

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION
OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS
ASIA PACIFIC CONFERENCE
2022
(MAAL APC 2022)

KLCC Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

EDITORS:
Vahid Nimehchisalem
Cordelia Mason

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**Proceedings of the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics Asia Pacific Conference
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PREFACE

The papers you are about to read are the proceedings of the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics Asia Pacific Conference 2022. With 'The Role of Languages in the Pursuit of Global Sustainability' as its theme, MAAL APC 2022 was held at the KLCC Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur on 10-11 AUGUST 2022. The shortlisted submissions were reviewed blindly by peers and revised by authors according to the reviewers' comments before we checked and copy-edited them. Coming from diverse areas of applied linguistics, such as discourse analysis and language assessment, the papers are expected to attract many readers.

We would like to express our thanks to our colleagues, Hui Geng, Yong Mei Fung, Minah Harun, Soh Siak Bie, Ena Bhattacharyya, Ghayth Kamel Shaker Al-Shaibani, Nur Nabilah binti Abdullah, Daniel Chow Ung T'Chiang, Rafidah Binti Sahar, Nadya Supian, Xia Xiao, Han Wei, Shahrina Md Nordin, Afiza Mohamad Ali, Hooi Chee Mei, Roslina Abd Aziz, Yassamin Pouriran, Nor Sakina Thomas, Amizura Hanadi Mohd Radzi, Lee Geok Imm, and Sharon Sharmini for their remarkable assistance in reviewing and quality control of the manuscripts.

Happy reading,

Editors

4 March, 2023

Interactive Meanings in Multimodal Visuals: A Socio-Semiotic Narratological Study of a Pakistani TV Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

TV commercials are interactive in nature and communicate social meanings through narratives, deploying verbal and visual semiotic modes. It has been established that the interpersonal metafunction of language, under the theory of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics demonstrates an interaction between the addressee and the addresser in verbal communication. Similarly, Kress and van Leeuwen's interactive domain of Visual Grammar deals with meaning making processes materialized by an interaction between the represented participant and the viewer in visual communication. This qualitative study is set in a Pakistani socio-cultural context and employs a socio-semiotic multimodal approach with the lens of narratology to analyze the interactive functions in the narrative of a Pakistani TV advertisement, Shan Thematic 2020's #MoreThanJustACook. In this regard, a threefold analytical framework: Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, 2020), socio-semiotic Visual Grammar, Ryan's (2006) Narrativity Conditions and Fog et al.'s (2010) Storytelling Elements has been deployed. The findings of the study unfold the gender roles and strong family ties that are reflected in the narrative of the TV advertisement. The representation of social relationships has been realized through the social distance and contact between the represented participants and the viewers in an interactive set up of the visual landscape. The results suggest that the indirect eye contact and frontal angle in the visual narrative induce the viewer to purchase the product and cherish family time. This study offers a methodological contribution towards the application of narratology, multimodal narrativity and socio-semiotic multimodal theories that can be highly effective for future research in the field of visual communication.

KEYWORDS

Multimodal visuals, socio-semiotic, narratology, interactive meaning, Pakistani TV advertisement

INTRODUCTION

In modern societies, advertising is a well-known discourse genre. According to Cook (2001) the primary purpose of advertising discourse is often to convince consumers to purchase a certain commodity. In narrative advertising, the advertisers depict the narratives of people's lives in order to develop messages which viewers can identify with themselves (Yücel, 2021). Nonetheless, narratives in TV

advertisements unfold psychological and physical behaviours of the represented participants and highlight various aspects in a socio-cultural context, i.e., stereotypical gender roles, women empowerment and family ties (Jabeen & Cheong, 2022). This paper focuses on the interactive meaning making processes embedded in the narrative construction of TV advertisements. Apart from that, the research proposes a multi-layered analytical framework drawing upon the concepts of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 2020), Ryan (2006) and Fog et al. (2010) to comprehend the visual narrative representation in TV advertisements. Therefore, the research question investigated under the current study is: *How do visual semiotic resources function to realize interactive meanings in the narrative construction of a Pakistani TV advertisement?*

RELATED LITERATURE

This section briefly covers reviewed literature regarding two strands of the study i) multimodal narrativity with the lens of narratology, storytelling elements, and socio-semiotic theory; ii) interactive metafunction of language within the scope of Visual Grammar.

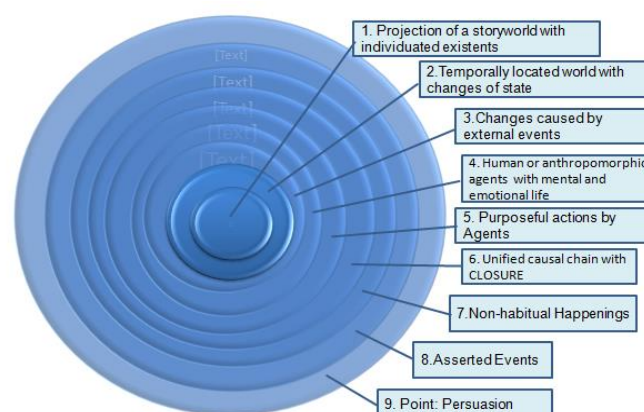
Multimodality Narrativity

For an in-depth analysis of multimodal narrative operations in TV advertisement, this paper has employed Ryan’s (2006) prototypical conditions of narrativity adjoining Fog et al.’s (2010) basic components of storytelling. Concepts from Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006, 2020) representational metafunction have been drawn to trace out the narrative processes semiotically.

Ryan’s Prototypical Narrativity Conditions in TV Advertisements

According to Ryan (2006), narrativity is measured on a scalar dimension that comprises varying levels of shared prototypical nested conditions marking the type of a ‘narrative’. This scalar dimension entails the occurrence or absence of a number of “nested conditions” that change the semantic focus from central semantic elements to peripheral pragmatic elements. The nine prototypical conditions proposed by Ryan (2006) that scale out narrativity on semantic and pragmatic principles are shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Prototypical narrativity conditions (Based on Ryan, 2006)

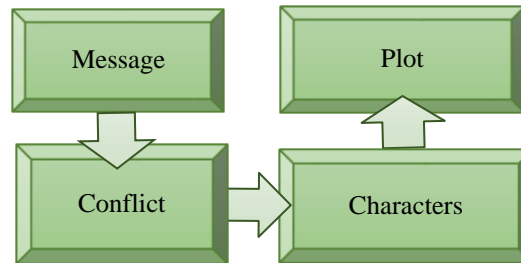


Storytelling Elements

According to (Fog et al., 2010. pp. 32-33) stories typically include four main components: “a *message*, a *conflict*, *characters*, and a *plot*”. Depending on the setting and intent of the story, these elements can

be combined and incorporated in several ways. The storytelling elements as described by Fog et al. (2010) are summarized in Figure 2.

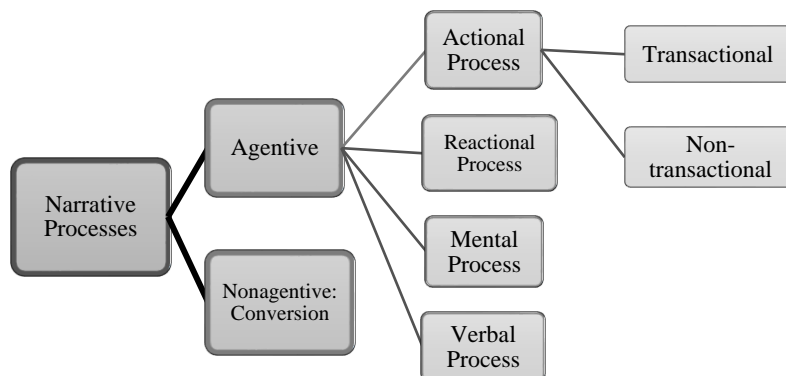
FIGURE 2
Adapted model of the four elements of storytelling (Fog et al., 2010)



Semiotic Narrative Processes in Visual Grammar

The semiotic narrative mechanism in visuals is related to the portrayal of “*doing or happening something*” between “*objects and relationships.*” Action and Reactional Processes occur because of the vector – the source that causes the happening (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, 2020). The objects’ activity results in the formation of vectors. When an eye’s gaze creates vectors, such an action is referred to as Reaction Process. Kress and van Leeuwen’s narrative mechanism in visuals is simply described in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3
Narrative processes in visual design (based on Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

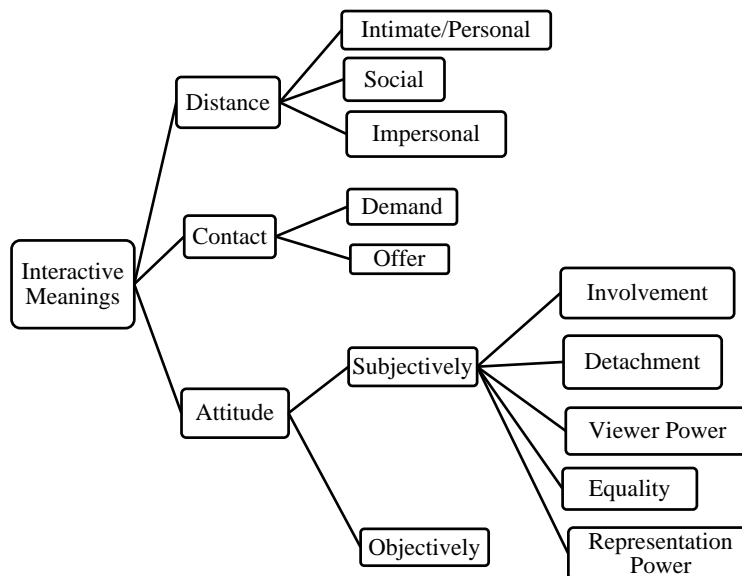


Interactive Meanings

The interactive metafunction is concerned with the way how images represent social links and interactions. Contact, social distance and attitude are three primary components to demonstrate interactive meanings in visuals (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Figure 4 summarises the interactive mechanism in visual text. Contact is distinguished through demand and offer within the process of gaze. A vector that emerges from the represented participant's eyeline and is pointed at the viewer establishes contact in a demand image. There is no eye contact between the represented participant and the viewer in an offer image and thus, such a detached representation serves as a piece of information. Social distance is one of the interactive functions in visuals. It is related to the frame dimension involving “*the choice between close-up, medium shot and long shot.*”

FIGURE 4

Interactive meanings in Visual Grammar (based on Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, 2020)



Socio-semiotic Multimodal Studies

Salam (2020) employed socio-semiotic multimodal analysis method to investigate gendered identities on Facebook in Pakistan. The findings suggested that the women conform the cultural standard of patriarchy but at the same time, they use social media to voice their opinions regarding social issues such gender identity, sexual harassment, and women empowerment.

Liu (2019) studied the interactive meaning making process in public service TV advertisements with regards to the integration of visual semiotic resources as contact, social distance, perspective and modality. The study suggested that these four semiotics resources interplay with each other rather than working separately to realise the interactive meanings in the advertisement. Similarly, basing their qualitative study on Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic framework for advertisements, Ali et al. (2019) stated that it is by the interactive processes that a social relationship is materialized between the represented participants and the viewers through eye contact, social distance and perspective of power.

METHOD

The current study is qualitative in design and applies a multi-layered analytical framework to explore interactive meanings construed through the functionality of various visual semiotic resources in multimodal narrative of a TV advertisement. The analytical framework of the study (Table 1) reflects the concepts drawn from socio-semiotic and narratological theories. The study relates to Pakistani socio-cultural context and through purposive sampling technique, a thematic food advertisement of Shan Thematic 2020's #MoreThanJustACook has been analyzed for in depth interpretation. The TVC has been accessed from Shan Foods (Pvt.) Ltd.'s official YouTube channel.

TABLE 1
Analytical framework for interactive meanings in multimodal visuals

Approach	Analysis	Theoretical Framework	Methodological Design
Socio-semiotic multimodal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Interactional metafunction ▪ The Representational metafunction – <i>Narrative Processes in Visuals</i> 	Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 2020) Visual Grammar	Qualitative
Narratological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narrativity Conditions ▪ Elements of Storytelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ryan (2006) Prototypical Narrativity Conditions ▪ Fog et al. (2010) The Four Elements of Storytelling 	Qualitative

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the analysis of the multimodal narrative processes with a combined approach and furthers the discussion about the interactive function in the understudied TV advertisement.

Analysis of Multimodal Narrativity: A Combined Approach

Socio-semiotic Multimodal Approach

This section analyses the narrative processes in the visuals of the TV advertisement through socio-semiotic multimodal components. This TV commercial presents three scenes with only two represented participants. Scene 1 presents a male and a female having a conversation with each other in the kitchen. In scene 2, the male is presented as cooking in the kitchen; and scene 3 shows both the male and female eating a meal together at the table. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), narrative mechanism in the visual is formed by a vector. A visual narrative mechanism consists of three sub-processes as action processes, reaction processes, and verbal and mental processes. In the action process, the represented participant is called an Actor.

In scene 1 of the TVC, the represented participant who is looking at the goal is termed as the Reactor. The Reactor is a human, male, an old person who shows a pensive mood through his facial expression while reading a newspaper in the kitchen. The Reactor's eye line forms a vector pointing towards the paper that serves as a Goal to it.

There are several transactional processes between the represented participants in Shan Thematic TVC that help the viewer to comprehend the visual landscape and enhance the effectiveness of represented emotions through facial expressions and actions (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5
The transactional process in the visual



Narratological Approach: Through the lens of Ryan’s (2006) narrative conditions, and Fog et al.’s (2005, 2010) storytelling elements, the analysis of Shan Thematic 2020 TVC unfolds a complete narrative mechanism to further our understandings of social meanings. Ryan’s (2006) Condition 1 depicts a story world of two individuals in the advertisement. Taking Fog et al.’s (2005, 2010) characterization into consideration, the characters presented in the Shan Thematic TVC represent a family story that the viewers can relate themselves with either in the role of a father or a daughter. The closure of the story establishes an ideological or moral statement that the viewers can internalize as the message of the story. Therefore, this message serves as the point of the story (Condition 9), the persuasion to buy the product. Therefore, the understudied TVC has been produced on a theme: More Than Just A Cook that presents the ideological statement of honouring women at home as more than just a cook and appreciating their contributions as a working woman, caring wife and loving mother. The breaking of gender stereotyping, with the representation of the father in the kitchen, can be well perceived by the viewers when the father honours his daughter (a working woman) by cooking a meal for her and celebrates the presence of women in his life either as the living daughter or the late wife.

Analysis of Interactive Meanings: A Socio-semiotic Multimodal Approach

The two represented participants in the first scene are making no eye contact with the viewer, therefore it suggests an offer as Figure 6 displays.

FIGURE 6
An offer image



In this shot, two represented participants – a male and a female are interacting with each other. Their facial expressions are serious. The male actor seems engrossed in thinking while looking at the paper. In this offer image, the viewer is required to ascertain or simply see the participants as objects paying attention to their movements, facial expressions, and place of action. A medium shot determines the social distance between the two represented participants and the viewer and thus, establishes a social relationship. The two participants have been portrayed from a horizontal viewpoint using an eye line level angle, suggesting an equal interaction with the viewer.

Several other shots in the second and third scene contain offer images depicting one represented male participant cooking in the kitchen using Shan spice mix and later the two represented participants having a meal together at the table. The viewer's part in this social interaction is to contemplate over the producer's inferred message that the meals and family time can be cherished if the product - Shan spices mix is used in the food. Regarding the social distance, the represented participants are portrayed in a medium shot, which places them at the viewer's eye level (Figures 7 & 8) giving him an equal power to relate with.

FIGURE 7
An indirect contact






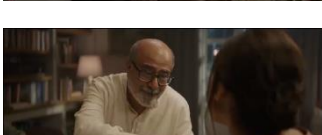


FIGURE 8
A medium closeup shot



The interactive functions in the visuals of Shan TVC have been summarised in the Table 2.

TABLE 2
Interactive functions in Visuals

Visual	Contact/Gaze	Social Distance	Perspective
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	Eye line level (frontal angle)
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	Eye line level (frontal angle)
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	High angle/ Horizontal
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	Eye line level (Low angle)
	Offer/Indirect	Close up	Eye line level/ Frontal angle
	Offer/Indirect	Close up	Eye line level/ Top angle
	Offer/Indirect	Medium Long	Eye line level/ Horizontal angle
	Offer/Indirect	Close up	Eye line level/ Frontal angle
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	Eye line level/ Frontal angle
	Offer/Indirect	Medium	Eye line level/ Frontal angle

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the interactive meanings in the narrative of a Pakistani TV advertisement - Shan Thematic 2020. A multi-perspective analytical framework containing a socio-semiotic multimodal and narratological approach was employed to interpret interactive meanings in the multimodal visuals of TVC. Findings reveal that the semiotic narrative processes highlight strong family ties and emotional bonding between the represented participants. The narrative of a Pakistani family presents the role of a father who honours women beyond the status of a cook. The representation of a family narrative has deployed various visual resources for interactive function i.e social contact, distance and perspective. Most of the visuals in the TVC offer information about the represented participants. Medium and close up shots indicate close relationship between the viewer and the represented participant and thus, the viewer inclines to relate himself with the narrative. Frontal angle and eye line shots reflect the full involvement and interaction of the viewer with the represented participants which urges him to buy the product. In this respect, this TVC provides a message of women empowerment and negation of a stereotyped male's role in Pakistani society. This study offers a methodological contribution to better understand interactive functions of multimodal narrative based TVCs, and proposes a comprehensive analytical framework for future studies.

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Learning to Learn: Using Mobile-Aided Language Learning to Learn a Less Commonly Taught Language

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ABSTRACT

There are over 7,100 languages in the world, the majority of which are unknown to the general population. Access to languages originally was limited to proximity and education, which was derived from wealth. Today, technology can bypass proximity and wealth to create an accessible language education. This paper explores the application and accessibility of language-learning technology to prepare for learning a minority, less commonly taught, or inaccessible language. Similar to the connections that people share through countless contexts, languages share similar connections. Shared linguistic characteristics among language families connect related languages as well as define them. The prevalent research involving Computer-Aided Language Learning addresses how to improve learning and make the technology accessible, however, not all languages are directly accessible. Studying a language to prepare for studying another language is time-consuming and difficult, but it allows a learner to make a connection to another language and culture that they otherwise wouldn't be able to. Through the usage of a Narrative perspective on Self Directed Language learning this paper attempts to demonstrate another usage of technology to learn a language that isn't accessible otherwise. The study involved learning Turkish for 90 days through a Mobile-Aided Language Learning medium, Duolingo, followed by an intensive 8-week Azerbaijani Language program. Throughout the course of the study, self-reflective journaling revealed the positive impacts of studying a related language prior to studying a less commonly taught language.

KEYWORDS:

CALL; MALL; Duolingo; Turkish; Azerbaijani

INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication between people and their cultures; the process of learning a language has changed over time and evolved alongside languages. Initially, language was taught orally, then through texts, and now using technology. Technology has revolutionized nearly every aspect of human life, including language learning. Technology has enabled access to languages with millions of speakers and languages with thousands of speakers. While more languages than ever have been made accessible to the general population, not all languages are equally supported.

This study intends to use Mobile-Aided Language Learning (MALL) to demonstrate a bridge through which language learners can gain access to a Less Commonly taught language. This study will address the following research questions: 1) Will studying Turkish through Duolingo prepare an individual to study Azerbaijani? 2). Will prior exposure to Turkish prove effective in aiding in the study of Azerbaijani?

RELATED LITERATURE

Kukulka-Hulme (2013) defines Mobile-Aided Language Learning (MALL) as the usage of mobile technologies in language learning, especially when the portability of technology is beneficial. Numerous researchers note that the main strength of MALL is the accessibility it provides its users; especially the ability to study a language regardless of physical location (Karjo & Andreani, 2018; Czerska-Andrzejewska, 2016). Additionally, it is noted that the spaced repetition that MALL offers benefits in the acquisition of skills such as language learning (Munday, 2016).

The discussion between language learning and language acquisition is debated by language researchers. Krashen (2014) and Munday (2016) critique whether Duolingo encourages language learners to acquire languages. This debate is rooted in the notion of “knowing” a language a “using” a language, furthering the debate of what is knowing a language. In other words, knowing a language and memorizing vocabulary without fully understanding the language’s features.

METHODS

Turkish and Azerbaijani

Turkish and Azerbaijani were used for this study for three reasons: 1) Turkish and Azerbaijani are both Turkic languages and even within the Turkic group of languages share a strong degree of similarity; 2) Turkish was an accessible language to study through a free online/mobile program and the participant was able to take a course in Azerbaijani at one of the few US universities where it is taught; 3) Turkic languages as a whole are relatively foreign for the participant. The participant had a pre-existing awareness of Turkic languages but possessed no formal or informal experiences with any of the languages beyond seeing examples during an undergraduate Morphology course.

Materials

Duolingo

Duolingo is a Web-based and Mobile App-based language learning program that presents lessons in a segmented progressive manner. Language learning is divided into skill-based objectives such as Basics, Food, Family, Numbers, Accusative, Dative, etc. Skills develop progressively within set units (a collection of several skills), which vary based on language course and skills within the unit. Within each skill lesson, there are 2-6 rounds of mini lessons that gradually increase in difficulty until the skill lesson is completed.

The structure of each lesson consists of a series of tasks such as matching L1 and L2 words, translating sentences or phrases from L1-L2 or L2-L1; L2 audio listening/ translation, and audio response. During each lesson, feedback is explicitly given as either “correct” or “incorrect” accompanied by the correct answer alongside a translation into either the L1 or L2 depending on the task. In addition to the language learning structure of Duolingo, a gamification aspect is included in the form of XP (Experience Points) which are earned while completing lessons. Each completed lesson results in gaining 10 XP which can be added based on the time a lesson was completed; on the app between 7:00 PM -7:59 PM.

Lessons are self-paced and allow for errors to be made without impacting the progression of the lesson. On the mobile app, at full capacity, the apps allow for 4 hearts or four errors that can be made without impacting the progression of the learner. A heart can be regained every four hours or after completing a practice lesson. The web-based format doesn’t have a heart system which would inhibit learning based on the frequency of incorrect answers.

Additionally, if using an Early Bird Reward, the XP accumulated within a 15-minute window is doubled. During lessons, learners can click on L2/L1 words to offer an L1/L2 translation, which serves as a “hint” option for studying. Sentence structures are often repeated throughout skills. Both the web-based and mobile app-based formats contain a ‘Tips’ section for certain lessons, which provides an overarching “cheat sheet” for the skill lessons.

Hybrid Class

The hybrid Azerbaijani class was taken via zoom at an American University in the Midwest. The hybrid course consisted of two condensed, intensive language courses each incorporating the material from a semester-length course (12-16 weeks) into a four-week session. The intended result of the two four-week sessions equaled the language instruction normally received during a 24–32-week academic year. The course instructor was a native Azerbaijani speaker visiting the US to teach this course.

The course was heavily structured and designed with the goal of taking an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) exam near the end of the 8-week course. Classes were held Monday-Thursday for 4 hours and a 1-2 quiz/exam every Friday. The class consisted primarily of reviewing assigned readings and developing language skills. Grammatical concepts were explained in English, however, a large portion of each class consisted of listening to Azerbaijani and roleplaying dialogues and using Azerbaijani in ‘real world’ contexts. Outside of class, a minimum of 2-4 hours were dedicated to the independent study of Azerbaijani.

Reflective Journaling

Throughout this study, reflective journaling was utilized to provoke metacognitive reflection on the material learned. During the initial language study stage, the participant wrote a reflection after completing a grouping of skills/lessons as organized by Duolingo. The reflection for the initial section consisted of three prompts: 1) What course lessons made up the unit; 2) Summarize what was learned; 3) What are your thoughts during the units? Benefits? Frustrations? During the second section of the study weekly reflection was used due to the increased amount of information introduced. The three prompts were retained.

Participant

The participant was an American graduate student with an academic background in Linguistics, Russian, Japanese, and Teaching English as a Second Language. Language exposure to Turkish/Turkic languages prior to this study consisted of brief mentions of Turkish examples during undergraduate study. The participant was an enthusiastic casual user of Duolingo and had experience studying languages at the university level.

Procedure

During the initial stage of studying Turkish through Duolingo, the participant completed a minimum of one new lesson or ten XP points per day for 90 consecutive days. Attention to reviewing previously learned skills or lessons was incorporated to maintain language development. The participant mainly studied for 10-20 minutes each day in the evening.

During the secondary stage, the participant attended a hybrid Azerbaijani class via Zoom. The participant attended class 4 hours a day from Monday to Thursday with a one-hour quiz/exam each Friday. Over the entirety of the course, the participant received 128 hours of instruction and 8-16 hours of testing evaluation. The course was separated into two four-week sessions each designed to cover the coursework of a full university semester-length course. The course concluded with an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents this study's results and discusses the participant's experience from a Narrative Perspective of Self-Directed language learning. Ultimately, the participant completed 38 lesson topics on Duolingo. During this period the participant amassed 3088 XP points or roughly 34 XP points per day. The participant excelled in assigned homework and translation exercises throughout the hybrid course. The participant passed both sections of the hybrid course with a final score greater than 90% (A).

Reflective journaling revealed that although lessons were completed, and vocabulary was acquired the participant did not fully acquire grammatical structures or a personal sense of ownership of the language. The participant regularly struggled with pronunciation, listening comprehension, and producing the language without stimuli. The limited performance in these “active skills” were counterbalanced by strong reading, writing, and grammar-translation skills or in other words more “passive skills”. Throughout the initial section of this study, the participant repeatedly noted developing a good grasp of grammatical concepts and understanding the agglutinative aspect of Turkic languages. This grasp of how vowel harmony and suffix building worked in Turkish directly transferred when learning about these concepts in Azerbaijani.

The main benefit determined in this study is that prior exposure to grammatical concepts greatly aided in learning the new language. Studying Turkish helped prepare the participant for studying Azerbaijani, however, having a pre-existing background in Russian and Japanese proved equally useful. Russian loanwords were easily found and used. The grammatical structure of Japanese allowed for familiarity and comfort with suffix building.

The major critics of using solely Duolingo to prepare for the hybrid study of Azerbaijani involved the disproportionate development of language skills. While reading and translation skills proved useful entering stage II, the lack of development of speaking and listening skills inhibited improvement throughout stage II. Throughout the reflective journaling, the participant alluded to desiring a more balanced development of passive and active language skills during stage I.

CONCLUSION

This study answered the following questions 1) Will studying Turkish through Duolingo prepare an individual to study Azerbaijani? 2). Will prior exposure to Turkish prove effective in aiding in the study of Azerbaijani? Based on the reflective journaling conducted throughout this study, it was determined that although studying Turkish aided in studying Azerbaijani, the participant deemed that having a pre-existing background in Russian and Japanese was equally as impactful. The ability to practice grammatical and structural characteristics of Azerbaijani through Turkish in Duolingo was beneficial and aided in language acquisition. These results propose a follow-up study geared towards the impact of exposure to language characteristics with aiding in the study of minority or less commonly taught languages.

In future studies, researchers should address the accessibility of other Less Commonly Taught Languages as well as languages that possess fewer commonalities between them, than Turkish and Azerbaijani. The usage of self-paced learning and intensive structured language instruction can produce varied results among participants. Recruiting a larger sample size would improve the accuracy of future studies.

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Comparison of Gameplay Elements and Language Simple Syntax

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares elements of gameplay against a language simple syntax. It then proceeds to describe various 'language' features of gameplay, focusing on how it allows the player to explore and progress in the game and learn by taking actions to overcome the challenges to reach the goal.

KEYWORDS

Gameplay; language syntax; knowledge delivery; game-based learning; language for specific purposes (LSP)

INTRODUCTION

Gameplay is a game rule that defines the challenges and actions to get to the goal. The gameplay is similar to the syntax of a sentence in a language. The syntax of a sentence refers to the set of rules that determines the arrangement of words in a sentence. The most basic syntax follows a subject + verb + direct object formula; an example is, "Suhaili eats the apple". On the other hand, gameplay refers to the set of actions taken to overcome challenges to get to the goal. It can be translated in the most basic syntax as a subject + action + challenge + goal; an example is, "Suhaili jumps the rope to earn a point". Our behaviours and learning processes have been shaped by human evolution. In contrast to the hundreds of thousands of years of learning by doing, our encounters with contemporary learning methods, such as sitting in lecture halls, reading textbooks, and watching films, take place in the blink of an eye (Noam, 2016). Play, rules, and goals are the three components that make up a game (Adams, 2013). Gameplay can be summed up as game rules that define the challenges and actions to get to the goal. To make a game enjoyable to play, the gameplay must be interactive and engaging. The learning process is made more enjoyable and effective using this strategy by incorporating games. Today's most well-known learning technique on the digital platform is game-based learning (GBL). GBL enhances interest in learning, emotional connection, and enjoyment (Harttet al., 2020). This contemporary methods area is also applicable to language learning. Language does not just mean spoken communication. There are many other ways to communicate, including signs, gestures, and actions. In the age of digital technology, a user's engagement with an interface has generated a form of communication that provides the user with knowledge and experience. Digital games do not require

written rules, in contrast to traditional games (Adams, 2013). Some might offer guidelines, but presently written rules are largely non-existent. By using programming, the rules are incorporated into the game and applied to the players. Players only need to play and gain experience to understand the rules (learn by doing).

Objective

This paper focuses on describing the language features of game-based learning which is simply learning through games (Hartt et al., 2020). Because game-based learning can be applied to all fields of learning such as in the pure sciences, social sciences and the broad spectrum of learning (Wardoyo et al., 2020), it is important to understand its basic feature. The objective of this paper is to introduce the concept of gameplay as a non-text language for special purposes (LSP) by presenting the various ‘language’ features of gameplay, focusing on how it allows the player to explore and progress in the game and learn by taking action to overcome the challenges to reach the goal.

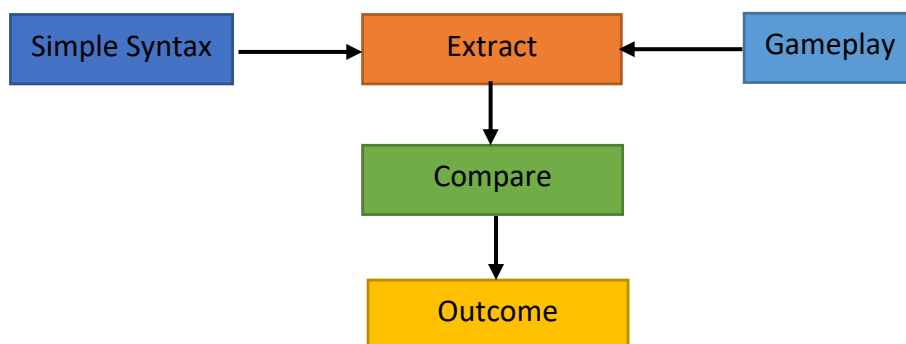
METHODOLOGY

To analyse the various ‘language’ features of gameplay, the elements of gameplay and language syntax, the syntax–lexicon trade-off (Rezaii et al., 2022) method is explored. The processes in Figure 1 were carried out and the method was applied during the compare phase. This protocol is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the characteristics or components of both languages simple syntax and gameplay syntax (Extract); and
2. To compare the grammatical similarity between the two languages (Compare).

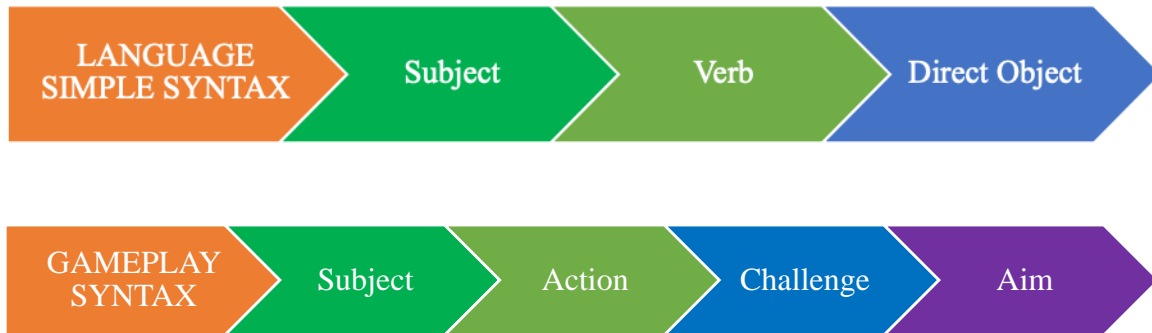
FIGURE 1

Process of comparing the elements of gameplay and language simple syntax



A sentence was chosen and extracted as the subject of study. In this case, "Suhaili eats the apple to earn a point" was chosen. Figure 2 below, shows the characteristics or components of both languages.

FIGURE 2
Language simple syntax and gameplay syntax



The degree of grammatical similarity between the two languages is seen in Table 1. Surprisingly, the fundamental grammar of both languages is very similar, with the exception that the syntax for game includes an additional element called an aim. Aim typically refers to the incentive or reward that a player receives for participating in the game. To make learning more interesting, it is converted into a score. Score or reward encourages students or players to continue pursuing the learning or adventure path. The comparison reveals that the basic syntax of the language and gameplay syntax are similar except for the elements of the aim and the score.

TABLE 1
Comparing language simple syntax and gameplay syntax using the sentence, “Suhaili eats the apple”

Language Simple Syntax	Gameplay Syntax	Example	Findings
Subject	Subject	Suhaili	Both syntaxes have a subject. The subject in gameplay refers to the avatar that represents the player in the game world.
Verb	Action	eats	Both syntaxes have a verb. The verb in gameplay refers to the action that an avatar took while playing the game.
Direct Object	Challenge	the apple	Technically, both syntaxes have a direct object but in gameplay, it refers to the challenge that an avatar has to overcome while playing the game.
	Aim & Score	[to earn a point]	The setting of the game makes this last component abundantly clear. This is the end goal of the game for the player. It encourages players to play the game through to the end. To assess the student's degree of knowledge and to illustrate how well the learning was accomplished, it was transformed into a score in the learning process. However, the goal in the language is the indirect result of the verb (action) taken, which in this case makes Suhaili feel less hungry. Although it is not explicitly stated in the syntax, it is nevertheless understood.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the comparison shows that the basic rule in language (English, in this case) uses the formula *subject + verb + direct object*, as in "Suhaili eats the apple". On the other hand, in gameplay, the basic rule/formula must include the actions taken to overcome challenges to get to the goal. Therefore, the simplest way to express the syntax rule for gameplay is *subject + action + challenge + aim*; for instance, "Suhaili eats the apple to earn a point". Note that the gameplay syntax is usually only written as codes in the programming. The actual learning will be consumed as a digital game. According to research by Wardoyo et al. (2020), game-based learning is far more successful than traditional learning at enhancing learning outcomes.

The case for promoting gameplay is supported by a finding which says that the retention rate for reading alone is 10% according to the NTL Institute's Learning Pyramid (Noam, 2016). Thus relying solely on reading for learning is ineffective. The best way for people to learn is to actively participate in the learning process (Noam, 2016). Therefore, in this age of digital technology, digital learning was utilised to illustrate or describe the knowledge to make the learning process easier to understand. These tools included graphics, audio, video, 2D and 3D models, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR). However, if the methods lack interaction and involvement, they are still not as effective as they may be. Adding interactivity to the digital learning methods to facilitate the learning process allows users to do the practice with increased retention rate up to 75%. On the other hand, adding gameplay in the learning increases the engagement and retention rate by more than 75%. To increase the effectiveness of learning, game-based learning was developed to offer both engagement and interactivity on a single platform.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and comparison of the two syntaxes, it can be said that gameplay has the attribute of being a language used to impart knowledge in game-based learning, even without the requirement for numerous written and spoken texts to do so. For example, the written sentence or spoken phrase "Suhaili eats the apple" differs from the action displayed in the game which features Suhaili eating the apple to earn a score. Therefore, gameplay can be categorised in the same category as non-textual languages like body language and sign language. One could classify it as a language of new technology. The advantages of using gameplay as a language are that they have no comprehension restrictions compared to written and spoken texts, and they also allow for self-evaluation of learning efficacy through score. In many instances, the use of spoken or written language is very minimal in gameplay. The gameplay will guide the player through the game from the beginning until the end and while playing the game, the player learns something directly or indirectly in an interactive and fun way. It can be concluded that one major characteristic of gameplay is that it is a language used to deliver knowledge in game-based learning even without the need of having many texts to convey the knowledge. It is argued that the language for gameplay lies within the domain of language for specific purposes (LSP).

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Croatia and Serbia's usage of language to influence the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Political Scene

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ABSTRACT

Social wrongs is dangerous as it often causes one to think negatively of the other through euphemisms and dysphemisms. However, the usage of dysphemisms and euphemisms not only impacts group relations but also revives various negative sentiments present within Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research is conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina whereby their direct neighbours, Croatia and Serbia intervened in the country's political scene. Thus, the research focused on how social wrongs condoned by politicians influence both the socio-political setting of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the readers of the news articles who are not well-versed in Balkan politics and history. Thus, to observe how the ideologies embedded by the politicians, this research employed a Critical Discourse Analysis, especially the Dialectical Relational Approach whereby various parts of speech were examined concerning both history and political setting in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The power relations expressed by both Croatia and Serbia implied that both often commit social wrongs to either make a stand or shed off negative perceptions embedded towards the country during the Yugoslav Wars. Thus, committing social wrongs has a devastating impact on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society. The paper concluded by stating that although certain social wrongs may seem harmless in nature, they impact the socio-political setting of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the readers of the newspaper.

KEYWORDS

Ethnocentrism; Balkan; ethnic conflict; power relations; Yugoslavia

INTRODUCTION

Neighbouring countries often influence each other on the political scene (Mwaba, 2019). This sees Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as the clearest example whereby Croatia (HRV) and Serbia (SRB) often influence the political spectrum of BiH (Reményi et al., 2016). The study aims to observe HRV and SRB's influence on BiH's political scene which leads to diplomatic tensions. Thus, both Aleksandar Vučić (SRB) and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (HRV) manipulated the social wrongs to influence the social context of BiH to justify their actions. Social wrongs are defined as a wrong in the social order (Fairclough, 2009). Thus, the study focuses on the justifications for HRV and SRB's interventions that were constructed and recontextualized through online newspapers. The study embedded both theories of loaded language and Clash of Civilisations and employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Fairclough (2009) which emphasises the social wrongs of BiH. The study employed a

transdisciplinary approach integrating political sciences, history, and linguistics to observe whether committing these wrongs was justified and how the social wrong impacted BiH's social and political setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies were conducted to observe the relation between language and conflicts. The summaries are tabulated below.

TABLE 1
Summary of past research

Title	Author(S)	Objectives	Context	Method	Findings
Secondary designations of nationalities in modern Ukrainian as one of the signs of national identity and a manifestation of ethnocentrism	Kuznietsova (2019)	To understand the use of language reflects a person's perspective	Sevastopol, Ukraine	Corpus Linguistics	The usage of dysphemism in the dictionaries explains the Ukrainians' perception of other people and strengthens stereotypes embedded in the Ukrainian culture.
Говор на омраза на социјалните медиуми во Република Македонија (Romanisation: <i>Govor na omraza na socijalnite vo Republika Makedonija.</i> English: <i>Hate Speech in Social Media in the Republic of Macedonia</i>)	Marolov & Stojanovski (2016)	To investigate on free speeches are used to manifest hate speeches	Štip, Republic of Macedonia ¹	Corpus Linguistics	Macedonian hatred of the Albanians increased partially due to Serbian influences

¹ It was formerly known as the Republic of Macedonia. However, after the signature of the Prespa Agreement by both Greece and Macedonia, the country is now known as the North Macedonia (Macedonian: Северна Македонија)

Two main theories were used for this study, which are:

Loaded Language

Loaded Languages are defined as the usage of language to influence people's perceptions (Frijda et al., 2000). This is divided into two categories: euphemisms and dysphemisms. Euphemisms are the substitutions of controversial words whereas dysphemisms are the purposive use of controversial words. Hence, this sees language losing its neutral stance as it is weaponised (Bolinger, 2021).

Clash of Civilisation

The Clash of Civilisations explains that conflicts are bound to happen when different cultures clash in a social setting (Huntington, 1993). Therefore, communities will attempt to dominate each other leading to conflicts to overpower one another to establish their power over the other (Huntington, 1993).

METHODS

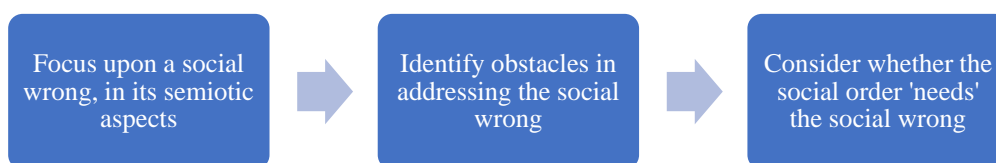
The study employed CDA, notably the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) which emphasised the power relations implied by both HRV and SRB. This method was chosen as it focused on the impact of words on the social setting. News reports were chosen to describe and explain the ideologies embedded by both HRV and SRB to the readers regarding their actions. This transdisciplinary study incorporated disciplines from political sciences, history, and linguistics to understand the committing of social wrongs, embedded ideologies, and their impact on the group relations of BiH.

The data collection was framed from 2015-2019 with seven to eight news collected annually. News articles from Independent Balkan News Agency, BalkanInsight and The Sarajevo Times were selected due to their niche on the Balkans and BiH.

The research adopted Fairclough's (2009) DRA model for its research design.

FIGURE 1

The stages of the Dialectical Relational Approach proposed by Fairclough (2009)



However, as the researcher focused more on the social context, rather than the linguistic context of the study, Fairclough's fourth stage was removed.

RESULTS

Throughout the discourse, two issues were prevalent. These issues are deliberated below:

Croatia and the Bosnian Croats Standing up Against the Bosniaks

The first issue revolves around HRV's disappointment with the treatment of Croats in BiH. This is due to the Bosniaks outvoting the Croats for the Croat presidency of BiH. This causes the Croats to demand better representation and better treatment for the Croats in BiH. This was further elaborated in the news report below.

*Meanwhile, Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, **President of Croatia, has reminded Bosniaks that Croats are a constitutional nation in Bosnia and may not be treated as a minority.***

(Mladen Lakic, Line 54, BalkanInsight, 26th December 2017)

*She also said that **Croatia has an obligation to take care of the Croats in Bosnia**, the newspaper *Vecernji List* reported on Sunday.*

(Mladen Lakic, Line 57, BalkanInsight, 26th December 2017)

Grabar-Kitarović's tone was considered an open-aggressive act whereby she was openly threatening the Bosniaks. The misrepresentation of the Croats was quoted by the Dayton Agreement and the Hrvatski zakon (English: Croatian Law). Grabar-Kitarović dominated the discourse due to the power and influence she has on the Croats in BiH. Thus, the ideology embedded was the legitimacy and proper representation whereby she demands that the Bosniaks not to outvote the Croats. The text influences the social practice whereby it claims that inequality occurred as the Bosniaks treated the Croats as a minority which prompts HRV to interfere.

This then sees a negative impact on the Croats and Bosniaks in BiH whereby poor relations were observed. This causes the blame game between the Bosniaks and Croats. The repercussion sees that the Croats demands the re-establishment of 'Herceg Bosna²' which angered the Bosniaks.

As for real-life events, HRV becomes more aggressive towards BiH with the construction of the Pelješac Bridge (Croatian: Pelješki most) which partially cut off BiH from the Adriatic Sea (BiH has limited access to the Adriatic Sea) (Žabec, 2019) and the potential amendment of the election law in BiH which favours the Croats (HRT, 2022). This sours relations between the Bosniaks and Croats living in BiH.

Serbia Offering a Helping Hand to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Secondly, the issue discusses Aleksandar Vučić's concern about the internal conflict that occurs in BiH. SRB claimed that it is willing to help BiH, but BiH lacks the effort to solve its political crisis. Therefore, it implies that SRB is trying to help BiH to progress but no efforts were done by the constituent groups of BiH themselves. This was stated throughout the discourse as mentioned below.

² Herceg Bosna was a Croat proto-state established during the Bosnian War.

Serbia will make an effort to build bridges of friendship. We do not have the power to do it on our own, but we can do it all together. Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, we can move the mountains. There is no progress without peace and stability. There is not much left to fight about without losing everything we have at the end,” said Aleksandar Vucic, among other things. (Amina Dzaferovic, Line 14, The Sarajevo Times, 25th June 2017)

“Serbia will continue to invest a lot of effort into improving relations between Serbs and Bosniaks, because the stability of BiH and the entire region is crucial for us,” said Serbian Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vucic. (Zejna Yesilyurt, Line 6, The Sarajevo Times, 12th July 2016)

Unlike Grabar-Kitarović, Vučić's tone was passive-aggressive whereby he claims that SRB is willing to help, but the Bosnians failed to take any action. His concern about the internal conflict was quoted from the political spats that were mentioned by the politicians in BiH. Hence, the ideology embedded was internal conflicts in which he hopes that the Bosnians would set aside their differences for SRB to help. The text influences the social practice in which it claims that the political conflict in BiH has worried SRB.

This causes another negative impact on the Bosnians and a positive impact on the Serbian government. On the Serbian side, it implies that SRB wanted the best for BiH but the poor ethnic relations between the constituent groups of BiH causes difficulties. This leads to another blame game between the Bosnians³ in which the Serbs demanding for secession from BiH, which angered the Bosniaks as well.

Based on current events, this leads to the Serbs denying the existence of the Srebrenica Genocide, especially by the mayor of Srebrenica, Mladen Grujičić who claims that the Genocide is a make-believe event (Danas.rs). Besides, this causes aggressive Serb behaviour whereby the Serbs celebrated the controversial Republika Srpska day with controversial nationalists' songs (Mondo.rs, 2016). This causes an uneasy situation between the Bosniaks and Serbs as they felt threatened by the Serbs' behaviour.

DISCUSSION

The first prevalent issue that arises in the discourse is groups will assert dominance when threatened. As the Croats felt threatened in BiH, HRV interfered to protect the Croats in BiH. Similar to Fedorowycz's (2021) study that states the Belarussian opposition tried to establish themselves as the legitimate government during elections as they claimed Lukashenko cheated in the election. This was mentioned by Huntington (1993) who stated that civilisations clash to establish their dominance over one another.

Besides, the other issue that was brought up was intensified hatred due to outside influence. The Croats' ethnocentric behaviour becomes prevalent due to HRV's interference. Similarly, Poshka's (2018) study mentioned that the Macedonians' extreme hatred of the Albanians was due to the Serbs' influence during Former Yugoslavia. This is then deliberated as the Macedonians and Serbs share the same civilisation (Orthodox) whereas the Albanians are Muslims. Hence, this proves that conflicts are bound to occur

³ The term Bosnians represents those who live in BiH (the constituent groups and the minorities) instead of the other ethnic minorities.

when different cultures meet (Huntington, 1993)

Finally, language is also used to change people's perceptions of past events. As discussed throughout the discourse, Vučić attempted to remove the negative perception of SRB that was given to them during the Bosnian War. This was mentioned when Vučić claimed that he wanted the best for BiH and is willing to offer help to BiH. As mentioned by Gortat (2020), the Austrians often propagate the 'Austrian victim theory' which causes many people to forget about Austria's participation during World War II. Vučić implied this by using euphemisms hoping to change the international perspective of SRB.

CONCLUSION

Although BiH is a sovereign country, HRV and SRB often influence BiH's politics implying that BiH is not strong enough to go on its own. Consequently, causing political tensions between BiH and its neighbours. Readers who are not well-versed in the political climate in BiH may perceive BiH as an unsustainable country due to the power relations implied by HRV and SRB in illustrating that foreign interventions are necessary to solve BiH's internal conflicts. Although the social wrongs may seem harmless, they heavily impact the social setting of BiH and readers. Thus, proving that any social wrong can be dangerous to society if manipulated.

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Languaging: Children L2 Output During Play

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ABSTRACT

Language output has its role in L2 learning and is seen as a source of L2 learning (Swain & Watanebe, 2013). Study indicates that language was used by the L2 learners as a cognitive tool to mediate their thinking and talking about the language mediates L2 learning and development (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). As English is a second language for most of the population in Malaysia and a compulsory subject learned in school, having an interactive English learning environment is crucial for Malaysian students who come from different language backgrounds. This paper focuses on the L2 output and discusses how language learning is mediated during child's play that enhances young L2 learner's language output. While playing, the objects or prompts used could act as the mediation tool to mediate children L2 learning and development. Languaging during play promotes language input and yields language output that co-constructs linguistic knowledge which draws attention to form and meaning. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, language is learned through interaction. Through the natural setting of play, the L2 output produced by the children allows adults (educators and parents) to understand the child's L2 level and scaffolds L2 oral language skills.

KEYWORDS

Child second language learning; Child play; Language output; Oral language; Sociocultural theory

INTRODUCTION

English is a second language (L2) for most of the population in Malaysia and a compulsory subject learned in school from the age as young as four. Nevertheless, the incompetency of older Malaysian students' oral communication skills has raised concerned. Today in the English language teaching and learning of Malaysia there is an increasing emphasis on students' literacy skill to prepare them for the standardized English exams. The foundation laid at preschool level is significant for a child's later development based on Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. From the perspectives of sociocultural theory (SCT), young children learn through social interaction. Due to the diverse language backgrounds among Malaysian young children, an interactive language learning environment is essential. It provides young children opportunities to interact in the target language as classroom interaction could be the primary English environment for the children due the native language use at home. Output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) which suggests that language output allows opportunities for learners to pay more attention to how meaning is expressed through language. When children are immersed in language rich activities such as play, the oral language input and output occur reciprocally, it is where languaging (Swain, 2006) the

process of using language to make meaning occurs. To avoid possible misunderstanding, sociodramatic play such as role play is discussed. Through the natural setting of play, the L2 output produced by the children allows adults (educators and parents) to understand the child's L2 level and scaffolds L2 oral language skills which is the precursor for children's later L2 literacy development.

Objective

The benefits of play towards young children's learning and the significance of communicative L2 learning experience have long been discussed. However, how language output in play could benefit young children L2 learning is underexplored in Malaysian context. As oral language is the precursor of children's later literacy development, within the framework of sociocultural theory, this paper discusses the significance of children's L2 oral language output during play which mediates their L2 learning where languaging is stimulated, and how adults (parents and educators) could scaffold L2 learning from the language output within the zone of proximal development among Malaysian young children.

DISCUSSION

Sociocultural Theory and Play

Through the lens of SCT, children learn through interaction and Vygotsky (1978) pointed the significance of play as an important socialization activity towards children which benefits their language development. Study (Istomina, 1975, as cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2015) indicates that dramatic-play benefits young children at preschool age in vocabulary development compared to non-play conditions. Through play, it engages young children's active conversation and stimulates active responses. The objects or prompts used in play could act as the mediation tool to engage children to meaningful interaction with interlocutors (peers and adults) that develop both L2 production and comprehension. In terms of the peer interaction during play, study (Philp & Duchesne, 2008) indicates that interaction between peers enhances children L2 learning which contributes to learner's L2 language acquisition and develop social skills. The communicative and interactive nature of play yields L2 language input and output.

Language Output

Although important, language input alone is never sufficient. Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985) suggests the significance of language output played in learning a new language. Language output should also be generated during the process of language learning. The language production (output) such as speaking, and writing constitutes learners' knowledge of language use and 'stretch' their interlanguage to meet communicative role (Swain, 2000). Language output constitutes languaging such as collaborative dialogue and private talks. Swain (2005) stated the three significant functions of language output in L2 learning: The noticing/triggering function, the hypothesis testing function, and the metalinguistic function.

Mediation and Zone of Proximal Development

Through the lens of sociocultural theory, Swain (2000) viewed language output as a socially constructed cognitive tool for mediating learning. Mediation plays a crucial role in human development and learning. Learning a language is a socially mediated process. Vygotsky argued that humans' activities are mediated and regulated by tools (physical and symbolic or psychological). In L2 learning, mediation acts as a "tool" to assist learners to perform tasks which they are unable to perform successfully due to their existing linguistic resources (Ellis, 2015). Swain and Watanabe (2013) point out that language is used by L2 learners as a cognitive tool to mediate their thinking. By integrating play, visuals and audio prompts used in role-play may mediate children's interactions and stimulate oral language output in the English class. It helps children to communicate and express themselves. Swain suggested that L2 learners co-construct linguistic knowledge when they are engaged in production tasks such as speaking and writing which simultaneously draw learners' attention to form and meaning. Children's L2 oral output during play, and meaningful feedback such as addressing children's language errors or slips during communication, help children to notice the errors made and provides a basis for metalinguistic reflection. This is where the languaging (collaborative dialogue and meaningful feedback) occurs. It helps mediating children's L2 development.

In Vygotskian's view, the role of play in language development is recognized since it creates a zone of proximal development (ZPD) in which the child behaves "beyond his average age, above his daily behavior" (Sullivan, 2000, p.123). ZPD is the progress of learners' actual developmental stage to their next level of potential developmental stage. In L2 learning, children may respond to feedback through modifying their oral output towards more target-like forms. This helps learners' language knowledge to reach automaticity and become more fluent in their L2 production (Gass & Mackey, 2015). Children's oral language and vocabulary could be scaffolded through play by adults (Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2016). Besides, peers (more capable others) may stimulate children's L2 development through dialogues (input and output) during play. This is relatable to Malaysian's English classrooms due to children's diverse language proficiency and backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Play provides children's ideal linguistic environment, as a rich source of input (language forms) and interaction (using language forms in conversations) that are crucial for children language development. In L2 development, the language output children produce enables adults (educators and parents) to understand children's level of L2 skills such as phonological (pronunciation), grammatical competence, vocabulary development, etc. The Malaysian multilingual context provides a heterogeneous learning context in terms of language proficiency and backgrounds in most Malaysian English classrooms. An interactive language learning experience is crucial in building young children's oral language skill as it is the precursor of children's later literacy skills development. However, pertinent studies indicate the lack of interactive language learning in Malaysia school context (Hendi & Asmawi, 2018; Mustafa & Ahmad, 2017; Tee & Nor, 2018) despite the implementation of interactive play-based learning highlighted in the Malaysia National Preschool Standard Curriculum. As play often associates with real-life events among young children and stimulate their language

development, it would be beneficial for more in-depth study on how play could stimulate and optimise children's L2 oral output that would benefit Malaysian young students' English oral language skill while lowering the affective fillers in English as L2 learning.

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The Nature of Polylinguaging in Two Diverse Chinese Families in Singapore

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ABSTRACT

In Singapore, besides the four official languages (English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil), Chinese dialects, other Indian languages, foreign languages, and other language varieties such as Singlish are used in the community. In the past, most linguistic studies follow the traditional language separation norm, which cannot fully explain the current highly diverse real-life language use in Singapore. By adopting a polylingual view, this study aims to understand the language use of interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds. The concept of polylingualism originated in Denmark and was proposed by Jørgensen (2008), who argued that speakers would employ whatever linguistic features to achieve their communicative aims. This empirical study involves two families, the Ngor family and the Lim family. For the Ngors, both parents and their three children were locally born. For the Lims, both parents were born in Malaysia whereas their two children were locally born. One mealtime conversation that lasted about 30 minutes for each family was recorded and transcribed. Utterances were coded as pure English (PE), pure Mandarin Chinese (PMC), or non-pure English or Chinese (NPEMC) for quantitative analyses purpose. Of the 1,096 utterances in Family One, 69.1% were PE, 0.4% were PMC, and 30.6% were NPEMC. Of the 548 utterances in Family Two, 12.4% were PE, 46.2% were PMC, and 41.4% were NPEMC. Linguistic features that cannot be categorised into any known languages were analysed qualitatively. Interestingly, this study found that the nature of polylinguaging in the family mealtime conversation is highly dependent on the family's cultural background, presenting a new approach for analysing language data from the perspective of polylinguaging.

KEYWORDS

Mealtime conversation; polylinguaging; family talk; linguistic features; cultural diversity

INTRODUCTION

Singapore is a language-rich country. Besides the four official languages (English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil), Chinese dialects, other Indian languages, foreign languages, and other language varieties such as Singlish are used in the community.

In the past, most linguistic studies followed the traditional language separation norm. All linguistic elements were categorised into different known languages. However, analyses that keep language separated cannot fully explain the current highly diverse real-life language use in Singapore. As Jørgensen et al. (2011) pointed out, not all linguistic elements can easily be classified into any known

language. These linguistic elements should not be discarded because every linguistic element carries meaning.

By adopting a polylingual view and upholding the notion that speakers have one linguistic repertoire, this study aims to explore the language use of Singaporean Chinese families from different cultural backgrounds.

RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of polylingualism originated in Denmark and was proposed by Jørgensen (2008). According to Jørgensen (2008), speakers would employ whatever linguistic features to achieve their communicative aims. Speakers use features instead of a language or languages. Some features involve one language, whereas some features involve several languages. The speakers do not need to have a good command of the involved languages (Ag & Jørgensen, 2012; Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen et al., 2011; Møller et al., 2014). The features chosen must be associated with meanings and values. The same set of features may have different meanings in different contexts or for different speakers (Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen et al., 2011).

According to Møller and Jørgensen (2012, 2013), the linguistic features can be described in three parameters. The first parameter is associated with different registers. The second parameter is associated with different languages. The third parameter is related to the speakers' positioning.

In Copenhagen, the use of Danish among young people can be divided into four degrees in terms of purity. "Integrated speech" is a formal form used in academic and official settings. It is considered an upscale culture and polite language (Jørgensen et al., 2011). "Street language" or "Perker language" combines the linguistic features associated with minority languages, such as Arabic, Urdu, and Turkish. (Ag & Jørgensen, 2012; Jørgensen et al., 2011). "Normal speech" is in between "integrated speech" and "street language". "Old-fashioned language" is beyond the extreme of "integrated speech". Young people use it with old people (Ag & Jørgensen, 2012).

In Jørgensen's (2008) article, the polylinguaging phenomenon was found in the conversation of Turkish-Danish Grade 5 students. The students' linguistic features were associated with English, Danish, and Turkish. That was their shared value and attitude. When they wanted to position themselves as good students in a classroom that followed monolingual ideology, they avoided using linguistic features associated with multiple languages.

Some polylinguaging phenomena happen within one word, making it hard to be categorised into any known language. For example, the word "*eine limesteife*" was used in a Grade 8 group conversation. "*Eine*" is a German word. "*Limesteife*" is not associated with any language. "*Lim*" means "glue" in Danish. Middle "e" may be associated with Danish as a compound marker. "*Steife*" is neither associated with Danish nor German. It sounds like German in Danish, but it does not sound like German in German (Jørgensen et al., 2011).

Different polylingual practices were employed in different settings, activities, and speakers. In school, students followed the monolingualism norm (Danish only) in the official interaction with teachers, but they adjusted their linguistic practices when speaking to different friends. At home, polylingual behaviour was observed and adjusted depending on the interlocutors (Ag & Jørgensen, 2012). Despite the differences in school performance, all students claimed that polylinguaging "comes so naturally" (Møller et al., 2014).

METHODS

This study aims to explore the nature of polylinguaging in families from different cultural backgrounds. Spontaneous language data from two diverse Singaporean Chinese families were collected. Mealtime conversations were audio and video recorded.

For Family 1, the parents were born and educated in Singapore. Under Singapore’s bilingual educational policy, English is the first school language for all subjects, Mandarin Chinese is a compulsory second school language subject for the Chinese ethnic group. For family 2, the parents were born and educated in Malaysia. Both parents attended Chinese independent schools in Malaysia. In Chinese schools, Mandarin Chinese is the main medium of instruction for all subjects, while Malay and English are taught as separate language subjects. At the secondary school level, textbooks of certain technical subjects, such as science and mathematics are in English, but teachers conduct the lesson in Mandarin Chinese. Details of the data are as follows (Table 1):

TABLE 1
Details of Data

Family	Interlocutors’ Profile				Duration of the conversation
	Anonymised name	Role	Age	Languages he/she can speak	
The Ngor family	Nathan	Father	48	English, Mandarin Chinese, Hokkien, Teochew	37 minutes
	Sally	Mother	43	English, Mandarin Chinese	
	Charlotte	Daughter	13	English, Mandarin Chinese	
	Caleb	Son	11	English, Mandarin Chinese	
	Clara	Daughter	9	English, Mandarin Chinese	
The Lim family	Larry	Father	40	English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay	28 minutes
	Pamela	Mother	40	English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, Hokkien	
	Vivian	Daughter	9	English, Mandarin Chinese	
	Grace	Daughter	5	English, Mandarin Chinese	

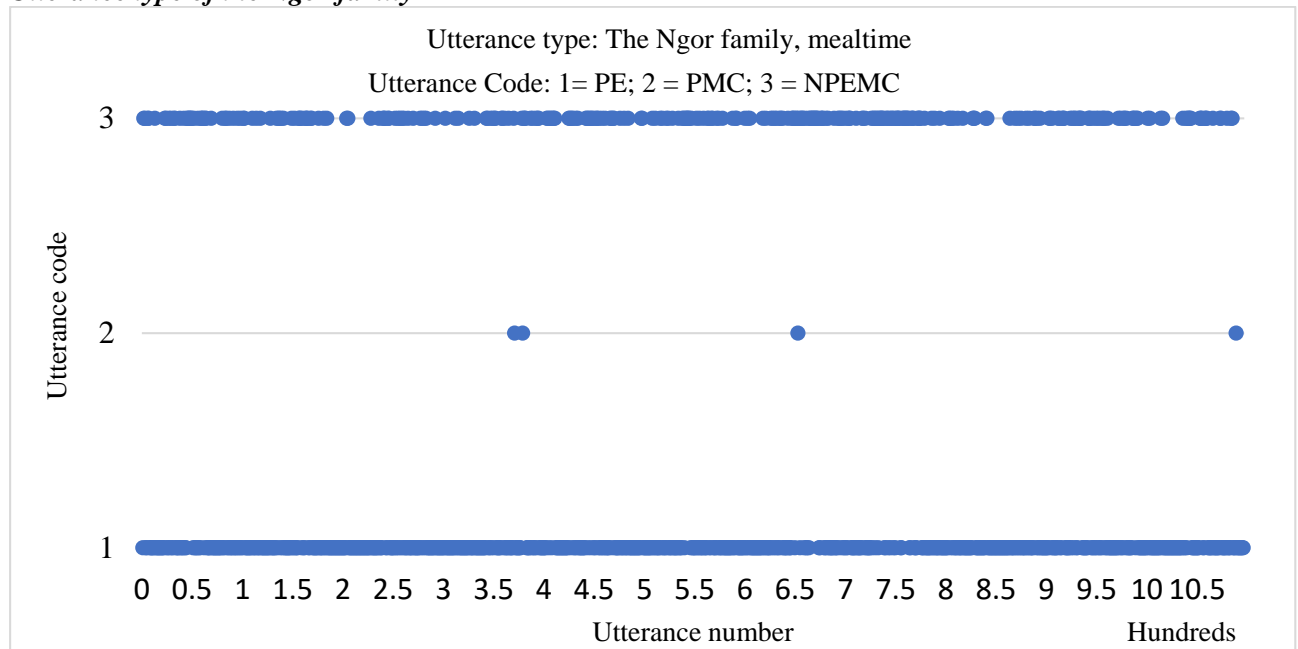
All video and audio recordings were anonymized and transcribed using CLANWin, open-source software from CHILDES (Child Language Exchange System, <https://childes.talkbank.org/>) (MacWhinney, 2000). All utterances produced during mealtime were coded as “pure English” (PE), “pure Mandarin Chinese” (PMC), or “non-pure English or Mandarin Chinese” (NPEMC). NPEMC includes:

- The combination of the linguistic features associated with English and Mandarin Chinese.
- The combination of linguistic features associated with non-English/non-Mandarin Chinese and English/Mandarin Chinese.
- The use of linguistic features associated with non-English and/or non-Mandarin Chinese.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ngor family produced 1,096 utterances during mealtime. As shown in Figure 1, 69.1% were PE, 0.4% were PMC, and 30.6% were NPEMC.

FIGURE 1
Utterance type of the Ngor family



Besides English and Mandarin Chinese, linguistic features associated with other languages were found in the NPEMC utterances, such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Japanese, and Malay. Some linguistic elements cannot be categorised into any known languages, such as child-invented form, family-invented form, and onomatopoeia.

For example, Nathan knows Hokkien. While hard and thick are not enough to describe the texture of the meat and how the meat tasted, he used the word “*chha-chha*”. In Hokkien, “*chha*” means wood. Clara, who doesn’t know Hokkien, learned the phrase “*wa-ka-li-kong*”, which means “I tell you”, from a TV show her grandma watched. She didn’t know the meaning, but she found it funny and shared it with her family during mealtime. She then told the family she wanted to eat mangosteen after dinner, but she pronounced it wrongly as “*plasterseen*”, the family then started a language punning game, discussing what this newly “invented” food would taste like. This family also combined English and Mandarin Chinese into one word when corresponding standard Chinese or English words are available, such as 姐’s (*jiě*’s, elder sister’s).

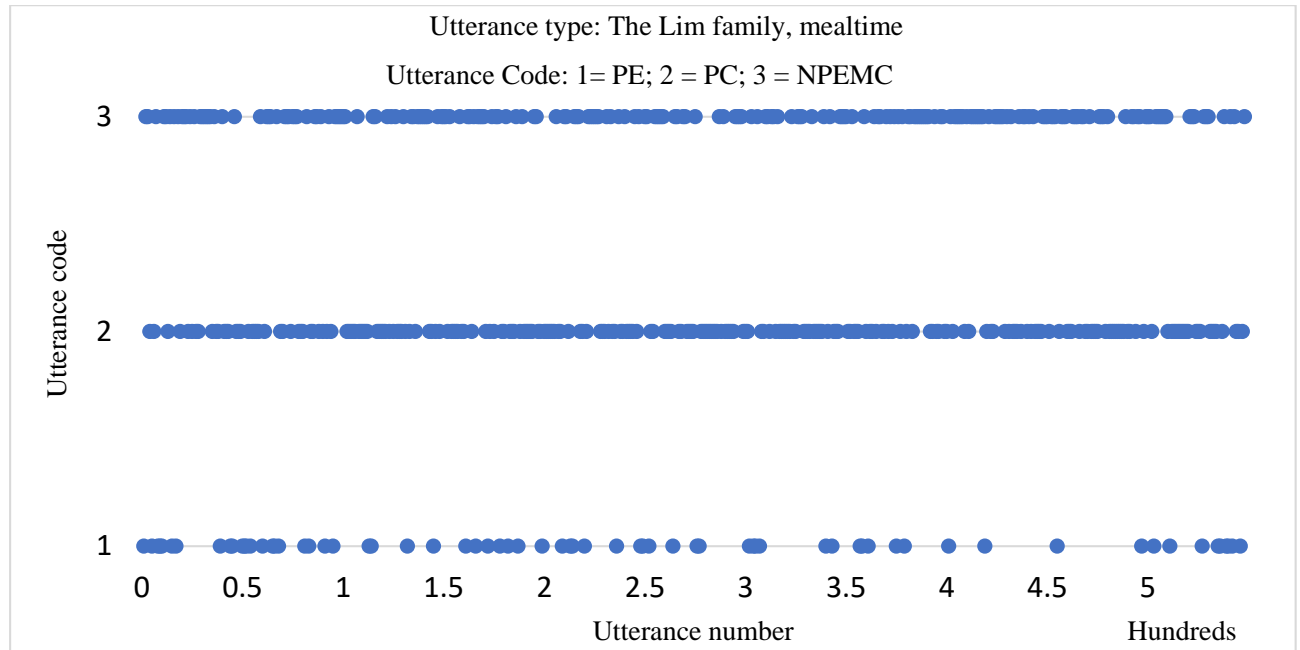
The Ngors’ creativity was shown during the mealtime conversation by using the full range of their linguistic resources. Language punning game became a family bonding activity. Hokkien became the connection between the younger and older generations.

The Lim family produced 548 utterances during mealtime. Out of these, 12.4% were PE, 46.2% were PMC, and 41.4% were NPEMC (Figure 2). Besides English and Mandarin Chinese, linguistic features associated with other languages were found in the NPEMC utterances, such as Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese, Japanese, Malay, and Indian languages. Some linguistic elements cannot be categorised into any known language, such as child-invented form, family-invented form, internet language, and onomatopoeia. Some were merely interactions.

For example, Grace used “*nah*” when she asked daddy to help to eat her fish dumpling. “*Nah*”, which may originate from Chinese “take” (拿, *ná*), was used here to enhance the meaning of “take”. “*Nah*”

includes the meaning of “passing something”, “give” instead of just the action “take”. Vivian burped during mealtime, she said “*erb*” instead of “burp”. “*Erb*” combines the actual sound of burping and part of the pronunciation of burp without the consonant. “*Yee-yer*” was used to express disgust.

FIGURE 2
Utterance type of the Lim family



The Lims produced more NPEMC utterances. This may be due to parents’ educational background. Linguistic features associated with multiple languages were used in their educational experiences, which in turn became a linguistic habit. Linguistic features associated with actual sound constitute a large part in the Lims’ data. While these linguistic elements present the imagination of the speakers, it also helps to express a stronger feeling.

CONCLUSION

The Ngor family is a typical local family. The Lim family is a Malaysian migrant family. The two families have diverse cultural backgrounds. The Ngors used more linguistic features associated with English only. The Lims used more linguistic features associated with Mandarin Chinese only. Both families produced more than 30% of NPEMC utterances. These utterances consist of linguistic features associated with different known and unknown languages. The interlocutors may or may not know the languages they used but that is their shared values. Some linguistic elements cannot be categorised into any known language but the interlocutors found it easier to achieve their communicative aims.

In conclusion, polylingual practice happens naturally in Singaporean Chinese families. The linguistic features involved in their conversation vary due to their diverse cultural backgrounds.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The data presented in this paper is part of the author's Ph.D. study. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Nanyang Technological University, with reference number IRB-2021-127.

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Malaysian English Language Secondary School Teachers' Speaking Assessment Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, language assessment has been receiving a lot of attention from scholars all around the world. Despite many studies being conducted on language assessment, speaking assessment is the most unpopular subject debated among researchers in Malaysia. To bridge the gap, this study examines the speaking assessment knowledge of Malaysian English language teachers as well as their demographic backgrounds based on the Seven Standards of Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students (AFT, NCME, & NEA, Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice 9:30-32, 1990). The aim of the study is to understand teachers' current situations in order to prepare for the upcoming speaking assessment requirements in a secondary school context. To accomplish this aim, a set of multiple-choice questions was adapted from the Assessment Literacy Inventory and distributed among 98 in-service English language teachers through purposive sampling. In order to explore the issue in depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted among selected participants after the test. The study revealed that most secondary school English teachers have an average level of speaking assessment knowledge. The findings showed a significant impact between teachers' qualifications and two assessment standards: choosing a method of assessment and developing assessments. The findings provide information on the requirements of speaking assessment competencies that should be considered in upcoming training for English language teachers in Malaysia.

KEYWORDS

Language assessment; Assessment literacy; Knowledge; Belief; Practice; Secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Language assessment has been considered as an essential component of teacher professional development (Plake & Impara, 1992). Most scholars highlighted the importance of teachers' assessment knowledge and its benefits to teaching and learning (Coffey, Sato & Thiebault, 2006). Despite the undeniable role of assessment in educational process and development, literature shows evidence of teachers all around the globe suffering from lack of assessment knowledge and understanding of basic assessment principles (Cheng et al., 2004; Volante & Fazio, 2007; Herrera & Macias, 2015).

The current changes in assessment methods in Malaysian secondary schools have highlighted the need for researchers to investigate the area of assessment in a secondary school context. Prior studies revealed that teachers' lack of assessment expertise is a major source of concern (Fook & Sidhu, 2012; Majid, 2011; Rahman, 2014; Hamdan, 2019). The implementation of school-based assessment has entailed a major change in the Malaysian school assessment culture. A few studies mentioned teachers are struggling with school-based assessment due to lack of understanding. This situation is a major alarm in teaching and learning as assessment is a benchmark of teacher teaching practice (Fook & Sidhu, 2006; Majid, 2011; Rahman, 2014; Hamdan, 2019). Therefore, it is undeniable that teachers must be equipped with assessment knowledge so that they can perform effectively in class and deliver the best quality of teaching and learning (Fulcher, 2012; Chan, 2008; Davies, 2008; Stiggins, 1999). Assessment literacy reflects the knowledge and skills needed by educators to interpret and use assessment effectively. Hence, the need to check on assessment literacy, specifically on speaking assessment among Malaysian teachers is crucial.

Most scholars have emphasized the importance of assessment literacy in the teaching and learning process. Researchers like Fulcher (2012), McMillan (2000), and Stiggins (1999) are among those who first used the phrase "assessment literacy". According to Fulcher (2012), assessment literacy refers to teachers' ability to use their knowledge within four frameworks, such as historical, social, political, and philosophical. Davies (2008) mentioned that the basic principles of assessment literacy are teachers' preparation and understanding of assessment. The term was derived from the classic framework of "The Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students" proposed by the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education, and National Education Association (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990). The blueprint has been used by most scholars as the framework to devise assessment literacy instruments (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003; Mertler & Campbell, 2009). In order to keep up with the constant changes in school syllabus and systems, more research needs to be done for the latest version of assessment literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Teachers' Assessment Knowledge in Speaking Skills

Based on the literature review, a few studies have been conducted to investigate different aspects of assessment knowledge. There is a lack of research focusing on specific language assessment skills and as suggested by Cohen (2019), researchers should explore other areas of language assessment (Nimehchisalem & Bhatti, 2019). Previous research related to speaking assessment knowledge has focused specifically on the purposes, methods and contents (Tajeddin, Alemi & Yasaei, 2019). However, literature on teachers' assessment knowledge focusing on other areas such as using assessment results, developing assessment task and the communication of assessment results are insufficient. To bridge this gap, this study sought to widen the present understanding of language assessment by examining in-service teachers' assessment knowledge and the influence of demographic backgrounds regarding speaking in a secondary school context. The following questions were used for the study:

1. What is the level of speaking assessment knowledge of English language teachers in secondary school based on the seven standards of teacher competence in educational assessment of students?
2. Is there any influence of English language teachers' demographic background on their speaking assessment knowledge?
3. What is the impact of other factors that might influence teachers' speaking assessment Knowledge?

METHODS

The study used a mixed-method explanatory design to investigate English language teachers' speaking assessment knowledge in a secondary school context. A multiple-choice test was designed to elicit teachers' knowledge of speaking assessment. The standards of teacher competence in educational assessment were used as a framework to guide the 28 multiple choice questions of the study. The questions were distributed to the participants, followed by semi-structured interviews with four selected participants.

Participant and Contexts

The study utilized purposive sampling at secondary schools in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Participants were recruited from 40 secondary schools around the state with permissions from Ministry of Education and school principals. A set of survey which consists of demographic background information and multiple-choice questions were distributed among the participants.

Multiple-choice Questions

The instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher step by step. The researcher worked through extensive review of literature about language assessment and teachers in the context of classroom assessment. The test was adapted from previous similar multiple choice questions based on extensive reading of literature from Bachman & Plamer (1998), Luoma (2004), Mertler and Champbell (2005) and Taylor (2013) language assessment theories. The framework of the questions were designed based on seven standards measures of assessment literacy (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990). A pilot study was done to ensure the validity of the questions.

Analysis of the survey

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data and answer the research questions. The assessment principles were grouped into the seven domains of interests; choosing the correct method, developing assessment, administering assessment, using of assessment result, validating grading procedure, communicating result and recognizing ethical consideration. To further explore the influence of demographic background with teachers' knowledge, ANOVA was used to analyze the data.

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interview data were coded in accordance with the theme: knowledge; a sub- theme – format – school culture – emerged from the data.

TABLE 1
English Language Teachers' Demographic Background

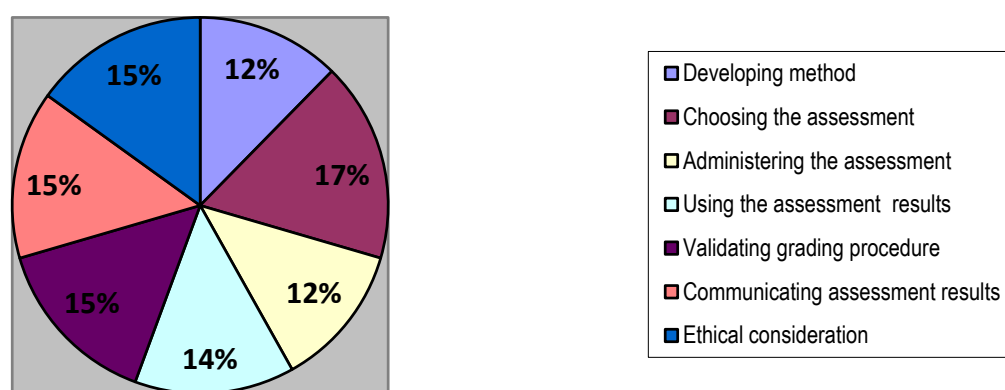
Background Variable	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Qualification	TESL- major	52	53.1
	English Language- major	23	23.1
	Other courses	23	23.5
Years of teaching experience	Junior (1-10 years)	22	22.4
	Experienced (11-20 years)	39	39.8
	Senior teacher (21 – 30 years)	37	37.8
Language assessment training	No training	38	38.9
	One source of training	19	19.4
	More than one source of training	41	41.8

Note: Sources of language assessment training included: full/partial course or workshop.

TABLE 2
Total Scores of Teachers' Knowledge of Speaking Assessment

Group	Frequency	Total Marks	Percentage
Low	29	0 – 10	25
Average	69	11 – 19	75
Excellent	0	20 - 28	-

FIGURE 1
Percentage of English Language Teachers' Knowledge based on the Seven Standards of Competencies



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study explores speaking assessment knowledge among English Language teachers in secondary school. The first data elicited from multiple-choice items then the researcher reported the results of demographic background and finally other factors that influence teachers understanding of assessment.

Knowledge

The main objective of the study is to investigate teachers' speaking assessment knowledge and the influence of qualification, experience and training (refer to Table 1). The second goal is to look at teachers' basic knowledge of the seven assessment subcomponents in assessing speaking. Over half of the participants had extensive experience, teaching in school for more than 10 years. Moreover, majority of them (53%) graduated with a TESL major while the rest were in English language major (23.1%) and other courses (23.1%). Some participants (19%) have attended training once within a five-year time frame while about 41.8% have attended more than one training. However, 38.8% of participants did not participate in any training program related to assessment which is a major concern.

Based on the overall multiple-choice scores, the researcher divided participants into three groups; low, average, and high. The results showed that more than half (69%) of the participants scored between 11 – 19 marks, which categorised them as average. However, only 29 participants received less than 10

out of a total 28 points, classifying them as low and none of the participants scored higher than 20 to be considered excellent (Table 2).

Since this study breaks down English Language teachers' knowledge into specific categories (refer to Figure 1), the pie chart illustrates that 18% of participants are aware of how to choose a suitable method of speaking assessment, followed by valid grading procedures (15%) and ethical considerations (15%). The percentage slightly decreased to 14% when it comes to using the assessment results together with communicating the results to students, parents, and stakeholders. The findings revealed that teachers need to be trained in administering the speaking assessment (12%) and developing suitable assessment methods (12%).

Influence of Demographic Backgrounds on Teachers' Knowledge

In this section, the researcher focussed on the influence of teachers' qualifications, experience and training on teachers' knowledge. As the study investigates the relationship between teachers' knowledge and demographic backgrounds, a one-way ANOVA test was used to compare the total score marks of the seven assessment standards: method, develop, administer assessment, use of result, valid grading, communicate result, and ethical consideration with training, experience, and qualification. The study revealed there was a significant impact on teachers' choosing and developing speaking based on qualification. However, training and experience do not influence any of the categories listed for teachers' knowledge.

Other Factors

As the researcher investigated further into teachers' speaking assessment knowledge, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four selected participants based on their responses to the multiple-choice questions. The unexpected sub-themes that emerged from qualitative data were, school culture and the method of speaking assessment. The phrase "school culture" is frequently used to refer to organisational culture embedded in the educational context, which consists of the fundamental presumptions, customs, and values held by school members. The school culture is important because it displays habits, traditions and formalities among teachers (Duan et al., 2018). In the interview session, participants mentioned that they did not choose the method of the speaking assessment and they normally practised for the exam before the actual evaluations in class. The assessments were standardized and teachers did not change them to accommodate individual student's proficiency level. The participants stated that, despite their perception that weak students would struggle with the speaking assessment, they decided not to deviate from the norm and proceed with the exam as planned by following the rules and regulations of the school. One of the interviewees mentioned that it is unfortunate for weak students to get low marks but they have to work harder in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study shed light on in-service teachers' knowledge of speaking assessment based on the standards of assessment competence; choosing the method, developing the assessment, administering assessment, using assessment result, validating grading procedure, communicating assessment result and ethical consideration. The overall findings showed that both novice and experienced teachers shared an average level of speaking assessment. The study provided evidence that teachers require training and extra guidance in the context of giving feedback especially in terms of communicating and using assessment results. In addition, the study indicated a crucial need for training or workshops in the area of speaking assessment development and also in administering the assessment. This study indicated contrary results

of language assessment knowledge reported by other scholars (Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 1999, 2002; Xu & Brown, 2016; Nimehchisalem & Bhatti, 2019).

The study addresses a small number of limitations. The first restriction was most of the participants in this study were female. This is based on the fact that the number of female teachers in Malaysian secondary schools has outnumbered male teachers. If an equal sample of male and female teachers is used in other studies, different results are expected to emerge in the future. Another limitation was that the speaking assessment knowledge was explored under the subcomponents of the Standards of Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students framework. The study did not investigate speaking assessment in the context of speaking fluency or pronunciation. The results of this study offer some suggestions for future research in the area of speaking assessment which might benefit Malaysian novice and experienced teachers. Future investigation should be done into the four domains of interest; communicating assessment results, using assessment results, administering assessments and developing suitable assessment methods including why training and experience do not influence teacher's assessment knowledge.

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Content Analysis of Managerial Views of Performance of Co-Operatives: Role of Language in Conducting Management Research

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ABSTRACT

Co-operatives have existed since 1922 in Malaysia, and as the engine of growth for the third economic sector, it has gained recognition as a significant contributor to the nation's economic performance. Big co-operatives, less than 10 percent of total number of co-operatives, contribute to more than 90% of co-operatives' turnover (Malaysia Co-operatives Statistics, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to study factors which lead to good co-operative performance. This paper reports the qualitative analysis of managers feedback on the results of a quantitative study which shows that loan, organizational characteristics and leadership have significant impact on co-operative performance; while, managerial competency has insignificant impact on co-operative performance. To triangulate, interview sessions were conducted to gather managerial views on the findings of the study. Interviews are interactions in which questions and answers are used to elicit information on the lived experience of the informant, in this case, the managers of co-operatives. Content analysis of the interview transcription shows that managerial competency is important for co-operative business performance, contrary to the results of the quantitative study, which states otherwise. The analysis also indicates high demand for certified and well-trained and competent managers to ensure sustainability of the co-operative sector. This study underscores the potential of content analysis and language knowledge and skills as a tool to discover managerial thoughts on management and business matters.

KEYWORDS

Managerial Competency; Content Analysis; Co-operative, Interview; Managerial thoughts.

INTRODUCTION

A co-operative is an organization formed by a group of people with a common objective to improve their economic condition. After 100 years of inception, co-operatives have gained recognition as a significant contributor to the Malaysian economy. However, the performance of co-operatives is often viewed with dismay and there is much room for improvement. Despite demonstrating significant impact on millions of Malaysians (Janudin et al., 2016), several studies reported that co-operatives in Malaysia show low performance (Rasit et al., 2018). According to Malaysia Co-operatives Statistics for year 2020, big co-operatives, less than 10 percent of total number of co-operatives, contribute to more than

90% of co-operatives' turnover (Malaysia Co-operatives Statistics, 2020). Therefore, to find out why the other 90% of the cooperative sector are contributing so little, this study aims to establish factors impacting co-operative performance.

The study was carried out using the mixed method. Initially, the study was carried out quantitatively. The results of the quantitative study show that loans, organizational characteristic, and leadership have significant impact on co-operative performance, while managerial competencies have insignificant impact on co-operative performance. Triangulation using qualitative method was conducted next where feedback on the outcomes of the quantitative study was gathered using interviews. This paper shares the reflections of the researcher on the roles of language in conducting research in the field of management.

Research Objective

Within the backdrop of a research on cooperative performance, the research objective is to reflect upon the role of language across the research process for example in conducting interviews; data preparation and analysis and drawing conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Managerial Competency

There are numerous definitions of managerial competency. One definition is the ability to perform a set of functions and achieve a high level of performance that contribute to the performance of an organization (Birknerová & Uher, 2021). Masoud and Al Khateeb (2020) define managerial competency as a set of skills, related to knowledge, attitudes, and attributes that allow an individual to perform a task or an activity within a specific function or job.

Souisa et al. (2019) stated that competent people, are those who have knowledge, skills and individual qualities which include attitudes, motivations, and behaviors needed to carry out work or activities.

Veliu and Manxhari (2017) stated that competency is a cluster of the related knowledge, skills characteristics and attitudes that correlates with effective performance. Managerial competencies play an important role in all organizations. Every successful and effective manager possesses several competencies that enable him to perform efficiently and effectively.

Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis

According to Cohen et al. (2007), content analysis refers to the process of summarising and interpreting written data. In addition, content analysis can be conducted with any written material, from documents to interview transcriptions and can be applied to examine large amounts of text.

Omar et al. (2022) describe content analysis as a systematic coding and categorising approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information. It is a method that focuses on identifying trends and patterns of words, their frequencies, their relationships and the structures of communication involved.

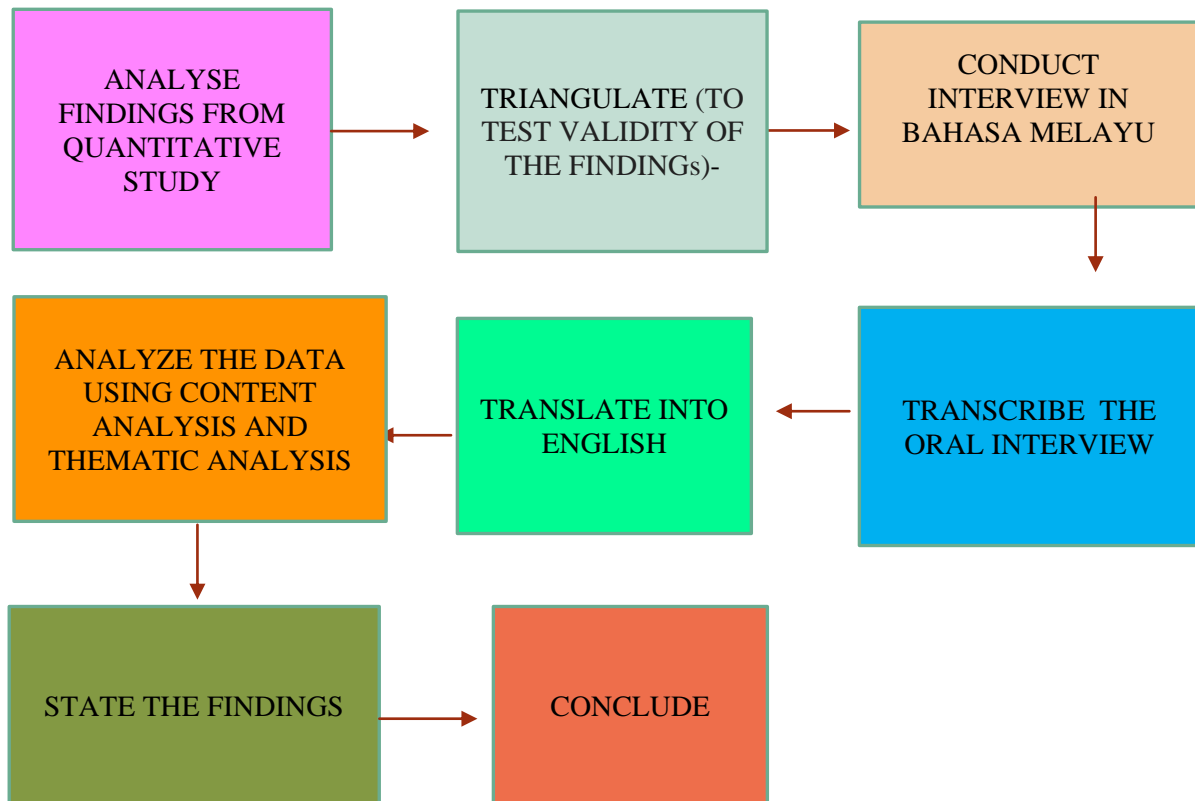
Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set (such as transcripts from in depth interviews or focus groups), and identifying patterns in meaning across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from an interview process with eight respondents who were asked about impacts

of managerial competency on co-operatives performance. The interview was conducted using Bahasa Melayu. The respondents have more than five years of experience in the co-operative movement. They have experience either as a board member or as a management team. The research process is illustrated in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1
Research Process



FINDINGS

Figure 2 shows the processes involved are interviewing, transcribing, translating, analyzing and drawing conclusion.

The informants are requested to provide opinions on the finding of the survey. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Melayu since it is a common language in Malaysia. For the purpose of this paper, the result is translated in English. The interview reflects the opinion of the respondents about managerial competency of co-operatives managers.

Later, the interviews were transcribed into English for further analysis. The written transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis as summarized in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 shows summary of responses on managerial competencies and suggestions for improvement. From the table it can be deduced that the respondents feel that managerial competency is important towards improving co-operative performance; there is low managerial efficiency in small co-operatives; co-operatives are encouraged to engage certified and professional managers in running their activities and board members should open opportunity for younger generation to lead the co-operatives.

FIGURE 2

Role of Bahasa Melayu

PROCESS	REFLECTION
Interviewing	In a multilingual situation, when we need to gather opinions, it is important to know the language in which the respondents are most comfortable to converse in. In this case, the interview was conducted in Bahasa Melayu.
Transcribing	When transcribing, it is necessary to listen to the recordings carefully. The transcribing was done manually because the number of respondents small.
Translating	The ideas shared were based on the respondents' experiences, which were then translated into English.
Analysing (Content and Thematic Analyses)	The transcript was segregated into themes. The research focus was narrowed down to managerial competencies.
Drawing Conclusions	A researcher needs to look for similarities and differences. So, the language skills needed by a researcher is to be able to cluster ideas and this is in line with thematic analysis approach.




CONCLUSION


In conclusion the use of language in conducting research may impact the accuracy of information obtained in a research. In this interview the use of common language i.e. Bahasa Melayu simplified the process of obtaining information from the respondents. This study highlights the importance of language in doing a research. The knowledge of the target languages is important for a researcher.



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Appendix 1
Analysis of Interview Data

Topic	Variable	Interview Excerpts	Analysis
Factors Impacting on co-operative performance	Impact of managerial competency on co-operative performance	<p><i>“Kecekapan Pengurusan adalah penting. Ia lebih jelas dalam Koperasi yang lebih besar tetapi agak kurang dilihat dalam Koperasi yang lebih kecil”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Managerial Competency is important. It is more evident in larger co-operatives but somewhat lesser seen in smaller co-operatives.”</p> <p>(Informant 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managerial competency is important. ▪ There is low managerial efficiency in small co-operatives. ▪ Co-operatives are encouraged to engage certified and professional managers in running their activities. ▪ The board members should open opportunity for younger generation to lead the co-operatives.
		<p><i>“Koperasi besar biasanya melibatkan pengurus yang cekap tetapi jarang di Koperasi yang lebih kecil”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Big co-operatives normally engage competent managers but rarely in smaller co-operatives”.</p> <p>(Informant 2)</p>	
		<p><i>“Kecekapan pengurusan adalah sangat penting. Responden merasakan bahawa suatu badan diperlukan untuk memperakui pengurus Koperasi. Kecekapan pengurusan merangkumi pelbagai aspek seperti pengurusan kewangan dan manusia. Responden juga merasakan masih banyak Koperasi yang tidak diuruskan oleh pengurus profesional”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>	

		<p>“Managerial competency is very important. Respondent feels that a regulatory body is needed to certify co-operative managers. Managerial competency covers various aspects such as financial and human management. Respondent also feels that many co-operatives are still not managed by professional managers.”</p> <p>(Informant 3)</p>	
		<p>“Pengurus yang cekap diperlukan untuk menjalankan perniagaan dengan lancar. Koperasi besar mempunyai banyak aktiviti berbanding Koperasi kecil”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Competent managers are needed to run business smoothly. Large co-operatives have many activities compared to small co-operatives”</p> <p>(Informant 4)</p>	

		<p><i>“Koperasi memerlukan pengurus yang lebih cekap. Anggota Lembaga daripada generasi yang lebih tua harus memberi laluan kepada generasi muda untuk menerajui koperasi. Anggota lembaga sepatutnya lebih banyak berinteraksi dengan ahli Koperasi”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Co-operatives need more efficient managers. Board members from older generation should give way to the younger generation to lead co-operatives. Board members should have more interaction with co-operative members”</p> <p>(Informant 5)</p>	
		<p><i>“Kecekapan pengurusan adalah merujuk kepada pengalaman, kemahiran dan pengetahuan dalam fungsi utama seperti kewangan, pentadbiran, perancangan dan pemasaran. ”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Managerial competency is a measurement of the experience, skill and knowledge in primary function such as finance, administration, planning and marketing”</p> <p>(Informant 6)</p>	

		<p><i>“Koperasi yang diuruskan oleh anggota lembaga sepatutnya memberi peluang kepada pengurus muda menguruskan Koperasi.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“Co-operatives that managed by board members should give opportunity for young managers to manage the co-operative.”</p> <p>(Informant 7)</p>	
		<p><i>“Jika pengurusan tidak cekap maka ia akan menjejaskan prestasi Koperasi.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>“If the management is not efficient then it will affect the performance of the co-operative.”</p> <p>(Informant 8)</p>	

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