be accessed as the proficiency improves, and when sufficient data input is provided to the learners.

The findings of this study can provide a better understanding of the nature of the learning a second language for Malay students, and this in turn helps the curriculum designers and teachers to provide them with the adequate input in the appropriate time by triggering the parameter resetting process.

It is important to note that this study has some limitations with regard to time duration, participants and methods. This is a cross-sectional study and for this reason, the researcher had to follow the progress of the X-bar projections by studying the participants at different levels of proficiency. The participants at the low proficiency level had some exposures to the language before participating in the study, so it was possible that they had passed some of the progressive phases. These limitations can be further considered in any study in the future, particularly in relation to the availability of the principles and the parameters of the X-bar theory and the Universal Grammar. In addition, a longitudinal research could be conducted

TABLE 3  
The implicational table

	English proficiency level	Word order	Null subject	Subject-verb agreement	Auxiliary movement	X-bar tree levels
Low	1	-	-	-	-	VP
	2	-	+	-	-	
	3	+	-	-	-	
	4	+	-	-	-	
	5	+	-	-	+	
	6	+	-	-	-	
	7	+	+	-	-	
	8	+	-	-	-	
	9	+	+	-	-	
	10	+	+	+	-	
	11	+	+	+	-	
	12	+	+	+	-	
	13	+	+	+	-	
	14	+	+	+	-	
	15	+	+	+	-	
Intermediate	16	+	+	+	-	IP
	17	+	+	-	-	
	18	+	+	+	-	
	19	+	+	+	-	
	20	+	+	+	-	
	21	+	+	-	-	
	22	+	+	+	-	
	23	+	+	+	-	
	24	+	+	+	+	
	25	+	+	+	+	
	26	+	+	+	+	
	27	+	+	+	+	
	28	+	+	+	+	
	29	+	+	+	+	
	30	+	+	+	+	
High	31	+	+	+	+	CP
	32	+	+	+	+	
	33	+	+	+	+	
	34	+	+	+	+	
	35	+	+	+	+	
	36	+	+	+	+	
	37	+	+	+	+	
	38	+	+	+	+	
	39	+	+	+	+	
	40	+	+	+	+	
	41	+	+	+	+	
	42	+	+	+	+	
	43	+	+	+	+	
	44	+	+	+	+	
	45	+	+	+	+	

to follow up the same participants from the beginning of their second language learning and to cover more parameters to get more precise results.

### CONCLUSION

The implicational data tabulated in Table 3 suggest that even the least proficient learners of English could correctly apply the word-order parameter and the null subject parameter in their writing. As far as the X-bar theory is concerned, this implies the availability of the VP related nodes of the X-bar tree from the early stages of the acquisition of English as a second language. The IP-related agreement paradigm and the CP-related auxiliary movement emerged as the second language learners became more and more proficient in it. It may be inferred that lexical positions are more readily available than such functional positions as those associated with IP and CP.

The implicational table also suggests that the participants have access to Universal Grammar only based on the weak continuity approach: the whole CP tree is not yet available at the earlier stages of second language acquisition. Instead, lexical projections are more easily accessed. Functional projections are gradually added in successive, implicational stages and become more accessible as L2 learners attain higher levels of L2 proficiency. The effects of the mother tongue seem to be negligible. The word-order parameter is differently set in Malay and English. Yet, this parameter was found to be successfully reset even for the less proficient participants. Moreover, the learners' access to IP and CP in their first language proved to have little effect on the availability of IP and CP at lower levels of English proficiency.

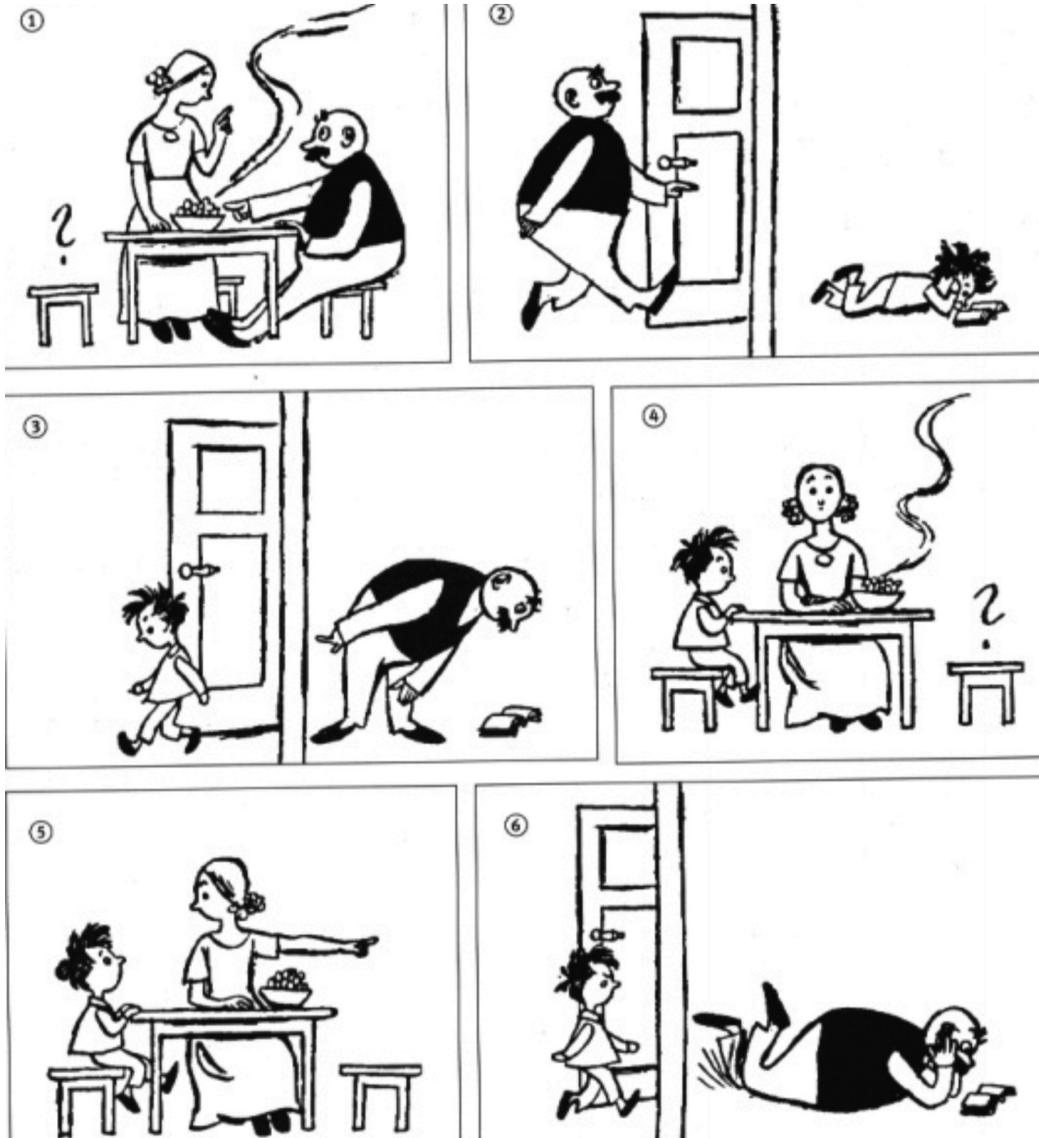
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APPENDIX 1

Sample of the pictorial tasks: Story-telling, Pictorial Dialogue and Caricature, respectively.



Please write a question and an answer in the form of dialogue between the characters





**"You can remember 'Dental Health Week', but you can't remember my birthday?!"**

## Acceptance of Kuala Lumpur Malay's Residents towards *Rukyah* (Incantation)

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to describe the acceptance of Kuala Lumpur Malay residents towards: i) treatment through *ruk yah* (incantation), ii) traditional Malay healer (*bomoh*), and iii) learning of *ruk yah* (incantation). For this purpose, 343 respondents from various backgrounds were identified using a convenient sampling technique. Taman Segambut SPPK and PPR Kg. Baru, Air Panas were randomly selected as research locations. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed as a descriptive statistic. Findings indicated that the level of acceptance towards the treatment through *ruk yah* (incantation) and the Malay traditional healer (*bomoh*) was moderate. Meanwhile, the level of acceptance towards learning of *ruk yah* (incantation) was low. In conclusion, the respondents were found to accept treatments done through *ruk yah* (incantation) and the Malay traditional healer (*bomoh*) moderately, but they were less acceptance towards the learning of *ruk yah* (incantation). These bring the implications that the respondents living in the city still accept treatments through *ruk yah* (incantation) and the traditional Malay healer (*bomoh*) but they are not interested in the learning of *ruk yah* (incantation). Thus, based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that efforts which give prestige to the *ruk yah* (incantation) be supported by all parties to maintain the practice of the Islamic medicine.

**Keywords:** Islamic medicine, Malay community, Malay medicine, *ruk yah* (incantation)

### INTRODUCTION

After the arrival of Islam to the Malay world as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, according to the arrival theory of Islam from Arabs, the worldviews of the Malay community went through an assimilation process to achieve a balance between Islam and the worldviews before the arrival of Islam. Islam (5 pillars of practice) and *Iman* (6 pillars of faith) together with the al-Quran and al-Hadith are referred to as guides. In addition to that, Islam itself instructs its followers to pray to Allah SWT as an unseen, which is similar with the central belief of the Malay community who believed in the supernatural before the arrival of Islam.

Islam arrived in the Malay world equipped with the medical aspects which emphasize the treatment of *ruk yah* (incantation), and this is parallel to the usage of *mantera* which became the practice of the Malay community before the arrival of Islam. The *mantera* continued to experience the process of adapting to the Islamic influences in the Malay land as late as 15<sup>th</sup> century (Haron Daud, 2001). The contents of *mantera* were replaced by prayer (*doa*) using the verses from the al-Quran and the words of the prophet Muhammad SAW (Haliza Mohd Riji, 2000). There are *mantera* which are known as prayer (*doa*) and have Quranic verses which at

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least begin with 'Bismillah' (Mohd. Taib Osman, 1983). During incantation, the pronunciation such as 'salam', 'syahadah', 'Bismillah', i.e. name and attribute of Allah SWT, name of rasul and prophet, the name of Islamic warrior and many other names which show the Islamic influence are constantly jumbled up with the names of Hindu deities and a touch of animism (Amran Kasimin, 2003). Most of the contents of *mantera* have been changed or adapted into *rukyah* (incantation) which contains holy verses from al-Quran or hadith of the Prophet SAW to adhere to the laws of Islam which are related to Allah SWT. Among other, the word 'incantation' is used to represent the word '*rukyah*' in reference to the usage of the words which have the same roles to treat and prevent sickness, especially in relation to jinn and devil. The word *mantera* in the Arab language is referred to as '*rukyah*' which means 'protection'. In other words, asking the protection against evil. It has also been known as '*al-muawwizat*' which also means protection. The usage of *rukyah* is frequently used than the word *muawwizat* (Amran Kasimin, 1995).

The Islamic ways of treatment through *rukyah* (incantation), among other, are *surah al-Fatihah*, *al-Kursi* verse, *muawwidhat* verses (*surah an-Nas* and *surah al-Falaq*), *zikrullah* and *seribu dinar* verse which refer to application to Allah SWT. Abi Khuzamah says:

*"I say: Oh Rasulullah! What is your opinion on prayers (doa) imploring recovery (rukiyyah), we pray that the rukiyyah in regard to medication are use to cure illness and prayers (doa) imploring protection/nurturing (takiyyah) and so we pray the taqiyyah? Doesn't it mean that we are rejecting Allah's destiny? Therefore Rasulullah SAW replied: 'This is also Allah's destiny.'"* (Riwayat Ahmad and Tirmizi).

The above *hadith* explains that *rukyah* (incantation) was a part of Prophet's treatment (*Tibb Nabi*) which was extensively practiced during the Prophet Muhammad's time and continued by his followers. According to Ibn Qayim al-Jauziah, the medical system carried out by Rasulullah SAW comprised of three ways, namely i) *tabiah* treatment (natural or physical), ii) spiritual treatment by way of prayers (*doa*) and the use of certain verses which are stated as *rukiyyah*; and iii) the combination of the abovementioned treatment (al-Jauziah, 2000).

As such, spiritual healing by *rukyah* (incantation) involves the spiritual aspects that require the practitioner to return to *fitrah tawhidiyyah* which is to humble oneself with confidence that everything that happens is Allah SWT's will. This treatment is an effort to cleanse the soul with the belief that each illness created by Allah SWT will have a cure. The illness is a form of test from Allah to his followers, who are always patient. As said in *Surah al-Baqarah* verses 155 and 156:

*"be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the Fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah we belong, and to Him is Our return"*

The treatment through *rukyah* (incantation) is done as a spiritual healing method by many Malay traditional healers known as '*bomoh*'. Even though there are some opinions which suggest that the practice by the Malay traditional medicine are different from the Islamic medicine, the researcher took into account the historical view of the Malay's world, in which the Malay traditional medicine was assimilated with the Islamic medicine after the arrival of Islam to this region. Before the arrival of Islam, the institution of *bomoh* was the social

institution in the Malay community and they still maintain their role in giving advice to the Malay community for their well-being, especially in the aspect of health even after the arrival of Islam. There may not be another social institution in the Malay community that can challenge the Malay traditional medicine institutions in terms of old practices and their continuation of the practice, but it still functions in daily lives of the community until this day (Mohd. Taib Osman, 1977). There are two members (specialists) in the Malay community; the first being '*imam*' ('*lebai*' and others), followed by '*bomoh*' ('*pawang*', '*dukun*' and others). At times, an *Imam* also plays the role as *bomoh* (Mohd. Taib Osman, 1983). This show that a *bomoh* is still carrying their role even after the arrival of Islam. In addition, an *imam* is still being consulted whenever there is a problem, particularly when it is related to an illness in the belief that the prayers from *Imam* are easily accepted by Allah SWT. With that being said, the role of *imam* is directly connected with the role of *bomoh*, and hence, he is also called a *bomoh* in treating illnesses.

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Malaysia strives to strengthen the research on science and technology to be at par with modernization that is taking place in the world. With the development in science and technology, the Western medicine gained entry to Malaysia around the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has then been gradually accepted by the community, especially by the people living in the city. Thus, the position of the traditional medicine has been challenged by the presence of western medicine or modern medicine (Hashim Awang, A. R., 2007). The irony of the situation was that the traditional medicine became an alternative to the Malay community, apart from western medicine, as an endeavour to curing sickness (Mohd. Taib Osman, 1983). Treating illness by means of the Noble Quran is a practice that was abandoned for a while, and remained unknown except to a small number of scholars, to such an extent that the people knew nothing about it, but

instead, witches and soothsayers, and the wares of charlatans and frauds have become popular (Ameen, 2005).

Urbanization that was and are taking place during the pre- and post-independence Malaysia has certainly resulted in an enormous change in value and attitude of the people. The immigrants, especially the Malays who were mostly born and grew up in the *kampongs* (rural villages), would certainly find and have to adopt the new and different kinds of social and cultural surroundings. In addition, they have to live in and make themselves familiar to the new form of neighbourhood and social interaction consisting of people from different cultures and belief systems (Nobaya Ahmad *et al.*, 2007).

Furthermore, a research conducted by Deuraseh (2008) among the Malay community in Kelantan and Terengganu found that the level of the respondents acceptance was low towards the treatment by way of *rukayah* (incantation). Meanwhile, a research by Haron Daud (2001) revealed that those who looked at *mantera* in a negative way were mostly those below 40 years of age. From the above findings, it is shown that the community was beginning to reject this treatment and it is also a cause for concern that in the future, this particular form of treatment will eventually become extinct as the younger generation has negative perception towards the treatment.

In the light of these situations, it is crucial to know the acceptance of *rukayah* (incantation) as attributes to the spirituality among the modern Malay community which has been influenced by the scientific and logical mode of thought.

Therefore, this research was carried out to look for answers to questions regarding the acceptance level towards the treatments through *rukayah* (incantation), the Malay traditional healers (*bomoh*), as well as how far they want to learn *rukayah* (incantation) given the fact that its effectiveness can not be scientifically proven to the people in the city who have been exposed to modernisation and urbanization.

In addition, this research was also done to understand the level of acceptance the urban residents have towards the treatment

through *rukyah* (incantation). This research was also aimed at understanding the acceptance level of the urban residents towards Malay traditional healers (*bomoh*) as the community generally tends to lend the title '*bomoh*' to the Malay traditional healers who practice *rukyah* (incantation). This research was also meant to understand the level of acceptance of the urban residents to learn *rukyah* (incantation) so as to determine the continuity of this art in future generations.

Within this research, the efforts that lead to giving prestige to the treatment by way of *rukyah* (incantation) were supported by all relevant parties to maintain the practice of the Islamic treatment and to raise the level of Islamic cultures and the *sunnah* of Rasulullah SAW in the medical field.

### METHODOLOGY

In this research, *rukyah* refers to incantation by prayer (*doa*) using the verses of the al-Quran and the *hadith* of prophet Muhammad SAW. As parts of the Islamic medicine, *rukyah* attributes to spiritual healing, and it is constantly used by the Malay community as a treatment, to avoid illnesses and also as a protection from *jinn* and devil.

The study was done in Kuala Lumpur, as it is the capital city of Malaysia which apparently receives the impacts of modernization, globalization and urbanization processes. With the density of 803.5 thousand people (Malaysian Department of Statistic, 2008) that comprises various ethnics and religions, modernization and complex life routine, the people in this city absorbed new belief, value, and culture into their lifestyle.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers randomly chose two out of the six Kuala Lumpur Strategic Zones, and these are from Sentul Manjalara to Wangsa Maju Maluri. The researchers also randomly selected one housing area at each zone. As a result, Taman Segambut SPPK represented an area in Sentul Manjalara whereas PPR Kg. Baru, Air Panas was selected from the Wangsa Maju Maluri area.

Meanwhile, the convenience sampling was used due to cost constraints, and because the researchers required huge amounts of fund to obtain the list of residents living in each housing area selected. Furthermore, the researchers faced time constraints, whereby data collection data should be conducted in not less than three weeks to ensure that the research was completed on time. These approaches provide easy access to large group of targets with the advantage that the investigators obtain research participants without spending a great deal of money or time on sampling (Cozby, 2001). Meanwhile, the researchers also take into account the fact that this new research was still in the adaptation process to the methodology and the theory applied. In particular, the convenience sampling technique was used to carry out the research in the new areas where the methods and theories do not fully work. There is always time to replicate the research on a true random sample later on (Bainbridge, 1989).

343 respondents comprising of 162 respondents from Taman Segambut SPPK and 181 respondents from PPR Kg. Baru, Air Panas took part in this study; they were selected using the convenience sampling procedure whereby anyone who was contacted and the individual concerned was questioned on a voluntary basis. The researcher used any available individuals, rather than selecting from the entire population, and no or only limited attempt was made to insure that the sample would be an accurate representation of a larger group or population (Cozby, 2001).

As a result, the findings of this study are limited to the respondents only and they cannot be generalized to the population because of the convenient sampling technique used. The parameters of generalizability in this type of sample are negligible (Cohen *et al.*, 2001).

This quantitative study employed an exploratory research design. The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and assisted by trained enumerators. The respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, and they were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The collection of data took about one month and the respondents chosen aged between 17 to 68 years, as this research considered three stages of human development, namely teenager, adult and senior citizen.

The scope of research was only limited to the acceptance aspect among the modern Malay community, including the acceptance towards the treatment through *rukayah*, Malay traditional healers (*bomoh*) and the learning of *rukayah*.

The instrument used in this study was adapted from Deuraseh (2008) (alpha coefficient was 0.883) and was revised for clarity and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the study and the appropriate length of time. The research instrument was pre-tested on 36 respondents. The results from the pre-test showed that the reliability scores on (i) acceptance towards treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) was 0.651, while the (ii) acceptance towards the Malay traditional healers (*bomoh*) was 0.765, and the (iii) acceptance towards the learning of *rukayah* (incantation) was 0.835.

Meanwhile, the statistical analyses used in the study were descriptive statistics analyses which generated frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations using SPSS version 13.0.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The five-point Likert scale was constructed to measure the instruments (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to be used in the study. The level of each item was divided into three levels, namely low, moderate and high, based on the highest score=5, minus the lowest score=1, and divided by 3. Thus, the low level ranged from 1.00 to 2.32, moderate being 2.33 to 3.66, and high was between 3.67 and 5.00. Meanwhile, the level of acceptance of the treatment through *rukayah* (incantation), traditional Malay healer (*bomoh*) and learning of *rukayah* (incantation) were categorized into three levels based on the items and scores using the equal class interval method. These were low, moderate, and high

and were calculated as follows: the minimum score was 5 points (1 point x 5 items) and the maximum score was 25 points (5 points x 5 items). The class interval was 6  $[(25-5)/3]$ . Thus, the level was categorised into low (5-11), moderate (12-18), and high (19-25).

However, in this session, the five point Likert Scale was reduced to only 3 scale (namely disagree, undecided, agree) to ease the discussion. For the 'undecided' scale, the researchers regarded the fact that the respondents accepted the statement as 'being neutral'. This approach is in accordance with the study on the level of knowledge which showed the respondents' high level of general knowledge on *rukayah* (incantation) (Siti Nor Azhani M. T., 2010). Therefore, the respondents were assumed that they had knowledge of each statement stated but chose to be 'undecided' instead, as they accepted it on a neutral basis only.

### *Profile of the Respondents*

As shown in Table 1, more than half of the respondents were female (58.6%) and 41.4% others were male. More than half of the respondents were between 26 and 40 years old (56.4%) and those who were less than 25 years old comprised 31.3%. The percentages of the married and single respondents were almost the same, with 49.3% and 48.1%, respectively.

The percentage of the respondents who were raised in the urban was the largest (55.4%) as compared to those who grew up in the suburban areas (44.6%). Meanwhile, 33.9% of the respondents had SPM/Certificate/Diploma as their highest education level, and this was slightly the same with 32.7% respondents who had attained their highest education at the Bachelor Degree level. A majority of the respondents (74.4%) received their secondary education in at national schools. Most of the respondents (49.4% or 167) are working as officers/executives, and this was closely followed by clerical jobs (29.3%).

TABLE 1  
Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic factors		Frequency	% (n=343)
Gender	Male	139	41.4
	Female	197	58.6
Age	Less than 25	105	31.3
	26 – 40	189	56.4
	41 and above	41	12.2
Marital status	Single	161	48.1
	Married	165	49.3
	Widower/widow	9	2.7
Place raised	Urban	186	55.4
	Suburban	150	44.6
Highest education	Primary school	2	0.6
	Secondary school	97	28.6
	STPM/certificate/diploma	115	33.9
	Bachelor degree	111	32.7
	Masters/PhD	14	4.1
Secondary school type	Religious school	66	19.6
	National school	250	74.4
	Chinese/Tamil school	3	0.9
	English school	15	4.5
	Not related	2	0.6
Type of Job	Officer/executive	167	49.4
	Clerical	99	29.3
	Self-employed/entrepreneur	11	3.3
	Student	48	14.2
	Housewife/not working	11	3.3
	Others	2	0.6

**ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS  
TREATMENTS THROUGH RUKYAH  
(INCANTATION)**

Table 2 shows that the respondents' acceptance towards the treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) is in moderate level (mean = 13.12, S.D = 4.36) (Item 1). However, the treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) is not the respondents' first choice because 45.2% of them preferred to be neutral while 44.6% others did not agree or did not opt for this kind of

treatment as compared to the modern treatment. As for effectiveness (item2), it was found that the majority of the respondents (58.1%) were neutral towards the modern treatment effectiveness as compared to the effectiveness of *rukayah* (incantation) treatment. This scenario or outcome could probably be due to the credibility of the modern treatment, whereby recklessness often happens at clinics and hospitals, particularly in the government sectors. Furthermore, slightly half of the respondents

(50.9%) disagreed that (item 3) the *ruk yah* (incantation) treatment is not suitable in today's era. This indicates that the Malay traditional medicine still plays its role as an alternative choice to the Malay community even though it is not their first choice. This can be seen in all places where *bomoh*'s services are offered, regardless of whether they are at squatters, villages, or hotels (Ahmad Zuhairi Abdul Halim, 1999). Moreover, the urban residents are more exposed to the media like the internet that offers a lot of information giving them more choices. In fact, the majority of the respondents possess high qualifications (SPM and above), and these individuals will always search for information that is does not come from only one source. The establishment of alternative treatment institutions in the cities has also given the community more choices in their lives. One can see a large number of patients who need treatments at these traditional institutions that offer them (Amran Kasimin, 1995).

As for Item 4, about 46.0% of the respondents did not give any opinion, and this was almost the same with those who opted to be neutral (40.5%) in giving an opinion to their family members about the *ruk yah* (incantation) treatment. Furthermore, for item 5, most of the respondents (46.5%) did not give any opinion and more than one third (37.4%) were being neutral in giving opinion to their friends about the specialty of the *ruk yah* (incantation) treatment. The results show that the acceptance in giving opinion to family members and friends is less preferred. Subsequently, this scenario is able to influence the spread of the *ruk yah* (incantation) treatment to the community in general. The traditional culture depends on whether there are people who are still practising it, when the functions are less clear and less affective when used, and so by itself the traditional elements faces an uncertain future (Haron Daud, 2001). These show that the community needs to be active in maintaining and encouraging others to get treatment through *ruk yah* (incantation). Otherwise, the fate of the *ruk yah* (incantation) treatment remains uncertain and may totally disappear in the coming generations.

### ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS MALAY TRADITIONAL HEALERS (*BOMOH*)

In the Malay community, *bomoh* is divided into two categories, namely *pawang* and *dukun* (Haron Daud, 2001). In relation to this, the researchers took into account the term *bomoh* represents the Malay traditional healers or other kinds such as *pawang* and *dukun*.

Item 1 in Table 3 shows the majority of the respondents (69.7%) disagreed to see *bomoh* for their illnesses. Besides, only in certain cases (item 2) the majority of the respondents (55.6%) indicated that they would use the alternative treatment, i.e. seeing a *bomoh* for treatment with more than one third (38.3%) of respondents (item 4) preferred seeing the *bomoh* who used al-Quran and al-Hadith as *ruk yah* (incantation). In contrast, 33.3% of the respondents disagreed in seeing *bomoh*. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (74.0%) disagreed (item 3) to spend their time and money to find out the best *bomoh*. Other than that, almost half of the respondents (40.5%) would not suggest while one third (37.0%) were neutral (item 5) to the idea of suggesting to their family members and friends if there is any reliable *bomoh* who can cure any illness that is caused by jinn and devil.

Overall, the respondent's acceptance towards *bomoh* is in moderate level (Mean= 13.21, S.D=5.14). This result is parallel with the result of acceptance towards treatment thru' *ruk yah* (incantation) which is also in the moderate level.

From the researchers' point of view, the respondents did not fully accept the treatment through *bomoh* due to the existence of pretentious *bomoh* who spreads lies and evil on patients as portrayed by the printing media. They are a few healers who use *ruk yah* (incantation) that is added with unnecessary worshipping of other things, beside Allah SWT, and thus causes uncertainty among the Malay community. Many of these Malay traditional healers worship jinn including those who claim that they practice 'Islamic treatment' (Zakaria Stapa, 2003). There are two groups of *bomoh*; one which practice based solely on Islam and the other on black

TABLE 2  
Acceptance towards Rukyah (Incantation) treatments

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)	Level of acceptance*
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
1) I prefer having treatment through <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) than modern treatment	46 (13.5)	106 (31.1)	154 (45.2)	25 (7.3)	10 (2.9)	2.55 (0.92)	Moderate
2) Modern treatment is more effective as compared to <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) treatment	15 (4.4)	59 (17.3)	198 (58.1)	60 (17.6)	9 (2.6)	2.97 (0.79)	Moderate
3) Treatment through <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) is not a suitable practice in today's time	35 (10.3)	138 (40.6)	146 (42.9)	15 (4.4)	6 (1.8)	2.47 (0.81)	Moderate
4) I always give opinion to my family members the specialty of treatment through <i>rukayah</i> (incantation)	45 (13.2)	112 (32.8)	138 (40.5)	43 (12.6)	3 (0.9)	2.55 (0.90)	Moderate
5) I always give an opinion to my friends about the specialty of treatment through <i>rukayah</i> (incantation)	45 (13.2)	114 (33.3)	128 (37.4)	51 (14.9)	4 (1.2)	2.58 (0.94)	Moderate
Overall						13.12 (4.36)	Moderate**

n=343; \*Mean score: 1.00-2.33 (Low); 2.34-3.66 (Moderate); 3.67-5.00 (High); \*\*Overall mean score: 5-11 (Low); 12-18 (Moderate), 19-25 (High)

magic. *Bomoh* who uses black magic carries out worship or rituals that are against the teaching of Islam to fulfil individual's wishes. There are a few *bomoh* from this particular group who are not sincere in giving their services. In fact, some are even more selfish by charging high rates for their services. Besides, there are also *bomoh* who take advantage to fulfil their sexual desires. These actions develop the fear in people and also other *bomoh* (Haron Daud, 2001). There are parties who take advantage by mixing up many acts that are different from our values. On being self-centred, the *bomoh* institution is ruined by those who are irresponsible. There are *bomoh* institutions that are based on Islam, a partial of Islam (mixed-up) and also *bomoh* who are completely astray with wrong teachings. Among the three types of institution, there is one empty space which is fake *bomoh* (Ahmad Zuhairi Abdul Halim, 1999).

Hence, most of the Malay community takes a precaution of getting *bomoh*'s services to avoid being lost into sinful acts and lies because of the existence of various kinds of *bomoh* who are against the teaching of Islam, black magic and fraud.

#### ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS THE LEARNING OF *RUKYAH* (INCANTATION)

From Table 4, item 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (79.2%) were not knowledgeable in *rukayah* (incantation). In fact, in item 2, majority of the respondents (64.7%) would not try to probe the *rukayah*'s (incantation) knowledge that they have while one third of the respondents (33.8%) were neutral in (item 3) learning on how to cure an illness that is caused by *jinn* and devil using the Quran. Moreover, the majority of the respondents (59.4%) did not (item 4) learn *rukayah* (incantation) from books, al-Quran, al-hadith and Muslims scholars. This is further enhanced by the findings of the majority of the respondents (69.7%) who had not (item 5) used the treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) classes, lectures or talks.

Overall, the acceptance towards learning of *rukayah* is at the low level (mean = 11.04, S.D = 5.28). The researchers viewed that the lack in reading culture among the Malay community has given an impact on the low acceptance of *rukayah* (incantation) treatment. In particular, the tradition of getting knowledge through reading or academic books is very low among the Malay community and they have more faith on words by mouth or verbal communication as compared to searching for realities of facts (Zainal Abidin Borhan, 2003). It is not their choice or interest to learn about *rukayah* (incantation) but if they are told spontaneously or incidentally by the people in their surroundings, there is a possibility that they will be more cautious of that knowledge. This gives an interpretation that this knowledge is possessed by certain individuals only and is therefore not a passion for the general public or community.

Moreover, it is the norm of the Malay community to assume *rukayah* (incantation) is specifically a treatment of illnesses caused by *jinn* and devil disturbance. People who encountered such illnesses (i.e. caused by devil or *jinn*) would just prefer the healing touch of *bomoh*. Thus, the acceptance to learn and deeper understand *rukayah* (incantation) was less.

#### CONCLUSION

Treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) is one of the treatments by prophet SAW who used the holy words of al-Quran or al-Hadith and it is according to Allah SWT as a sign of humility and hope to Him by emphasizing the aspect of spirituality in curing an illness.

The findings of this study reveal that the respondents moderately accept treatments through *rukayah* (incantation) including *bomoh*. However, from the aspect of accepting the *rukayah* (incantation) knowledge, it is found that the respondents are less interested in learning and understanding the knowledge.

Thus, although they are living in a metropolitan area which has the impacts of modernization, the respondents still accept the

TABLE 3  
Acceptance towards Malay traditional healers (*Bomoh*)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)	Level of acceptance*
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
1) I prefer seeing bomoh if I'm concerned about my illness	88 (25.7)	151 (44.0)	84 (24.5)	10 (2.9)	10 (2.9)	2.13 (0.93)	Low
2) In certain cases of illness only, to see the bomoh is my alternative way of healing	20 (5.8)	49 (14.3)	83 (24.3)	160 (46.8)	30 (8.8)	3.38 (1.03)	Moderate
3) I'm willing to spend my time and money to find out the best bomoh	122 (35.6)	135 (39.4)	72 (21.0)	12 (3.5)	2 (0.6)	1.94 (0.87)	Low
4) I prefer to see a bomoh who uses al-Quran and al-Hadith as ruqyah (incantation)	27 (7.9)	87 (25.4)	97 (28.4)	80 (23.4)	51 (14.9)	3.12 (1.18)	Moderate
5) I'll suggest to my family members and friends if there is any reliable bomoh who can cure any illness that is caused by jinn and devil	77 (22.4)	62 (18.1)	127 (37.0)	64 (18.7)	13 (3.8)	2.68 (1.13)	Moderate
Overall						13.21 (5.14)	Moderate **

n=343; \*Mean score: 1.00-2.33 (Low); 2.34-3.66 (Moderate); 3.67-5.00 (High); \*\*Overall score mean: 5-11 (Low); 12-18 (Moderate), 19-25 (High)

TABLE 4  
Acceptance on learning of *Rukyah's* (Incantation) knowledge

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)	Level of acceptance*
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
1) I'm knowledgeable in <i>rukayah</i> (incantation)	155 (45.5)	115 (33.7)	54 (15.8)	15 (4.4)	2 (0.6)	1.81 (0.90)	Low
2) I'll try to probe the <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) knowledge that I have	124 (36.3)	97 (28.4)	81 (23.7)	32 (9.4)	8 (2.3)	2.13 (1.08)	Low
3) I'll learn on how to cure an illness that is caused by <i>jinn</i> and devil from Quran	63 (18.4)	70 (20.4)	116 (33.8)	68 (19.8)	26 (7.6)	2.78 (1.18)	Moderate
4) I've learned all the <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) from books, al-Quran, al-Hadith and Muslims scholars	108 (31.6)	95 (27.8)	93 (27.2)	34 (9.9)	12 (3.5)	2.26 (1.11)	Low
5) I've followed the healing through <i>rukayah</i> (incantation) classes/lectures/talks	122 (35.6)	117 (34.1)	73 (21.3)	25 (7.3)	6 (1.7)	2.06 (1.01)	Low
Overall						11.04 (5.28)	Low **

n=343; \*Mean score: 1.00-2.33 (Low); 2.34-3.66 (Moderate); 3.67-5.00 (High); \*\*Overall mean score: 5-11 (Low); 12-18 (Moderate), 19-25 (High)

treatment through *rukayah* (incantation) and bomoh, despite the fact that they not interested in gainin the *rukayah* (incantation) knowledge. This shows that the treatment through *rukayah* and bomoh will still be used whenever they face certain situations involving diseases that are caused by *jinn* and devil as an alternative after having the modern treatment. Whereas, the *rukayah* (incantation) knowledge will become extinct in the future because the respondents clearly indicated that they are not interested to learn it.

The modern medicine is based only on physical therapies. Hopefully, with the knowledge from this research, the community will become more knowledgeable in *rukayah* (incantation) and that they will integrate this spiritual healing together with the physical healing which offered by the modern medicine to get a better outcome, as stated by Maier-Lorentz who suggested holistic nursing practice, and prayer may be a very effective type of cognitive therapy that nurses should use to help elders minimize the negative effects of stress and, thus, feel better, and promote an optimal level of health (Maier-Lorentz, 2004).

Meanwhile, several efforts need to be encouraged via the media, workshops or seminars by the government, non-government organizations (NGO), and individuals to raise the level of acceptance by the Malay community towards this treatment, particulaly from the aspect of learning the *rukayah* to complete the spiritual filling within themselves and to ensure that this treatment will not become extinct in future generations.

The researcher believes that *bomohs* who are fake and sinful need to be prevented and prohibited so that the community will not have doubt in getting this treatment and to increase the credibility and excellence of treatment through *rukayah* (incantation). In addition, JAKIM needs to take stern action against the fake *bomohs*, either from a legal point of action or by approaching them and advised them to improve or deepen their faith. At the same time, the government and non-government

organizations (NGO) are required to prepare lists of *bomohs* who provide genuine services which are according to the teachings of Islam as reference for the public before obtaining such services.

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## Virtual Teenage Talk in Game Play: The Nuances and Variants in Interactive Written Discourse

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, research in computer-mediated communication (CMC) via the Internet has revealed the fostering of a sense of community in which special, close, and intimate interactions can be traced. These research studies have employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to get insights into the understudied virtual phenomenon. In an attempt to add to this body of knowledge, a study was conceptualized to analyse interactive written discourse (IWD) that takes place in game play. Game play attracts teenagers as participants and allows them to express themselves in virtual space that invites reciprocal exchange in a variety of contexts. These exchanges are subject to content and textual analysis to show the forms and performatives of language use in a specific sub-community of teenagers which invariably forms part of the larger community. The data give information about 'virtual speak' that helps to illuminate how and what teenagers talk about in virtual space through IWD. The results show specific themes of social interaction and particularities in language use that characterize the social dynamics of engagement in teenage game play.

**Keywords:** Computer mediated communication, interactive written discourse, game play, sub-community of teenagers, content and discourse analysis

### INTRODUCTION

The Internet as a form of electronic media came about due to the promotion of new interfaces between man and machine. This has led to the exciting creation of virtual reality that attempts to simulate the real world. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been described as an altered state of communication (Argyle & Shield, 1996) and the experience of virtual reality through CMC is fast gaining currency with unparalleled developments in new interactive engagements. This form of communication allows interaction and the forming of new social

relationships that are not constrained by time and space giving a new form of social phenomenon that has made its mark in communication and language studies.

CMC could use social software to mediate the communication between individuals. As a result, a new sociological approach (that could include the study of language) can be developed in novel ways where individuals form, support, and maintain relationships with others, and in the event, regulate the flow of information through this form of interaction. The encounter could result in identity construction, fostering

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relationships and maintaining changes in them, and the process may be characterized by emotional consequences. What CMC can offer in terms of research in language change is noted by Stein (2003) in his review of David Crystal's book, *Language and the Internet*. He comments that Crystal's work in CMC is a welcomed initiative for more research into the multifaceted, dynamic and fascinating new medium that would bear evidence of a language revolution.

Figures from McKay *et al.* (2005) show that the number of children and teenagers in the world who are net users stands at 77 million, and this figure is likely to grow. One area of Internet use that is fast developing is rooted in the domain of entertainment such as game play. Many would agree with Fromme's (2005) observation that video and computer games have become a matter-of-course in the everyday life of young people (in societies that can afford them). There is, as he says, "cultural and social significance of electronic games", and by extension of web-based virtual games as well. Among the web-based games created are those like *Cyworld* and *Habbo Hotel* that appear to incorporate game features for socializing purposes. In *Habbo Hotel*, the focus of study, real people are able to create characters that can have authentic conversations, play games, enter competitions, and develop new friendships. The game markets itself as a fun game within a non-violent environment and upon close inspection and participation, *Habbo Hotel* in fact offers more than games. The ecology may be described as a hybrid that allows game play and social interactions as provided in the form of sites that resemble chat rooms.

Social dynamics, relationship formation, and identity roles are played out constantly in society, and they undergo change depending on new demands and situations that arise. As a result, existing social theories often need to be re-examined or revised to explain how communication works. In the event, predictions about the outcomes of new phenomena are made and tested to achieve an understanding of the new events. In the CMC context, much of the communication is in the form of 'interactive

written discourse' (IWD) which attempts to simulate real time speech. Many researchers have noted the psycho-social dimension of IWD involvement. According to Shortis (2001), the new genre has invited many research comments on how IWD has led to social disinhibition where the traditional notion of commitment and trust in the group is given new meaning. This generalization could be further anchored on a specific group of participants that is youth. It has also been claimed that cyberspace is operating as an unregulated frontier which continues to be under-examined (Shields, 1996). New knowledge frontiers that need to be chartered invite research investigation, as principled approaches could give some answers to questions raised.

This study is an attempt to provide principled insights into a relatively new area in IWD that concerns virtual game play with youths as participants. Traditionally in many academic representations, youth has been constructed as 'problems' and as actively deviant (Griffin, 1997, p.1). This view appears to be restrictive. A more neutral and perhaps more productive standpoint could be adopted, whereby young people could be studied to reveal idiosyncratic features that mark them at a developmental transition between distinct age stages, or as teenagers morphing into adults. Much more therefore needs to be understood about youth in specific CMC situations and this also poses as a cultural challenge in terms of how virtual communication takes place primarily through the use of written language.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the twenty-first century, the gaming industry has grown and revolutionized itself through the technology of the Internet and there has, in fact, been an explosion in the many different types or genres available in online gaming. The genre that we will be focusing on will be MMORPGs or known as "massive multiplayer online games".

On-line computer games are most likely here to stay, judging by the popularity of this

form of entertainment. With this recognition, we need to give fair treatment to a technological phenomenon that can have far-reaching and diverse effects on the community or society and the individuals involved. The general objective of the study is to investigate the nature of online social interactions of teenagers who play *Habbo Hotel* which is viewed as a representation of virtual interaction. Social dynamics that operate in a computer mediated environment where interaction is not facilitated by physical contact is explored.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the dominant functions that characterize social interactions in relation to language use in an online game for teenagers?
2. What is the intensity of the functions and the accompanying variant language forms in an online game for teenagers?

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The overarching framework for this research rests on Communication Theory which defines the elements of human communication. In brief, the elements involved are: (1) context, (2) source-receivers, (3) messages, (4) channels, (5) noise, (6) effects, and (7) ethics (DeVito, 2006, p.3). DeVito further elaborates on the communication context as having four dimensions: the physical, socio-psychological, temporal and cultural. This study focuses on the socio-psychological and cultural dimensions in the way language is used, though the other elements certainly have a place in the whole connection. For example, the message is essentially realized through IWD as the participants engage in game play, and the channel used is CMC-based.

Within the identified elements, researchers have theorized on many other aspects that impinge on the outcome of a communication. For example, many theories have been forwarded to explain the relationship between the source-

receiver interactions that is mediated by the message. In this study, the relevant theories identified are those that explain social and cultural reality, and that of signs and language (LittleJohn, 2002; Miller, 2005). The theories of social construction of reality foreground the notion that reality is not objective; rather, it is constructed through interactions which are situated in specific cultures. The reality that is socially constructed could also be determined by the self and his/her emotions. In addition, there is a close relationship between reality and language. At one level, the theories of sign and language make reference to semiotics that explains the meaning of signs. Differentiated from symbols, signs serve as an instrument of thought. Meaning is captured by what is termed as propositions which in turn can be expressed through language. Language is further defined through discourse with its associated power to signify, denote, connote and abstract in the context of human communication (van Dijk, 1995; Searle, 1969). The theories point to the concept of representation which is discursively determined. The representations can be unpacked by content and textual analysis of discourse to reveal the cultural signification and the shaping of language behaviour assumed by communicators.

Morreale *et al.* (2001) forwards a CMC Competence Model that explains the nuances of all the elements involved in communication (see *Fig. 1*). The model basically elaborates in greater detail what DeVito has summarized about the elements of communication. According to the model, the individual (the potential *Habbo* in this research) may be motivated to use a specific medium (the virtual game play) to derive a preferred outcome in the communication. The person using a computer should not have fear for technologies (an assumption about the youth population engaged in *Habbo Hotel*). The interface with the software reveals focused behaviour in achieving outcomes. This focused behaviour is enhanced by attentiveness, composure, coordination, and expressiveness as the participants go into the game play. Attentiveness refers to the giving of due attention

to the other participant in order to establish a rapport with him or her. Composure, on the other hand, deals with the ability to show control and ease of communicating through the chosen environment. Someone who is composed will exhibit confidence. Coordinating a message requires temporal appropriateness and content relevance. In that way, the communication becomes efficient, thus establishing a firm interaction between the players. Finally, the concern with expressiveness in a mediated environment deals with the vividness of the message. The more vivid the message, the more revealing it is, in terms of how the participants are able to show how they act and feel. In *Habbo Hotel*, this has been facilitated through creative inventions of emoticons, use of acronyms and other special use of language.

**METHODOLOGY**

Methodologies involved in obtaining information about online computer gaming have been subject to scrutiny. There are several questions that need attending to as online gaming is a new field with few established answers. Morris (2004) addresses some of the dilemmas and challenges faced by online researchers. In her study, she investigated the kind of extra knowledge that a researcher may need to have in order to make pertinent interpretations of online community actions. She emphasized the importance of being a researcher cum player. She also cautions against the danger of starting research on an unproductive footing, such as having the prior assumption that intellectual analysis of computer games may be frivolous and also the danger of getting into stereotyping imaging of gamers and academics involved. Thus the researcher needs to be open-minded and not be influenced by any existing bias.

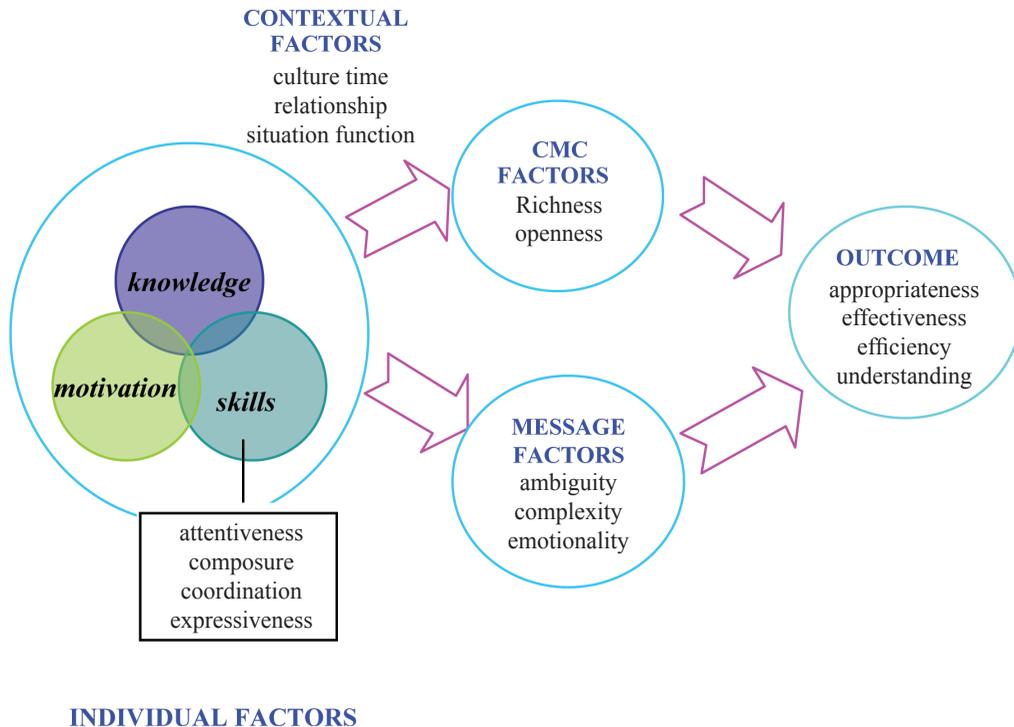


Fig. 1: A Model of Mediated Communication

(Source: Morreale, Spitzberg & Barge, 2001)

In this study, the researchers took on analytical and participatory roles in the game play especially at the initial stage. At the later stages, however, the researchers became observers in order to gather field notes more efficiently. In essence, the approaches used in data collection are mainly qualitative supported in part by quantitative data. A disadvantage with qualitative data, unlike quantitative data, is that it can be more difficult to interpret. Statistical data can be more easily summarized, but qualitative data must be managed in a way that the data can become meaningful and rich in providing salient information to explain the phenomenon under study. The data usually consists of many different layers of information which call for sensitive interpretation. There are in fact few canonical approaches for qualitative data analysis and Patton (2002, p. 433) offers advice that underlies the techniques used in this kind of study. He believes that the qualitative approaches are unique for each study. Much in fact depends on the ability of the researcher who must have the necessary skills to bring out the salience of the inquiry. This forms strength as well as weakness in qualitative research as the human factor is paramount.

The quantitative aspect in this study involves frequency counts (through content analysis) while the qualitative method involves narrative description of participant observation and analysis of the social structure of the game discourse and textual analysis of the discourse.

#### CONTENT AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Berger (2000, p. 173) explains that the use of content analysis is a research technique that can be viewed as qualitative or quantitative in nature, or a combination of both. The rationale rests on the use of a classification system to capture the richness of the communication content. Other researchers may prefer to separate the quantitative and qualitative aspects more clearly. Thus content analysis is seen to yield quantitative data while textual analysis is oriented towards qualitative means. In this study, the researchers see both content and

textual analysis as inextricably linked. They could be distinct and at the same time, each feeds into the other.

Content analysis calls for an exercise with caution in being able to identify the trends and categories to show the nature of IWD that has taken place on *Habbo Hotel*. The data has to be systematically analyzed and the interpretation needs to be objective and quantified. However, this does not mean a meaningless counting of categories. Language, in whatever form, is still the vehicle for the conveying of a message and by itself is sometimes ambiguous. The categories established through pure content analysis would not do justice to the richness of the text. To take account of how the text actually works, it would be prudent to complement the approach with textual analysis.

Textual analysis helps to construct a world view inherent in the message, bearing in mind that there is no one single correct interpretation. It is through language and its analysis that we are able to impose a coherent understanding of the communication and the society that we live in. Fundamentally, it is about making sense of the world that we live in, be it physical or virtual. Making sense is naturally related to context. As such, textual analysis is not just about looking at words but also at the context in which the text is realized. O'Shaughnessy (1996, p. 67) emphasizes that textual analysis "explore the ways that language is deployed, how images, sounds, and statistics are organized and presented and where relevant, how these various elements are combined."

In this study, the language realizations are mainly in the form of conversations. Images in the form of pictures and emoticons which are used to give the social settings of the interactions are noted, and statistics are gathered through content analysis. The text will help to explain the nature of the social interactions in *Habbo Hotel*.

According to Montgomery (1995, p. xxii), speech is the core feature of any communicative act. This is true even in new technologies, (such the Internet), where conversation forms a focal point in any interaction. Conversations serve to develop, maintain or even end relationships, and

they also constantly help to shape and reshape our world views. To analyze speech in the form of a conversation, the notions of turn, exchange and adjacency pair are relevant in the study of the IWD in game play. In linguistic jargon, a turn is taken when a person receives a signal to speak. As a conversation may be long and complex, it helps in interactive discourse analysis to examine the smallest building block that contributes to a meaningful discourse. This meaningful unit can consist of several turns. The smallest meaningful unit is an exchange and in its simplest form consists of two turns. Crystal (1997) provides this example:

- A: What's the time?  
B: Two o'clock.

Such a unit is also referred to as an adjacency pair. The value of identifying adjacency pairs is that they provide what Montgomery (1995, p. 194) calls a small scale organizing device within the flow of talk. Adjacency pairs become islands of predictability though at times, the exchange may not be as predictable as expected. Most exchanges (whether they consist of two turns or more) will conform to a pattern of regularities and it is precisely these regularities that could give characteristic information about the online social interaction under investigation.

### SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The virtual game chosen for analysis is *Habbo Hotel* which was created as a small project initially by Sampo Karjalainen and Aapo Kyrölä. *Habbo Hotel* is a virtual community that combines the features of both a chat room and an online game. Data on the extent of its popularity is not empirically available (Wikipedia.com, however, noted that *Habbo Hotel* is currently considered as one of the largest non-violent online game communities on the Internet, operating in 17 countries). It is run by a Finnish telecom company, Elisa Oyj. The *Habbo* community is full of colourful characters and offers great potential for research into social dynamics in the context of online gaming and

chatting in an online environment. Anyone entering the site can access the following information:

Habbo Hotel is a virtual hotel where you can hang out and make new friends. It's designed for 13 to 20 year olds in Australia, but visitors from other countries are also welcome. When you register you 'become' a Habbo and then you can walk, dance, eat, drink and chat in the cafes, restaurants, swimming pools and games rooms. You can even decorate and furnish your own room.

(<http://www.habbohotel.com.au>)

Thus, the participants in this game are assumed to be young teenagers or adolescents. The two terms are used rather interchangeably in this study.

To gather data for analysis, the game *Habbo Hotel* was logged on 3-4 times a week for 1-2 hours each session over a period of two months. Random screen shots were taken and recorded to make up a total of 150 shots. These shots consisted of the game structure itself and the conversation that illustrate the participation and observation. In order to make sense of a stretch of conversation, there must be meaningful units of exchanges. This means that the conversations analysed consisted of exchanges or adjacency pairs that lent themselves to be categorized as a complete message.

From early trial participation prior to the research, it was observed that a meaningful unit of exchange consisted roughly of about 5-10 turns. Most of the conversations analyzed fell within this number of turns. However, for illustrative purposes of specific language use, shorter excerpts in the form of adjacency pairs were also analyzed.

Since social interactive discourse was the focus of this research, the popular places that the *Habbos* frequently gathered were focused on to obtaining data which are concentrated and therefore could yield rich and thick data. These places were the welcome lounge and the

swimming pool. Heuristics was also employed as part of the approach to arrive at information driven by the data. Heuristic inquiry taps on the personal experiences and intense interest of the researcher in the phenomenon under study. The reporting of the research is anchored on discoveries, insights, and reflections of the researcher as he or she grapples with the phenomenon that is studied (Patton, 2002).

In sum, the procedure involved four steps. They were:

1. Obtaining representative samples,
2. Determining measurable units,
3. Confirming reliability in coding by asking for confirmation from colleagues who were also game players when in doubt, and
4. Fitting the data into terms or themes that are defined operationally to explain the social interactive discourse.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In playing the game, it has been observed that players must be familiar with the language of the *Habbo Hotel* subculture. It requires a common language, and the *Hobo* community has developed its own terminology (see Appendix 1).

Much of how we feel and think is conveyed through language even in a virtual world. However, *Habbospeak*, though based in English, can be quite difficult to understand and comprehend at times. Players tend to use a mixture of Standard English, non-standard English, acronyms, game-related terms, Internet jargon, icons and occasionally non-English words to communicate. The details of the findings are presented in the next section.

### TEXTUAL AND CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE FEATURES

The analyses focus first on the use of abbreviations, the nature of the conversations, and the token counts of specific discourse functions.

### ABBREVIATIONS

Many *Hobos* use short abbreviations instead of writing the full words or sentences. Sometimes without understanding the common gestures used by the community, a player cannot fully participate in the community. Although it would have been possible for the players to have conversations in Standard English, most players chose not to do so as they adopt *Habbospeak*. Only people who were new to the game use Standard English (see Appendix 1 for a list of such words).

Another form of abbreviated communication is the use of emoticons and symbols found frequently to graphically express feelings. Without fully understanding the terminology of the emoticons and symbols, it can also be difficult and confusing for new players to participate in the game. Thus, to help readers along in understanding this discourse feature, the signs and abbreviations are transcribed (noted in brackets) and placed immediately after the original forms found in the text. The use of these abbreviations is shown in the following conversation (marked in bold) that involves the turns to form the exchange.

#### Example 1

007:james.bond : been for a swim yet  
 firefly-baby : nahhhh...just looking around  
 007:james.bond : **asl?** (*age/gender/location*)  
 firefly-baby : 16/f/vic (*female Victoria*)  
 firefly-baby : **u?** (*you*)  
 007:james.bond : 17/m/nsw (*male New South Wales*)  
 firefly-baby : ☺ (*smiley face icon*)  
 007:james.bond : ♥♥♥♥♥♥ (*love*)  
 firefly-baby : so **wat** (*what*) do u **wan** (*want*) to talk abt (*about*)?  
 007:james.bond : I dont know lets just go to the disco



*Example 5*

falloutgirl-xox : WELL THIS SEXY BIKINI  
IM WEARING IS A GUCCI  
falloutgirl-xox : IT COST ABOUT 500  
DOLLARS  
falloutgirl-xox : BUT IT WAS TOTALLY  
WORTH IT  
falloutgirl-xox : OMG (*oh my god*) IM  
TOTALLY THE HOTTEST  
PERSON HERE  
falloutgirl-xox : I FEEL KINDA GUILTY,  
SINCE IM PRETTIER THAT  
EVERYONE ELSE HERE  
falloutgirl-xox : AND MY SKIN IS SO  
PREFECTLY EVEN  
falloutgirl-xox : IM SO GOOD I FEEL  
GUILTY  
x!x.JeSs.x!. : SHUT UP WOMAN  
falloutgirl-xox : IM THE BEST YOU ALL  
SUX (*sucks*)

DerekOz : found anything interesting  
firefly-baby : u (*you*) r (*are*) ;p (*emoticon of  
tongue sticking out*)  
DerekOz : ☺ (*smiley face icon*)  
firefly-baby : ;p (*emoticon of tongue sticking  
out*)  
DerekOz : u (*you*) here often  
firefly-baby : not really...i only come here when  
i have nothing else to do  
firefly-baby : u (*you*)?  
DerekOz : same  
firefly-baby : wat (*what*) do u (*you*) normally do  
around here?  
DerekO : flirt abit..lol (*laugh out loud*)

*Example 7*

boymagnetxoxo : u (*you*) single cutie???  
Xx:CuTiePie:xX : yerrr ;p (*emoticon of tongue  
sticking out*)  
Xx:CuTiePie:xX : wat (*what*) abt (*about*) u  
(*you*)?  
boymagnetxoxo : yea of course 4 u (*you*) i wud  
(*would*) be  
boymagnetxoxo : \*pashes\*  
boymagnetxoxo : ur (*you are*) adorable

Common short one-liners for this purpose are illustrated below:

*Example 8*

2cexy2byou : lookin for a bf (*boyfriend*) press 111  
(*type the number 1 three times*) to be  
mi (*my*) bf

*Example 9*

roXyGurL : Hit 123 if u wanna go out wit me and  
come here 2 (*too*)

*Example 10*

lanafox : hey rugby guy  
lanafox : ur (*you are*) cute  
lanafox : i luv (*love*) a guy who plays a rough  
game like that

**LANGUAGE FUNCTION: FLIRTATIOUS TALK**

A significant phenomenon in virtual gaming is often the need to look for a virtual ‘partner,’ as noted by Zybnek, Šmahel & Divínová (2006), and this is paralleled in *Habbo Hotel*. Many *Habbos* seem to be looking for online boyfriends or girlfriends (Examples 6-11). Moreover, there seems to be a need for intimacy and a sense of belonging. They appeared to be looking for comrades and new groups where they could feel a sense of belonging. Forming relationships could become a big part of exploring one’s own social identity. In *Habbo Hotel*, there is an almost limitless array of people and groups to interact with to form social relationships - all kinds of people and groups with all kinds of personalities, backgrounds, values, and interests.

*Example 6*

DerekOz : r (*are*) u (*you*) here alone  
firefly-baby : yup...just looking around

*Example 11*

mint12 : im lookin 4 a cute guy  
 mint12 : cute guy anywea (*anywhere*)????

**LANGUAGE FUNCTION: VENTING  
 FRUSTRATIONS**

Swear words are usually associated with the venting of frustration. In the game, the use of swear words or terms that are considered racist or sexual are not allowed in the game. Filtered words are replaced with the word 'bobba'. E-mail addresses and phone numbers are also filtered. The bobba filter works in all rooms, stickies and console messages. However, there are sometimes flaws with the filter and players get around it by putting full stops in between swear words (see *Fig. 2*). Players who bent the rules or caught swearing by the moderators could be banned from the game. Meanwhile, other players who are offended by the swear words could also report the offender to the moderators.



Figure 2: An example of swearing

Expectations from school, family, and friends can overwhelm teenagers, as noted by Abbot (1998), and *Habbo Hotel* in a way appears to provide them with an outlet to vent their frustrations. In the anonymous world of cyberspace, teenagers are able to vent their frustrations without facing any repercussions. They can also get other players to sympathise with them at the same time. It affirms that cyberspace presents them an opportunity to escape from reality. These forms of frustration are illustrated in the following examples.

*Example 12*

*(Betrayed by friends)*

wokina : all this stuff happened at skool (*school*) and now everyone hates me for sumthing (*something*) I didn't do  
 Yasmyne : awwwwwwww  
 wokina : yea..  
 Yasmyne : i h8 (*hate*) wendat (*when that*) happens  
 wokina : its stooped (*stupid*)  
 wokina : yea  
 Yasmyne : some1 (*someone*) makes up a roomor (*rumour*)  
 Wokina : my friends have turned agenst (*against*) me  
 Yasmyne : and EVERY1 (*everyone*) believes it  
 Yasmyne : OMG (*oh my god*)  
 Wokina : yea  
 Wokina : exactly (*exactly*)  
 Yasmyne : ☹ im soo ssosz (*sorry*) for ya (*you*)

*Example 13*

*(Do not like adults)*

FlowerCrown : I've had 30 something year olds after me...  
 Aiden2006 : rawr they annoy me. i don't go after those types.  
 Aiden2006 : BAHAAAAHA  
 Aiden2006 : poor u  
 Aiden2006 : lol  
 FlowerCrown : Heh. Indeed.

*Example 14*

*(Do not like school)*

Flamesmaster9 : I met a girl and she was 21  
 Flamesmaster9 : and she plays Habbo  
 Flamesmaster9 : haha  
 Cleo. : Ye  
 Flamesmaster9 : like yer  
 Cleo. : Aw ok

- Cleo. : To bed coz skool (*school*)  
tomoz (*tomorrow*)
- Flamesmaster9 : omg (*oh my god*) i no (*know*)
- Flamesmaster9 : stupid skool (*school*)
- Flamesmaster9 : bi bi (*bye bye*)
- Cleo. : Bye

From the above descriptions, the salient features of the sample discourse used by the teenagers in their interactions in *Habbo Hotel* have been analyzed. The main characteristics are the use of abbreviations and emoticons, as well as the talk that ranges from idle chatter, flirtatious talk, self-centred superficial talk, and the venting of frustration. Some of these features are given further treatment through content analysis accompanied by frequency and appropriate description.

### FREQUENCY COUNT OF SPECIFIC DISCURSIVE FUNCTIONS

A word count is carried out on seven main categories from the 150 screen shots captured. Abbreviations are found to be used on almost every page and are thus not given a count. The categories that are counted are presented and discussed below. All the tokens reflect the actual number of times they occur in the discourse captured in the 150 screen shots and the variants involved in the language function.

#### Greeting

Item variation	Frequency (total = 28 out of 150)
ASL - address sex and location	7 out of 28 9 out of 28
Haii/hei/hi	9 out of 28
Hey	2 out of 28
Hello	1 out of 28
How are you?	1 out of 28

From the data, a formal identification of a demarcated exchange related to greetings did not yield a high figure. In fact, most of the conversations tended to begin without this preamble. Where identified, the most popular is the variations of *haii*, *hei* and *hi*, followed by the variant *hey*. ASL is also a high variant which is direct and to the point. The expression that sounds more formal such as ‘*How are you?*’ is noted only once. This indicates that formal English is not the preferred style in greeting. Even *hello* is not often used.

#### Taking Leave

Item variation	Frequency (total = 24 out of 150)
G2g/g2run (got to go/got to run)	5 out of 24
Brb	3 out of 24
Cya/ See you all	2 out of 24
Byee/Bye	4 out of 24
Bibi	7 out of 24
Talk to you later	1 out of 24
I have to go	1 out of 24
My dad needs the comp.	1 out of 24

As can be seen, *bibi* is the most variation used compared to the more recognisable *bye*. Once again, it illustrates a kind of teenage speak which is often creative and novel. The other frequently used expression is *g2g* (5 tokens), while the formal *talk to you later* and *I have to go* register only one count each, which again supports the observation that standard English is not a preferred style in this type of virtual communication. Interestingly, there is one reference to an adult party as being contributory to a *Habbo* having to exit from the game. The exertion of independence that is supposed to be associated with the virtual space of a make-believe world could still be tampered by real-life concerns.

*Flirtation*

Item variation	Frequency (total = 17 out 150 )
Forms of address: cutie, sweetie, my baby, cute boys	8 out of 17
Invitation to forming friendship: Will you be my friend, Single??? Looking for a bf? NO I LKYES U R u looking for a gf?	9 out of 17

Flirtatious talk was identified among the teenagers with expressions like *sweetie*, and *cutie* as forms of address. Looking for boyfriends or girlfriends is also obviously a thing to do online for teenagers. In fact, forming relationships is part and parcel of the social interactions found.

*Venting of Frustration*

Item variation	Frequency (total = 22 out of 150 )
Bobbas (referring to censored words)	13 out of 22
Use of swear words that can be overtly identified: damn, fucken ugly,	4 out of 22
Dislike adults, school, having to be home early	3 out of 22
I hate my life	1 out of 22
I have no friends	1 out of 22

Twenty-two instances were identified for this category. The use of swear words, though of low frequency, is unfortunately the most common. As mentioned earlier, swear words are not allowed, although some teenagers chose not to respect the rule. These words are automatically censored and the frequency is indicated. Nonetheless, some managed to avoid censorship. It would seem that swearing is still

the most common form of venting frustration, and other forms of frustration, like those listed in the above table had relatively low incidences of occurrence (which is similar to the findings of Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2006). Although the talk was monitored, there were still attempts to use unsavoury expressions (see *Fig. 3*), indicating teenagers found a creative way through punctuation to get around the Bobba filter.

*Exclamatives*

Item variation	Frequency (total = 15 out 150 )
Omg ( oh my god) What the hell?	14 out of 15 1 out of 15

Such exclamatives are not rampantly used. Among the two identified, *omg* was more used. If there was a need to express one's surprise or similar feelings, this form of expression is less resorted to compared to the use of a stronger version in that of venting frustration, particularly through the use of swear words.

*Expressing Superficial Concerns*

Item variation	Frequency (total= 12 out of 150 )
Use of capital letters Self- centred expressions: e.g. I'm the hottest person here, My skin is so perfectly even I'm prettier than everyone else, etc.	5 out of 12 7 out of 12

There are an identifiable number of expressions that concerns the self. In this category, two sub classes were noted: one that dealt with the use of capital letters to draw attention to the speaker, and the other revolves around self-praise. Both were considered as superficial talk.

*Use of Emoticons*

Item variation	Frequency (total = 76 out of 150 )
Varieties of symbols (e.g. smileys, hearts, cups, etc.)	76 out of 150

This category ranks very high and it can be concluded that there is a high preference for such use among teenagers in their online communication. Emoticons, aside from replacing words, are also used as punctuation marks to indicate tone, intention, and emotion. It is a manner of written communication that has crept into the Internet and it is definitely here to stay. This particular type of virtual communication attests to the need to speak fast and economically in online talk. However, in studies on SMSes, which is a delayed form of synchronous interaction (see for example, Thurlow *et al.*, 2003; Crystal, 2008), the feature was also found to be well used. It is likely an ingrained characteristic of the younger generation which is techno-savvy and which relies heavily on a form of graphic communication that conveys a vivid message.

*Forms of Positive Acknowledgement*

Item variation	Frequency (total = 50 out of 150 )
Lol (laughing out loud)	43 out of 50
Kool (cool)	7 out of 50

This final category shows the kind of teenage attempt at giving positive judgment or response. The *lol* registers a high frequency of use and the reason could be that it is associated with sound which is generally not an element denoted in writing. As such, interjections of this nature could provide a break from written monotony and add a personal and friendly flavour to the interaction. Teenage online expression of acknowledgement through *lol* could be described as a peculiar discursive feature. It brings to mind the kind of devices that are used in dramatic dialogues that characterize plays. It is not

uncommon in this genre to resort to the use of asides given in parenthesis to indicate the mood of discourse. Online communication could be viewed as a kind of dramatic dialogue and as the participants play out their roles, interjections that resemble laughter or other forms of feelings would require techniques to capture such needs of expression. Similarly, the word *Kool* is also identified as a comment that indicates approval with a special meaning other than the literal. It is well associated with informal real speech, and it also transposes into the virtual domain.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The virtual game offers a place for personal expression in terms of space and character emulation, and it is an avenue for cultivating and maintaining friendship. As a popular form of entertainment, the game is a realization of a current fad in which interactive social moves mirror a variety of functions. It is also definitely a place for the expression of emotions, as revealed in the captured screens of the conversations which revealed tokens of interactions where the participants flirted with each other, showed their frustration, and used exclamatives as a form of emotional response. In addition, there were elements of talk that displayed competitiveness and a sense of achievement. If these features are an extension of real life, then, it could be concluded that these are reflections of current teenage urban values captured through a virtual recorder. In a small measure, the study has shown that engaging in a teenage virtual game can lead to the understanding of a sub-culture where particular values and interactive behaviours can be exhibited. As Jenkins (2003) noted, games can provide an escape from reality as well as an avenue to live out fantasy. Morris (2004) found that gamers' opinions are not just confined to gaming matters. According to her, there are many 'free flowing and uncensored' discussions, thus giving the communication a performative perspective that may characterize the gaming community and this is uncovered in the discourse in *Habbo Hotel*. Nonetheless,

she also cautions that one needs to be sensitive to the cultural context of the communication so as to avoid misinterpretations about statement intention. Small talk is also identified as another performative indicating shared humour and light hearted indulgence among gamers. Such small talk in fact is characteristic of *Habbo Hotel*.

More importantly, the study has shown that a teenage hybrid game and chat room software can be exploited to provide illumination into a variety of social interactions that appear to cater to the need for teenage expression. An analysis of the dialogic engagements offers insights into how teenagers attract each others' attention or what catches teenage attention and in the event, how the social interactions are realized.

The descriptive study uses content and textual analysis to obtain the objective and qualitative data. The objective counting of the tokens of occurrence of the identified categories of discursive practices illustrates the degree or frequency of the incidence of particular language use. Textual analysis, on the other hand, provides further salient information about the nature and type of interactions that have taken place. It also gives insights into language preference and forms of stylistics that are peculiar to teenage talk.

In sum, the research has addressed the issue of real-time communication. It gives proof of our innovative use of language as we exist not in a vacuum but with others. Along with communication, relationships are formed, and identities are moulded to provide telescopic insights into the ways of culture and contexts of social expression among adolescents. In exploring the teenage talk, it has implications on the meaning of the bigger 'us' in our existence. Part of the 'us' refers to an important segment of adolescents who is in transit to adulthood. In understanding how teenagers do virtual speak through IWD, we came to appreciate a form of language use that appears to be both unique and characteristic of a community that is part and parcel of the big "T".

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## APPENDIX 1

### ABBREVIATIONS AND GAME TERMINOLOGY

asl	-	Age/Sex/Location
abt	-	about
atm	-	at the Moment
bak	-	back
bf	-	boyfriend
bobba	-	Habbo's word censor for rude or inappropriate words (an in game built feature)
bi	-	Habbo slang for the word be
bibi	-	Habbo slang for Goodbye mainly used by girls
brb	-	Be right back
creds	-	credits
furni	-	Habbos name for furniture that you can buy for your room
gf	-	girlfriend
gtg	-	got to go
k	-	short form for ok
kool	-	alternate spelling for cool
mi	-	Habbo slang for the word my or me depending on the context of the conversation
n00b	-	Name used for new Habbos/ new players
ty	-	thank you
ttyl	-	talk to you later
lol	-	laughing out loud
neva	-	never
nm	-	nothing much
np	-	no problem
nty	-	no thank you
nvm	-	never mind
r	-	are
ur	-	your
omg	-	Oh My God
ppl	-	people
plz/pls-	-	please
u	-	short form for you
wth	-	What the hell?
w8	-	wait
y	-	why
ya	-	you

### GAME TERMINOLOGY

auto	-	win the game automatically by trading with the maker of the game
bomb	-	remove 3 other players
poi	-	poison
p2p	-	pay to continue playing game
p2s	-	pay to stay in the game
rev	-	take revenge on other players
kik	-	player is removed from game

## **PBL Project Reflection: Challenges in Communicating Change**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this paper is to discuss challenges of implementing a Project Based Learning (PBL) approach at three selected schools in one of the northern states in Malaysia. For this purpose, semi-structured interviewing and observation methods were employed. The data were analyzed based on the Five Sentiments Approach (Armenakis, Harris, Cole, Lawrence & Self, 2007a). The findings revealed that there was a high resistance from the teachers and students towards change due to the blatant exam-oriented culture which was still practiced in Malaysian educational institutions.

**Keywords: Change, communication, PBL, qualitative**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article was the result of the researchers' interests and on-going work in developing a new pedagogical method in the Malaysian educational setting. The main aim was to discover the challenges of implementing a Project Based Learning (henceforth PBL) approach at three selected schools in one of the northern states in Malaysia<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, the objective of this paper was to discover and understand the challenges in introducing change in educational institutions using the Five Sentiments Approach, as mentioned in the Kurt Lewin's theory (Armenakis, Harris, Cole, Lawrence & Self, 2007a).

Before we proceed any further, it is important to point out at this juncture that this paper reflects largely the principal author's professional perspectives. This paper is the result of the first author's experiences in conducting an intervention study, and she

has adopted a different perspective compared to other researchers in this area of study in understanding the challenges anticipated when change is introduced in the classroom setting.

### **WHAT IS PBL?**

PBL is a mode of teaching using a practical technique which is based on constructivism principles (Savin-Baden, 2000). The European psychologists Jean Piaget (1977) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) were instrumental in developing the concept of constructivism on which much of contemporary problem-based instruction rests. Piaget claimed that children are intrinsically curious and they are constantly striving to understand the world around them. Lev Vygotsky shared a similar idea with Piaget; he believed that intellect develops as individuals confront new and puzzling experience and as they strive to resolve discrepancies posed by

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these experiences. Drawing from both the experts' understanding on constructivism, students' are intrinsically motivated to learn if the learning environment supports the learning objectives. Problem based learning is one of the approaches which celebrates constructivism approach. It is a student-centred learning where formative assessment and learning outcomes drive learning (Buck Institute for Education, 2006).

The fundamental assumption of constructivism is that knowledge is co-constructed based on individuals' prior knowledge and their interaction with the environment. From the constructivist perspective, PBL advocates gradual knowledge co-construction in individuals. This view is in line with the idea that the role of a teacher is to facilitate and provide guidance, rather than to provide knowledge. Savery & Duffy (1995) discuss three primary constructivist principles embedded in PBL: (1) understanding comes from our interactions with our environment, (2) cognitive conflict stimulates learning, and (3) knowledge evolves through social negotiation and evaluation of the viability of individual understandings. This process of interaction and negotiation that is embedded in PBL is consistent with constructivism.

PBL was first introduced in the medical school at the University of McMaster to assist medical students to think creatively on issues related to the medical field (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980). This particular approach propagates active learning which enables the teachers to empower the learners (students) with skills needed to succeed in their future career. PBL can be characterized as an inquiry-based approach, using real-world problem solving and cooperative learning strategies, with a focus on content depth rather than breadth, where teachers are seen as facilitators of learning rather than deliverers of information (Moreno, 1999). Meanwhile, proponents of PBL (e.g., Savery & Duffy, 2001; Savin-Baden, 2000) believe that PBL is one of the best alternatives in response to the challenges facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The challenges include building teamwork,

enhancing leadership, and empowering creative thinking skills (Silva, 2008).

PBL encourages critical thinking, where learners have to critically generate and evaluate possible solutions to problems. They also have to creatively research and gather information, and develop their teamwork competence through frequent consultations and debriefing sessions. Thus, PBL emphasizes on the collaborative construction of knowledge, problem-solving, and transformation of traditional student and teacher roles (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Dochy, Seger, Bossche & Gijbels, 2003). All these processes are powerful means to develop higher-order thinking skills and self-regulated learners expected of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce (Silva, 2008). Studies on the implementation of PBL in various educational settings support the fact that it develops critical, independent and highly motivated learners, traits which are vital for their future careers (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Dochy *et al.*, 2003; Silva, 2008).

Drawing from these positive outlooks of PBL, as a powerful method to transform the mind of the learners, this article describes the use of Kurt Lewin's theory of change framework to interpret the first PBL mini project carried out at three selected schools in one of the northern states in Malaysia.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by the teachers, as a result of the PBL implementation in the classroom settings. The Five Sentiment Approach (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007a) was employed to analyze the data. The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) What are the challenges faced by the teachers? and 2) How can the Five Sentiment Approach be used to explain the challenges in the context of communicating change?

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND: THE FIRST PBL MINI PROJECT

This PBL project was modelled after the PBL projects carried out in the Buck Institute for

Education, California, or reputedly known as BIE. The BIE is a non-profit, research and development organization dedicated to improving the practice of teaching, and the process of learning. It is an independent educational body that focuses mainly on PBL research and development, and it propagates the usage of PBL in educational settings (Buck Institute for Education, 2006).

In the project, six steps were delineated to facilitate the PBL classroom intermediation process: 1) Begin with the end in mind, 2) Craft the driving question, 3) Plan the assessment, 4) Map the project, 5) Manage the process and 6) Develop assessment rubrics (refer to Appendix A).

On the whole, this PBL project comprised four mini-projects. For the purpose of this article, the principal author has chosen to describe the first mini-project as it has already been completed. The other three mini-projects are still on-going and will be completed by the end of 2010. The first mini-project was different from the other projects due to the component of an external reward attached to it. The project was designed in such a way that the group with the best product would be selected to attend a PBL summit overseas.

The first project was the only project where there was an external reward offered by a non-profit organization, an iOU (note that a fictional name is used to protect the confidential identity of the company). The iOU is a non-governmental body which is actively pursuing and propagating PBL training in the country. The other supporting bodies for this first mini-project were a giant software company, Medof<sup>2</sup> and the State Education Department. The project was completed in five months; it started in October, 2008 and finished in March 2009.

This first PBL mini project was aimed at creating a Safety Map for natural disasters. The students were asked to come out with the most creative and critical plan on how to save lives when disaster struck. They were evaluated on the basis of a written report and the presentation of the project to a panel of judges. The panel of judges comprised of teachers from different

schools, the school representative and the researchers.

The primary informants, i.e., the teachers, were given a month to plan and complete the project. As the PBL approach itself is a new mode of teaching for the informants, the researchers felt it was crucial to provide a series of training sessions to equip the teachers with the appropriate skills and knowledge of PBL.

Thus, the project started with the training of the selected teachers from three different schools. In total, fifteen teachers were selected by the respective school management based on the criteria delineated by the researchers.

The three schools had shown different levels of academic performance, based on their students' achievements in the public examinations, namely, the *Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah (PMR<sup>3</sup>)*, *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM<sup>4</sup>)* and *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM<sup>5</sup>)*. Based on these levels of academic performance, the schools were categorized as follows; the best school was *Sekolah Mawar* (fictional names are employed to protect the confidential identity of the schools). This was followed by *Sekolah Anggerik* and finally *Sekolah Kenanga*.

This project was started after obtaining the required consent from the State Education Department. Permission from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia was also required before the project was allowed to proceed. When the approval was granted by the Ministry, the researcher team met with the State Education Department representative and with the three principals of the selected schools.

## TRAINING SESSION I

The first training session had taken place in the university, where most of the researchers were attached. This workshop was conducted under immense pressure of time due to the need to select the best group from each of the three selected schools for an overseas trip; the reward for implementing the best PBL case study project on the subject Science. The training was conducted from 8 a.m. till 5.30 p.m. It is important to note that a close communication

among the active agents (namely the researchers, the iOU, Medof and the State Education Department) had taken place since October, 2008.

Each group consisted of five teachers. They were three Science teachers, and one each for English and, *Bahasa Malaysia*<sup>6</sup> represented in each school. They were given files containing the Science syllabus, workshop schedule and planning documents. The teachers were also asked to give their contact addresses and mobile phone numbers so that they could be contacted in the near future. They were exposed to the philosophy of PBL and the ideal way of implementing the project in the classroom. The whole session was videotaped.

## TRAINING SESSION II

The second workshop was conducted on 13 February 2009. This workshop was attended by 14 teachers, as one teacher had decided to withdraw from the session because he was no longer interested in any of State Education Department sponsored programmes.

The second workshop was conducted by the lead researcher, and she started the session by asking about the progress of the project, issues encountered, and on the general practical aspects regarding the PBL project, especially matters regarding the overseas' trip. This workshop ended on a rather unexpected positive note as it was found that some teachers from each school were active in coordinating the project. This was a rather surprising outcome because, even though it was a completely new method for the teachers, they were still active and enthusiastic in their attempt to implement the PBL project. Moreover, one of the teachers from *Sekolah Anggerik* took the initiative to build a blog. The blog was actively used by the students, teachers, and the principal author. Based on the feedbacks from the workshop session, it was found that the teachers were progressing well in the first mini-project. The teachers from *Sekolah Mawar* had reached step 5<sup>7</sup> in the PBL procedures (workshop data, February 2007). For the teachers in

*Sekolah Anggerik*, they had moved to step 6 and *Sekolah Kenanga*, the school teachers were at level 5 and moving on to level 6 (workshop data, February 2007).

It is also vital to note here that this PBL project is not directly related to the existing official Science syllabus, which teachers still had to enact during the period of the study. The researchers knew that the teachers involved in the project were conducting the PBL sessions both inside and outside of the classroom setting. Thus, this situation might give rise to an ethical issue; whether these teachers were actually aware of their rights to participate or withdraw from the PBL project. It was made very clear to the participants that they had the option to withdraw from the PBL project if they thought it was not in line with the Science syllabus.

In order to complete the cycle, the researchers had to visit the three schools to evaluate the students' participation. As this was a pilot project i.e. a new project in this state, only the best class from each school was selected to join the programme. The two criteria used to choose the winner are as follows; 1) oral presentation and 2) final written report. The students were given the proposed evaluation rubrics before each task. Due to financial constraints, the iOU decided that only one group from each class would be selected to represent Malaysia to the overseas summit.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

This section specifically discusses Kurt Lewin's theory of change. This theory argues that the change process usually flows in three phases, namely unfreezing, moving and freezing. Lewin's change theory propagates three phases (Burnes, 2004; Medley & Akan, 2008). The first stage is the unfreezing stage. Unfreezing refers to the state of preparing the targeted individuals with mental and physical justification of why change needs to be embraced. The change agents normally provide information and training and keep on persuading the targeted group to accept the change idea at the same time.

The second stage is the moving stage. This is the implementation stage where change is executed. At this stage, most individuals or groups will be busy absorbing the implementation of the change and adjusting themselves to the new working culture. Finally, the third stage is the freezing stage. This stage refers to the state of full acceptance of the targeted individuals of the change. It is assumed that after the unfreezing and moving phases have been accepted and implemented properly, change is fully embraced by the targeted individuals or groups.

Given that most studies attempted to explain the whole cycle of change (Klien, 1996; Sparks, Raats, Geekie, Shepherd, 1996; Varey & Hamblett, 1997), this research only attempted to contribute to the unfreezing literature. Although this approach can be seen as a limitation of the study, it is also the strength, where the researchers tried to provide insights into what actually had happened during the early stages of change (unfreezing phase).

Unfreezing, as suggested by Armenakis & Harris (2009), indicates the readiness to change. The concept of readiness for change is in line with Kurt Lewin's view that change is positive for members in a community or an institution (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). In the early study by Klein (1996), unfreezing is interpreted as 'readying the organization for change' (p.37) which normally involves the first step of introducing new practices and knowledge to the members in an organization. Reflecting on the above definitions, unfreezing refers to the process of identifying why change is needed in the first place. It promotes the idea of transitions, i.e. from the existing state to the future one. Indeed, this readiness to learn a new culture means unlearning, learning, and relearning at one and the same time (Schein, 2006). This means that the people are prepared to understand new issues (structures and tasks), and gradually, the change agent could introduce the change, i.e. the new agenda to the targeted and potential receivers.

In a study on "Surviving organizational change," Nelissen & Selm (2008) suggested that there are six dimensions in the unfreezing

process. These dimensions are corporate survival, personal opportunities, positive state of mind, fear tasks, fear atmosphere and lack of confidence. In experiencing these six dimensions, Nelissen & Selm (2008) argued that during the unfreezing stage, individuals would experience positive and negative feelings.

Nonetheless, there are many critics of Kurt Lewin's theory of change. However, according to Burnes (2004) and Schein (2006), the parsimonious principle of the theory in explaining the change cycle has made it a useful theory to explain the change phenomenon in a particular setting.

For instance, in the unfreezing phase, it touches on how communication channels are opened to disseminate change messages to the targeted subjects, which in this case are the teachers. In this phase, the trainers, i.e. the iOU and the researchers attempted to distribute the 'useful' information related to change to the subjects. In line with communicating change, i.e. explaining about the project, the teachers were free to interrupt to exchange ideas, ask questions, express their feelings and argued their view whenever they thought that they needed clarification from the change agents (namely, the iOU representative and the researchers). Documents pertaining to the project were given to each of the participants and several topics in the documents were also discussed. Both the printed documents and the soft copies in power points from the iOU representatives were freely distributed to the participants. Those materials represent the initiative of the reformers to educate, elaborate and argue why this project is pertinent for student development in critical thinking and creative skills. In this stage, trainers and materials act as stimuli to the communication change process. Even though the decision to make the change is up to the participants, this stage represents the first bold attempt of the researchers to persuade the participants to adopt the PBL project for the sake of positive development in future generations.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a qualitative research methodology, with semi-structured interviews and observations, as the main methods utilized in data collection.

## THE METHODS

The informants of this study were 15 teachers, three principals, and three State Education representatives. As mentioned above, a total of 15 teachers were involved. Five teachers were selected by the principals for each school. Each group was represented by three science teachers and a senior teacher to supervise the project. In addition, one English teacher and one *Bahasa Malaysia* teacher were included to assist the students in preparing the report and presenting the project. The distribution of gender is seemingly balanced with 7 male teachers and 8 female teachers. For the details of the demographic data, please refer to Appendix B.

In this study, the researchers employed semi-structured interviews and observation. Interviewing took place during the first meeting with the Director's representatives from the State Education Department, the State representative for the Science Cluster, the three principals, and finally the teachers in the different workshops, formal and informal meetings. The interview protocol was guided by Armenakis *et al.*'s (2007a) five fundamental change questions. They are: 1) How would you describe your job?, 2) What are you having successes with and why?, 3) What are you struggling with and why?, 4) What changes do you think need to be made?, 5) Do you have any final comments? In addition, observation was mostly done during the workshop and meeting with the teachers.

### *Data Validation*

Interviews were tape-recorded and in some cases where tape recording was not practical, especially during the early meetings between the teachers and the researchers, all the researchers took notes during the interviews. Right after the

interview sessions, the researchers immediately went over their notes of the interviews and wrote down additional observations. The principal author also kept an observation diary to record the challenges encountered in implementing the PBL project in the classrooms. During the whole period of the project, the principal author monitored the interactions in the PBL blog which was initiated by the male teacher from *Sekolah Kenanga*. In this study, the teachers were encouraged and asked to submit their comments to the principal author via email whenever they had doubts during the process of completing the first mini-project.

## ANALYSIS STRATEGY

The required data were collected and thematized to focus on the phenomenon of unfreezing, whereby the respondents were prepared to accept change, i.e. from the state of the unknown to the known. Drawing from the data, the principal author identified emerging concepts which were able to explain the change process as the result of the introduction of the PBL approach to the classroom settings. Due to the need to relate the data to a theoretical framework, the principal author chose Kurt's Lewin unfreezing paradigm to explain the observed change process. These concepts could be further explained using the five dimensions suggested by Armenakis *et al.* (2007a). These include discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support and valence (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007a, b).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS: THE CHALLENGES OF INTRODUCING PBL IN SCHOOL

As mentioned before, the data were analyzed using the framework of the five sentiments of change, namely, discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and valence. Discrepancy refers to the presence of any instances of deviance from the norms of the institution. Appropriateness can be defined as whether the PBL (the change) introduced by the researchers is in line with the institutional

culture or situation (situation based). Meanwhile, efficacy can be described as having confidence in adapting to change. Principal support refers to the support of leaders towards organizational change. In this context, valence refers to what the individual perceives to be his or her benefit or loss as a result of change.

From the principal author's viewpoint, which was based on the earlier meetings with two State Education Department representatives and three principals, the response to introduce the PBL project was positive. Only one principal from *Sekolah Kenanga* was quite hesitant about the project, as she had just been transferred to the school. However, at the end of the first-mini project, she became supportive of the project.

### DISCREPANCY

Introducing PBL to the schools is a challenge. At first, the researchers expected low resistance from the schools, especially when we had strong support from the top management at the federal and the state levels.

Arguably, given the nature of the Malaysian community, which most commonly practices the culture of collectivism (Hofstede, 1984; Gudykunst & Lee, 2003), the principal author was expecting positive responses from the respondents. Collectivism is an attribute which characterizes individuals as respectful of authority and confirming to community values (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003). On the other hand, in a different culture such as in the Western context, this process is not certainly uncommon in many change research where organizations usually experience resistance from employees and other stakeholders when change is introduced (Vakola & Wilson, 2004).

In this study, the responses from most of the teachers were rather apprehensive. Majority of the teachers voiced their concerns on the implementation of PBL in their schools. They stated several reasons to justify their thoughts. These include students' readiness to accept the change, parents' expectation in term of grades, and inflexibility of school time-table, especially

for science classes. As stated by a senior Science teacher from *Sekolah Anggerik*:

*Parents will be keen to know how this project will affect the exam grades. They usually care about the exam grades (personal communication, February, 2009).*

The above mentioned statement, which reflected a rather apprehensive thought, was supported by his colleague in *Sekolah Kenanga* on the issue of inflexibility teaching time-table:

*I think we have to remember, school time-table is quite inflexible to cater for this project (personal communication, February, 2009).*

The abovementioned reasons are related to the grade conscious culture of the schools. Due to this rather pervasive school ethos, most teachers were reluctant to change to a new teaching method as they would be subject to intense pressure by parents if the children could not achieve good grades in their exams. In other words, for the teachers, the PBL method is against the mainstream pedagogical method which is chalk and talk.

### APPROPRIATENESS

The timing of this project is another controversial issue from the perspectives of the recipients, especially among the teachers. As a Science teacher from *Sekolah Kenanga* stressed during an interview:

*The timing is bad, syllabus problem, exam questions for midterm, parents' expectations, sports events, ceremonial events (personal communication, February, 2009).*

In the above confession, the teacher actually tried to describe to the researchers that what was the most important from the perspective of the principals, parents and students was the students' grades. He further explained that the teachers

were worried that, if by implementing PBL while the students were in the middle of finishing the structured syllabus, this could affect the grades of the students in their mid-term exams. In other words, they were concerned over the implications as a result of their students getting poor grades when using PBL.

Another teacher from *Sekolah Mawar* pointed out that their school had to participate in many ceremonial events which they could not avoid because it was a top-down directive:

*Next week, we will have royal visit at our place and then there will be other activities taking place. We are just too busy. We ask for deadline extension for the PBL presentation. Maybe on the 2 March and then the chosen students can make their passport on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March. It will take only a day to prepare their passport* (Workshop data, February, 2009).

The teachers were not only being pressured to produce high achievers in terms of grades but they were also expected to juggle between administrative duties and having a social life. They argued that they came under immense pressure trying to maintain the grades of the students in the top classes as they were afraid that parents would be angry if their children's performance declined. This fear of introducing change is apparent especially with the students in the top classes. This phenomenon is not uncommon in the change literature, as no organization wants to take any unnecessary risks if the outcome will have more negative impact on the recipients (Watters, 2007). Emerging crisis is unwelcome to any organization. Severe crisis must be avoided. As has been documented in the past research, anticipation of crisis is real in most change processes in organizations (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). In fact, some studies even suggested the organizations identify measures to lessen the negative impact of change by providing training, concentrating on leadership capability and strengthening employee-employer relationship (Armenakis *et*

*al.*, 2007a, b). The challenge of introducing PBL in this case is that the top management, on the one hand, feels that it is one of the best methods to provide a comprehensive learning experience to the students. However, the teachers on the other hand, felt pressured to implement this project as they had foreseen difficulties in implementing it due to grade conscious culture of the stakeholders.

### EFFICACY

During the early stage of the study, the principal researcher had assumed that the teachers selected for the project generally believed in the PBL. However, when the project had been started for a period of time, it was found that only one Science teacher from *Sekolah Anggerik* was confident in adapting the new concept in his school environment.

He was pursuing his Master in Information Technology and claimed that in the past, he had undertaken a similar kind of project which was sponsored by a giant electronic company in his previous school. Another criterion which reflected his interest in this project was his initiative in creating a PBL blog. The main intention of creating the blog was to assist the students in conducting the PBL project. He indicated that:

*The purpose of creating the blog is to ease communication among the students so that they know what they need to know. What's more they are involved in sports and by blogging they can contact me at their convenience* (Email interview, February 2009).

Generally, however, it was not easy for most other teachers to adapt to this new style of teaching as they had been comfortable with their existing teaching practices. In light of this argument, it is extremely hard when it comes to top down approach (whereby the principals and the state believe that it is one of the best methods to be adopted), but the teachers feel that it is too burdensome (refers to appropriateness aspect).

Thus, for the first PBL mini-project, we could safely claim that only one school (i.e. *Sekolah Anggerik*) reflected the high confidence level in understanding the project due to the highly motivated teacher, whereas the rest was sceptical in accepting the change.

### PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

The researchers started this project with the hope to develop one exemplary model of the teaching method in secondary rural and urban schools in Malaysia. This is because in the extant literature in PBL, the claim is made that this method has tremendous positive impacts on students learning and their self-development in the future (Mitchell & Smith 2008; Savin-Baden, 2000; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006). It is arguably one of the most effective methods in learning if it is implemented in the right manner (Dochy *et al.*, 2003; Goodnough, 2006; Mitchell & Smith, 2008). With these positive findings on the PBL approach in various research settings, this study embarked on the journey to find out whether the implementation of the PBL approach in local school setting would also show a similar positive impact on students' experiences in learning.

The principal author and the lead researcher went to meet the State Educational Director representative to seek permission to conduct the research at selected schools and to persuade him to accept the idea of implementing PBL in the school system. He was enthusiastic and showed a positive response towards the project. He pointed out that:

*Yes, we believe any project such as this will help our state to move forward. We do foresee the problems with the teachers where they will see it as a burden but as it seems our state is geared toward positive cooperation from other institution, we believe that we will try to overcome the challenge. We just need a letter from the Ministry of Education to start the ball rolling (personal communication, December, 2008).*

In addition, the principals from *Sekolah Mawar* and *Sekolah Anggerik* gave their full support from the beginning, while the principal from *Sekolah Kenanga* was a bit resistant as she had just been transferred to the school. There was a formal meeting between the researchers and the school principals before the PBL project was realized. Both the principals from *Sekolah Mawar* and *Sekolah Anggerik* pledged their full support to the project implementation as they believed this project would benefit their students in the long run. However, the principal from *Sekolah Kenanga* was rather hesitant to embrace the change as she was unsure on the culture of accepting change in her new school. Another party, i.e. the Medof an NGO, also contributed a lot to the project. The company had sponsored the workshop session for the first mini PBL project.

### VALENCE

Valence refers to what one perceives as benefit or loss when change occurs. At the start of the study, only *Sekolah Anggerik* believed it was beneficial for the students, whereas the teachers of the other two schools (*Sekolah Mawar* and *Sekolah Kenanga*) gave bleak responses to the project stating that they never really wanted to participate due to their work load and parental pressure. During the first workshop, a female teacher expressed the following view:

*This is their (the university) project. We just do it (Workshop data, February, 2000).*

The issue here is the ownership of the project. Most of the teachers saw the PBL project as the researchers' academic project and they were just a part of it. When the researchers started the project, it was fully supported by the State Education Director, the three principals and the Medof organization. However, when it came to the implementation stage, the school teachers were resistant to the change, and as mentioned earlier, only *Sekolah Anggerik* was positive about the implementation of the project.

What was interestingly observed in this study was the gradual change of the teachers' belief in the PBL project. Initially, only one the male Science teacher from *Sekolah Anggerik* was enthusiastic about the project. Later, another Science teacher from *Sekolah Mawar* gradually started to show interest upon discovering more about the project. In fact, for the third mini-project (which is still in progress), he is the most active informant asking for more advice and support, preparing for the PBL documentation and participating actively in the workshop sessions. According to him, in the first mini-project, he was in a rush to finish the syllabus, and he acknowledged that his lack of knowledge and skills in the PBL approach was a hindrance to his full participation. However, when he had completed the first mini-project, he realized that there was more to learn. His confession intrigued the researchers as he also realized that the other teachers also lack knowledge and skills in implementing PBL, but did not attempt to ask for more input. Thus, the researchers realized that this lack of knowledge and skills when checking the students' diaries and their end products did not seem to be in line with the PBL's rubric expectation.

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is undeniably true that communicating change to the target respondents is rather challenging in this research context. This first mini project was completed within a month. Due to the special character of the PBL project (i.e. reward was promised for the successful group), the teachers from the three selected schools worked hard to complete the project. Unfortunately, the trip was postponed to a later date due to the growing threat of the H1N1 pandemic. As a result, the researchers had to face criticisms from the schools and parents. Most of the teachers were unmotivated to continue with the second mini-project. During the meeting to explain the reason of the postponement, the lead researcher asked the teachers to consider withdrawing from the second mini-project if they were no longer

interested in the PBL training. However, none of the teachers accepted the offer and at the time of writing this paper, the Science teachers from the three schools were still undergoing training with the lead researcher for the third mini-project.

In retrospect, in the first mini-project, the researchers' attempt to understand the idea of change and the analysis of the change perspective using the Five Sentiments of Change by Armenakis *et al.* (2007a) revealed that there was a high resistance towards change. Working on this project, the researchers further realized that it would be better if they could monitor the interaction of the respondents at the group level more closely. There is a need to discuss the participants' frustrations more openly and address the issue of how their teaching methods could be improved. What is more important is to ensure that they are really implementing PBL, and not simply accepting the feedback from the project participants that they were faithfully implementing the PBL approach in their classes. We are considering winning over the State Education Director, especially in getting and encouraging more official support to involve teachers as they need to be made aware that they have the support from the top management. The impact of high resistance towards accepting pedagogical change is apparently due to the widespread grade conscious culture in Malaysian educational institutions.

From this study, it can be seen that interpreting the data using the Five Sentiments can help the researchers to understand the change process. Therefore, the prevalence of high resistance from the community of parents and students need to be taken into serious consideration in future research due to the blatant exam-oriented culture being practised in Malaysian educational system.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Located in the north of Peninsula Malaysia (Economic Planning Unit, 2008).
- <sup>2</sup>A fictional name is used to protect the confidential identity of the company
- <sup>3</sup>PMR stands for Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Assessment)
- <sup>4</sup>SPM refers to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Education Certificate)
- <sup>5</sup>STPM stands for the Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Higher Education Certificate)
- <sup>6</sup>Bahasa Melayu is the national language. It is best translated as the Malay language.
- <sup>7</sup>Please refer to Appendix A

**APPENDIX A**

The PBL Process

Cycle	Process	Notes
1	<b>Begin with the end in mind</b>	Summarize the theme or “big ideas” for this project. Identify the academic outcomes that students will learn in this project (2 – 3 per subject) Identify key skills students will learn in this project. List only those skills you plan to assess (2 – 4 per project).
2	<b>Craft the driving question</b> Students are confronted with a problem & they are free to discuss with group members prior to class discussion. Step 1: Framing of the problem. As a class/group, draft an initial problem statement using the formula: “How can we as ? do ? so that ?” Step 2: Knowledge inventory: “Knows” “What do we need to know?” Step 3: “What do we (already) know?” Step 4: “What do we need to know now?”	Divide students into small teams of 2 to 4 to organize ideas and to define the problem. Give them 5-10 minutes to read and discuss the ‘entry document’ Guide students to create the ‘Driving Question’ Engage students in a dialogue to generate the following lists: NEED TO KNOW ALREADY KNOW NEED TO KNOW NOW
3	<b>Plan the assessment</b> Carefully plan the assessment to ensure learning outcomes are met	Step 1: Define the products and artifacts for the project. Step 2: State the criteria for exemplary performance for each product.
4	<b>Map the project</b> Look at one major product for the project and analyze the tasks necessary to produce a high-quality product. Analyze the knowledge and skills needed	Do the products and tasks give all students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned? What do students need to know and be able to do to complete the tasks successfully? How and when will they learn the necessary knowledge and skills?
5	<b>Manage the process</b>	How will you and your students evaluate the project? Examples: class discussion, fishbowl, student-facilitated formal debrief, teacher-led formal debrief, individual evaluations, group evaluations, etc.
6	<b>Develop assessment rubric</b>	Identify the types of assessment Examples: essay, presentation and report

**APPENDIX B**

Demographic Data

*Sekolah Mawar*

No	Teacher (Subject expertise)	Age	Gender	Highest Academic Qualifications	Teaching experience	Ethnicity
1	Science	50s	Female	Bachelor Degree	> 28 years	Malay
2	Science	40s	Male	Bachelor Degree	>12 years	Malay
3	Science	30s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 7 years	Malay
4	English	30s	Female	Bachelor Degree	>10 years	Malay
5	Malay Language (Bahasa Malaysia)	40s	Female	Bachelor Degree	>20 years	Malay

*Sekolah Anggerik*

No	Teacher (Subject expertise)	Age	Gender	Highest Academic Qualifications	Teaching experience	Ethnicity
1	Science	50s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 28 years	Chinese
2	Science	40s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 12 years	Malay
3	Science	40s	Female	Diploma	> 15 years	Malay
4	English	40s	Female	Masters	> 14 years	Chinese
5	Malay Language (Bahasa Malaysia)	40s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 23 years	Malay

*Sekolah Kenanga*

No	Teacher (Subject expertise)	Age	Gender	Highest Academic Qualifications	Teaching experience	Ethnicity
1	Science	30s	Female	Bachelor Degree	> 10 years	Malay
2	Science	50s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 17 years	Malay
3	Science	30s	Male	Bachelor Degree	> 10 years	Malay
4	English	40s	Female	Masters	>20 years	Chinese
5	Malay Language (Bahasa Malaysia)	30s	Female	Diploma	>25 years	Malay

## Shariah and Legal Issues in House Buying in Malaysia: The Legality of *Bay' Bithaman-Al-Ajil* ('BBA') with Special Reference to Abandoned Housing Projects

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### ABSTRACT

The primary duties of Islamic banks and financial institutions in Malaysia are to carry out Islamic banking and financial activities and to offer products that are in accordance with the Islamic teachings. These products are subject to the scrutiny and approval of Bank Negara's Shariah Advisory Council (SAC) and the internal Shariah Advisory Bodies (SAB) or the Shariah Committees of the respective financial institutions. Despite having been in existence for more than 25 years, in the authors' view, it is still questionable whether or not the Islamic banks and financial institutions in Malaysia have been satisfactorily carrying out these duties. One area worth examining is the transaction involving house buying, particularly the one that falls under the purview of the Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Act 1966 (Act 118) and transactions involving houses pending completion. This paper examines this area of transaction and the loan agreement, affected via *Bay' Bithaman al-Ajil* (BBA), provided by Islamic banking and financial institutions in Malaysia. The purpose is to see to what extent the sale and purchase agreement and the loan agreement have complied with the requirements of the Islamic Law in protecting stakeholders and to provide practical suggestions to improve the existing practice. The paper concludes that the current practice of the BBA contradicts with the teachings of Islam and should therefore be modified and revamped until it is fully able to protect the interests of the purchasers/borrowers.

**Keywords:** Bay' Bithaman al-Ajil, Gharar al-Fahish, Islamic Banking Law, abandoned housing projects, Malaysia

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic banking aroused quite an interest in the 1960s and 1970s, following the resurgence of Islam in the early twentieth century, with the momentum being spearheaded particularly by Egyptian Muslim scholars and thinkers, such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Hassan al-Banna, and Jamaluddin al-Afghani. Islamic

banking eventually gained foothold in Malaysia, with the establishment of Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad in 1983 (Haron & Shanmugam, 1997). Thus, the Islamic banking facilities have since expanded to meet and serve the customers' insatiable demands for user-friendly banking facilities and products. These Islamic banking products include *Mudarabah* - a general and

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special investment deposit in the nature of profit sharing between the depositors/customers and the bank, acting as the entrepreneur; *Wadiah* - where the bank simply acts as the safe-keeper of the deposits of the depositors/customers but it may provide returns to the depositors as a gift (*al-Hibah*); *Murabahah* (partnership and equity financing); *Ijarah* (leasing); *Musharakah* (partnership) and *Bay' Bithaman al-Ajil* (BBA) (i.e. sale by deferred payment). Due to the increasing demand for these Islamic banking products, Islamic windows (Islamic banking products) are likewise introduced by the conventional banks (Yacop, 1996).

### OBJECTIVES

This paper examines the provisions of the standard *Bay' Bithaman al-Ajil* (BBA) agreement as practised by the Islamic Banks and Islamic Window Banks (IWB) in Malaysia, as to whether the BBA conforms to the requirements of the *Shariah* (Islamic Law), specifically insofar, as it relates to the purchase of houses-still-pending-completion and abandoned housing projects.

### THE BAY' BITHAMAN AL-AJIL (BBA) - THE PROPERTY PURCHASE AGREEMENT (PPA) AND THE PROPERTY SALE AGREEMENT (PSA)

It is a trite practice in Malaysia that for some who wish to purchase a house, specifically a transaction falling under the Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Act 1966 (Act 118), they will seek to obtain a loan from an Islamic bank or the IWB. Before the purchasers apply for a housing loan from an Islamic Bank or IWB, they should have entered into agreements of sale and purchase with the licensed developers. Once the said agreements are executed and enforceable, the purchasers may apply for loans from an Islamic Bank or IWB to finance the balance purchase price of the property. The purchasers are required to execute two agreements to facilitate this; firstly, the Property Purchase Agreement (PPA) and

secondly, the Property Sale Agreement (PSA). The first agreement (PPA) provides that the purchasers agree to sell the property, which he purchased from the developer, at the price similar to the price he agrees with the developer, to that particular Islamic Bank or IWB and on the undertaking that they (the purchasers) are to re-purchase the property from the Bank. The second agreement is the Property Sale Agreement (PSA). Under this agreement (PSA), the property (which has been vested in the Bank) is sold by the Bank back to the purchasers, at an increased price. The purchasers are required to repay the Bank this price, by way of instalments for a specified duration until the sale price is fully settled. The Bank will get a profit, being the difference between the price stipulated in the PPA or the said agreement and the price stated in the PSA (the sale price).

The type of transaction between the purchasers and the Bank described above is called *Bay al-Inah*. It should be noted that the theory and application of *Bay al-Inah* are still subject to debate by the schools of Islamic Law as the sale involves *riba'* (i.e. difference of prices) or a trick (*helah*), in the sale and purchase activities, by applying *riba'* method of borrowing transaction (al-Zuhayli, 1988). The majority of Muslim jurists reject *Bay al-Inah* (al-Zuhayli, 1988). However, the minority (such as the Shafie, Abu Hanifah, and Zahari Schools) have permitted it but with the condition that the application of *Bay al-Inah* must be used with circumspection and if warranted by circumstances (al-Zuhayli, 1988). Otherwise, its application should be limited (Resolution of Shariah Advisory Council of Bank Negara, 2009).

### GHARAR

There are many verses from the Quran which call for the doing of justice and abstaining from committing any cruelty, fraud, and injustice, especially in business and transactions. The following are some examples of the relevant verses:

1. "Do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people's property" (al-Baqarah (2): verse 188).
2. "O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!" (al-Nisa'(4): verse 29).
3. "Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition" (al-Nahl (16): verse 90).

Some examples of the practices involving fraud and injustice are the practice of *riba'* (interest/usury) in lending transactions and the '*gharar*' sale and purchase. The practice may be necessary and appropriate for investors and businessmen as being creative and devious capitalist business devices to maximise profits with no or less risk, but they are unlawful and injustice according to the Islamic law. Thus, Islam prohibits the practice of *riba'* (interest/usury) and '*gharar*' transactions. These are explained in the following Quranic verses:

1. "Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch Hath driven to madness. That is because they say: "Trade is like usury," but Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (The offence) are companions of the Fire: They will abide therein (for ever)." (Al-Baqarah (2): verses 275).
2. "This because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter: and Allah will not guide those who reject Faith. Those are

*they whose hearts, ears, and eyes Allah has sealed up, and they take no heed. Without doubt, in the Hereafter they will perish"* (al-Nahl (16): verses 107-109).

Similarly, the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him - PBUH) also, calls for a similar practice in carrying out any transaction:

1. "Muslims are brothers. It is not permissible for a Muslim to sell a thing which contains faulty elements/flaws/defects (*aib*) to his fellow brother (Muslim) except if he discloses it" (reported by Ibnu Majah from Utbah bin A'mir, in al-Shawkani, 2002: p. 1115).
2. It was reported that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), while he was passing a vendor selling foods, and became attracted to the bunch of foods before him. He put his hand into the bunch and found the part below the foods were wet. He asked the seller: What is this? The seller replied: the foods were wet because they were poured with rain water and to prevent public from knowing this fact, he put the wet foods at the bottom part of the bunch. On hearing of this, the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'He who cheats us, is not from us' (reported by majority except al-Bukhari and al-Nasai, in al-Shawkani, 2002: p. 1115).
3. "It is not permissible for someone to sell a thing except after he has explained about it, nor is it permissible for a person who knows such a state of condition of a thing, except he explains about it" (reported by Ahmad, in al-Shawkani, 2002: p. 1115).

#### CONTRACT OF SALE INVOLVING A NON-EXISTENT SUBJECT MATTER

The position of the Islamic law is clear on contracts involving a non-existent subject-matter. The Islamic law lays down a condition that the subject-matter must actually exist at the conclusion of the contract. Hence, if the

subject matter does not exist, generally, the contract is void even though it could probably exist thereafter, or even if it is established, then that it would exist in the future but the existence is still to the detriment of any party to the contract. A contract which involves a non-existent subject-matter is prohibited pursuant to a *hadith*, whereby the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prohibited a person from selling an animal foetus yet to be born while it is still in the mother's womb, when the mother is not part of the sale (Nawawi, 1999, p. 7). This is also applied to the selling of milk whilst it is still within the udder of the animal. This sale is void as there is a possibility of the udder being perhaps void of milk, and instead, only containing air (al-Zuhayli, 1988, pp. 427-429). In one *hadith*, the Prophet (PBUH) prohibited the act of stopping the milk of udder of the female goat for certain duration for the purpose of enticing the public to purchase the female goat on the pretext of it containing a lot of milk (al-Shawkani, 1357H). The Prophet (PBUH) too prohibited the sale of things which one does not own (al-Zuhayli, 1988).

However, Muslim jurists allow the contract of a non-existent subject matter, as one of the exceptions to the above, relating to the sale of agricultural products before they become ripe. However, this is subject to the knowledge that the products have already appeared even before the signs of ripeness are shown. Furthermore, this type of contract is allowed if the purchaser immediately harvests them. The position is the same in respect of the sale of fruit and agricultural products, which yield successively one after another during one harvest as in the case of watermelons and egg-plants. In this particular case, Muslim jurists in general have agreed to allow the sale of the fruits which have already appeared but disallow the sale of fruit which have yet to appear (al-Kasani, 1328H). This contract falls under the category – “the subject matter exists in essence, then comes into existence thereafter” (Nawawi, 1999, p. 74).

As for the subject-matter which does not exist at the time of contract and it is established and it will not exist in the future, Muslim jurists

also do not accept this kind of contract as it contains the element of *gharar* (Nawawi, 1999, p.74). Transactions containing a *gharar* element are prohibited based on the verses of the Quran above and the *Hadith* of the Prophet (PBUH) (al-Baihaqi & 'Ata, n.d., p. 338). Majority of the jurists are also unanimously of the opinion that the contract which its subject-matter can not generally be surrendered to the parties at the conclusion of the contract, or at the promised date, is a *gharar* contract and thus, it is void, not binding and having no legal effect (al-Zuhayli, 1988, pp. 429—432).

Hence, *gharar* is forbidden in Islam as its existence will harm the well-being, rights, and interests of contractual parties and cannot ensure satisfactory outcomes, justice, and fairness in their contractual dealings (Zaharuddin, 2008). It is also forbidden by the *Shariah* because this element typically causes enmity, dispute, hardship, injustice, and losses to the parties.

#### ABANDONED HOUSING PROJECTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

Abandoned housing projects in Peninsular Malaysia are one of the spill-over problems of the housing industry. This problem is a nightmare for the affected purchasers and becomes a burdensome social obligation for the government to tackle. From 1990 until June 2005, a total of 141 projects were considered as abandoned. This figure did not include abandoned housing projects which had been categorised as abandoned *in toto* since the 1970s, i.e. abandoned housing projects which had no possibility for rehabilitation at all, housing projects (which are abandoned) carried out by parties not being within the purview of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) and abandoned housing projects in Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia). This figure is a cause of concern to the general public purchasers who may lose confidence in housing developers and the housing industry as a whole and especially the government (the Ministry of Housing and Local Government – ‘MHLG’) being the regulatory body in the housing industry

(Dahlan, 2009). There is also a formidable problem of what to do with abandoned housing projects? Can these abandoned projects be expediently and expeditiously rehabilitated? If so, how much will they additionally cost?

#### **CAUSES OF ABANDONMENT OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

Among the reasons leading to the abandonment of housing projects in Peninsular Malaysia are:

1. Financial problems faced by the developers. The cause of this problem is owing to the problems with the developers' financial and construction management (severe liquidity problems and high gearing) to meet the construction costs and to repay creditors;
2. Loose approval of the applications for housing developer licences by MHLG. MHLG fails to obtain the requisite advice and opinions from economists, legal experts, property experts and other experts in approving the applications;
3. Challenges and problems in dealing with and clearing the project site of squatters;
4. Ongoing conflicts, feuds and squabbles ensuing between and among the developers, land proprietors, purchasers, contractors, consultants, and financiers causing further difficulty to coordinate and streamline the development and construction activities; and,
5. Insufficient coordination between the land administration authority, planning authority, building authority, housing authority, and other technical agencies in respect of the approval for the alienation of land, land uses, subdivision of lands, planning permission, building/infrastructure plans' approval, housing developers' licences and issuance of the Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (CF) and Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC), as the case may be (Dahlan, 2009).

#### **GRIEVANCES OF PURCHASERS IN ABANDONED HOUSING PROJECTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

The grievances and problems faced by the purchasers, if a housing development project is abandoned, are:

1. They are unable to get vacant possession of the units on time as promised by the vendor developers.
2. The construction of the houses is terminated or partly completed resulting in the houses being unsuitable for occupation for a long duration of time, unless the units can expeditiously be revived.
3. In the course of the abandonment of the project, purchasers still have to bear all and keep up the monthly instalments of the housing loans repayable to their respective end-financiers, failing which, the purchased lots being the security for the housing loan would be sold off and with the possibility of the borrower purchasers be made bankrupts by their lender bank.
4. Further, as the purported purchased unit has been abandoned and cannot be occupied, purchasers have to rent other premises, thus, adding up to their monthly expenses.
5. Purchasers' inability to revoke the sale and purchase agreements and claim for the return of all the purchase money paid to the developers as the developer may have absconded or may have no monetary provisions at all to meet the claims.
6. Many problems and difficulties happen in attempts to rehabilitate abandoned housing units. The problems are because the projects may have too long been overdue without any prospect of revival and to rehabilitate them, additional costs and expenditure are needed on the part of the purchasers.
7. Possible difficulties in reaching consensus and towards getting cooperation from purchasers, defaulting abandoned developers, end-financiers, bridging loan financiers, contractors, consultants,

technical agencies, local authority, land administration authority, state authority and planning authority to rehabilitate the projects. This may be due to technical and legal problems faced in the attempt to rehabilitate the projects.

8. Insufficient funds to generate the rehabilitation as the outstanding loan funds of the purchasers are not enough, purchasers refuse to part with their own money, no financial assistance from any agencies, and the fact that the rehabilitating parties would incur losses if they were to proceed with the purported rehabilitation.
9. Purchasers themselves need to top-up using their own money, as the available funds are insufficient for meeting the rehabilitation costs and they themselves personally have to rehabilitate the projects left abandoned. Thus, they have to face all kinds of music in consequence of the abandonment and initiating efforts for rehabilitation.
10. Purchasers would not get any compensation and damages from the defaulting abandoned developers as they (the defaulting abandoned developers) may have no monetary provisions to meet the claims.
11. There may be no party agreeable to rehabilitate the abandoned housing projects, causing the project to be stalled for an indefinite period of time or for a long period of time or at the worst, the abandoned project may not altogether be rehabilitated.
12. Other pecuniary and non-pecuniary losses subtle or otherwise, suffered by purchasers due to the abandonment and in the course of rehabilitation of the projects pending full completion, such as divorces, family breakdowns, dismissals from employment, nervous shocks, mental breakdowns, and losses of future earnings.
13. Due to the abandonment and the ensuing complications occurring thereafter, the ordinary machinery and enforcement of the housing, planning, building, and

development laws becomes dysfunctional at the expense of the purchasers. This also includes the inability of the purchasers to take legal actions against the defaulting developer because the actions might not be beneficial nor feasible (Dahlan, 2006; Dahlan, 2007a, b).

#### **THE LATEST LEGAL DEVELOPMENT OF BAY' BITHAMAN AL-AJIL (BBA) IN HOUSE FINANCING**

In a recent historic decision by the Court of Appeal on 26 August, 2009, the Court of Appeal in 9 cases [among them are *Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad vs. Lim Kok Hoe & Koh Hsia Ping* (Civil Appeal No: W-02-918-2008), *Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad vs. Mohd Razmi bin A. Rahman & Wan Hazlina binti Wan Mohd Ali* (Civil Appeal No. W-02-954-2008), *Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad vs. Baharom bin Harun & Rohynoon bt Mohd Yussof* (Civil No. W-02-955-2008)] decided that BBA was valid according to the Islamic Law. Prior to this in the High Court, in these 9 cases, the judge had decided that BBA was contrary to the religion of Islam as it involved *riba'* transaction. However, the judge in the Court of Appeal (Raus Shariff, JCA, on behalf of the court and the other judges, Abdul Hamid Embong and Ahmad Maarop, JCA concurring) held that the learned judge in the High Court erred in holding that BBA was contrary to the religion of Islam as it involved *riba'*. According to Raus Shariff JCA, BBA is not a *riba'* transaction, but instead, it is a sale transaction under the Islamic Law. According to Raus Shariff JCA, the High Court judge was not competent to decide the matter, i.e. whether or not the BBA is in compliance with the Islamic law. The competent persons are those Islamic jurists who are conversant in the Islamic law and in reference to the Islamic banking and finance in Malaysia are the Bank Negara Shariah Advisory Council ('Bank Negara SAC') and Shariah Advisory Body ('SAB') of the Islamic banks. Furthermore, the High Court judge in the 9 cases had not observed the doctrine of the *stare decisis* (judicial precedent), whereby

prior to the adjudication of these 9 cases, they were Supreme Court and Court of Appeal cases [*Adnan bin Omar vs. Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad* (unreported) (Supreme Court), *Dato' Haji Nik Mahmud vs. Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd* (1998) 4 MLJ 393 (Court of Appeal) and *Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia Berhad vs. Emcee Corporation* (2003) 1 CLJ 625 (Court of Appeal)] which held that BBA is valid under the Islamic law.

#### OUR OPINION ON THE BBA OF HOUSE FINANCING IN MALAYSIA

Although judicial decisions have held that BBA does not involve elements of *riba'*, in the authors' opinion, BBA that is being practised in Malaysia may not be valid on the ground of the elements of *gharar al-fahish* contained in it. Hence, following the elaboration on the *gharar al-fahish* (exorbitant *gharar*) and some judicial decisions that the BBA contains the *riba'* element, the following are the findings of the authors in respect of the BBA, as practised in Malaysia by the Islamic financial institutions.

1. The BBA is void for it inherently may involve the possible (*ihthimal*) (al-Zuhayli, 1988, vol. 4, pp. 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 180, 226, 229, 430, 431, 437 & 438), occurrence of *gharar al-fahish* elements, particularly in the case of a transaction financing a house pending completion. The elements of *gharar al-fahish* are the grievances of the purchasers in abandoned housing projects which have been elaborated above (Dahlan, 2009);
2. In houses pending completion, where the transaction involves the application of Schedules G, H, I and J of the Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Regulations 1989 or otherwise, normally the purchaser/borrower may pay some portion of the price as a deposit. However, on the payment of the deposit and on the execution of the sale and purchase agreement with the developer, the purchaser applies for a housing loan (BBA) from an Islamic bank to

finance the balance purchase price. This is affected by the PPA and PSA, as well as other documents, such as the charge document or deed of assignment, as the case may be. Normally, in the purchase of a house, the purchaser pays a deposit representing 10% of the purchase price. The balance purchase price (90%) will be paid by the Bank to the vendor/developer progressively. The bank granting the loan (90% of the purchase price) to the purchasers to complete the sale will charge the said house as collateral to the loan. The title to the housing unit will not be registered into the purchaser's name until and unless the purchaser has fully settled that loan (90% of the purchase price), together with the profit margin (the sale price), to the bank. Once the purchaser has fully settled the sale price (usually in instalments), the bank will then discharge the collateral (the house as the security to the loan) and allow the transfer of the house into the purchaser's name. The issue is, whether the purchaser/borrower, in this circumstance, has acquired full ownership (*milk al-tam*) warranting him to become the full and absolute legal owner (not just being an equitable and beneficial owner) to the purported house on the payment of the deposit and on the execution of the sale and purchase agreement, when his name has yet to be registered as the registered proprietor of the property at the land office? It is still doubtful that he has obtained any legal ownership (*milk al-tam*) to the purported house to warrant him to 'sell' the purported house to the Islamic bank for the latter to re-sell the purported house to him (the purchaser/borrower) in accordance with *Bay' al-Inah* and *Murabahah* principles (Engku Ali, 2009, pp. 21-27). Thus, in transactions involving houses pending completion, the issue of ownership of the purported uncompleted house is still unresolved. In other words, the ownership is not a full (*milk ghair al-tam*) and not an unconditional ownership but an incomplete ownership (equitable/beneficial ownership).

Incomplete ownership does not give any absolute power/authority on the part of the purchaser to sell the purported house to Islamic Bank. However, it may be argued that, the purchaser/borrower can sell the purported house to the Islamic Bank, even though his ownership of the house is still incomplete, in order to get the housing loan from the Islamic Bank, on the condition that the actual owner (the developer or the like) has agreed to such an undertaking. Be that as it may, in the opinion of the authors, still this is not acceptable under the Islamic law, as the ownership of the purchaser over the house is still incomplete (*milk ghair al-tam*), which can justify the selling of the house by the purchaser to the bank and for the bank to re-sell the house to purchaser, under *bay' al-Inah* and *murabahah* modes. This is to avoid possibility of *gharar* in the transaction. It follows that the charge created over the house (which still under *milk ghair al-tam*) as the security to the BBA may also not valid under Islamic law, as the house is still not absolutely/fully owned (*milk ghair al-tam*) by the purchaser/borrower to warrant the selling of the said house to the bank for the bank to re-sell back the house under the BBA transaction.

3. It is opined that, the current practice of the BBA seems absurd, in the sense that the house, which is subject to the charge being a security to BBA, is also considered under the ownership of the bank. The bank's ownership over the house is explicitly stated in the PPA and PSA. How could the bank as the 'owner' of the house, become a 'chargee' to their own asset? Thus, the positions and status of the house, the charge, the ownership, the purchaser, the bank and the developer in the BBA transaction are ambiguous and not certain. This can lead to *gharar al-fahish*. It should be noted, notwithstanding a charge is created against the land and in abandoned housing unit, in the event of default on the BBA repayment by the purchaser, the bank may also not

be able to enforce the charge as the house is still not complete and the fact that there is a term in the statutory standard sale and purchase agreement (pursuant to clause 2(2) of the Schedules G, H, I and J of Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Regulations 1989), which excludes the charged land from being subject to a foreclosure. Furthermore, it is doubtful if there is any interested buyer to bid for the purchase of the incomplete house/project (abandoned housing unit).

4. The BBA is void, based on the judicial decisions, on the ground that the practice is inequitable and unfair to the general public. The inequitable elements are that the profit margin is higher than the debt owed. This would amount to a *riba* transaction. Secondly, if the borrower defaults, he has to pay the whole amount of the debt and the profit margin for the whole repayment of the instalment period without being entitled to any equitable and appropriate rebate. This practice in the BBA will lead to an inequitable and unconscionable mode of transaction. On the contrary, this rebate is applicable in the conventional system in the house financing loan (*Malayan Banking Bhd vs. Ya'kup bin Oje & Anor* [2007] 6 MLJ, pp. 390, 399 & 417). Inequitable and unconscionable mode of transaction is prohibited under the Islamic Law (*al-Nisa*'(4): verse 29), *al-Nahl* (16): verse 90, *Al-A'raf*(7): 85 & *Al-Syu'araa*'(26): 183).
5. There will be no adversity (hardship) in rejecting the Malaysian style of BBA. In other words, the degree of necessity (*darurah*) does not exist currently in Malaysia, for allowing the practice of the BBA (hybrid of *Bay' al-Inah* and *murabahah*), which are rejected by majority of jurists as it may involve the *riba*' elements. Instead other modes which are more equitable should be implemented such as *musharakah* (partnership) or *Ijarah* (lease) or that the current terms in BBA are radically revamped to the effect of

eliminating the elements of *gharar*, *riba*, and other inequitable terms. Some quarters may argue that the current practice of the Malaysian style of BBA is for the *maslahah/maslahah amah/maslahah al-mursalah* (public interest) of the *ummah* (Muslim society), in line with the *maqasid al-Shariah* (Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziah, 1977, vol. 3, pp. 14-15). However, to reply this, the *maslahah* must not be in derogation of the express provisions of the primary texts (al-Quran and al-Sunnah), which clearly prohibit *gharar*, *riba*, and other inequitable/unjust practices. It (BBA) may be applicable if there is a necessity (*darurah*) for it. However, the degree of necessity (*darurah*) for the practice of the BBA in Malaysia warranting the application of BBA, it is opined, has not yet actualized. The persons in authority (the Government of Malaysia, Bank Negara, and Shariah Advisory Committee/Body), it is submitted, have the means and ability to replace the Malaysian style of BBA in house financing with better products, but they do not resort to them. This is sinful. This is akin to the requirement that to perform the obligatory prayer (*solah fardu*), one shall have to stand up (*qiyam*). If he has the ability to stand up (*qiyam*) without any difficulty or hardship, but instead he chooses to pray by sitting down, his prayer is rejected as the *rukun* (pillar) of the obligatory prayer (*solah fardu*) has not been fulfilled (al-Zuhayli, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 635-645). Similarly in house financing, the persons in authority have the ability and means to use better Islamic products, such as *musharakah* and *ijarah* in house financing to avoid the occasion of *riba* by way of *helah* (as in the BBA which utilizes *Bay'al-Inah* and *Murabahah* modes) and other inequitable modes of transaction (such as no rebate given if any early settlement is made); however, they choose the BBA (the Malaysian style of BBA). The reason for this may be economic and/or maximization of profit factors. Thus

on this footing, it is opined, the rationale and reason for adopting the Malaysian style of BBA are not satisfactorily sound.

6. If a housing project fails and is subsequently abandoned, the purchasers are still required to pay the monthly instalments to the Bank. There is no term in the BBA that protects the interest of the purchasers if in the course of construction, the houses are abandoned.
7. The banks absolve any liability for ensuring the completion of the houses. The banks do not consider the grievances faced by the abandoned housing projects' purchasers. What the bank want is, it is submitted, the instalment moneys of the BBA must be fully settled by aggrieved purchasers;
8. Purchasers are persons aggrieved if abandonment occurs as they must pay monthly instalments and they cannot occupy the purported houses. Consequently, they have to rent other premises and face other grievances, pecuniary and non-pecuniary. There is no term in the BBA which can provide measures to face these problems.
9. In BBA, through the PSA, the banks are the owners of the property. Logically, the owners are obligated to ensure that the purported houses will be duly completed and duly handed over to purchasers and the titles can be registered in the purchasers' names. There is no guarantee that at the end of the day, if the project is abandoned or the property has not been duly constructed, the bank as the owner must either do whatever is necessary to protect the interests of the purchasers or to compensate the purchasers or to return back all the moneys paid to them (restitution and indemnity). Apparently, there is no term prescribing this duty on the banks in the PPA and PSA.
10. There are no preventive and curative measures provided in the BBA, especially in the PSA, to avoid losses on the part of the purchasers due to the abandonment of houses they purchased.

11. There is no term in the BBA which provides the purchasers with the right to sue the bank for the calamities that have occurred or the right to claim compensation and damages. Meanwhile, the provisions such as defect liability period, protection against sub-standard housing constructions, the guarantee that the titles to the property are to be registered into the purchasers' name upon full settlement of the loan and compensation for late delivery of vacant possession and the obligation of the bank to obtain the certificate of completion and compliance (CCC), must also be made clear and provided in the BBA. This suggestion is made bearing in mind that the owner of the house (i.e. the bank, is effected through the PPA) must be responsible to hand over the duly completed house to purchaser in receipt and as a consideration of the specified amount of sale price by way of monthly instalments paid by the purchasers (effected through the PSA).

### SUGGESTIONS

In facing the above problems, the following are suggested:

1. The current practice of the Malaysian style of BBA should be abolished. Instead, the Islamic financial institutions should use other modes of transactions, such as *musharakah*, *ijarah* or a modified BBA in house financing. In order to illustrate this, in *musharakah*, the Islamic Bank enters into an agreement with the customer/purchaser that both (the Bank and the customer/purchaser as partners) agree to jointly purchase a duly completed housing accommodation. The customer/purchaser will pay certain portion of the purchase price to the vendor developer and the balance of the purchase price shall be paid by the Bank to the vendor developer. The ownership of the house will be shared by both on the execution of the sale and purchase agreement with the vendor developer. The whole ownership will be transferred by the Bank to the customer/purchaser, on the customer/purchaser paying the full balance purchase price, together with the profit margin (in instalments for certain duration or in lump sum), which the bank stipulated to the customer/purchaser, insofar as it is equitable and fair. The Bank undertakes to give certain rebate if the customer can settle earlier the balance purchase price together with the profit margin. Similarly, this illustration is likewise applicable in *ijarah* transaction. The Islamic Bank will pay the full amount of the purchase price of the duly completed house to the developer. Later, the bank leases it to the customer/purchaser for certain duration. The whole progressive rental payment paid in instalments for certain duration by the customer/purchaser are considered as a settlement of the full price, together will the profit margin set by the Bank, of the house. Under the *ijarah* mode, the customer/purchaser also enjoys equitable rebate if he can settle the full purchase price and the profit margin earlier. This would prevent the possibility of the occurrences of *riba'* and *gharar al-fahish* transactions and other problems associated with the BBA, as illustrated above;
2. The new modes in house financing, such as *musharakah* and *ijarah*, if involved the purchases of houses pending completion, must also provide sufficient terms to protect the interests of purchasers if abandonment or otherwise inevitably occurs; or,
3. If the current practice of the Malaysian style of BBA is to resume, it must substantially be revamped to the effect of protecting the rights of the stakeholders. This is also in accordance with the principles of *sadd al-dhari'*. Thus, the following proposals should be adopted by the Islamic banking and financial institutions, *viz*:
  - a. the profit margin should be reduced to a more acceptable and equitable amount so as to avoid *riba'* commensurate with the period of occupation and enjoyment of the house by the purchasers/customers (to

- avoid any unconscionable and inequitable modes of transaction prohibited under Islamic law as enshrined in the Quranic verses above), if the customer/purchaser defaults on the instalment payment before settling the full sale price;
- b. the rebate should be substantial if the customers/purchasers/borrowers were to make early settlement or where the borrowers default during the repayment period as far as the rebate is commensurate with the period of enjoyment of the house and the total instalments which have been paid to the bank and as far as this is equitable to the bank and the purchasers/borrowers;
  - c. The Islamic Bank should only apply BBA for financing houses which have been duly completed only (with CCC and title ready for transmission to purchaser on full settlement), not for financing houses pending completion to avoid any possible occurrence of abandoned housing projects, as well as grievances and problems consequent to it altogether;
  - d. If the BBA is applied for houses pending completion, the terms in the BBA should provide for the responsibilities and duties of the Islamic bank as the owner of the houses in the course of construction of the houses and for the position where the construction of the houses is terminated and the project is abandoned. The duty is to ensure that rehabilitation can be carried out. If rehabilitation of the houses is impossible, the duties are to return back all the moneys paid by the purchaser and to pay all incidental compensations consequential to the abandonment and above all, to ensure that the bank shall be fully responsible for the purchasers if abandonment is inevitable in the protection of the purchasers' interests and rights. Similarly, as the owner of the property (effected through the PPA and PSA), the Islamic bank in the BBA transaction must observe the duty to deliver the house on time, failing which late delivery damages may be chargeable on them, the duty to observe defect liability period and the duty to ensure that all the requirements under the laws (Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 (SDBA), the Uniform Building By-Laws 1984 (UBBL), the requirements for obtaining the CCC or Certificate of Fitness for Occupation ('CF'), as the case may be and the guarantee that the title to the property can be registered in the purchasers' name upon full settlement of the loan) relating to the construction of the houses have been duly and fully complied with. If the Islamic bank (as the owner to the purported houses under BBA) fails to adhere to these requirements, the purchasers/borrowers shall have every right to take actions against the bank for specific performance and claim damages in lieu of specific performance, as well other equitable relief insofar as they are just and expedient.
  - e. Under the current BBA practice, there should be no charge created over the land and the property under construction, i.e. involving incomplete purchaser's ownership (equitable/beneficial ownership) of the house and the property of which is being the subject matter of the sale. This suggestion is to avoid *gharar*. In replace of this kind of charge, the purchasers/customers shall have to create a third party legal charge or the first party legal charge on other property belonging to him, or there must be some guarantors to the BBA, or a special Islamic insurance (*Takaful*) should be introduced to guarantee repayment of the purchase price by the purchaser, if the purchaser later defaults on the BBA repayment. If the purchaser defaults, these means can be used to settle the outstanding BBA repayment.

- f. Above all, the terms and conditions in the BBA should strike a balance between the interests of the bank (i.e. profit-oriented interests), as well as the interests and rights of the customers.

### CONCLUSION

It is the opinion of the authors that the current practice of the BBA in Malaysia is contrary to the teachings of Islam, and thus, it should be modified and revamped until it is fully able to protect the interests of the purchasers/borrowers in all circumstances [including when the housing projects/housing units are abandoned, to avoid any possibility (*ihtimal*) of *gharar al-fahish*] or in the alternative, other modes of house financing should be chosen in replace of the current BBA. The alternative modes or if the BBA is still to remain, these instruments should also contain terms and conditions which can balance the interests of the bank and the purchasers/borrowers, and provide measures so as to protect the interests of the latter, particularly when the housing units are abandoned and above all, the instruments must contain no terms which can lead to the possibility of the occurrence of *gharar al-fahish*.

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## Potential Challenges in a Witness Protection Programme in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

Witness protection is a programme which protects crucial witnesses whose testimony may put them or their family members in jeopardy. Many countries including Malaysia have included the witness protection programme into the federal legislation. The United States, which has implemented witness protection programme since the 1970s, has reported a high rate of convictions as compared to countries without such a programme. Malaysia has recently passed the Witness Protection Act and therefore it is relatively new in matters pertaining to witness protection programmes. Lessons can be learnt from countries which have long implemented such programmes. Common issues which Malaysia may face include matters such as finances and resources, the ambiguity of certain terms in the legislation and problems when witnesses are relocated or change of identity. Other problems include the maintaining of participants in the programme and the termination of it. There is also the issue of whether the programme is rebirthing and rewarding criminals. This happens when the participant is a criminal herself/himself, i.e. whose punishment is reduced or relocated to another neighbourhood in lieu of her/his testimony to convict a 'bigger' criminal. These participants sometimes continue their 'criminal' activities in the new community they are relocated to, and thus, pose a risk to the residents in the new community. It is undeniable that problems will exist and with experience, they can be ironed out periodically. This article briefly views these problems.

**Keywords:** Law, witness protection legislation, witness protection programme

### INTRODUCTION

A witness protection programme (hereinafter referred to as WPP) was designed for persons who intend to testify in a trial but are reluctant to do so in fear that their life or the life of loved ones would be threatened or put in jeopardy. Often, these are the witnesses most required by the authorities as theirs' is the testimony that determines a successful prosecution. The non-existence of these programmes leads to the absence of important testimony which makes it impossible to dispensed justice. This programme ensures that witnesses such as

eyewitnesses or their relatives do not become victims of harassment, threat, abuse or in extreme cases, killed.

Many states have adopted various ways of dealing with protecting witnesses. Many states such as Australia, Canada, Thailand, and Malaysia have incorporated these programmes as a part of the federal or state legislation. The absence of such programmes can result in the fear of reporting crimes and the failure of prosecution due to the lack of evidence. These have been the cases in the states without such protection. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the low

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conviction rate is primarily due to the reluctance of witnesses to testify against crimes<sup>1</sup>.

Many witnesses or victims of crimes who dare to speak out and make complaints against the abuse are often threatened and without proper protection, these victims/witnesses will eventually give in to the threat and withdraw the complaint. An example is the case in Sri Lanka where a woman was raped by airport officers. The victim identified the alleged perpetrator who was arrested together with four other suspects. Soon after that, the victim began receiving threatening calls from the relatives of the alleged perpetrator which included threats to kill the victim if she appeared in court to testify against the perpetrator. Various complaints were lodged by the victim; however, no protection was offered to her and her family members. The victim and her family are now afraid to pursue the matter or assist in the investigation.

On the other hand, in the United States where the witness protection programme has been in use since 1970s, it is seen as an effective mechanism in solving cases. As reported by a former United States attorney in New York<sup>2</sup> that "the more serious prosecutions you do, including terrorism and organized crime, the more you have a need for witnesses, if you can persuade them." The conviction rate in cases where these witnesses have testified is 89%.

In Malaysia, witness protection is relatively new. The implementation of the Act is yet to be seen. In view of that, a closer look at the programme as implemented by other countries should be studied, mainly the common problems. Studying the experiences of other countries could prepare us to face the eventuality that might be experienced by us. Naturally, the initial stages of implementation might pose problems. With time and experience, the possible problems would be ironed out.

<sup>1</sup>Victim and witness protection, lesson series 47. Asian Human Rights Commission, correspondence school derived from <http://www.hrschool.org>

<sup>2</sup>USA Today.com, witness protection program to add terrorism case work, posted Sept, 2004 derived from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-03-19-terror-witnesses\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-03-19-terror-witnesses_x.htm)

## WITNESS PROTECTION IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, the witness protection programme has been incorporated into the Federal law as The Witness Protection Act 2009<sup>3</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the WPA). Although this Act has been gazetted, it is still not enforced up to now. A brief introduction to the Act is given here.

Under WPA, the programme is managed by the office of the Director General, a person appointed by the Minister from amongst members of the public service<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore the responsibility of the Director General to recommend witnesses for protection and consider applications from witnesses for protection.

When considering persons to be included into the WPP, the Director General weighs matters such as their criminal records, medical records, the seriousness of the offence to which the evidence or statement of the witness relates, the nature and importance of the witness' evidence or statement, whether or not there are alternative methods of protecting the witness and any other matters as the Director General considers relevant<sup>5</sup>.

The participants are required to disclose information of any outstanding legal obligations, outstanding debts including taxes, criminal history or any pending civil proceedings and bankruptcy proceedings, immigration status, financial liabilities and others. This disclosure is necessary to avoid the WPP to be used as a gateway route for participants with liabilities. The Act provides that failure to disclose such information is an offence punishable with a fine not exceeding ten thousand *ringgit* or imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or both, upon conviction<sup>6</sup>.

As mentioned in section 13 of WPA, in providing protection to the participant, the actions taken by the Director General include, relocating the participant, changing the identity of the participant, providing financial assistance for the participant and his/her family and any other assistance deemed necessary. The

<sup>3</sup>Witness Protection Act 2009 (Act 696)

<sup>4</sup>Section 4(1) of the WPA 2009

<sup>5</sup>Section 9 of the WPA 2009

<sup>6</sup>Section 8 WPA 2009

assistance provided by this section is essential as it gives the participant space and time before he/she and family could settle in a new location. This section impliedly encourages witnesses to participate in the programme.

The Director General may recommend a participant to be terminated from the WPP, but only after giving him/her an opportunity to be heard. Section 16 provides that a participant can be terminated from the programme for reasons such as knowingly disclosing false or misleading information, improper conduct, and the need for protection ceases to exist or the Director General is of the opinion that such protection is not reasonably justified.

As seen, the WPA narrates the basics of the WPP, with certain omissions, such as the details of the programme. The WPA is silent on the requirement of the participant entering into an agreement with the authorities, the extent of the powers of the authorities involved, the powers extended to other agencies which may be indirectly involved in the programme and the existence of any other independent agency that overlooks this programme. However, it is believed that these matters will be taken care of in the form of rules, regulations or orders upon the enforcement of the WPA.

## **COMMON ISSUES IN WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAMMES**

### *Finances and Resources*

In the presence of witness protection programmes, many witnesses are still afraid to speak out. It is often argued whether the refusal of witnesses to testify is because of fear or the lack of confidence in the authorities. In view of this, it is the duty of the authorities to build more confidence in the public to encourage participants to testify.

Among the problems faced by the authorities responsible for this programme is the lack of resources such as manpower and finances. Cost is a major factor since all the expenses for the programme are sponsored by the government. These expenses include relocating and changing the identity of all the members to the programme

(usually the family which may include at least four or five persons). The costs will be higher if the relocation is outside the original county. The expenses would also include stipend, the participants' living expenses, costs of accommodation, and job searching. Apart from these, some witnesses are also given a certain amount or award in the form of cash. As the Act has not been enforced, it is difficult to further discuss on the costing issue. However, the factors discussed here are among the issues to be kept in mind when the Act is duly enforced.

In San Francisco, two witnesses were killed while they were under the WPP, which the District Attorney called an 'absolute tragedy and outrage'. As a result of these killings, a state legislation was passed, and this doubled the funding for the state's witness protection plan and the time the witnesses could receive help from the government finding new jobs, doctors, schools, and homes in their new location. In view of this, the State also tripled the number of sworn investigators assigned to the WPP and received veteran law enforcement officers<sup>7</sup>. No state or country should wait for an incident like the one in San Francisco to happen before realizing that more funding or staff are required to safeguard someone's life who had so daringly risked his/her life in order to prevail justice and prevent further crimes. A witness's life may still be in danger after the end of a trial. Therefore, further costs would still be required to maintain that particular witness.

In another case, a witness and his wife, who were removed from the WPP after seven years, sued for damages, claiming that they were penniless and forced to live off the charity after having enjoyed a more affluent lifestyle prior to their participation. The courts in New South Wales allowed the claim<sup>8</sup>. This is the type of situation which could arise again and again as participants get frustrated or find it difficult to adapt to their life either financially or for

<sup>7</sup>Brent Begin, Second witness under DA's protection shot to death, Examiner.com, Jan 2008.

<sup>8</sup>Secrecy Guide:=Witness Protection, Caslon Analytics guide secrecy and accountability retrieved from www.caslon.com.au/secrecyguide19.htm March 2007.

any other reason. Joining the WPP is a very important decision because it literally changes the lives of those involved. They should be properly guided and informed and provided with independent support. Meanwhile, the agencies involved with the WPP should train their staff rigorously to handle the programme, emphasising on secrecy and security to ensure its success.

#### *Clear Provisions*

A delicate and intricate programme such as witness protection requires clear and precise words explaining the system. This is so especially if the system has been incorporated in a statute and is relatively new to the country. Aspects such as changing the identity of a witness should be clearly stated to reflect salient features. For example, how the change is done and by whom, that is who are the people involved in the procedure. These also include how the protection is affected in emergency situations.

The WPP often involves the family of the witness. Thus, the Act (if any) should explain what is meant by family. Does it include only immediate family comprising of spouse, children and parents or does it expand to the extended family? Sometimes, the extended family member is directly dependant on the witness for care and support, such as an ailing grandmother or aunty. In the United States, one witness persuaded the government to accept 20 family members and another to include his mistress together with his wife into the programme<sup>9</sup>.

#### *Relocation and Change of Identity*

Among the mechanisms of witness protection are relocation and change of identity. While these are considered to be viable solutions, they can also pose certain problems. Relocation and change of identity are usually done simultaneously, where a person is moved to another city or state within his/her country or wherever necessary out of the

<sup>9</sup>Mark Sherman, Witness Protection a World of Secrets, FOX News.com, 2006

country. It merely means moving a person from where he/she is to a supposedly 'safer' location.

Where should a participant be moved to, is often the main issue. Primarily, it should be a place where the safety of the participant(s) will be most guaranteed. Aspects such as the religion, culture and status, as well as the background of the witness, have to be taken into consideration. Relocation is often carried out on a witness together with his/her family. The family must be able to adapt to the new 'homeland' as the family is going to be placed there for a long time. The family, especially if it involves children, must understand the situation and fit in into the new environment. The family will be required to cut ties with all previous friends and family members who are not included in the programme.

In order to prepare the family to face the 'rebirthing' under the WPP, counselling services or any other form of preparedness should be provided for those who have agreed to be part of the programme. In the United Kingdom, the 'schooling' provided to such witnesses and family members involved in the programme is a good move towards preparing the participants.

Sometimes, relocation and change of identity may have to be done several times. For example, where a witness's whereabouts have been discovered and the life of the witness is again at risk. Then, the family will have to be relocated to another place, and this migration may go on several times.

Apart from that, relocation and change of identity in Malaysia will be a little difficult, considering the size of the country. Geographically, Malaysia is a small country. The Malaysian WPA has expressly excluded east Malaysia, the states of Sabah and Sarawak to be parts of the relocation places for witnesses from Peninsular Malaysia<sup>10</sup>. Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia and both east Malaysian states have diversified culture which will serve the programme well. Therefore, the most conducive states for relocation have been duly excluded. In view of this, if relocation is done within the

<sup>10</sup>Section 13(3) of the WPA 2009

states of Peninsular Malaysia, tracing a person and disclosing the identity of a participant may not be a very difficult task, which will further lead to several relocations or relocation to another country.

#### *Staying in the Programme and Termination of the Programme*

When a person agrees to participate in a WPP, the most challenging part is probably staying in the programme. An important aspect of this particular programme is the aspect of secrecy and confidentiality. No one under the programme is to make contact with anyone not in the programme, including close friends and even family members.

Some may be unable to take the isolation and ultimately give in by moving to their original home. Spouses and children are often parts of the programme. Therefore, a child may not be able to assimilate himself/herself in the new community and disclose her/his true identity in order to go back to her/his original community, i.e. to people she/he is comfortable with. In the event of divorce, a spouse may disclose the true identity in order to go back to the family members who are not included in the programme.

#### *Rebirthing and Rewarding Criminals*

It has to be kept in mind that by changing the identity and location of a person, the nature of that particular person is not changed. This is not a problem if the person involved is a good citizen with a clean police record, but witnesses often involve persons with notorious criminal records. These witnesses with criminal records could use the pseudonym identity to commit more crimes. Therefore, the locals in the area where the witness with criminal record is sent are totally oblivious with who their new neighbour is. If the witness stays clean, then it is fine; nevertheless, if the witness reverts to his/her criminal nature, the authorities has actually relocated a criminal and threatened the safety of an otherwise safe

neighbourhood. Nearly one in five protected witnesses has been charged with new crimes<sup>11</sup>.

In the United States, for instance, apart from being relocated with a new identity, witnesses with criminal records, especially in major crimes, are often rewarded with large sums of money or their own penalties are waived. In other words, the authorities are releasing one criminal to capture another.

The reason for the necessity to protect witnesses with criminal records is that small criminals are protected in order to prosecute the larger ones and to protect citizens who risk their lives for justice. In major mafia crimes, the witness is sometimes a member of that group who wants to get out, therefore he/she requires such protection in order to disclose the notorious group which can solve a number of homicides and prevent many more. The risk is carefully weighted between the giving of protection to a criminal and solving another crime.

### CONCLUSION

In the United States, problems in the WPP still exist even after more than 30 years of its existence. Nonetheless, it is a programme which is essential but it still needs to be administered with supreme cautiousness at the same time as it involves human lives. This is particularly important for persons who daringly risk their lives and the lives of their loved ones in order to bring justice. The country surely owes these witnesses protection. In light of the prolific crimes which involves notorious and dangerous 'underworld' gangsters, mafias, drug dealers, murderers and terrorists, no man/woman will testify unprotected, and this will definitely cripple the prosecution and encourage crimes which will further endanger the peacefulness of a country. Therefore, this is a much required programme, and the passing of the Witness Protection Act by the Malaysian parliament is a positive step towards fighting crimes and raising the prosecution's conviction rate.

<sup>11</sup>Mark Sherman, Witness Protection a World of Secrets, FOX news.com, July 2008.

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## Impact of Selected Organizational Characteristics on Psychological and Behavioural Outcomes of Hotel Frontline Employees

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores a model of the effects of empowerment, training, and reward on frontline employees' service recovery performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Data were collected using questionnaires. The hotel industry was chosen as the platform being surveyed due to the boundary spanning roles of its employees who were underpinned by frequent contacts with customers during their day to day activities. As such, it is most likely that employees, particularly the front-liners, would be individuals who address service failures. Hypotheses were formulated from previous conceptual and empirical studies. In this study, eleven hypotheses were posed to test the inter-linkages between six identified variables. Spearman Correlation was used as the method of analysis, whereby empowerment and training were found to be correlated with service recovery performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Meanwhile, reward was found to be correlated with only service recovery performance and job satisfaction. Conclusion, limitations and future research direction were also discussed.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, frontline hotel employees, job satisfaction, performance, turnover

### INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that things could go wrong even for a service company that is rated the best among the best. One cannot control the weather that makes the flight late, an accident that makes the package arrived broken, or an ill staff that makes her/him inattentive. The occasional service failures are in fact unavoidable, when taking into account the inseparability of a service, referring to the simultaneous production and consumption of services. This also means that both the employee and the customer are present to experience the service. Although all the problems cannot be prevented from happening, unsatisfied customers can be avoided. In other

words, when service failures do occur and customers are dissatisfied, that is then something that can be prevented. Effective service recovery may serve as a remedy. The literature on service recovery seems to have been initiated by Hart *et al.* (1990) in their article entitled, "The profitable art of service recovery". The authors are adamant that recovery is essential to service excellence. Unless an organization is committed in solving customer's complaints and problems, it would then face the consequences which can be destructive. For example, the unsatisfied customers might "defect", a term that is used to describe customers who shift their loyalty to a competing firm (Lovelock,

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2005). A study by Bitner *et al.* (1990) revealed that 42.9% of dissatisfactory encounters were related to employees' inability or unwillingness in responding to service failure situations. The high percentage of dissatisfaction indicates that the cause is not solely due to the initial failure of delivering the core service, but rather the employees' responses to the failure. In other words, the customers are more dissatisfied by the employees' responses to the failure. In other words, the customers are more dissatisfied by the employees' lack of service recovery performance than the service failure itself. This is supported in the work of Keaveney (1995), where service switching incidents of customers were found to have been partly caused by unsatisfactory employee responses to service failures. It was reported that the customers switched not because of the initial service failure, but due to the service employees' failure to handle the situation appropriately. Hence, as customers' evaluations of service encounters are often influenced by their interpersonal interactions with employees, it is important for service organizations to find ways to effectively manage their employees, especially the front liners to ensure that their attitude and behaviour are conducive in delivering quality service (Hartline & Ferrell, 1999). Parts of the suggestions discussed by Hart *et al.* (1990) were to act fast, to empower the frontline employees, and to provide them

with appropriate training. Therefore, research conducted to discover antecedents which would have an impact on frontline employees' behavioural and psychological outcomes would be useful. The subsequent sections in this paper are structured as follows; the paper will first discuss the research framework, followed by the hypothesized relationships with regard to the relevant literature. This is then continued with explanations on the methodology employed. Findings and discussions are given prior to the conclusion. Limitations and future research directions will also be discussed.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the pivotal role of frontline employees in delivering quality service to customers, a careful review of the literature pertaining to the hotel industry discovers a number of problems faced by the employees. For instance, frontline hotel employees face problems in relation to inadequate pay, low job security, inadequate training and development opportunities, as well as excessive turnover (Cheng & Brown, 1998; Deery & Shaw, 1999; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000; Karatepe & Uludag, 2007). These problems can have major impacts on an organization, and these can be in terms of direct costs or indirect

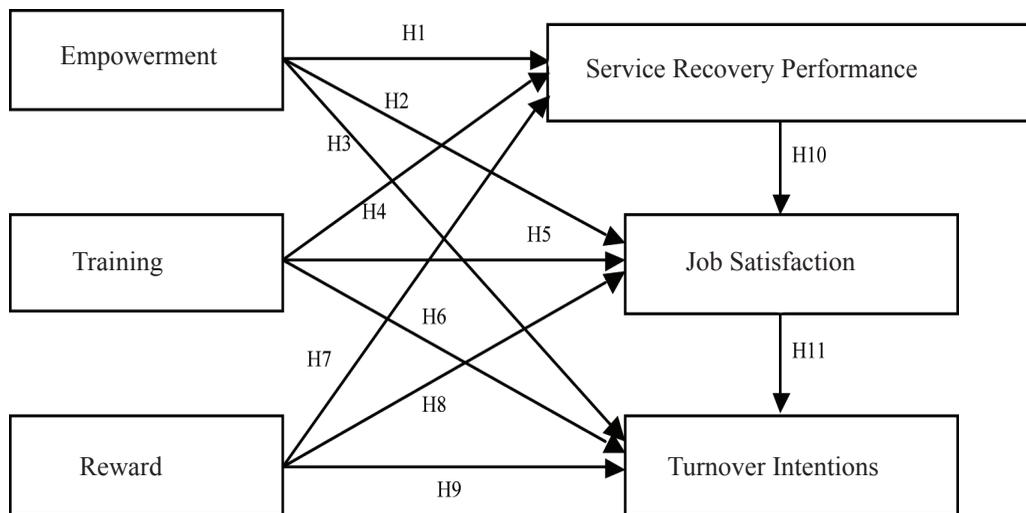


Fig. 1: The research model

costs. For example, lower job satisfaction, lower service quality, customer dissatisfaction, higher turnover, and increased costs of recruitment and selection. Consequently, action needs to be taken to make improvements. In a work environment where frontline employees are expected to deal with a wide variety of customer requests and complaints (Boshoff & Allen, 2000), empowered and well-trained frontline employees are seen as more likely to resolve customers' complaints effectively, increase their job satisfaction, and reduce their intentions to leave an organization.

As shown in *Fig. 1* above, the research framework for this study illustrates eleven hypotheses which are set to be tested. The pointed arrows reflect the constructed hypotheses. Three organizational characteristics were identified to be simultaneously tested and to find out their effects on employees' psychological and behavioural outcomes. Employees' behavioural outcome consists of their service recovery performance, whereas employees' psychological outcomes consist of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The theory underpinning this study was derived from several studies following Hart *et al.*'s (1990) suggestion that organization should be committed in solving customers' complaints and problems by providing service training and empowering its employees. Lee *et al.* (2006), in their work, did look at the constructs of empowerment, service training, and service reward, but on a different aspect, i.e. how the variables contribute to the evaluation of organizational commitment through the medium of job satisfaction. On the other hand, Karatepe & Sokmen (2006) only focus on the effects of work role and family role variables on employees' behavioural and psychological outcomes. Therefore, the current study fills in the gaps by going a step further to simultaneously testing the contribution of the three organizational characteristics on the said outcomes.

#### *Empowerment and Service Recovery Performance*

In an experimental study by Boshoff & Leong (1998), it was found that more than 80 percent

of the respondents preferred fully empowered frontline employee to handle their complaints and solve their problems. This high percentage could be due to the fact that empowered employees would be able to attend and solve their problems immediately. The non-empowered employees, on the other hand, would have to refer to their managers for directions and permissions before taking any actions on customers' complaints. In this scenario, time has been wasted through the long chain of communication from the employees to the managers, and then back to the customers. Most customers will not feel at ease while waiting for the frontline staff to refer to other representatives or management staff before making a decision, and/or in solving the problem.

In the services and hospitality industry especially, frontline employees need to promptly respond to the individual needs of the increasingly demanding customers in an increasingly unpredictable service situation (Hartline & Ferrell, 1999). Such a situation typically occurs in the upscale sector of the hotel industry where customers expect the best. In other words, there is a need for high service quality, and thus, requiring employees to be empowered. When filing complaints, guests would expect the frontline staff to rectify the problems for them. Speedy recovery is indeed crucial when things go wrong.

There are several benefits of empowerment highlighted in the literature. Some of them include empowered employees being more customer-focused (Chow *et al.*, 2006), as well as them being able to provide quick and appropriate responses to disgruntled customers (Boshoff & Allen, 2000). Another issue to be noted is that empowerment has been found to be a key to managerial and organizational effectiveness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). They suggest that managers should be willing to delegate authority to their employees. Managers should also be aware that the frontline employees may have a better understanding of how the service encounter can be improved. After all, they are the ones going through the day to day, often routine activities involving customers.

In addition, the setting in the hotel industry makes the frontline employees more likely to be the ones to whom the guests forward their complaints to. Attending immediately to guests' complaints is possible if employee empowerment is exercised.

Substantial empirical studies have reported a strong relationship between empowerment of frontline employees and service recovery performance (Babakus *et al.*, 2003; Yavas *et al.*, 2003; Ashill *et al.*, 2005). Empirical evidence by Chow *et al.* (2006) using service employees as the sample also lends support that empowerment significantly improves performance of frontline employees. The discussion above implies that frontline employees must be empowered to do what they perceive as right or fair given the situation and customer in question (Andreassen, 2000). Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*Hypothesis 1:* Empowerment is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.

#### *Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions*

There is substantial evidence that empowerment has a significant influence on job satisfaction (Spreitzer *et al.*, 1997; Eylon & Bamberger, 2000). Empowered employees would have more autonomy and control over their work. When employees believe that they are empowered, they may find that their jobs are more interesting and enjoyable. These employees would feel more motivated and valued by the organization; hence, they report higher levels of involvement and positive job perceptions (Pickard, 1993; Hayes, 1994).

Empowerment increases employees' self-esteem and loyalty towards the organization because it allows them to make on-the-spot decisions (Iris, 1991), and causes high levels of job satisfaction (Lee *et al.*, 1999; Maister, 2001). Employees who are empowered have higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels

of job-related strains (Spreitzer *et al.*, 1997). Similarly, Kirkman & Rosen (1999) also found that empowered frontline employees have higher levels of job satisfaction. A similar conclusion has also been made by Lee (2001). It is often the case that when one is satisfied with the current condition of one's job, he or she may have lower intentions to leave the organization. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were proposed:

*Hypothesis 2:* Empowerment is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 3:* Empowerment is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.

#### *Training and Service Recovery Performance*

Customers evaluate service recovery in terms of the outcomes they receive and the nature of the interpersonal treatment they receive during the recovery process (Smith *et al.*, 1999; McCollough *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, frontline employees need to have the interpersonal skills needed to perform the service recovery well. When customers have spared their time and put efforts to complain, they usually have high expectations. They would expect to be heard, to be compensated, and to be treated in a professional and nice manner. However, research done by Bitner *et al.* (1990) revealed that almost 50 percent of unsatisfactory service encounters are the result of the employees' inability to respond to service failures. The inability to respond appropriately to the failures may be due to lack of skills. Employees who lack interpersonal or behavioural skills in dealing with complaining customers would need suitable training.

Magnini & Ford (2004) claimed that service recovery training has been shown to be effective towards employees' service performance and it is one of the strategic necessities for guest retention and hotel profitability. Research suggests that training of frontline employees both in job-

related and behavioural skills to improve their capability to deal with customer needs is critical for delivering superior service quality (Hart *et al.*, 1990; Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996). In other studies, it is reported that employees who lack the necessary job and interpersonal skills fail in providing a high level of service when dealing with customers' complaints (Lewis & Gabrielson, 1998; Yavas, 1998; Boshoff & Allen, 2000; Yavas *et al.*, 2003; Ashill *et al.*, 2005).

Many hoteliers now utilize service recovery training programmes (Brown, 2000), since it is crucial for the frontline staff to be fully equipped with essential skills and information to effectively deal with hotel guests. Nowadays, guests are more sophisticated and demand high service quality from the service provider. In fact, guests are more ready in voicing out their frustrations or dissatisfactions of the services they have received (Ashill *et al.*, 2005). Guests could simply defect to other competing provider if the frontline hotel staff is not able to handle their complaints in an effective and acceptable manner. From the discussion above, the following hypothesis was put forward:

*Hypothesis 4:* Training is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.

#### *Training, Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions*

Human relation skills are one of the essential skills needed by frontline employees (Benoy, 1996; Johnson, 1996). Training plays a pivotal role in gaining these skills. Service providers who acquire more training opportunities are more likely to show higher levels of job satisfaction (Lee *et al.*, 1999). Harel & Tzafirir (1999) postulated that training not only improves skills and abilities crucial to employees' roles, job tasks and development, but it also increases employees' satisfaction with their jobs and workplace. Furthermore, it has been found that training affects organizational commitment, participant knowledge, and self-esteem (McEvoy, 1997). It is therefore reasonable to

expect that employees having sufficient training in their scope of work will be more committed to the organization, having attained a more positive attitude, and hence, removing any feelings or intentions of leaving the organization. In view of the above discussion, the following hypotheses were proposed:

*Hypothesis 5:* Training is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 6:* Training is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.

#### *Reward and Service Recovery Performance*

To instil service excellence, employees must get the message that providing quality service holds the key for them being rewarded (Lovelock *et al.*, 2005). Effective service recovery performance often goes unnoticed when employee rewards are being considered. Considerations for rewards are given mainly based on the years of service and the overall achievement assessment. Thus, to appreciate and motivate the employees, it is only fair to also reward them for handling customer complaints (Bowen & Johnston, 1999; Yavas *et al.*, 2003) for the sake of the organization's continuous success. In other words, by having an appropriate reward policy that covers all aspects of employees' work, it could be ensured that they would be motivated to deal with complaining customers, while delivering high quality services at the same time.

The empirical findings by Boshoff & Allen (2000) showed that rewarding frontline staff for service excellence exerted a positive influence on their service recovery performance. However, it is generally known that frontline employees are overworked but underpaid (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). This is particularly strange considering the fact that employees do play a part in generating profits for an organization, that is, by delivering quality services to satisfy its customers. Consequently, they will create more businesses with the satisfied customers and

reduce the number of customers they may lose. It should be reminded that an organization's reward structure must not only focus on reducing customers' complaints but also emphasize on giving employees positive reinforcement for handling complaints and problems, as well as for pleasing the customers (Hart *et al.*, 1990). If the hotel management does not reward service recovery efforts, frontline hotel staff will not spend much effort in dealing with their guests' complaints or any service failures that occurs. In view of this, the next hypothesis was considered:

*Hypothesis 7:* Reward is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.

#### *Reward, Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions*

Rewarding and recognizing excellent services highly influence service providers' job satisfaction (Johnson, 1996). Similarly, employees who are rewarded for performing excellent jobs are more likely to possess high levels of job satisfaction (MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998; Lee *et al.*, 1999). It is the nature of almost all employees in any workplace to expect some kind of rewards for the good job they have done. When performing a good job is rewarded appropriately, only then will an employee feel satisfied and have the motivation to continue with the high level performance. Then, this also mean that rewards associated with excellence increases employees' productivity and reduces absenteeism (Kaufman, 1992). In the same vein, Gomez-Mejia & Wellbourne (1988) stated that an advanced reward system could be a potential source of retaining excellent employees. This may suggest rewards to be based not only on a fixed aspect of performance indicators, but also to look at other work aspects as well.

In addition, Hausknecht *et al.* (2009) in their recent study revealed that job satisfaction and extrinsic rewards were among two of the most frequently mentioned reasons for employees to stay in an organization. This gives insights to the management that it is important to focus

on these features in order to retain their valued employees. Based on the above discussions, the following hypotheses were postulated:

*Hypothesis 8:* Reward is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 9:* Reward is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.

#### *Service Recovery Performance and Job Satisfaction*

The relationship between job performance and job satisfaction has been frequently researched in several disciplines, be it in marketing, management, or psychology. Brown & Peterson (1993) have proposed a positive relationship between performance and job satisfaction in their meta-analytic study. Babin & Boles (1998) similarly found that food servers performing effectively in the workplace reported higher satisfaction with their jobs. It is also reported that job performance has a significant positive impact on employees' job satisfaction as in the work of Babakus *et al.* (1999). In the same vein, sales people's job satisfaction also resulted from high levels of performance, as was evident in the study of Netemeyer *et al.* (2004). The effect of job performance on job satisfaction was positively significant in the recent study of Karatepe *et al.* (2007). In addition, Karatepe & Sokmen (2006) also found the two constructs to be positively correlated.

Likewise, it is important to note that recent empirical studies also specifically indicate that effective service recovery performance has a significant positive association with job satisfaction. For example, Boshoff & Allen (2000) as well as Yavas *et al.* (2003) found that effective service recovery performance by frontline employees in the banking sector exerted a significant positive effect on their job satisfaction. Findings of some previous research strongly show that high performing employees report high levels of job satisfaction

and this could be the same in the case of frontline hotel employees. In line with all the previous and recent empirical findings, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*Hypothesis 10:* Frontline employees' effective service recovery performance is positively associated with their job satisfaction.

#### *Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions*

High turnover rate is an important issue in the tourism and hospitality industry (Lam *et al.*, 2002), deserving the attention to be researched further. Low job satisfaction may be a possible factor which leads to intentions to resign and consequently to high turnover among employees. There are substantial empirical studies to support the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. For example, Tett & Meyer (1993) found that job satisfaction had a significant negative relationship with turnover intentions in their meta-analytic study. Furthermore, Moncrief *et al.* (1997) reported that salesperson's job satisfaction was negatively related to their tendency to leave.

In addition, Babin & Boles (1998) found evidence in the restaurant industry that low levels of job satisfaction among frontline employees' resulted in their intention to leave the organization they work for. Similarly, Babakus *et al.* (1999) showed that lower levels of job satisfaction among salesperson would increase their intentions to leave the sales force. Karatepe *et al.* (2007) also found the relationship between job satisfaction and employee's turnover intentions both significant and negative. Since turnover intentions are immediate precursors of actual turnover, which is a critical problem in the hotel industry, it therefore is crucial to further understand whether there is indeed a strong effect of job satisfaction on employees' intentions to leave the hotel organization. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*Hypothesis 11:* Frontline employees' job satisfaction is negatively associated with their turnover intentions.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire survey was employed to solicit responses on the frontline employees' perceptions toward their hotel's empowerment practices, training, and reward system. The ways the hotels conduct such practices were posed to have effects on their service recovery performance, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. A 7-point scoring format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used to measure all the constructs. Empowerment was operationalised using four items from Yavas *et al.* (2003) and three from Spreitzer (1995). An example is, "I have freedom in determining how to solve guest problems". Training consists of five items, while rewards with seven items, both adapted from Ashill *et al.* (2005). "Staff in this hotel receives ongoing training to provide good service" is an example of one of the five items under training, while "I am rewarded for satisfying complaining guests" is one of the items measuring the reward construct. Service recovery performance and job satisfaction was operationalised using five and four items, respectively, from Boshoff & Allen (2000). An example of the item measuring service recovery performance is, "No guest I deal with leaves with problems unresolved", while example of an item measuring job satisfaction is, "I am satisfied with my working conditions". Finally, for the construct of turnover intentions, four items were drawn from Karatepe & Sokmen's (2006) study, whereby one of the items is "I often think about resigning". All of the adapted questionnaire items achieved the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 and above in their respective studies. The survey instrument was first tested with a pilot sample of 66 frontline hotel employees before the actual survey was administered. Minor changes were made to the instrument as a result of this pilot test.

Stage sampling (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) was adopted by firstly selecting only 3-, 4- and 5-star hotels located in Klang Valley from the list of hotels provided by Malaysia's Accommodation Directory. The star rating symbolizes a universally accepted standard of high service quality in Malaysia. Then, from the 15 hotels agreeing to participate in the study, the next stage was collecting data from selected customer contact employees as the sampling frame, namely the front office, food and beverage, housekeeping, spa, gymnasium and public areas. Frontline employees in those departments have boundary-spanning roles, and spent most of their times dealing directly with guest's requests and complaints. Furthermore, within those departments, the hotel representatives in charge of distributing the survey were asked to randomly select the required number of respondents. This sampling technique ensures that the sample or respondents are indeed the right individual to provide the relevant data needed.

A total of 258 out of 502 questionnaires distributed to participating hotels were returned, representing 51.4 percent of the response rate. However, due to incomplete answers, 2 sets of the questionnaires were removed, providing a final sample of 256 usable questionnaires. The response rate was considered quite high, considering the difficulty of getting hotels and their employees to participate in such studies. Data from the final number of responses were subjected to correlation analysis using the Spearman Product-moment Correlation statistic. This statistical analysis is considered as the best as it is aligned with the study's objective, i.e. to test whether or not the hypotheses are accepted. Nonetheless, the study did not consider multiple regression as it did not intend to make predictions or test the significance of the research model as a whole.

The demographic characteristics of the samples indicated that 134 respondents were males (52.3 percent) and 121 were females (47.3 percent). As for the departments, front office was 50 (19.5 percent), food and beverage 74 (28.9 percent), while housekeeping was

72 (28.1 percent). The employees from other departments, such as spa, gymnasium and public areas, accounted for more than half of the respondents (23.1 percent). When asked about the respondents' past experiences in the hotel industry, 142 (55.5 percent) stated they had had experiences working in a hotel environment, while 112 (43.8 percent) indicated no relevant experiences in the field. Table 1 demonstrates the characteristics of the respondents.

TABLE 1  
Demographic profile of hotel employees  
(N=256)

Profile	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	134	52.3
Female	122	47.7
Total	256	100
<b>Age</b>		
<20	7	2.7
20-24	71	27.7
25-34	109	42.6
35-44	44	17.2
>45	25	9.8
Total	256	100
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
Malay	180	70.3
Chinese	31	12.1
Indian	34	13.3
Others	11	4.3
Total	256	100
<b>Department</b>		
Front office	50	19.5
Food and beverage	74	28.9
Housekeeping	72	28.1
Others	59	23.1
Missing	1	0.4
Total	256	100
<b>Experience</b>		
Yes	142	55.5
No	112	43.8
Missing	2	0.8
Total	256	100

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

*Reliability Assessment*

The reliability test was used to purify the measurement scale for each construct. All the six variables achieved the co-efficient alphas above 0.7, which concurred with Nunnally’s (1978) minimum suggested level, as shown in Table 2. As such, no items were deleted.

TABLE 2  
Alpha coefficient of reliability on variables

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Service recovery performance	5	0.798
Reward	7	0.900
Training	5	0.913
Empowerment	7	0.849
Job satisfaction	4	0.857
Turnover intentions	4	0.887

*Correlation Results*

Spearman product-moment correlation was employed to test all the hypotheses in this study and to determine the organizational variable which is significantly associated with the outcomes of the study. Correlation is often used to explore the relationship among a group of variables (Pallant, 2005), which is the case in this study. In light of the correlation results, ten out of eleven hypotheses are accepted. The results

indicate that the formulated hypotheses are significant and hold good. In particular, H1 to H3 addressed the relationships expected between empowerment and frontline employees’ service recovery performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, respectively. Meanwhile, the results from the correlation analysis portray a significant positive relationship for all three hypotheses. H4 to H6 speculated the association between training and the three outcomes. The correlation results in Table 3 demonstrate that training has a significant positive influence on service recovery performance as well as on both of the psychological outcomes, and thus supporting H4, H5, and H6.

H7 to H9 were dedicated to test the impact of reward on the frontline employees’ psychological and behavioural outcomes. Nonetheless, there is no empirical support for the link between reward and turnover intentions, and therefore, H9 is rejected. The empirical evidence was found to support H7 and H8 in light of the significant and positive results between reward and service recovery performance, as well as reward and job satisfaction. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that service recovery performance would positively be associated with job satisfaction. The correlation results produce positive and significant findings which provide support for H10. Finally, H11 suggested that job satisfaction would have a negative impact on turnover intentions. H11 was also accepted in light of the negative and significant result, as shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3  
Results of correlation

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
TotalSRP	1					
TotalReward	.203**	1				
TotalTraining	.252**	.466**	1			
TotalEmpower	.515**	.240**	.177**	1		
TotalJSat	.286**	.596**	.346**	.254**	1	
TotalTurnover	-.043	-.106	-.150*	.142*	-.200**	1

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

\* . Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To further assist in an easier understanding and interpretation of the findings, Table 4 presents a summary of the results based on the hypotheses testing, which include Cohen's (1988) suggestion in determining the strength of relationship, whereby .10 to .29 is considered weak, .30 to .49 is considered moderate, and .50 to 1.00 is considered strong.

*Discussions*

This paper aims to contribute empirically to the current understanding of organizational characteristics and their relation with employees' behavioural and psychological outcomes. There are many variables which are related to service recovery performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. However, the present study only focused on investigating the effects

TABLE 4  
Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Coefficient value R	p-value	Supported/ Not supported	Strength of relationship
H1: Empowerment is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.	.515	0.01	Supported	Strong
H2: Empowerment is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.	.254	0.01	Supported	Weak
H3: Empowerment is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.	.142	0.024	Supported	Weak
H4: Training is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.	.252	0.01	Supported	Weak
H5: Training is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.	.346	0.01	Supported	Moderate
H6: Training is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.	-.150	0.017	Supported	Weak
H7: Reward is positively associated with frontline employees' service recovery performance.	.203	0.01	Supported	Weak
H8: Reward is positively associated with frontline employees' job satisfaction.	.596	0.01	Supported	Strong
H9: Reward is negatively associated with frontline employees' turnover intentions.	-.106	0.092	Not supported	_
H10: Frontline employees' effective service recovery performance is positively associated with their job satisfaction.	.286	0.01	Supported	Weak
H11: Frontline employees' job satisfaction is negatively associated with their turnover intentions.	-.200	0.01	Supported	Weak

of empowerment, training, and reward on employees' behavioural (service recovery performance) and psychological (job satisfaction and turnover intentions) outcomes using a sample of frontline employees in three-, four-, and five-star hotels in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The results presented have implications for service managers. These centres need to understand how empowerment, training and reward can have an impact on employees' service recovery performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.

Clearly, focus should be given to the impact that empowering frontline employees will have on their service recovery performance, as indicated by its strong relationship. In fact, the current study's result is in line with the previous findings (Chow *et al.*, 2006; Babakus *et al.*, 2003). Hoteliers should be aware that empowerment has a stronger impact on service recovery performance compared to the other two variables. Managerial actions should be taken in terms of its internal marketing efforts where empowerment is being emphasized in the workplace. Employee empowerment should be exercised so employees can provide quick and equitable responses to customers without having to go through long decision-making processes through supervisors or managers. Greater authority and flexibility given to employees in dealing with customers may enhance their service performance, particularly to their recovery efforts. At times, service recovery efforts fail simply because employees are not empowered (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). In addition, supportive work environments may be enhanced. For example, supervisors and managers need to show their recognition for the employees' extra effort in solving customers' complaints. It may often be the case that employees want to take the extra step needed to help customers and solve their problems, but they are actually afraid that actions taken without consulting their supervisors would cost them their jobs or gain disapproval from the management.

The strong and positive effects of reward on employees' job satisfaction need to be addressed as well. This result lends further support where it is in line with the previous findings by Lee *et al.* (1999). Indeed, it is the nature of almost all employees in any workplace to expect some kind of reward for the job or work they do. Once performing a job is followed with the expected and appropriate reward, only then will an employee feel satisfied and have the motivation to continue with the high level performance. Hotel managers should take note on this association so as to take suitable measures pertaining to rewards and benefits provided to the frontline employees. Reward may not only mean in monetary terms alone, such as salary increase or bonuses, but should also cover the non-monetary aspect as well. For example, praise or recognition from the management, respect from colleagues, and trust by immediate supervisors may be seen as parts of the aspects of reward to boost frontline employee's job satisfaction.

Besides the above recommendations, the hotel management should be committed towards providing appropriate training in handling customers' problems or complaints. Service training constitutes a form of explicit communication with employees which have a direct impact on the service behaviours of those employees (Lings *et al.*, 2008). Employees may display poor service behaviour if they do not have the skills to deliver high quality services. The study found substantial impact of training being associated with job satisfaction. It suggests that employees equipped with the needed skills will have higher job satisfaction. In fact, there is a link where training is also necessary for empowered employees to be effective (Babakus *et al.*, 2003). Among other things, it is important for service management to provide specific training for the employees to understand the service delivery systems of the organization, and manage the numerous interactions which customers experience during service encounter. Trainings which are

especially designed on how to handle customer problems and complaints are also critical for the employees to provide an effective service recovery performance. If frontline employees do not have the required training to perform a recovery after a service failure, the customers will then continue to be dissatisfied, and this may affect future relationships between customers and the organization.

As for the hypothesized relationship between reward and employees' turnover intentions, the empirical finding did not generate a significant result. The lack of significant negative correlation may be due to the country's current situation. In a period where Malaysia and the world is facing economic crisis and commodity prices are rising every year, coupled with the existence of high unemployment rate, many employees do not consider leaving their jobs regardless of the existence of rewards or not. It could be one of the reasons that contributed to the respondent's answer for the items under turnover intentions.

#### **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION**

This paper has given its focus to selected organizational characteristics, namely; empowerment, training, and reward. These characteristics were hypothesized to have impact on employees' service recovery performance, their job satisfaction, and their turnover intentions, as illustrated in the research model. In other words, the association between organizational characteristics and its psychological and behavioural outcomes was looked into simultaneously. This paper hopes to lay the groundwork for future research on service recovery performance in particular, as well as overall service performance in general. It is important to highlight that customers nowadays have rising expectations, less tolerant, greater sense of importance as well as growing affluence. Thus, it is also hoped that this study will offer practical recommendations to managers on how to manage their customer-contact employees in their dealings and service

delivery to customers, which could be an important source of competitive advantage to the organization.

Just like other research, this paper is not without some limitations. Investigations into the anticipated relationships in the research framework have only been done within Malaysian hotel service environment, and thus, may raise questions of generalizability towards the hotel industry of other countries or different tourism industries. However, hotel organization is deemed to be suitable to test the model as the industry has become one of the most competitive industries among the service industries. Moreover, due to the highly intangible, perishable, inseparable, and highly variable nature of the service provided by the hotel industry, it therefore demands special attention because of the difficulty in meeting customers' needs and wants. Furthermore, the research has considered the frontline employee's perspective on the issues. The findings may be more interesting if hotel manager's perceived impacts of empowerment, training, and reward on their employees' behavioural and psychological outcomes are also considered. Finally, there is a need to explore other antecedents anticipated to be associated with customer-contact employees' behavioural and psychological outcomes. Variables like self-efficacy, supervisor support, and organizational commitment may be included in the model in future research.

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## Sex and Class of Secondary School Students in Experiencing Emotional Abuse by Teachers in Edo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of sex and class of secondary school students in experiencing emotional abuse. For this purpose, a survey designed was adopted in the study. A total of 1537 students, drawn through multistage proportionate sampling technique from all secondary school students in Edo state, participated in the study. The instrument, a questionnaire entitled, "Classroom Emotional Abuse Scale" was used to collect the data for this study. The results showed that male students experienced emotional abuse in the forms of terrorizing, isolating, ignoring, and verbal assaulting more than their female counterparts. The results also indicated that senior secondary school students experienced emotional abuse in the forms of dominating ( $\bar{x}=6.43$ ,  $SD=1.93$ ) and terrorizing ( $\bar{x}=6.40$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ) more than their junior secondary school counterparts in terrorizing ( $\bar{x}=6.16$ ,  $SD=1.70$ ) and dominating ( $\bar{x}=6.00$ ,  $SD=1.93$ ). The study further revealed that junior secondary school students experienced isolating ( $\bar{x}=4.40$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ) as a form of emotional abuse more than their senior secondary school counterparts ( $\bar{x}=4.11$ ,  $SD=1.42$ ). Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers should mete equal treatment on students irrespective of their sex and class. In addition, internship programmes should be organized for pre-service teachers, while ongoing professional development programme should also be organized for in-service teachers to avoid emotionally abusive behaviour in the classroom which will eventually lead to child-centred learning environment.

**Keywords:** Psychological maltreatment, students, Edo State, child abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

The term emotional abuse conjures up images of violence and cruelty. It infers a deliberate action, an intention to harm and to damage. It is an active label for the violations of one person's rights by another. Like other forms of violence in relations, emotional abuse is based on power and control. A clear-cut meaning of emotional abuse in the school system was provided by Glaser & Prior (1997), whereby they posited that emotional abuse is a repeated pattern of damaging interactions between the teachers and

the child that becomes typical of the relationship. Krugman & Krugman (1984) identified teachers' abusive behaviours as screaming at students to the extent that they cried, making degrading comments and labelling students as stupid and dumb. It is important to note that the severity of emotional abuse on students' learning cannot be underestimated. Hence, Geffner (2007) points out that emotional abuse can be thought of as the non-physical abuse of the self and spirit, which degrades self-worth and interferes with human development and productivity.

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Meanwhile, it is important to stress that classroom discipline should be differentiated from emotional abuse by teachers. Disciplinary practices used in schools to prevent and suppress students' misbehaviour should not be punitive and focus on behaviour and not on a student's personality, race, and ethnicity, disabling condition or sexual orientation (Charles, 1999). A research by Newberger (1997) has shown that a continuous use of emotional abuse on children can result in shrinkage of the regions of the brain that are responsible for memory, learning and the regulations of affect and emotional expression. Similarly, Perry (1993) has stated that the brains of maltreated children can be 20% to 30% smaller compared with their non-maltreated peers.

Research on child abuse has been plagued with much attention being placed on the physical and sexual abuse. In this regard, emotional abuse has been largely and apparently ignored. Yet, emotional abuse produces the most destructive consequences of all forms of child abuse (Garbarino & Vondra, 1987; Anda, Whitfield & Felitti, 2002; McEachern, Aluede & Kenny, 2008). Some teachers are unaware of the impacts of their behaviours on children (Shumba, 2002; Krugman & Krugman, 1984). It is possible that teachers are also unaware that emotional abuse is a form of child abuse that has serious damaging consequences on the children's development and their academic achievement in school.

The secondary school level of education coincides with adolescence stage of human development. In more specific, it is a time of "storm and stress". The storm and stress phenomenon means that adolescence is a turbulent time charged with conflicts and mood swings, and hence, parents and teachers should be careful in this transition period from childhood to adulthood. Teachers who work with adolescents may fail to understand, among other things, the nature of the transition through which adolescence passes and the special needs and developmental tasks of adolescence; the role of peer group in influencing adolescent

behaviour, as well as the problems arising out of sexual maturation (Okoza, 2009; Santrock, 2004). Failure to understand these adolescents' characteristics may lead to crises between teachers and students, which may probably prompt teachers to be emotionally abusive in the classroom.

A study by Brendgen, Wanner & Vitaro (2005) points out that in-attention seems to provoke the teachers' scorn, especially for boys. One possible explanation that was adduced for this difference in maltreatment was that, in girls, a lack of attention may be considered a temporary lapse and, thus, be more readily excused or ignored than in boys. In the literature, male students are considered to be more involved in disruptive behaviours in the classroom, such as noise, shouting, fighting and throwing up, to get attention compared to girls (De Zolt & Hull, 2000). This may prompt teachers to emotionally abuse boys more than girls. Moreover, De Zolt & Hull (2000) posited that compliance, following rules and being neat and orderly, is valued and reinforced in many classrooms. The researchers have further stressed that these are behaviours which are typically associated with girls rather than boys and this may also account for the reason why boys experience emotional abuse more often than girls from their teachers.

In addition, the academic performance in the classroom between male and female students has also been shown as the reason why teachers emotionally abuse boys more than girls. The study of Good, Sikes & Brophy (1973) showed that low achieving boys were treated more negatively by both male and female teachers as compared to their female counterparts. Meanwhile, Casarjian (2000) showed that boys are more likely to have a conflicting relationship with their teachers than their female counterparts. Similarly, Hughes, Cavell & Willson (2001), Birch & Ladd (1998) and Kersner (2000) revealed that boys also experienced emotional abuse more than their female counterparts. In addition, Hyman & Wise (1979), Youssef, Attia, & Kamel (1998), and Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor & Khoury-Kassabri (2002) revealed that

many disciplinary confrontations with teachers involved boys and that they were emotionally abused more than the females.

The class of students in the school is often noted to influence their experience of emotional abuse. Students in junior secondary school class are expected to be at the early adolescent stage with the exception of late bloomers or slow learners, as well as bulks of students in senior secondary schools class are at the late adolescent stage. Apparently, their perceptions and interactions with teachers vary and hence their experience of emotional abuse may also be different as well. In Israel, Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor & Khoury-Kassabri (2002) reported that older students in senior high schools are much more vocal and powerful in protecting themselves against school authority than the younger ones in junior schools and they therefore experience less emotional abuse by educational staff. Youssef *et al.* (1998), Smith, Madsen & Moody (1999) also revealed that students in junior class are subjected to more maltreatment and more prone to victimization compared to students in the senior class.

### RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

At adolescent stage, there is a divergence in the levels of physical maturity between males and females. This may account for the differences in their behaviour in the classroom, which may lead them to experience emotional abuse from their teachers differently. Similarly, students in junior secondary schools may not experience emotional abuse in the same way with their senior secondary school counterparts. Therefore, this study was aimed at determining the influence of sex and class of students in experiencing emotional abuse. The gender of the students has also been indicated to influence their experiences of emotional abuse.

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

As indicated earlier, the survey design was utilized for the current study. The population of

the study was all the students in both the public and private secondary schools in Edo state of Nigeria. A total of 1559 students, who were drawn through the multistage proportionate sampling technique, were used to compose the sample for the study, though only 1537 (98.6%) returned their questionnaire, and were analysed in this study. The composite of the sample included 780 males and 757 females, which were also 820 junior secondary students and 739 senior secondary students.

#### *Measures*

The instrument used for the study was the Classroom Emotional Abuse Scale (CEAS), which was an adapted version of the Classroom Behaviour Scale (CBS) developed by McEachern, Aluede & Kenny (2003). Meanwhile, the scale proposed by McEachern *et al.* (2003) was adapted from the Nesbit & Philpot's (2002) Subtle Emotional Abuse Scale (SEAS). In the present study, the Classroom Emotional Abuse Scale (CEAS) modified the CBS to include other items on emotional abuse and account for the cross-cultural differences between North America and Nigeria, where the original instrument and this modified version (i.e. Classroom Emotional Abuse Scale or CEAS) were originally developed and used.

The present version of the Classroom Emotional Abuse Scale (CEAS) was validated by two experts in Educational Psychology in the Department of Foundations and Management, Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Nigeria. The aim was to ensure that the items in the instrument were capable of eliciting responses to answer the research questions. Some of the items in the instrument included the following: our teachers insult their students publicly; our teachers use responses such as "you did not listen", "your mind was not in the lesson", "you will never understand" when students ask questions; our teachers threaten to flog students; our teachers do not show concern for students' well-being; and our teachers are in the habit of scolding students who make mistakes in their lessons; our teachers lock

up students in the room for misbehaviour; our teachers do not give room to students to explain their side of the story/matter, and our teachers are very selective in assigning tasks to the students.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through the split-half method on a sample of thirty (30) secondary school students in Delta State. In the context of this study, the split-half method used yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

*Procedures*

The instrument was administered by the principal author, with the aid of several research assistants in the sampled secondary schools. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot.

*Results*

The results of this study are presented under the following two categories:

1. There is no significant difference between the male and female students in their experience of

emotional abuse. To test this hypothesis, the t-test for two independent sample means was applied. A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 1 below.

Based on the survey, it could be concluded that both the male and female students experienced rejection, discrimination, degrade, and domination as the forms of emotional abuse in approximately the same way. The results further revealed that significant differences existed in the way the male and female students experienced emotional abuse in the forms of terrorization, isolation, ignore, and verbal assaults, with the males experiencing terrorization, isolation, ignore, and verbal assaults from their teachers more often than their female counterparts.

2. There is no significant difference between students in the junior secondary schools and students in the senior secondary schools in term of their experience of emotional abuse. To test this hypothesis, the t-test of two independent sample means was applied. A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 1  
Experience of emotional abuse between male and female students

Variables	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Rejection	Female	749	5.76	1.75	1517	.56	>.05
	Male	770	5.71	1.69			
Discrimination	Female	741	6.51	2.14	1499	-1.45	>.05
	Male	760	6.66	1.95			
Degrade	Female	711	5.65	2.4	1448	-1.79	>.05
	Male	739	5.86	2.43			
Domination	Female	745	6.19	1.86	1508	-.69	>.05
	Male	765	6.25	1.77			
Terrorization	Female	731	6.08	1.63	1480	-4.47	< .05
	Male	551	6.47	1.75			
Isolation	Female	741	4.13	1.41	1500	-3.09	< .05
	Male	761	4.37	1.62			
Ignore	Female	733	5.36	1.94	1477	-3.79	< .05
	Male	746	5.74	1.85			
Verbal assaults	Female	750	5.75	1.92	1496	-2.68	< .05
	Male	748	6.03	2.07			

TABLE 2  
The experience of emotional abuse between students from the junior secondary schools  
and senior secondary schools

Variable	Class	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Rejection	JSS	810	5.72	1.71	1534	-.50	>.05
	SSS	726	5.76	1.75			
Discrimination	JSS	796	6.59	1.10	1516	0.24	>.05
	SSS	722	5.56	2.09			
Degrade	JSS	761	5.66	2.23	1463	-1.83	>.05
	SSS	704	5.90	2.35			
Domination	JSS	800	6.00	1.72	1525	-4.66	< .05
	SSS	727	6.43	1.90			
Terrorization	JSS	780	6.16	1.70	1498	-2.54	< .05
	SSS	720	6.40	1.71			
Isolation	JSS	788	4.40	1.60	1512	3.59	< .05
	SSS	726	4.11	1.42			
Ignore	JSS	782	5.50	1.89	1492	-1.35	>.05
	SSS	712	5.62	1.90			
Verbal assaults	JSS	795	5.93	2.02	1514	0.99	>.05
	SSS	721	5.83	1.98			

Note: JSS - Junior Secondary School Students  
SSS - Senior Secondary Schools Students

Based on the survey, it can be concluded that SSS and JSS students experienced rejection, discrimination, degrade, ignore and verbal assaults as the common forms of emotional abuse in approximately the same way. The study further revealed that SSS students experienced domination and terrorization more often than the JSS students. In addition, the study also revealed that JSS students experienced isolation more frequently than their SSS counterparts.

### DISCUSSIONS

The study found that there was no significant difference between the male and female students in their experiences of emotional abuse, namely, rejection, discrimination, degrade, and domination. The study further exposed the significant difference between the male and female students in their experiences of terrorization, isolation, ignore, and verbal

assaults. Male students were found to experience terrorising, isolating, ignoring, and verbal assaults as the common forms of emotional abuse more often than their female counterparts. This result is worthwhile because, expectedly, male students may be more involved in classroom disruptive behaviours such as making noises, shouting, fighting, inattention, and throwing up to get attention from the teacher in classroom. These behavioural traits are usually associated with boys and they may account for the reasons why boys often experience terrorization, isolation, ignore and verbal assaults compared to their female counterparts. This finding is in agreement with that of Brendgen *et al.* (2005) who posited that boys were emotionally abused more often by the teachers than girls in the classroom because of inattention. Dezolt & Hull (2000) adduced that schools personnel tended to stereotype boys behaviour as problematic. Moreover, some teachers may have such

perception against boys which further prompts them to emotionally abuse boys. Thus, to have a conducive classroom environment for teaching and learning compliance to rules, neatness, and good behaviours are essential ingredients for classroom ambience. These positive behaviours are typically associated with girls rather than boys (Dezolt & Hull 2000), and this may account for one of the reasons why boys experience emotional abuse more than girls from their teachers.

To account for gender differences in the experience of emotional abuse, Hughes, Cavell & Wilson (2001) reported that low achieving boys have been shown to be more emotionally abused by both male and female teachers compared to girls. Similarly, Casarjian (2000) showed that boys experienced emotional abuse more often than females. It is possible that poor academic achievement and lack of attention may account for the reasons why teachers emotionally abused boys more frequently than girls in this study. Therefore, from this study, it could be concluded that gender is a strong predictor of emotional abuse by teachers.

In addition, the study also revealed that there was no significant difference between students in JSS and SSS in their experiences of rejection, discrimination, degrade, ignore, and verbal assaults. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers emotionally abuse students on these variables, irrespective of the class. The similarity in the experience of these forms of emotional abuse between the JSS and SSS students may be traceable modus operandi of exhibiting abusive behaviours in the classroom by teachers with words, actions and indifference. This fact is supported by Shumba (2002) and Krugman & Krugman (1984) who revealed that teachers are emotionally abusive in the classroom through their constant uses of words that affect the psychological well-being of students. Hence, it is safe to conclude that these forms of emotional abuse are perceived by students as psychosocial problems which may be endemic in their classroom and hence their similarities of experience in this study, irrespective of the class.

Nevertheless, significant difference was also found to exist between students in JSS and SSS in term of their experiences of dominance, terrorization and isolation. The study revealed that the students in SSS class experienced these forms of emotional abuse with particular reference to dominance and terrorization more than their JSS counterparts. What may be responsible for this difference could be the perception that the students in SSS may have been involved more in misbehaviours in the classroom, and further leads their teachers to emotionally abuse them more than the students of junior secondary schools. Thus, engagement in disruptive behaviours, such as bullying colleagues in the classroom and quest for identity by the students in SSS class, may prompt teachers to emotionally abuse them more often than the students in the junior secondary schools (JSS). It is a common knowledge in our school system that students in the SSS class tend to arrogate some privileges to themselves, on contrary with the ethos of our schools system. Ultimately, such unwholesome attitudes from the SSS class may predispose them to be constant conflicts with teachers and hence, their teachers emotionally abuse them through dominance and terrorization.

The study also found that the JSS students experienced isolation as a form of emotional abuse from their teachers more often than their SSS counterparts. This finding may not be too surprising given the fact that in our school system, there have been reports that teachers these days adopt isolation by placing students in “naughty corners”, which isolate the perceived problem ones from other students within the classroom. Psychologically, this kind of treatment is highly and emotionally abusive. Moreover, it is tantamount to removing problem students from positive reinforcement. Isolating students may cause them to yell, knock over furniture and soon on, and this, as a matter of fact, may disrupt the entire learning process. Isolation as a perceived correction measure carries a lot emotional injuries and should be avoided by teachers. This finding supports the work of Benbenishty *et al.* (2000) in Israel,

whereby they found that students in the junior secondary schools experienced emotional abuse more than those in the senior secondary schools.

### CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that sex and class of students influenced their experiences of emotional abuse. It is a serious problem that can significantly affect students' development and productivity in teaching-learning environment. Consequently, a full scale intervention involving all stakeholders in the education process, namely, students, teachers, parents and government, are necessary to ensure a good classroom ambience where students can have positive academic achievement. Moreover, studies should be conducted in the area of emotional abuse in Nigeria to enable policy makers have more information about emotional abuse and enact policies which will protect and prevent students against emotional abuse by their teachers in the school process and at the home front of children.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the study has found out that there seems to be a disproportionate treatment of students, with boys experiencing emotional abuse more than their female counterparts and senior secondary school students experiencing emotional abuse more than their junior secondary school counterparts, teachers should avoid selective treatment of students. This action from teachers negates the principles of justice and equity. Consequently, teachers should mete equal treatment on students irrespective of their sex and class. More importantly, there should be equal educational opportunities in the classroom.

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## Linguistic Representation of English Vocabulary Attrition

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify vocabulary attrition and the linguistic representation of English vocabulary attrition. One hundred and twenty-one participants were randomly selected to participate in the vocabulary tests. The results of vocabulary attrition tests were measured through non-parametric 2-related samples tests and linguistic analyses in terms of phonology, morphology, and semantics. The authors identified a statistically significant vocabulary attrition during a two-month holiday. In the field of phonology, the authors reached the conclusion that medial segments of words are easily attrited, while words with similar onsets are easily attrited and the words with similar general rhythms are easily attrited. Furthermore, in the morphological area, it was argued that suffixes are subject to attrition, while words with similar onsets and general rhythms are easily attrited. As far as semantic representation of lexical attrition is concerned, the authors purport that the participants tend to mix synonyms, antonyms, and the words coordinately associated, superordinately related, or affectively connected. The affective factors, including active, passive and associative imagination, may cause lexical attrition as well.

**Keywords:** Linguistic representation, English language attrition, vocabulary attrition

### INTRODUCTION

This study, aiming at vocabulary attrition and linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition, is worthwhile to be attached importance to. In China, vocabulary attrition has not aroused much concern. Most of the studies on attrition stress the linguistic structure (Anderson, 1999), and only limited studies have investigated into the experiences which surround and permeate the attrition of foreign language (Guardardo, 2000). As Schmid and Köpke (Köpke *et al.*, 2007, p. 4) noted, "the field of attrition is still far

less extensive, less theoretically sophisticated." Among those research into attrition of language skills, abundant studies have explored the area of vocabulary. Nevertheless, very few have investigated the differences of vocabulary attrition in terms of linguistic representation. Hence, via this study, the author hopes to elucidate this infrequently discussed field of attrition.

The research question proposed is "do English skills attrite after a two-month holiday in terms of vocabulary knowledge and linguistic

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representation of English vocabulary?" The objectives of this study were to determine if there is any vocabulary attrition during a two-month holiday and to investigate the linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition. In response to these objectives, a null hypothesis proposing that any vocabulary attrition over the holiday does not exist was therefore postulated.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

While language attrition has generally gained attention in the recent years (e.g. Schmid, 2002), lexical attrition has not, despite the importance of lexicon in many communities for linguistic self identity (Hill, 1993). In the cases where lexical attrition has been examined, various contradictory contentions have been made. For example, lexical attrition in a target language is common and significant (Schmidt, 1985, p.170), resulting in decreased overall vocabulary range (Trudgill, 1976/1977); it has also been reported that vocabulary loss can be minimal (Hutz, 2004, pp.191-192; Schmid, 2002). Lexical attrition has been characterized in terms of loss of vocabulary, loss of semantic distinctions, and in reduced performance ability. Performance-related attrition may include difficulty in lexical recall (Olshtain, 1989; Leyew, 2003, p.108; Sasse, 1992) and increased uncertainty of lexical judgments (Giacalone Ramat, 1979). Semantic changes may include increased polysemy (Leyew, 2003, p. 118) and increased generic usage of terms (Fabunmi & Salawu, 2005; Leyew, 2003), with changes occurring in the designation, connotation, and range of application of words. Schmid & de Bot (2003) have argued that the evidence for lexical attrition is difficult to find, despite the fact that it is generally considered to be existing. The loss of content morphemes is argued to precede the loss of irregular forms (Ecke, 2004), noun classes (Schmidt, 1985), sub-categorization patterns and case markers (Polinsky, 1997), adpositions and relational words (Trudgill, 1976/1977), as well as allomorphic variation (Schmid & de Bot, 2003). Despite its appeal, the hypothesis postulating that content morphemes are lost

before grammatical morphemes has little or no supporting quantitative data (Myers-Scotton, 2002, pp. 206-207).

The issue of morphological structure in the mental lexicon has long been a controversial topic in psychological and neurological linguistics. Generally, two major contrasting models claim different forms of representation. Full-listing models (e.g. Butterworth, 1989; Dell & O'Seaghdha, 1992) assume that the lexical storage or access unit is the whole word. In these models, each morphologically unique word has its own form in the mental lexicon. Parsed models (e.g. Taft & Forster, 1975; Taft, 1994) put forward single morphemes as the storage or access unit. In such models, every morpheme in the language (i.e. each root and each affix) has its own form.

Kim *et al.* (2004) addressed that the level of orthographic representation phonology was linked in the lexicon by comparing the two scripts used in Korean, logographic "hanja" and alphabetic/syllabic "hangul," on a task where judgments were made about the phonology of a visually presented word. It was concluded that the process of making a homophone decision reflected the relationship between orthography and phonology, as mediated through the sub-lexical units activated from orthography to phonology, and vice versa (called "Orthography-Phonology-Orthography Rebound" or "OPO Rebound").

It is indicated in the above mentioned frequency of phonological variant representation that the lexical representation in human mind may be subject to the output of the related lexicon. The more frequently it occurs in the environment, the deeper impression the receiver may have. The notion of variant frequency differs from typical experienced lexical frequency metrics (simple frequency counts) that have been used to predict performance in a wide variety of word recognition tasks (Balota, 1994). The robust and ubiquitous nature of lexical frequency effects has shaped theoretical assumptions about the representation of lexical form (Lively, Pisoni & Goldinger, 1994). Furthermore, a single lexical recognition may

be greatly influenced by the frequency of the phonological input. As a result, a highly frequent phonological variant may be deeply rooted in our mind so that we may recognize the lexicon by matching the phonological characteristics with the lexical form.

In the framework of cohort model proposed by Marslen-Wilson (1984), the word onset is considered to play an important role in the process of lexical retrieval. Taft (1986) has demonstrated that lexical access takes place when sensory information is matched to lexical information, while non-words take longer to classify as non-words if they form the onsets of real words, regardless of the syllable structure. It has been concluded that the access code that activates lexical information in spoken word recognition is the first few phonemes regardless of the syllable structure, whereas in printed word recognition, the access code is the first (orthographically defined) syllable. Studies on word recognition strongly suggest that the psychologically most salient part of any word is its onset. The evidence is of two kinds; the onsets are the most effective cues for successful recall or recognition of a word, and the effects of distorting the onset of a word are much more severe than the effects of distorting later portions (Hawkins & Cutler, 1988). In correctly pronounced words, greater attention paid to word onsets has as a consequence a reduced likelihood of slips of the ears occurring on initial segments, the most likely part of the word for a hearing slip to occur is the middle (Browman, 1978). Based on this theory, Marslen-Wilson & Welsh (1978) proposed a theory of left-to-right auditory word recognition. Under this model, the first portion of a spoken word activates the lexical elements related to all words beginning with that portion. This set of lexical elements forms the “initial cohort”. As subsequent lexical elements are sensed by human auditory nerves, they drop out of all words that do not include them and those including them are recognized as the matched words. This model would be very convincing if there were few words with the same onsets. On the contrary, if several other words have the

same onsets as the sensed ones, this model will then most likely bring about confusing results.

In the theory of the bathtub effect, both the beginning and the ending parts are considered important for word recognition. It is not the case that only word onsets are important in word recognition. The strict form of, say, the cohort model, or any other model of lexical access which allows only left-to-right word search, will hold the latter parts of the word—segments following the uniqueness point—are entirely redundant. Yet, the evidence clearly shows that although onsets are unquestionably the most salient word parts, endings are more salient than middles (Hawkins & Cutler, 1988). Endings are better recall prompts than middles in Horowitz *et al.*'s (1968; 1969) experiments described above, whereas reversal of letters at the end of a word disrupts recognition more than word-medial reversal (Bruner & O'Dowd, 1958). Both of these are visual word recognition effects, and one may argue that in reading, where the entire word is presented simultaneously in space, the recognizer can afford to attend to other parts of the word. Recall, however, that slips of the ear happens less often on endings than on the middle of words (Browman, 1978).

Aitchison (1994, p.143) proposed a general rhythmic pattern which is inextricably linked with the sounds. Words are possibly clumped together in groups, with those having a similar onset, similar ending and similar rhythmic pattern clustered together. These similar-sounding words sometimes aid recall of one another. However, they can compete for selection, as shown by “blocking” — a familiar, annoying experience when a required word gets pushed back by another like-sounding one.

Word recognition can be realized not only through phonological aid but also morphological identification. Cross-linguistic studies of morphology have demonstrated that there is an asymmetry in the type of affixation preferred; languages which would be predicted on independent structural grounds to prefer suffixes to prefixes do so, but languages which would be predicted to prefer prefixes to suffixes

also show a tendency toward suffixation. In other words, independently of other structural considerations, there is an overall preference for suffix morphology (Cutler *et al.*, 1985).

**METHODOLOGY**

The design of this study involves two vocabulary tests (pre-and post-tests) which were conducted before and after the holiday, respectively.

*Participants*

The participants are all sophomores from Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications (NUPT) who are non-English majors and have learned English for two semesters. The population from which 121 students were selected has all learnt the same English subject which includes the vocabulary in College English Book III (A textbook for junior students in NUPT) in the second semester of 2007-2008 academic year. Their English level is under the category of Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR)

scale (Level 1 - Elementary proficiency). The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale is a set of descriptions of abilities to communicate in a language. It was originally developed by the Interagency Language Roundtable, which included representation by United States Foreign Service Institute, the predecessor of the National Foreign Affairs Training Centre (NFATC). It consists of descriptions of five levels of language proficiency, and is the standard grading scale for language proficiency in the Federal service (ILR online resource, 2010).

*Participants Sampling*

There were a total of 3556 students in the same semester, among which 167 students were randomly selected using SPSS 13.0. Among 167 students, 121 students had indicated their willingness to participate in the study. As a result, the final number of the participants was 121, which is considered as large enough to conduct a non-parametric 2-related samples test.

TABLE 1  
Vocabulary knowledge scale

Self-report categories
I. I don't remember having seen this word before.
II. I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.
III. I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____ (synonym or translation).
IV. I know this word. It means _____ (synonym or translation).
V. I can use this word in a sentence: _____ (Write a sentence).

TABLE 2  
Vocabulary knowledge scale used in this study

Please answer the following questions according to the following requirements
If you choose A, please mark A behind the word.
If you choose B, please mark B behind the word.
If you choose C, please mark C behind the word and explain the word or provide its synonym in English.
A. I don't remember having seen this word before.
B. I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.
C. I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____ (synonym or translation).

### *The Vocabulary Test*

The vocabulary test was designed based on the following table, "Vocabulary knowledge scale" proposed by Wesche & Paribakht (1996). Although this scale has received some criticisms, it is feasible in this study.

As described in Table 1, it is suggested that vocabulary knowledge be measured through five categories. The participants were required to choose the corresponding items according to their understanding.

Since this study aimed to explore the linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition rather than the range of vocabulary, the first, second and third items were chosen as the scales of the vocabulary assessment.

As described in Table 2, A means *I don't remember having seen this word before*; B means *I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means*; CW means *I have seen this word before, and I think it means \_\_\_\_\_ (synonym or translation)*. The translation is wrong; CR means *I have seen this word before, and I think it means \_\_\_\_\_ (synonym or translation)*, and the translation is right.

The participants were required to translate the words in the following table from English.

As described in Table 3, 63 words were randomly selected from the glossary in College English Book III, in which around 700 words were enclosed. To begin with, 117 words were randomly selected, and these included some proper nouns, such as address names, people names, fixed collocations and phrases, etc. After removing the proper nouns, 63 words remained as the tested vocabulary. The frequent errors the participants made in the vocabulary tests are listed based on which the sequence of vocabulary is arranged. Nonetheless, the infrequent ones are not listed.

The vocabulary test was conducted twice, one at the end of the academic year 2007-2008, the other at the beginning of the semester of the academic year 2008-2009. The time limit was 20 minutes. The answers were classified into four categories; A: retrieval failure; B: difficult retrieval; CW: wrong retrieval and CR: right

retrieval. If the question remained unanswered, then it would be marked A, i.e. *I don't remember having seen this word before*. If the participant chose B (*I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.*), it would then be classified into B: difficult retrieval. If the participant chose C: *I know this word. It means \_\_\_\_\_ (synonym or translation)* and provided a correct explanation, it would be marked as CR: right retrieval. If the participants chose C but gave a wrong explanation, it would then be marked as CW: wrong retrieval. For each choice, the participant would obtain one point.

After marking the answers, all the data, including those from both pre-test and post-test would be entered into SPSS 13.0. The vocabulary attrition would be measured through the non-parametric 2-related samples tests. Moreover, the frequent errors in C: wrong retrieval would also be summarized and analyzed through the non-parametric T test, based on which, vocabulary attrition in terms of phonological, morphological and semantic representation would be analyzed as well.

## RESULTS

This section presents the results of the vocabulary tests and identifies if there is any significant attrition in terms of vocabulary. In addition, linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition is also identified. The following table shows the data produced from the non-parametric two-related-samples tests in SPSS 13.0.

As shown in Table 4, the first column is the *items*, in which four pairs are listed. The first pair means the result of A1 minus A2, in which A1 means the scores of the participants who chose A (*I don't remember having seen this word before.*) in the pre-test and A2 means the scores of the participants who chose A in the post-test. The second pair indicates the result of B1 minus B2, in which B1 means the scores of the participants who chose B (*I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.*) in the pre-test, while B2 means the scores of the participants who chose B in the post-test. The third pair refers to the result of CR1 minus

TABLE 3  
Classified data for measured vocabulary

No	Vocabulary	Acceptable Explanation	Frequent Error	Total
1	Saucer	浅碟 茶托 Plate	用碟者(a person who uses a sauce)	121
2	Barrier	障碍 栅栏 Obstruction	持棒者(a person who carries a bar)	121
3	Hamburger	汉堡包	吃汉堡者(a person who eats hamburger)	121
4	Equality	平等 均等 Equivalence sameness	Quality	121
5	Liberate	解放 释放 Free Rescue	Literate	121
6	Convention	大会 集会 Conference Meeting	Invention	121
7	Chew	咀嚼 咬 Bite nibble	Crew	121
8	Sauce	酱汁 调味汁 Condiment Seasoning	Source	121
9	Conservation	交谈 会话 Dialogue Discussion	Reservation	121
10	Throat	咽喉 嗓子 Larynx Gorge	Throw	121
11	Rack	支架 Framework	Rock	121
12	Coast	海岸 Beach Seaside	Beach	121
13	Enthusiastic	热情的 Interested Keen	Unwilling	121
14	Reliant	依赖的 Dependent	Independent	121
15	Improvement	改进改善 Promotion Development	Damage	121
16	Freelance	自由职业者 Contributor	Writer	121
17	Oversee	监督 Supervise Preside	See	121
18	Venus	金星	Planet	121
19	Character	角色 品质 Actor Nature	Personality	121
20	Neighbor	邻居 朋友 Friend Fellow	Classmate	121
21	Fancy	空想 Imagine	Fans	121
22	Honey	蜂蜜 宝贝 Sweetheart Lover	Money	121
23	Shatter	粉碎 Smash	Latter	121
24	Behave	表现 Perform Conduct	Have	121
25	Undergo	经历 Experience	Go under	121
26	Surgeon	外科医生	Surgery	121
27	Ironical	冷嘲的 Cynical Caustic	Of iron	121
28	Prohibit	禁止 阻止 Prevent Forbid	Profit	121
29	Generate	生成 产生 Produce Create	General	121

Linguistic Representation of English Vocabulary Attrition

Table 3 (continued)

30	Insurance	保险 保险业	Assurance	121
31	Specific	明确的 具体的 Definite	Special	121
32	Pad	护垫 Cushion	Pat	121
33	Paste	粘贴 Glue	Taste	121
34	Grief	悲伤 Sadness Sorrow	Brief	121
35	Immerse	沉浸 Engross	Immense	121
36	Flutter	颤动 Tremble	Flatter	121
37	Band	带 箍	Bank	121
38	Conservative	保守的 Protective	Conversation	121
39	Flourish	繁荣 Prosper	Furnish	121
40	Prospect	前途 景色 View	Respect	121
41	Successive	相继的 Consecutive	Successful	121
42	Veteran	老兵 Ex-soldier	Vegetable	121
43	Compromise	妥协 让步 Concede Yield	Complex	121
44	Champagne	香槟酒	Champion	121
45	Capture	俘获 俘虏 Seize Arrest	Captain	121
46	Curse	咒咒 Anathema		121
47	Pearl	珍珠		121
48	Prayer	祈祷 祈祷文		121
49	Retail	零售		121
50	Solemn	庄严的 Serious		121
51	Strain	绷紧 Stretch		121
52	Waterproof	防水的 不透水的		121
53	Perfume	香水 香气		121
54	Racial	种族的		121
55	Switch	开关 转换 Shift		121
56	Transport	运送 运输		121
57	Wicked	邪恶的 Vicious		121
58	Feature	特征 特色 Characteristic		121
59	Conclude	断定 Infer		121
60	Fantastic	荒谬的 Quixotic		121
61	Reliable	可靠的 Dependable		121
62	Construct	创建 Build		121
63	Resist	抵抗 Oppose		121

Note: The infrequent errors are not listed

TABLE 4  
Non-parametric two-related-samples tests on linguistic representation of  
vocabulary attrition

Item		Mean difference	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	A1- A2	-.24	3.873	.000
Pair 2	B1- B2	.20	3.606	.000
Pair 3	CR1 - CR2	.09	2.449	.014
Pair 4	CW1 - CW2	-.13	2.828	.005

CR2. CR1 means the scores of the participants who chose C: right retrieval (I know this word. It means \_\_\_\_\_ (synonym or translation) and made the right choice in the pre-test, whereas CR2 means those in the post-test. The fourth pair refers to the result of CW1 minus CW2. CW1 means the scores of the participants who chose C (I know this word. It means \_\_\_\_\_ ‘synonym or translation’) but made the wrong choice in the pre-test, whereas CW2 means those in the post-test. The second column indicates the mean differences of each item.

In this study, it was found that there is a relationship between attrition and phonological features which could be exemplified by the phenomenon that some light ending syllables tend to be easily mistaken or some weak syllables are subject to attrition. This phenomenon may be accounted for by the hypotheses which can be tested through the cohort model (Marslen-Wilson, 1984), Bathtub Effect (Cutler, Hawkins & Gilligan, 1985) and general rhythmic pattern (Aitchison, 1994). The following table shows the results which were obtained from the vocabulary tests.

Rayner (1992) has reported that the eyes move farther into a word when the information that uniquely identifies the word is at the end of the word, rather than at the beginning. Not until all the segments of the word are reviewed does sound of the word begins to take effect in the word recognition. The participants must have first focused on the end of the word, and will judge the rough idea if the end is familiar to them, regardless of the exact pronunciation of the word, which is evidenced in Table 5.

Semantic representation of the lexical attrition is also explored in this study, and the data are shown in Table 7.

## DISCUSSION

This part is divided into two sub-parts, namely; (1) vocabulary attrition, and (2) linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition in terms of phonology, morphology, and semantics.

### *Vocabulary Attrition*

As shown in Table 4, the probabilities for the four tests are all below 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis for this non-parametric test, i.e. there are no significant differences between the four pairs, can be rejected. As a result, it can be concluded that over the two-month holiday, the frequencies of choosing CW1 and A1 have significantly increased, but it decreased in choosing B1 and CR1. In other words, the participants made significantly more “wrong retrievals” and “retrieval failures”, while obtaining much significantly less “right retrievals” and “difficult retrievals” after the holiday. Although the frequencies of the “right retrievals” and “difficult retrievals” decreased, it does not mean that no “right retrievals” or “difficult retrievals” remained. Some impressions of the vocabulary are still intact and not completely attrited, which can be analyzed through linguistic representation of vocabulary attrition.

*Linguistic Representation of Vocabulary Attrition***Phonological representation of lexical attrition**

As described in Table 5, *liberate* and *literate* have the same “initial cohort”, so do *throat* and *throw*, *immerse* and *immense*, *flatter* and *flutter*, and *band* and *bank*. Consequently, it is not surprising that the participants mistook *liberate* for *literate*, *throat* for *throw*, *immerse* for *immense*, *flatter* for *flutter* and *band* for *bank*, which demonstrates that the onsets of real words, regardless of the syllable structure, are more resistant against attrition than the ending parts. This evidence purports that the onset is so impressive that the participants might have judged their corresponding meanings based on the onset, causing them to mix the semantically different words carrying similar onsets.

Finally, consider also the fact that one could retrieve words successfully given only an ending (think of a word ending with -vark). This is true even in the auditory modality. Nooteboom’s (1981) subjects still achieved 60% successful word recognition given only the latter parts of the words. This can simply not be done if words could only be accessed from the lexicon

in the left-to-right order. Thus, it appears that although word onsets are most important for word recognition, word terminations can be quite important as well. This phenomenon is referred to as the *bathtub effect*.

The bathtub effect is well-proven in Table 5. Both *rack* and *rock* have the same onset *r* and the same ending *ck*; *flutter* and *flatter* have the same *fl* and *tter*; *chew* and *crew* have the same *c* and *ew*; *Liberate* and *literate* have the same *li* and *rate*. The participants seemed to make similar mistakes in recognizing all the words with the same onsets and endings.

The general rhythmic pattern is also demonstrated in Table 5. As shown in Table 5, five pairs of words; *convention* and *invention*, *conservation* and *reservation*, *paste* and *taste*, *grief* and *brief*, and *paste* and *taste*, have similar sounds and rhythms, which stimulated the participants to plunge into confusion and misunderstanding.

In summary, the words with similar sounds are subject to attrition. Specifically, the medial segments are easily attrited, whereas the words with similar onsets/endings are easily attrited, and the words with similar general rhythms are easily attrited.

TABLE 5  
Phonological representation of the attrited words

Vocabulary	Frequent errors	Phonological characteristics
Liberate	Literate	Light; middle; consonant;
Convention	Invention	Onset; light;
Chew	Crew	Middle; consonant; stress
Sauce	Source	Homophone
Conservation	Reservation	Initial syllable
Throat	Throw	Ending; light
Rack	Rock	initial syllable; vowel; stress;
Pad	Pat	Ending; consonant; light;
Paste	Taste	Onset; consonant; stress;
Grief	Brief	Onset; consonant; stress;
Immerse	Immense	middle; consonant; light;
Flutter	Flatter	Middle; vowel; stress;
Band	Bank	Ending; consonant; light;

**Morphological representation of lexical attrition**

As described in Table 6, the participants mistook *ironical* for the adjective of *iron*. The reason for this may be that the end of the word *al* which tends to form an adjective has caught the participants' prompt attention. The word *barrier* which ends with *er* can be taken as an example. The participants frequently mistook it as *a person who runs a bar* since the suffix *er* often refers to *a person*. The misunderstanding of *saucer* and *hamburger* as *a person who uses sauce* and *a person eats hamburger* further demonstrates this theory.

Finally, the confusion between three pairs of words, namely; *equality* and *quality*, *insurance* and *assurance*, and *honey* and *money*, may be caused by their similar endings. These three pairs also have similar pronunciations in their endings, which may also contribute to the attrition of word recognition. Additionally, the light prefixes are also attrited in Table 6. In the word *insurance*, it is a light prefix that could have led the participants to incorrectly take it for *assurance*. It may also have been the light prefix *be* in *behave* that made participants mistake it for *have*.

Generally, morphological features also constitute a significant phenomenon of attrition in word recognition. To state this in detail, it is important to note that suffixes are subject to attrition, while words with similar endings (specifically when similarly pronounced) are easily mistaken, and light prefixes are easily attrited.

In the mental lexicon, L1 and L2 lexica within the same speaker are clearly linked phonologically, semantically, and associationally. According to Aitchison (1994, p. 97), two links appear salient especially in the mental lexical dictionaries of English native speakers' mind. One is co-ordinate link that refers to the semantically coordinated words which are connected each other. Among the examples are the connections between *salt* and *pepper*, *hawk* and *swallow*, *truck* and *car*, and *butterfly* and *moth*, etc. The other is the collocational link. For instance, frequent collocations such as *salt water*, *blonde hair*, *traffic jam*, *a slender figure*, *a hot dog*, and *a sweet dream* give rise to the tendency that in human mind these words are memorized in the form of collocation. Aitchison (1994, p. 97) has put forward two further links known as super-ordination and synonymy,

TABLE 6  
Morphological representation of the attrited words

Vocabulary	Frequent errors	Morphological characteristics
Fancy	Fans	Ending
Honey	Money	Onset
Shatter	Latter	Onset
Behave	Have	Prefix
Undergo	Go under	Compound word
Surgeon	Surgery	Ending
Ironical	Of iron	Suffix
Prohibit	Profit	Prefix
Saucer	A person who uses sauce	Suffix
Barrier	A person who runs a bar	Suffix
Hamburger	A person who eats hamburger	Suffix
Equality	Quality	Ending
Insurance	Assurance	Prefix
Specific	Special	Ending
Generate	General	Ending

although both links occur less frequently. The former means that if one word semantically includes the other, the two words will then possibly be linked and kept in human mind in this super-ordinate relationship. Some examples of these are *butterfly* and *insect*, *tree* and *plant*, *zebra* and *animal*, *cupboard* and *furniture*, and so on. The latter link means the two synonyms may be linked together and deeply rooted in human mind. Some instances for this are *starving* and *hungry*, *worried* and *anxious*, *hope* and *expect* and so forth. Sokmen (1993) argued that in the mental lexicon of non-native speakers, affective associations are more frequently observed than links of coordinates and collocations. Based on Sokmen's explanation, there is an affective element that presents a certain visual image, an opinion, an emotional response, or a personal past experience, such as *desk*, *learning*, *bright* and *explore*. When learners see the word *desk*, they may think of *learning*, and a *bright classroom* for *learning* will then occur to them, in which they explore the sea of knowledge. This demonstrates that students develop word links or associations according to the emotion, attitudes, or deep impressions and strong memories.

### Semantic representation of lexical attrition

As demonstrated in Table 7, semantically associated mental lexicon is convincing. The participants mistook *enthusiastic*, *reliant* and *improvement* for *unwilling*, *independent* and *damage* respectively. All of the misperceived words have the adverse meanings with the participants' misconception, which supports the antonymic links in the mental lexicon. In addition, the participants were also found to have confusion about the exact meanings of these pairs of words; *freelance* and *writer*, *oversee* and *see*, *Venus* and *planet*, whose meanings are super-coordinately associated. In addition, the participants also failed to distinguish the differences between these coordinately connected pairs: *character* and *personality*, *neighbour* and *classmate*, *coast* and *beach*, *physicist* and *physician*.

Finally, the participants tend to associate with other affective factors when judging meanings of words. When they catch sight of the word *settlement* (which means 'the act or process of settling or living in some place'), they associate the act or process of coming into some place to live. Consequently, they tend to mistake

TABLE 7  
Semantic representation of the attrited words

Vocabulary	Frequent error	Semantic relationship
Enthusiastic	Unwilling	Antonym
Reliant	Independent	Antonym
Improvement	Damage	Antonym
Freelance	Writer	Super-ordinate
Oversee	See	Super-ordinate
Venus	Planet	Super-ordinate
Character	Personality	Coordinate
Neighbour	Classmate	Coordinate
Coast	Beach	Coordinate
Physicist	Physician	Coordinate
Settlement	Immigration	Affection: associated
Frustration	Disappointment	Affection: passive
Resemble	Love	Affection: active

*settlement for immigration*. A sort of passive affection influences the participants when they read the word *frustration*. According to Merriam-webster's online dictionary (Merriam-webster's online dictionary, n.d.), *frustration* refers to *a deep chronic sense or state of insecurity and dissatisfaction arising from unresolved problems or unfulfilled needs*, while *disappointment* means *the state or emotion of being disappointed*. Both of them contain some passive meaning which leads the participants to misjudge *frustration* as *disappointment*. On the contrary, the active affection can mislead readers as well. *Resemble* refers to *'to be like or similar to'* (e.g. he resembles his father) and *'love means strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties'* (e.g. maternal love for a child) (Merriam-webster's online dictionary, n.d.), whose meanings are both active. As a result, the participants interpreted *resemble* as *love*. Thus, the participants are subject to confusion between two words with active meanings. In other words, in the process of word recognition, the participants tend to mix synonyms, antonyms, and the words which are coordinately associated, and superordinately related or affectively connected. The affective factors such as active, passive and associative imagination may also increase the possibility of lexical attrition.

To sum up, vocabulary attrition has been described in this study in terms of phonology, morphology and semantics. In the field of phonology, it is concluded that the medial segments of words are easily attrited, while words with similar onsets are easily attrited and words with similar general rhythms are easily attrited. Furthermore, in the morphological area, the authors argue that suffixes are subject to attrition, whereas words with similar endings (specifically when they are similarly pronounced), are easily mistaken and light prefixes (those not stressed in pronunciation) are easily attrited. As far as semantic representation of lexical attrition is concerned, the authors purport that the participants tend to mix synonyms, antonyms, and the words which are coordinately associated,

and superordinately related or affectively connected. The affective factors, including active, passive and associative imagination, may cause lexical attrition as well.

Based on the above results, an English language programme during the holiday was designed as follows:

Fifty-minute vocabulary lessons which focus on vocabulary training should be conducted based on China's College English textbooks. More light is shed on words with similar endings, especially when the endings are similarly pronounced, light prefixes, synonyms, antonyms; the words that are coordinately associated, superordinately related or affectively connected; and the words stimulating active, passive and associative imaginations.

It is undeniably true that a study of language attrition is worthwhile and interesting. While language attrition has been investigated mainly in western contexts, it is relatively new in China, particularly in higher institutions and over a holiday period. Therefore, to some extent, this study opens a new window to studies in language attrition in China. In that sense, the data could give accountability to language planning and curriculum designers. Finally, the data derived in this study cannot claim to be exhaustive, but it can be seen as helping to advance knowledge with regard to attrition and the learning of English as a foreign language, especially in China which is fast expanding its contact with the English speaking communities in the world.

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## **Consumers' Perceptions on the Service Quality in the Motor Vehicle Repair and Service Industry: An Exploratory Study in Klang Valley, Malaysia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Motor vehicle repair and service are common and regular services used by consumers in Malaysia. The high demand for these services is contributed by the continued increase in the number of registered vehicles and the number of driving licences issued annually. There are also many complaints reported in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims (TCC) in relation to this industry. Thus, this study aimed to identify the perceptions of consumers towards the quality of the services provided by motor vehicle garages. A total of 400 respondents participated in the study through simple random sampling and data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The results of this study indicated that most of the respondents generally had low and moderate perceptions of the service quality. Meanwhile, among the matters that need to be given more considerations are to ensure that the written consent from the consumers is given before undertaking any repair work, and to provide written statements describing the services and the estimated labour fees incurred. Thus, it is recommended that the enforcement bodies enforce the laws strictly and more attention be given to small garages. This study highlighted the seriousness of the problems and it also showed the importance of enacting a specific statute governing this industry in order to achieve a higher standard of services as well as to provide a comprehensive consumer protection.

**Keywords:** Consumers' perceptions, motor vehicle repair and service industry, service quality

### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been recognised that consumers consume not only of products, but also of services and 57.9 per cent of the value of Malaysia's economic activities is performed by the services sector based on the statistic issued by the Ministry of Finance in 2009. In the supply of services, consumers justly demand fair treatment and high standards in the whole range of services, which include tailoring, hairdressing, motor repairing, house construction, transportation, recreation, hire purchase, insurance, and banking.

However, consumer services tend to be neglected compared to the attention paid to consumer goods. These are becoming important to consumers and thus, have raised complicated legal issues. Unlike the supply of goods, in which the quality of products can be assessed before a particular sale, a supply of services involves human activities that cannot be subject to such control. Furthermore, consumers often lack technical expertise and are therefore in a weak bargaining position. In fact, they are not in a capacity to fully discuss their requirements with service providers and can thus be at the latter's

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mercy. These problems have been raised many times by consumers groups and academicians, such as FOMCA (2006), Sothi Rachagan (1999), Mohd Hamdan (2005), Howells (2005), Lowe & Woodroffe (2004), to name a few.

The area of car servicing and repairing is a good example of consumer services. According to an interview with the Federation of Malaysian Consumers' Associations (FOMCA), the car sector is a frequent cause of complaints among consumers as for many, motor vehicles are important possessions since their mobility depends upon them (Mohd Yusof Abdul Rahman, 2005). There are also many complaints reported in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims (TCC) in relation to the supply of services, with 3784 cases in 2007 and 3502 cases in 2008. There were 312 complaints relating to garages in 2007 and 223 cases in 2008, which became the third highest number of cases filed in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims. This is a wider phenomenon since the same problems exist in other countries as well. Among other, the New South Wales Fair Trading Tribunal, Australia has reported that the Division of Motor Vehicle had received 917 applications and finalised 1,012 cases in 2002. The European Consumer Law group also conducted a research that exclusively dealt with the industry and submitted that this particular industry is an area where consumers experience considerable problems. In the United Kingdom, the problems are regarded serious for the Office of Fair Trading to devote considerable resources to solve the matters (European Consumer Group, 1989).

TABLE 1  
The number of complaints related to the supplier of services

	Classification of services	2007	2008
1	Travel agency	444	327
2	Time sharing	396	241
3	Workshops	312	223
4	Job agency	263	202
5	Maid agency	253	166
6	House renovation	198	131

Table 1 (continued)

7	Electrical repairing	163	114
8	Beauty salon	162	93
9	IPTA/IPTS (Higher education institution)	136	85
10	Umrah agency	100	82
11	Transportation	101	46
12	Networking/ Telecommunication	73	41
13	Postal/courier services	46	37
14	Security services	40	36
15	Electrical services	42	26
16	Laundry	31	20
17	Medical card	26	17
18	Water supply	17	9
19	Tailor	14	9
20	Others	967	1597
TOTAL		3784	3502

Source: The Tribunal for Consumer Claims, Putra Jaya

Among the examples of the stated problems identified are the failures of service providers to carry out work according to consumers' instructions or to perform more than what the consumers have intended. The consumers also complained that instead of carrying out repairs, a new part is fitted or service providers replace a whole section of a car when only a small element of that particular section is damaged. Apart from that, service providers are also guilty of late performance, overcharging, failure to reach the expected standard and the use of defective or low quality spare parts (Tribunal for Consumer Claims, 2008). Thus, the objective of this paper was to determine the consumers' perceptions towards the services provided by garages so that better consumer protection could be suggested.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Theoretical Background and Literature Review*

Service quality has been defined as "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority" (Parasuraman, 1988). Service quality is also defined as "deeds,

processes, and performance" (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). From the legal perspective, service quality means the services are carried out with reasonable care and skill (Section 53 of Consumer Protection Act 1999). Rust and Oliver (1994) stated that customers' overall satisfaction with a particular service provider and perceptions of service quality is interrelated and highly correlated. A number of research studies have also supported that service quality is recognized as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006, Lee *et al.*, 2010). Thus, consumers' perception towards service quality is important to imply their satisfaction towards the service providers. In this respect, consumers' satisfaction is the outcome of the service quality.

Nevertheless, the difficulty is for consumers to evaluate service quality since its characteristics are intangible, perishable, and simultaneously produced and consumed (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). In order to shed some solutions to these problems, several service quality models have been proposed, tested, and used to measure customer perceptions of service quality. Among the first model proposed was Gronroos' Model (1992; 1994), in which the quality of service is dependent on expected service and perceived service. A more well-known model is Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's Model (SERVQUAL) which measures the gap between customers' expectations of the services and the perceptions of the actual service delivered. Meanwhile, another scale that measures service quality is called SERVPERF, based on the consumer's perception of the service performance alone without considering the expectations of consumers (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

The latest model is the one proposed by Brady & Cronin (2001) who have suggested a hierarchical and multidimensional model. According to this model, service quality is formed by three primary dimensions, namely, interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality. Each of these dimensions is formed by three other sub-

dimensions which contribute to a total of nine dimensions. Nevertheless, all these models are not without difficulties and shortcomings (Jose *et al.*, 2010; Kline, 2006). Jose *et al.* (2010) stressed the importance of building more creative service quality on the basis of a well-developed qualitative stage of research. According to Hofmans *et al.* (2009), researchers should develop service quality measures that are country- or culture-specific since cultural factors have greater influence on people's perceptions on service quality.

The aim of this paper was to discover the perceptions of Malaysian consumers towards the quality of the services provided by the motor vehicle garages so that suggestions could be made to the policy makers and the enforcement bodies. Nonetheless, it is important to note that it was not the objective of this paper to explain the consumers' perception for marketing reasons. Nevertheless, very few quantitative research papers approach service quality from a legal perspective (Joseph, 2010). In this paper, the dimensions of SEVQUAL Model was chosen apart from the criticisms by many researchers (Carman, 1990; Jose *et al.*, 2010) since it is the model which is most widely used by researchers either abroad or from Malaysia. To name a few, these include researchers in health institutions (Woodside *et al.*, 1989), courier industry (Norbani *et al.*, 1999), Islamic banking (Othman *et al.*, 2001), and hotel industry (Mohd Tahir *et al.*, 2010). Thus, only consumers' perceptions were measured rather than their expectations, minus the perceptions. This is in line with the proposals by many researchers, i.e. to exclude expectation scores. Patterson & Johnson (1993) expressed that service quality was not directly and indirectly influenced by expectations, whereas McDougall & Levesque (1994) considered including expectation scores as unnecessary. Hence, perception by itself seems to be a stronger predictor of the service quality concept.

Whilst much has been written on the law relating to consumer protection in Malaysia, there is hardly any discussion which exclusively

deals with defective and unsatisfactory services in the motor vehicle service and repair industry. Khor Kok Peng (1983), Wu Min Aun (2000) and Naemah (2004) emphasized the importance of protecting consumers not only of products but also of services. According to these researchers, Malaysia's economic activities are highly performed by the services sector and consumers, and therefore, they demand fair treatment and high standards in the services provided including motorcar repairs. Nevertheless, there is no specific legislation focusing on this industry, except for the Motor Vehicle Repair and Maintenance (Workshops Information Disclosure) Regulations 2002, and the Guidelines and Code of ethics in the motor vehicle repair and service industry issued by the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism.

Levine (1987) and Muller (1991) have identified that a particular industrial sector which needs attention due to its quality is the automobile industry. Archer *et al.* (1996) have further determined that the competition in quality is more than just the quality of the vehicle but it also includes after-sales provision of warranty and maintenance services. Meanwhile, a few empirical researches have been conducted in the motor vehicle repair and service industry. For example, the European Consumer Law group (1989) has conducted a research that exclusively deals with the industry. This particular research has identified several problems in the industry, and these include the failure to carry out work according to the customers' instructions and excessive charges. The suggestions made in this report are beneficial to the research at hand. In Australia (Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, 1999), research has been carried out by looking at the perceptions of women consumers on workshops' service since this specific group of consumers is considered as vulnerable and needs more protection. The questions in the questionnaire used in this research have been considered in formulating the questionnaire in the present study.

#### *Research Instrument*

The data used in this paper were part of a larger study on the services provided by garages in Klang Valley, the area where the highest number of registered vehicles are located based on the statistics issued by Jabatan Pengangkutan Jalan Malaysia. The self-administered questionnaire was developed for data collection, and it included the questions on demographic characteristics and perceptions of consumers. The questions attempted to measure consumers' perceptions towards the services provided by garages based on their experiences. This part of the questionnaire was designed based on the dimensions of SERVQUAL Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985), in which they provided insights concerning the criteria used by consumers in judging service quality. Five dimensions were identified based on this model, namely, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

Tangibility means the appearance of the physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication. In the motor vehicle repair and service industry context, tangibility means the physical appearance of the garage is appealing, equipments are up-to-date, mechanics' appearance is suitable with their job and the important information is displayed at easily accessible places. The second dimension is reliability, which means the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. In the motor vehicle repair and service industry, reliability can be defined as the work of the garages should be of such nature and quality that it can reasonably be expected to achieve. These include performing the work as what has been promised, i.e. to complete the work at the designated time and keeping all the records correctly. The third dimensions, i.e. responsiveness, can be defined as willingness of the garages to help customers and to take prompt response to customers' requests and complaints. The fourth dimension is assurance, i.e. the knowledge and courtesy of the mechanics and their ability to convey trust and confidence in relation to their skills, expertise, and the safety

of the vehicles. The final dimension is empathy, which means, caring and giving individual attention to each customer. Included in this dimension is the extent to which the garages care about their customers, such as providing convenient operating hours, using technical terms which are easy to understand and having consumer's best interest at heart.

Based on these dimensions, the researchers then developed a 22-item research instrument to measure the customers' perceptions of the five dimensions. For the purpose of this study, necessary modifications were made to the items of the original SERVQUAL scale in order to suit the motor vehicle repair and service industry. This is in line with what Dabholkar (1996) has suggested, i.e. the measurement of service quality must be defined from the customer's perspective and it must also be relevant for the industry in which it is measured. Thus, the modifications were based on the instrument used in the survey carried out in Australia on motor vehicle repairs and services among Australian women (Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, 1999). Some statements from the research had been adopted, such as whether the consumers were satisfied with their most recent service, the service centre understood what they wanted, the service centre clearly explained the necessary service or repairs, the service centre did not use technical terms which were difficult to understand, they could trust the service centre to do what was required to repair their cars and to do a good job, and they did not feel that they were being talked into unnecessary servicing or repairs.

This study, however, added two more dimensions to the SERVQUAL Model by Parasuramans *et al.* (1989), by looking at the cost factor and the responsibilities of the garages to provide clear information to suit the needs of the study. The addition of these dimensions to the SERVQUAL items was done to suit the objectives of the research and which have been done in many other research work. For example, a research on the Islamic banking by Othman & Owen in which they proposed a new dimension called "Compliance with Islamic law"

to be added to Parasuraman's five dimensions. Meanwhile, cost factor is also important to be looked into in the industry since it is an implied guarantee in relation to the supply of services as being provided by section 56 of the Consumer Protection Act 1999. This dimension included the prices of spare parts, the service charges, and the actual charges as opposed to the estimated price. The sixth dimension included the responsibilities of the garages to disclose important information to their customers since they have been strongly emphasized under the Malaysian Consumer Protection (Workshops Information Disclosure) Regulations 2002. This dimension can be defined as providing clear information before the services are performed, giving clear information of the specification of spare parts and charges, and explaining any risk that may happen.

As a result, a total of 29 attributes were structured and categorized under seven dimensions. These 29 attributes measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from number 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree.' The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement of these attributes. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The analysis yielded an alpha reliability of 0.908 and thus showed that it was reliable (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). It is important to note that the instrument had also been tested using a small group of 15 respondents prior to its execution to ensure that people could understand the topic and the level of language used was appropriate. Their responses and suggestions were used to further polish the instrument. The questionnaire was set both in English and Malay language to enhance the clarity of the questions.

#### *Data Collection*

The surveys were administered on a face-to-face basis among 400 respondents at the selected garages. Due to time and cost constraints, the researcher made a target of 400 respondents. In spite of this small number (compared to the total population), the sample size of 400 could be considered as sufficient. According to the

guidelines by Gay & Airasian (2003) and Uma (2000), in a situation where the population size is almost irrelevant (beyond a certain point), the sample size of 400 should be adequate. As indicated earlier on, the researcher applied a simple random sampling. The samples were divided into two groups, namely, those who sent their cars to the big garages in one group and those who sent their cars to the small garages in another group. The big garages included those who provided services by the manufacturers of the vehicles and also the garages which held franchises from the manufacturers and importers. The small garages mean those who carry out service and repair work for all types of vehicle irrespective of the brands. Four manufacturers were selected based on their highest number of sales from January 2007 to June 2007, as reported by the Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA, 2008). These manufacturers were Perodua, Proton, Honda and Naza, which contributed to 73.5% of the total market share. Prior to data collection, permissions were obtained from the manufacturers' headquarters to ensure co-operation. Three service centres were randomly selected for each manufacturer and the survey was conducted by approaching the customers at those service centres until the number of the respondents reached the desired number, i.e., 50 for each manufacturer and therefore 200 respondents were approached altogether as the representatives of the first group. As for the second group, the researcher used the list retrieved from the Malaysia Automobile Repairers' Association members handbook as the sampling frame. 20 service centres were randomly selected from the list and 10 customers were selected from each service centre, contributing to the total sample of 200. The respondents must have at least three experiences of sending their vehicles repaired at the selected service centres, otherwise, other respondents would have to be chosen to replace the first-time customers. This is because familiarity with a service serves a key component of consumer knowledge (Katariina *et al.*, 2002) and it determines an accurate perception towards its quality.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The study was carried out on the urban community living in the Klang Valley; thus, it might not be a representative of the entire population of Malaysia as consumers' knowledge and perceptions might also be different among the consumers living in the rural area. Another weakness was that the researcher only chose the types of garages as the controlled variable. The other demographic variables, such as age, level of education, status, ethnicity, and household incomes, were not controlled due to the cost and time constraints. However, the researcher still ensured that the numbers did not violate any assumption underlying each statistical tests employed in the analyses such as population normality and homogeneity of variance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### *Demographic Profile*

A total of 400 respondents participated in this study and they comprised of 67.8% males and 32.3% females. This was due to the reason that many males sending the cars themselves or on behalf of their wives and daughters. In terms of age, the largest proportion of the respondents was in the age group of 26-35 years, amounting to 45.4% of the total respondents. Those in the age group below 26 years constituted around 16%, followed by 36-45 years (22.9%), 46-55 years (12.4%) and those above 55 years (only 3.2%). More than half of the respondents were married (67.3%), while 32.3% were still single. Malays formed a large proportion of the respondents compared to the non-Malays, with only 22.3%.

The respondents' education level could be considered as high, with 47% of them having a university degree or above. This was probably reflective of the profile of the urban population. Meanwhile, the respondents with STPM and diploma made up 5.3% and 17.0%, respectively. In terms of their household incomes, more than half of the respondents (65.8%) had income level of RM1001-5000 and about 25.4% had income level of more than RM5000. About half

(53.5%) of the respondents worked in the private sectors. Another 30.3% were in the government sector, while 8.8% were self-employed and unemployed, making up the remaining 7.6%. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3  
Characteristics of the respondents

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	271	67.8
Female	129	32.3
<b>Age (year old)</b>		
Below 26	63	16
26 - 35	181	45.4
36 - 45	95	22.9
46 - 55	49	12.4
Above 55	12	3.2
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	269	67.3
Single	129	32.3
Others	2	0.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	311	77.8
Non-Malay	89	22.3
<b>The highest level of education</b>		
Primary school	4	1.0
LCE/SRP/PMR	14	3.5
MCE/SPM/SPMV	105	26.3
Diploma	68	17.0
HSC/STP/STPM	21	5.3
University Degree/ Professional	188	47.0
<b>Household income (monthly)</b>		
Below RM1000	36	9.0
RM1001 - 2000	70	17.5
RM2001 - 3000	88	22.0
RM3001 - 4000	60	15.0
RM4001 - 5000	45	11.3
RM5001 - 6000	29	7.3
RM6001 - 7000	25	6.3
Above RM7000	47	11.8

Table 3 (continued)

<b>Occupation</b>		
Government	121	30.3
Private	214	53.5
Self-employed	35	8.8
Unemployed	30	7.6
<b>Sending pattern</b>		
At the same place every time	283	70.8
Different places	117	29.3
<b>Having technical knowledge</b>		
Little	282	70.5
A lot	36	9.0
Not at all	82	20.5

To grasp their practice pattern of sending their cars for servicing or repairing, the respondents were asked to indicate the number of vehicles, how often they sent their vehicles to garages and whether or not they chose the same garage every time. A cross tabulation on the sending pattern was made, and it showed that the consumers of big garages were more loyal to the service providers (77.0%), compared to the small garages (64.5%). Meanwhile, a majority of the respondents (81.6%) indicated that they owned only one or two vehicles. Slightly over half of the respondents (51.5%) sent their vehicles for every 5000km and 70.8% chose the same garage each time. The majority of them (70.5%) indicated that they did not have deep technical knowledge in motor vehicle repair and service, while 20.5% others did not have such knowledge at all. This could imply that most consumers did not have the expertise and knowledge in the area and solely relied on their service providers to assist them.

*Consumers' Perception towards Motor Vehicle Repair and Service Industry*

Generally, the consumers' perception towards the services were quite fair since all the mean scores for each statement ranked between 3.01 - 3.97. It showed that the consumers were mostly and fairly agreed to the statements. The statement with the lowest mean score was that the

important information was displayed at the place which was easily assessable to consumers (3.01). Under the laws, the garage should display all the important information to consumers, such as their service charge, the price of the spare parts, etc. Based on this result, however, the garages did not have enough important information displayed to the consumers. This finding is supported by three other statements which also showed quite low mean scores, i.e. the garages provide clear information of the specification of the spare parts (3.57), the information of the risks to the vehicles (3.392), and the information of the charges (3.6). The statements in relation to the reasonableness of the costs, either it was the service charge or the price of the spare parts, also showed quite low mean scores, with 3.45 and 3.4598 respectively. These finding can be seen in Table 4.

The consumers' perception score was further counted by computing the answer according to its scale. The highest scale (strongly agree) was given five marks while the lowest scale (strongly disagree) was given one mark. Therefore, the minimum total score was 29 and the highest total score was 145. From the total score, the respondents were grouped into three categories, i.e., low scoring group (consumers with low perception), medium scoring group (consumers with medium perception), and high scoring group (consumers with high level of perception). These are presented in Table 5 below.

From the table, the biggest portion of the respondents was in the first group. This showed that many respondents had low perception towards the service quality of the garages. In this study, an independent-samples t-test was also conducted to look at whether there was a difference in the perceptions between the consumers of the big garages and the consumers of the small garages. Table 6 presents the results of the test. The result showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores between the two groups ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), indicating that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the consumers between the two types of garage. Comparing the mean values between the two groups, it was found that the

big garages had higher mean score (107.298) compared to the small ones (103.76). Therefore, it could be concluded that the consumers of the big garages had better perceptions towards the services provided as compared to those of the small garages.

The independent-samples t-test analysis was also carried out to each item to compare the differences of the consumers' perceptions between the two groups. Table 6 presents the mean score M, the significant value (p), and the t-value of each item. The result showed that there were eleven items indicating significant differences, namely, the equipment is up-to-date, the physical appearance of the garage is appealing, garages display important information at easily accessible places, keeps records correctly, do not feel that they were being talked into unnecessarily servicing/repairing, individual attention given to each consumer, convenient operating hours, have consumers' best interests at heart, do not use technical terms which are difficult to understand, actual charge is lower or similar to the estimated one, and provide clear information of the charges.

Nonetheless, it was not surprising to discover that the physical appearance and the equipment used in the big garages were more appealing compared to the small garages. The consumers also perceived that the big garages kept records more accurately, provided more individual attention to each customer, put more consumers' interest at heart, offered more convenient operating hours, and did not use technical terms which are difficult to understand. In addition, they also perceived that the actual charge were lower or similar to the estimated one and provided clearer information of the charges. On the other hand, the consumers of the small garage felt that they were being talked into unnecessary services or repairing compared to the consumers of the big garages. However, the results surprisingly showed that the consumers of the big garages perceived that the garages had failed to display important information at the places which are easily accessible to consumers.

TABLE 4  
Customers' perception towards the services provided by garages

Statements	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Means M	Standard deviation SD
1 Equipments are up-to-date.	1.0	12.0	34.5	46.0	6.5	3.45	0.824
2 Physical appearance of the garage is appealing.	0.5	6.3	18.3	59.8	15.3	3.84	0.772
3 Mechanics' appearances are suitable.	0	3.5	21.5	58.5	16.5	3.89	0.706
4 Display important information at easily accessible places.	10.5	27.8	18.0	29.8	14.0	3.01	1.24
5 When something is promised, it is done.	3.0	17.3	23.5	44.0	12.3	3.45	1.01
6 Could be trusted to do a good job.	0.8	7.5	21.8	57.8	12.3	3.74	0.783
7 Performs the service correctly the first time.	1.5	8.3	22.3	53.5	14.5	3.71	0.867
8 Completes the services at the designated time.	2.0	16.3	26.5	46.5	8.8	3.44	0.932
9 Keeps records correctly.	2.5	11.0	21.8	43.5	21.3	3.7	1.004
10 Finishes the jobs within a reasonable time.	0	10.3	19.8	61.8	8.3	3.68	0.760
11 Provision of prompt service.	0	11.8	27.0	48.0	12.3	3.6	0.868
12 Responsive to complaints.	0.8	9.5	22.8	53.0	14.0	3.7	0.853
13 Mechanics are never too busy to respond to requests.	1.5	9.5	22.8	56.0	10.3	3.65	0.835
14 I trust them with their skills and expertise.	0	5.5	21.0	61.5	12.0	3.8	0.705
15 Can be trusted to take care of the vehicle (safety).	1.3	6.0	20.5	60.5	11.8	3.769	0.762
16 Do not feel that they were being talked into unnecessarily servicing/repairing.	4.3	13.8	20.3	43.5	18.3	3.58	0.654
17 Have the knowledge in answering all consumers' problems.	0.3	4.8	16.3	65.0	13.8	3.884	0.686
18 Individual attention given to each consumer.	1.0	9.5	27.5	52.5	9.5	3.61	0.8133
19 Convenient operating hours.	1.3	7.5	17.8	58.5	15.0	3.79	0.826
20 Have consumer's best interests at heart.	1.3	5.3	28.3	53.3	12.0	3.7	0.782
21 Do not use technical terms which are difficult to understand.	1.0	4.3	17.3	63.3	14.3	3.86	0.727

Table 4 (continued)

22	Understand what the consumer wants.	0.5	2.8	12.3	69.3	15.3	3.97	0.623
23	Actual charge is lower or similar to the estimated one.	3.3	16.0	26.0	42.5	12.3	3.972	1.002
24	The charges are reasonable.	2.3	15.0	28.8	43.3	10.8	3.45	0.949
25	The prices of spare parts are reasonable.	2.8	19.0	30.5	38.8	9.0	3.4598	0.945
26	Provide clear information of the problems before the services are performed.	1.3	8.8	21.0	56.5	12.5	3.332	0.966
27	Provide clear information of the specification of the spare parts.	2.0	12.5	23.3	51.8	10.5	3.573	0.9
28	Provide clear information of any risk that might happen.	3.8	19.0	22.5	45.0	98.0	3.392	1.0074
29	Provide clear information of the charges.	4.0	16.0	20.0	35.8	24.3	3.6	1.1326

\*Note: The higher the mean score, the higher the level of consumers' perceptions are

TABLE 5  
Consumers' level of perception

Total score	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Low 29-101	141	35.3
Medium 102-110	130	32.5
High 111-145	129	32.3

TABLE 6  
Consumers' perception and the types of service centres

Types	Number	Means M	Standard deviation SD	Significance (p)	t-value
Big garages	200	107.298	12.23281	0.007*	2.214
Small garages	200	103.76	13.79616		

The mean difference is significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level

TABLE 7  
Mean score for each item according to the types of garages

Items	Big garages M (SD)	Small garage M (SD)	Significance (p)	t-value
Equipment is up-to-date.	3.6 (0.76)	3.3 (0.87)	0.01*	2.696
Physical appearance of the garage is appealing.	3.96 (0.7)	3.7 (0.8)	0.000*	3.605
Mechanics' appearances are suitable.	3.92 (0.64)	3.84 (0.76)	0.183	1.398
Displays important information at easily accessible places.	2.85 (1.23)	3.33 (1.21)	0.00*	-3.774
When something is promised, it is done.	3.5 (0.9)	3.38 (1.09)	0.163	1.398
Could be trusted to do a good job.	3.76 (0.75)	3.7 (0.85)	0.323	0.991
Performs the service correctly the first time.	3.7 (0.92)	3.73 (0.94)	0.928	-0.091
Completes the services at the designated time.	3.42 (0.93)	3.46 (0.94)	0.623	-0.492
Keeps records correctly.	3.94 (0.97)	3.47 (0.98)	0.00*	5.122
Finishes the jobs within a reasonable time.	3.73 (0.76)	3.64 (0.77)	0.159	1.411
Provision of prompt service.	3.58 (0.9)	3.6 (0.87)	0.991	-0.012
Responsive to complaints.	3.7 (0.87)	3.69 (0.84)	0.616	0.502
Mechanics are never too busy to respond to customers' requests.	3.68 (0.84)	3.6 (0.86)	0.223	1.220
I trust them with their skills and expertise.	3.83 (0.69)	3.78 (0.74)	0.334	0.968
Can be trusted to take care of the vehicle (safety).	3.82 (0.8)	3.69 (0.8)	0.038	2.082
Do not feel that they were being talked into unnecessarily servicing/repairing.	3.91 (1.02)	3.23 (1.01)	0.00*	6.758
Has the knowledge in answering all the consumers' problems.	3.92 (0.7)	3.83 (0.7)	0.082	1.742
Individual attention given to each consumer.	3.7 (0.2)	3.5 (0.8)	0.009*	2.621
Convenient operating hours.	3.92 (0.82)	3.06 (0.83)	0.001*	3.417
Has consumers' best interests at heart.	3.8 (0.75)	3.6 (0.83)	0.004*	2.874
Does not use technical terms which are difficult to understand.	3.93 (0.7)	3.78 (0.79)	0.016*	2.409
Understands what the consumer wants.	3.94 (0.67)	3.98 (0.64)	0.809	-0.242
Actual charge is lower or similar to the estimated one.	3.56 (0.91)	3.33 (1.04)	0.014*	2.462
The charges are reasonable.	3.49 (0.92)	3.42 (0.98)	0.399	0.844
The prices of spare parts are reasonable.	3.29 (0.97)	3.36 (0.98)	0.557	-0.588
Provides clear information of the problems before the services are performed.	3.67 (0.83)	3.74 (0.86)	0.524	-0.638
Provides clear information of the specification of spare parts.	3.52 (0.89)	3.61 (0.93)	0.475	-0.716
Provides clear information of any risk that might happen.	3.35 (0.99)	3.41 (1.05)	0.720	-0.359
Provides clear information of the charges.	3.84 (1.08)	3.37 (1.14)	0.00*	4.306

\* The mean difference is significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the consumers' perceptions have been looked into to determine the service quality so that further actions can be pursued for the betterment of the industry. In addition, the findings can be used to better understand the problems from the perspective of the consumers. It is recommended that the enforcement bodies enforce the laws strictly since the survey has indicated that the garages have failed to comply with the laws on certain aspects. Furthermore, the enforcement bodies need to give more attention to small garages since the statistical tests have indicated that there is a significant difference between the types of garages. Meanwhile, the matters that need to be given more considerations include ensuring that the written consents from the consumers be given before undertaking any repair work, and providing written statements describing the services and the estimated labour fee. Nevertheless, in relation to big garages, more focus should be given to the requirements in providing information on the specification of the spare parts used, either they are new or recondition, informing the consumers (in writing) the estimated time of completion, allowing the consumers to inspect the old spare parts after being replaced with the new ones, and providing warranty to the consumers.

In view of the negative perceptions towards the services, especially the ones related to the insufficient information, the enforcement bodies should ensure that the garages provide clearer information to their customers, particularly because most of the consumers lack the technical knowledge. Under the Malaysian Consumer Protection (Workshops Information Disclosure) Regulations 2002, the garages should display all important information to their consumers, such as their service charge, the price of the spare parts, etc. Based on this result, however, the garages did not do enough to display important information to their consumers. Notably, this regulation only imposes criminal sanctions to those workshops which fail to disclose important information to consumers before any repair is carried out. It does not provide a mechanism

for consumers to claim for redress. In addition, it fails to address many issues in the industry, such as the efficient licensing scheme, the imposition of equipment requirements, and the safety standards which need to be adhered to by the garages.

On the part of the suppliers, not only they need to develop marketing strategies to satisfy consumers' needs, they should also be responsible in protecting their consumers. Thus, the development of a code of practice is essential. Nevertheless, the Federation of Automobile Workshop Owners' Association of Malaysia (FAWOAM) does not have any written code of the ethics and solely relies on the Guidelines and Code of Ethics which are prescribed by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs. The prescribed Code, however, is very basic and it is also insufficient to provide a comprehensive guideline in this respect. Moreover, the association does not provide any mechanism in monitoring the services and spare part quality of their members. Neither have they controlled the service charges though they issue a recommended retail pricing. The membership is not compulsory and thus, the organization cannot monitor the services in the whole industry.

Therefore, the present practice of the FAWOAM, which relies solely on the Guidelines and Code of Ethics (as prescribed by the Ministry), is insufficient to provide effective self-regulation unless amendments are made to the prescribed Guidelines. Thus, it can be stated that the United Kingdom Vehicle Builders and Repairers Association Consumer Code of Practice (VBRA Code) is helpful in this respect. Below are some of the matters which are recommended to be inserted into the existing guidelines and code of ethics:

- i. The provision on diagnostic works which includes the expenses and the nature of the work.
- ii. The provision on the definitions of an estimate and quotation.
- iii. The provision on warranty in relation to workmanship.

- iv. The provision on the suppliers' responsibilities to take care of their customer's vehicles and possessions.
- v. The provision on the complaining procedure which include the conciliation and arbitration processes.
- vi. The provision on the enforcement of the Code.

On a final note, it can be concluded that the quantitative data presented in this study have highlighted the seriousness of the stated problems in the industry. The study has also indicated the importance to enact a specific legislation governing this industry. It is pertinent to emphasize that consumers are always in detrimental position since they do not have the same technical competence and knowledge about the quality of repairs as professional repairers and thus, are exposed to exploitation. In addition, the co-operations from the consumer organizations, traders as well as consumers are essential to assist the industry in achieving a higher standard of services, as well as to provide for comprehensive consumer protection.

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## The Effects of Shoulder Flexibility on the Golfers' Performance

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### ABSTRACT

The effects of sports are important because it will help the players to perform their best in games and events. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of shoulder flexibility on the golfers' performance. The participants of this study were 30 golfers; these were the people who got their handicap cut or license to play golf at the golf course. The researchers employed the experimental method to gather relevant data. The test performed included shoulder rotation test and driving range test. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inference statistics to investigate the relationship between shoulder flexibility and the golfers' performance. The findings of the study revealed that there are strong relationships between shoulder flexibility and golfers' performance. Apart from that, shoulder flexibility was found to be not affected by the age of the golfers and that the performance of the golfers would only be known by their handicap. It is hoped that this new knowledge will be beneficial to all golfers and instructors. It is also suggested that future studies include respondents' motivation and cooperation so as to attract their interest in the study. The subjects also need to be clarified of the objectives and the purpose of the study in relation to their performance.

**Keywords:** Golfers, flexibility, performance, shoulders, swing

### INTRODUCTION

In this study, the game of golf was taken as the subject of investigation, in which the effects of shoulder flexibility on the players' performance was used as a measurement. The accuracy of the performance was determined based on the ability or 'skill' of the golfers. In this study, the term 'skill' can be defined as an action or task that has a specific goal to achieve. It is also defined as an indicator of the quality of performance. This skill represents how good the players are and will also reflect the experience of practice that leads the players to become a master in certain parts or skills of the sports.

According to Hill (2005), Rockwood (2008), Johnsan (2008), and Schlacter (2008), one of the factors that determines a successful

golf's swing is the flexibility of the golfer. The word 'flexibility' refers to being able to move the joint freely in full range of motion (ROM) so that it can perform better (Sharpe *et al.*, 2004). Static and dynamic are two types of flexibility. Static flexibility is the range of motions which is achieved by a slow and steady stretch to the limits of the joints involved, while dynamic flexibility is when the range of motions obtained when one is rapidly moving a body part to its limits. There are many different and specific types of test for each joint. It has been proven by several studies that when a muscle is pre-stretched before doing an activity that requires it, the production of force can be greater than usual. This can enhance a person's performance in a game as well as lessen injuries.

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Crespo *et al.* (2003) and Sharpe *et al.* (2004) state that flexibility is a common thought when in training. It is a normal situation when a player has a full range of movements in some areas of the body, while the rest of the body parts may have average or limited flexibility. Bone structure, connective tissue, muscle bulk, and skin could be the causes of limited flexibility. Although flexibility is dependent on soft tissues, it is very much linked to the development of the physical fitness. A healthy person is associated with high degree of flexibility, which indicates that the more flexible a person is, the healthier he or she is. However, the increase in age has been reported to decrease flexibility because it ranges according to age, gender, and involvement in physical activities (Alter, 1996). According to Sharpe *et al.* (2004), flexibility begins to decline at as young as 10 years old. Mitchell *et al.* (2003) found that older golfers' ROM was reduced for both shoulders when compared to college golfers. Other than that, research has also found that flexibility imposes several effects on certain players' performance. In more specific, previous studies have found that flexibility is only to identify the flexibility in specific sports. Miller (2002) defines flexibility as the ability of an individual to move the body joints through a maximum ROM without undue strain.

The shoulder usually shows how good the player could swing by placing the golf ball during the games in a better situation. The flexibility of the shoulder will help the player to achieve a better swing and stroke in order to beat the opponent during the games (Wilson, Elliot & Wood, 1992). According to Wilson, Elliot & Wood (1992), the most research done indicates that the 'swing' and the combination of the shoulders' movements produce a better swing accuracy which the player wants to send the ball. "Flexibility permits greater energy storage." Brandon (2010) agrees that the increase of flexibility is related to augmented force production during movements. According to Bremer (2005), the measurement of flexibility is determined by the amount of movements around a joint in the body. Tight muscles

can restrict one's movement in the limb, and this automatically restricts the motion range movement. Thus, good flexibility and range of motion are important not just for active people but also for normal people to ensure a smooth run of their daily activities run.

In addition, flexibility is extremely important for golfers because poor flexibility will put them at risk of injury, especially if the golfers are under train or they go overboard during practice or competition. Injuries are also likely to happen to golfers who have a very flexible upper body, but totally ignoring the lower part of body. As indicated earlier, stretching is essential before the start of any game as it can help decrease injury during the game. Stretching should be balanced with proper strength, and no stretch should be carried out beyond the range of motions that the players use in the golf game. Hammond (2004) states that "future injuries can be lessened or prevented with modifications of the golf swing." According to Elliot (1999), sufficient amount of flexibility can increase the golfers' performance throughout the range of movements. Apart from that, flexibility also produces a better force because a stretched muscle stores elastic energy and releases it when it is shortened. Lephart *et al.* (2007) agrees to the finding that flexibility and physical adaptations can improve golfers' performance in playing. Flexibility and performance must have a good relationship so as to determine the achievement of athletes (Grant *et al.*, 2001).

Elliot (1999) states that "from a movement view point, golf is a ballistic in nature, and high levels of flexibility are needed in order for athletes to place themselves into positions where they can hit the ball more powerfully. High levels of flexibility to be able to accelerate the golf club thought the greater ROM when executing the shot. Flexibility is specific to each joint; a player might have an extensive range of movement in some areas of the body and below average flexibility in other areas." Many golf experts believe that little flexibility can cause laxity in the joint, dislocation problems, cooperation strength and reduction of swing efficiency when driving a golf ball. Thus,

flexibility exercises should be performed to help maintain fluid movement through a complete range of motions for a particular swing motion.

In addition, golfers' good swings are determined by the way the players hold the clubs. Holding the club correctly in a good position can help the players to swing and drive the golf ball with more force, as well as to control and place the ball accurately to reach the green flag. The flexibility of the shoulders will help the players to attain better swing and stroke in order to beat the opponents during the games. Meanwhile, gripping the club in a correct position is the first basic component that helps a golfer to play in a better way. Therefore, it is important for the players to know and possess this basic skill.

According to Schlacter (2008), exercising helps the muscles to develop greater flexibility, which is important for golfers who wish to increase their golfing scores. Exercising such as weight lifting can make golfers become stronger and attain more flexibility so that they can make good and full swings. Rockwood (2008) states that flexibility is very crucial for golfers as it will determine the range of motions needed for swing in the golf game. Meanwhile, Johnsan (2008) indicates that flexibility and strength are the most important factors when playing golf because they determine the golfers' development of balance, skill, stability, and the coordination. In other words, the game can improve dramatically when flexibility is taken care of. Stretching and exercising is the key to a better flexibility for golfers. Lower back and shoulder muscles must be the centre of concentration for golfers as these two areas are the most important body parts for them (Rockwood, 2008).

Good exercises need to be done regularly to avoid or lessen low back pain. Schlacter (2008) explains that "a good exercise to prevent low back pain is to lie on one's stomach on a hard surface, with the hands on both sides. Raise the upper body, arms and legs are high as you can and hold this position for ten seconds." In addition, Schlacter (2008) also states that this method can improve the flexibility of the back as well as lessen the low back pain problem.

According to Johnson (2009), a specific exercise can be used to improve strength or flexibility in any part of the body and it will also helps to strengthen the core of the body to hit longer and straight shots in golf.

The objective of this research was to determine the effects of shoulder flexibility on the golfers' performance. The study was carried out to identify the effects of shoulder flexibility on the accuracy of iron-7 distance driving test. Thus, the scores and flexibility were determined so that a better performance in sports can be achieved.

## METHODS

By using iron-7 while performing the distance driving test, the present study was done to investigate the accuracy of the subjects' ability to score high long distance strokes. In this study, iron-7 was used because it is as a middle iron which is easy to handle by all golfers regardless of whether they are beginners or amateur players who have low handicap. In order to achieve this, the subjects must have a good golf swing of the shoulder movements as well as good shoulder flexibility. The subjects also need to possess other physical fitness components such as muscular strength, endurance and power to perform a massive powerful swing for golf. During the process, the subjects were requested to carry out proper warm up session before practice as it is particularly important in lengthening the muscles around the joint so that the golfers will be able to do proper rotation of their shoulders. This also helps them to develop a better progressive joint mobility to increase swing accuracy.

It has been stated that flexibility is very important for golfers, especially for the shoulders. Before the subjects started the test, they were briefed on the shoulder rotation test and golf distance driving test which would be measured for them. Then, subjects were required to start the test by doing some warming up exercises and stretching (*Fig. 1*). The purpose of doing the warm-up session was to increase



*Fig. 1: Warming up*

the body temperature, decrease the chance of muscle and joint injuries and lessen the chance of abnormal cardiac rhythms.

In this study, the samples or subjects comprised of 30 golfers aged between 20 to 40 years old. The research was done at Bukit Raja Golf Range in Klang, Selangor. Prior to the tests, all the subjects were informed of the risks and stress associated with the test. In addition, the researchers also gave a brief explanation on the purpose of the study to the subjects. Each of them was also asked to fill in a score sheet form before they performed the tests.

The subjects were given a consent letter which was collected on the testing day. A briefing session was conducted before the tests were carried out. The briefing covered and emphasized on the attire, the procedures during and the sequences of the tests. In order for the subjects to have a better understanding of the tests, both tests were demonstrated to them (Figs. 2 and 3). After that, the subjects were given 10 minutes to practice before the real tests were carried out. After the practice session had been completed, all the subjects were given three trials for each test to make them familiar and comfortable with the tests. Prior to the flexibility tests, the data on the golfers' height, weight, and age were collected as the anthropometric data.



*Fig. 2: Using Goniometer for shoulder flexibility on down rotation*



*Fig. 3: Using Goniometer for shoulder flexibility on upper rotation*

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the subjects' demographics data which had been collected by the researcher. Through the data which are illustrated using the frequency analysis statistical method, the researchers were able to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the subjects' demographics data. The average age of the golfers ( $N = 30$ ) who participated in this study was  $35.83 + \text{year}$ , with the height (m) of  $1.71 + 0.04$  meter and the average weight (kg) of  $72.91 + 3.55$  kg.

Meanwhile, the results presented in Table 2 indicate the significant differences between the golfers' shoulder flexibility and their performance in golf. The significant level ( $p$ ) was found to be  $< 0.005$ . As depicted in the table on distribution,  $r$  is equal to  $0.000$ , indicating the strong relationship between shoulder flexibility and the golfers' performance.

Nonetheless, Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between shoulder flexibility and age factor, as the significant level is  $0.739$ , the value which is higher than  $0.005$ ; this further indicates that the Null Hypothesis ( $H_02$ ) is accepted. The results prove that shoulder flexibility does not have a role in the golfers' performance based on their age.

Table 4 shows that there are significant differences between the golfers' performance and handicap factor. When the significant level is  $0.000$  and it is more than  $0.005$ , it indicates that the Null Hypothesis ( $H_03$ ) is rejected. The results shows that the lower handicap golfers perform better in the tournament.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results presented above, it is clear that shoulder flexibility has a great effect on the golfers' performance when playing golf. Apparently, flexibility is an important asset in the body fitness component of the joint movements. Most athletes who perform better in sports have high level of flexibility. Flexibility does not only lead to better performances, but more importantly, it reduces the chances of getting injury that usually occurs whether one is conscious or unconscious during sports. It

has been proven by many researchers that high level of flexibility enhances most athletes' achievement to achieve more vigorous excellent records.

Moreover, flexibility is an important component to help golfers maintain good joint mobility and increase resistance to muscle injury. It also helps in preventing lower-back and spinal problems that always occur to the golfers. By improving and maintaining good postural alignment, the golfers promote proper movements of the body and have a better range of motions (ROM) while striking or swinging the golf ball. In other words, the joint will be able to move smoothly without being injured or dislocated. By doing regular stretching and maintaining, specific stretching around the joint will also help to increase the development and to maintain basic motor skills of the golfers' body movements.

In golf, flexibility of the shoulder movements is the most frequent part that has been used by the golfers. With good shoulder flexibility, the players will be able to use certain techniques of controlling the ball in better ways, such as the ability to perform continuous good swinging of the ball in a long drive to the fairway, as well as the accuracy in putting it into the hole, and the movement of scooping the golf ball out of the bunker area.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, golfers' performance in golf can be determined by their shoulder flexibility. In other words, the more flexible their shoulders are, the better their performance in golf will be. Nonetheless, shoulder flexibility is not affected by the age factor and that the golfers' performance is also determined by their handicap. It is hoped that golfers will be able to achieve the physical activity goals, as well as attain and maintain the component level of their physical fitness to achieve a better performance. The findings of the current study have provided coaches and golfers with better information regarding performance and training methods. With a proper procedure and good techniques

TABLE 1  
Respondents' background

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	30	100
	Female	0	0
Age	25-30	6	20
	31-35	11	36.7
	36-40	13	43.3
Weight	61-70 Kg	11	36.7
	71-80 Kg	19	63.3
Height	161-170 cm	14	46.7
	171-180 cm	16	53.3
Handicap	0-11	9	30
	12-18	11	36.7
	19-24	10	33.3

Average age of the golfers (N = 30) is 35.83 ± .

Average height (m) of 1.71 ± 0.04 meter.

Average weight (kg) of 72.91 ± 3.55 kg.

TABLE 2  
Correlation pearson between golfers' shoulder flexibiliy and golfers' performance in golf

		Golfers' performance	Shoulder flexibility
Shoulder flexibility	Correlation Pearson	.924	1
	Sig. 1-tailed	.000	.
	N	30	30
Golfer performance	Correlation pearson	1	.924
	Sig. 1-tailed	.	.000
	N	30	30

Correlation significant level,  $p < 0.005$

TABLE 3  
Mean difference for shoulder flexibility with age factor

Variation	Ss	Df	Ms	F	Sig
Between groups	.829	2	.415	.306	.739
In groups	36.638	27	1.357		
Total	37.467	29			

The significant level is  $p=0.005$ . For one-way ANOVA, the degree of freedom (df) is (N-1), so (30-1=29)

TABLE 4  
Mean difference for the golfers' performance and handicap factor

Variation	Ss	Df	Ms	F	Sig
Between groups	18.073	2	9.036	34.232	.000
In groups	7.127	27	.264		
Total	25.200	29			

From the table, the significant level is  $p=0.005$ . As for the one-way ANOVA, the degree of freedom (df) is (N-1), hence,  $30-1=29$

TABLE 5  
Key points of the text

Key points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This study examines the effectiveness of shoulder flexibility on the golfers' performance.</li> <li>• A randomized sampling was used to pick 30 golfers for this study.</li> <li>• It is found that, there are strong relationships between shoulder flexibility and golfer performance, while shoulder flexibility did not play a role with age factor on golfers' performance and that the lower handicap golfer perform better.</li> <li>• We concluded that in order to increase performance level, golfers must monitor the flexibility component, total body conditioning, muscle strength, power and endurance. Apart from that, strong back core, shoulder flexibility, strength and proper posture will contribute to the golfer's fitness to sustain in the long hour tournament.</li> <li>• Based on the data of the present study, the subject should apply more specific stretching in order to get better flexibility.</li> </ul>

related to shoulder flexibility, it can create better training programmes. Besides, it can also minimize the degree of structural and functional asymmetry. All the information on physical fitness components is useful for the purpose of performance enhancement, particularly for the players who wish to increase their performance throughout the tournaments and prevent injury.

In the process of identifying the effectiveness of shoulder flexibility on golfers' performance using iron-7 distance driving test, flexibility component, total body conditioning, muscle strength, power, and endurance have been found as the components which the golfers must monitor in order to increase their performance level. A good and proper strong back core, shoulder flexibility and strength, as well as proper postures, contribute to the golfers' fitness to sustain in the long hour tournament.

In addition, more specific stretching should be focused in the upper extremities and upper limbs since they are the important body parts which are used the most in sports. Therefore, obtaining a better flexibility is also recommended. Table 5 gives a clearer view of the important points derived from this research.

Future researchers should look into the effects of using different clubs or irons (such as iron-3 and iron-4) to investigate the effects of shoulder flexibility on golfers' performance because different clubs or irons may contribute to different results. Apart from that, future researchers should also compare between golfers' performance while playing at the driving range and playing at the golf course, as the results may be different.

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## Malay Students' Entrepreneurial Attitude and Entrepreneurial Efficacy in Vocational and Technical Secondary Schools of Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy are considered as important factors affecting the intention to step into the process of entrepreneurship. However, there is limited information on students' entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, particularly for technical school students who have acquired the technical knowledge to become entrepreneurs. This study has surveyed entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy among secondary school students in Malaysia. A total of 2,574 students undertaking technical subjects were randomly selected as the participants. A set of questionnaire was employed to measure students' attitudes toward and efficacy in entrepreneurship. Findings of the study indicate that the student scored high on entrepreneurial attitude components including self-esteem cognition, achievement cognition, and achievement affect. However, the students' mean score for entrepreneurial self-efficacy was between moderate to high level. This paper discusses the importance of intervention programmes and proper teaching and learning strategies to improve technical students' entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurial efficacy, technical school students, Malaysia

### INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial efficacy have been considered as important factors influencing intention to become an entrepreneur as well as determining entrepreneurs' success (De Noble, Jung & Ehlrich, 1999; Robinson *et al.*, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; 1991). However, little attention has been directed to measuring entrepreneurial attitude (Mohd Noor Mohd Sharrif & Mohammad Basir, 2009) and entrepreneurial efficacy among Malaysian students. Therefore, entrepreneurship educators have been facing the major challenge of how to capture and develop students' innate entrepreneurial capabilities (Anderson & Jack, 2008). This may be because of the on-going

debates among scholars on the necessity and importance of entrepreneurship education for school students based on the assumption that school students may not have the maturity and experience required for understanding the complexities and challenges associated with the business world. In fact, some researchers highly emphasize on offering entrepreneurship education at the earliest possible age for various reasons (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). First, the initial aspirations towards entrepreneurship take shape at secondary level (Heinonen, 2007; Man & Yu, 2007; Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Second, adolescent is the ideal age for acquiring knowledge and improving positive attitude toward entrepreneurship (Fillion,

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1994). Moreover, students at high school level have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy and are more likely to have the intention to become entrepreneurs (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Finally, younger students have innate entrepreneurial attitude that should be explored, preserved, and developed since “students at this age tend to display an entrepreneurial attitude in everything they do – they are usually very creative, straightforward and unconcerned with the potential risks inherent in their actions” (Fuchs, Werner & Wallau, 2008, p. 367).

However, entrepreneurship scholars highlighted that the objectives of entrepreneurship education at school level should be different from those of the university entrepreneurship education. University entrepreneurship programmes may target at exposing students with detailed knowledge and complex theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education at school level should aim at providing students with the opportunities to gain entrepreneurship experience through experiential learning, practical training, and project work in co-operation with enterprises, as suggested by Fuchs, Werner & Wallau (2008). This study aimed to narrow the gap in the literature and empirical research on school students’ entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. More specifically, it attempted to determine the overall Malay secondary technical school students’ entrepreneurial attitude orientation (EAO) and their perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) based on the assumption that they have acquired the technical knowledge needed to launch a business, and if provided with purposeful education, they may more likely to create their own venture (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). Furthermore, this study also investigated the correlation between different dimensions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, based on Malay secondary school students’ perception. This paper first discusses entrepreneurship education in Malaysia. Then, entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and the ways to enhance them through entrepreneurship education are also proposed.

The next section provides details of the research methodology and findings. The closing part of the paper proposes discussion and implications of the findings and the agendas for further studies.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

With the strong ambition of becoming a leading developed country through a knowledge-based and innovative economy by the year 2020, Malaysia has focused on entrepreneurship development as an effective means to enact the vision. Moreover, entrepreneurship has been considered as one of the effective solutions to economic and social crises that Malaysia is currently struggling with, particularly the increasing number of unemployed graduates and the challenges of industrialization (Firdaus *et al.*, 2009; Mastura Jaafar & Abdul Rashid Abdul Aziz, 2008; Ramayah & Zainon Harun, 2005). Accordingly, various strategies have been developed by policy makers in both macro- and micro levels to provide the infrastructures and create the supportive and encouraging environment for entrepreneurial activities all over the nation. Enhancing the quality of human capital and equipping *Bumiputeras* (son of the soil) with entrepreneurial capabilities as well as developing entrepreneurs who are independent, resilient and competitive are some of the main strategies that the Malaysian government has initiated during the last four decades (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006-2010).

In addition, the budget allocated to implement entrepreneurship development programmes increased by 70 percent in the Ninth Malaysia Plan compared to the Eighth Malaysia Plan, which is an evidence of the importance and necessity of entrepreneurship education and training programmes in the process of transition from a developing to a developed country, though, more efforts are required to encourage the people to become entrepreneurs (Md Nor Othman, Ezlika Ghazali & Yeoh Sung Sung, 2006).

Concentrating on the role of education in creating positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship and inculcating entrepreneurial capabilities among the students, through developing effective and purposeful entrepreneurship programs and courses, were other important strategies developed by the Malaysian government (Fauziah, Rohaizat & Siti Haslinah, 2004). As a result, in less than two decades, entrepreneurship education has increasingly grown all over the country and implementing entrepreneurship development programmes have recently become compulsory for all of the institutions of higher education in Malaysia (Mastura Jaafar & Abdul Rashid Abdul Aziz, 2008). Furthermore, many researchers have emphasized the importance and necessity of developing the positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship among *Bumiputeras* (Malays) and improving their entrepreneurial self-efficacy in order to enhance the probability of their success in their entrepreneurial activities. Hashim (2002) highlighted that Malay entrepreneurs' lack of strategic framework, entrepreneurial knowledge, and ineffective entrepreneurial strategies as the reasons for *Bumiputeras*' business failures. Amran Awang *et al.* (2009) called for more in-depth studies on entrepreneurship development to enhance *Bumiputeras*' small and medium enterprise practices. Despite all the efforts by the Malaysian government to develop entrepreneurial qualities among the Malay people, there is not enough knowledge on Malays' attitude toward entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, particularly for secondary school students undertaking technical subjects who have acquired the technical knowledge to establish their own businesses (Mohd Noor Mohd Sharif & Mohammad Basir Saud, 2009).

#### **ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY**

A review of the robust literature on entrepreneurship indicates that entrepreneurship researchers have focused on three main areas

to explain entrepreneurial behaviour. First, entrepreneurship researchers sought the characteristics which differentiate entrepreneurs from other people based on the assumption that it is the entrepreneurs who entrepreneurial process; the more their traits are recognized, the better the entrepreneurial qualities can be developed in others through entrepreneurship education and training (Kundu & Rani, 2008). Second, entrepreneurship researchers focused on demographic factors describing entrepreneurial behaviours and activities, such as age, gender, and prior experience (Shapero & Sokol, 1982; Louw *et al.*, 2003; Liñán, Rodríguez & Rueda-Cantucho, 2005). However, many researchers have questioned the efficacy of personality characteristics and demographic factors to explain entrepreneurial behaviour because of contradictory research findings and relatively static nature of the characteristics (Krueger, Michael & Carsrud, 2000; Mueller & Thomas, 2000; Ajzen, 1991; Robinson *et al.*, 1991). Third, entrepreneurship researchers looked at entrepreneurial behaviour through attitudinal perspective, based on the assumption that entrepreneurial attitude is a more consistent measure of entrepreneurial behaviour that can be improved by interventions from environment (Robinson *et al.*, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; 1991).

In this sense, researchers approached entrepreneurial attitude from two main ways. The first approach considers entrepreneurial attitude as ones' feelings, thoughts, and conations toward entrepreneurship. Therefore, entrepreneurial behaviour is a function of attitude toward the value, benefit, and favourability of entrepreneurship, and most importantly, a uni-dimensional construct (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). The second approach considers entrepreneurial attitude as a multi-dimensional construct (Robinson *et al.*, 1991) which encompasses four personality factors, as listed below:

- Need for achievement which refers to the perceived results and outcomes of new venture creation which drives one to take the burden and responsibilities of launching a new business;

- Personal control over entrepreneurial behaviour which reflects the perceptions of control and influence on venture creation outcomes;
- Innovation which is thinking of new ideas, products, or methods; and
- Self-esteem which indicates self-confidence and perceived entrepreneurial competencies.

Moreover, entrepreneurial attitude encompasses three aspects, namely, affection (feeling and emotion), cognition (thoughts and belief), and conation (action and behaviour). It is worth to mention that the combination of all the three dimensions of entrepreneurial attitude in terms of affection, cognition, and behaviour motivate one to become an entrepreneur.

As the most cited personal traits of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is defined as the strength of beliefs in one's capabilities to successfully perform the specific roles and tasks of an entrepreneur (De Pillis & Reardon, 2007; Segal *et al.*, 2005; Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). It is grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), which defines self-efficacy as the personal believe in one's abilities and skills to successfully perform a specific task. According to the theory, human action is a function of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Therefore, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a more robust construct for explaining entrepreneurial behaviour since it includes both personal and environmental factors affecting entrepreneurial behavior (McGee *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is one of the main reasons why some people with equal abilities intend to undertake the responsibilities, risks, and challenges to step into the process of a new venture creation while others totally avoid them (Zhao, Seibert & Hills, 2005; Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003; Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). It enables entrepreneurs to recognize business opportunities, manage the resources, and cope with the challenges of the whole entrepreneurship processes (Kumar, 2007; Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007; Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003). It also can differentiate

students from entrepreneurship education background from those who do not undertake it (De Noble, Jung & Ehrlich, 1999). However few studies have focused on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of students at secondary and high school level (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007).

Entrepreneurship researchers also approached the analysis of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in two main ways. First, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is an overall perception of abilities in starting up a business (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Second, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a general perception which originates from various dimensions (McGee *et al.*, 2009; Barbosa, Gerhardt & Kickul, 2007; Zhao, Seibert & Hills, 2005; Krueger, Michael & Carsrud, 2000; De Noble, Jung & Ehrlich, 1999; Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). De Noble, Jung & Ehrlich (1999) identified six dimensions for entrepreneurial self-efficacy which include coping with challenges, developing new product and market opportunities, building an innovative environment, initiating relationship, defining purposes, and developing critical human resources. More specific to the entrepreneurs' tasks, Barbosa, Gerhardt & Kickul (2007) classified four dimensions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as:

- Opportunity identification which is a strong perception of abilities in new business opportunity identification and development;
- Relationship self-efficacy which refers to perceived capability in building relationship with important people;
- Managerial self-efficacy which is the perceptions of abilities in managerial tasks; and
- Tolerance self-efficacy which reflects perceived capability to work under challenging conditions.

Based on the literature, it can be said that entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy are multi-dimensional factors affecting entrepreneurial intention in many different ways. The following section discusses about

the significance of improving entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy of students through entrepreneurship education.

### **ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE AND SELF-EFFICACY**

Entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy can be enhanced through environmental factors, particularly through entrepreneurship education and training programmes (Harris & Gibson, 2008; Baum & Locke, 2004; Luthje & Franke, 2003). Accordingly, many entrepreneurship education programmes have been developed to improve students' entrepreneurial attitude orientation (Florin, Karri & Rossiter, 2007; Mitra & Matlay, 2004; Van Wyk & Boshoff, 2004; Robinson *et al.*, 1991) and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Anderson & Jack (2008) emphasize that entrepreneurship education programmes can influence students' entrepreneurial attitudes by enhancing their awareness toward entrepreneurship as an alternative career choice and encouraging favourable attitudes toward entrepreneurship.

Majority of the research findings on students' entrepreneurial attitude have shown students' positive attitude toward entrepreneurship (Mohd Noor Mohd Sharrif & Mohammad Basir, 2009; Harris & Gibson, 2008; Kundu & Rani, 2008; 2007). Meanwhile, more recent research findings indicate that education programmes do not enhance students' attitude towards entrepreneurship, instead they reduce students' ambition to become entrepreneurs (Oosterbeek *et al.*, 2010; Fuchs, Werner & Wallau, 2008). This necessitates more investigation of students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship and more purposeful entrepreneurship training and programmes to enhance their entrepreneurial attitude.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship education has been highlighted as one of the key environmental factors enhancing students' self-efficacy to launch a new business (Baum & Locke, 2004; Luthje & Franke, 2003). In Rae & Carswell's (2000) points of view,

entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be developed over time by being engaged in experiential and social learning activities. Meanwhile, Erikson (2003) developed a model for entrepreneurial competencies in which entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be enhanced by involving in three major learning opportunities which include mastery experience, vicarious experience, and social experience. The author also pointed out that mastery experience is the most effective way to develop strong entrepreneurial competencies in students. The mechanism through which entrepreneurship education improves students' intention to become entrepreneurs has also been attempted by Zhao, Seibert & Hills (2005) who found empirical support for their proposed model in which self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention of university students.

Accordingly, various learning opportunities and programmes (such as developing business plan, running a real/simulated business, and conducting a case study) have been developed to improve the different aspects of students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy. It is argued that involvement in these activities shapes students' perceptions of their entrepreneurial capabilities and enhances their motivation to engage in entrepreneurial behaviours (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007; Fayolle, Gailly & Lassas-Clerc, 2006; Zhao, Seibert & Hills, 2005; Erikson, 2003; Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). Despite the numerous research on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the knowledge on different dimensions of the construct is still limited (McGee *et al.*, 2009), particularly for school students. Based on the literature on students' entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurship education, this research aimed to determine Malay secondary school students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy in order to measure entrepreneurial potential among Malay secondary school students. Furthermore, it focuses on measuring different dimensions of students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed a survey method to determine the entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial self-efficacy of Malay secondary school students. A sample of 2,672 students from vocational and technical secondary schools in three states of Malaysia (Selangor, Pahang, and Perak) was randomly selected to participate in the study. These Malay technical secondary students were selected as the participants of this study because of Malaysian government's concentration on developing entrepreneurial attitudes and capabilities among *Bumiputras* (Firdaus *et al.*, 2009). It is worth to mention that all the technical secondary school students in the states were selected as respondents of the study who also formed the population of the study, out of which 1,000 students were sampled from each state. Moreover, students were also selected from different technical and vocational programmes as illustrated in Appendix 1. The data were gathered in October-November 2008 and the permissions to conduct the survey were obtained from Educational Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education and the Director of Education of the three selected states. The school principals were contacted to fix the date of data collection and make the necessary preparations with Form Four students in the vocational and technical classes. The data were collected by the researchers.

### Measures

In order to determine the students' entrepreneurial attitude, this study adopted a modified questionnaire of EAO developed by Robinson *et al.* (1991). In addition, a modified questionnaire of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), developed by De Noble, Jung & Ehrlich (1999), was used to determine the students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The questionnaire administered in this study consisted of three parts. The first part included items about the respondents' background, such as age, gender,

and ethnic group. The second part which was on the EAO assessed the main components of attitude which included achievement, self-esteem, personal control, and innovation, using 75 items. The final part of the questionnaire measured the students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) in six dimensions of coping with unexpected challenges, developing new product and opportunities, building an innovative environment, initiating investor relationship, defining core purpose, and developing critical human resources through 23 items.

A group of 116 vocational and technical school students from two secondary schools in the state of Selangor were selected to participate in a pilot study which was conducted in July 2008. The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers and the students were allowed to ask questions if they did not understand any of the items. Modification of the questionnaire was made to ensure accurate responses were obtained from the participants. A reliability test for entrepreneurial attitude items was conducted and the Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .94 was obtained, indicating that this instrument was highly reliable. The reliability of self-efficacy construct also has a Cronbach  $\alpha$  value of .89. The measurement of items in the survey questionnaire was based on 5 point Likert scale, with 1 demonstrating "strongly disagree" to 5 demonstrating "strongly agree". The mean score above 3.80 was considered high, 3.40-3.79 was considered moderate and below 3.39 was regarded as low perceptions. The data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. As this study also attempted to investigate the correlation between all the dimensions of the ESE construct, the Davis (1971) convention was adopted in interpreting the magnitudes of the correlation coefficients, as follows: .70 and higher = very strong association, .50-.69 = substantial association, .30-.49 = moderate association, .10-.29 = low association, and 0.01-0.09 = regrettable association.

### MEASURING ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY

Measuring entrepreneurial attitude has been one of the core focuses of entrepreneurship researchers for two main reasons. The first reason is to determine entrepreneurial intention and action through measuring entrepreneurial attitude (De Noble, Jung & Ehlrich, 1999; Ajzen, 2002; 1991) and second, to provide appropriate entrepreneurship education and training programmes to improve any aspects of entrepreneurial attitude, in which individuals scored low on it (Van Wyk & Boshoff, 2004). Robinson *et al.* (1991) developed a scale to measure entrepreneurial attitude orientation (EAO). The scale measures EAO in four subscales, namely, the need for achievement, personal control over behaviour, innovation, and self-esteem and three dimensions (affection, cognition, and conation) through 75 items. To validate the scale, the authors utilized two groups of undergraduate students, 54 entrepreneurs, and 57 non-entrepreneurs. The findings indicated that EAO scale was able to differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs, with an accuracy of 77 percent of cases.

Utilizing the EAO scale as the research instrument, Mohd Noor Mohd Sharrif & Mohammad Basir (2009) concluded that students of a Malaysian higher learning institution who minored in entrepreneurship were significantly different from non-minored entrepreneurship students in term of their self-esteem and personal control dimensions, but not in achievement, motivation and innovation. Harris & Gibson (2008) also studied entrepreneurial attitude orientation (EAO) among 216 students from small business programmes. The findings showed that the majority of the students scored high in three of the four EAO subscales, including innovation, need for achievement, and personal control but they were low in self-esteem. Kundu & Rani (2008) focused on the relationship between gender, family background, and EAO of 435 Indian Air force trainees. The results of the study revealed that female students scored higher in achievement

motivation. However, no significant difference was found between gender and overall EAO of students. There was also no difference between the male and female participants in term of family background.

In their study, Jumaat *et al.* (2004) focused on the association between demographic variables, such as age, gender, race, experience, and parents' education and Malay students' EAO and found no significant relationship between the demographic factors and participants' EAO. The authors further argued that despite the prevailing view that the Malay students had higher positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, they could not find a significant difference between the Malay and non-Malay students in terms of their EAO. In sum, the relatively high entrepreneurial attitude among the young generation necessitates providing entrepreneurship education and training to exploit the high potential on entrepreneurship (Fuchs, Werner & Wallau, 2008). However, the findings of these studies are contradictory in the EAO subscales, which necessitate more investigation in this area.

Several measures have been developed for assessing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In a recent review of the research measuring entrepreneurial self-efficacy, McGee *et al.* (2009) classified them on entrepreneurial self-efficacy into two groups. First, those research which measure a general perception of individuals' entrepreneurial ability through a limited number of items, and second, the research that consider entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a multi-dimensional construct and measure it through its subcomponents. Focusing on the specific tasks nascent entrepreneurs need to perform in the process of new venture creation, they confirmed the multi-dimensionality of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and identified five dimensions for the construct, which include searching, planning, marshalling, implementing people, and implementing-financial. Interestingly, they found empirical support to include the attitude toward entrepreneurship as an influential factor in stepping into new business ventures. The following sections are allocated to the research methodology and findings.

### FINDINGS

The findings presented in Table 1 illustrate that in general, secondary school students are classified as having the attitudes consistent with entrepreneurs on self-esteem cognition, innovation affect, achievement affect as well as achievement cognition because the mean scores are above 4. Meanwhile, the students' mean scores are low for self-esteem behaviour (mean= 3.25). This indicates that students possess high self-esteem cognition in business, low in self-esteem behaviour, and moderate in self-esteem affect. The students' scored high on innovation affect and innovation cognition but moderate on innovation behaviour. The students also possessed high achievement in business attitude scores. As for personal control of business outcome attitude, students perceived high only on personal control behaviour which indicated that they possessed the attitude scores that are entrepreneurial. This high entrepreneurial attitude among secondary school students necessitates providing them with entrepreneurship education and training as suggested by Fuchs, Werner & Wallau (2008) because their scores on personal control affect and cognition are moderate.

Table 1 also illustrates that the Malay students generally have high positive attitude toward entrepreneurship. This may indicate that Malaysian government policies are effective to enhance *Bumiputras'* attitude toward entrepreneurship. Therefore, Malay students have high positive EAO on achievement, personal control, and innovation. In addition, the government has initiated many polices to develop independent, resilient, and competitive *Bumiputra* entrepreneurs as indicated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan. The results of this study indicate that the efforts have helped the Malays to realize the importance and necessity of entrepreneurship for socio-economic development of the nation. Since students' attitude towards entrepreneurship can be affected by learning and experience (Harris & Gibson, 2008), it can be concluded that undergoing commerce and entrepreneurship courses (which are included in the students' curriculum) may help the Malay students to improve their attitude towards entrepreneurship. Moreover, the education programmes may help the students to change their attitudes towards new venture creation, which was previously not common among the Malay community. Therefore, Malay

TABLE 1  
The students' perceptions of the EAO

EAO Aspects	Mean	S.D	Mean interpretation
Achievement affect	4.03	.48	High
Achievement behaviour	3.81	.49	High
Achievement cognition	4.11	.47	High
Personal control affect	3.50	.63	Moderate
Personal control behaviour	3.83	.45	High
Personal control cognition	3.79	.57	Moderate
Self-esteem affect	3.50	.62	Moderate
Self-esteem behaviour	3.25	.58	Low
Self-esteem cognition	4.13	.54	High
Innovation affect	4.04	.48	High
Innovation behaviour	3.58	.43	Moderate
Innovation cognition	3.82	.48	High

students have benefited from the entrepreneurial education which was significantly emphasized in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010).

Table 2 illustrates that the overall mean score for entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the Malay technical students is moderate. The students have moderately high perceptions toward developing new product and market opportunities, as well as initiating investor relationship, but they scored moderately low on coping with unexpected challenges. The other dimensions were perceived as moderate by the students.

The correlation analysis was conducted among the dimensions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and a high significant correlation was found between “developing new product and market opportunities” with “coping with unexpected challenges” ( $r=.53$ ); “developing critical human resources” ( $r=.67$ ); “defining

core purposes” ( $r=.69$ ); “initiating investor relationship” ( $r=.61$ ); and “building an innovative environment” ( $r=.65$ ) as illustrated in Table 3.

### DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the different aspects of the Malay secondary school students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy. The findings showed that the Malay secondary school students had a high attitude toward entrepreneurship in terms of self-esteem cognition, innovation affect, achievement affect as well as achievement cognition. Indeed, high entrepreneurial attitude indicates that the Malay vocational secondary school students favoured of becoming entrepreneurs or being self-employed, suggested by Kolvereid (1996). However, they scored low in self-esteem behaviour, suggesting that the Malay secondary vocational school students

TABLE 2  
Students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy based on ethnics groups

ESE dimensions	Mean	S.D	Mean interpretation
Coping with unexpected challenges	3.57	.62	moderate
Developing new product and market opportunities	3.77	.53	moderate
Building an innovative environment	3.72	.58	moderate
Initiating investor relationship	3.78	.66	moderate
Defining core purpose	3.73	.63	moderate
Developing critical human resource	3.68	.63	moderate

TABLE 3  
The correlation between developing new products and market opportunities with all other dimensions of ESE

Dimensions of ESE	Developing new product and market opportunities	Degree of association
Coping with unexpected challenges	.53*	Substantial
Building an innovative environment	.65*	Substantial
Initiating investor relationship	.61*	Substantial
Defining core purpose	.69*	Substantial
Developing critical human resource	.65*	Substantial

\*sig at <.01

might lack self confidence and entrepreneurial competencies. Based on the findings, the Malay secondary school students generally need to improve in the area of perceived self-esteem in business so as to improve their self-confidence and related competencies in business affairs. This is possible through more purposive entrepreneurship education as suggested by Chen, Greene & Crick (1998).

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that Malay secondary school students have moderate perceptions on all the dimensions related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy. This finding concurs with those of De Noble, Jung & Ehlrich (1999), i.e. non-entrepreneurial students scored 3.87 on the overall entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) constructs. The students in this study comprised of those who did not take specific entrepreneurship courses as parts of their curriculum. With moderate entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the students may not have enough interest, motivation, and capability to be engaged in entrepreneurial activities and face the challenges in the process of venture creation, because only those who have strong beliefs in their entrepreneurial capabilities get engaged in entrepreneurial activities and are able to face the challenges associated with a new business creation (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998).

In more specific, the findings showed that students scored low in terms of 'developing new product or market opportunities'. This shows that they lack skills related to opportunity recognition, which is particularly important in creating an entrepreneurial venture. In addition, the students scored moderately low in 'coping with unexpected challenges'. This indicates that the students perceive themselves as less capable of dealing with the ambiguity and uncertainty involved in real life of entrepreneurs, such as lack of information, equivocal messages, and rejection (De Noble, Juny & Pearson, 2000). As for the students' perception on all dimensions of ESE, it was found that the Malay students scored significantly high. This may be attributed to Malaysia's poverty eradication strategy which has currently focused on human resource development and quality of life

improvement. The strategy may improve the entrepreneurial awareness among Malays. In addition, it may also be related to the impacts of a systematic training in a subject called 'Living Skills' which include entrepreneurship elements which are taught during lower secondary years in Malaysian school system. The activities in the subject might have enhanced the Malay students' awareness about the importance and necessity of entrepreneurship for their community. Moreover, this training skill subject might have improved students' knowledge about entrepreneurship because content knowledge is important for individuals to gain confidence to consider entrepreneurship as a career alternative.

Thus, the Malays who had previously lacked the motivation to become entrepreneurs have started to develop their enthusiasm and confidence to step into entrepreneurship once they have realized the values of entrepreneurship for their nation's development. However, the mean score of the students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy is only moderately high. It is urgently necessary to provide the technical secondary school students with entrepreneurship education programmes and activities to improve their entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and therefore increase the number and quality of the students who have the ability and motivation to start-up their own venture (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998). Furthermore, the findings of this study concur with that of Zaidatol Akmaliah *et al.* (2005; 2002) who found that entrepreneurial attitude was generally positive among the secondary school students and they scored high on entrepreneurial potential.

The analysis of correlation between the dimensions of ESE declared that the dimension of 'coping with unexpected challenges' had a significant positive correlation with 'developing new product and market opportunities'. Thus, the stronger the students' perceptions of their capabilities to cope with unexpected challenges, the better their skills to recognize opportunity for venture creation are. Opportunity recognition is an important skill for an individual considering to pursue an entrepreneurial career (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). Moreover, building an

innovative environment had a significant positive correlation with 'developing new product and market opportunities', which indicates that the better the perception of students regarding innovative environment, the higher their skills on developing new opportunities. This dimension is important because innovative environment facilitates risk-taking and innovation (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998), and thus, the more students believe that they can set such an environment, the better will their ability to develop new opportunities will be. Furthermore, innovation and risk taking differentiate entrepreneur from managers.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS AND AGENDAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

This study contributes to the body of knowledge and empirical studies in many ways. First, it provides an overview of entrepreneurial potential among the Malay secondary school students. Moreover, it also suggests a better understanding of entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy among the Malay younger generation. Furthermore, it portrays a clearer picture of the different aspects of students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy by measuring the different aspects of the constructs, based on which, more purposive and effective entrepreneurship education and training programmes can be developed. More specifically, the high entrepreneurial attitude among the Malay technical secondary school students necessitates a long-term planning and policy making to facilitate new venture creation for younger generation through providing the funds and infrastructures, as well as removing the impediments in the path to become entrepreneurs. This high entrepreneurial attitude also demands more systematic, comprehensive, and continuous approach to entrepreneurship education and training (Chen, Greene & Crick, 1998) to equip the Malay students with entrepreneurial skills and capabilities. The findings may also be insightful for policy makers at the Malaysian Ministry of Education to support and promote the establishment of formal

courses in entrepreneurship in all the vocational and technical education programmes so as to provide a better entrepreneurial environment and facilitate new business creation in Malaysia. According to Valera & Jimenz (2001), higher investment in entrepreneurial courses and training will result in higher new venture creation rates among students.

Additionally, based on the findings of this study, the technical secondary school students in Malaysian have moderate entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Thus, more learning opportunities should be provided to motivate and enhance these students' ability to start own businesses. More importantly, entrepreneurship education programmes should provide various learning opportunities for the students to develop different dimensions of their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. This is possible by involving students in various entrepreneurial activities and learning opportunities, such as developing a business plan, running a simulated or real business, and many others. All these may increase students' confidence and improve their self-esteem to become entrepreneurs in the future.

However, more research on students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy still need to be undertaken, specifically those determining the association between constructs and entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, further studies should be done to determine if entrepreneurship education and training programmes enhance Malay students' entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy. In addition, different aspects of entrepreneurial attitude and self-efficacy can also be agendas for further investigations.

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**APPENDIX 1**

Vocational skills training subjects offered by Malaysian Ministry of Education: Ministry of Education

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Vocational skills training program subjects

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Domestic Construction (Home Repairs)

Furniture Making

Sign Design

Domestic Plumbing

Domestic Wiring

Arc and Gas Welding

Automotive Servicing

Vehicle Panel Beating and Painting

Servicing of Domestic Electrical Equipment

Servicing Air Conditioning and Cooling Equipment

Fashion Design and Sewing

Food Catering and Presentation

Facial Care and Hairstyling

Food Processing

Basic Interior Decoration

Early Childcare and Education

Geriatrics

Landscaping and Nursery

Aquaculture and Animals (Pets)

Food Growing

Multimedia Production

Computer Graphics

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## Manhood in Crisis: Powerlessness, Homophobia and Violence in *Fight Club*

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### ABSTRACT

The following study will explicate how in Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, the narrator is in a certain crisis of manhood as a result of his contradictory experiences of power under the impositions of hegemonic masculinity, also aggravated due to a sense of disparity between his lived experiences and his inherited language of masculinity. As a response, the narrator sets out a nostalgic backlash to grapple with the outlets of the crisis—buried feelings, homophobia and aggression. While the backlashes materialize as transgressive assertions of manhood, the narrator becomes eventually disillusioned with his struggles and opts, instead, to come to terms with the crisis of manhood by forming an affectionate bond with Marla Singer, the only female character in the novel.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, power, repression, homophobia, aggression

### INTRODUCTION

During the course of the following study, it was realized that men are doomed to be isolated and powerless in their struggles to match up to the ideals set by hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, the formation of heterosexual masculinity in the post-war and absent-father families have led to certain predicaments in gender for men. In this manuscript, the coupling of such complications is referred to as the crisis of manhood: a twofold concept which lies at the core of the scope for this argument.

The following is a study of masculinity in terms of such crisis on the protagonist of Palahniuk's (1996) *Fight Club* with the proposed thesis that the struggles with masculinity of the anonymous narrator of the novel are in fact nostalgic attempts to overcome the crisis of

manhood. Palahniuk (1996), in *Fight Club*, depicts such nostalgic efforts through hyper-masculine reactions like violence so that the narrator can empower his emasculated sense of manhood. Finally, it is argued that such struggles do not resolve the crisis of manhood, and the partial tone of relief that eventually conclude *Fight Club* is the aftermath of embracing a more nurturing masculinity, along with forming an affectionate bond with Marla Singer, the only female character in the narrative.

In regard to the body of past studies, the following study has a status of its own. A notable portion of research on *Fight Club* is placed within a framework of Marxism. While Jordan (2002) has read the novel as an ironic take to blame contemporary culture for "a crisis in masculine identity" (p. 368); Clark (2002) blamed consumerism as the emasculator in

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*Fight Club* in which “heterosexist isolationism” is depicted as a cause to the “current economic and environmental woes.” Ta (2006) has read the masochism in *Fight Club* as a consequence of capitalist social order to seek “recourse in victimhood” (p. 265-7), and Walters (2004) has interpreted the narrator’s transgression as an attempt “to replace himself ideologically outside of consumer culture” (p. iii).

Although such findings are reasserted in the following scholarship, the study stands out from a Marxist framework because our character study aims at an exclusive male experience. In other words, although the following study holds that the patriarchal and capitalist social order is responsible for the initiation of the crisis of manhood, its major concerns are how the narrator grapples with the crisis on an individual level of experience, and in what ways the predicaments challenge the private sphere of the narrator’s life. Therefore, the following research is more an analysis of an individual experience of masculinity than a mere study of how consumerism has emasculated the narrator (Clark, 2002).

The significance of the following study, from a perspective of men and masculinities, is that the character study of *Fight Club* is enhanced by a wider lens of gender which encompasses the power-oriented predicaments in masculinity along with gender predicaments of “silence”, which are rooted in the discrepancy between the lived experiences of men, and their “inherited language of masculinity” (Rutherford, 1992). The focus of the study, through such lens, is exclusively on the narrator. Hence, the study of his schizophrenic split personality, Tyler Durden, as a distinct character is demoted for the sake of a narrower investigation on the narrator himself.

Additionally, the following scholarship, in its reading of *Fight Club*, takes one step further to investigate whether the crisis of manhood finds a resolution in the novel. In regard to the previous takes on *Fight Club*, the question to ask is whether Hall’s (2004) cycle of “remasculation,” Delfino’s (2007)

quest for “testicular masculinity”, Alexander Boon’s (2005) struggle between effeminate and testosterone-based masculinity, lead to a resolution for the predicaments in masculinity. The following study argues that the partial tone of relief that concludes *Fight Club* is in fact a sign of coming to terms with the crisis rather than an ultimate catharsis.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

On one level, the crisis of manhood is caused as a result of men’s paradoxical experiences of power under the shadow of hegemonic masculinity. Kaufman (1994) has believed much of what is associated with masculinity, on an individual level, “hinges on a man’s capacity to exercise power and control” and while patriarchal masculinity is in fact a “privilege” for men, the way they “have set up that world causes immense pain, isolation, and alienation” (p. 142). Men, hence, fall into a gender realm of “contradictory experiences of power” in which while measuring up to the ideals of manhood would be impossible, the individual powerlessness would “maintain a powerful and often unconscious presence in [men’s]...lives” (p. 144).

As Kimmel (2005) has stated, the impossible ideals of manhood, originally rooted in the emergence of Capitalism, precipitated the tragedy of “American Everyman” which is a tale of “striving to live up to the impossible ideals” of “Market Place Manhood,” eventually leading to “chronic terrors of emasculation, emotional emptiness, and... gendered rage” (p. 29). In other words, Kimmel (2005) believes that the American man’s struggle to measure up to hegemonic masculinity is “a relentless test” and “a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated” (p. 29-39).

The second aspect of the crisis of manhood that is sought to be read in *Fight Club* has to do, preliminarily, with the post-feminism fascination of men with “a reflexive concern with identity,” and, primarily, with the “new ideologies of parenting” (Rutherford, 1992, p. 4-13). During post-feminist era of victimization

(of heterosexuality) men were left with a new concern with their masculinities for which there was no language of feeling. All this then led to “this disparity between men’s lived experiences and their inherited language of masculinity” (p. 9).

Apart from the tie of gender relations, it was also the new “ideologies of parenting” characterized by the absence of the father, which in the atmosphere of post-war booming “service oriented consumer capitalism” precipitated “men into a state of uncertainty in their relationship to the private sphere” (Rutherford, 1992, p 13-5).

The post-war legacy of “failed paternity” turned out to be a costly experience for men since it “produced a growing institutionalization of women and children into a dyadic bond” which turned out to be “a far from positive” experience (Rutherford, 1992, p. 20-1). In other words, the “generation of men raised by women” depicted by Palahniuk in *Fight Club*, suffered not only from the legacy of failed paternity but also from exclusive mothering. According to Rutherford (1992), “the image of the doting, smothering mother increased masculine anxiety already beset by the ambivalence of its paternal role” and during the 1950s, this image was “merged with the icon of the dutiful mother to produce a motif of social conformity” (p. 23).

In studying Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, the struggles of the protagonist in dealing with his crisis—attempts which include attending support groups and the institution of male bonding activities like *Fight Club* and Project Mayhem—are read, in this study, in the light of what Rutherford (1992) has called “nostalgia,” which is a reaction to a “disturbance within male subjectivity” (p. 127). In other words, the narrator’s backlashes are nostalgic endeavours to appease the buried pain of men in order to resolve the crisis of manhood.

As the crisis of manhood was unfolded previously, it was mentioned that the first aspect of the crisis is the acquisition of patriarchal power and its “contradictory experiences” for men under the shadow of hegemonic masculinity. A significant question is what is the price that men ought to pay for this way

of acquiring masculine power? In fact, “... the acquisition of hegemonic masculinities is a process through which men come to suppress a range of emotions, needs, possibilities, such as nurturing, receptivity, empathy, and compassion, which are experienced as inconsistent with the power of manhood.” Consequently, men’s exercise of power has shaped today’s “sense of manhood” which is in fact “a form of alienation” and an ignorance of “emotions, feelings, needs, and potential for human connection and nurturance” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 148-51).

In a prognosis, highly significant to this study’s reading of *Fight Club*, Kaufman (1994) states that “men might direct the buried pain against themselves in the forms of self-hate, self-deprecation, physical illness, insecurity, or addictions,” in order to “experience a momentary sense of power and control” (p. 150). Meanwhile, *Fight Club* and *Project Mayhem*, by asserting manhood, act as mediums of experiencing “a momentary sense of power and control,” the masochistic emergence of Tyler Durden, the narrator’s split personality disorder, is a form of self-inflicting pain which designate the narrator’s “self-hate” and his insecurity with the egoist life that he leads under the impositions of hegemonic masculinity.

The expressions of power for men in a social milieu of patriarchal competition and of restricting emotions lead to a form of “fear” for men that is “experienced as homophobia” (Kaufman, 1992). Kimmel (2005) looks deeper into “homophobia” and reads it as a symptom of masculinity in a framework of “homosocial” enactment. In other words, men’s accomplishments are always measured in masculine scales. Even heterosexuality, as Tyler Durden’s behaviour in *Fight Club* suggests, becomes a form of homosocial enactment since it becomes an act of conquering women in order to prove one’s manhood. It is such behaviour, Kimmel concludes, which results in homophobic drives among men.

The narrative of *Fight Club* develops toward a backlash against the crisis of manhood and the efforts of the narrator are directed toward a nostalgic response to the crisis. In other words,

the narrator takes part in support groups and then establishes fight club and Project Mayhem to confront his buried emotions. These efforts could also be read in a framework of responding to homophobia as a form of male intimacy through violence. According to Kaufman (1992), “[m]any institutions of male bonding... are a means to provide safety for isolated men who need to find ways to affirm themselves, find common ground with other men, and collectively exercise their power”: a sense of power which is already lost on an individual basis (p. 151).

The rife nature of violence among men is the result of their “surplus repression” of sexual and emotional desires, and since masculinity “involves the construction of ‘surplus aggressiveness,’ it is inevitably prone to the phenomenon of “surplus repression” as well (Kaufman, 1992, p. 28). Referring to masculinity as “one half of the narrow, surplus repressive shape of the adult human psyche,” Kaufman (1992) has stated that one way to combat the doubts aroused by the fragile gender of masculinity is actually “violence.”

According to Kaufman (1992), while homophobic drives among men are originated in “repression,” the surplus amount of it may lead to “aggression.” Therefore fight club, being an institution of male-bonding in which aggression is the ruling force, is a significant representation of “surplus repression” among its members. Significant to this argument’s reading of *Fight Club*, Kaufman (1992) has stated that the expression of affection and male-bonding always comes with some act of violence to maintain “the active/passive equilibrium” through “an active assault” in the relationship (Kaufman, 1992, p. 41).

Whether such hyper-masculine expressions of power lead to a catharsis of the crisis of manhood is the eventual concern of this study. As Kaufman’s (1994) study of men’s powerlessness, along with Rutherford’s (1992) analysis of men’s silences demonstrated, men’s struggle might materialize as efforts to “experience a momentary sense of power” (Kaufman, 1992, p. 150) as well as to fulfill “fantasies of...omnipotence” (Rutherford, 1992,

p.130). However, toward the conclusion, this thesis argues that the power-driven nostalgia of “phallic masculinity” (Flanning-Saint-Aubin, 1994) gives way to disillusionment and it is then that the narrator opts to come to terms with his crisis by embracing a less “phallic” conception of masculinity. According to Kimmel (2005),

*...men’s lives are structured around relationships of power and men’s differential access to power; as well as the differential access to that power of men as a group. Our imperfect analysis of our own situation [as in Fight Club] leads us to believe that we men need more power, rather than leading us to support...efforts to rearrange power relationships along more equitable lines (p. 40).*

This study acknowledges Kimmel’s remark by reading the gradual disillusionment of the protagonists of *Fight Club* with his struggles as the realization of the fact that emphasizing the hyper-masculine power of heterosexist aggression cannot resolve the crisis of manhood.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The anonymous narrator in *Fight Club* is a perfect example of a man who faces the individual loss of power. In fact, while the narrator enjoys the patriarchal privileges of manhood as a white collar employee in a major American corporate company, the tone of individual dissatisfaction permeates the novel. The narrator is isolated, lives alone, cannot healthily connect with others, and does not even bear a name throughout the novel. Such are images which designate the fact that the narrator does not have a lot to offer on an individual basis.

Furthermore, the narrative of *Fight Club* develops toward the backlash of the narrator against his pain, isolation, and alienation. Such issues could be studied through a wide lens of striving to measure up to the ideals of manhood. In other words, the first aspect of the crisis of manhood which I intend to trace in *Fight Club*

is basically generated in the narrator's struggle with the hegemonic masculinity. Upon reading the very first chapter of the novel the reader encounters a fragmented man, about to explode a massive credit card building on a national museum. Hence, the novel begins with a transgressive tone of anarchy, ironically against what apparently empowers and privileges men collectively.

Interestingly, it is at the end of the novel's first chapter that the narrator reveals that the cause of all this "anarchy" and "explosion" is Marla Singer, the only female character of the main plot (p. 14). This remark should primarily be read as a statement that the narrator is at odds with his heterosexual orientation, bestowed upon him by hegemonic masculinity.

Moreover "emotional emptiness" and the sense of emasculation, reflected by Kimmel (2005) as the consequences of measuring up to the ideals of manhood, are apparent in the narrator of *Fight Club*: from the absence of his father that arguably leads to his "silence" (p. 49), to his inability to communicate with Marla (p. 14), from identifying his career as a paternal figure (p. 186), to his being a senseless slave to his consumerist "nesting instinct" (p. 43). Such issues gain more significance under the impositions of hegemonic masculinity because of the ensuing alienation. This is intensely depicted in the sixth chapter of the novel in which the narrator has just established his first fight club and is pondering on the frailty of the ethics of hegemonic norm of manhood during a meeting with the representatives of Microsoft.

One revolting idea behind the sixth chapter of the novel is materialized in the narrator's final attack against one particular representative of Microsoft, Walter. The narrator who is now looking from the perspective of fight club, a position of so-called empowered masculinity, describes Walter as an archetype of the emasculated and powerless men in crisis, without a paternal figure, and indoctrinated by the masculine hegemony:

[Walter is] a young guy with perfect and clear skin and the kind of job you bother to write the alumni magazine about getting. You know he

was too young to fight in any wars [to prove his manhood], and if his parents weren't divorced, his father was never home (p. 55).

Arguably, Walter seems to be one of the "complete" and "unblushing" men whose failure at measuring up to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity could result in an "unworthy, incomplete, and inferior" rendered self image (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Kimmel, 2005, p. 29), that is a situation of powerlessness which is already observed in the resisting narrator of *Fight Club*.

According to Kimmel (2005), "...men's lives are structured around relationships of power and men's differential access to power, as well as the differential access to that power of men as a group" (p. 40). As it will be discussed throughout this argument, the question in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* is whether gaining more power is the answer to the narrator's complications. Before that, however, it is important to read the novel in terms of the second aspect of the crisis of manhood.

The narrator in *Fight Club* could be studied as a phenomenal representation of "silence". While his persistent insomnia is said to be "the symptom of something larger" suggesting his inability in identifying the true cause of his troubles (p. 19), the narrator's incapability at interacting directly with the outside world is so much that his linguistic representations primarily consist of long and hallucinatory monologues along with a great number of indirect representations of feeling that utterly put a distance between his identity and his feelings. Such are the narrator's statements like "I'm Joe's Boiling Point," expressing anger in chapter six; and "I'm Joe's Broken Heart," expressing dejection in chapter fourteen. In addition, the narrator's excessive use of action (as in fight club) rather than language in establishing a relationship with his peers are images which represent his sense of discrepancy between his "lived experiences, and his inherited language of masculinity" (Rutherford, 1992, p. 9).

Moreover, there are various suggestions in *Fight Club* that the insecure men in the novel, including the narrator himself, experienced

ambivalence fatherhood during their childhoods (p. 49, 50, 141). While the narrator is one among the “generation of men raised by women” (p. 50), he is also a victim of consumer capitalism which was not only the aftermath of post-war masculinity as Rutherford suggested, but also of hegemonic Cold-War masculinity according to which men “were expected to define themselves through their identities as consumers” (Corber, 2004, p. 162). Here, a relevant reference to *Fight Club* would be the narrator’s remark that, “...I wasn’t the only slave to my nesting instinct. The people I know who used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit with their IKEA furniture catalogue” (p. 43).

After tracing the crisis of manhood in the narrator of *Fight Club*, it is important to take one step forward and ask in what ways the crisis materializes and finds its way into representation in the life of the protagonist. In the novel, the crisis appears through a series of deviant tests of manliness which take the bulk of the narrative. Such are nostalgic efforts that are built up from the narrator’s need to appease the pain of repressed emotions and his homophobia. The attempts develop toward the assertion of masculinity in an aggressive sense of masculinity in order for the narrator to experience “a momentary sense of power and control” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 150).

A lack of ability in connecting with others is a major concern for the narrator. A chronological reading of the plot reveals that the narrator joins a number of support groups as the first effort to confront his buried pain of repressed emotions. The support groups are clubs for the sick and the dying in which the narrator fakes to be an invalid so that he can feed on the nurturing energy that goes on. Take, for example, the following passage which expresses the narrator’s response to the support groups; “I loved the support groups so much, if people thought you were dying, they gave you their full attention. If this might be the last time they saw you, they really saw you (p. 107).

After the support group experiences, the narrator moves on to create an all-male institution called fight club which is an institution

where men beat each other with bare knuckles to prove that maybe “self improvement [under the rules of society] isn’t the answer” and that “self destruction” might be (p. 49). The major purpose behind fight club is that its members, who are struggling in a world of cold emotional barrenness, shall feel livelier. As the narrator proclaims, “[y]ou aren’t alive anywhere like you’re alive at fight club” (p. 50).

Homophobia is another driving force in *Fight Club*. The tone of tension in an all male atmosphere is a dramatic effect that lies beneath the narrative. It is no coincidence that the only female character of the main plot is Marla and that the narrator’s work place is an all male social environment. Furthermore, the psychic emergence of Tyler Durden is more proof to the narrator’s homophobia, and his tendency to identify with Tyler shows his need to evade it.

Take, for example, the second chapter of *Fight Club* which begins at the height of male-bonding during a cancer support group where the narrator is able to cry in another man’s arms without any shame. Attempting to confront his homophobia, the narrator finds further solace in fight club and Project Mayhem. However, before taking the analysis any further, it is necessary to deal with a question: why is it that with the establishment of fight club, the assertion of masculinity as an effort to confront the crisis of manhood leads to more acts of aggression? The answer lies in Kaufman’s (1992) analysis of “surplus repression” leading to “surplus aggression” which was previously illustrated.

It is the accumulation of “surplus repression” which justifies the emergence of violence in the novel. Therefore, I argue that fight club appears as a response to the “surplus repression” of the narrator and as a result of his life-long conformity to hegemonic masculinity and also as a consequence of his homophobia. The violence of the club is then an effort to offload the inevitable “surplus aggression” of the narrator in the company of a group of men who are ironically his patriarchal competitors in the work place. In other words, as the name of the institution suggests, it is both a place to fight and offload the “surplus aggression” and also a club

so that men can gather around and denounce homophobia. *Fight Club* is hence the expression of “affection and the need for the other boys” accompanied and balanced by “an active assault” (Kaufman, 1992, p. 41).

Let me reread the following passage which represents an aggressive all-male, power-driven, and homophobic struggle; “You saw the kid who works in the copy centre... [who] was a god for ten minutes when you saw him kick the air out of an account representative twice his size then land on the man and pound him limp until the kid had to stop” (p. 49).

It is the image of the narrator’s naive colleague in the copy center turning into a whole other person in fight club that sheds light on our argument that the nostalgic and transgressive assertion of phallic masculinity, here offloaded as a response to “surplus repression,” is the backlash of men against the crisis of manhood. Unloading the burden of “repression” through the act of violence is so gratifying that “[a]fter a night in fight club, everything in the real world gets the volume turned down. Nothing can piss you off. Your word is law” (p. 49).

As *Fight Club* approaches its final pages, the reader realizes the narrator’s disillusionment with Tyler and with the masculinity that is cherished in fight club. Our study of *Fight Club* ends with an analysis of the final treatment of the crisis of manhood in the concluding chapters of the novel. The question to bear in mind is whether the narrator’s efforts to appease the crisis of manhood eventually find resolution. If not, what is it that makes up for the partial tone of relief that concludes *Fight Club*?

When *Fight Club* begins, the narrator starts searching for a new definition of manhood via “masculinism” or a resistance against all which designates the feminine (Kimmel, 1995, p. 117). So the narrator, who initially comes to idolize the ideal masculinity of Tyler, is threatened by Marla. Such nostalgic efforts of the narrator, as it was previously argued, initially seem to resolve the predicaments of power, emotional troubles, and homophobia. However, with the gradual development of the narrator’s disillusionment toward such nostalgic confrontations, Marla’s role in the novel becomes more significant, and

her relationship with the narrator becomes more intimate and less intimidating.

Early in the novel, Marla is referred to as the cause of all “the anarchy” and “the explosion” (p. 14), and it is Tyler who happens to represent the ideal with whom the narrator can cure himself of the crisis of manhood. However the narrator’s disillusionment begins half way through the novel.

Chapter thirteen of *Fight Club* marks the first intimate encounter of the narrator with Marla in which he attempts to assert his caring, empathic, and receptive attitudes to Marla in comforting. The same tendency continues in the next chapter in which the tone of affection is bred when Marla is cherished. Meanwhile, disillusionment with Tyler grows so much that the narrator feels separated and rejected from him (p. 134). In other words, while Tyler is busy destroying the civilization, the narrator is alone and ignorant of what is going on (p. 130). Instead, the hours with Marla become more intimate and less intimidating when they talk about “everything except Tyler Durden” (p. 132).

Eventually, it is in the twenty sixth chapter that the narrator becomes utterly disillusioned with the way he has confronted the crisis of manhood thus far when he tries to rule out the authority of Tyler in Project Mayhem but in return finds himself being castrated by his fight club peers. This symbolic and epiphanic event underlines a significant conclusion to the narrator’s efforts to evade the crisis of manhood because at the end of the twenty sixth chapter, the narrator finds himself being literally castrated by the very same men with whom he once tried to regain and empower his lost manhood. This utter disillusionment precedes the most important encounter of the narrator with Marla in the twenty seventh chapter during which he finally tells her that he likes her (p. 197).

*Fight Club* ends with the narrator’s symbolic attempted suicide in the twenty ninth chapter in which the narrator, Tyler, and Marla stand at the top floor of a skyscraper, just about to explode it as a finale to Project Mayhem. As the narrator’s ironical proclamation of his amazing “will to live” suggests (p. 202), the attempted suicide depicted at the end of *Fight Club* is

actually a symbol signifying the burning of the old self. This symbolic finale to the novel is complemented with a most romantic turning point:

“It’s not love or anything,’ Marla shouts, ‘but I think I like you, too.’

One minute.

Marla likes Tyler.

‘No, I like you,’ Marla shouts. ‘I know the difference [between you and Tyler].’

And nothing.

Nothing explodes.” (p. 205)

While Marla’s claim that she knows “the difference” between Tyler and the narrator suggests that they have finally managed to establish a healthy bond without the schizophrenic presence of Tyler, the bond with the narrator can symbolically prevent the explosion. Let us not forget that while she eventually comes to prevent the explosion (p. 205), Marla was initially considered to be the cause of all “the anarchy” and “the explosion” (p. 14).

In *Fight Club*, the crisis of manhood is not eventually resolved. In fact, as the thirtieth chapter reveals, the narrator is institutionalized in a mental hospital, is confused, and still receives fan letters that plead for the return of Tyler Durden (p. 208). However, what remains is a receptive bond with Marla Singer in the final page of the novel as “...if there were a telephone in Heaven, I would call Marla from Heaven and the moment she says, ‘Hello’ I wouldn’t hang up. I’d say, ‘Hi. What’s happening? Tell me every little thing” (p. 207).

Furthermore, the narrator’s self-diagnoses of his crisis throughout the narrative are all concluded oppositely. For instance, Marla who was the source of all the anarchy and explosion (p. 14), metaphorically prevented the explosion in the end (p. 205); the narrator’s initial verdict that “self improvement isn’t the answer” but self-destruction is (p. 49), had the opposite representation in the end; and finally the narrator’s remark that “...I’m wondering if another woman is really the answer I need” (p.

51), eventually turned out to be wrong.

As it is suggested in the final pages of *Fight Club*, the crisis of manhood persists, but there is an obvious tendency on the part of the narrator to come to terms with it, rather than confronting it transgressively to experience “a momentary sense of power and control” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 150).

Pertinent to the efforts of the narrator throughout *Fight Club*, Kaufman (2005) suggested that acts of asserting power could not eventually help those men for whom power is a vital element of their gender identities. Coming to terms with the crisis of manhood, as it was just explicated, highlighted the narrator’s positive efforts to establish a bond of affection which is read in this study, as a positive act of rearranging the relationships of power.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, it was realized that the way to appease the crisis of manhood is actually to redefine the order in a new framework where masculinity is tested in regard to new touchstones such as empathy, receptivity, and love, instead of with patriarchal politics of power. Furthermore, Palahniuk’s (1996) bleak satire in *Fight Club* on the assertion of phallic masculinity as a way to evade the crisis of manhood revealed how such struggles do not eventually lead to the catharsis of predicaments. A suitable conclusion to this argument comes from Palahniuk (2001) himself who, in his novel *Choke*, wittily stated that “[u]pper body strength, abstract thought, phalluses – any advantage men appear to have are pretty token. You can’t even hammer a nail with a phallus” (p. 118-9). The worldview of Palahniuk in general, and his attitude toward the crisis of manhood in particular taught me to realize that the very act of trying to build an unknown order out of chaos is worth the effort and much more rewarding than actually creating more chaos as a response to predicaments. Although there might not be an eventual catharsis of the crisis of manhood, most times the very effort to healthily come to terms with it is close enough.

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## **Students' Attributions for Success and Failure in the Learning of English as a Second Language: A Comparison of Undergraduates from Six Public Universities in Malaysia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study was undertaken on six Malaysian public universities. It attempts to examine the relationship between performance attributions and different university settings in the English as a Second Language (ESL) context. Investigation into types of causal attributions people make to explain successes and failures in a variety of settings, and how these attributions affect expectations for future success or failure are in line with the primary goals of motivation models and hence of relevance to language teaching and learning. A quantitative approach, through the use of a questionnaire, was used to measure students' responses to authentic tasks undertaken in the ESL context. The findings clearly show that "getting a good grade" and "teacher influence" are the most endorsed attributes for success across all six universities in Malaysia, so we can say that external factors play a vital role in moulding attributions and this is particularly apparent in the case of one particular university. In conclusion, it can be said that high respect for teachers and self-critical tendency are communal characteristics in the Malaysian context. Findings of previous studies by Gobel and associates reveal similar trends in two other Asian countries.

**Keywords:** Attributions for success and failure, learning English as a second/language, motivation theory, Weiner's attribution theory

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research in analyzing the causes for success or failure originated from mainstream psychology. This field of knowledge is important to language teaching and learning too, as it is closely linked to motivation models that explore factors that lead to effective language learning. These models

propose that successful learning will occur if learners are able to actively attach meanings to their learning situations. Students' beliefs about their ability to control the outcome of a given task are assumed to play an important role in their actions, motivation, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Weiner, 1986). In view of this,

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investigation into types of causal attributions people make to explain successes and failures in a variety of settings, and how these attributions affect expectations for future success or failure will definitely be in line with the primary goals of the abovementioned motivation models and hence of relevance to language teaching and learning. In the context of this study the focus is on the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language (ESL).

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is that of Weiner's (1986; 2000) attribution theory. Weiner developed a theoretical framework that has become very influential in social psychology today. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do, that is, interpret causes to an event or behaviour. A three-stage process underlies an attribution:

1. Behaviour must be observed/perceived.
2. Behaviour must be determined to be intentional.
3. Behaviour may be attributed to either internal or external causes.

Weiner's attribution theory is mainly concerned with degrees of achievement, and perceptions of how that achievement was or was not attained. According to him, the most important factors affecting attributions are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions, namely:

1. Locus of control (two poles: internal vs. external)
2. Stability (does it cause changes over time or not?)
3. Controllability (causes one can control such as skills vs. causes one cannot control such as luck, others' actions, etc.)

In general, Weiner (2000) claims a person is more likely to take credit for success than attribute failure to the self (what he terms as hedonic bias). However, he acknowledges that there are several causal antecedents that will

influence this. For example, if a person has always failed in the past, the current failure is most likely attributed to the self, rather than the task. Similarly, if others succeed and he fails, he will most likely attribute it to the self, rather than the task.

The present study attempts to examine the relationship in the Malaysian ESL context between performance attributions and different university settings. Contrary to most previous studies, which had used scenarios or hypothetical events to ask about individuals' reasons for the task outcomes (e.g., Chase, 2001; Shores & Shannon, 2007), this study measured students' responses to authentic tasks undertaken in the context of learning English in an ESL context. More specifically, for the designed questionnaire, students are required to select just one activity and one outcome for its success/failure thus controlling choices. In this way, it will be possible to find out with greater precision which activity and what factors have influenced their success or failure.

#### **ATTRIBUTION THEORY IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS**

In the field of education, a number of studies have investigated student attributions regarding test performance, past and future task performance. The majority of these studies which investigate the effects of attribution theory in education focused mainly on the school milieu in general, analyzing attributions, and performance across academic subjects as well as other school activities. For example, Vispoel and Austin (1995) looked at junior high school students' recollection of successes and failures in the areas of English, math, music, and physical education, noting strong connections between causal beliefs and classroom achievement. In a similar vein, Meyer & Koelbl (1982) suggested a strong relationship between student test performance and attributions which are similar in structure to Weiner's model. Meanwhile, Sorić & Palekčić (2009) took a different approach, but found strong correlations between learning strategies and the causal dimension of controllability when

TABLE 1  
Dimensional classification scheme for causal attributions

Attributions	←————— Dimensions —————→		
	Locus	Stability	Controllability
Ability	Internal	Stable	Uncontrollable
Effort	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Strategy	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Interest	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Task difficulty	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Luck	External	Unstable	Uncontrollable
Family influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Teacher influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable

From Vispoel and Austin (1995), based on Weiner (1979)

explaining academic achievement. Although the results of these studies differ to some degree, they have highlighted not only the importance of attributions of ability, effort, luck, and task, but have also shown how these various attributions can be interpreted in terms of the dimensions of locus, stability and control (*see* Table 1).

The results of the early studies support Weiner's (1986) theory which proposes that internal attributions produce greater changes in esteem-related affect than external attributions, stable attributions are more concerned with expectancy for success or failure, and controllable attributions are more closely connected with persistence than uncontrollable attributions. These early studies were mainly qualitative, relying on open-ended questionnaire and interview generated data. It was only recently that detailed quantitative analysis that utilized factor analysis and multidimensional scaling were undertaken and the results of these studies (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Vispoel & Austin, 1995) provided support for the above studies.

Studies on the attribution theory in ESL and Foreign Language learning (EFL) contexts began much later. In 1991, Crookes and Schmidt pointed out that motivation research conducted in the foreign language realm has primarily relied on attitude and anxiety constructs. Dornyei (1994) and Graham (2003) were the

earlier ones who had tried to rectify this limited perspective on motivation in foreign language learning. Besides, Tremblay & Gardner (1995) tried to bring motivational constructs from the general educational psychology literature to the Second Language field. They investigated the relation of a number of psychological measures of motivation such as goal salience, valence, self-efficacy, and causal attribution, to existing measures of attitude and motivation for learning a language. The results of this study are questionable, since the participants were asked to imagine situations which they had never experienced. Thus, any measures of motivation did not accurately reflect the participants' learning. In the Malaysian context, studies on motivation also tend to focus on its relationship with attitude (Samsiah *et al.*, 2009; Thang, 2004).

Considering the theoretical significance of attributions in L2/FL motivation, it is surprising that not much research has been conducted in this field. The results of related studies have been mixed. Some of them support Weiner's theory (e.g. Ushioda, 2001; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008) and some of them do not (Williams *et al.*, 2004; Peacock, 2009). Hence, it is evident that further research needs to be undertaken in this field in the L2/FL environments. It should be pointed out here that all the above studies, except for Hsieh

& Schallert (2008) and very recently, Peacock (2009), used data gathered through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, or autobiography. This qualitative approach helps to explain why a variety of attributional categories were uncovered, as well as the differences in the findings, made it difficult to compare groups or generalize findings. In addition, many of the studies employed role-playing methods (creating hypothetical situations), rather than measuring actual behaviour, to gather data. This was what prompted Peter Gobel and his associates to undertake further studies in this field in the L2/FL environments using a quantitative approach that would allow larger numbers of participants and more sophisticated statistical procedures. Gobel & Mori (2007) and Mori *et al.* (2010) found that both Japanese and Thai students attributed success to external factors and failure to internal factors, and this finding is not in line with Weiner's theory. The studies they conducted were in the Asian settings, which has hardly been explored before by experts in this area, and this further adds significance to their studies. The findings contradict those conducted in L1 settings and many in earlier L2/FL settings too. The findings of their studies clearly point to the reliability of this mode of investigation. It further suggests that the consistency may have something to do with some communalities in these students. The findings suggest that the communalities may be due to a high respect for teachers and self-critical tendency, where underlying influences are cultural in nature. Peacock's (2009) findings support this. These studies are significant in that they open up a whole new uncharted area of research. This study takes the studies of Gobel & Mori (2007), Mori *et al.* (2010) and Peacock (2009) a step further by attempting to reaffirm the validity and reliability of their studies by comparing the attributions of Malaysian students across six public universities.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, this research study hopes to find answers to the following research questions.

- RQ 1: To what dimensions proposed by the attribution theory do the Malaysian ESL students from the six different public universities attribute their success and failure?
- RQ 2: Are the attributive dimensions valid in all six universities?
- RQ 3: Are there features in the attributive dimensions that make the university (universities) stand out? What are possible reasons for this phenomenon?

### METHOD

#### *Background of the Universities Involved*

University students from six public universities in Malaysia took part in the study. The six universities are Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). The first five universities are located in West Malaysia, while UMS is located in East Malaysia (Sabah).

Table 2 provides a summary of the basic facts on these universities.

The establishment of all the 6 universities is based on the need to provide an opportunity for Malaysian students to further their studies at tertiary level in their own country. In addition, they provide the country with skilled and educated human resources. However, every university has its own focus, i.e. the field of specialization. UKM and USM are known for the specializations in Sciences, while UPM is known for its focus in agriculture. UM, on the other hand, is often noted for medicine. UMS focuses on marine science and UiTM is noted for Arts and Humanities (Mass Communication and Public Relation). UiTM was initially established as the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) Training Centre for conducting professional courses offered by established international bodies, such as the London Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Society of Accountants and the British Institute

TABLE 2  
Summary of the basic facts on the six universities

University	Status	Year of obtaining university status	No. of campuses	No. of students (approximately)	No. of academic staff
UM	Research university	1949	1	24269	1918
UKM	Research university	1970	2	22525	2105
USM	Apex university	1969	3	30000	1600
UPM	Research university	1973	2	26000	2500
UiTM	Public university	1999	3	120000	10000
UMS	Public university	1994	2	13200	814

of Management. In fact, when UiTM was officially renamed as Institut Teknologi MARA in 1976, its prime focus was to provide training in the professional and semi-professional levels for Malay students because its sole responsibility was to provide training for Bumiputras (the Malays and the indigenous people of Malaysia). UKM was also established for similar reasons.

UKM was founded based on the need for a university for students from Malay medium schools and religious schools to further their studies at tertiary level. In addition, the Malays (teachers, writers, academicians) championed for the Malay language (now Bahasa Melayu) to be recognized as the national language of Malaya (Malaysia). Hence, the history of UKM is very much rooted in the spirit of nationalism among the Malays. This explains why the majority of the students in UKM are from rural parts of Malaysia, from the East Coast states (Terengganu and Kelantan) and from religious schools. These students usually get Bands 1, 2 and 3 in the Malaysian University Test (MUET).

#### *Background of the Participants*

The students who participated in this study were mainly the first and second year students from the six universities. They came from three faculties, namely, Science, Arts and Economics and Business. All these students had a minimum of eleven years of exposure to English as a second language in primary and secondary education. The students are mainly of three ethnic origins, namely, Malays, Chinese, and

Indians. The mother tongue of the Malays is the Malay Language (or a Malay dialect close to it). For the Chinese, it is most probably one of the Chinese dialects (such as Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, or Hakka) and for the Indians, it is most likely to be an Indian Language (such as Tamil, Malayalam or Telugu). Despite this, there is a unifying factor in that the medium of instruction in all the secondary schools is the Malay Language, which is formally known as Bahasa Malaysia. Students' placement in the English courses depends on their performance in MUET, but this may vary from university to university. Generally, students who obtain the lower bands for MUET (Bands 1, 2, and 3) will have to register for English Language Proficiency courses before they continue with English for Academic Purposes, whereas students with MUET Bands 4, 5, and 6 are allowed to begin with English for Academic Purposes or Higher Proficiency English Courses. However, students from UMS are required to audit only one English Course before they graduate. Generally, the teachers use textbooks supplemented by materials collated by the department/centre. Each teacher also follows a common structured teaching and assessment schedule developed by the department/centre.

Although the actual contents of the classes and teaching methods of the six universities may differ in certain ways, the participants from the six universities generally have a similar educational experience as far as the language curriculum is concerned. In addition, the levels of proficiency of all the students from all six

universities range from low to upper immediate, suggesting that the three groups participating in the study are congruent in this regard.

*Measure*

Two versions of a questionnaire were created based on previous research (Vispoel & Austin, 1995). In one version – called Attributions for Success Questionnaire (ASQ) – students were asked about successful learning experience, and in the other version – called Attributions for Failure (AFQ) – students were asked about unsuccessful learning. The questionnaires were translated to the Malay Language by experienced translators. Each version consists of two parts. In the first part of the ASQ, the students were asked to choose an activity from a list of 25 activities which they were particularly successful at. Although those activities were roughly divided into four skills, they were instructed to choose only one activity in order to avoid complications in the subsequent statistical analyses. As for the first part of the AFQ, students were asked to choose an activity at which they performed particularly poorly in the previous semester. The second part of both versions was the same. The students were asked to rate the twelve causes for success (for ASQ) or failure (for AFQ) on a six point Likert scale. The attributions included ability, effort, strategy, interest, luck, teacher influence, task difficulty, class atmosphere, grades, preparation, likes, and levels of the class.

*Procedure*

The students from the six universities were asked to fill in one of the questionnaires. Roughly, an equal number of ASQs and AFQs were distributed in each university in such a manner as to produce a fairly even distribution of sample population in terms of proficiency levels and students’ major disciplines. The entire classes were asked to complete either the ASQ or AFQ. In all the six cases, the questionnaire was completed within 15 to 20 minutes.

**RESULTS**

1062 participants were asked to rate the 12 success attributions on a 6-point Likert scale and 1080 were asked to rate the 12 failure attributions. However, due to uneven sample sizes resulting from a large number of students failing to fill up the forms correctly in the case of UMS, the sample size for the participants from the ASQ were randomly reduced so that it was more proportionate to that of the AFQ groups. Hence, the total sample size for the ASQs groups was reduced to 835. Table 3 gives the universities involved and the sample sizes of the ASQ and AFQ groups.

TABLE 3  
Universities involved and their sample sizes

University	Sample size of ASQ	Sample size of AFQ
USM	125	121
UMS	121	71
UM	148	137
UiTM	135	211
UPM	139	301
UKM	167	216
All universities	835	1080

*Success and Failure Attributions*

Student responses were scored based on the 6-point Likert scale. The data revealed that all of the 12 success attributions fell well above the scale midpoint of 3.5, implying that they were all viewed as reasonable reasons for success. In the rank order based on the total sample means, the most to least endorsed success attributions were: interest in getting a good grade (5.17), teacher influence (4.63), enjoyment of studying English (4.55), interest in the activity (4.49), class level (4.48), effort (4.40), class atmosphere (4.27), preparation (4.17), strategy (3.99), luck (3.72), task easiness (3.61), and ability (3.61).

Regardless of the university, interest in getting a good grade was the most endorsed attribute for all universities and teacher influence also scored above 4.3 for all universities, while ability was the least endorsed.

Contrary to the results for success attributions, only two of 12 failure attributions means were above the scale midpoint of 3.5. In the rank order, the most to least endorsed failure attributions were: preparation (3.53), ability (3.52), effort (3.41), strategy (3.38), task difficulty (3.35), interest in the activity (3.00), class atmosphere (2.99), teacher influence (2.95), class level (2.80), luck (2.57), enjoyment of studying English (2.46), and interest in getting a good grade (2.13). The self-critical tendency was in evidence here, with the two most endorsed failure attributions, namely preparation and ability, being internal.

*Differences in the Attributional Tendencies Based on University*

In order to determine the extent to which attribution ratings varied with respect to university affiliation, a factor analysis was first performed to reduce the data set to a group of manageable factors. If the dimensions suggested by the attribution theory actually exist, those attributions that are categorized as internal/unstable/controllable should load together as a result of factor analysis.

The dimensionality of the 12 items from the success attribution measure was analyzed using principal components analysis. Four criteria were used to determine the number of factors to rotate: a minimum Eigenvalues of 1.0, the screen test, a minimum loading of .45, and the interpretability of the factor solution. Based on these criteria, three factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation procedure. The rotated solution, as shown in Tables 4 and 5, yielded three interpretable factors, an internal/controllable success attribution, a class-related success attribution, and a task difficulty-related success attribution. Since only one low

communality (the grade attribution) did not meet the criterion (of a loading of more than 0.5), the solution was accepted and analysis undertaken. The interest success attribution accounted for 34.60%, class-related success attribution accounted for 10.80%, and task/luck-related external/uncontrollable success attribution accounted for 8.78% of the item variance.

TABLE 4  
Principal components analysis summary for success: Eigen values and percentage of variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.15	34.60	34.60
2	1.30	10.80	45.40
3	1.05	8.78	54.17

Using the same criteria, the dimensionality of the 12 items from the failure attribution measure was analyzed. The rotated solution, as shown in Tables 6 and 7 yielded three interpretable factors, class and interest-related failure attribution, internal/controllable failure attribution, and task-related failure attribution. Class and interest-related failure attribution accounted for 35.98%, internal/unstable/controllable failure attribution accounted for 13.42%, and task-related failure attribution accounted for 9.17% of the item variance. Note that principal components analyses for failure and success show similar factors (though not identical) results. Specifically, teacher influence, class atmosphere, and class level loaded together on factor one in failure and factor 2 in success, and study strategy and preparation for class loaded together on factor two for failure and factor two for success. However, in this rotated solution, there was a low communality for luck in the Factor Analysis for failure. In view of the fact that this was a reasonable solution, it was used for further analysis.

TABLE 5  
Principal components results for success (n=835)

	Dimension			Component			
	Locus	Stability	Controllability	1	2	3	<i>h</i> <sup>2</sup>
Ability	internal	stable	uncontrollable	0.71	-0.02	0.19	0.54
Effort	internal	unstable	controllable	0.64	0.20	0.01	0.45
Strategy	internal	unstable	controllable	0.78	0.09	0.07	0.62
Interest	internal	stable	controllable	0.52	0.48	0.06	0.51
Preparation	internal	unstable	controllable	0.66	0.34	0.09	0.55
Enjoyment	internal	stable	controllable	0.55	0.50	-0.02	0.55
Teacher	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.07	0.73	0.17	0.56
Class	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.09	0.75	0.15	0.59
Grade	internal	stable	controllable	0.26	0.47	-0.04	0.29
Level	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.20	0.73	0.12	0.59
Luck	external	unstable	uncontrollable	0.06	0.02	0.84	0.71
Task	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.14	0.27	0.66	0.53

TABLE 6  
Principal components analysis summary for failure: Eigenvalues and percentage of variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	4.32	35.98	35.98
2	1.61	13.42	49.40
3	1.10	9.17	58.57

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to determine the effect of the independent variable of university affiliation on the three success attributional factors measured by factor scores. With the use of Wilks' criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by the independent variable of university,  $F(3, 827) = 3.45, p < .00$ . Table 8 contains the means and the

standard deviations on the dependent variables for the three groups.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted as follow-up tests on the MANOVA. Using the Bonferroni adjustment, each ANOVA was tested at the 0.017 level. Only the ANOVA on the class-related/external success attribution was significant,  $F(5, 827) = 5.94, p < .00$ . Meanwhile, the post-hoc analyses to the univariate ANOVA for the second consisted of conducting pairwise comparisons to find which university affiliation most strongly affected the attribution. Each pairwise comparison was tested at the 0.017 level. The results indicate that there were significant differences between UKM and UMS, UM, and UiTM on the class-related success attribution, with the UKM group scoring significantly higher on the class-related success attribution, while the UMS group scored significantly lower (see Table 8). This finding suggests that students in the UKM group tended to attribute external/

TABLE 7  
Principal components results for failure (n=1080)

	Dimension			Component			<i>h</i> <sup>2</sup>
	Locus	Stability	Controllability	1	2	3	
Interest	internal	stable	controllable	0.55	0.36	0.14	0.45
Luck	external	unstable	uncontrollable	0.55	0.11	0.24	0.37
Teacher	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.80	0.01	0.13	0.65
Class	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.72	0.03	0.18	0.56
Grade	internal	stable	controllable	0.76	0.18	-0.36	0.73
Enjoyment	internal	stable	controllable	0.75	0.30	-0.09	0.66
Level	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.78	0.14	0.08	0.63
Ability	internal	stable	uncontrollable	-0.08	0.49	0.48	0.48
Effort	internal	unstable	controllable	0.22	0.79	-0.16	0.69
Strategy	internal	unstable	controllable	0.15	0.63	0.28	0.50
Preparation	internal	unstable	controllable	0.15	0.73	0.08	0.57
Task	external	stable	uncontrollable	0.25	0.08	0.83	0.75

uncontrollable-related attributions such as class, teacher, and level to their success more than the other students.

A MANOVA was also performed to determine the effect of university affiliation on the three failure attributional factors measured by factor scores. With the use of Wilks' criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by university affiliation,  $F(3, 1052) = 59.52, p < .00$ . Table 9 contains the means and the standard deviations on the dependent variables for the three groups.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted as follow-up tests on the MANOVA. The ANOVA on all three factors were significant,  $F(5, 1054) = 138.59, p < .00$ , and  $F(5, 1054) = 14.22, p < .00$ , and  $F(5, 1054) = 22.53, p < .00$  respectively. Post-hoc analyses to the univariate ANOVA for the attributions consisted of conducting pairwise comparisons to find which perceived proficiency level affected the success attributions most strongly. Each pairwise comparison

was tested at the 0.017 level. The results indicate that on factor 1 the UKM group scored significantly higher than all the other groups on the class/interest-related failure attributions. The differences were significant for all groups, with the ranking as follows:

UKM > UMS > UiTM > UPM > USM > UM (see Table 9).

For the second, internal/controllable factor, a significant difference was found between UKM and other universities (UMS, UM, and UiTM). Once again, UKM scored highest, with the rest of the university's mean scores in the following order UKM > UM > UiTM > UMS. There were also significant differences between universities USM and UMS, universities UMS and UPM, and universities UiTM and UPM. This suggests that the UKM group tends to attribute class/interest related causes to failure much more than many of the other groups. Finally, Factor 3 (the task-difficulty related factor) showed similar results in that the difference between

TABLE 8  
Analysis of variance of success attributions with university as the independent variable  
(n=835)

	University	N	M	SD
Internal/controllable attributions	USM	125	-0.10	0.97
	UMS	121	-0.11	1.05
	UM	148	0.05	0.99
	UiTM	135	0.25	0.97
	UPM	139	0.02	1.00
	UKM	167	-0.11	0.98
Class/interest-related external attributions	USM	125	-0.04	0.96
	UMS	121	-0.23	1.12
	UM	148	-0.16	0.96
	UiTM	135	-0.07	0.87
	UPM	139	0.10	1.11
	UKM	167	0.31	0.89
Task /luck-related attributions	USM	125	0.07	0.96
	UMS	121	-0.09	0.92
	UM	148	0.04	0.96
	UiTM	135	0.11	0.89
	UPM	139	0.07	1.17
	UKM	167	-0.17	1.04

all groups was significant. This time, the rank order of the grouping was as follows: UPM>UMS>UiTM>UM>USM>UKM. In addition, there were significant differences between UPM and USM, UM, and UiTM. Thus, it seems that UKM stands out in that they attribute class and internal/controllable causes to their failure more than the task they are given to do.

#### *Breakdown by University and Activity*

The final analysis undertaken was to find which activity was cited most as a success activity and

which was cited most as a failure activity. The findings revealed that among the 6 universities, 46% of the students cited a reading task as a success activity, 14% cited a listening activity, 26% a speaking activity, and 14% a writing activity. Thus, it seems that reading seemed to be viewed as the most successful activity.

For failure, 36% chose a reading activity, 11% a listening activity, 34% a speaking activity, and 19% a writing activity. The findings suggest that reading was again the most popular choice. The most possible reason for this is because of the emphasis given to reading in all these universities.

TABLE 9  
Analysis of variance of failure attributions with university as the independent variable  
(n=1060)

	University	N	M	SD
Class/interest-related attributions	USM	124	-0.39	0.67
	UMS	71	-0.16	0.66
	UM	137	-0.42	0.68
	UiTM	211	-0.22	0.71
	UPM	301	-0.34	0.72
	UKM	216	1.24	1.03
Internal/controllable attributions	USM	124	0.01	1.05
	UMS	71	-0.55	0.88
	UM	137	-0.10	1.06
	UiTM	211	-0.29	1.00
	UPM	301	0.16	1.02
	UKM	216	0.30	0.76
Task related attributions	USM	124	-0.05	0.92
	UMS	71	0.32	0.90
	UM	137	-0.01	0.97
	UiTM	211	0.00	0.95
	UPM	301	0.33	1.01
	UKM	216	-0.53	0.89

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings will attempt to answer the research questions of the study:

RQ 1: To what dimensions proposed by the attribution theory do Malaysian ESL students from the six different public universities attribute their success and failure?

The findings of the study revealed some striking similarities in the manner in which the respondents from the six universities attributed

their successes and failures. First, students in all three groups tend to have stronger attribution ratings for successes than for failures. Second, a comparison across mean scores revealed that interest in getting a good grade and teacher influence were the most endorsed attributes for success across all universities. Since English is very important in the private sector in Malaysia and it is the passport to a better job, it is not surprising that obtaining good grades in English was the main driving force behind these students' desire to perform well in English. Teacher's influence, another external attribute, was also

highly rated as the reason for success. This is in line with the Asian cultural trend of showing high respect to the teachers and attributing success to being taught well by their teachers. Studies undertaken in Hong Kong by Murphy (1987) and Pierson (1996) and in Malaysia by Thang & Azarina, (2007), Thang (2009a, b) have all found this to be a very strong influencing factor on students' learning characteristics, especially on their attitude towards autonomy.

Self-critical tendency was also evident in this study. The majority of the students from all six universities attributed their failures to two main internal attributes, namely preparation and ability. These findings supported the findings of Gobel *et al.* (forthcoming), Gobel & Mori (2007) and Mori (2008), which also uncovered a connection between internal attributes and attributions for failure. This tendency to blame oneself for failures (rather than blame external forces) contradicts Weiner's concept of a self-enhancement or self-protective bias, in which one blames external forces for failure. This self-protective bias is widely recognized in cognitive psychology.

RQ 2: Are the attributive dimensions valid in all six universities?

Regarding dimensionality, the results of factor analyses presented in this study were very similar to those found in Gobel *et al.* (forthcoming), Gobel & Mori (2007) and Mori (2008). In terms of success attributions (ASQ), the dichotomy for locus was clearly identified across all studies. Specifically, ability/ effort/ strategy/ interest/ preparation/ enjoyment (all internal) always loaded together, and teacher/ class/ grade/ level (all external) always loaded together. As with the other studies, all the internal attributes except for "ability" are controllable factors. As for the external attributes, all were uncontrollable except for grade. Like the previous studies, the dichotomy of stability (stable/ unstable) was not evident. Just like the previous studies, the results for the AFQ also revealed no clear dichotomy. Specifically, interest/ luck/ teacher/ class/ grade/

enjoyment/ level (a combination of external and internal attributes) all loaded together in Factor One and ability/ effort/ strategy/ preparation (all internal factors) loaded together in Factor Two. These findings suggest the possibility of two culturally-biased attributional frameworks; one for the West and one for Asia, the Western framework would have a self-protective bias for failure situations, and a self-enhancing bias for success situations (blaming others for failures, and praising yourself for success, for example). On the other hand, the Asian framework would adopt a self-critical bias for failure situations, and attribute successes to external factors (such as parents or teachers, for example).

RQ 3: Are there features in the attributive dimensions that make the university (universities) stand out? What are possible reasons for this phenomenon?

The results revealed that UKM was the university that stood out. It scored significantly higher than other universities on the class-related/ external success attributions such as teacher, class, grade and level to their success more than the other students. It also scored significantly higher than all the other groups on the class/interest-related failure attributions and internal/ controllable failure attributions, but did not score significantly higher in task. This seems to suggest that UKM attributed class and internal/controllable causes to their failure more than the task they were given to do.

The above findings are indeed interesting and the researchers would like to offer a possible explanation for this phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, a large proportion of UKM students are Malays from the rural areas and many of these students came from religious schools background. The Malays (the largest racial group in Malaysia) are known to display high respect for the teachers. Siti Zuraina *et al.* (1999) gave the example of Malay parents giving a cane to the teachers when they sent their children to school or to religious classes in the past. Such practice symbolizes power, trust and respect granted to the teachers in teaching

their children. In return, the children were trained to respect and accept the knowledge of the teachers. Thus, this may be a contributing factor to the high evidence of success being attributed to teachers more than the students in the other universities. Meanwhile, a study by Thang & Azarina (2007) lent further support to this explanation. In their study on the students of three universities in Malaysia, namely UKM, UPM and OUM (Open University of Malaysia), they found UKM students to be the most teacher-centred indicating that they had great trust in the teachers' abilities to help them and hence attributed their success to their teachers. As for failure, understandably, they would blame themselves more than the students in other universities which will explain why they scored significantly higher in the internal/controllable failure attributions. As for scoring higher in class/interest-related failure group, [which comprises mixed attributes of both external (teacher, class, level, luck) and internal (interest, enjoyment and grade) factors], it is possible that the internal attributes were responsible for the significantly higher score rather than the external attributes. However, further investigation needs to be undertaken to confirm the validity of these findings.

Finally, one more feature that stood out was that majority of the students from the 6 universities chose "reading" as the most common activity for their success and failure. The reason may be due to the fact that "Academic Reading" is a compulsory course in all 6 universities. Hence, the type of tasks that they were most exposed to would be those related to reading. Thus, understandably they would relate their successes and failures to reading.

### CONCLUSION

Notably, the divergent sizes of the different groups might have affected the reliability of the results but this could not be avoided in a study that depended on the availability and existing size of the sample population and the goodwill of those collecting the data.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the findings of this study support the reliability and validity of the findings of the studies conducted by Peter Gobel and his research team which showed that communalities do exist in Asian countries in the form of high respect for teachers and self-critical tendency. These attributions seem to be influenced by cultural factors. Nonetheless, further investigation could be carried out to confirm the postulations made and to further explore the role of culture in influencing students' choice of attributions not only in Malaysia but in other Asian countries, too.

### IMPLICATIONS TO THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA

The findings clearly show that "getting a good grade" and "teacher influence" are the most endorsed attributes for success across all universities in Malaysia, so we can say that external factors play a vital role in moulding attributions and this is particularly apparent in the case of UKM. If the attribution, irrespective of whether it is for success or failure, can be identified, it can then be strengthened to produce a change in behaviour that will ultimately have an impact on students' effort and success in L2/FL learning. It is also clear from the study that students perceive their teachers as having a tremendous impact on their learning abilities especially in the case of UKM. According to Borich (1995, p. 233), teacher behaviour imparts attributional information to their students. This implies that if language teachers are conscious of the attributional messages they send their students, then they can affect attributional changes in their students and in this way bring about successful learning. Dornyei (2001) endorses this by mentioning that teachers can encourage internal attributions and downplay external ones and that by emphasizing the link between effort and outcomes, they will have a positive impact on students' perceptions that attributions towards success can indeed be controlled. Teachers can exploit this to promote learning by focusing on effort as the factor

critical to success. They can show their students ways to improve their efforts and to effectively channel their energies, thereby helping their students to perceive that increased effort is likely to have successful outcomes. Classroom interventions such as the self-enhancement approach and the skill development approach are intended to alter students' self-perceptions by eliminating behaviours that can impede academic success and by developing a student's skill in a particular academic area. One way is for the teacher to find a specific area in which the learner perceives himself or herself to be particularly successful, and then relate that area to the topic currently under discussion in the classroom. Teachers could also think of ways to inject new ideas, introduce new topics or add new twists to topics they could teach in the classroom in order to offer their students learning opportunities that are more meaningful and motivating.

In a situation where "teacher influence" has been identified as one of the most endorsed attributes for success, evaluating students and grading their tasks with a heavy hand may be counter-productive to the learning process of their students. Course assignments should be planned in such a way that diligence and effort actually lead to successful academic outcomes and the teacher's evaluation should enable students to see this link. Positive teacher feedback has a significant impact and if teachers consistently help students make strategic effort attributions, that is, believing that working hard in a particular way ultimately leads to success, they can be encouraged to regard failures as the stepping stones in the search for improved learning strategies (Pressley, Borkowski & Schneider, 1987).

In terms of L2/FL learning in the Malaysian context, the findings also have implications on pre and post-service teacher training programmes and instructional design. It is crucial that teachers are aware of the causes for attributions for success and failure and their role in the learning environment so that they can, both directly and indirectly, through motivational

strategies promote helpful attributions that will not only have positive but also long-term effects on the students. The findings also indicate that the lack of academic ownership – students attributing their success or failure to external and uncontrollable factors will have far-reaching implications on their L2/FL learning. Students' perceptions of these attributions are critical because they influence self-esteem, their expectations and motivation to learn. By empowering the students with the awareness that they have control over their actions and that they can change outcomes, academic self-esteem can be enhanced and future success optimized.

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## Improving ESL Learners' Academic Text Construction through a Collaborative Task

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### ABSTRACT

Many ESL writing instructors incorporate some form of pair or group work at some stage of the writing process to provide their students the opportunity to brainstorm ideas, plan, and co-construct knowledge with their peers. Another reason is to encourage students to work independently from the teacher with the intention that they will be more autonomous. This paper reports on a qualitative study which examines how one group of tertiary ESL learners in an academic writing course jointly produce an academic essay during one collaborative task. This study highlights some critical incidents pertaining to the students' roles, their behaviours, and instances that contribute to knowledge and text construction during the group work. The findings showed that cumulative talk and use of questions moved the group discussion forward while negotiation helped the learners to test ideas at a deeper level. The learners also shared their expertise during text construction. The affective conflict which the group encountered during the collaboration also helped them to deal with differing viewpoints and maintaining coherence in the group.

**Keywords:** Academic writing, collaborative task, ESL learners, knowledge construction, text construction

### INTRODUCTION

Vygotsky (1978), a social constructivist, maintained that knowledge is co-constructed and learning always involves more than one person. Learning takes place as a result of internalisation of ideas during social interactions in a sociocultural environment. One of the ways to encourage this form of interactive learning in the writing class is to create collaborative writing groups, where individuals can develop their zone of proximal development through interactions with more capable peers. Sociocultural theory forms the theoretical framework for this study (Lantolf, 2000). This theory places emphasis

on what is significant in the social and cultural context which affects the learning process. Knowledge is not simply constructed within the individual, but is socially co-constructed and later internalised by the individual.

Research on collaborative writing has revealed many positive findings. In the L1 contexts, collaboration has fostered reflective thinking (Higgins, Flower & Petraglia, 1992), helped students to experience dialogic engagement (Dale, 1994), and engaged collaborators in cognitive conflict productively (Morgan *et al.*, 1987). In the L2 contexts, research has shown that collaboration improves

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grammatical accuracy (Storch, 1999), pooling of knowledge (Storch, 2002; 2005), scaffolding (Donato, 1994), sharing of expertise (Yong, 2010; Yong & Tan, 2008), and actualising zone of proximal development (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997).

Although research has reported encouraging findings on collaborative work, some setbacks have also been mentioned. Judgemental behaviour (Dale, 1994), affective conflict (Tocalli-Beller, 2003), individualistic stance (Storch, 2001), and male domineering behaviour (DiNitto, 2000) can be counterproductive to group interactions. Group members may encounter difficulty reaching agreement or completing the task on time.

I often incorporate group work in my writing class activities to encourage students to take more responsibility of their own learning process through collaborative tasks. Some students enjoyed working in groups while others were reluctant to do so as they preferred to work individually. As I assign collaborative tasks, there is information which I would like to seek. How do students co-construct knowledge during collaboration? How does collaboration affect text construction? What roles do the group members take? These are the questions that the present study aims to investigate.

## METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was used in this qualitative study. The subjects were undergraduates who were enrolled in an academic writing course offered by the English Department at a public university in Malaysia. The writing course was a compulsory university course for them to improve their language proficiency. The enrolment for this academic writing course was approximately 900 students per semester. Students were divided into smaller groups of 30 per class. The students had three contact hours per week over 14 weeks.

One intact class was chosen for the study to investigate the collaborative sessions in a naturalistic context. The class was instructed to carry out all writing tasks in groups of three.

Students self-selected their group members as they felt more comfortable working with people they knew. Three groups volunteered to be the subjects of the case study.

This paper, however, will focus only on one of the groups to provide in-depth description of critical incidents that occurred during one of the collaborative writing task. The members in this group were Chinese. The connection between the members was loosely-knit. They were course mates who were pursuing a Bachelor degree in Economics and Management, but they did not know one another very well. The participants' background information is as follows:

TABLE 1  
Participants' general background information

Participant	Age	Gender	Language proficiency
Joe	22	Male	Intermediate
Tim	22	Male	Low
Yin Wai	22	Female	Low intermediate

### *Writing Tasks*

The students wrote three academic essays collaboratively: descriptive, logical division, and cause-effect. These writing tasks were part of the class activities to provide practice on writing. The writing activities were conducted outside class hours. The essay topics were assigned to the class to maintain standardisation. The writing tasks were not graded and the students were not under any pressure to perform. Nonetheless, the students tried to complete the tasks to the best of their abilities because they knew that they had to apply what they have learned when they write an individual essay during the final examination.

### *Research Instruments*

The collaborative writing session of the case study group was audio- and videotaped and transcribed verbatim for analysis. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to gather

information about the participants' personal views and perceptions of their collaborative writing experience. The interview was conducted after the collaborative writing sessions. The learners took turns to be interviewed.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were taken from the last collaborative task where the students wrote a cause-effect essay on increased crime rates in the country. As this writing task was the most challenging among the three, it revealed many critical incidents which exemplified the manner in which the case study group collaborated and the ways in which they constructed knowledge and composed the text.

In this group, Joe was the leader, while Yin Wai was the scribe, and Tim was an active contributor. The scribe jotted down points that were raised during the group discussion. Most of the time the group members composed the text together where word choice and sentence structures were decided through group effort. The roles of the members remained the same throughout their collaborative sessions. The members' behaviours were quite consistent except for some instances when they encountered conflicting views.

The following excerpts are selected to illustrate the typical manner in which the group constructed knowledge and worked together.

Excerpt 1 is taken from the brainstorming stage. The group co-constructed knowledge by engaging in cumulative talk whereby they built on the ideas of the previous speaker (Mercer, 1995).

#### Excerpt 1: Cumulative talk

- 1 J : Okay, today we're going to write an essay about "What are the causes and effects of increased crime rates in a country". So what is the point, do you think?
- 2 T : I think illegal immigrants is a point for the causes. Um... how about the deficit economy?

- 3 J : Deficit economy? Oh, you mean... ah... recession.
- 4 T : Ah, recession and unemployment.
- 5 J : Unemployment, yeah.
- 6 YW : And I think that the peer pressure also one of the cause.
- 7 J : family problems
- 8 YW : and the mass media, western culture.

In Excerpt 1, Joe (J) initiated the discussion by taking on the role of the leader and getting the members to contribute their ideas. Tim (T) gave two suggestions for the causes, namely, illegal immigrants and deficit in the economy (Line 2). From Tim's initial suggestion, Joe provided a better alternative word recession to replace deficit economy (Line 3). Tim continued to expand Joe's idea as seen in Line 4. Yin Wai (YW) continued the brainstorming session by adding a new suggestion. As illustrated in Lines 7 and 8, the same pattern of cumulative talk occurred as the members built on the suggestions given by their group members.

#### Excerpt 2: Use of questions

Besides cumulative talk, the group also used questions to help them elaborate their points. This episode is taken at the juncture where the members had come up with a list of suggestions.

- 9 YW : Any other point? No other point, we pick three points from here. First, illegal immigrant. How?
- 10 J : Wait we don't, wait, wait, wait... we talk about all the point before...
- 11 T : Okay, yeah.
- 12 J : So illegal immigrant?
- 13 T : From the other country.
- 14 J : Illegal immigrant from other countries. Ah, okay. Then?
- 15 T : How about the causes?

- 16 YW : Ah, immigrant comes the...many has recession in their country, so they can't secure a permanent job, then they have to come here.
- 17 T : Um hmm.
- 18 J : What a better, better environment. What aa... income, good income?
- 19 T : Good income...
- 20 J : High salary? High income? I don't know.
- 21 YW : High...
- 22 J : Wealthy income? Well paid.
- 25 T : I know. (J chuckles) They use boat. That shows that our, our what? How to say defense ah? So the country... "keselamatan" (security)
- 26 J : security
- 27 T : some problems because if the security is good enough, the illegal immigrant cannot come.
- 28 J : That means what? Easy to cross?
- 29 T : Ah huh.
- 30 J : Easy to cross? Easy to...
- 31 T : Lack security?
- 32 J : Yeah, I know your point, but...the word is like...
- 33 T : Ah, lack of...
- 34 J : Lack of rules or the rule.

As the group continued their brainstorming session, they decided to elaborate each supporting point before they embarked on the composing stage (Lines 9 to 11). Joe and Tim asked short questions to help the group think about specific details for the point (Lines 14 and 15). Tim's question triggered an answer from Yin Wai who came up with a logical reason to explain the point about illegal immigrant (Line 16). The excerpt also shows Joe's deliberation on the choice of vocabulary through self-questioning in choosing the most appropriate word choice. It can be seen in Lines 18 to 22 when he tested out several alternatives: *good income*, *high salary*, *high income*, *wealthy income*, and *well paid*.

As the discussion progressed, more questions were asked and the questions served several purposes. The first purpose was to stimulate thinking through WH questions (Line 23). The second purpose was to seek help from others. Tim asked questions to seek help from his group members when he had difficulty expressing his thoughts in English (Line 25). The third purpose was to clarify thoughts as seen in the interaction between Tim and Joe in Lines 27, 28, and 31.

- 23 T : And how... how do they come here? Why...
- 24 J : Use boat.

In the exchanges above, the WH questions and questions seeking for help or clarification provided the means for the group members to stretch their idea generation. It is apparent that these questions, which were directed to others or oneself, improved the thinking process by triggering existing knowledge or creating new knowledge and refining the text production.

Thus far, the two excerpts show that the group collaborated in a supportive and cooperative manner. This cooperative pattern of collaboration changed as the group progressed in the discussion of the second supporting point.

The following transcripts (Excerpts 3 and 4) illustrate instances where the group engaged in negotiation and conflict resolution during the brainstorming session of the second supporting point on recession.

### Excerpt 3: Negotiation

- 35 YW : Recession and unemployment rate.
- 36 J : No, unemployment rate increase because recession causes. Recession, what aa...
- 37 T : No job. Cannot find a new job.

- 38 J : What not, no job?  
 39 T : Cannot find a new job.  
 40 J : Um. Why cannot find new job? Then?  
 41 T : Then? No money, no salary.

In Line 35, Yin Wai informed the members about the topic of discussion at that instance, that is, recession and unemployment rate. Joe corrected her and said that the unemployment rate increased due to recession. As usual, the members explored ideas in a cumulative manner. Both Joe and Tim deliberated back and forth over the idea about people not being able to find a job during recession (Lines 38 to 41). Their talk resembled the Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF) mode between a teacher and a student. In this case, Joe acted as a surrogate teacher when he carried out all the questioning (DiNitto, 2000) in the hope of getting more justification from Tim. This created opportunity for deeper exploration of their ideas.

The following transcript shows how Joe utilised Malay and Chinese sentence particles to position himself above others during the negotiation process.

- 42 J : Wait *lah* ((emphasising)) that one is effect *wut* ((indicating obviousness))  
 43 T : The effect? The cause *ah*.  
 44 YW : The cause.  
 45 J : Yeah *lah*, ((emphasising)) we're talking about the cause.  
 46 T : Yeah.  
 47 YW : The cause.

The excerpt illustrates Joe having difficulties distinguishing the difference between cause and effect (Line 42). Tim and Yin Wai reaffirmed Joe that they were discussing the cause (Lines 43 and 44). Joe asserted his power as a leader by reminding the others that they were supposed to discuss the cause. When the confusion was cleared, the discussion continued.

- 48 J : What no money? The cause no money *ah*? ((seeking confirmation))  
 49 T : No job, no money *lah*. ((convincing)) No salary.  
 50 YW : because when they no salary... and they want to survive  
 51 T : Cannot eat  
 52 J : Don't eat *lah*. ((emphasising))  
 53 T : No food. ((laughter))  
 54 J : Wait, wait... what are high tech, high technology?

As seen in the interactions above, the members responded to each other's utterances in a cumulative fashion. To answer Joe's query (Line 48), Tim and Yin Wai provided the outcomes of people not having a job (Lines 49, 50, 51 and 53). The members also used Malay sentence particles in the utterances for different functions as seen in Lines 48, 49, and 52. The low level unstressed tone softens the meaning of the utterances, which created rapport among the members (Kwan-Terry, 1978; Platt, 1987).

Joe, in his enthusiasm, shifted the discussion to another topic about *high technology* before the members could explore the idea about *job* further (Line 54).

- 55 T : What about high technology?  
 56 J : They can't find any... they can't find job because they're now more modern they use...  
 57 T : No... [because now is...  
 58 J : [electronic more than human. They use capital more than=  
 59 T : =wait, now is recession period, so most of the company that...  
 60 J : No, now, we're talking about unemployment.  
 61 T : Yeah. Recession, causes by the recession.  
 62 J : Yeah, any more causes.

- 63 T : Deficit economy *ma*. ((persuasion))  
So employer... ((Joe chuckles)) uh  
huh?
- 64 J : Okay *lah* ((persuading)), you write  
*lor* ((resignation to a course of  
action)). Anything, anything, okay.  
Effect, effect. ((Tim pauses to jot  
down his ideas))

This time it was Tim's turn to query Joe on his new suggestion (Line 55). Joe provided the reason about the use of high technology to replace human (Line 56). The overlapped and latched talk in Lines 57 to 59 indicates a slight power struggle between Joe and Tim. Both of them seemed to have their own explanation why people cannot find a job. Joe felt that it was because modern technology is now replacing human workers, while Tim felt otherwise. In Line 62, Joe diverted the disagreement by asking for new ideas. Tim explored another possibility about *economy deficit* (Line 63). During the interaction, both Tim and Joe inserted colloquial L1 particles to soften the slightly tense atmosphere (Lines 63 and 64). In Line 64, before Tim could finish his explanation, Joe decided to relinquish control and let Tim take over the writing because Joe wanted to complete the task quickly. The findings revealed that the group resolved their differing viewpoints by negotiating and sometimes by complying with others to avoid conflict (Tocalli-Beller, 2002). As far as possible, Tim always tried to provide explanation for his views. It appears that Joe and Tim adopted male domineering behavior while Yin Wai took a more subservient role by listening (*see* DiNitto, 2000).

#### Excerpt 4: Affective conflict

Another negative affective factor created by power relations is illustrated in the following excerpt. Affective conflict (Tocalli-Beller, 2003) and power struggles (Thornborrow, 2002) are evident as the members struggled to compose their first supporting point about illegal immigrants. The underlined words are the actual written text.

- 65 J : First of all, illegal immigrant  
is the main problem, in these  
days. Illegal immigrant has create  
serious problem.
- 66 YW : For our country?
- 67 T : To some countries? Not our  
country.
- 68 J : Then in a country *wut*?
- 69 T : It's not only our country.
- 70 J : Yeah.
- 71 T : Oh.
- 72 J : Don't want to write our country.
- 73 YW : It's our country.
- 74 J : In the country, what our country.
- 75 T : Has created serious problem.
- 76 J : Later, later. Serious problem in  
the country. Follow this one, in  
the country.

Joe constructed the first sentence for the introductory paragraph- *First of all, illegal immigrant has create serious problem* (Line 65). The group members, however, had disagreement over the word choice of *our country*, *some countries* or *in the country*. After a few rounds of deliberations, Joe asserted his power by asking the others to follow the wordings which were given in title (Line 76). Joe exhibited impatient behaviour of wanting to move on quickly with their text production.

The discussion continued as follows.

- 77 YW : This problem happen in our  
country because due to the poor  
economy in their... country.
- 78 J : Not poor economy, what you  
call that? Bad economy? Weak  
economy. Unemployment  
rate... Um?
- 79 T : Unemployment rate is very high  
in their country.

- 80 J : During recession. That's why they can't find a job. They hardly find jobs in their countries. I don't know... you construct the sentence (chuckles).
- 81 YW : Some of them come to our country not because of the unemployment.
- 82 J : Yeah, no...
- 83 YW : Because they want to secure a better job in our country.
- Due to the what? High unemployment rate during recession in their own country.
- 85 T : Ah, like that-*lah*, the illegal immigrant is no passport (J: Um.), and then shop employer don't want to employ them (J: Um.). And then when they come, they can't find a job, and then they will go to... ah... involve in some illegal activity (J: Um.)

In the transcript above, the members joined effort to construct the text. Yin Wai provided the second sentence (Line 77). Since Joe was unsatisfied with the phrase *poor economy*, he explored other alternatives (Line 78). Meanwhile, Tim tried to come up with another alternative sentence structure (Line 79). Joe also attempted to formulate a sentence based on the ideas which they had brainstormed earlier. However, midway, he jokingly shoved the responsibility to Yin Wai to construct the sentence, since she was the scribe (Line 80). Yin Wai gave an alternative idea to explain why immigrants came to the country (Lines 81 and 82). The transcript shows that through constant testing and deliberation in idea generation and text construction, the group wanted to produce a more quality piece of work.

The continuation of the discussion shows the members' struggle in composing the text due to their lack of proficiency.

- 84 J : Yeah. I mean our first cause is this, then our second cause is, they want to secure a better job. Calm down one by one, *wut*? Write one point by one point, *wut*. Isn't it right? Like the unemployment that's why come over here. Then you can write what? Your what? The environment?  
[pause for 40 seconds]
- 86 J : That one is effect *wut*?
- 87 T : From the causes to effect. It's consist all.
- 88 YW : Um.
- 89 J : No, we want to write... can you? Can you write all the causes first then write your effect? That one is consider effect, I think?
- 90 T : I think they're connected from the causes to effect.
- 91 J : Yeah, that's right. We should put... yeah, that's why we're talking the causes first.
- 92 T : Okay, okay.
- 93 J : Can you think about the causes first? No, this happen due to they can't find any job, you mean recession in their own country.

Joe laid down the rules to discuss the causes one at a time (Line 84). The group paused for quite a while because they lacked language proficiency and had to struggle to come out with the sentence structure. Tim employed a strategy by jotting down his thoughts. After Tim had gathered his thoughts, he could explain his points in a more logical link (Line 85). Joe paid close attention to Tim as he provided the explanation. Tim took responsibility to contribute his ideas to the text construction.

The members continued to explore and to come to a decision on how they wanted to construct their sentence.

Even though Tim's earlier explanation seemed sensible, Joe pointing out that Tim's idea was related to effect (Line 86). Tim explained that there should be a connection between cause and effect (Line 87). Joe continued to assert his decision of writing the causes first before the effects (Line 89). Although Tim had his own views (Line 90), he was willing to accommodate Joe's authoritative behaviour because he wanted to maintain the group's harmony (Line 92).

**Excerpt 5: Sharing of expertise**

The following critical incident shows the transfer of knowledge and sharing of expertise (Storch, 2002). This excerpt was taken during the end of the text construction of the first supporting paragraph on illegal immigrants.

- 94 T : There are lack security of our immigration authorities. So that the illegal immigrant can easy cross to... cross to our country?
- 95 J : Um hmm. You write ah.
- 96 YW : Huh?
- 97 T : Write like that cannot connect?
- 98 YW : Can't connect
- 99 J : You write the whole thing again.
- 100 T : And then suddenly jump, the essay is not beautiful.
- 101 J : What talking you?
- 102 YW : Can't continue with this point.
- 103 T : How to jump, suddenly jump to the another point. Like that.
- 104 J : What you mean jump to another point, same...
- 105 T : From the better environment and then jump to the security.

The excerpt illustrates how Tim put into practice what he had learned about coherence in class. He felt that the ideas which the group wanted to put in the essay were incoherent as there was no direct link between wanting a better environment, an idea which was suggested by Yin Wai earlier (Excerpt 4, Line 83), and the idea

about lack of security. He was transferring his knowledge into the text construction to make the ideas flow smoothly. There were disagreements between Joe and Tim (Lines 97, 101, 103 and 104).

The continuation of the discussion demonstrates another aspect of collaboration, namely, sharing of expertise.

- 106 T : Lack security... of our... of the country immigration...
- 107 YW : of...
- 108 T : of the country immigration or the custom? The custom effect is immigration. Maybe we write custom. And, so that the immigrate... the illegal...
- 109 J : Therefore the illegal immigrants can come to...
- 110 T : can easily come to our... across our...
- 111 J : So, therefore what? Illegal immigrants can come to our country without legal documents?
- 112 YW : Finished this sentence?
- 113 T : No, no, no. Therefore, comma, therefore.
- 114 J : Therefore, immigrants, illegal immigrants can come to our country without legal documents.

Despite disagreement of viewpoints, everyone contributed ideas collectively. Tim suggested ideas while Yin Wai monitored the discussion. Joe, who was more proficient, provided the vocabulary and grammatical structure. The members learned to pool their resources together. Although Tim was not good in writing, he transferred what he had learned in the classroom about transition markers and punctuating sentences to the collaboration. He corrected the structure by asking Yin Wai to add a comma after the conjunctive adverb *therefore* (Line 113).

All the critical incidents demonstrate the manner in which the group collaborated, co-constructed knowledge and composed the text. Sometimes they functioned harmoniously as a group, but at other times they experienced conflicting views and had to resolve the conflicts in order to keep group solidarity.

#### *Findings from the Interview*

The interview responses from the participants revealed how they felt about their collaboration experiences during the collaboration process. Below are some of their comments regarding the positive reactions towards collaborative task.

#### **Yin Wai**

I can exchange my idea with my group member, so I can get more idea in this essay writing. I also can learn to how to work in a group. So I can learn how to cooperate with others.

We tolerate each other and accept opinions. All of us dare to voice what we think and we know that our members do not mind if we correct their mistakes. When I'm wrong, they'll correct me.

#### **Tim**

They accept my idea and try to correct my mistake about the grammar and the ideas. When I can't express myself, they give me the words, so it makes me more confident.

I learn about cooperation and teamwork. When we go out to work, it's all teamwork.

#### **Joe**

Both of them understand what I am talking about and they quite support my ideas. They give a lot of examples.

Yin Wai felt that she could exchange ideas with her group members because they were tolerant and willing to accept corrections. She

also shared the same sentiment with Tim about learning to cooperate and work as a team. Tim saw the value of teamwork in preparation for workplace collaboration in future. He did not feel intimidated although his language proficiency was not as good as the others. The group members' scaffolding helped him to build his confidence. Joe, on the other hand, was happy that the other members supported his points and provided examples to substantiate his ideas.

The members also commented on the conflicts which they encountered.

#### **Joe**

At first I feel a bit stressed and disappointed because they don't accept my point of view when they mentioned out why the point is not suitable for this essay. They give the rational reason and I started to accept it.

#### **Tim**

Although they disagree with what I have mentioned I did mentioned it out compared to the last discussion where maybe I did not express what I was thinking.

#### **Yin Wai**

Maybe not conflict just different ideas. Maybe we can't understand what the members are trying to say. We are trying to understand the ideas more and we explain the ideas until we understand. When we understand the point more then we can elaborate.

Being the group leader and a better student, Joe found it hard when his ideas were rejected. Through the collaboration, he had to learn to listen to others and to accept multiple perspectives to resolve disagreements (Dale, 1994). On the other hand, Tim learned to voice his opinions more openly as compared to earlier collaboration sessions. He recognised his position as a team member to contribute actively

to group effort and to maintain harmony. Yin Wai, a more timid member, felt that conflict occurred because ideas were not communicated effectively among the members.

### CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that it is not always easy for learners to collaborate. Sometimes the collaboration process is smooth and productive, but at times the collaborative process becomes difficult because group members have to contend with resolving conflicting viewpoints, member's authoritative behaviour, and lack of language proficiency. Affective conflict can also influence the climate of the group's collaboration. If a member adopts a domineering and aggressive attitude, it can intimidate other members and prevent the group from having a positive working relationship.

On the other hand, when group members play mutually supportive roles, they can co-construct knowledge through sharing of knowledge and expertise. As demonstrated in the excerpts, the weaker students learned about sentence construction and increased their command of vocabulary from more proficient peers, while the better students are exposed to ideas and perspectives which they have never thought of before. The study reveals that the collaboration pushed the learners to go beyond what they could achieve on their own in terms of idea generation, sentence structure or language accuracy. The group has learned not to simply meet the task requirements, but to actively construct it (Platt & Brooks, 2002). The collaborative task also taught the learners about team work through negotiation, joint decision making and conflict resolution which are important aspects of working in a group.

Adopting group conformity instead of individual stance also contributes to the success of collaboration. When group members find meaning, recognise the value of collective work and accountability derived from working together, their language performance and productivity could be improved to a greater level.

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## Understanding Path Dependence Management in Indonesian Automotive Industry: Narrative from Toyota Case

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### ABSTRACT

Learning path dependence of managerial and manufacturing technology from a parent company is significant in understanding the technological and managerial trajectory of its automotive subsidiaries elsewhere. This paper discusses the path dependence management of Toyota Indonesia by focussing on the knowledge transfer process. Using a qualitative case study approach by highlighting TPS (Toyota Production System) for lean production management, this paper contributes to managerial production in the automotive industry.

**Keywords:** Path dependency, knowledge transfer, automotive industry, Toyota Way, Toyota production system, lean production

### INTRODUCTION

Toyota's success story has caught the attention of the world in the 1980s, when it became clear that there was something special about the quality and efficiency of the Japanese production system. Furthermore, in 1990s, it became noticeable that there was something more special about Toyota compared to the other automakers in Japan (Liker & Meier, 2006; Fujimoto, 1999; Womack, Jones & Roos, 1991; Ohno, 1988).

The secret of Toyota's success is the consistency of Toyota's performance as a direct result of operational excellence. In fact, Toyota has turned operational excellence into its strategic weapon. Nevertheless, tools and techniques are not a secret weapon for transforming business (Liker, 2004), as Toyota achieves continued success at implementing these tools stems from a deeper business philosophy based on understanding of people and human motivation. Thus, its success is ultimately based on its ability

to cultivate leadership, teams, and culture, to devise strategy, to build supplier relationships, and to maintain a learning organization (Liker & Meier, 2006; Liker, 2004, Irawati, 2010).

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indonesia (TMMIN) has experienced a long way journey through managerial and technological trajectories which implemented in knowledge transfer process. Accordingly, the underpinned research questions for this paper are as follows:

1. How is the process of knowledge transfer in Toyota's Indonesian production network?
2. To what extent the path dependency process is regarded as a successful lean production management?

This paper proceeds as follows. The following section gives an overview of path dependence for Toyota. The third section discusses the Toyota's trajectories in technology and management in Japan. The fourth section is

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methodology. The fifth section is the discussion and findings of path dependency in Toyota's Indonesian production network in the case of the Kijang project. Finally, the paper ends with the conclusion.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW: PATH DEPENDENCY IN LEAN PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT**

The concept path dependence originates with the desire of evolutionary economists to account for the factors, which determine the selection mechanisms that exist within the process of technological choice and the natural trajectories that emerge from those patterns (i.e. management). Brian Arthur (1994) and Paul David (1997) used path dependence to explain how and why certain technologies emerged and prevailed over competing technologies in periods of rapid innovation when a number of alternative technological designs characterized the market place.

Paul David (1997) defines a path dependence sequence of economic changes as one in which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including those dominated by chance elements rather than systematic forces. He further suggests that in a dynamic process, positive feedbacks are generated by strong technical complementarities on the supply side of markets, or the independence of customer preferences operating on the demand side.

The lean production system through knowledge transfer has become a path dependence study in the automotive industry. In the automotive industry case, these may arise as well from learning effects and habituation associated with the sunk cost effects of new technologies-such as those involved in learning how to use a new programme (Irawati, 2010).

In conjunction with the nature of the global business network of Japan in the automotive sector, the principal channels of international technology transfer are licensing, franchising, foreign direct investment, joint

ventures, subcontracting, cooperative research arrangements, and co-production agreements.

In view of that, to make research manageable, this research applies a narrower definition of formal channels which defines technology transfer in the automotive industry as a process by which expertise or knowledge related to some aspect of technology is passed from one user to another for the purpose of economic gain.

The case studies in the automotive industry make clear that the Japanese MNEs have extended important influences upon the global automotive industry and indirectly upon knowledge transfer process in subsidiaries. It is when Japanese industrial organization models are transferred abroad that they influence the modes of technology transfer and systems for local skill formation in particular place (i.e. automotive cluster). At the same time, however, Japanese industrial organization models show a strong ability to adapt themselves to local conditions (Irawati, 2010).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses the explanatory case study method to answer the proposed research questions. The explanatory case study is chosen as it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance, that is, the Indonesian automotive industry, in an attempt to identify detailed interactive processes. An explanatory case study is a sensible method to use in international business and management studies, where cross-cultural understandings (such as the Japanese business characteristics in the automotive *keiretsu*) are a necessary element to be taken into account.

The primary data from research in Indonesia has been collected from the archive evidence, ongoing email correspondence, phone interviews with employees of Toyota in Indonesian and other relevant represent throughout the data analysis process. A qualitative approach has been used to analyse the data. In each case, the management representatives included the Head

Office and other senior (Marketing and Project Development) managers who are regularly involved in the development of car assembling-operational and trading. On the employee side, in each case employee representatives (i.e. engineers) who are members of the select committee have been interviewed.

### **KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IS A MANAGERIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRAJECTORY: PATH DEPENDENCE IN INDONESIAN CASE**

In Indonesia, applying the Toyota Production System (TPS) in the shop floor has been done gradually over the last three decades (Irawati, 2010; Irawati & Charles, 2010). Toyota Indonesia has developed long path dependence, both in technology and management since 1971, where the establishment of PT Toyota-Astra Motor (TAM) as importer and distributor of Toyota vehicles has had been approved by the Indonesian Government. Additionally, Indonesia has become not only a springboard for Toyota's products to Western European and North American markets, but is itself one of the fastest growing markets for Japanese products. Toyota's technology transfer to Indonesia has been designed to strengthen and develop its ties with this country.

Specifically, technological and managerial trajectories in terms of the automotive sector in Toyota Indonesia can be classified into two broad categories: capital-embodied and labour-embodied. Capital-embodied technology is intrinsic to various production processes such as casting, forging, metal-cutting, welding, pressing, etc. On the other hand, labour-embodied technology includes: (1) skills and know-how in the operation of specific processes, (2) the ability to understand capital-embodied technology (which is the ability to maintain and repair machines and equipment, and this applies to elementary level employees) and (on a more advanced level) the ability to devise alternative processes and equipment in response to various economic and engineering needs, (3) the capacity to design or re-design products, processes and

plants, and (4) the ability to innovate and to develop new production techniques.

In the automotive industry, transfer of technology commonly happens between the parent company and the host company. The process itself does take time as it is not simply technology per se but also involves human interaction, which in turn involves absorptive capacity. The nature of the technology that Toyota transfers to advanced industrialized countries is fundamentally different from that of the technology transferred to Indonesia as a developing country (Irawati, 2010). Technology transferred to the advanced industrialized countries largely consists of patented high-level technology; while that transferred to the developing countries is mainly modernization experience and skills closely related to standardized production methods.

The scope of a typical technology transfer contract usually covers production, management, and marketing. The various production activities that Toyota Motor Corporation has transferred to Toyota Indonesia include: material selection, selection and installation of equipment, plant layout, assembly methods, machine operation, training of personnel, maintenance techniques, provision of technical data, quality and cost controls, and inventory management (Irawati, 2010).

Moreover, technology recipients (e.g. Toyota Indonesia) tend to require foreign investors to be involved in the initial stages of production. Many developing countries do not usually recognize the economic value of industrial expertise and tend to regard this as a free service that should accompany the purchase of machinery and equipment. Therefore, Japanese car producers found it necessary to obtain sufficient compensation for their technology through capital ownership and direct management of their foreign investment.

As most technology transferred by Japanese car producers to Indonesia is related to labour-intensive industries, labour training occupies a prominent position in the Japanese strategy of technology transfer. For this reason, on-the-job

training (OJT) has been considered by some as Japan's 'inner mechanism of technology transfer'.

OJT not only provides technical and administrative knowledge to employees, but also coaches them on how to have higher motivation and better discipline so that the process of never-ending quality improvement (*kaizen*) can be fulfilled. Unlike European and American companies, which utilize written manuals and detailed job descriptions, Japanese car producers support their production management methods and their technical training all through OJT.

Moreover, Toyota has different approaches towards technology transfer (Liker & Meier, 2005; Toyota, 2007). Most Europeans and American companies will pull back their technical advisers when the factory runs smoothly, and the local employees will only need to follow manuals carefully (Ozawa, 2005). In contrast, in Japanese automotive affiliated companies, technical advisers tend to stay even after good operations have been achieved. They will continue to train the employees step-by-step in productivity and quality control, maintenance and repair, utilisation of new production methods and new technology, as well as other production-related skills (Chen, 1996; Ozawa, 2005; Fujimoto, 2007).

Accordingly, in the automotive industry, Japanese car producers, notably Toyota, are currently the main sources of mature technology transfer to Indonesia. Industrial expertise and know-how have been the primary transfer while foreign direct investment constitutes the most widely used transfer channel. Meanwhile, traditional Japanese OJT management has commonly been used to ensure the success of the transfer process.

As a result, the process of transfer is beneficial for Toyota and its host country, since Toyota needs to shed some of its traditional industries in order to promote high-technology and service-based industries. On the other hand, the continued flow of technology and investment from Japan to Indonesia will not only contribute to growth of industrialization but also help boost the Indonesian economy in the booming Pacific Rim.

### **KIJANG PROJECT: A SUCCESSFUL PATH DEPENDENCY PROJECT IN INDONESIA**

It is increasingly apparent that car producers in newly-industrializing countries cannot just rely on traditional, labour-intensive manufacturing operations, particularly if they want to enhance their bargaining power by being prominent in automotive export markets.

According to Jones & Womack (1985, p. 405), if newly-industrializing countries are intent on developing an export-oriented motor vehicle industry, the objective should be to maximise the amount of wealth produced per worker using state-of-the art social organization and production technology and to create jobs by expanding volume.

If this does not take place, Jonas & Womack (1985) argue that newly-industrializing countries would fall further behind in technological development and have even less chance of ever catching up. As a result, the implication of such analysis must be that Indonesia, regarded as a newly-industrializing country, has to forge stronger links with Japanese vehicle multinationals, particularly in terms of technology transfer and new organizational methods.

Toyota Indonesia wants to take up this challenge not only through assembly line plants, but also by active involvement in producing engines, parts and components for export-oriented production, specifically in Asia Pacific, the Middle-East, Africa, and Latin America. Consequently, the local engineer in Indonesia is closely involved with Kijang project. One of the preferred types of passenger car for exports is *Kijang*. In Toyota, the process of path dependency is executed through knowledge transfer, started from technical capability, involving transferring knowledge through people by on-the-job training (OJT). The following paragraphs will explain the path dependency in Kijang Project, the local contribution from Indonesian subsidiary to Toyota.

*Kijang* or deer (in English translation) is one of Toyota Indonesia's accomplishments through an extended path dependency in managerial

and technology. A Kijang prototype idea was designed by Toyota Indonesia's engineers based on push factors, namely, the Indonesian market, local context, and the urge from the government to use 80% local components. However, as Toyota Indonesia was not the final decision maker to proceed with this project, the initial design was sent to TMC Japan for further feasibility study and improvement. This process involved Indonesian engineers in the Kijang team project to come up with more details for production and technology improvement, alongside Japanese engineers in Japan. After a long on-going improvement process and a rapid strategic marketing to target the 4x2 segment, this Indonesian family car is a phenomenon in the history of the Indonesian automotive industry. In particular, Kijang's reputation has soared from its debut up to now, with a place in the heart of every Indonesian family. Furthermore, Kijang production reached the million marks by the end of 2003; hence, Kijang was recorded in MURI (Museum of Indonesian Record) which strengthens Kijang's reputation as the best Indonesian family car.

The first generation of Kijang began in the period 1977-1980. Kijang's debut on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1977 was extraordinarily well received. The second generation of Kijang was launched in 1981-1986. Since then, Kijang has received an even more favourable response. In fact, the growth of the coachwork business soon afterward was a key element in the transformation of the Kijang from a commercial vehicle to a family car.

The third generation of Kijang continued to be sold in 1986-1996. Furthermore, Kijang's popularity increased when Super Kijang was introduced in 1986 and Kijang Grand in 1996, with the Toyota Original Body technology. As a result, Kijang started to be caulk free and has the same body structure quality as the sedan. It has made Kijang overtake the sedan as a popular family car. Therefore, in 1995, the production of Kijang reached 500,000 units and the introduction of 1800 cc engine was also finalised.

In the fourth generation, the new look of Kijang was introduced as Kijang Kapsul, with

60% local content. This new generation of Kijang was very different in its design from the previous one. It also offered a number of variants, including the choice of gasoline or diesel engine, as well as the luxury Krista and the option of automatic transmission.

Early in 2000, Kijang Electronic Fuel Injection was introduced, followed by a more powerful 2000 cc EFI Engine. In the fifth generation, Toyota Indonesia proudly introduced Kijang Innova, a revolutionary design that continues the ultimate performance of Kijang. With its stylish revolutionary look and new improvements in all features, Kijang Innova offers a significant driving experience.

Accordingly, in response to global expansion, Toyota Indonesia has been exporting Kijang since its first launch. However, the most significant export for Kijang began in 1998 up to the present, particularly for ASEAN and Middle East markets which could stimulate the fast-growing markets of Asia and Latin America against Europe and Northern America.

## CONCLUSION

Learning path dependence in automotive industry is a motivating research object as automotive manufacturing is big investment type of business and has developed long trajectories in both technology and management to survive in long-term achievement.

Toyota Indonesia has taught the path dependency management to implement Toyota Production Systems through knowledge transfer. The path dependency in Indonesia has been made to transform Toyota Indonesia into a true lean learning organization that continuously improves and meets the needs of its customers, and positions itself for long-term success; a challenge from parents company, Toyota Motor Corporation in Japan. One the example of this path dependency is the local project called Kijang which involved managerial and technological path dependency.

Through the Kijang project, Toyota Indonesia has proved its credential to follow the success of the Parents Company. Implementing TPS (Toyota Production System) has taken

Toyota Indonesia to make path dependency in its management and production to be more productive and efficient. This encouraged top-down knowledge transfer since the Japanese companies would in the end enjoy the benefits themselves. Second, the hierarchical structure proliferates a shared sense of identity and shared purpose, and a shared set of norms, values and conventions throughout on technical path dependency via job training. These soft factors are important for management path dependency, in particular, with regard to its tacit dimension. An effective transfer of tacit knowledge requires a shared frame of reference, a shared social context to interpret and give meaning to knowledge.

For future recommendations and further research, the challenge for the Indonesian automotive industry now lies in finding a sustainable business development model to propel itself on a trajectory that will enable it to take an independent place in the global automotive industry. This industry can function as an engine, transforming a low wage, labour intensive and developing economy into a higher wage, technology-intensive and developed economy. On the downside, however, the Indonesian automotive industry has become overly dependent on their Japanese patrons.

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## Supervisors' Conceptualisations of Creativity in Education Doctorates

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### ABSTRACT

Doctoral study is inherently a creative endeavour through which a student creates a scholarly contribution extending the knowledge boundaries of a discipline. However, creativity is not well-defined within the context of doctoral education. Supervisors play a key role in doctoral students' understanding of the creative process that leads to an original contribution. This article therefore explores the conceptualisation of creativity in doctoral education. A qualitative descriptive approach was followed in the research, starting with a theoretical conceptualisation of creativity within doctoral education as a basis for further inquiry. Ten experienced supervisors in a South African Faculty of Education described how they conceptualised creativity in guiding students along the doctoral journey by means of recounting their supervisory experiences. The results reveal that as a multi-dimensional concept, creativity is not limited to the eventual contribution the doctorate is supposed to make. Respondents narrated their understanding of creativity as a student attribute, an epistemological understanding, and an interaction with methodological processes.

**Keywords:** Creativity, doctoral education

### INTRODUCTION

Doctoral study is inherently a creative endeavour through which the student creates a scholarly contribution, extending the knowledge boundaries of a particular discipline. A variety of literature from across the world implies the notion of creativity as a central feature of doctoral education in that the student is expected to create an original, significant and independent knowledge contribution to a discipline (see the definitions of a doctorate as proposed by the Association of American Universities 1998, in Lovitts, 2005; the Australasian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, 2007, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2001, and the

United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008). The United States of America Council of Graduate Schools (1977, as quoted in Bargar & Duncan, 1982, p.1) goes so far as to proclaim the main purpose of a PhD as a preparation for "a lifetime of intellectual inquiry that manifests itself in creative scholarship and research." However, creativity is not well-defined within the context of doctoral education, even though it underlies the notion of *doctorateness* (Trafford & Leshem, 2009, p.305). Lovitts (2007) argues that conceptualisations – such as creativity – are not operationalised or well-defined in doctoral education. This lack of conceptualisation may

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make it difficult for students to understand what is expected of them, and this further complicates the task of supervisors who need to guide the students on their doctoral journey.

The question of conceptualising creativity in education is not new – in fact, educational theorists have grappled with possible explanations for the general notion of creativity for some time (Piaget, 1971; Torrance, 1988), but the way in which creativity is encapsulated in the highest degree awarded in higher education raises unique issues beyond a general conceptualization of creativity. Creativity is often used synonymously with terms such as originality. Barron (1995) sees originality as a component of the complex phenomenon of creativity, and the work of Lovitts (2007) positions originality as an eventual product of the (creative) doctoral process. The conceptual distinction MacKinnon (1970) and Sternberg & Lubart (1999) make between the creative process and the creative product may therefore be useful. While such contributions have enhanced our understanding of doctoral education, the literature focused on creativity as part of the doctoral process seems limited at present (Whitelock *et al.*, 2008). Thus, this study explored the conceptualisation of creativity in doctoral education from the perspective of university lecturers in a faculty of education who facilitate the creative endeavour of doctoral education.

#### *A Theoretical Conceptualization of Creativity in Doctoral Education*

A process view of creativity can be traced back to the Greek word *krainein*, which means to fulfil – and implies that people who fulfil their potential, who express an inherent drive or capacity, can be seen as creative (Evans & Deehan, 1988). Such a process-oriented view resonates with Pope's (2005, p. xvi, 11) definition of creativity as “the capability to make, do or become something fresh and valuable with respect to others as well as ourselves”, which involves “a grappling deep within the self and within one's relations with others; an attempt to wrest from

the complexities and contradictions we have internalised”. MacKinnon (1970) summarises that the creativity extends from simple problem solving, to the full realisation and expression of a person's potential. In doctoral education, the tasks of identifying and describing a research problem, selecting an appropriate approach to investigate the problem, collecting and analysing data, as well as writing research proposals and papers form parts of the creative process (Dewett *et al.*, 2005).

Sternberg & Lubart (1999) argue that creativity extends beyond the generation of novel ideas – it also includes an evaluative component in terms of problem solving as a part of the creative process. The creative product, according to Sternberg & Lubart (1999), is an original and appropriate contribution that has value and purpose, and these can be judged according to some external criteria. Creative products result from purposeful behaviour, and often lengthy and arduous processes (Hennesey & Amabile, 1988; MacKinnon, 1970; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), but which Pope (2005, p.12) still describes as “work at play.” In doctoral education, the creative product may manifest in the doctoral dissertation itself or in refereed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers.

Pope (2005) challenges definitions that only apply to the creative product as reductionist, and proposes that creativity not only be seen in terms of what it *does*, but also in the socio-historical underlying influences of *who*, *where*, and *how*. Meanwhile, literature suggests an emphasis on the creative product (Dewett *et al.*, 2005) which Pope (2005) explains as a mid-twentieth century, Western problem-solving response to social and technological changes. Dewett *et al.* (2005, p. 14), therefore, describe creativity as “a protracted process of creative engagement with many intermediate stops in the journey towards creative products.” Thus, creativity may have relevance to the individual and the wider society but it could also have an economic imperative (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

Creativity results from inquiries that are able to draw lasting support away from

competing scientific theories, facts or products, and is sufficiently open-ended to leave an array of problems for the new supporters to resolve (Kuhn, 1962), which Trafford & Leshem (2009, p. 311) refer to as “troublesome knowledge.” As such, creativity does not emerge suddenly, but it needs to develop and be fostered over time in an atmosphere that allows exploration and expression, regardless of the discipline or programme format (Jones, 1972).

Csikszentmihalyi (in Sternberg, 1999) and Kuhn (1962) confirm that creativity is often not the result of individual endeavour alone, but rather of social systems that judge the merit of individual work. Social systems refer to the cultural domain (such as the academic discipline), and the social field (consisting of competent judges, including supervisors) (Csikszentmihalyi, in Sternberg, 1999). The process of creativity can be observed where the individual, domain and field meet, in what Kuhn (1962) describes as “revolutions in science”, Feyerabend (1975) calls “epistemological anarchism”, and Foucault (1972) refers to as “epistemological breaks.” Creativity may result in changes in how reality is viewed within a social system (consisting of the domain and field), or what Taylor (1959, in Torrance, 1988) refers to as “emergentive creativity.” Such changes may serve as evidence of doctorateness. Doctoral students should therefore be able and even encouraged to challenge the existing social systems if creativity is to be fostered. However, differences occur in the social systems within which doctoral education takes place (Pope, 2005). Kuhn (1962) notes that creativity may be more difficult in domains where rigid boundaries occur as changes require a redefinition of the permissible problems, concepts and explanations within the discipline and its scientific community. Hodges (1995, p. 35) agrees and argues that a duality exists in the way doctoral students are supervised within disciplines. On the one hand, students are expected to produce an “original” contribution, which implies an “obligation to change the whole field of knowledge in some undefined way, which is always at risk of being overtaken by some other work”. On the other

hand, guidelines and policies within disciplines, institutions and at a national level are much more guarded, seemingly making little allowance for the “anarchy” the notion of originality might imply, and which may alienate the student from the discipline.

Pope's (2005, p.66) notion of creativity as co-becoming, Maslow's (1959, p.93) explanation of integrated creativity and Bohm's (1996, p. 48) arguments around participatory thinking may be valuable in bridging the above-mentioned duality and in exploring the role of the supervisor in a conceptualisation of creativity. Pope (2005) argues that learning can only be truly creative when all stakeholders' roles in the creative process are acknowledged. MacKinnon (1970) argues that traditional approaches to learning (e.g. rote learning, learning of unrelated facts, repetitive learning, and precise memorisation) do not foster creativity, and relate to an authoritarian, supervisor-controlled learning environment that may lead to “destructive friction” (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999, p. 270). MacKinnon (1970) warns that creativity should not be seen as something to be taught, but rather as developed by leading through example. Austin (2009, p.175) calls this approach “cognitive apprenticeship”, as it makes experts' thinking processes in understanding and addressing problems visible. Co-becoming implies that the supervisor becomes the co-creator of knowledge, which legitimises creativity in doctoral education as the collaboration between an established expert/researcher, and a novice researcher.

Frick (2009, pp. 40-41; 2010) argues that the notion of creativity opens the door to a more integrated view on the processes and eventual product(s) associated with doctoral education. As such, creativity can be conceptualised as a multi-faceted concept developed in various facets, including ontological (how to position themselves as scholars), axiological (how students integrate themselves into the values and ethics underlying the discipline), epistemological (how students negotiate their understanding of and contribution to the discipline), and methodological facets evident in both the processes and products associated

with doctoral education. Epistemological beliefs and methodological approaches become evident in a doctoral dissertation (the product), but ontological and axiological development is much harder to discern. Translating creativity into the doctoral process and eventual outcomes therefore needs to take place on various levels including ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology. If a student is only stimulated or allowed creativity in one or two of the levels, and the emphasis is on either process or product, creativity may suffer (Frick, 2010).

### METHODOLOGY

A qualitative descriptive approach was followed, as this methodological approach allows the researcher to be intersubjective as interpreter of the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A conceptual framework of creativity within doctoral education was used as a basis for further inquiry (Frick, 2010). Semi-structured interviews with ten experienced supervisors (professors) in a South African Faculty of Education explored how these supervisors conceptualise creativity in guiding students towards the eventual product in the form of a PhD dissertation. The particular doctoral programme is research-based, and student-supervisor interactions are mostly conducted on an individual and project-specific basis. Supervisors therefore play a key role in doctoral students' understanding of the creative process that leads to an original contribution.

The respondents were asked to narrate their understanding and practice of doctoral supervision based on their prior supervisory experiences. They were asked to keep the following question in mind when narrating their stories of supervision, namely, how they conceptualise creativity in doctoral education.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed by means of narrative inquiry. Johnson (2006) describes narrative inquiry as a way in which meaning can be made from lived experience. Pavlenko (2002) defines narrative inquiry as research which focuses on the socially-situated content of narratives. Ollerenshaw & Creswell (2002) make reference

to contextualized inquiry situated within a particular setting, while Phillion & Connelly (2004, p. 460) add 'context is crucial to meaning making', which serves to explain the limited nature of this explorative inquiry to a particular faculty at one university.

The idea of narrative space consisting of three interconnected dimensions which provide context for any particular story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was useful in the design and execution of the study. The three dimensions include: (a) the participants, in this case supervisors' own experiences in their interactions with their doctoral students; (b) the timing of the story, how it relates to both the past and the future; and (c) the setting or locality of the story. Any story can be positioned within the space created by these three interrelated dimensions. The space creates the context within which the story is understood, by both the narrator of the story and the narrative researcher – in this case relatively experienced doctoral supervisors reflecting on past and current experiences and insights as it pertains to creativity in doctoral education within the discipline of Education.

The data was analysed by means of narrative analysis and the major emerging threads (or narrative threads, as explained by Nieuwenhuis, 2007) are reported. The choice of voice (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 301) and the presence of the researcher in creating the narrative is justified in what Pillay (2005, p. 540) refers to as the researcher's "story of others stories" and Tierney's (2002, p. 392) notion of narrative reflexivity. Johnson & Golombek (2002, p. 4) also note the value of reflexivity in the narrative, in that "inquiry into experience ... can be educative if it enables us to reflect on our actions and then act with foresight". Respondents' anonymity is ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Each story told highlights the individualized nature of doctoral education, but there were also definite emerging themes on how the ten interviewed supervisors conceptualised creativity in doctoral education. The study does not aim to generalize, but rather explore the complexity of conceptualising creativity in doctoral education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' narratives were analysed as stories of their supervisory experiences. In reaction to my reference to the so-called original contribution commonly expected of doctoral candidates, many used this as a starting point for their discussion (the conundrum of the original contribution). They then proceeded to talk about how they conceptualise creativity in doctoral education (creativity as...).

### *The Conundrum of The Original Contribution*

While the work of Barron (1995) and Lovitts (2007) may have greatly contributed to a general understanding of creativity and eventual originality at the doctoral level, the respondents still found the notion of originality problematic. L pointed out how a differentiated understanding of what an original contribution entails is problematic in practice:

*What worries me is lecturers' different understandings of what it [the original contribution] is. Three years ago I had a bad experience, bad in the sense of my understanding [of the topic]. And the externals all agreed, but another person's understanding of what constituted this contribution was totally different. And it took the student a year longer, you, know, to make changes to make it even stronger. And this is the dilemma that you sit with people's understanding of what is an original contribution. It's totally different.*

D was quite explicit in problematising the conundrum of the original contribution, and preferred to steer away from this notion altogether:

*I doubt whether a person can ever make an original contribution. I would rather say that a person makes a contribution, firstly. And the contribution must be of such a nature that it is justifiable. Sometimes the focus is too much on*

*the original contribution and then the contribution made is not justifiable. So I would rather say you can make any contribution, but the contribution must be justifiable. For me the originality lies in how you can justify – the argument – rather than saying it is an original contribution. Because it sounds a bit presumptuous, or forward, to think that your contribution can be, can imply you have read everything that exists. Because how do you know your contribution is original? So I would say the contribution is maybe of such a nature that it's plausible enough to qualify for a doctoral study. I am rather careful of using the word originality because original would mean to me something that you have never thought of [before].*

E resonated with this view, and added that it is difficult to judge originality, and that it should not be seen as an absolute notion required in doctoral research:

*How do you decide if this thesis makes a contribution to shifting the boundaries of the discipline? ...when is an idea original? There are not ideas that can be original in an absolute sense. So you use other people's work, and you use other people's ideas and you extend on it in a way. So in an absolute sense there is not such thing as originality.*

K talked about original work as pioneering work, with an emphasis on the applied nature of research:

*Now my perception is that research must be pioneering work. ... I think anything that eventually makes a difference – and this is a very loaded word – because we say original contribution – what do we actually want to know by asking this? I think*

*the one [thing] is what knowledge gap does this fill? If it fills a knowledge gap then the examiners are happy. But I still ask: so what? Fill the knowledge gap but what is going to change out there? I don't know if this is creative enough? I don't think it's worth pursuing a doctoral study if there's no creativity. This is what this can bring to the community for whom the research was done. And I think that would be the ultimate of the research, to say this is actually the output of this research and what it brings. Because that's where most research falls flat.*

These results support Hodges' (1995) claims that originality is an equivocal concept with is problematic within the often set boundaries of disciplines, even though originality often features in policy documents on doctoral education. The distinction between originality and creativity in doctoral seem to be vague in both literature (see Hodges, 1995; Lovitts, 2005), and practice (as the above results indicate). Although neither originality nor creativity in doctoral education is easily defined, creativity seemed to be less troublesome and more legitimate and defensible within doctoral education in the particular context. The respondents conceptualised creativity as a student attribute, an epistemological understanding, or an interaction with methodological processes.

#### *Creativity as a Student Attribute*

The data suggest that the respondents could relate to the various factors Sternberg & Lubart (1999) which refer to as student-specific influences on creative development. Intellect seems to be an important consideration, which is understandable as a PhD requires an intellectual engagement with and inquiry into a particular issue or problem. R and K linked creativity and intellect in the following ways:

*I don't think it's worth pursuing a doctoral study if there's no creativity. It would be interesting to construct the word, because I would see creativity as intellect, there's a huge amount of intellect, there's the ability to insight, and the ability to bring that together... [Respondent R]*

*It [creativity and intelligence] is closely related, I think. So to be creative I also think you need some grey matter. I don't think you can be very creative if you don't have the material [intellect]. [Respondent K]*

If creativity requires an interplay between intellectual abilities, knowledge, personality, styles of thinking, motivation and environment (as postulated by Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), then intelligence seems to be necessary for creativity, but not a sufficient condition in itself (Nickerson, 1999) and one would therefore need to look wider than only intelligence to understand creativity.

Frick (2009), Dall'Alba & Barnacle (2007), as well as Wisker & Robinson (2009) emphasize on the importance of ontological development in doctoral education. The respondents in this study also told stories of students' ontological development, and what gave these students the courage to take "creative leap(s)" (Jones, 1972, p. 25). F referred to students' cultural capital as a defining influence on their ability to progress, which seemed to move beyond intelligence:

*... with cultural capital I mean what we possess before we come to the PhD ... It calls in history, it calls in family, it calls in community, it calls in a sense of being educated, educatedness. And the two people who made original contributions, established a relatively (although not unproblematic) seamless connection between supervisor, themselves and*

*what they were researching. They were able to establish for themselves a research process momentum that enabled them to establish a synergy with supervisor. Intellectual synergy with supervisor. And establish a synergy with the processes they needed to do that. They could understand what that entailed. And those people had the cultural capital. For these people there was a congruence between the school that they went to, the university that they went to. So their cultural capital was congruent, with requirements of an original contribution in a PhD... [They] had to establish a process that wasn't an intellectual process. It was a systemic process they had to engage in.*

He continued to tell the stories of the ontological journeys of two particular students, who brought vastly different forms of cultural capital into the supervisory relationship, but who both succeeded in establishing the congruence he mentioned above:

*One of the two students I work with best, because she's so creative, this student has an ontology, nothing will stop her. ...this student for example, ... she didn't come through the university system. She's got four kids, she's divorced. What propels her through all of this, she's got a hell of a plak [attitude], she's a bit robust and she's a bit rude and stuff like that. But she pushes herself. And she can see the damn thing, and she can run after it. And she can find and bribe people to give her money to do things [laughs]. So, she's got something in herself. So I have to deal with the affective.*

*...there was this one student, I could see... he exceeded the expectations way beyond what I thought was the start of a PhD. I saw him once over those four*

*years. I supervised him over the email. [The student's country of origin] was involved in a war. You can't get an environment that's more challenging. This guy he had the ability and the understanding of discipline. ... This guy was just continuously working. He had a cultural capital that didn't need me to do the affective stuff. He took care of himself in what he needed to do. He knew exactly what the thing entailed and I needed to promote that. ...and that was easy because he could push the creativity boundary. When it came to three and a half years into it, I realized this man will not be able to pull the thesis together, while there is a conflict state. And then the only thing that I did was I brought him in and he klapped [completed] that thesis, brilliantly.*

Pope's (2005, xvi, 11) definition of creativity as "the capability to make, do or become something fresh and valuable with respect to others as well as ourselves", which involves "a grappling deep within the self and within one's relations with others: an attempt to wrest from the complexities and contradictions we have internalised" is apparent in these stories. These and other stories spoke of students' seemingly difficult circumstances, but that students' maturity and autonomy enabled them to eventually take the necessary creative leaps (Jones, 1972). The independence and maturity evident in the two stories above was mirrored in the personal reflection of L:

*With creativity, to establish that originality, comes autonomy. You know that their individuality, it's about freedom really, maturity yes. So it's the maturity to dare taking that jump. I always tell students I want you to look out when you're starting to overtake me. And then I'll say ok, you're on the push.*

Autonomy was also emphasized in the stories told by R, who referred to autonomy as cue alertness, self-direction, an ability to handle critique and intelligence, facilitated by experience in practice. The inability to handle critique and the clashes between students and supervisors is not unexpected, as Jones (1972) describes creative students as non-conformists, which may result in tension and adjustment problems, even though such students often strive for independence.

R also talked about passion as an element in creative development, which was emphasized in the majority of conversations, as evident in K's quote thereafter:

*A person should never enter a D and think I just want to follow this research process, there's a lot of passion and a lot of other stuff, many times also emotion, that goes into a D study. That's really why a D study is there, to put people on another level of thought and functioning. If someone does not have an attunement about what she [sic] wants to work on, and have sort of a passion to address and solve that problem, I think you'll struggle. You cannot, especially over a longer period, you cannot get someone enthusiastic about something you are enthusiastic about, but not that person necessarily. It is not just a procedure to complete. I think this is where creativity plays a role. [Respondent R]*

*If a student doesn't have a passion that is linked to feeling, it won't be a good study. Because otherwise, they won't put the energy and the commitment into it. And I don't think you can disconnect feeling from that, because of what it takes out of a student. ... And then you have the promoter, whether they match. What the doctoral student wants to do, and what the promoter wants to do – you need to get that match as well. [Respondent K]*

Creativity as a student's attribute was evident from the data, but in itself seemingly insufficient as an explanation for creativity in doctoral education. An epistemological understanding also featured prominently in the data as an undercurrent to understanding creativity.

#### *Creativity as Epistemological Understanding*

The importance of an epistemology in respondents' understanding of creativity in doctoral education is not surprising, as creativity demands knowledge and immersion in the field of study in identifying problems and gaps in the field in order to move beyond the existing perspectives and to create something new (Dewett *et al.*, 2005; MacKinnon, 1970; Nickerson, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). An epistemological understanding seems to be important throughout the doctoral journey. In order for this understanding to be creative, however, it requires identifying gaps in current knowledge and then moving beyond what was known (as K explains):

*First there must be a huge knowledge gap filled by nothing else. Nothing else. Which means you must be comfortable to enter space that's unknown. In your literature review, you're only working with what's known. Nothing is unknown in a literature review. So what are you going to do with that to enter the unknown? And to stay in some form of integrity. Now one person may dare to go into the unknown and for others it may be more uncomfortable. So the only way in which that person can stay within integrity, is to show how he/she is justifiable. That takes a lot of creativity. To take all this stuff, all these worlds, to get a bridge and say this is how these worlds fit together.*

F similarly referred to a particular kind of synthesis as part of what could be called creativity in doctoral work:

*You're making an empirically based argument to show different nuances, to add to the literature, as opposed to confirm the literature. And you know I have to be very honest, and say of my six students whom I have, about two of them did original creative PhDs. Others did excellent syntheses, with empirical base, that supports the synthesis. As opposed to pushing the synthesis. The other two did excellent empirical work, who I think did original contributions, but challenged the prevailing synthesis. To then construct, to make an original contribution beyond existing work.*

He went further to explain what he called a generative process in doctoral work, and that this generative process demanded epistemological fluidity, which D described as creatively immersing yourself in the current discourses.

*And you have to understand that a PhD in form is also generative. There's a generative process that goes on in that PhD. That's why a PhD is never done until it's done. And that's why you'll write it ten times over and over again. And my sense is that we're also dealing with changing epistemologies. We're not dealing with static epistemologies. If the world is mobile and fluid, then epistemologically you have to have a lens that captures the mobility [Respondent F].*

*I don't believe anyone can tell me anything creativity if you haven't read the preceding debates, about where we are and where we stand now. So what this tells me is if you are creative, there is a place where you start. Then you can disagree, build or extend further. That, for me, is creativity to an extent. Creativity means to me that I can describe or explore a theoretical point different to what was intended before, that is very creative to me. I like what*

*Derrida says to me, he says if you talk about creativity, you talk about critique. You have the ability to explore new possibilities, you have the ability to pursue a diversity of interpretations. You have the ability to look beyond the given, and that to me is highly creative. ... And creativity will be more evident in people's work who engages in depth with their discourses. You must initiate yourself within the discourses. You have to be initiated into the discourses before you can begin to think creatively [Respondent D].*

L added that supervisors guide this process, but rarely have control over what students eventually add to the field of study.

Epistemologically speaking, creativity thus also manifested itself in how doctoral students were able to become experts in their field of study. L talked about this notion of creativity as eventual expertise in the field based on the experience in working with students and his own experience:

*I always tell the student when we enter the oral, listen here you are the fundi in this area now. You know more than us, you know more than the person [examiner]. They evaluated you. You are now the expert. You are going to be the doctor on this. As [his supervisor] told me, remember the guys are now going to consult you on that which you have put on the table there.*

E summarized that creativity as an epistemological concern could be viewed in different ways, and should not be seen in isolation from the methodology of the study.

*I think there are different ways in which you can view creativity. The first is that you look at the topic itself and see whether the topic, the question actually, you look at creativity there.*

*And it can also be in the particular genre within which the person writes, where creativity can come in where people move away from how it was done conventionally. And the third is how people work methodologically in their thesis. So I would think there is actually a lot of room for creativity.*

### *Creativity as Interaction with Methodological Processes*

In doctoral education, the tasks of identifying and describing a research problem, selecting an appropriate approach to investigate the problem, collecting and analysing data, as well as writing research proposals and papers form part of the creative process (Dewett *et al.*, 2005). This process takes place within a particular methodological framework focused on the research problem, which the R emphasized as an important consideration in creativity.

*I question the thing about a creative problem. A problem as such cannot be creative. But someone can see, or identify a problem in a creative way. I think this is important. And if that problem is seen in a creative manner, one can go about solving the problem creatively. Because you get people who tell you I want to do a PhD, what can I do it on? So you [the supervisor] must identify the problem. People who don't have the vaguest notion what they want to study. And these are very difficult people to work with. ... Additionally to the whole thing of creativity, one must maybe think of creative problem-solving. Because that is what a study is, a study of a problem. There's a problem statement and a problem question. And actually it's about how the student creatively does problem solving to address the formulated problem. ... My point of departure is more to look at creative problem solving, and not only creativity. Because I*

*distinguish between creative problem solving and creativity. Because creative problem solving follows a type of process, while creativity is more of an attribute. I use that perspective and the creativity is in that. And you must master the methodology. Go and read about the methodology and different methodologies so that you can make choices to fit your research question.*

F and E described the methodological choices students make as some of the most creative elements of the doctoral process, as follows:

*And methodologically speaking, it's the most creative moments in the thesis. But what's your methodological issue, what's the research question? Now what method do I use to answer that research question? Can you see the connectedness between the two? ... But that's not how it works, you've got to have the research question, not completely apart from the research methods. And if it's generative, then the methods unfold. And there's all these post-positivist methodologies that you can generate methods and so on. [Respondent F]*

*So I think there are different examples of what you can do. The one thing is that you can tell different narratives or stories in the field. And that is a way of being creative, that you can look at a particular problem and you can tell a positivist story and you can tell a post-modern story, you can tell a critical story of the same issue. And this is one way of doing it [research] creatively. The presentation of the data. [Respondent E]*

K agreed with Sternberg & Lubart (1999) that creativity needs to result in an original and appropriate contribution that has value and

purpose, and that such a contribution can be judged according to some external criteria.

*A study may be very meaningful to the student. Most students choose something that they have some personal commitment to. A passion. Which becomes very meaningful and creative to them, but not necessarily for the examiners, and you need that match eventually.*

The process underlying such an end result therefore needs to be rigorous in order to meet doctoral standards, but students may not always find it easy to match creative work to rigorous processes.

### CONCLUSION

The results of this small-scale study in Education highlighted the conceptual and practical difficulties in pinpointing concepts such as originality and creativity in doctoral education – even though such concepts often occur in documents describing the intended outcomes of a doctorate.

The interviewed supervisors confirmed Hodge's (1995) argument that the concept of originality does not easily fit into the confines of academic disciplines. Creativity seemed to be a more legitimate pursuit.

The conceptualisation of creativity in doctoral education is multi-dimensional. A conceptualisation of doctoral creativity needs to encompass aspects of both process and product in a transformative manner in the various phases of the research process. The data suggested that creativity could be conceptualized as a student attribute, but that it also has epistemological and methodological foundations in doctoral education. Creativity needs to transform students so that aspects of self, knowledge and action interact (Parker, 2003). MacKinnon (1970) summarises that creativity extends from simple problem solving, to the full realisation and expression of a person's potential.

As supervisors, we need to create environments that motivate students to become creative, to provide a means for them to be creative, and the opportunity to showcase their creativity, as Johnson-Laird (1988, p. 208) claims, “[c]reativity is like murder – both depend on motive, means, and opportunity.”

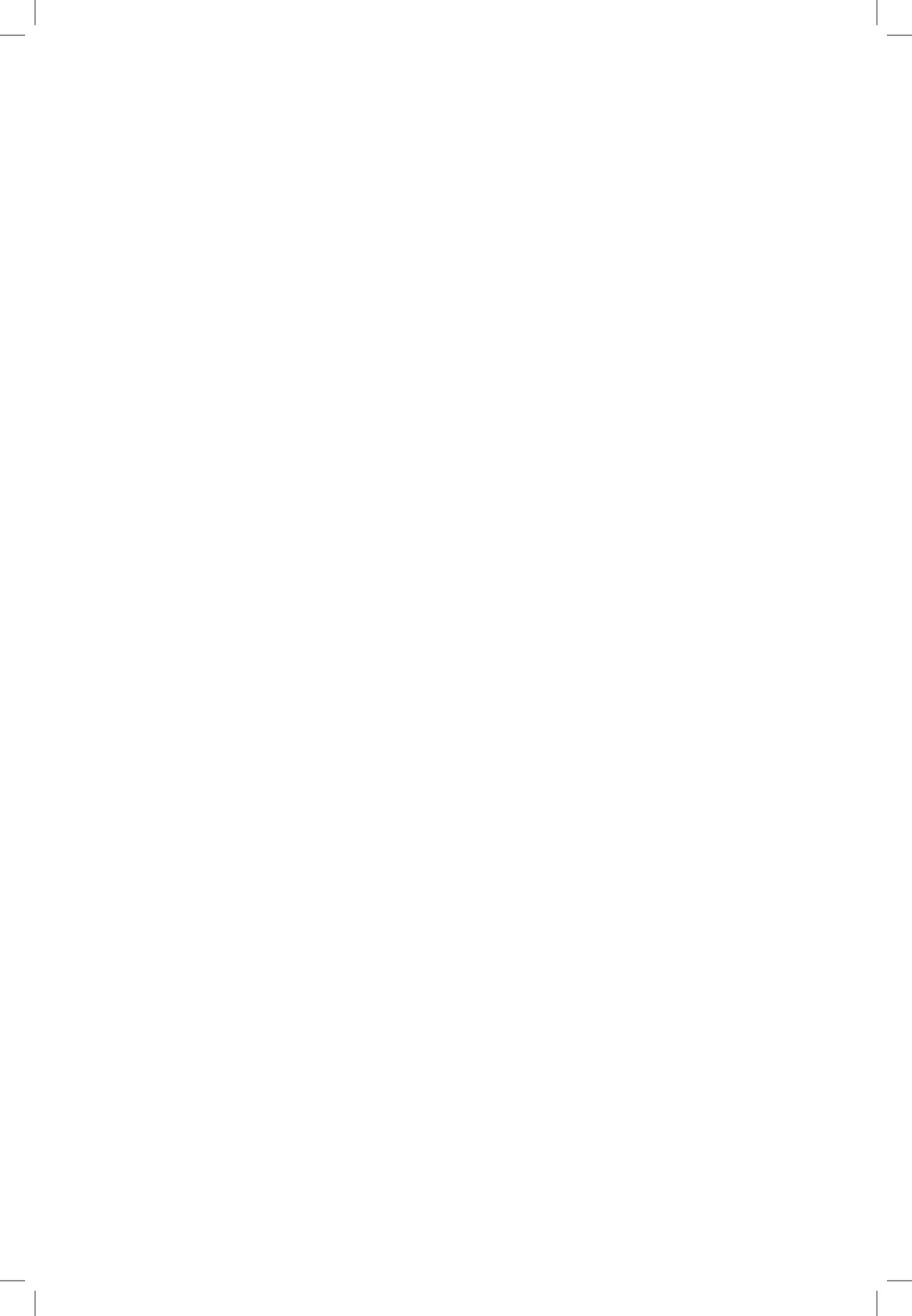
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## Developing Researchers in Education through A Doctoral Programme: A Challenge in the Context of Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

This is a reflective paper on the challenges of developing educational researchers through doctoral education in the context of Pakistan. These challenges are discussed from the perspective of the PhD programme in education offered by the Institute for Educational Development of the Aga Khan University, a private university in Pakistan. The analysis was based on the author's experiences of developing and remaining actively engaged with the programme for more than seven years covering the period of admission of the first three cohorts of doctoral students from the year 2002 to 2009. First, the main features of the programme are described and then the major challenges faced are highlighted. A number of issues of concern have been identified; developing PhD students into independent learners, academic sustainability of the programme in the face of faculty attrition, maintaining a balance in quality assurance measures and ensuring financial sustainability of the programme. Some of these findings are unique to AKU-IED doctoral programme and some resonate with other programmes both in the developing and the developed world. Recommendations are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Developing world, doctoral education, education doctorate, education researcher

### INTRODUCTION

There is a great paucity of research in education in Pakistan, which is at least partially due to a lack of people trained in undertaking such research. The Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) has attempted to fill this gap by developing researchers in education through a PhD programme in Education which admitted its first cohort of students in 2004. The author, by reviewing key documents and reflecting on her experience of both developing the programme proposal and implementing it over a period of seven years, discusses some of the major challenges faced in the context of Pakistan.

This covers the period of admission of the first three cohorts of doctoral students from the year 2002 to 2009.

From independence in 1947 to the 1980s, university education in Pakistan was the responsibility of the state and all universities were in the public sector. In 1983, however, policies were adopted to allow the charter of private universities for the first time in Pakistan. This led to a rapid growth in both private universities and programmes that are market oriented and in high demand, such as medicine, business/IT, etc.

As far as the doctorate in education is concerned, more universities in the public sector

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offer it than do those in the private sector. Exact statistics related to the number of PhD graduates in education from these universities are difficult to obtain, however, these numbers are bound to be very limited because the preparation of PhD prepared academics has been very limited in Pakistan. As a result, there is a severe dearth of PhD qualified human resource in the country. According to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) statistics only 25% of the teachers in universities in Pakistan have doctoral qualification (HEC, 2005). Doctoral preparation is not only needed for university faculty but for educational researchers as well. Clark states (2005, p. 61) that:

There is a critical need for research on education in Pakistan. With all the money being poured into education, it is essential to be conducting research on a peer-reviewed basis according to international standards of research. It is essential to know what works and what does not and why.

The formation of the Higher Education Commission in 2002 and the massive infusion of funds into doctoral education have registered a sharp increase in the enrolment of students in PhD programmes. HEC statistics show that 4500 students are undertaking PhD studies in Pakistan and another 5000 scholars are pursuing their PhD abroad. The majority of these scholars, nonetheless, are in science and technology. HEC has been critiqued for paying less attention to the development of social sciences as compared to the physical and natural sciences (Osama, Najam, Kassim-Lakha & King, 2009).

Another major criticism of doctoral programmes in Pakistan is that they are unable to support scholarship and consequently do not produce good quality research and researchers. Hoodbhoy concurs and writes:

While there are brilliant exceptions among Pakistani PhDs, most such graduates lack elementary knowledge of their fields...Although only a few meaningful

quantitative indicators of faculty quality exists, it is highly probable that a large number of university teachers, many with PhDs in mathematics and physics, would probably fail the 'A' level examinations [administered by Cambridge University to 17-18 year old students] in these subjects" (1998, p. 262).

It is in this climate that AKU-IED decided in 2001 to develop a PhD programme to reduce the severe shortage of people qualified to undertake research in education. Considering the poor reputation of doctoral programmes in Pakistan, three aspects were essential for development of a rigorous programme; to put into place policies and procedures that would ensure quality, to employ faculty of high calibre and appropriate qualification so that the programme enjoyed credibility and provide sustainable and committed resources to doctoral studies. To achieve these, three objectives have not been easy. To develop trained and highly qualified human resources within Pakistan was the first priority. For this purpose, AKU-IED took a long-term view of faculty development and a programme was put into place. Competent AKU-IED faculty and master's graduates were offered scholarships to undertake doctoral work in universities in the UK and North America subject to serving AKU-IED for a five-year period. In this way, over a period of ten years more than 20 faculty members were prepared for eventually teaching in the doctoral programme. An international PhD Programme Development Committee chaired by the author developed the proposal for a PhD Programme in Education for the Board of Trustees (Halai, Dean, Farah, Macleod, Shamim, Memon & Pring, 2004). It included policies and procedures to ensure quality in the programme. However, AKU-IED continues to grapple with issues pertaining to financial and academic sustainability of the programme (Connor & Halai, 2006).

*Brief Description of AKU-IED PhD Programme in Education*

The aim of AKU-IED's PhD Programme in Education is to develop high quality educational researchers able and prepared to conduct research in the *context* of the developing world with a *focus* on curriculum, teaching, learning, and leadership (Halai *et al.*, 2004). The programme comprises coursework, internship, and research work leading to submission of a thesis. It is a full-time programme that is expected to take four years for completion. The programme is conducted in English and the students are expected to write all the assignments and dissertations in English. Therefore, it is mandatory for the applicants to obtain a score of 6.5 or higher on the IELTS (or equivalent).

The first year is devoted to coursework and the second year is allocated to the internship and writing of the research proposal. The last two years are devoted to data collection, analysis, and writing the thesis. The formal coursework is spread over two 16-week semesters in Year 1 and is offered in three areas, namely: (a) educational research, (b) education and development, and (c) curriculum, teaching, learning, and leadership. The internship is a unique aspect of the programme. It comprises of 8-10 weeks of work-experience attachment to a programme or an organization concerned with research and/or development to give the student a broader intellectual experience. The attachment is normally expected to be to a non-university setting to expose students to research undertaken outside the university.

The PhD Programme Development Committee was cognizant of the constraints within which this programme was to be offered and hence a very limited array of courses were developed which were mandatory for all students. The small number of faculty available to teach in the programme and the small number of students enrolled does not allow the possibility of offering a larger number of courses. Hence, the students do not have a choice in the selection of courses - all students have to take all the courses in an almost lock-

step fashion. However, the advantage is that it ensures that the students take a sequence of appropriate courses to enable an optimum doctoral experience.

A maximum of six students were selected on merit on the basis of high level performance in a master programme (or its equivalent) in a relevant field. Admission to the programme is undertaken every alternate year. The three cohorts under discussion include 14 students (8 males and 6 females) of which 3 are from East Africa and 11 are from Pakistan. Six (i.e. more than half) Pakistani students are from the Gilgit-Baltistan province and the rest are from Sindh, where the AKU-IED is situated. Two students graduated in 2009.

Initially at least six of the eight courses were taught by a team of two, which included a PhD qualified full-time faculty member from AKU-IED, and one faculty member from a Partner University outside Pakistan. Two partner universities have played an important role in teaching in the programme, namely, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada and Oxford University Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK. The faculty members from the two Universities came to teach generally for one/two weeks during a 16-week semester in the programme - one exception was an eight-week teaching assignment. However, this particular support in teaching was slowly withdrawn. The fourth cohort that was admitted recently was entirely taught by the AKU-IED faculty.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for writing this reflective paper on the doctoral programme entailed recollecting my experiences of managing and teaching/supervision in the programme supported by a detailed reading of the contents of four kinds of documents, as described below:

- a. Minutes of the PhD Programme Committee (PPC) meetings from September 2004 to June 2009. This committee was formulated once the programme began formally and the PhD Programme Development Committee

was disbanded. The PPC consisted of all the faculty members of AKU-IED who taught or supervised students in the programme. This Committee met once a month in the early stages of the programme but later on reduced the meetings to only once a semester. These minutes provided a view of the day-to-day conduct of the programme.

- b. Reports of the five 3-day meetings of the international PhD Advisory Committee (PAC) held in Karachi every year. The PAC (as it was generally called) consisted of three members from the partner universities outside Pakistan, AKU-IED faculty teaching in the programme and the Director. The main objective was to advise the Director and Head of the programme on quality related issues in the programme. The first year of the programme was an exception when the PAC met twice in an academic year – February and August 2005. This forum provided an opportunity to discuss key issues relevant to the programme and find ways to move forward in light of international norms and policies.
- c. The report of the Mid-Programme review conducted by an International Review Committee in January 2007 provided an objective assessment of the programme by experts in the field.
- d. Official documents such as PhD Proposal, Assessment Policies, Admission policies, etc.

The reading of these documents provided an understanding of the major challenges faced and the manner in which some of them were resolved (or remain unresolved). The lens used for reading these documents was Schon's (1987) reflection-on-action, a process that takes place after the experience has taken place. This kind of reflection provides insights into and an opportunity to examine experience and to draw conclusions concerning future actions. It also allows the possibility of providing a conceptual clarity which may be absent in the throes of action.

The main responsibility of developing the PhD Programme was deputed to the 6-member international PhD Programme Development Committee with membership from both within AKU-IED and from universities outside Pakistan and which the researcher chaired till the 2004 when the proposal for the programme was accepted by the AKU Board of Trustees. Then, the researcher was nominated to lead the implementation of the programme which was for the three cohorts of PhD students before stepping down after completing the two terms as the Head of the PhD programme in June 2009. During this seven-year period, the researcher was even more convinced that developing countries such as Pakistan needed strong doctoral programmes to develop their own research agendas and research methods to help understand and solve national problems and develop a research practice that explores local ways of knowing, teaching and research (Smith, 1999).

#### *Challenges in the Context of Pakistan*

The challenges faced by the doctoral programmes in Pakistan and other countries in the developing world, often are referred to as the South, have many similarities. They are characterized by deficits of all kinds of resources (Altbach, 2002; The Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). However, AKU-IED has attempted to overcome or reduce this resource gap and offered a rigorous programme.

#### *Developing Independent Learners*

To become independent learners and how to teach this skill are the goals to be achieved and processes to be learnt by the PhD students as well as faculty members. These would definitely take time and a lot of efforts (Biggs, 2003; Gow & Kember, 1990). During the 4-5 years of their studies, the students demonstrated perseverance, despite severe odds (including death of spouse, severe, and debilitating illness) and they continued their doctoral studies. However, it appeared that in the areas of academic and scholarly learning, tutors had to

urge and coax students to be more independent in their thinking. At least in the beginning, they appeared highly dependent on their teachers. This was evident by the substantial resistance offered by the students to come prepared to class with their readings completed and to take control of their own learning by initiating discussions and raising questions. This was a regular topic of discussion in the PhD Programme Committee meetings. A part of the problem was of course, the students' difficulty in reading and comprehending academic texts despite their IELTS scores of 6.5 or higher. The resistance they offered was different, i.e. there was a tacit (and sometimes overt) desire for the faculty to "teach" them what was required. For instance, the students articulated a need in at least some courses for lectures rather than interactive classroom discussions. Furthermore, students requested very detailed guidelines for assignments and saw attempts by the faculty to let them interpret at least a part of the assignments themselves as confusing.

One reason why doctoral students showed resistance towards independent learning could be due to what Hofstede (2006, p. 7) called power distance. In a large international study encompassing 40 countries, including Pakistan, Hofstede investigated cultural differences in the value systems, and identified four main dimensions, which was later increased to five, describing them as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and femininity, and long-term orientation. The five dimensions have been critiqued for being reductionist, among other things (Fang, 2003; McSweeney, 2002; Tayeb, 1994). However, replication studies have yielded very similar results, pointing to stability of the dimensions across time and possibly nations. Other studies which were based in Pakistan have also used the five dimensions productively (Islam, 2004) and hence, two of these dimensions were used in the paper because of their relevance for the doctoral programme.

Power distance and individualism vs. collectivism will be discussed in the paper as it

is pertinent to the PhD programme. Hofstede (2006) defines power distance as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally and has identified certain characteristics intrinsic to large power distance societies like Pakistan. This list includes affinity towards teacher-centred education, seeing elders in the society with both respect and fear and acceptance of hierarchy as existential inequality rather than inequality of roles established for convenience. The students were socialized in a large power distance society and had acquired quite a number of characteristics mentioned above. On the other hand, AKU-IED wanted them to become independent learners which is a quality more readily developed and sustained by small power distance institutions.

The problem is further exacerbated because AKU-IED is a mix of both small and large power distance organizations. For instance, AKU-IED encourages all the students to address their faculty members by their first names instead of adding the prefix of Dr. or Professor, as is the norm in other universities in Pakistan. The faculty and the management, including the Director of AKU-IED, often eat with the students and staff in the cafeteria and queue up for their food. This is unlike the normal practice of having separate facilities for the students and the faculty members. In the class, particularly at the doctoral level, the students are encouraged to discuss openly and frankly their ideas and to even strongly disagree with their professors. On the other hand, there are a number of practices at AKU-IED which are more reflective of a large power distance organization. For instance, the deference demonstrated by the management of AKU and IED to the views expressed by the faculty members from UK, Canada and Australia who teach or supervise in the programme as compared to the local faculty. Another example is that there is very little mingling of students and faculty (including supervisors) at the social and informal level. AKU-IED gives mixed signals to the students. Hence, it takes doctoral

students some time to be able to mediate the value systems within AKU-IED and become socialized into them.

Most Asian and African societies value collectivism where people are born in large families or clans; they value belonging to a group and have the “we” consciousness rather than “I” way of thinking (Islam, 2004; Jandt, 2001, p. 200). The stress is on belonging and harmony rather than on speaking one’s mind. The purpose of education is learning how to do rather than learning how to learn (Hofstede, 2006, p. 10). A large majority of the PhD students in the programme are from the regions which exhibit a strong collectivist culture. It is being a part of this culture that makes it difficult for them to disagree with each other or their tutors. In a sense despite being in Pakistan, they were exposed to and encouraged to inculcate the values of independence and individualism which are foreign to the Pakistani society. By the end of their doctoral studies, the students accomplished the harder task of a “conceptual addition” as opposed to a “conceptual change” where they were able to pick and choose the dimensions of power distance and collectivism to exhibit at AKU and to exhibit outside the University (Barnett & Hodson, 2001).

#### *Management of Student Learning*

As the Head of the programme for the first five years, the researcher was surprised to find that a great deal of time was spent in negotiating and renegotiating deadlines for assignments and other institutional activities, such as internship, PhD seminars, etc. Partly, this was due to the poor time management and students’ need for some feedback. The first PAC meeting minutes documents the suggestion that, “Wherever possible, assignments with a built-in formative component” will be planned for the students (AKU-IED, February 2005, section 2.5.6). Hence, as part of this strategy, the faculty decided to build in interim milestones within the assignments/activities so that the students would be required to share a draft outline of their paper some time before the final deadline or to make

a presentation before finalizing their report, etc. The tutors found that most of the students tended to ignore these milestones if they were non-graded. Or, they submitted ill-prepared drafts outlined in haste. In other words, the tendency of the students to miss deadlines continued. Meanwhile, delays and missed deadlines caused difficulty in a programme, as already stated earlier, which had little flexibility in the first year to allow students to take additional time for coursework. However, this problem was reduced by shifting the responsibility of submitting assignments on due dates to the Registrar’s office that did not have authority to extend deadlines or to accept papers that exceeded word limits and rigidly adhered to the policy of deducting points for late submission of assignments (AKU-IED Assessment Policy).

It was also challenging to help students to complete their programme in the relatively short period of four years and provide them with the opportunities such as internship (mandatory) and to study visit outside Pakistan (optional). Particularly as these four years included a whole year of intense coursework – eight courses spread over two semesters. The PhD programme has been critiqued for being too packed with things to do, leaving little room for reflection and other intellectual pursuits by the mid-programme review.

One option would be to reduce the coursework but the standard of higher education and research in the social sciences is very poor in Pakistan (Zaidi, 2002). It is absolutely essential that the programme maintains a strong taught component to ground students in research methods as well as both the theories and practice of education and development. Therefore, any strategy to reduce coursework does not appear feasible. Suggestions to increase the time to complete the programme to more than four years have met with resistance because this also means finding more funds to support the students in an already very difficult funding climate. Additionally, students would find it very hard to obtain study leave for more than four years as it is a full-time programme and at this point, doing it on part-time basis is not even an option.

However, the experience with students who have graduated or are close to completion shows that all of them took (or will take) more than four years to complete.

*Quality Assurance with the Support from Partner Universities in the Developed World*

Quality assurance in doctoral programmes in the universities in Pakistan is dependent on peer-review and external scrutiny as it does in most universities of the world. At AKU-IED, peer review is also the backbone of quality assurance processes. However, the foundational idea is to include experienced academics from the universities outside Pakistan (read West) to be a part of the: (a) teaching team for the taught courses, (b) supervision committees of students, (c) external validation of student assignments in coursework, (d) examination of thesis by two experts from “technologically advanced countries” as mandated by HEC (<http://www.hec.gov.pk>). In addition, and as already been mentioned, the programme is supported by an international PhD Advisory Committee (PAC). The HEC requires that the thesis be examined by two external examiners, while the other measures are peculiar to AKU-IED and demonstrate an excessive dependence on the North for validation.

However, these measures have been very helpful in a number of ways. Among other, they give confidence to AKU-IED doctoral supervisors and teachers about teaching and supervising at the PhD level. For example, after the first semester of the first programme, it was seen that AKU-IED faculty was much harder in the assessment of student assignments than the members of the PAC. The external scrutiny of the grading process of the course assignments, both within a course and across courses, gave both the faculty and students confidence that uniform grading standards are implemented across all courses and within each course. Meanwhile, the examination process demonstrated that the rigorous quality assurance process had paid great dividends to students and their supervisors as their theses were rated of

high quality and received offers for publications in international journals.

However, an aspect that needs attention is the level to which the development of new knowledge and research agendas in the South will be guided by academics in the North. AKU-IED must have robust quality assurance mechanisms if the doctoral programme is to maintain and sustain quality, but the assumption that scholars from the North will be better able to assure the quality than scholars from the South needs to be interrogated. An unintended consequence of this manner of ensuring quality is that we may be allowing the North to be the gatekeepers of the knowledge generation process and that may stifle the development of new and local ways of knowing. Scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999; 2005) challenge the Western ways of knowing and researching and have called for the “decolonization” of methodologies and for new agendas of research for the indigenous people. There is a danger of the research emanating from Pakistan to be seen as “research through Imperial eyes” (Smith 1999, p. 56). Thus, it is important for supervisors and PhD students to remain conscious of this “gaze” and allow alternate interpretations to emerge and not become marginalized.

*Financial Sustainability*

There are pressing demands from all sections of the society to make higher education more accountable and cost-effective in the delivery of educational programmes (Mok, 1999, p. 118). “New managerialism” as defined by Utley (2001, p. 1) means that the “imposition of a powerful management body that overrides professional skills and knowledge. It keeps discipline under tight control and is driven by efficiency, external accountability and monitoring, and an emphasis on standards.” The concept of the university as a corporate institution that should provide clients what they want at an optimal price is an idea that has slowly but surely penetrated both the public and private sector universities in Pakistan (Szerkeres, 2006).

The admission to the first cohort of the PhD programme coincided with the change in the management of AKU which partially brought the ideas related to the new management with them and had partially acceded to them because of the financial crisis which has engulfed the world. The concept of higher education, as a public good that society, has to contribute towards is being rapidly replaced by the new idea of higher education as a product to be developed for clients. In addition, these clients will have to pay for the products they purchase. This has led to a number of changes at AKU-IED related to financial management which has affected the funding available to support doctoral students.

One of the most important changes that AKU-IED has had to undergo is to obtain a part of its funds through the levy of a modest fee for all its programmes to make them sustainable. Cost recovery through fees covers only 30% of the tuition at AKU-IED, the lion's share, i.e. 70% of the cost is raised through endowments, philanthropic contributions, etc. Due to the high cost of the AKU-IED doctoral programme, even though this is just a small amount in relative terms, it exceeds the ability of the students to pay. In fact, the fee charged is almost three times the scholarship offered by HEC to candidates undertaking PhD within Pakistan. The high tuition fees at AKU particularly affects AKU-IED, as teachers and teacher educators do not get a substantial increase in their remunerations after completing their PhD qualification as is normally the case in other professions. Hence, they lack the ability to repay heavy loans after graduation. For short-term at least, extra financial support for students undertaking PhD in education is required as a form of affirmative action.

Between 2004 and 2008, the admission year of the first and the third cohorts respectively, a rapid change came in the financial support offered to doctoral students. All the students of the first cohort were on the scholarships given by AKU-IED but in the second and subsequent cohorts, the students did not receive scholarships, but they were supported partially through grants and partially through soft loans that the university had negotiated for them. All

the students did not get the same amount as they were assessed on a case by case basis.

For the grants that the students receive from AKU, they are expected to pay back by offering their services in teaching or research. A student assistantship programme has been initiated but has not taken off fully due to insufficient structures in place to utilize this untapped source of academic labour. Additionally, AKU-IED expects students to work for the faculty members who have grants to be able to "pay" them. At this point, at least in the area of education, very little public or private funds for large-scale research projects are available. Hence, it is very difficult for the faculty to obtain sufficiently large grants to support the students for the duration of their doctoral studies. Only a few faculty members have been able to support students but that too for a short period of time. Until this avenue of funding PhD students become viable in Pakistan, financial sustainability will remain a challenge.

#### *Faculty Development and Retention*

AKU, through its generous faculty development programme, was able to prepare a large cadre of more than 20 doctoral-prepared faculty members who became the backbone of the doctoral programme. It must be noted that HEC requires only three faculty members with doctoral qualifications to start a doctoral programme (<http://www.hec.gov.pk>). However, as the faculty members gained experience and became known for their work both within and outside Pakistan, the demands on their time for capacity building of other national and international institutions has increased exponentially. Meanwhile, a number of experienced academics have left AKU though they continue to supervise PhD students and teach in the programme. This has affected the intellectual climate of AKU-IED and the students' perception of the doctoral programme.

Skilled migration of human resource is a reality in the developing world and globalization has made it easier (Vinokur, 2006). However, incentives and reward structures need to be strengthened to encourage the faculty to continue serving AKU-IED. While AKU-IED is proud

to be considered a national resource, claims on the faculty time need to be balanced between University needs and national needs. The new management ideas which have gained acceptance at AKU have the potential for benefiting the institution as a whole. Appropriate questions on the accountability of the faculty and the sustainability of programmes have also been raised. Faculty incentives and rewards have rightfully been connected on scholarly output. However, the implementation of these policies without sufficient support and role models at AKU-IED has the potential to de-motivate the faculty (Winter, 2009). This may further limit AKU-IED's ability to offer a high quality PhD programme.

#### *Diversity in Students Admitted into the Programme*

The three cohorts of students admitted to the PhD programme included 14 students, out of which, 13 are affiliated in some way to AKU or the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The applications received are not only large in number but are very diverse in institutional affiliations representing universities from all over Pakistan. The first stage of the selection process eliminated almost all the applicants from the public sector universities. The applicants who finally made it were almost exclusively either Master's students of AKU-IED or faculty at AKU's other departments or in some way belonging to the Network. This has been a source of concern for the faculty.

There are two important reasons for this situation. AKU-IED has one of the few masters' in education in Pakistan that requires the submission of a research thesis. Hence, the AKU-IED M. Ed. students' applications reflect the awareness and understanding of educational research that add value to their admission portfolio. Secondly, the information that the potential applicants get from AKU-IED administration about financial support available is at best unclear and ambiguous. The applicants do not know until the programme is well underway about the kind of financial support they will be offered. Hence, the applicants from

outside the AKU and the AKDN repeatedly seek clarity about the financial assistance package that they can expect and failing to get a satisfactory response choose to go elsewhere. Whereas, AKU alumni and the faculty were able to take in stride the vague statements of financial support as they were confident that AKU would come through with the required assistance in the end. However, the applicants from outside the University or Network do not have an understanding of the system and either chose not to apply or even after the short-listing process opted to go elsewhere. How the students will be able to pay for this programme is something that needs thinking ahead of time. The lead time should be at least 4-6 months before the beginning of the programme. Therefore, to encourage bright students from outside AKU and the AKDN to apply for the programme, the financial support offered to the students needs rethinking and streamlining.

#### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Altbach (2002) stresses the importance of developing countries to acquire their own scientific systems (p. 146):

The newly industrialized nations must develop their own scientific systems and academic institutions ... in some ways the social sciences and humanities are even more important than scientific expertise because it is impossible to rely on external knowledge for analysis of society and culture. It is quite common to downplay or ignore these "soft" fields as academic systems expand. This is a mistake, since they can make significant contributions.

The development of indigenous systems of knowledge generation will enable the development of theories to explain human behaviour in the local context. Hence, it is absolutely crucial for Pakistan to develop its own cadre of researchers in education who can begin to examine issues important to the country.

### *Retaining and "Growing" Faculty*

From AKU-IED's experience, it is clear that PhD programmes in the developing world face four kinds of challenges. Programmatic challenges include both academic as well as financial aspects. For the students, the major challenge is acquiring the habits of mind that characterizes higher education. Developing and retaining qualified people remain the major challenge as far as the faculty is concerned. Similarly, to maintain quality through quality assurance processes is a challenge that cuts through all the other four issues. The AKU-IED experience demonstrates that at least in this part of the world, universities cannot acquire or attract the faculty from outside because there is none available. They have to "grow" their own. At this point, the majority of the faculty members are those who studied for their M. Ed. at AKU-IED and went abroad for their PhD. This is a precious resource and thus, incentives must be provided to retain them or to continue to utilize their services in the form of "adjunct positions" even if they choose to leave AKU-IED.

### *Attracting Diversity in Students*

There is apparently a great need to attract a diverse group of students to the programme. At this point, a majority of the doctoral students are AKU-IED's own M. Ed. graduates. Perhaps, better marketing of the programme is required, as too much "inbreeding" will not be very healthy for a small programme that admits only four students from Pakistan every alternate year. Thus, in order to attract students from outside AKU-IED, it is grappling with the question; what are the characteristics of a PhD applicant or student? Due to the multidisciplinary nature of education, this is both a pertinent and a difficult question to answer. The response partially depends on the purpose of the PhD programme. "Is the purpose of PhD to prepare future teachers for the universities, or to initiate into a conduction of research, or contributing original research or to train minds to contribute to the society at large?" (Rhodes, 2001, p. 2). So far, AKU-IED has been very focused in its aim

to develop educational researchers; a tracking of the graduates will demonstrate Pakistan's capacity to absorb such trained human resources. However, there are pressures to not only increase the number of doctoral students admitted but to also diversify the portfolio of the students as part of the overall broadening of the scope of AKU-IED within AKU. These changes will have to be brought in carefully.

### *Providing the Financial Support*

Financial issues have two interconnected dimensions, namely, the high cost of the programme and the provision of financial assistance to the students. Most applicants find the programme too expensive and if they have sufficient resources, they choose to go abroad rather than staying in Pakistan for the same cost. For cost reduction, it may be prudent to consider lessening of external scrutiny through academics outside Pakistan other than the final dissertation examination as per HEC guidelines. With one cohort graduated and the second cohort close to completion, the faculty members teaching in the programme have gained both experience and confidence.

However, doctoral programmes by nature are expensive and hence, cost-cutting can only go so far; what is required is linking up with HEC and other national and international agencies that fund higher education to offer scholarships to students to help pay for their studies. This model has shown a great promise for providing funds for M. Ed. students (Ed-Links, 2010), but the length and the cost of the programme have not invited greater interest in investing in this particular programme.

### *Reducing the Density of the Programme*

Academically, the PhD programme suffers from a problem which is the exact opposite of what is generally seen in Pakistan. The programme is too demanding and tightly packed without giving sufficient 'breathing space' between programmatic activities. An overseas faculty called it a 1.5 PhD. In other words, it puts

too much pressure on the students to complete whatever it is that has to be completed without the reflection and thinking time which is so essential for any programme in higher education. Thus, it may be worthwhile to consider making the internship an optional part of the programme similar to study visit abroad. While it is important not to leave the completion time of the PhD open-ended, it may also be more realistic to plan for a 4-5 year time period. Experience suggests this to be the case.

#### *Creating National Partnerships and University Linkages*

AKU-IED has been remarkably successful in using its international partnership arrangements to support both the teaching and supervision of doctoral students. To a lesser extent, scholars at the national level are also involved in assessing and evaluating thesis and thesis proposals. However, a greater effort is required for both the students and the faculty to benefit from the national expertise and expertise available at AKU through the establishment of intra-university and inter-university networks within Pakistan. This is absolutely essential as AKU-IED is a very small unit and cannot possibly expect to have all of the expertise required to teach and supervise doctoral students. Meanwhile, enhanced linkages with government policies and better synchronization with the HEC funding cycle will also benefit the students.

#### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, this bold attempt to provide a high quality doctoral programme in Education in Pakistan has the potential to contribute tremendously to the development of educational researchers in Pakistan and enhance the culture of research in education. However, this can happen only if the challenges facing this initiative are recognized and resolved through commitment and ingenuity.

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## Doctoral Pedagogy: What Do International PhD Students in Australia Think About It?

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### ABSTRACT

Despite recent research, doctoral pedagogy remains something of a ‘black box’. This article explores the ‘mysterious activity’ (Green, 2005, p. 151) which transforms research apprentices into licensed scholars by drawing on longitudinal interviews with six graduate students who travelled to Australia to undertake doctoral study. The article first discusses difficulties associated with the term “international students”. It then argues that, given the economic benefits to Australian universities of participation by increasing numbers of international students (Bullen & Kenway, 2003), attention needs to be paid to the quality of students’ learning experiences. The article also incorporates the author’s dual perspectives as full-time doctoral student/researcher and experienced academic. The findings suggest that effective doctoral pedagogy is based on a mutually respectful relationship between student and supervisor supported by a flexible learning structure which enables modelling of scholarly practices and opportunities for scaffolded participation and reflection. However, as good doctoral pedagogy cannot be guaranteed, PhD students need to develop sufficient understanding of the doctoral endeavour to enable them to manage their own learning.

**Keywords:** Doctoral pedagogy, doctoral supervision, international students, student learning

### INTRODUCTION

Despite having spent the last two and a half years researching the learning experiences of international PhD students in Australia, doctoral pedagogy remains something of a “black box” for me. What *is* known about doctoral learning centres on the ‘mysterious activity’ (Green, 2005, p. 151) of supervision, regarded by many as ‘a private pedagogical space’ (Manathunga, 2005, p. 17). In the absence of an explicit doctoral curriculum, it seems that ‘the student is supposed to absorb the necessary know-how by a sort of intellectual osmosis between great minds’ (Connell, 1985, p. 38). It has been argued, however, that doctoral success or failure does not depend simply on the instruction the

student receives but concerns ‘the relationships between students and the practices in which they and their teachers engage’ (Goode, 2007, p. 589). If this is true, exploring doctoral students’ perceptions of the practices in which they and their supervisors engage should generate insights into doctoral pedagogy.

However, my decision to use the problematic term “international students” needs to be justified lest it inadvertently ‘sanction an ethnocentric stance’ (Spack, 1997, p. 765). In Australia, the label “international student” is an administratively convenient way of designating an individual who crosses international borders in order to study; however, it also carries a number of unfortunate connotations. First, the

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term overtly ‘others’ the students it describes, constructing them by reference to what they are not, i.e. Australian. Second, it is associated with a ‘discourse of deficit’ (Candlin & Crichton, 2010) invoking stereotyped images of underprepared students with weak English language skills. However:

[s]uch constrained understandings of international students do not take into account the motivations, transnational identities and resources these students bring to the ... university, and how these resources may be exploited to construct less parochial, more global or internationalized educational spaces’ (Doherty & Singh, 2007, p. 130).

Third, the label is associated with a tendency to treat international students as a homogeneous group. Writing in the context of higher education in the United Kingdom, Goode claims – ‘... it is not uncommon to hear talk about “international students” as a whole as “hard work”, both deferential and demanding, and as having an “immature approach to study, leading to a generalised stereotyping of what is ... a heterogeneous group’ (2007, p. 592). Where such negative attitudes and stereotypes exist, they are likely to impact on international students’ learning experiences.

It is against this backdrop that I locate my narrative study of the learning experiences of six international doctoral students studying in Australia. I retain the term “international student” despite its negative connotations both because it is a formal descriptive category employed in the university where the study participants are enrolled, and because it features prominently in the higher education discourse in Australia. Despite education having become an increasingly significant export industry in Australia (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Marginson *et al.*, 2010), the quality of international students’ educational experiences in Australia does not appear to have received much attention. This article addresses that

gap by reporting on six international students’ perspectives on the pedagogy they encounter in their doctoral studies. First, I review recent research on doctoral pedagogy before discussing the participants’ accounts of their learning in the light of that research. I then draw on the participants’ accounts and my perspectives as doctoral student, researcher, and former academic in identifying key dimensions of effective doctoral pedagogy.

### PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Fifteen years ago Green & Lee (1995, p. 40) described postgraduate pedagogy as ‘radically undertheorised’, suggesting that teaching-learning in higher education was not well understood. Why might this be so? First, pedagogy is highly abstract as both concept and practice, which makes it difficult to observe, analyse, and describe. Furthermore, historically, higher education privileged research and knowledge over teaching and learning in higher education (Evans & Green, 1995), with teaching considered ‘the poor relation’ (Vardi & Quin, 2011, p. 39). While much has been done in the last fifteen years to redress the imbalance (in status, recognition and rewards) between research and teaching in higher education, ‘many challenges remain to be addressed’ (Chalmers, 2011, p. 35). The apparent lack of interest in pedagogy may reflect ambivalence about where to locate research supervision in the conceptual landscape of scholarly activity. According to Lee & McKenzie, ‘supervision is neither simply “teaching” nor “research” but an uneasy bridge between both’ (2011, p. 69). This ambivalence is reflected in university performance review policies which designate research supervision as a ‘teaching’ activity (Blinded Institution, n.d.), while treating the outcomes of student research (theses and research articles) as aspects of research activity.

The importance of pedagogy lies in the fact that ‘it draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced ... asking under

what conditions and through what means we 'come to know' (Lusted, 1986, pp. 2-3). Gaining insight into how individuals 'come to know' is crucial if we are to enhance learning. Green & Lee argue that doctoral learning involves not only *coming to know*, but also *coming to be* in that the doctoral student gradually acquires an identity as researcher and scholar (1995, p. 41). This idea of transformation is also central to Lusted's understanding of pedagogy:

What pedagogy addresses is the ... transformation of consciousness that takes place in the interaction of three agencies – the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce ... (1986, p. 3)

Nonetheless, Lusted's definition must be modified if it is to account for the complex relations at the heart of doctoral learning. First, the learner, teacher, and their co-produced knowledge are not the only 'agencies' that contribute to pedagogy; they also interact with the academic discipline. Evans & Green argue that the *disciplinary* character of doctoral pedagogy distinguishes it from teaching at other levels: '[i]t is not so much what the supervisor literally 'transmits', pedagogically, as what (s)he enables by ... setting up a critical exchange ... between the student and the discipline' (1995, p. 4). In other words, the discipline is an invisible presence in the pedagogical relationship.

Second, any definition of doctoral pedagogy needs to incorporate interactions which occur beyond the supervisory team, whether in the wider discipline or closer to home. Doctoral learning 'is better conceived *ecosocially*, i.e. as a total environment within which postgraduate research activity ... is realised' (Green, 2005, p. 153) and which encompasses students' relationships and experiences with a wide range of people (Hopwood, 2010). Third, any model of doctoral pedagogy would be incomplete without including the institutional and social dimensions of learning (Green & Lee, 1995). Doctoral students' learning is impacted both by institutional policies and practices

(such as funding arrangements and supervisor workloads), and by their social context populated by family, friends, peers, fellow researchers, and others.

Within this relational exchange, what does the supervisor's pedagogical role consist of? One investigation of supervisory practice identified four categories of facilitative practices: (1) Progressing the candidature; (2) Mentoring (including personal support, career development, and intellectual development); (3) Coaching the research project; and (4) Sponsoring student participation in academic/professional practice (Pearson & Kayrooz, 2004). Clearly some of these practices are more pedagogical than others. Recent research in doctoral pedagogy suggests that productive supervisor contributions include collaborating with students in co-authored research (Thein & Beach, 2010, p. 122), focusing attention on disciplinary discourse (Paré, 2010), providing resources such as models of good writing (Kamler & Thomson, 2006), sharing professional networks (Simpson & Matsuda, 2008), and critically analysing students' work (Haksever & Manisali, 2000; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Simpson & Matsuda, 2008).

The student's role, on the other hand, involves gradually adopting the practices modelled by their supervisors as they begin participating in scholarly activities such as giving seminars, writing papers, and attending conferences. However, this role is not unproblematic. First, different expectations of supervisor and student roles can create misunderstanding, particularly in cross cultural contexts (Kiley, 1998). Second, not all supervisors are adept at 'unpacking' their scholarly expertise as they attempt to introduce their students to the history and practices of the discipline (Paré, 2010). Furthermore, an implicit supervisor bias towards valuing independence can discourage students from asking questions and encourage them instead to present themselves as 'capable of independent scholarship from the beginning of their candidature' (Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000, p. 141). All three issues militate against effective learning.

Finally, peers can also contribute to doctoral students' learning. By participating in activities such as doctoral writing groups, students gain opportunities to discuss and critique others' texts thereby learning to speak and write as members of the research community (see for example, Aitchison, 2010; Maher *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, peer contributions extend beyond critiquing texts. Pilbeam & Denyer (2009) found that doctoral students helped each other with conceptual and administrative matters, research methods, technical problems, and personal and social support. Acknowledging the contribution of peers and the wide range of contexts in which doctoral students learn suggests that 'pedagogy be reconceptualised as significantly "distributed" and "horizontalized", with an associated dispersal of responsibilities and of agency' (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 502). In other words, doctoral pedagogy exists in interactions and 'arrangements' (Cumming, 2010) which operate beyond the "vertical" relationship of supervisor and student and crucially, can be student-driven.

### BACKGROUND

The research described in this article was carried out to investigate questions about doctoral pedagogy raised by reviewing previous research. It does this by examining the transcripts of 22 hour-length interviews with six international doctoral students studying in Australia and

identifying episodes which refer to participants' experiences of and perspectives on pedagogy. Interviews were conducted with each participant approximately every four months between May 2009 and August 2010. Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously in a dynamic, recursive process (Merriam, 1998). Thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) involved multiple readings of the transcripts to locate all references to practices identified by the participants as promoting or inhibiting learning. Table 1 presents biographical information on the participants who had been enrolled for between 3 and 17 months at the time of their (first) interview. The numbers following participants' names at the end of interview excerpts indicate which interview the extract is taken from and the number of the first line in the transcript. In analysing the interview data, I drew on my multiple perspectives as concurrent doctoral candidate-researcher, and experienced academic, researcher and supervisor.

### RESULTS

This section first introduces *supervisor practices* which the six participants identified as contributing to their learning, and then ways in which they believed *other individuals* contributed. Subsequently, I present the unhelpful supervisor practices reported by the participants.

TABLE 1  
Participants' details

Name <sup>1</sup>	Gender	Country	Faculty	Number of interviews
Ariunaa	Female	Mongolia	Science	3
Dev	Male	India	Human Sciences	4
Emily	Female	Withheld	Human Sciences	4
Jack	Male	Kenya	Business and Economics	4
Journey	Male	Indonesia	Business and Economics	4
Mary	Female	People's Republic of China	Science	3

<sup>1</sup>All names are pseudonyms chosen by the participants

**POSITIVE SUPERVISOR PRACTICES**

Table 2 lists positive supervisor behaviours reported by the participants grouped according to four sets of facilitative practices identified by Pearson & Kayrooz (2004). In this framework, **facilitating the candidature** refers to guidance which enables the student to manage their programme of study and meet official requirements. **Mentoring** practices can involve both personal and professional support which aims to help the student develop ‘in the context of their evolving personal and career goals’ (Pearson & Kayrooz, 2004, p. 105). The authors cite the practice of introducing students to professional networks as an example. **Coaching** involves providing expertise on the research process and on writing the thesis. Finally, **Sponsoring** practices help students to access resources and opportunities.

In Table 2, the names of the participants who mentioned each practice are shown in brackets so as to provide an indication of how widely the practices were distributed across the participants. This reveals, for example, that of the 17 positive

supervisor practices identified, Ariunaa reported only one, whereas Emily reported eight. The fact that the majority of practices were classified as examples of Coaching may reflect candidates’ prioritising of activities which focus directly on the research process. Interestingly, only two of the six participants reported any Mentoring practices.

**POSITIVE PRACTICES – BEYOND THE SUPERVISORY TEAM**

Table 3 presents positive learning experiences identified by the participants which originated beyond the supervisory team. Some of these were initiated by the participants (indicated by an asterisk); the rest were opportunities provided by other individuals. Inspection of Table 3 suggests first that some participants have access to more learning opportunities than others, and second that some appear to demonstrate more agency than others in constructing their own learning experiences. Once again Ariunaa reported only one supportive practice, whereas

TABLE 2  
Positive supervisor practices

Focus	Supervisor practice
Facilitating the candidature	Monitors and provides regular feedback on progress (Dev) Helps structure ideas and plan research activities (Ariunaa, Dev, Emily)
Mentoring	Boosts confidence, encourages, motivates, provides emotional and personal support (Dev) Always makes herself available (Emily) Responds promptly to emails, requests (Dev, Emily) Provides access to professional network (Dev, Emily)
Coaching	Creates dialogue about ideas, provides intellectual challenge (Jack) Discusses theoretical problems (Mary) Discusses ideas for paper (Mary) Gives feedback on ideas/organisation/language in draft text (Emily, Jack, Journey, Mary) Revises and edits draft text (Emily, Mary) Writes collaboratively with student, helping reformulate draft text (Journey, Mary) Recommends specific readings for content (Journey) Recommends model articles to read in terms of structure, style, etc. (Journey) Knows who to contact, how to ask, how to do things the right way (Emily) Suggests designing a table to summarise all relevant studies (Emily)
Sponsoring	Encourages student to publish and attend conferences (Mary)

TABLE 3  
Positive practices – Beyond the supervisory team

Focus	Practice
Facilitating the candidature	Writing to clarify and reflect on ideas (Dev, Emily)*
Mentoring	Receiving positive feedback on conference presentation from international expert (Jack)
Coaching	Receiving positive feedback on project from senior academic (also research partner) at another university (Emily) Reading papers to study their organisation and style (Mary)* Receiving feedback on writing from conference paper reviewers (Journey, Mary) Receiving feedback on writing from faculty writing specialist (Journey) Receiving feedback on written papers from husband (Emily) Discussing ideas with husband (Mary, Emily)
Sponsoring	Taking part in Research Methods/Communication/Writing course (Ariunaa, Emily, Journey, Mary) Seeking feedback on writing from international experts (Journey)* Volunteering to review articles for journals (Emily)*

\* Practices initiated by doctoral candidates

Emily identified six different ways in which her learning had been supported, including two which she initiated. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned learning interactions with peers.

... I just got to do whatever he wanted me to do ... because you know when you're arguing with a professor anyway, the truth is you really have a lot to lose ... so I just compromised ... and then sort of we started developing a relationship ... (Jack, 1, 266).

### UNHELPFUL SUPERVISOR PRACTICES

In addition to the positive practices, four of the participants reported supervisor activities that they found unhelpful (*see* Table 4). However, none of the students were willing to challenge their supervisors in relation to these practices. For example Jack explained how stressful he found his supervisor's instructional style at first:

... he gives me a textbook which he thinks might be useful ... I have to read through it maybe like for three weeks, and probably it is a textbook which is 600 pages ... and then after that ... he quizzes me ... so you know I was opposed to that because ... I'm already past that level ... so there was a sort of friction for some time until I was just thinking should I just go back to [country where Jack did his MSc] and just continue with my professor ... so I just thought no

Interestingly, all three practices in the Coaching category in Table 4 reported by Jack, Emily and Journey respectively, relate to the same issue. All three seem dissatisfied with their supervisors' feedback on their writing because it fails to provide direction for them as they revise it. Informal conversations with doctoral peers suggest that the modest inventory of unhelpful practices in Table 4 could easily be extended. However, regardless of the 'truth value' of the practices listed in Table 4 or the actual number of unhelpful practices the participants have experienced (some may have felt culturally constrained from 'criticising' their supervisors), these examples indicate that doctoral students have views on pedagogy, and suggest that their views are worth canvassing.

TABLE 4  
Unhelpful supervisor practices

Focus	Supervisor practice
Facilitating the candidature	Assigns substantial amount of reading (e.g. 600 page textbook) and then quizzes me on the content (Jack)
Mentoring	Uses Chinese during supervision sessions so I can't practise my English (Mary)
Coaching	Provides negative feedback on ideas without suggesting what kind of change is needed (Jack) Points out weaknesses in writing without suggesting how to 'fix' them (e.g. "too wordy" (Emily) Fails to provide adequate detail and direction in feedback on draft text (Journey)
Sponsoring	-

### DISCUSSION

What does investigating the participants' pedagogical experiences reveal? First, and most optimistically, many examples of good doctoral pedagogy reported in the research literature were also mentioned by participants (such as supervisors writing collaboratively with their students and providing access to personal networks). Second, practices related to writing dominate participants' accounts. This may reflect the centrality of text-related work in doctoral study or suggest that talking about text is a useful way of exploring knowledge claims. However, analysis also reveals significant variation in the pedagogical affordances of the six participants. This section first discusses the quality and range of participants' experiences, and then, based on these reflections, identifies elements likely to contribute to effective doctoral pedagogy.

### SUPERVISORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The majority of supervisor practices identified by the participants were both helpful and supported by recent research in doctoral pedagogy. However, both the number and range of practices were relatively limited. Whereas Ariunaa reported only one positive supervisor practice, Emily and Mary both identified several different ways in which their supervisors supported their learning. Furthermore, a number of the

innovative practices discussed earlier did not figure amongst the practices reported by the participants. For instance, none of the participants reported having the opportunity to critique others' writing, to analyse written models or to consider the typical discourse features of their discipline. Furthermore, given that Journey, Emily and Dev had all elected to complete their thesis by publication, it is surprising that no instruction was provided in strategically conceptualising the research project in preparation for publishing. (See Kwan (2010) for a similar finding).

The fact that the participants identified a number of *unhelpful* supervisor practices indicates that some dissatisfaction with supervision exists. Yet, as Jack's example suggests, supervisors did not appear to negotiate pedagogical activities with their students, or to seek feedback on their usefulness. A study of doctoral students' experiences conducted in Canada and the UK reported a number of similar supervisor-related difficulties, including the lack of encouragement and the lack of feedback (McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek & Hopwood, 2009). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that students seldom raise such issues with their supervisors. For instance, although Mary was frustrated at her supervisor's use of Chinese (their common first language) during their meetings, she did not challenge this practice:

Yeah, of course it's negative because you don't have ... much opportunity to practise your English. But you can't ask for your supervisor to change her way (laughs) (Mary, 3, 960)

As supervisors are unlikely to deliberately adopt behaviours which inhibit their students' learning, this suggests they may lack insight into the way their practices impact on student learning. Whereas, teachers in most educational settings routinely obtain peer and student feedback on their teaching, supervisors seldom seek feedback on their supervision practices. Instead, most tend to rely on the results of annual student questionnaires. Yet the type of information likely to result in improved supervision processes 'will not come from institutional level surveys' (Pearson & Kayrooz, 2004, p. 101).

#### **PARTICIPANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

Differences were observed in the extent to which different participants took the initiative in their learning. Journey, Mary, Emily and Dev instigated activities which extended their understanding of ideas or scholarly practices. This kind of agency is probably influenced by factors such as the participants' confidence and previous academic experience as well as their expectations of their and their supervisors' roles. For instance, Journey had worked as an academic in Indonesia for fifteen years before enrolling as a PhD student; it is therefore not surprising that he initiated contact with two international experts to seek feedback on a conference paper he had written. Ariunaa, on the other hand, seemed content to participate in the activities her supervisors proposed. Clearly, diversity in students' backgrounds demands that supervisors 'differentiate students, tailor supervision accordingly and enter into genuine dialogue' (Goode, 2007, p. 601) in the same way that experienced teachers adjust their teaching to cater for different types of learners.

#### **OTHERS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

The participants reported a number of supportive practices which originated beyond their supervisory team. For example, Emily accessed a range of sources when trying to solve problems in her doctoral work:

So [if] I have a question, I go either in the papers and I find all the literature, for sure I learned a lot from the literature, but I cannot say this is more than all the professors I've met while they've been ... discussing it and confronting my ideas ... but I cannot say it's only with [principal supervisor], it's a lot larger. (Emily, 3, 1361)

Differences observed in the participants' experience of obtaining assistance from members of the wider academic community raise the possibility that access to such opportunities is not equally shared. Whereas, the examples reported in Table 3 suggest that Emily's doctoral experience is well supported by a range of individuals (Emily reported 6 of the 11 practices), Ariunaa and Jack seem more isolated in their academic interactions. Strikingly, none of the participants reported learning experiences with peers. This could be because they have no colleagues researching topics in the same area, they are reluctant to inconvenience other students by seeking help, or they believe their peers are unlikely to contribute anything of value. Alternatively, local student networks may be difficult for international students to access (Sawir *et al.*, 2008) or the departmental culture may discourage student collaboration:

- M I kind of think it's a bit strange that we don't collaborate
- S But is that your decision or do you prefer it that way?
- M Not my decision because when I come here, others don't have no collaboration with each other and my supervisor didn't ask we to collaborate each other and I didn't bother to ask and I just -
- S - sort of followed that pattern?
- M Yeah, yeah (Mary, 3, 419)

Given the positive outcomes of peer learning (Maher *et al.*, 2008), the participants' lack of opportunities to interact with peers about their learning is regrettable.

### GOOD DOCTORAL PEDAGOGY

There is little doubt that PhD supervisors wish to support their students' learning. However, the accounts of the study participants suggest that not all their interactions with their supervisors constitute effective pedagogy. In this section, I discuss critical dimensions of effective student-supervisor encounters revealed in the participants' accounts of their learning and infer important principles for implementing effective doctoral pedagogy.

### RESPECT AND CONCERN

All six participants spoke candidly and overwhelmingly positively about their relationships with their supervisors, despite, in Jack's case, some initial difficulty adjusting to his supervisor's working style. Dev spoke appreciatively about his supervisor's concern for his general well-being:

... [Principal supervisor] is pretty cool ... he's a kind of person who really ... helps you sorting your problem, personal problems as well ... he nourishes me, pampers me ... so ... he asks me - "How are you?" ... "How is everything?" (Dev, 2, 424).

However, Journey's account of co-authoring an article with his supervisor reflects most eloquently qualities in their relationship which support successful learning:

... when he adds his parts into the draft I submitted to him, he will ask my opinion on that ... I respect his way of letting me be in a strong position to decide what would be best for the papers ... He also changed the formulation I made on another part of the paper. And, he asked me whether I am happy with what he added and whether the

change doesn't take away the main message I want to deliver (Journey, Email message, February 25, 2010).

The respect, concern, and genuine collaboration evoked in Journey's description represent key underpinnings of effective doctoral pedagogy. A successful supervision relationship recognises what both parties have to offer - 'successful pedagogy should not ... construct the student as an empty vessel' (Tsolidis, 2001, p. 108).

Negotiating a comfortable supervision relationship demands time and sensitivity and may require additional skill in transcultural relationships where communicative behaviours and styles can differ (Adams & Cargill, 2003). Flexibility and sensitivity to cultural practices is also important; for example, despite the apparent warmth of his relationship with his supervisor, Dev persisted in calling him 'Sir' because - 'It's an Indian thing' (Dev, Interview 2, 479). Positive supervisory relationships are a source of interpersonal and intellectual support for students (Pearson & Kayrooz, 2004) and are characterised by good rapport. Clear communication is essential for establishing rapport. Kiley points out that students and their supervisors may have different assumptions about issues such as who should call meetings, so that, as this Indonesian student in her study comments:

*A supervisor should be understanding about the culture. Like here, if you don't ask anything then it means that everything is ok, but in Indonesia it means that everything is wrong* (1998, p. 197).

A relationship based on respect, concern for the student's well-being and good communication is a fundamental component of effective pedagogy.

### STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

In each interview, Ariunaa expressed anxiety about her progress, citing her lack of research experience, her weak English skills and her family commitments as obstacles. Her sense of insecurity was clear from our very first interview when Ariunaa explained how she had felt confused for the first three months of her candidature:

A ... from February I was very stressful and I didn't know what I had to do because ah supervisor means in Mongolia "conductor" ... and supervisor teach always give direction and do this, do this, and it's easy ... But here it's totally different and first time I didn't realise what I have to do and I was stressed and I thought I couldn't do my PhD, might be, I cannot finish it always think –

S That must have been a very uncomfortable period?

A Yeah –

S And so how did that become clear? Was it just over time talking to your supervisor that you realised it was a different style?

A Yeah, I talked to my supervisor what I had to try ... and ... after three months I realised what I have to do. During that time I discussed with my fellow students –

S Exactly and I bet that was helpful too?

A Yeah and also um discussed with Mongolian students who is studying in different states in Australia ... also they faced the same situation and ah read some books how to do PhD, what I had to do and that ... three months was very difficult, I am always busy, reading something but I have no direction ... it's very difficult – (Ariunaa, 1, 212)

Arguably, Ariunaa's supervisor could have helped more by providing more structured support during her first few months and making expectations explicit. Experienced supervisors recommend requiring new doctoral students to attend regular supervision meetings and

complete small tasks (such as summarising or critiquing text), as well as providing feedback from the beginning (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Furthermore, when seeking to provide doctoral students with additional support, the supervision relationship itself is also worthy of attention. Gurr (2001) recommends the use of a simple tool to track developments in the supervisory relationship and facilitate adjustments when, for example, candidates demonstrate the ability to operate more independently. Kiley (1998) includes a useful tool for making expectations about roles in supervision explicit. These and other tools may help provide the kind of explicit structure and support that some students need.

### ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOLARLY PRACTICES

The heart of the pedagogy experienced by the participants seems to reside in the practices which Pearson & Kayrooz (2004) classify as *Coaching*. Whereas the students clearly appreciate the personal and emotional support (*Mentoring*) their supervisors provide, and use their assistance in meeting official requirements (*Facilitating the candidature*) and accessing resources and opportunities (*Sponsoring*), they benefit particularly from their supervisors' *Coaching* practices since these model typical researcher behaviours. When she describes her experience of co-authoring an article with her supervisors, Emily conveys a sense of the learning process proceeding in tandem with construction of the text:

E Yes but so I realised [Principal Supervisor]'s help was ... to go forward and that was very, very useful –

S You say *forward*, what do you mean by that?

E Um I would give her all my idea and she would make it better and we could start from there, while for [Associate Supervisor] I needed to go back, look at my text and reflect –

S Oh I see!

- E - and then I learned so much. I've realised when he said two words, I was "But how can I do this?" - but then no, I breathed in and looked at my text and said - Yes, that's true, I can make this sentence a lot shorter. This is the point, I can take this away, I'm just repeating that part, and I've realised how my text was improving following his comments even if I would have liked him from the beginning to tell me -
- S To give more direction?
- E - to do it! (laughs) Not all of it but to show me how he would have done it or to give examples.
- S But in terms of learning, that's fabulous!
- E Exactly. I did learn a lot by doing that. (Emily, 3, 710)

The participants appreciated opportunities to discuss their ideas, draft and revise texts and engage with their supervisors' feedback on their writing. However, as was noted earlier, practices aimed at supporting student writing were relatively limited for some. Simpson & Matsuda (2008) describe three other opportunities which graduate students might benefit from: copyediting proofs, transcribing a scholarly interview, and participating in a collaborative research project. While doctoral students initially exercise their research skills during supervision sessions, other opportunities can arise in departmental seminars, electronic discussions, student-mediated groups and conferences. For less confident students, opportunities to engage in such practices will depend on the extent to which their supervisors promote such activities and encourage them to participate. Previous research (Aitchison, 2010; Maher *et al.*, 2008) indicates that peer writing groups also provide a positive environment for developing skill in a range of scholarly practices. Given the resistance some participants in my study demonstrated to interacting with peers about their work, the benefits of such opportunities may need to be promoted more actively.

## REFLECTION

In a recent interview (not formally analysed for this paper), Emily explained that she valued the opportunity to reflect on her learning which the interviews provided:

I think that every PhD student should have um someone doing a PhD about PhD students [laughs] ... No, but a counsellor, someone who's there to show how it is going, and someone detached, not your supervisor ... not anyone in your department, that can just see how are you doing, and how are you feeling through all that, because it is a long road ... and there's a lot of things attached to this road, it's ... (Emily, 6, 1812)

In her research with graduate students in the USA, Austin noted a similar phenomenon - '... many respondents told us how much they looked forward to the interviews as the only opportunity for structured self-reflection with an interested professional' (2002, p. 116). While Emily suggests creating opportunities for reflection *outside* the supervision relationship, an argument can also be made for viewing reflection as a component of effective doctoral pedagogy. In a landmark study of ESL learners, O'Malley and his colleagues cautioned:

Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to review their progress, accomplishments and future learning directions. (1985, p. 561)

The same is true of doctoral students. By reflecting on the way in which they are gradually acquiring confidence as researchers, they become better able to manage their future learning. Both my study participants and my doctoral peers have been consistently willing to discuss their PhD learning experiences. This suggests that incorporating structured opportunities for *reflection* into doctoral pedagogies would benefit all PhD students.

## CONCLUSION

This study has a number of limitations. First, it reports the views of a small number of doctoral students whose experiences may be unrepresentative. Second, it deliberately privileges the student perspective in an attempt to complement research conducted with supervisors. Third, it only discusses learning experiences mentioned by the participants; some practices may have been too implicit to detect, too complex to describe or may have seemed too 'obvious' to report. Finally, the article presents an aggregated account of pedagogical practice rather than profiling the experiences of any one participant. A case study treatment of the data would provide a more nuanced individual perspective on doctoral pedagogy.

Despite these limitations, the study provides some empirical support for reconceptualising doctoral pedagogy as 'significantly "distributed" and "horizontalized"' (Boud & Lee, 2005, p. 502). The participants identified learning as occurring in face to face settings, via computer-mediated communication, and in international academic meetings. These opportunities involved a 'diverse range of relationships, networks, resources, and artefacts' (Cumming, 2010, p. 33) confirming that learning as participation can operate in settings other than the supervisory dyad. The study also confirms that doctoral students have useful things to say about pedagogy. Rather than rely on institutional surveys to obtain such critical information, supervisors could periodically review their practices with students using tools developed for this purpose. The results of this research also highlight the wide range of practices expected of skilled doctoral supervisors. While no supervisor can be expected to be expert in all aspects of supervision, some may need to 'increase their pedagogic repertoires' (Edwards, 2001, p. 176). Finally, the study provides some evidence to suggest that effective doctoral pedagogy is based on a mutually respectful relationship supported by a flexible learning structure which incorporates opportunities for scaffolded participation and reflection.

Examining the pedagogical experiences of the six study participants confirms that when it comes to pedagogy – 'one size does *not* fit all'. If students cannot count on access to good pedagogy during their doctoral studies, they must learn to understand and manage their own learning. Goode argues that '[i]nternational doctoral students ... are able competently to make "adjustments" once they understand the "rules of the game"' (2007, p. 601). Rather than expect students to painstakingly discover these rules for themselves, supervisors can help by initiating discussion about the what, why and how of doctoral learning from the very first supervision session.

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## Internationalising Western Doctoral Education through Bilingual Research Literacy

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports an original study into possibilities for internationalising Western doctoral education programmes by engaging the bilingual capabilities international research students use through their informal globally networked learning. This study is situated in the debates over research which centres on learning Western knowledge through English, and studies arguing for engaging non-Western knowledge through bilingual education. This question is explored through evidence from a group of female Chinese research students and their uses of English and Chinese to engage in different forms of globally networked learning. The term *bilingual research literacy* is used to describe the use of two languages for research purposes which may contribute to internationalising Western doctoral education programmes.

**Keywords:** Bilingual research literacy, doctoral education, globally networked learning, globally networked language learning

### INTRODUCTION

International student numbers around the world are increasing, thereby increasing the global networking of learning and the linguistic diversity on university campuses. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) defines 'international students' as those who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of tertiary study. However, definitions of an 'international student' vary from country to country in accordance to their own national education system. Usually, they are young adults who pay fees to study on-shore in foreign educational institutions under a specific visa, and are not a citizen or permanent resident in the country where they are studying (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). For

the academic year ending in 2009, the number of international students studying worldwide rose to 3.43 million from 2.96 million in 2008, rising by over 75% since 2000 (Coughlan, 2011; Jaume, 2011). Countries throughout Asia, such as China, are increasing their recruitment of international students through organization such as The Asia-Pacific Association for International Education. In 2010, more than six hundred thousand international students were studying in Australia; nearly one-quarter of these come from China (Studies in Australia, 2010). In New Zealand, more than 85% of the international students are from Asia (Campbell & Li, 2008).

These students bring with them a diversity of languages. They need to, and want to learn Western (content-area) knowledge through

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English, and to do so by engaging in globally networked learning (GNL). However, GNL is opening up to questions concerning assumptions about Western university education and research being used to promote Western knowledge through monolingual, English-only pedagogies. Chen, Bennett & Maton (2008) found that while international students like the flexibility of formal GNL, their lack of intellectual interactions with academics and peers is an impediment to their learning. Furthermore, formal GNL promises to enable research students, both domestic and foreign, to reflect on 'their own environment and culture by interacting with foreign partners and answering their questions about the home culture' (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 129). However, this undertaking to provide cross-cultural intellectual engagement and the extension of their linguistic repertoire remains to be fulfilled (Mihhailova, 2006).

Here, the researchers distinguish among formal, non-formal, and informal GNL (Shrestra, Wilson & Singh, 2008). Formal GNL entails the provision of learning materials and/or instruction for formal coursework requirements for research education programmes by means of authorised information and communication technologies. Non-formal GNL refers to doctoral education programmes and pedagogies that are purposefully structured and provided by supervisors (research educators) but are not part of, and may deviate from a university's prescribed or accredited requirements. Informal GNL encompasses the unconventional, amorphous and/or unplanned knowledge, and/or skills research students gain incidentally through their daily uses of information and communication technologies, including social networking. This definition of GNL draws attention to the power relations governing who normally authorises and initiates the learning process.

How the internationalisation of Western research education programmes and pedagogies might encourage and benefit through Western intellectual engagement with non-Western knowledge is an area in which there has been little research (Singh, 2009). While some studies focus on Asian students' 'voices' (Campbell & Li,

2008), this paper explores this question through a group of female Chinese research students' uses of English and Chinese via different forms of GNL. To understand the intellectual context, the first section of this paper situates this study in the key debates over internationalising Western doctoral education by learning Western knowledge through English versus also engaging non-Western knowledge through bilingual literacy education. The research method is then explained and justified with reference to this original study's participants and the procedures used for data collection and analysis. The results of this study are framed in terms of formal English-only research literacy and, non-formal and informal bilingual research literacy.

#### **INTERNATIONALISING WESTERN DOCTORAL EDUCATION**

With the internationalisation of Western doctoral education the norms for learning Western knowledge through English have become a taken-for-granted part of Western research education. The first group of studies reviewed below focus on the norms for learning Western knowledge through English. The central message of these studies is that the problem of intellectual order in Western Anglophone universities is to have non-Western international students share in, and adhere to their norms of English-only pedagogy. In Parsons' (1968) terms, these studies suggest that, given the increasing plurality of international (and immigrant) students, these universities can stabilise their intellectual activity systems by using the power of English to regulate the norms by which such students relate to these institutions. The second group of studies reviewed below focus on the norms of bilingual literacy education. The key theme in these studies is that the problems of intellectual order in Western Anglophone universities is the use of English-only pedagogies (and Western-centred knowledge) as the classificatory system for normalising the production of international students as their graduates. In Foucault's (1979) terms, it is the normative use of English-only metrics, rather than a bilingual framework to

measure and grade international students that is integral to this complex and challenging problem.

### **LEARNING WESTERN KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ENGLISH**

Research that focuses on the challenges of teaching Asian students tends to reveal their lack of knowledge of Western academic norms. Campbell & Li (2008) report that Asian students' language and cultural differences create intercultural communication barriers and lead to challenging Western norms of classroom interactions. The study by Campbell & Li (2008, p. 392) suggests that Western lecturers and host institutions help Asian international students make adaptations 'to equip them with adequate knowledge of academic discourses and to transcend [their Asian] culturally framed borders and subjectivities.' Like other studies in this section, this study indicates Western universities' engagement in a pervasive process of 'normalisation' (Foucault, 1992, p. 18) through acculturating Asian students to the Western academic knowledge they are seen to need in order to detach themselves from their culturally determined Asianness.

The dynamics of this drive to adjust non-Western international postgraduate students to Western universities can be unpredictable, with acculturative stress caused by individual and cultural factors. Accordingly, Brown & Holloway (2008) offer a model for effecting these students' Western adjustment which focuses on helping them cope with the challenging uses of English and an unfamiliar Western academic environment.

The mastering of the English language is a key focus for research into non-native English-speaking international students undertaking graduate studies. Halic, Greenberg & Paulus' (2009) findings focus on the meaning the students attach to their English language proficiency, and the relationship between English and their acculturation into a Western academic identity through joining a Western research community. These students had a sense of

starting their education all over again, knowing when their English sounds wrong, and feeling in-between Western and Eastern academic cultures. The study by Halic, Greenberg & Paulus' (2009) suggests that the English language and Western cultural identity are central to the academic success of these 'non-native' speakers of English, and recommends learner-centred instruction to addressing these deviancies.

Improving the written English of non-Western international students is a key focus for research into the effectiveness of Western academics' teaching. A case in point is Bitchener & Knoch's (2008) study of the extent to which direct corrective feedback (with or without written and oral meta-linguistic explanation), versus no corrective feedback helped these students improve their accuracy in the use of the English articles (a, the). This study found that all the students who received all forms of feedback outperformed those who did not, and that their level of accuracy was retained over several weeks.

A key theme in studies such as these is that having international students adjust to the norms of English-only pedagogy will minimise the troubling of intellectual activity in Western Anglophone universities. These studies imply that universities can reinforce their intellectual order through using the power of English to normalise how international students relate to them. However, these studies can be critiqued by reference to an alternative body of research. This latter research supports and explains the pedagogical possibilities for normalising bilingual literacy education that is now feasible given the increasing presence of non-Western international students. The literature reviewed below suggests that the certainties Western universities have in promoting Western knowledge through monolingual, English-only pedagogies are being questioned.

### **BILINGUAL LITERACY EDUCATION**

Bilingualism has entered Western Anglophone universities. Its every day presence is audible among the hundreds of thousands of

international (and immigrant) students on their campuses. The research below suggests that some of the challenges encountered by bilingual (and multilingual) students entering research programmes in Western universities relate to their privileging of English-only pedagogies.

That international students are graduating with degrees without having developed their English language skills is a cause for concern among Australian universities. A possible way forward is increasing the selective recruitment of international students by eliminating those with low levels of English proficiency and increasing the performance level required on English language tests. Another option is for Australian universities to create post-entry English language assessments to evaluate the English language competence and academic literacy of these students. Dunworth (2009) found that in certain discipline areas over one third of Australian universities currently do this. However, Benzie (2010) argues that the debates over the English language proficiency of international students construct them in terms of so-called 'native English speakers.' Therefore, she contends, international students are defined as deficient, and negative attitudes towards them are reinforced.

The assumption that local linguistic and cultural knowledge should prevail in the internationalisation of Western education is being questioned. Ryan & Viete (2009) argue that intellectual disengagement among international students is related to the undervaluing of their knowledge. They further contend that pedagogical and assessment practices in English-speaking universities privilege the power of an imagined native-speaker norm. Thus, they call for research into ways to promote dialogic, multi-voiced learning for all students.

International students' educational trajectories are shaped in part through the medium of bilingual literacy practices. Bartlett's (2007) study of a young female international student found that she was able to position herself as a successful student through her bilingual literacy because her educational institutions positioned bilingualism as educationally valued

and valuable. Education for bilingual literacy is the norm in many universities around the world, from Sweden (Airey & Linder, 2008) to South Africa (Benson & Plüddemann, 2010). However, in multilingual Australia, as it is in other Anglophone nations (McPake, Tinsley & Ceri, 2007), the provision of, and engagement with language learning, is fragile. Henderson (2008, p. 171) reports that in Australia 'the value of language skills in terms of national capacity building is contested.' Orton (2008, p. 5) reports that in Australia's senior secondary school, the teaching and learning of Chinese is largely a matter of Chinese teaching Chinese to Chinese students; 94% of those learning Chinese as a second language drop out before Year 12.

The presence of international students in Western universities sees libraries responding to their bilingual capabilities with provisions for their electronic databases to be searched using a range of languages. By way of illustration, EBSCO, FirstSearch, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, and JSTOR provide for electronic data searches in Chinese, French, Korean, Japanese and Spanish. From a survey conducted at two universities in the USA Zhuo, Emanuel & Jiao (2007) found that international students preferred using such library databases. They were asked about the use of multilingual features, bibliographic instructions given in the students' home nations, and questions about the literal translation of search keywords and terms. This presents a novel way of providing a key Western research service to international research students in seemingly Anglophone universities.

The intellectual interactions afforded by globally networked learning (GNL) face contradictions when teaching English to international students. Basharina's (2007) study of GNL identified intra-cultural and inter-cultural contradictions as well as technology-related incongruities among English language learners from Japan, Mexico and Russia. Various interventions are suggested by Basharina (2007) for addressing these challenges. These include realigning curriculum drivers with students' desires for interactive learning, making

explicit and engaging culturally different uses of GNL, and engaging the intellectual resources available to students.

These particular studies offer a different perspective on the problem confronting the internationalisation of Western Anglophone universities. This research questions the exclusive use of English-only pedagogies and Western-centred knowledge. These studies raise the prospects of a bilingual framework, rather than just the use of English-only metrics to address this multifaceted challenge.

The original study reported in this paper is part of a project investigating the potential for new approaches to doctoral education programmes and pedagogies that support language learning so international research students can position themselves as bilingual, intellectual agents in the progressive internationalisation of work-intensive Western universities (Singh, 2010), and secure their participation in the world's multilingual knowledge societies (Singh & Han, 2009). The power of this investigation resides in centring these Chinese research students' knowledge and turning these into analytical tools—concepts, metaphors, and diagrams (Turner, 2010)—for their research into, and original contributions to debating Western education (Singh & Han, 2010). This means recognising what Western, Anglophone educators do not know, and that this provides pedagogical spaces for non-Western research students to use their intellectual heritage as a normal part of their research, and to deepen their abilities for scholarly disputation (Singh, 2009). This research departs from approaches to equality that takes students' intellectual differences as deficiencies that require remediation, or which position them solely in terms of research income and outcomes. In contrast, this research investigates the potency of Ranciere's (1991) argument that equality in education begins with the presupposition that Chinese research students are already capable of scholarly argumentation and, that Chinese intellectual culture provides them with the theoretical tools for doing so. The pedagogical task for Western, Anglophone research educators is to create conditions for

non-Western international research students to use formal, non-formal and informal GNL to verify this.

## RESEARCH METHOD

To study ways of internationalising Western research education programmes and pedagogies so as to enhance Chinese research students' bilingual research literacy, this section briefly explains the method used to study their formal, non-formal and informal GNL. Given that a goal of research education is to produce research literate graduates, then the term bilingual research literacy refers to their use of two languages for the purposes of generating, interpreting and/or analysing evidence. As is the norm for people generally, the lives of the female research students in this study were embedded in social and intellectual relationships with kin and friends who crossed their life span and nations. For this reason a life history method was chosen because it is able to deal with 'the ways in which all and any life events potentially influence and impact upon all experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and values' (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 96). While allowing for the identification of contingencies, this approach permitted the investigation into intellectual links between the students' research education, their uses of GNL and the prospects for extending their bilingual research literacy.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study, all female international research students from China (n=24) had multiple and shifting identities, ranging from being as wives, daughters, teachers, international students, beginning teacher-researchers—and bilingual in what was normally taken to be a Western, Anglophone university (Dunworth, 2009; Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009). Some had left their roles relating to paid and unpaid work behind them to become international research students. Making the choice to go abroad to study was not easy for these women because they needed to take into

consideration their parents, family, colleagues, friends, and even students. They all had made an abrupt transition in their life projects, flying nine to twelve hours from China to Australia, a useful reminder that aeroplanes represent a major technology underwriting the internationalisation of education.

*Data Collection*

The research students who volunteered to participate in this study were asked to keep diaries, in English and/or Chinese, recording the impact of their changed learning environment on themselves (Brown & Holloway, 2008). This data collection procedure, which accorded with ethical requirements, provided a good basis for them to depict the linguistic and technological dimensions of their learning practices, whether these were formal, non-formal, or informal. For some students, this data collection method pushed the boundaries of their academic understanding of normal research methods.

*Data Analysis*

The 24 students generated ninety reflections over 6 months, which constitute the data base for this study, and provide the source for the selected evidentiary excerpts analysed in this paper (see Table 1). The main topics of their reflections covered daily life, study and research, academic progress and improvement, supervisors and teaching facilities, ideas about education, and cultural similarities/differences. All these reflections were analysed to identify their key themes and then categorised. Their journal entries were analysed using the three-dimensional conceptualisation of formal, non-formal and informal GNL (Shrestra, Wilson & Singh, 2008).

TABLE 1  
Reflections about formal, non-formal and informal globally networked learning

Categories	Theme
Formal GNL in English only	New teaching technology PhD course Library training Leximancer
Non-formal GNL in English or Han Yu (Mandarin)	Plagiarism and real plagiarism Teacher vs. responsibility Routine life vs. good achievements Videoconference My first informal presentation Second videoconference The third videoconference Communication between Aus and Canada 17 <sup>th</sup> National Conference The consequence of Olympic Games Professor vs. students
Informal GNL in Han Yu (Mandarin)	Mother's Day Disaster earthquake in China Different educational systems Skype: Devil or Angel Olympic Games 'Unusual' capabilities <i>Xin You Ling Xi</i> Closing ceremony of Olympic Games QQ Bad mood Opening ceremony of Paralympics Games Mooncake Teacher's Day Mid-autumn festival Skype made me feel bad The launch of Shenzhou No. 7 spaceship

## RESULTS

The following analysis seeks to make sense of rich and representative evidentiary excerpts selected to foreground the links between the students' research literacy practices; their uses of formal, non-formal and informal GNL, and the prospects for transformative, transnational dialogical research processes.

### *Formal English-only Research Literacy*

These research students' formal GNL involved the training officially organised by their university, all of which was in English as might normally be expected. However, many of them had expected to have courses with lectures on educational theories and research methodologies. This is the case in China, but not in their particular university in Australia. They did undertake a prescribed on-line training programme that came close to the formal course they had expected:

Of the six modules, most of them are very useful to my research, especially the literature review module. The least useful module is how to deal with the supervisor module, because the 'supervisors' it mentioned are those who meet students infrequently, but my supervisor is together with me every day, in his office across the hallway. So I can talk with him any time I want to, from early in the morning to late in the evening. But in China for a PhD student, the first thing s/he should do is to have one or more years of formal courses in which s/he may be taught theories of different subjects, and knowledge of different fields. The students then usually write a term paper for each course.

This excerpt provides insights into how research training and formal GNL are understood institutionally and the consequences for research students and those who educate them. This formal GNL involved using on-line e-learning to deliver the principles and rules issued

by the university governing research ethics and academic integrity, teaching research methodology, and learning materials. However, in the absence of formal university courses, these students found that it was their research supervisors who educated them in research methods and educational theory through weekly research training workshops, seminars and one-on-one, face-to-face tutorials. This being the case, they had to adjust to an unexpected pedagogical relationship for which the formal GNL was a supplement. Substantively, their research education was provided through non-formal GNL.

### *Non-formal Bilingual Research Literacy*

What supported the students' survival during their first six months in Australia was the daily help from their research educators and fellow full-time, on-campus research students. Communication with their close friends in China with whom they shared their experiences in Australia was also very important. They often spoke in *Putonghua* (spoken Chinese) via Skype with those overseas about each others' lives and studies. This non-formal GNL provided valuable opportunities, especially given that there was little interaction with locals:

在网上和我的好朋友聊聊我在澳大利亚的生活。我将之称为“枯燥的生活显著的成果”。我觉得我在澳洲的生活与我之前的期待不同。来澳之前，我曾经想象那里的生活一定是丰富多彩的，经常会有各种各样的活动。我能够接触到很多当地人，和他们聊天。我希望我的英语听力和口语短时间内会有很大提高。然而，三个月过去了，我发现并没有那些想象中的活动。我能够接触到当地人，但也只限于打招呼。我的英语听力和口语有点提高，但不显著。每天的生活千篇一律，确实有些单调枯燥。可是令我吃惊的事，当我总结三个月来的学

习成果时我发现学习上却有很大成就。这正应了中国的一句谚语：堤内损失堤外补。但是我觉得我所收获的要比我所谓失去得更有价值。由此我不再觉得生活单调枯燥了，我从学习中找到了乐趣。渐渐地我爱学习了。

*I talked to my good friend in China on Skype about my life in Australia. I described my experience here as 'routine life but good achievements.' I think the life in Australia is quite different from what I expected. Before I came here, I imagined that the life here must be colourful, with diverse activities. I thought I would be able to meet with and talk to many local people. I hoped my listening and spoken English would be improved in a short time. However, after three months, I have found there are not many such activities or opportunities. I can meet with many local people, but I cannot talk to them except for greetings. My listening and spoken English have improved a little, but not much. Everyday my life is almost the same. It is really a bit dull and boring. But to my surprise, when I summarized my three months' work, I found I had achieved much in my studies. That accords with a Chinese metaphor, 'di nei sun shi di wai bu,' which means, 'you lose in some aspects, but you gain in other aspects.' But I think what I have gained is much more valuable than what I have lost, for that is the main aim of my coming here. In this sense, I do not feel life is boring any more. I get pleasure from my studies. Gradually I love it.*

These research students were taken aback when they discovered that chances to talk to local Anglo-Australian students or faculty were not the norm. They had hoped to share

their research interests and knowledge gained through their life experiences. Like so many international students, this lack of social and intellectual interaction was a challenge for their research and education (Singh & Sproats, 2005).

#### *Informal Bilingual Research Literacy*

Contrary to the idea of GNL shattering distance (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008), these students were a long way from home, and worried about their husbands or partners, their aged parents, their colleagues, and/or their students. Using the university's internet capabilities, they talked to family members via Skype to ensure their well being on a daily basis. In some cases they talked to their parents via the telephone, using relatively inexpensive phone cards, to know that they were happy and healthy. Chatting with family and friends released the students from their qualms about them; leaving them worry-free time to study:

传说如果一对夫妻是天生的一对，彼此间心灵是相通的。以前我从来没有验证过，但是今天却意外的验证了。我老公去拜访他的朋友，临走前说至少要五天才能回来。他走了以后我就不上网了。我想利用这段时间好好学习。到了第四天早上，我莫名其妙地、下意识地上了网，却发现他在网上。他说他到家五分钟，刚上网，还没来得及呼叫我我就呼叫他了。这难道不是心有灵犀吗？

*It is said that if a couple is a best couple, they are Xin You Ling Xi (like the sixth sense). I have never tested this proposition before, but today I tested it and confirmed it. My husband had gone to visit his friend in another city. He said he would stay there for at least five days or more. After he left I was not on Skype. I could make use of this time to do more work. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day in the morning without any reason and unconsciously I opened up Skype*

*and was surprised to find that he was on Skype. He said he arrived at home five minutes ago and he just opened up Skype. Is it Xin You Ling Xi?*

The use of informal GNL described above indicates the work of a bilingual research student engaging in trans-national, cross-border experiences. Even though the students were in Australia now, they could not escape being concerned about what was happening in China. Informal GNL involved the private, personal communication between the students and their family, friends, students or colleagues in China or other countries. Their informal GNL included good friends in Japan, classmates in the USA and former students in Britain, all of whom informed their research studies in Australia. All such informal GNL was conducted in *Putonghua*.

### CONCLUSION

The global networking of Western research education programmes and pedagogies now has to contend with the bilingual capabilities of non-Western international students as a norm. The normative use of bilingual research literacy as part of the metrics to measure and grade non-Western international students is part of the complex and challenging problem of internationalising of Western education. From Parson's (1968) perspective, for there to be a stable Western intellectual order involving a plurality of international students there must be a normative framework that sets limits on the linguistic and intellectual resources used within Western universities. However, the monolingual, English only framing of what makes internationalisation of Western research education normal foregrounds the inadequacies of international students from Asia.

There is, however, nothing natural or rational about seeing the internationalisation of Western research education programmes and pedagogies in terms of Western-centred knowledge and English-only pedagogies; this

view must be established and sustained as a norm through processes which prioritise subjecting non-Western students to Western acculturation and adjustment. The study reported in this paper raises questions about the reign of this claim on normality, not in the least because of the need to extend and deepen non-Western students' commitment to critique and scholarly argumentation. Similarly, Foucault (1979, p. 304) argues for knowing 'how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimizing what is already known.'

Globally networked research education may open up possibilities for normalising their bilingual research literacy in Western universities. Bilingual research literacy signifies possibilities for expanding the range of students' research capabilities, as well as enhancing their potential to make novel contributions using non-Western theoretical tools, whether these be everyday metaphors, scholarly concepts, and images of various kinds. It is no longer just a question of English and Western knowledge being provided for international students from Asia. Their presence provides a basis for making it normal that Western universities engage intellectually with Asian languages and theories. Nonetheless, further research is still needed to establish how the concept of bilingual research literacy affects the conduct of Western research education programmes and pedagogies, and the learning involved for all parties.

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## Doctoral Students' Experiences of Supervisory Bullying

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### ABSTRACT

The power dynamic in the student-supervisor relationship is perceived to be unequal, with a good relationship between a student and supervisor important for a doctoral student's success. Many authors have discussed the power differential between a student and supervisor, with some reporting exploitative, aggressive, and intrusive supervision as resulting problems. However, no publicly available study has specifically reported bullying as a by-product of the student-supervisor relationship. As victims of bullying are typically reluctant to voice their concerns face-to-face, data for this paper was sourced from student's experiential evidence located on internet blog sites. The eight blogs which form the data for this study were analysed for common themes. The six themes that emerged from the data were confusion, unrealistic work demands, criticism, anger and rage, inappropriate attention, and abuse of power. By exploring the doctoral students' experiences of supervisory bullying, this paper will discuss a previously unreported issue in the doctoral student-supervisor relationship, and provide guidance for institutions to stop the bullying before it even has a chance to begin.

**Keywords:** Bullying, doctoral student, power, supervisor

### INTRODUCTION

Although difficult to categorise, the term 'bully' is commonly used to define a person "who is habitually cruel or overbearing, especially to smaller or weaker people" or who "force[s] one's way aggressively or by intimidation" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). A bully may also be described as "a person who uses strength or power to coerce others by fear" (Garrett, 1997, p. 227). Moreover, a bully is a person who "persistently provokes, pressures, frightens, intimidates, or otherwise discomforts a person" (Brodsky, 1976, p. 2). As discussed by Rayner & Hoel (1997), the definition of bullying in some countries is influenced by legislation. For example, in the United Kingdom, "the victim must feel harassed, their work be affected, and

there must be a measure of frequency to the action" (Rayner & Hoel, 1997, p. 183-4).

Bullying behaviours in the workplace can generally be grouped into five categories: "(1) threat to professional status (e.g., public professional humiliation, accusation regarding lack of effort); (2) threat to personal standing (e.g., name-calling, insults, intimidation); (3) isolation (e.g., preventing access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding of information); (4) overwork (e.g., undue pressure, impossible deadlines); and (5) destabilization (e.g., failure to give credit when due, meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, setting up to fail)" (Rayner & Hoel, 1997, p. 183).

In his report on bullying in a university setting, Lewis (2004) suggested that general

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behaviours that describe bullying include giving persistent insults or criticism, ignoring the victim, and expecting the victim to undertake demeaning tasks and unrealistic work demands.

Workplace bullying generally “occurs between people who know each other and who have a past and a future” (Rayner & Hoel, 1997, p. 187). The bullying experience in any relationship can be devastating. For victims, “the need to relive, dwell upon, and anguish over their experiences presents a picture of people who remain connected with what has happened to them long after the bullying has ended” (Lewis, 2004, p. 295).

Gender, differences in social class, and occupational position may influence the likelihood of being bullied (Roscigno *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, bullies often emerge in workplaces with a chaotic organisational culture (Roscigno *et al.*, 2009). Victims of bullying are generally less powerful than perpetrators, and organisations without effective constraints are likely to have employees who abuse other employees at will (Roscigno *et al.*, 2009).

Supervision is a demanding and chaotic pedagogy (Grant, 2003), with the power relationship between a student and supervisor reported as a major critical determinant of a graduate students’ success and satisfaction with their graduate experience (Aguinis *et al.*, 1996; Bargar & Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983). Many authors have discussed the power differential and inequality in the student-supervisor relationship (e.g., Fine & Kurdek, 1993; Aguinis *et al.*, 1996; Manathunga, 2007). For example, in their study on assignment of authorship credit and order to student-faculty collaborations, Fine and Kurdek note that while “collaboration between two professionals can occur on an egalitarian basis, collaboration between faculty and their students is inherently unequal” (Fine & Kurdek, 1993, p. 1142). In her 2007 study, Manathunga discusses the operations of power inherent in student-supervisor relationships, whereby “supervisors facilitate students’ development of their evolving identity as independent researchers, while, simultaneously, regulating students’ disciplinary and other identities” (Manathunga, 2007, p. 219).

The power relationship between students and supervisors can have a profound impact on students’ research productivity (Aguinis *et al.*, 1996, p. 289). A student’s feelings of power or powerlessness can be “maximised or minimised depending on the power relationships set up by the [supervisor], or how the [supervisor] ‘sets the tone’ of the relationship” (Garrett, 1997, p. 228). Most students understand that during candidature, “they [are] expected to take on more responsibility for their own learning and develop a sense of ownership of the research project” (Johnston & Broda, 1996, p. 274) while at the same time, their supervisor is relying on the student’s research outcomes and outputs as they are “important for the discipline and for the supervisor’s own development within the discipline” (Johnston, 1999, p. 24). If not managed appropriately, the tension between a student and supervisor can impact a student’s future career. Morris (2008) discusses more fully the impact of such tensions on a student’s candidature.

In addition to power struggles, authors such as Goodyear *et al.* (1992) have also examined some of the ethical problems that can arise from this unequal relationship, including exploitative, incompetent, aggressive and intrusive supervision, as well as supervisor abandonment. However, no publicly available study has specifically reported bullying as a by-product of the student-supervisor relationship.

University academics are placed under enormous workload pressures and typically have competing demands for their time due to heavy undergraduate teaching loads, considerable administrative responsibilities, and continued pressure to conduct research (Deem & Brehony, 2000; Austin, 2003). These other pressures leave little time for supervision of research students (Deem & Brehony, 2000), with some supervisors transferring these workload pressures on to their doctoral students in the form of bullying. Moreover, as doctoral students are not employees, they are not protected from employment legislation that prohibits staff bullying at work (Anon, 1998). Doctoral students would, however, be afforded some

protection under harassment and discrimination policies and legislation. Under the current research culture existing at most institutions, only a brave doctoral student would take on his/her supervisor and potentially risk his/her future career.

This paper will provide the first known report of doctoral students' experiences of supervisory bullying, and comment on their journey for answers to questions such as "Is this bullying?" and "How can my institution stop it?"

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A qualitative methodological approach was employed for this study. Data was drawn from the personal experiences of doctoral students and bystanders who have written about their own or their friend's doctoral experiences on publicly available internet blog sites. The blogs were located on the web by searching *Google* using the key words 'doctoral bullying supervisor.' Only eight blogs describing supervisory bullying experiences of past and present students were located. These bloggers are the participants of this study and their experiential comments provided the data that was subsequently analysed.

The identity of the bloggers is unknown and any identifying features that could be used to locate the bloggers (such as country, discipline, and blog url) have been removed from the transcripts. The age of the blogs ranges from less than one year to four years old. Two of the blogs (Blogger 5 and Blogger 6) were responses to Blogger 4's original post.

The transcripts from the blogs were coded and subjected to thematic analysis, with the common themes identified using key words that appeared in the blogs. Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the author's university.

Before analysing the data, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One such limitation is that most of the data sources used were from victim self-reports. While the

prevalence of victim self-report data is consistent with other studies on bullying (e.g., Rayner & Hoel, 1997), it is important to note that this one-sided reporting may affect the results of this study. An additional limitation in this study is the use of data from bystanders: bloggers who wrote about other student's experiences.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six common themes were identified from the eight student experiences analysed in this study. These themes revealed some classic examples of bullying behaviour as described by Rayner & Hoel (1997) and Lewis (2004), such as overwork and threat to personal standing. The Lewis (2004) description of bullying was subsequently chosen as the framework for this study as it was the only one found that specifically discussed bullying in an academic context. Other studies on bullying focused on workplace and schoolyard bullying. The identified themes include confusion, unrealistic work demands, criticism, anger and rage, inappropriate attention, and use of power. Each theme is presented below, using excerpts from the original narrative passages.

#### *Confusion*

An identified theme raised by several students during their doctoral experience was a feeling of confusion. While not a bullying behaviour, the confusion expressed by these students during the course of their doctoral studies may actually underlie the subsequent bullying they experienced.

Blogger 1 expressed confusion about where to go for advice: "I am an international PhD student... I just wondered whether there was anyone who knows who I can go to for advice?"

Blogger 3, a new doctoral student, expressed confusion about the nature of the supervisory relationship:

*I'm a first-year ... grad student in a two-year Masters program and I'm having a lot of mixed feelings about my*

*relationship with my advisor. Being new to grad life, it's been hard to figure out how much of what I'm experiencing is just 'paying my dues' and how much of it I should have real cause for concern. (Blogger 3)*

After describing their experience, Blogger 3 continued to explain their sense of confusion with their supervisor and used a war analogy to highlight their situation:

*I don't even know if this is truly a toxic situation or if my conception of graduate school was just completely off base. What I had expected to be a cultivating and enriching environment has lately felt more like a war zone. I think of my advisor as an enemy that I need to evade, not a friend or mentor. I don't even feel like a person around her. ... Should I just grow thicker skin, learn to cope, and stick it out with her? (Blogger 3)*

The bullying experienced by Blogger 3 will be discussed in more detail below. However, their expressed confusion may have actually underpinned their bullying experience.

#### *Unrealistic Work Demands*

Several bloggers wrote about how their supervisors placed unrealistic work demands on them during their candidature. As a scientist, Blogger 1 raised the issue of working long hours and weekends, and Blogger 7 described how they left their PhD because their supervisor would not let them return home to get married.

*My PhD supervisor is the head of the lab and he says that I must work weekends and long hours. But my roommates (who are not scientists) say that this is bullying and not right? Is it right that I should work long hours? I am writing this anonymously as I*

*don't want people from my lab to see it. (Blogger 1)*

*I'm afraid my experience as [an international] PhD student has not been particularly positive. ... My worst experience, and the one that caused me to leave the university, was a personal one. I got engaged in January 2002 and my second supervisor said I could return home to get married if I handed in a first draft of my thesis by April. But then, my third supervisor refused to give me a leave of absence. I was told the decision was 'in my best interests' ... I am now continuing my PhD [in another country]. (Blogger 7)*

#### *Criticism*

Returning to Blogger 3's story, the student describes how their supervisor had a dictatorial and commanding attitude, talked condescendingly to them, and was critical of their mistakes:

*The overall impression I've gotten is that my advisor sees her students as a means to an end. ... Though she was initially friendly, this soon gave way to a more commanding and dictatorial attitude. She's dismissive of my ideas, talks down to me condescendingly, brings me down in front of other people, slams her fists on her desk while raising her voice, and criticizes my slightest mistakes, all while minimally acknowledging solid work I have done. I walk out of meetings feeling like a punching bag. (Blogger 3)*

#### *Anger and Rage*

In the excerpt provided above, Blogger 3 also described how their supervisor expressed anger towards them, by "slam[ing] her fists on the desk while raising her voice". The same supervisor also caused Blogger 3 to feel angry

and frustrated: "There's virtually no positive reinforcement from her and I've ended up feeling this bizarre mix of resentment, frustration, anger, and uncertainty".

Blogger 2 described a frightful situation where a supervisor would "throw fits of temper" at her students and staff. Furthermore, Blogger 2 endured this behaviour for two and a half years:

*I have had the PhD from hell...I began my PhD in one department. After working for 1 1/2 years with one supervisor, my supervisor's funding for the project was cut. ... I then started my PhD over again in a new department with a new supervisor. Working with the new supervisor was worse than anything I could ever imagine. She was a horrific bully who would throw fits of temper at all her staff and students. She would threaten to 'crack your head against a wall'. She would swear and throw fits of rage and I spent 2 1/2 years working in a complete state of terror. There were several complaints filed against her with the university and in fact, she had been investigated for bullying on a previous occasion but the university didn't do a thing. .... brushed everything aside. After working with this PhD supervisor for 2 1/2 years I finally couldn't take it anymore so I walked out. When I left she tried to claim legal entitlement to my data and I had to fight to get the data returned to me. She confiscated the first year of my work (which is to be published in another person's name). I am now working with a third PhD supervisor. (Blogger 2)*

#### *Inappropriate Attention*

Blogger 4 outlined a disturbing situation where her supervisor appeared to be interested in her personally rather than professionally. She described several incidents where she received

inappropriate attention from her supervisor and in her blog, seems to be asking others to suggest a way out:

*I am a research student in my second year of a PhD bursary. I've become increasingly anxious about my supervisor, a professor in the department in which I am primarily based....*

*I know the relationship with a doctoral supervisor can be intense, challenging and unequal, but things are getting bizarre. He sits too close to me during our meetings. On the most recent occasion, I simply stood up and moved my chair back. He made a joke about it and then immediately encroached on my space again, saying: 'Goodness, I'm not contagious!'*

*He keeps telling me that I'm 'going to do great things' and says 'stick with me, I'll help you all I can but you have to play ball'. It's not what he says but the way he says it. I've also been given some lecturing and project development work, thanks to him. He has started phoning me at home about minor issues to do with the work. He now wants to meet me for a meal on Valentine's Day at a very expensive restaurant as 'a treat for all your good work.' ... There are few guidelines on conduct in this area, which seem to me intentionally underdeveloped. I think it's pointless going to the union. ... I need a way out. (Blogger 4)*

In response to Blogger 4's dilemma, Blogger 5 describes another incident where their friend was paid inappropriate attention from her supervisor:

*A friend of mine had a similar experience. However, when she stood up for herself and rejected her*

*supervisor's advances, he made her life hell. The end result, she failed her PhD. She felt she couldn't complain as the Old Boys' Network always closes rank.* (Blogger 5)

#### *Abuse of Power*

The final theme raised in the blogs was abuse of power. Bloggers discussed several forms of power abuse including abuse of physical, emotional, and academic power. Bloggers 2 and 3 described the physical power wielded by their supervisors during exchanges. Blogger 2's supervisor also wielded her academic power by trying to claim legal entitlement to Blogger 2's data after they left the institution. In Blogger 4's case, her supervisor abused his emotional and academic power by telling her she will achieve greatness as long as she plays his game.

While not their own experience, Blogger 8 described another student's experience of being bullied:

*One girl I worked with was badly bullied by her supervisor. The head of department knew he was a bully (especially towards women) but wouldn't let her arrange a new supervisor - she had to try and 'resolve' her problem by basically putting up with his unhelpful and derogatory comments.* (Blogger 8)

Blogger 6 also raised the issue of power, both in terms of the abuse of power in a student-supervisor relationship and the potential power that the bullied student has to "embarrass the university":

*The huge potential for abuse in the starkly asymmetrical relationship between PhD student and supervisor is something I have witnessed first-hand as a support member of staff working with a group who were either subjected to harassment (which sounds,*

*even in terms of the vocabulary used, very similar) or bullying depending on their gender from a supervisor. They all suffered in silence choosing to 'manage' the situation and endure behaviours which in the rest of the workplace and outside academia would have been stamped on years back. Realise your power which is the power to embarrass the university ... [by using] the media age.* (Blogger 6)

The findings above highlight an array of unsavoury interactions experienced by doctoral students or the blogger's friends as described on internet blog sites. Blogger 1 posed the question "is this [behaviour] bullying?". As described above, Rayner & Hoel (1997) and Lewis (2004) identified a range of behaviours that constitute bullying. With reference to these descriptors, particularly those noted by Lewis (2004) in a university setting, I therefore argue that the experience of all bloggers described in this study above constitutes bullying behaviour by their supervisors.

The bullying cases described by the bloggers appear not to be isolated, and I'm sure many of us are aware of similar incidents. Indeed, following presentation of this paper at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Doctoral Education Research Network Conference, April 2010, in Malaysia, and subsequent articles that featured in the Australian print media (Healy, 2010a, b), six Australian doctoral students informed me that they had experienced similar supervisory bullying behaviours to those reported here for the unidentified bloggers.

Given that most bullying episodes can be characterised "as entailing high levels of inequality and powerlessness" (Roscigno *et al.*, 2009, p. 1580), it is not surprising that doctoral students can experience bullying in their supervisory relationship. Furthermore, the bullying experience of these students has clearly impacted on their lives, as they dwell on and relive their experiences through their internet stories.

Bloggers 2 and 3 experienced classic cases of workplace bullying when their supervisors yelled at them in front of others to publicly humiliate them. "The supervisory behaviour evidenced here is callous, disrespectful, and undermines the employee's [or student's] dignity" (Rosigno *et al.*, 2009, p. 1571). Furthermore, the supervisors appeared to have acted aggressively towards the student to control the relationship (Dupré & Barling, 2006).

Bullying behaviours may also entail sexually-related content, such as those behaviours described by Bloggers 4 and 5. "The primary motivation [for such behaviour] appears to [be] to humiliate the worker [or student], with the sexual content serving as a gratuitous carrier for the abuse" (Rosigno *et al.*, 2009, p. 1572). In the case of the student-supervisor interaction, this behaviour can also be seen as an abuse of the supervisor's power in the relationship.

Although not a bullying behaviour, the confusion expressed by several bloggers may actually underpin their bullying experience. Some of the students were unsure what was acceptable practice in their institution or even where to access information about acceptable practices. New students would be well advised to learn about acceptable institutional practices either from their institution's website or from their local Faculty postgraduate coordinator. Being aware of their institution's expectations will prepare them for future discussion with their supervisor.

## CONCLUSIONS

In light of this study's findings, it is important to ask what can an institution do to stop bullying? The bloggers who experienced bullying behaviours thought action against their supervisor was fruitless. Indeed, situations such as those described by Bloggers 5 and 8 only reinforce the notion that lodging a complaint can be futile. It's no wonder that Blogger 1 was worried about being identified. There are guidelines on managing bullying or harassment behaviours at most institutions, such as the "Discrimination and Harassment" policy at

my university (The University of Queensland, 2010). However, policies such as these are "merely cosmetic unless enforced impartially against the aberrant supervisor" (Anon, 1998, p. 407).

Rosigno *et al.* (2009) called for "organisational responses to bullying to move beyond a Band-aid approach in which each incident is handled individually.... Indeed, [their] results suggest concrete avenues for organisations to take to prevent [emphasis in original] bullying rather than just seeking redress when it occurs" (Rosigno *et al.*, 2009, p. 1581). If organisations don't adequately manage bullying complaints in a more effective manner, then the exercise could become costly with a possible increase in litigation from discontented students (Anon, 1998). Moreover, the power that disgruntled students like Blogger 6 have, to embarrass the university, can further exacerbate the situation. Institutions need to do more to ameliorate this problem and stop or reduce supervisory bullying "rather than attempting to mitigate its effects only *after* [emphasis in original] someone has been victimized" (Rosigno *et al.*, 2009, p. 1581).

Legislation differs from country to country, but typically includes Workplace Health and Safety Acts (e.g., Australia), Harassment Acts (e.g., New Zealand), and Public Order and Nuisance Acts (e.g., Singapore). Each Act outlines the obligations for citizens in that country, and clearly lists the penalties that could be imposed for breaching these obligations. As these Acts typically underpin institutional policies and guidelines, discussion on the relevant Acts and institutional policies, acceptable behaviours, and sources for further information, could be incorporated into existing institutional programs like new staff and student inductions, or supervisor training sessions.

Other studies on workplace aggression have commented "the role of perceived organizational sanctions is important for the prevention of workplace aggression" (Dupré & Barling, 2006, p. 22). As such, it would be in an institutions best interest to ensure that both its staff and student members are aware of the existence and

use of such policies (Dupré & Barling, 2006). Incorporation of existing policies and procedures, legislation, and acceptable behaviours into staff and student training sessions, would encourage appropriate behaviour and reinforce the message that bullying is unacceptable. Furthermore, discussion of policies and acceptable behaviours would set a precedent for positive collaborative relationships, with knowledge of such policies having the potential to reduce negative student and supervisor experiences downstream and stop the bullying before it even has a chance to begin.

Although this study has not quantified the prevalence of bullying in the student-supervisor relationship, it is disturbing to think that these incidents even occurred and throws in to question, how many cases of bullying actually go unreported. In addition, it is also important to note that the bullying of supervisors by students, which, while not the subject of this study, is an equally alarming thought. Further research into the occurrences of bullying by both students and supervisors would enable the research community to better appreciate the prevalence of bullying in the student-supervisor relationship. Additionally, future research should involve, where possible, in-depth interviews with both victims and bullies to address the limitation of using self-report data as done in the present study.

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**Special Acknowledgement**

The JSSH Editorial Board gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Doreen Dillah, who served as the English language editor for this issue.

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# *Pertanika*

*Our goal is to bring high quality research to the widest possible audience*

## **Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities**

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Revised July 2011

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*Pertanika* is an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to the publication of original papers, and it serves as a forum for practical approaches to improving quality in issues pertaining to tropical agriculture and its related fields. *Pertanika* began publication in 1978 as Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science. In 1992, a decision was made to streamline *Pertanika* into three journals to meet the need for specialised journals in areas of study aligned with the interdisciplinary strengths of the university. The revamped Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (JSSH) aims to develop as a pioneer journal for the Social Sciences with a focus on emerging issues pertaining to the social and behavioural sciences as well as the humanities, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Other *Pertanika* series include Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science (JTAS); and Journal of Science and Technology (JST).

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

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Swan and Kanwal (2007) reported that ...

The results have been interpreted (Kanwal et al. 2009).

- References should be listed in alphabetical order, by the authors' last names. For the same author, or for the same set of authors, references should be arranged chronologically. If there is more than one publication in the same year for the same author(s), the letters 'a', 'b', etc., should be added to the year.
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  - Braconier, H. and Ekholm, K. (2006). Swedish multinationals and competition from high and low wage location. *Review of International Economics*, 8, 448-461.

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**JSSH** deals in research or theories in social sciences and humanities research with a focus on emerging issues pertaining to the social and behavioural sciences as well as the humanities, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. It is published twice a year in **March** and **September**.



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