

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Intercultural Communication Competence Between Malays and Chinese in Malaysian Organizational and Social Settings

Abstract approved

—
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This study analyzed intercultural communication competence between Malays and Chinese in organizational and social settings in Malaysia. Two groups: Malays and Chinese in organizations in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), were studied.

The intent of this study was to find similarities and differences in Malays and Chinese' communication styles. A total of forty-six respondents were surveyed: twenty-three Malay executives and twenty-three Chinese executives, in organizations in Malaysia. The organizations were selected based on their function, size, number of employees, ethnic composition, and location.

The open-ended questionnaire was written in English and pretested. The revised questionnaire was sent to Kuala Lumpur to be administered by two interviewers who were from each ethnic groups. All of the responses from the questionnaire were interpreted and categorized by two Malay and two Chinese individuals who acted as coders.

This study used thematic content analysis to analyze the responses from the two groups. Respondents' descriptions and explanations of their perceptions on conflict were studied. Coders from both ethnic groups were asked to recall a conflict situation in both organizational and social settings. Each group varied in their definition and perception of conflict.

The results showed some similarities in their perception of appropriate and effective verbal and nonverbal messages in organizational and social settings. The results also showed some similarities and differences in their perceptions of inappropriate and ineffective verbal and nonverbal across ethnic group lines.

The similarities can be explained by shared orientations to uncertainty, large degrees of power distance and collectivism. The differences may be due to cultural dimensions that are situationally variant. The findings showed both groups' preference for clear and explicit verbal messages in task - orientations, and for nonverbal messages in relational-orientations.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE
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ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIAL SETTINGS

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**Intercultural Communication Competence
Between The Malays And Chinese In Malaysian
Organizational And Social Settings.**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the reasons why this study was conducted will be discussed.

Rationale

In 1963, the Federation of Malaysia was formed by the union of Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak. It is situated in South east Asia. Her neighbors include Thailand to the north, Singapore to the south, with Indonesia bordering in the south-east. Malaya is referred to as Peninsula or West Malaysia. Sabah and Sarawak are referred to as East Malaysia.

Malaysia is a country characterized by racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. The major ethnic groups in West Malaysia are the Chinese, Indians, and Malays. Some 56% of Malaysia's total population are Malays and other indigenous groups, 34% are Chinese, and 8% are Indians, while other groups account for the remaining 1%.

In a pluralistic society such as Malaysia, Intercultural communication can be a perplexing activity. With each group's varied cultural and communication systems, ignorance, misunderstandings, misinterpretations,

and/or misperceptions of other groups' cultures can undoubtedly lead to frustrations and conflicts. Literature on Malaysia points to the inter-ethnic disharmony as a the greatest threat to stability (Jomo, 1990).

History, economics, and government policies have all played a major role in shaping the relationship of the citizens in general and the Malays and the Chinese in particular. As an incentive to peaceful coexistence, the Malaysian government has encouraged the different ethnic groups to maintain their own group identity, language, religion, customs and norms. De Vos (1982) states that when groups of people from different ethnic minorities come together, the potential for conflict exists. In Malaysia, the relationship of the Chinese and Malays has been characterized by conflict and struggle (Abraham, 1977; Saad, 1980; Kim, 1981).

This study addresses the perceptions of communication competence of the two groups, comparing their communication styles, how they perceive their own as well as each other's culture, and how they communicate interculturally inside and outside of the organizational setting. There are many approaches to understanding and improving Intercultural competence. Since culture is a process of communication, this study is based on a communication perspective.

BACKGROUND

Although there are many ethnic cultures that reside in West Malaysia or the Peninsula, only two groups will be the focus of this study; the Chinese and Malays. There is an abundance of research available on the relationship of the two groups, especially the years after 1969. Some researchers, tend to focus on the "negative" aspects of the two cultures where they are viewed as competing for limited resources (Jesudason, 1989), and/or scrambling for economic and political superiority (Winzeler, 1986; Jomo, 1990). Others focus on the historical development of the nation itself (Ongkili, 1979; Ariff, 1991; and Young, Bussink, & Hasan, 1980).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity here is defined as the ethnic group with which a person identifies his or her own heritage (Collier, 1991). The ethnic group is a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by the others with whom they are in contact. These traditions include "folk" religious beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, and common ancestry or place of origin (De Vos, 1985). Jesudason (1989) describe ethnicity as constituted by groups having divergent values and institutions. It is important to differentiate the meaning of race and ethnicity. In this study race refers to the biological grouping, example, Caucasian, (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993).

Malays

The Malays or Orang Melayu are the indigenous people of Malaysia , Borneo, parts of Java and other islands. They are a group of people who speak the same language, owe their allegiance to Islam and their territoriality to their sultan (Means, 1970). According to Ongkili (1979), the Malays were the first politically-organized indigenous people of the Peninsula in that the earliest political states were founded by them.

Before the British and Dutch came, the Malays lived without territorial boundaries; they traveled as far north as Cambodia and down south into the islands of Java, aptly called the Malay Archipelago. The Malays "island hopped" by means of a sampan, a wooden boat. With no boundaries to contend with, they came and went as they pleased to do trade or intermarry, facilitating cultural similarities (Ongkili, 1979). For example my maternal grandfather was from the island of Sulawesi (Celebes) while my grandmother was from the Peninsula.

Characteristically, the Malays were described as easily contented people, as evident in their proverb "Kais pagi, makan pagi, kais petang makan petang." Translated it means, "Gather just enough for today. For tomorrow we will gather tomorrow. " This attitude is brought about by the abundance of resources in their surroundings. With this attitude, they work only out of necessity with ample time for leisure. Their favorite past time was to spin the gasing (top) and kiting. These attitudes were "often misunderstood or purposefully characterized as laziness by some members of the ruling British group and the non-Malay communities" (Ongkili, 1979, p.3).

Another favorite past time for the Malay men is the daily meeting at the "kedai kopi" or coffee shop. They gather at a coffee shop and talk about

things from family to national affairs. To the non Malays, this appears to be a waste of time. However, I have had the opportunity to join my father on a number of these sessions, and always found it interesting. They use this free time to catch up on the local news at their favorite "clubhouse". They asked each other who is getting married, who is sick, or for whom to vote in the next election. Sometimes, it is just a place for the men to be away from their women. This scene is often depicted in the local movies.

The Malays also have a love for the aesthetic as shown clearly in their song like poems such as the *syair*, *sajak*, *puisi*, and *pantuns* (ballad and lyrics). Their dances such the *dondang sayang*, *ronggeng*, *inang*, and *zapin* also reflect the influence of many cultures.

While the Malays are united as Muslims, politically they are fractionated as evident in the UMNO (United Malay National Organization) and PAS (Islamic Party) adversarial relationship, Lee, 1986). While the former is viewed as liberal, pursuing both modernization and religion, the latter is labeled as fundamentalist Muslim. Whatever their specific aspirations, their efforts are united in preserving the rights of the Malays or Bumiputras (Prince of the Soil).

Chinese

The Malaysian Chinese (from here on as Chinese) on the other hand, are a group of people who came from China. They brought with them a rich diversity of cultural heritage. As a people, they practice many faiths and have a cultural heritage from China. They came primarily from South China and speak a wide variety of dialects which have helped to preserve their

provincial differences (Means, 1970). As a group they maintain their clan identity such as Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese and Hainanese. Compared to the Malays, the Chinese are not as homogenous a community.

The Chinese are widely known for their cuisine and artifacts. Today, Malaysia boasts of many delicious Chinese cuisine from Canton, Hunan, and Szechuan. When the Chinese came to Malaya, they brought with them many artifacts for daily and ritual usage. Among these were vases and paintings from the Ching and Sung Dynasty. As a past time and a tribute to their deities, the Chinese watched operas depicting legendary heroes and their life in China.

The relationship of the Chinese to the Malays has not always been one of conflict. The Chinese visited Malaya as early as the Christian era to trade. Some, like the Babas, permanently settled in the Peninsula and Singapore and assimilated with the Malays. The Chinese Babas lived in the Malay villages, adapting their language and attire to their host culture while still maintaining their religion, Buddhism.

The discovery of rich tin deposits, rubber as well as the wars in China during the 19th century, contributed much to the influx of immigrants into Malaya. Between 1909 and 1940 it is estimated that some sixteen- million Chinese and Indians landed in Malaya (Sandhu, 1969). Many who came as indentured labors later gained prosperity, opening gambier and pepper plantations. The abundant resources in Malaya encouraged many to stay permanently.

Despite their cultural differences, their astute business sense saw a rise in their economic strength in Malaya. In 1941 the Malayan Chinese remitted to China over \$110,000,000 (Ongkili, 1979). These later Chinese

migrants differed greatly from their predecessors the Babas. Not only did they keep their own religions, they also maintained their individual dialects, customs and norms. Unlike the Chinese who migrated to Cambodia and Vietnam, assimilation or adaptation by the Malayan Chinese to their host culture was kept to a minimum (Winzeler, 1986). There were several reasons that contributed to their digressing relationships. One such example was the use of the "divide and rule" ideology where racial and ethnic groups were manipulated and managed by the British (Abraham, 1986).

The Malays had little contact with the burgeoning tin and rubber industries (Young, et al., 1980). As the Chinese wealth grew, their relationship with the Malays soured, in part because the Malays were dissatisfied with the unwillingness of the Chinese to share in the lucrative tin industry. As aptly described by Wong Lin Ken:

"Except for the work of clearing the forests and bushes on the land, which was given to the Malays or the Sakais who were more dexterous in the use of the *parang*, all the work in the tin mines was done by the Chinese. Difference in race, religion, temperament, languages, customs, and mining superstitions, obvious economic self-interest, and the social requirements of living together in a mine precluded Chinese employers from employing non-Chinese laborers" (1965, p.65).

To top off the waning relationship, the Japanese occupied Malaya in 1942. According to Young, et al., (1980), the Occupation unleashed a wave of nationalist sentiments which evolved around Malay nationalism, Indian nationalism, and Chinese nationalism - each vying for a separate identity.

During the Japanese Occupation, the Malays were absorbed by the Japanese into their workforce, while the Chinese took to the jungle engaging

in guerrilla warfare and joining the Communist Party of Malaya (Jomo, 1990). The Japanese tended to be more lenient with the Malays but, were very harsh and brutal to the Chinese. The Chinese men were tortured and killed, while the women were raped and sent to work as prostitutes (Ongkili, 1985).

After the Japanese surrender, the Chinese came out of the jungle and began a witch hunt. They tortured and killed the Malays, whom they believed were spies of the Japanese, and destroyed some Malay villages. The Malays perceived this as a threat to their kingdom, the Tanah Melayu or Malay Land. They were afraid that the Chinese would take over the country. Working with the British, they successfully orchestrated the defeat of the Communists in Malaya. Soon after, Malaya received its independence from Britain in 1957. It was a result of a coalition of three ethnic groups: Indians, Chinese and Malays. The ethnic composition of 6.28 million population then was 50% Malay, 37% Chinese, and 11% Indian (Ongkili, 1985).

Prior to independence, the ethnic groups in Malaya had first established some kind of social contract to promote the welfare and status of the Malays in return for certain guarantees of non-Malay cultures and lifestyles, and the citizenship for those born after independence. The numerically dominant Malays, who considered themselves indigenous, were the paramount group controlling the political sphere and bureaucracy, while the Chinese were essentially the domestic capitalist class (Jesudason, 1989). The non-Malays agreed to accede to the Malay language, give special privileges and broader economic participation to the Malays (Young, et al., 1980).

Over the years the Chinese watched the Malays' growth in political strength and surge for economic equality with fear, causing insecurity.

Although an agreement was made to improve the poverty level in Malaya, and an economic development policy was adopted, the Malays did not see sufficient benefits for themselves in existing economic arrangements. The Malays resented the rich, affluent Chinese who could afford to get their children educated abroad. This economic disparity caused further tensions and mistrust between the two ethnic groups.

In 1969, the conflict between the two groups escalated when the Chinese won the votes in the major cities of Malaysia in the General Elections. They took their victory to the streets in celebration, taunting the Malays that they (Malays) were finished. The Malays perceived this action as a sign that the Chinese were going to take over the country, and hence retaliated. On May 13th, 1969, a bloody riot broke out. It devastated the entire nation. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister, was asked to resign and Parliament was suspended for 18 months (Jomo, 1990).

The widespread poverty and serious racial imbalance saw the development of a New Economic Policy (NEP) which was announced soon after Parliament resumed in 1971. Its purpose was

"to eradicate poverty among all Malaysians and to restructure Malaysian society so that identification of race with economic function and geographical location is reduced and eventually eliminated, both objectives being realized through rapid expansion of the economy over time" (Government of Malaysia, 1976).

Although the NEP too became a source of insecurity and anxiety for the non- Malays, no one wanted to be reminded of the May 13th incident. Everyone was eager to get the country out of the bloody mess. It has been

approximately 22 years since the last confrontation between the Malays and the Chinese. For the moment, their economic goals and aspirations are keeping the races quiet and agreeable. The Malays, Chinese, and Indians are trying very hard to accommodate each others differences. Unless they address, understand, and accept their differences, they are only a 'hiccup' away from another outburst of racial unrest (Jomo, 1990).

Organizations

Despite the existence of tensions among its citizenry, Malaysia has managed to achieve the status of a "middle-income" nation (Jesudason, 1989), and has been touted as one of the "rising stars" of Southeast Asia. As one of the most dynamic economies of the world, Malaysia cannot afford to succumb to internal conflicts which would drive away international investors (Ariff, 1991).

With the help of the NEP, organizations in Malaysia have personnel with an interesting mix of talents from different backgrounds and experiences. These individuals bring into the organization a unique frame of reference or perspective that influences their relationship with others. The success of organizations often depend on organizational climate and productivity which include cultural or racial heterogeneity, scarcity of resources, difficulty of the assigned tasks, motivation and commitment to work together, as well as competency in intercultural communication.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Young Yun Kim defines intercultural communication competence as the "overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely cultural differences and unfamiliarity, intergroup posture, and the accompanying experience of stress" (In Ting-Toomey & Korzeny, 1991 p.259). The present research is built upon Kim's definition and other previous research in intercultural communication competence. The findings of these other studies suggest that intercultural communication competence is related to cultural value differences (Lustig, 1987), language (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Hall, & Schmidt, 1992), intergroup anxiety (Gudykunst, 1986), ethnocentrism (Collier, 1992), and cultural identity (Collier, In Press).

In this study, the intercultural communication between the Malays and the Chinese in Malaysia is compared, focusing on their communication styles; how they perceive their own as well as each other's culture. By focusing and interpreting the subjects' responses, their cultural and communicative processes can be identified. Hence, two settings have been selected for these purposes, organizational settings, and social settings.

Settings

I have chosen to compare intercultural contact between Malays and Chinese in organizations and social settings because organizations represent a more formal setting where certain constraints determine individuals' behaviors, as opposed to social settings which are less structured and more

informal. In order to limit the type of relationship, my focus is upon task-oriented relationships in both organizational and social settings.

In an organization, workers are compelled to behave according to the organization's culture. Schwartz and Davis define organizational culture as:

"a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization's members. These beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups in the organization...." (1981, p.33).

Task-oriented relationships are common in organizations, and the quality of task relationships may affect job performance and professional success. In this study, task-oriented relationships in social settings such as the market place, banks, and restaurants are also being addressed. These intercultural relationships are perhaps less constrained and more short-term in duration than organizational relationships. Task relationship in both settings can be compared and contrasted.

Conflict

In organizational as well as social settings, individuals try to find a common or shared set of codes that enable them to align the meanings of the messages and/or actions they send and receive. I asked respondents to recall conflict situations because "the two speech episodes in which the rallying of efforts is most marked are conflict management and decision making" (Carbaugh, 1985,p32).

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although there is an abundance of literature on cross-cultural and intercultural theory, little research has been conducted on intercultural communication conduct in business organizations in general, and intercultural communication between the Chinese and Malays in organizations in Malaysia, in particular. Initially, it is necessary to establish working definitions of the following terms: culture, ethnicity, race, identity, communication, intercultural communication, conflict, language, Malays, and Chinese.

Culture

The term culture has been defined in many ways by scholars. As pointed out by Mitarai (1981), the concept of culture is so broadly defined that it is not possible to be specific in applications. Most scholars define culture from a communication perspective because culture is a "learned and shared behavior" (Hall, 1959 p.202). LeVine (1984) states that culture illustrates a consensus in a community about the meaning of symbols, both verbal and nonverbal, and that this agreement is substantially related to the importance of communication in social life" (p.68).

Symbols and meanings not only include verbal messages, nonverbal cues, emblems, and icons, but also how they are interpreted (Collier, In Press). For example, the flag of Malaysia would hold a different meaning to a Malaysian as opposed to an American. The Hindus of India would view the cow as a sacred animal but to the Muslims, a cow is looked upon as food.

Norms are patterns of appropriate ways of communication that may change over time. Hence it is important for both receiver and sender of messages to understand, to share, and apply the same codes appropriately (Collier, In Press).

Culture serves to inform its membership about how to interpret and respond to social life. So individuals learn the symbols and norms that are accepted by the group that they represent. In turn, they hand down or transmit whatever they have learned to the next generation. As proposed by Barnlund (1989), "Culture is the agency and symbols, the instrument by which new generation acquires the capacity to bridge the distance that separates one life from another" (p.xiii).

In national cultures, members are born in the same country, go through approximately the same socialization process. According to Collier (In Press), members of ethnic cultures share a sense of heritage and history, and origin from an area outside of or preceding the creation of the present nation-state. Therefore, based on the previous interpretations, culture, whether it is national, ethnic, organizational or gender is defined here as a social system where patterns of interaction and perception are shared by a group of people.

Identity

All beings have identities. We select labels that represent and/or describe ourselves or others, whether avowed or ascribed. Our identities help us categorize, interpret, and respond to our place in the world.

As members of the human race, individuals can and have the choice to identify themselves individually or in groups, and according to our race,

ethnicity, nationality, profession, geographical region, religion, language, and/or ideology (Tajfel, 1982; De Vos, 1982; Collier, In Press). Identities too create a sense of peoplehood(Hecht,et al., 1993). Individuals sometimes fight to maintain or assert the identities they have chosen for themselves. There are also times when individuals reject the identities that are bestowed upon them. For example, some Chinese might reject being called Malaysian, and prefer to be identified as Malaysian Chinese and/or Overseas Chinese.

Identities are not static, and because of this members can and have the choice to change their identities to meet their needs (Hecht, et al., 1993). Also, individuals or groups can have multiple identities simultaneously, depending on the strength of the situation and/or relationship.

Ethnic Identity

Identities based on ethnicity are those belonging to individuals who have similar heritage (Hecht, et al., 1993). Here members share and use appropriate and effective symbols, norms, and attitudes that have been transmitted generationally. De Vos (1982) states that ethnic identity is a past-oriented form of identity. An example is the Minangkabaus of Malaysia. Although majority of them are born in Malaysia after 1957, their cultural and communication processes are still patterned after the Minangs of Sumatra. The Minangs of Malaysia maintain similar language, values, customs, and norms as their Sumatran counterpart.

Some individuals or groups use ethnic identity as a symbol of hierarchy or status (Lee, 1986). An example would be the Brahmins in India who belong to the highest caste.

National Identity

Some individuals choose to identify themselves by national identity. Here is one example of a national identity. Sofyan Nugroho is a student from Indonesia whose ethnic identity is Chinese. He speaks fluent Indonesian and Chinese. When asked to label his identity, Sofyan will automatically say he is an Indonesian first. His national identity takes precedence over his ethnic identity. Twenty students from Oregon State University were interviewed regarding their ethnic identity for a class project. They were from Thailand (3), Indonesia(5), China(3), India(5), the Philippines(2), and Malaysia(2). When asked to label their cultural identity, respondents from Thailand, India, China, and the Philippines gave their national identity. The Malaysian, on the other hand, gave an ethnic identity label.

Regional Identity

In some cases, individuals or groups identify themselves territorially (De Vos, 1982). In Malaysia, the majority of the Malays identify themselves regionally or according to the states they come from. The Malays from Kelantan and Negri Sembilan each have their dialects, norms and customs. Nepotism or state loyalty is said to be high among the Malays. This is probably due to their feeling of loyalty to their Sultan or Ruler (Means, 1970).

The Chinese in Malaysia still maintain their clan identity from China. For example, Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese each represents one of the districts in China.

Dress Code

Individuals sometimes wear clothes that show the identity they wish to project. In Malaysia, some Malay women wear the *hijab* (scarves) and long dresses as a representation of their religious beliefs and attitudes. Due to this, some non Malays make an incorrect description that Malay women who do not wear the traditional Muslim garb are "liberal or modern" Malays. This of course has been a source of discomfort for some Malay women who choose not to wear the hijab. Others like the Chinese women wear the *Cheongsam* and the Indian women wear the *Sari* as a form of identification.

Organizations

Organizations refer to patterns of rational and political interactions and activities invented by people to fulfill the goals of individuals and groups (Randolph & Blackburn, 1989). They are places in which we work, play, and cope with others. There are business, industrial, governmental, educational, professional, religious, social, and political organizations (Daniels & Spiker, 1991). In this study, we are focusing on business organizations that are involved in economic production. These are profit making business organizations, which manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers.

Communication

Communication as defined by Schefflen (1974), is an organized, standardized, patterned system of behavior that sustains, regulates and makes possible human relationships. Communication according to Kreps (1990), is a symbolic activity that people engage in to help them interpret and influence their social life. It is a dynamic and an on-going process whereby people create shared meaning through the sending and receiving of messages via commonly understood codes (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1989). Humans communicate verbally and nonverbally.

Verbal

In this study verbal communication includes the use of language, signs, and/or symbols. Miscommunication and misperceptions of symbols can often lead to conflict since meanings are in people. Intercultural communication is a complex activity because members from different cultures are trying to decode and encode the different messages/signals. In the questionnaire for this research respondents were asked to write down what they said to each other that was appropriate and/or inappropriate.

Nonverbal

There has been an abundance of research done on nonverbal communication by people from different disciplines (biologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists). Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall,

(1989), state that verbal communication, every communicative act carries with it nonverbal components. People rely heavily on nonverbal cues to express themselves and to interpret the communicative activities of others. Nonverbal communication includes the use of bodily movement, vocal activity (sounds), physical appearance, touch, manipulation of distance and space, manipulation of time, and manipulation of artifacts and features of the environment.

Individuals can also rely on nonverbal communication to relate a message when direct verbal messages cannot or should not be used. Both the verbal and nonverbal forms of communication for the Malays are loaded with implied meanings. An example is in the Malay proverb, "Pukul anak sindir menantu" i.e., "Beat your child to hint your displeasure with your daughter-in-law."

In this study, bodily actions such as gestures, facial expressions, posture and eye contact; vocal behaviors such as pitch loudness, and tempo; proximity and potential for touch; messages about use of time such as pacing and giving undivided attention; and surrounding furnishings and objects were of interest. In the questionnaire respondents were requested to describe where the conflict took place and what they said and/or gestured to each other that was appropriate and/or inappropriate.

Intercultural Communication

In a society, communication provides members with an effective tool to shape and respond to other's culture. Communication serves functions such as creating and maintaining human relationships, establishing identity, expressing ideas and sharing knowledge (Haslett, 1987). Barnlund (1989)

states that we acquire culture through communication. Porter and Samovar (1988) posit,

"The link between culture and communication is crucial to understanding intercultural communication because it is through the influence of culture that people learn to communicate" (p. 24).

When two differing groups meet, members try to understand or make sense of what messages they receive and/or send. The outcome of their interactions can either be positive or negative. Intercultural communication will be defined here as the communication among two or more people from diverse backgrounds, who use two distinct communicative patterns, or enact different group identities (Collier, In Press). According to Jomo (1990), communication across ethnic lines in Malaysia has been largely reduced to polite half-truths.

Organizational Communication

Organizational communication is defined as the process whereby members gather pertinent information about their organization and the changes occurring within it (Kreps, 1990). In other words, members learn how to accomplish a task according to the accepted norm or practices of their own organization.

Language

Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Hall, & Schmidt, (1992) argue that language becomes a medium of communication because of its abstract system of rules (phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic). Messages are created by translating this abstract rules into a spoken, written, or sign language. Since language is inherent in communication, group members often use language to label or to represent their cultural and/or ethnic identity.

Giles and Johnson (1981) argue that language is a vital aspect of any group's, but particularly an ethnic group's identity. Some ethnic groups speak several different languages. For example, the Chinese of Malaysia speak several dialects that are representative of their former territory in China.

The Malays also speak several dialects which are representative of their districts. Barnlund argues that *in a multiethnic society*, the understanding or use of a common language does increase the percentages of predictability of another's response (Barnlund, 1989, p.xiv). Even though Malaysia and Indonesia have a similar language, their members' norms, values, and attitudes differ greatly. In this study, language includes the verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication that represents a group culture and identity.

Scholars have established the existence of language barriers in intercultural communication (Hecht, et al., 1993; Kim, 1991; Giles & Johnson, 1986). In the hope of uniting its multi-ethnic citizens, the Malaysian government, like the Indonesian, has declared the Malay language as the official national language. This means that schools and government sectors use the Malay language as a medium of transaction. However, in the private and/or business sector, English is still widely used (Ackerman, 1986). It is

taught in schools as early as Primary One and is used as the medium of instruction at the local universities.

Conflict

The existence of conflict between the Chinese and the Malays of Malaysia is well documented. However, the literature that describes their relationship as one of conflict is from a Western or Eurocentric perspective and not from the Malay or Chinese' perspective. There has not been an internal study that specifically describes how and what conflict means to a Malaysian Malay or Chinese.

Research regarding the relationship between Malays and Chinese almost always focuses on their adversarial relationship (Jesudason, 1989; Jomo, 1990; Winzeler, 1986). Political, economical, historical and cultural factors, all contribute to a feeling of mistrust and animosity between the two groups (Ongkili, 1985).

Jesudason (1989), argues that power and a sense of weakness play important roles in conflict, and that groups do not confront one another merely because they differ in their norms, and cultural practices, but also because of their fundamental and incompatible moral and differences.

Conflict in the Western sense is an umbrella term that can mean anything from an opposition, disagreement, tension, and/or even war. Most of the literature on conflict however, acknowledges that conflict is an inevitable byproduct of the process of communication. Conflict is viewed as an expressed struggle revealed in communication behavior (Hocker and Wilmot, 1985).

In this study, conflict is a communication process involving persons who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals (Collier, 1991). Such communication behavior can include a form of interpersonal and intrapersonal dissonance (tension or antagonism) between two or more interdependent parties based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, and/or attitudes (Ting-Toomey, 1985).

The way conflict is experienced and managed is culturally influenced. Since the Malays and Chinese might have different perceptions of conflict, the researcher defined conflict for respondent in this study to include disagreement, discord, hostility, and /or argument. Accounts of personal experiences of conflict by respondents are important because they reveal the thoughts, beliefs, and relationships of the individuals to each other and to the surrounding. Each group provided their own examples of conflict which is helpful in establishing representative validity (Carbaugh, 1985; Collier, 1991).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the history of the Malays and Chinese in Malaysia, as well as past research, I pose the following research questions:

Organizational Settings

1. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *appropriate/effective verbal messages* in intercultural conflict in the organization?
2. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *inappropriate/ineffective verbal messages* in intercultural conflict in the organization?
3. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *appropriate/effective nonverbal messages* in intercultural conflict in the organization?
4. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *inappropriate/ineffective nonverbal messages* in intercultural conflict in the organization?

Social Settings

5. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *appropriate/effective verbal messages* in intercultural conflict in social settings?

6. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *inappropriate/ineffective verbal messages* in intercultural conflict in social settings?
7. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *appropriate/effective nonverbal messages* in intercultural conflict in social settings?
8. What similarities and differences emerge when Chinese and Malays employees describe *inappropriate/ineffective nonverbal messages* in intercultural conflict in social settings?

This study will make an important contribution to the field of intercultural communication because it specifically addresses perceptions of competent intercultural conduct from two groups that experience conflict, Malays and Chinese in Malaysia. The results of this study may be applicable to the analysis of ethnic conflict in other multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic organizations and/or nations, for example, the United Nations, Indonesia, Thailand, U.S.A., Canada, India, the former Yugoslavia, and South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach, which is interpretive and descriptive, is being used in this study. Focusing on reports or descriptions of respondents own experiences, informs us about the creation and enactment of identity (Hecht, et. al., (1993). Collier (1991) argues that obtaining respondents' descriptions and interpretations increases representational validity and helps set appropriate limits on generalizability. Also, Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, and Nishida (1989), recommend that "To fully understand personal relationships, it is necessary examine the participants' interpretations, conceptions, and explanations of their relationships" (p.231).

Furthermore, those personal accounts represent their real relationships (Weber, Harvey, & Stanley, 1987, p.114). In addition, having respondents provide accounts of their own conduct and experience is one way to identify themes and prescriptions for more effective conduct. Two sets of open-ended questionnaires were developed (see Appendix), one for the Malays and another for the Chinese respondents.

Creation of Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire was created and pretested on a small sample of Malays and Chinese executives in Kuala Lumpur. Based on the results of the pretest, adjustments were made to suit the current study. The

questionnaire consisted of open-ended and some closed-ended questions including demographic questions.

The questionnaire included the following kinds of questions. First, respondents were asked to describe their ethnic or cultural background. The purpose was to ensure that the respondents fall under the ethnic groups needed for this study. Also, cultural codes influence participants' abilities to recognize and manage conflict (Carbaugh, 1985).

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part asked the respondents to recall a *recent situation at work* where they experienced conflict with a person from a different ethnic group (Chinese/Malay) who works for the same organization as they do. The other asked the respondents to recall a *recent situation in a social setting* in which they experienced conflict with a person from a different ethnic group (Chinese/Malay) where they visited a business such as a restaurant, bank, or marketplace to make a purchase or conduct business.

The purpose of asking both contexts of conflict is to differentiate the place the conflict took place, as environments do influence the climate in an organization (Burgoon, et, al., 1989) and conflict management. For example, haggling over prices may be a common occurrence in the open-air Malay bazaar, but not in an air-conditioned supermarket. Organizations have cultures that are predetermined to some extent by the leaders, and in order to fit in, individuals must adapt to these cultures. However, in a social setting, individuals observe a different set of codes according to the norms and customs of their individual cultures. The constraints that members feel in an organization may not apply in social situations.

Respondents were next asked to describe their position in the organization because position held can influence how the conflict is managed. "Negotiators make tactical choices based on their perceptions of their counterparts" (Nadler, Nadler, & Broome, 1985, p.87). In addition, where the conflict takes place, what language is used, and the other person's status can influence the outcome of the conflict. As indicated by Collier (In Press) when persons communicate with each other, messages carry information as well as implications for who is in control, how close the conversational partners feel to one another or conversely how hostile they feel toward each other, how much they trust one another, and the degree of inclusion they feel.

In the questionnaire respondents were asked to describe the verbal and/or nonverbal messages that were appropriate and/or inappropriate. Appropriate here means "those behaviors that are regarded as proper and suitable given the expectations generated by the culture, the constraints of the specific situation, and the nature of the relationship between the interactants" (Lustig and Koester, p.68, 1993). Effective is meant to be "behaviors that lead to the achievement of desired outcomes" (Lustig & Koester, p. 68, 1993).

Verbal communication includes the use of language, signs, and/or symbols, whereas nonverbal communication includes the use of bodily movement, vocal activity (sounds), physical appearance, touch, manipulation of distance and space, manipulation of time, and manipulation of artifacts and features of the environment (Burgoon, et al, 1989).

According to Collier (In Press), comparing what groups say and do allows us to begin to understand why some groups experience frequent misunderstandings or conflicts. Therefore both verbal and nonverbal messages were solicited.

The final part of the questionnaire involved demographics. It included sex, age, occupation, type of organization (public or private), educational achievement (what and where), and lastly their generation (first, second, third).

Respondents

A total of forty-six respondents were surveyed: twenty-three Malay executives and twenty-three Chinese executives, in organizations in Malaysia. These particular ethnic groups were chosen because of their ethnic identity, ability to read, write, and speak in English, educational background and also because of their past history and conflict. Executives were chosen for this study because of their tertiary education and communication skills such as ability to read, write, and speak in English as well as exposure to intercultural environments. They were representative of organizations in Kuala Lumpur.

Organizations

The organizations were selected based on their function, size, number of employees, ethnic composition and location. Kreps (1990) classifies organizations into four basic types: (1) organizations oriented to economic production, (2) organizations oriented to political goals, (3) organizations oriented to integration goals, and (4) organizations oriented to pattern maintenance goals. In this study the organizations selected are oriented to economic production. These are profit making business organizations, which manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers.

Procedures

The open-ended questionnaire was written in English. Administering the questionnaire in English was appropriate because the respondents are educated to speak, read, and write English fluently. English is also the medium of instruction in the business environment in Malaysia. As pointed out by Armer (1973), appropriateness of language is an important factor when researchers compare two or more cultures because language,

"appropriateness requires feasibility, significance and acceptability in each foreign culture as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for insuring validity and successful completion of comparative studies...." (pp50-51).

The questionnaire was pretested on a small sample of Malays and Chinese executives in Kuala Lumpur. Based on the results of the pretest, adjustments were made to suit the current study as some respondents had difficulty in understanding terminology. For example, the pretest showed that the word conflict had many extremely negative interpretations. In the revised questionnaire "disagreement" was used. The questionnaires were reorganized to increase comprehension. Two sets of questionnaires were made, one for the Malays, the other for the Chinese.

After the corrections, the questionnaire was sent to Kuala Lumpur to be administered by two colleagues who were already briefed on the research. One is a female Chinese lawyer and the other a male Malay business executive. The use of assistants from each ethnic backgrounds increases the internal validity of the study. Both are above 30 years of age. They represent the demographics of their respective ethnic groups. Their influential positions enable them to have access to organizations in Kuala Lumpur.

Analysis of Data

The data analysis for this study was based on the thematic content analysis. The coding procedure was similar to that used by Collier, (1991); Hecht, Ribeau & Alberts, (1993); and Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, (1989). All of the responses from the questionnaire were interpreted and categorized by two Malay (a female and male), and two Chinese (a female and male) individuals who acted as coders. Collier (1991) states that " Cultural validity is strengthened when coders have experience with the ethnic group being given attention" (Collier, 1988, p.142). The coders also act as a link or a bridge between the researcher and the two ethnic groups in this study. The researcher is a Malay and a citizen of Malaysia. The researcher coordinated and observed the coders and the coding process.

There were forty-three respondents but only forty were retained, twenty Chinese and twenty Malays. The data were separated into two piles, Chinese and Malays. Each of the respondents questionnaire was given a number (1-20). The coders first read all the responses belonging to their own ethnic group and then the other, to get a sense of both groups overall.

The coders typed out the exact responses of the respondents and then summarized the responses. For example, on Question # 8 - "What did you say that was appropriate /effective?" Malay Respondent #1 wrote, "I will agree and tell him of his good idea. I have always wanted to make the other party feel happy about his idea being accepted." Malay Coder 1 wrote - Will agree or accommodate others' ideas. Malay Coder 2 wrote - Accommodating ideas. The coders then did the same for all the nineteen responses. The coders summarized from the direct quotations to increase the likelihood of accurate

categorizing of the descriptions (Holsti, 1969).

After the coders had individually summarized all the responses for Questions #1-42, they met with their partner to compare notes. They looked for patterns that might arise. Collier (1991) describes the coding process "when repetition of key words or phrases or what was interpreted as similar meaning was evident, then a category ...of responses emerged" (p.142).

The researcher is familiar with both ethnic groups. Since she would ultimately write up the coders' interpretations, she needed to be completely clear on their reasoning processes. Further the researcher was able to remind the coders to avoid tendency to overemphasize positive characteristics of their ethnic group.

For Question #8, the Malay Coders came up with three types of speech acts.: Accommodating, Accepting, and Polite. Then they categorized the speech acts. When coders agreed on their final set of categories, they also agreed upon a label for each category of speech acts. In this way, themes for the speech acts were identified. Accommodating, Accepting, and Polite were listed under the theme label of BEING AGREEABLE, whereas Explaining, Requesting, and Questioning came under the label of CLEAR EXPLANATION. The two coders and researcher discussed each category of speech act and came to an agreement about the label for the theme of each category. The participation of the researcher for several reasons.

Next, the researcher organized and compared the categories according to the topics and sub-topics addressed in the research questions:

(1) Malay Verbal Communication - (A)Appropriate Effective Verbal Communication of Malays in Organizational Setting, (B) Inappropriate / Ineffective Verbal Communication of Malays in Organizational Settings, (C)

Appropriate / Effective Verbal Communication of Malays in Social Settings, (D) Inappropriate Ineffective Verbal Communication of Malays in Social Settings.

(2) Malay Nonverbal Communication - (A) Appropriate Effective Nonverbal Communication of Malays in Organizational Settings, (B) Inappropriate / Ineffective Nonverbal Communication of Malays in Organizational Settings, (C) Appropriate Effective Nonverbal Communication of Malays in Social Settings, and (D) Inappropriate / Ineffective Nonverbal Communication of Malays in Social Settings. The researcher applied the same procedure with the Chinese Coders.

In summary, the intent of the coding process was to identify the similarity of particular themes or patterns that emerge in intercultural conflict. The researcher compared the themes across groups to answer the research questions. This method was used by Collier, et al, (1986), Collier, (1988), and Hecht, et al., (1993).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this study, several important issues relating to intercultural communication competence were described by two ethnic groups: Malays and Chinese. Different types of conflict were perceived by the Malays and Chinese in Malaysian organizational and social settings. Of particular interest are issues such as what is appropriate and/or effective verbal and nonverbal messages in intercultural conflicts in Malaysian organizational and social settings.

To compare Malays and Chinese' communication styles, respondents were asked to describe a recent situation at work and social setting where they experienced conflict with a member of the other ethnic group. Each group was analyzed separately. The following is a discussion of the themes, speech act types making up each. Both frequencies and relative percentages are listed for each theme. In the Tables which follow, the frequencies are the number of times the speech act or theme emerged. Percentages (%) may not total 100% due to rounding.

Types of Conflict

Question #5, addressed similarities and differences in the perception of conflicts in organizational settings. The Malays identified four themes:

Lack of Cooperation, Lack of Understanding, Unrecognized Effort, and Differences in Work Ethics. The Chinese respondents also had four themes: **Different Work Ethics, Racial Differences, Differences in Religion, and Differences in Opinions.**

Table 1. Types of Conflict in Organizational Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

MALAY	Frequency	%	CHINESE	Frequency	%
Unrecognized Efforts	5	25	Different Work Ethic	6	30
No Acknowledgement	2	10	Tardiness	2	10
Inattentiveness	1	5	Unequal Salary	4	20
Salary Difference	2	10	Racial Differences	5	25
Lack of Cooperation	5	25	Differences in Religion	5	25
No Cooperation	3	15	Differences in Opinion	4	20
Jealousy	1	10	Political Issues	2	10
Job Dissatisfaction	1	10	Social Issues	2	10
Lack of Understanding	4	20			
Ethnocentrism	2	10			
Different Beliefs	2	10			
Different Work Ethics	5	25			
Different Procedure	4	20			
Completion of Task	1	5			
Total	20	100		20	100

Examples of speech acts are outlined below. Respondents number is listed in parenthesis. The examples are direct quotations.

Malays

1. Unrecognized effort

A. No acknowledgement - Being a Malay who was not recognized for his effort by another department which comprises of 100% Chinese employees will certainly cause ill feelings to the extend of causing racial feelings in my heart.
(M1)

B. Inattentive - I suggested to the zone manager to include one or more of the branch officers to attend the discussion prior to

launching of the company's product/service. He went along at the suggestions during our first meeting but pretended that he wasn't sure if he was agreeing to it during the second meeting. (M6)

C. Salary - Ex: Entitlement for claims (M5)

II. Lack of Cooperation

A. No cooperation - Ex: It was not getting good cooperation from the Malay staff (M2)

B. No Support - Ex: It is all about distribution of workloads and accountability. The boss scolded me for the failure even though my superior was aware that it was a team effort. I complained to my colleagues who just laughed knowing the boss just doesn't care much. I was the victim. (M18)

C. Jealousy - Ex: No disagreement. She is just jealous of my clients. (M19)

D. Job dissatisfaction - Ex: I felt that the job assigned is of no significance. Just a waste of time. (M16)

III. Lack of Understanding

A. Ethnocentrism - Ex. About the Chinese being better businessmen than Malays. (M3)

B. Beliefs - Ex. Fasting Month (M4)

IV. Work Ethics

A. Procedure - Ex: Procedure on disbursement of funds. His lack of cooperation in ensuring the funds are made available as soon as possible. His indifferent attitude towards the situation. As part of a senior management, I expect better sense of responsibility from him. (M9)

B. Completion of task- Ex. About completion of job assignment (M13)

C. Tardiness -Ex: About coming to work late. (M12)

Chinese

I. Racial Differences -

Ex. A lot of Malays prefer to work in government offices, compare to other races. (C2)

II. Differences in Work Ethics

A. Tardiness- Ex. He is always late to work. (C7)

B. Slow - Ex. He is not doing a good job. He is slow. He does not want to learn, unlike some people. (C3)

III. Differences in Religion

Ex. About religious belief - Muslim & Chinese Festivals. (C4)

IV. Differences in Opinions

A. Political Issues - Ex. About politics and immunity of the Rulers (C6)

B. Social Issues - Ex. Illegal immigrants are every where now. (C8)

The results showed that themes like **Unrecognized Effort** and **Lack of Cooperation and Different Work Ethics** seemed to concerned the Malays most. The speech acts described situations that were task-orientations. The theme **Lack of Understanding** showed behaviors that were relational in nature.

The Chinese had themes such as **Different Work Ethics, Racial Differences, Differences in Religion, and Differences in Opinions**. Of these, only **Different Work Ethics** seemed task-oriented. The others described behaviors that relational showed emotions and feelings

The Malays and Chinese both had themes labeled as **Different Work Ethics**, although the speech acts did suggest differences in behaviors. Another similarity in behaviors were themes such as Lack of Understanding

(M), Racial Differences (C), Differences in Religion (C), and Differences in Opinion (C). These behaviors may suggest relational-orientations.

Question #20 addressed similarity and differences in the perception of conflict in Social Settings.

Table 2. Types of Conflict in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

MALAY	Frequency	%	CHINESE	Frequency	%
Lack of Explanations	3	15	Different Work Ethics	9	45
Argued Over Order	2	10	Different Race	2	10
Being Insistent	1	5	Different Cultures	6	30
Lack of Cooperation	2	10	Different Food	4	20
Lack of Understanding	13	65	Different Beliefs	2	10
Gave Poor Service	7	35	Different Opinions	5	25
Questioned Beliefs	2	10	Political Issues	3	15
Instructions	2	10	Social Issues	2	10
Different Values	2	10			
Unfair	2	10			
Inconsistent pricing					
Total	20	100		20	100

Malay

I. Lack of Explanation

A. Argued over Order - Ex. I visited the supermarket which is one of my clients, checking on my produce which required to be replenished. The Chinese girl, the buyer, refused to issue a Purchase Order. We argued over the matter which she simply refused to give any explanation for the refusal. I believe that Chinese will not support Malay entrepreneurs. (M1)

B. Insistence - Ex. He insisted that I show my I.D. and get a pass to enter the building. (M2)

II. Lack of Cooperation

Ex. Taking too much of his time and refused to cooperate with the auditors. (M10)

III. Lack of Understanding

A. Poor Service - Ex. On a loan repayment. I posted 2 checks to a Finance Company bearing valid dates of 14 and 30th November, 1992 respectively. It was found out that they banked in the checks and simultaneously issued the receipt as at 17th November 1992 and 24th December 1992. Accordingly, I had to bear the late charges. (M6)

B. Question of Belief - Ex. Reason why they serve their Gods with fruits. Undoubtedly all the fruits are still not eaten. (M4)

C. Misunderstanding - Ex. Instruction letters to the bank. (M13)

D. Different Values - Ex. Her invaluable friend. (M20)

IV. Unfair

A. Inconsistent Pricing - Ex. Selling different price to different customers. We cannot choose the goods that we want to buy. (M3)

Chinese

I. Different Work Ethics

A. Service - Ex. The lady at the counter was very rude and I told her so. (C1)

II. Different Cultures

A. Food - Ex. Whether the restaurant is fit for a Muslim to eat. And are the cooking safe for the Muslims. (C6)

III. Different Opinions

A. Political Issues - Ex. Too many foreign maids and helpers. (C3)

B. Social Issues - Ex. They are not well educated. (C12)

Both groups mentioned recurrent themes like **lack of Explanations**, **lack of Cooperation**, **lack of Understanding**, and **Unfair (M)**, and **Different Work Ethics**, **Different Race**, **Different Cultures**, and **Differences in**

Opinions (C) as conflict that occurred in social settings.

Malays described difficulties in situations that were task-oriented. They perceived resistance by the Chinese to get their jobs done. The issue of unfair or different pricing came up several times. The Chinese on the other hand described difficulties in building and maintaining relationships. They perceived the Malays' lack of respect for them. Examples of speech acts also showed their differences in choice of foods and beliefs.

Research Questions

Research Question #1 addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of appropriate and /or effective verbal messages in intercultural conflict in organizations. The Malay respondents cited **Giving Clear Explanations** and **Being Agreeable** as appropriate/effective forms of verbal communication at the workplace. The Chinese respondents cited **Giving Clear Explanations** and **Giving Polite Explanations**. The following table summarizes the results.

Table 3. Appropriate/Effective Verbal Messages in Organizational Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Giving Clear Explanation	10	50	Giving Clear Explanation	11	55
Explaining	8	40	Explaining Clearly	4	20
Requesting	2	10	Questioning	3	15
Being Agreeable	6	30	Suggesting	2	10
Agreement	2	10	Being Opinionated	2	10
Being Helpful	1	5	Giving Polite Explanation	2	10
Being Understanding	1	5	Being Apologetic	2	10
Showing Acknowledgment	1	5			
Being Accommodating	1	5	Nothing	4	20
Nothing	3	15	No Response	3	15
No Response	1	5			
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

Examples of speech acts are outlined below. (Respondent number is listed in parenthesis). The examples are direct quotations.

Malay

I. Giving Clear Explanation

A. Explaining- Ex. He claimed that the business was meant to be dealt by his department rather than my department, Loan Dept. I agreed to the fact that was to be under my jurisdiction. (M1)

B. Requesting - Ex. He asked if I had a lot of work. He asked whether I can take on the new assignment. (M16)

II. Being Agreeable

A. Agreement - Ex. That he agreed to take note of the suggestion and would be minuted. (M6)

B. Being Helpful - Ex. If anything that you need or want you can ask for my help. (M19)

C. Being Understanding- Ex. We sympathize with you. The boss shouldn't do that. Don't expect the impossible in short time to complete everything. (M18)

D. Acknowledging - Ex. That he agreed to take note of the suggestion and would be minuted. (M6)

E. Being Accommodating - Ex. I will agree and tell of his good idea as I have always wanted to make the other party feel happy about his idea being accepted. (M1)

Chinese

Speech acts that came under the category of Giving Clear Explanations and Giving Polite Explanations included:

I. Giving Clear Explanation

A. Gave Clear Explanation - Ex. It is safer and more chances for promotion and of getting good pay is there. (C2)

B. Questioning - Ex. What makes you say so? (C8)

C. Suggesting - Ex. You should try to be more organized and take your work seriously. You are capable of a much better result. (C13)

D. Being Opinionated - Ex. We are all the same. (C9)

II. Giving Polite Explanation

A. Being Apologetic - Ex. I am sorry, but I was pressed for time to really complete a good job. (C12)

Several similarities and differences emerged from the analysis of Malay and Chinese descriptions of appropriate and /or effective verbal messages in organizations.

Both ethnic groups described **Giving Clear Explanation** (M, C) as an appropriate/effective form of verbal messages used at their workplace. The speech acts described by the Malays were Requesting and Explaining (M). The Chinese used speech acts like Clear Explanation, Questioning, Giving Suggestions, Giving Opinions, and Apologizing. The speech acts described by both groups indicated a task-orientation.

The theme **Being Agreeable** mentioned by the Malays differed from the theme Giving Polite Explanation cited by the Chinese. The Malays categorized speech acts like Agreement, Helpfulness, Understanding, Acknowledging, and Accommodating as **Being Agreeable**. The Chinese, on the other hand only categorized the speech act Apologized as **Giving Polite Explanations**.

There are several ways to explain these results. The first explanation is based on Hall's high and low context dimension. Malaysia according to Hall is a High Context group. According to Hall (1976), most Asian cultures fall under the High-Context Index. He states that

"People raised in high-context systems expect more of others than do participants in low-context systems. When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his (or her) interlocutor to know what's bothering him (or her), so that he (or she) does not have to be specific. The result is that he (or she) will talk around and around the point." (p.98)

However, the result of this study showed that more than 50% of the Malays and Chinese considered "**Giving Clear Explanation**" as an appropriate/ effective means of sending verbal messages. The respondents described preferences for clarity in the messages sent which, according to Hall, is typical of a low context culture.

Explanations may be related to a high-context emphasis in the following way. The Chinese and the Malays grew up in an environment where their socialization process differed from each other. Collier et al., (1986) state that members of different ethnic groups do not share a common set of communication norms. So when a Malay and a Chinese communicate,

it is more difficult for them to share meaning.

To elaborate, Hall describes messages in high-context cultures as almost preprogrammed because members behave precisely according to each situation. In this case, it would be difficult for the Malays and Chinese to know or read each others' implied messages because they do not share the same cultural codes or communication patterns. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that when members of two different high-context cultures communicate, they are forced to communicate on a low-context level, where messages become more explicit.

The emphasis on explanation may also indicate that in some settings low context messages which are more verbally explicit are preferred. Task accomplishment may be such a setting.

Judging from the results, the use of **Clear Explanation** in intercultural communication by the two groups may indicate an emphasis on understanding the other person and what is expected and interpreted. The emphasis may indicate a preference for avoiding uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980). Uncertainty reduction involves the creation of proactive predictions and retroactive explanations about behavior (Lustig & Koester, 1993).

According to Hofstede (1980), cultures high in uncertainty avoidance have a lower tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Members express higher levels of anxiety and energy release and have a greater need for formal rules and absolute truth. There is also less tolerance for people or groups with deviant ideas or behavior.

Both groups may be low context and avoid uncertainty in the organizational setting. Lustig and Koester (1993) state that a nation that is just beginning to modernize and going through a high rate of change needs to

reduce, if not eliminate, uncertainty from daily encounters. As a nation, Malaysia is going through some rapid changes, where adjustments made by members are unavoidable. Due to these adjustments individuals may desire "giving clear explanations" in order to establish motives.

In organizations, individuals are required to share a set of cultural codes and symbols that have been established by their organizations. In order to belong and be successful in these organizations, members must abide by the organizational rules; those who deviate from the norm are usually ostracized. Thus, in work situations where the climate is usually more stressful, in order to avoid conflicts, members may display higher uncertainty reduction behaviors. So, it is highly probable that while in the workplace, members of different cultures adapt their national cultural norms and practices, and adopt the organizational norms and practices which are more structured.

Based on the current findings, predicting that national groups will conform to particular dimensions of cultural variability may not be valid across all contexts. Heterogeneous societies, like Japan or Korea where individuals share more of the same cultural codes and symbols may be different than multi-ethnic Malaysia. Malays and Chinese both may be lower context and prefer less uncertainty in organizations than expected.

Research Question #2 addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of inappropriate/ineffective verbal messages in intercultural conflict in the organization. The Malay respondents cited **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation, Being Defensive, and Avoidance** as inappropriate/ineffective forms of verbal communication. The Chinese cited **Giving Unclear Explanation and Giving Rude Explanation** as

inappropriate/ ineffective forms of verbal communication. The following table summarizes the results.

Table 4. Inappropriate/Ineffective Verbal Messages in Organizational Settings Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Insensitive	10	50	Unclear Explanation	10	50
Putting Down	4	20	Poor Explanation	10	50
Being Accusative	2	10	Rude Explanation	8	40
Belittling	2	10	Sarcasm	1	5
No Understanding	2	10	Racial Remarks	3	15
Lack of Cooperation	4	20	Being Opinionated	2	10
Being Defensive	2	10	Being a show-off	2	10
Avoidance	2	10			
Nothing	1	5	Nothing	1	5
No Response	1	5	No Response	1	5
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

Outlined below are speech acts that made up the themes:

Malays

I. Being Insensitive

A. Putting Down - Ex. He should not have totally discredit other people's effort, especially we are of different races. (M1)

B. Being Accusative - Ex. I think there may be an organized effort to make things difficult for me in this office just because I am a Chinese, or the staff are just plain lazy. (M2)

C. Belittling - Ex. He said those who were late should be locked out (meaning not allowed to work for the day). This in my opinion is inappropriate. (M12)

D. No Understanding - Ex. Nobody makes better businessmen than the Chinese. (M3)

II. Lack of Cooperation

A. No Acknowledgment- Ex. He say that I am not performed therefore he has to cut down my increment. (M7)

III. Being Defensive

Ex. You are not perfect yourself. It is easy for you make comments. If you continue, I will shut you up myself. (M15)

IV. Avoidance

Ex. I will normally argue initially. However, if the other party is too strong defending his idea, I will keep my mouth shut and continue listening without interest. (M1)

Chinese

Speech acts that typify both themes were:

I. Giving Unclear Explanation

A. Poor Explanation - Ex. I am not paid enough. You must pay more to a better worker if you want a better job done. (C1)

II. Giving Rude Explanation

A. Racial Remark - How come you Chinese just eat, make money, gamble, and make babies. (C5)

B. Being Opinionated - Why work too hard, money is not everything. (C9)

C. Being Sarcastic - Ex. You must be a superb teacher. (C15)

D. Being a Show-off - Ex. We have got brains for it. (C2)

Similarities and differences appeared in the speech acts describing inappropriate/ ineffective verbal messages in organizations. The theme **Being Insensitive** as described by the Malays was similar to the theme **Rude Explanations**, described by the Chinese. Examples of the speech acts were:

"How come you Chinese just eat, make money, gamble, and make babies." (M5)

We have got brains for it. (C2)

Differences emerged in the Chinese descriptions of **Unclear Explanations** and the Malay description of **Being Defensive** and **Avoidance**.

The results showed that being insensitive and giving rude explanations can lead to conflict. As members of a pluralistic society, Malays and Chinese have to make sense of the messages that they send and receive. Being culturally and linguistically different, each have a different way of sending and interpreting messages.

Language may play an important role in our perceptions of inappropriate conduct. Both the Chinese and Malays have different languages. In order to communicate, individuals have to accommodate each other. Usually it is the Chinese who accommodate the Malays by speaking in Malay. In organizations, the discourse is usually in English. The Malays very seldom speak Chinese.

In this study, the majority of the respondents said they conversed in English, which meant both groups communicated in a second language. Misuse and misunderstanding of language can be common especially if individuals are speaking in a non-native language. The speech acts that were categorized as inappropriate/ineffective verbal messages described unsatisfactory feelings and emotions of individuals. These "unhappy" feelings could be due to misunderstandings and misperceptions that were brought about by the differences in their languages.

According to Lustig and Koester (1993), language also allow speakers to display respect for others; example, in the Malay language, the word "Mister" can be said in many ways. For example each word, "Tuan, Enche, Saudara, and Tuan Haji," displays different levels of respect.

Failure to address a superior, peer, or subordinate correctly can often result in negative perceptions and reactions to conduct viewed as rude.. Hofstede created a power distance index (PDI) to assess a culture's relative location on the power distance dimension. According to this index, Malaysia scored the highest in the power distance index relative to 103 other countries.

Cultures that demand a lot of respect from one another belong to the high power distance index (Lustig & Koester, 1993). The Malays come from a system that demands different levels of loyalty and respect for peers, elders, superiors, and rulers; thus they value high power distance and a clear hierarchy. If a member of their society fail to observe their norms and practices, he/she is usually described as "kurang ajar" or one who lacks education.

The Malays often consider themselves the rightful owners of the land. They are called Bumiputra or Princes of the soil. So when the two meet, the Malays often expect the Chinese to accommodate them. They expect the Chinese to understand the superiority of the Malays and to show respect to the Malays.

The Chinese too belong to a group that values hierarchical organization and large degrees of power distance. The theme, **Rude Explanation**, showed their preference for respect, and perception that rudeness should not be tolerated.

The Chinese view themselves as superior to the Malays in the following way. Their ethnocentrism is supported by their success in business. The results showed both groups being sensitive to rude behaviors displayed.

When the two groups meet, giving respect becomes a task. Who should begin first?

"When dyadic partners do not share the same ethnic culture, it is more difficult to know how to adjust to each other and the adjustment process may require a communication style that is not a frequently used aspect of the cultural repertoire" (Hecht, et al., p.117, 1993).

Although both groups belong in the high PDI, they still apparently may not synchronize their behaviors. This is because the Malays and Chinese have experienced different socialization process. Their values, customs, and norms differ.

Research Question #3 addressed similarities and differences in respondents' descriptions of appropriate and/or effective nonverbal messages in intercultural conflict in the organization. The Malay respondents cited **Being Rational, Being Agreeable, and Avoidance** as appropriate and/or effective nonverbal messages, while the Chinese cited **Being Agreeable** and **Showing Proof**.

Table 5. Appropriate/Effective Nonverbal Messages in Organizational Settings Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Agreeable	8	40	Being Agreeable	13	65
Smiling	3	15	Explaining	4	20
Stayed Calm	2	10	Gesturing	2	10
Being Cooperative	1	5	Smiling	3	15
Listening	1	5	Pacifying	1	5
Apologizing	1	5	Being Calm	1	5
Being Rational	10	50	Being Silent	1	5
Arguing Confidently	2	10	Being Polite	1	5
Requesting	2	10			
Explaining	2	10	Showing Proof	2	10
Being Helpful	2	10	Nothing	2	10
Avoiding	2	10			
Nothing	2	10	No Response	3	15
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

Hall (1976) refers to nonverbal communication as the "hidden dimension" of culture. The results in this study showed that the respondents' interpretations of "nonverbal" messages emphasized how problems are solved including verbal style characteristic. This is a much broader interpretation of "nonverbal" than expected and raises some questions about what is being measured, hence validity. The Malays descriptions reflected a "style" of confidence, support and cooperation, however, Below are examples of the speech acts:

Malays

I. Being Rational

A. Arguing Confidently - Ex. He really showed his authority and confidently argued over the issue. (M1)

B. Requesting- Ex. I will asked the BOD to have a meeting and discuss about it. And to vote for a decision on the matter. (M14)

C. Explaining - Ex. Came to me after the meeting and told me not to take the argument personally. (M6)

D. Discussing - Ex. Discuss among us what should be done. (M12)

E. Being Helpful - Ex. Helped to answer her call from clients if she is not around. (But not to steal her clients but for the company's image). (M19)

F. Being Cooperative - Ex. Teach me to do quotations with computer. (M19)

G. Avoiding - Ex. Stayed away from me. (M20)

II. Being Agreeable

A. Smiling - Ex. He sometimes smiles and nod. (M11)

B. Staying Calm - Ex. He spoke calmly. (M10)

C. Being Cooperative - Ex. He asked me to see him personally for the assessment. (M7)

D. Being Helpful - Ex. Teach me to do quotations with computers. (M19)

E. Keeping Quiet - Ex. Keep quiet and grinned. (M4)

F. Apologizing - Ex. Came to me after the meeting and told me not to take he argument personally. (M6)

G. Listening - Ex. They listened to my talk and keep quiet not to exaggerate my bad mood. (M18)

Chinese

The Chinese group included many more descriptions of "typical" nonverbal cues. Examples of the speech acts were :

I. Agreeable

A. Explaining - Ex. Going through the report with me briefly and highlighting the glaring faults. (C13)

B. Hand gesturing - Ex. He gestured with his dirty hands stressing his willingness to learn the trade. (C14)

C. Smiling - Ex. Smiling proudly. (C2)

D. Pacifying - Ex. He suggested that we stop the argument and go for tea together. (C12)

E. Being Calm - Ex. Just look back at her face. (C3)

F. Being Silent - Ex. Kept quiet. (C15)

G. Being Polite - Ex. Moved the phone close to him, slowly. (C12)

II. Showing Proof - Ex. Just show him the number of staff (Malays) found in that canteen itself. (C2)

The themes that appeared similar to both groups were **Being Agreeable**. Such a theme shows that attention to the relationship is important. The Malays labeled speech acts like Arguing Confidently, Requesting, Explaining, Discussing, and Being Helpful as **Being Rational**. This theme demonstrates a task-orientation. However, the Chinese included the speech act "Explained" under **Being Agreeable** which was relationally-oriented. To explain that when a person takes the time to give an explanation, s/he is being pleasant and agreeable. The other difference was the theme **Showing Proof** (C). The Malays made no mention of it.

Members of cultures vary in their interpretations or meanings that are attributed to particular nonverbal behaviors (Lustig & Koester, 1993). According to Argyle (1979), one of the five basic nonverbal communication functions is expressing emotional states or affect displays.

In the results, the Malays expressed a preference for **Being Rational** first, and then **Being Agreeable**. The Chinese expressed **Being Agreeable** as the most appropriate and/or effective nonverbal message, followed by **Showing Proof**. This theme is quite close to being "rational". The themes

included speech acts that displayed emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and interest. The two groups also displayed associative behavior which according to Triandis, (1977, 1978) is behaviors that are helpful, supportive, and cooperative. Thus, the results support Argyle's assertion that one of the five basic nonverbal communication functions is expressing emotional states or affect displays.

Research Question #4, addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of inappropriate/ ineffective nonverbal messages in intercultural conflict in the organization. The Malays described **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation, Showing Negative Action, and Avoidance** as inappropriate and or ineffective nonverbal messages in their organizations. The Chinese cited **Rude Expressions** as well as **Aggressive Actions**. The following table shows the results.

Nonverbal communication is multichanneled and plays an integral part in our lives. Individuals can either consciously or subconsciously give messages nonverbally. Individuals are exposed to nonverbal cues particular to their own culture. Hence, when the Malays and Chinese meet, they may misinterpret or misread each others' nonverbal displays.

Table 6. Inappropriate/Ineffective Nonverbal Messages in Organizational Settings Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Insensitive	12	60	Rude Expressions	6	30
Anger	2	10	Disapproval Look	3	15
Being Forward	1	5	Arrogance	3	15
Influencing Others	1	5	Aggressive Actions	8	40
Being Rude	2	10	Being Rude	4	20
Showing No Respect	3	15	Being Bias	2	10
Ignoring	1	5	Showed Anger	2	10
Being Sarcastic	2	10			
Lack of Cooperation	3	15			
Being Uncooperative	2	10	Nothing	2	10
Lack Supervision	1	5	No Response	4	20
Negative Actions	4	20			
Being Nervous	1	5			
Frowning	1	5			
Being Subdued	1	5			
Avoiding	1	5			
Nothing	1	5			
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

Examples of speech acts that fall under the categories were:

Malay

I. Being Insensitive

A. Showing Anger - Ex. He acted angrily when I spoke to him. (M15)

B. Being Forward - Ex. Leaning and trying to show openness above may have been interpreted as aggression, overbearing standpoint or creeping into his territory of psychologically safe belief system. (M11)

C. Influencing Others - Ex. By telling others that we should all go home since we were not allowed to go in. (M12)

D. Being Rude - Ex. I got rude when they gave excuses. (M18)

E. Showing No Respect - Ex. He did not show a respect to his subordinate who had given him the chance to secure that big business. When the argument took place we were both

standing, witnessed by his subordinates. (M1)

F. Being Sarcastic - Ex. Sly smile written all over his face. (M3)

G. Ignoring - Ex. When I asked him, the other person walked away, sort of "ignoring" my question. (M13)

II. Lack of Cooperation

A. Being Uncooperative - Ex. They will not agree with my colleagues. (M14)

B. Lack of Supervision - Ex. He does not supervised me at all. He leave me on my own. (M7)

III. Negative Actions

A. Being Nervous - Ex. However, his hands are clamped tightly, showing insecure attempt to maintain his own belief and standpoint. Rather ambiguous, right? (M11)

B. Frowning - Ex. Frowned and looked upset and disappointed. (M16)

C. Acting Desperate - Ex. Acted in a desperate manner, very much like a sore loser. (M6)

D. Being Subdued - Ex. That I had been too formal. Should have been a bit aggressive. (M6)

E. Avoiding - Ex. I stood up, spoke a few words and left. (M10)

Chinese

Speech acts under Showing Rude Expressions and Aggressive Actions

were:

I. Rude Expressions

A. Disapproval - Ex. Disapproval look (3)

B. Arrogance - Ex. Showed arrogance, also some hints of envy. (C5)

II. Aggressive Actions

A. Being Rude - Ex. He shouted and at times he acted racial by making a few racial statements that as though Chinese cannot be trusted. (C16)

B. Bias - Ex. I seem to take the only few Chinese in the crowd. (C2)

C. Anger- Ex. Expressing my anger by standing up and staring at him. (M13)

All the speech acts that were categorized by the Malays and Chinese indicated a relationship orientation and perception that respect for a harmonious relationship is important. The similar themes that described inappropriate/ ineffective nonverbal messages were **Insensitivity** (M) and **Rude Expressions** (C). Both express dissatisfaction. Examples were, "He acted angrily when I spoke to him" (M), and "Showed arrogance, also some hints of envy" (C).

There were two differing themes: **Negative Actions** (M) and **Aggressive Actions** (C). The Negative Actions seemed to be speaker-centered because they were directed towards the self only. For example, "Frowned and looked upset and disappointed." The **Aggressive Actions**, on the other hand are directed toward the other interlocutor, such as, "Expressing my anger by standing up and staring at him."

According to Owen (1984), there are seven themes that individuals use to make sense of their relationship: commitment, involvement, work, uniqueness/specialness, fragility, consideration/respect, and manipulation. In this research, the results showed that the themes were relationally- oriented where members of both groups preferred consideration/respect.

Lustig and Koester (1993) call these behaviors affect displays. They are facial and body movements that show feelings and emotions like anger, fear, disappointment, frustration, disgust, and contempt. According to Lustig and Koester, affect displays may be either unconscious and unintentional, or conscious and intentional. It depends on the individuals' cultural codes. Statements like, "Frowned and looked upset and disappointed" (M) and "Expressing my anger by standing up and staring at him" (C) convey individuals' inner feelings. Such expressions exemplified inappropriate and/or ineffective nonverbal messages.

Another important factor that could influence the results is vocalic behaviors. Asian languages are tonal. Unlike English, both Malay and Chinese languages are tonal. Often, when the Chinese speak English or Malay, they transfer their native intonation patterns subconsciously. Both groups depend on vocal intonation to assign connotative meaning. Therefore, when a Chinese or Malay converse in a second language, they unknowingly bring the intonation of their own language into English, which could be misinterpreted by the other. A strong tone may be misinterpreted as aggressive behavior by the Malays.

The overall comparison between appropriate and effective behavior in organizational and social settings resulted in many striking similarities across the two settings. Perhaps the similarities are due to the type of social settings being investigated which were mainly task-oriented. These involved situations for example, in a bank where the conflict was between a clerk and the customer, or at the supermarket where it was between a buyer and a seller. Thus, task orientation could be an explanation for the similarities in results between organizational and social settings.

Research Question #5 addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of appropriate/effective verbal messages in intercultural conflict in social settings. The Malays described **Giving Clear Explanations**, and **Being Agreeable** as appropriate and/or effective verbal messages in social settings. The Chinese on the other hand, described **Giving Clear Explanation**, **Being Direct**, and **Making Request**. The following table summarizes the results.

Table 7. Appropriate/Effective Verbal Messages in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Giving Clear Explanations	7	35	Clear Explanations	9	45
Explained	3	15	Explaining	4	20
Polite Explanation	1	5	Being Direct	3	15
Direct Explanation	2	10	Making Request	2	10
Requested politely	1	5	Polite Explanation	8	40
Being Agreeable	7	35	Being Polite	3	15
Being Cooperative	1	5	Suggesting	1	5
Being helpful	2	10	Being Apologetic	2	10
Acknowledging	2	10	Being Considerate	2	10
Being Polite	2	10			
Nothing	4	20	Nothing	1	5
No Response	2	10	No Response	2	10
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

The following were speech acts that made up the themes:

Malays

I. Giving Clear Explanation

A. Explaining - Ex. She insisted that I should see her manager.
(M1)

B. Giving Polite Explanation - Ex. Sir, do you mind getting a pass please? (M2)

C. Giving Direct Explanation - Ex. Tell him to wait for his turn in a proper manner. (M5)

D. Requested Politely - Ex. I have asked very politely to serve us. (M7)

II. Being Agreeable

A. Being Cooperative - Ex. No problem. I will fix the TV in no time. (M15)

B. Being Helpful - Ex. Can I help you? (M19)

C. Acknowledging - Ex. Agreed that the vehicle had rather little maintenance over previous two years, therefore requiring extra work. (M11)

D. Being Polite - Ex. No problem. I will fix the TV in no time. (M15)

Chinese

I. Giving Clear Explanation

A. Explaining- Ex. I don't think so, perhaps not at this seminars, the previous seminars there were a lot of Malays too. (C1)

B. Being Direct - Ex. Are you sure? I don't really agree with your opinion. (C8)

C. Requesting - Ex. Sir, can you show me your driving license? (M5)

II. Giving Polite Explanation

A. Being Polite - Ex. Can I help you sir? (C1)

B. Giving Suggestions - Ex. I told him to be reasonable and I would suggest for a change to a more prudent warehouse company. (C16)

C. Being Apologetic - Ex. He admit that it was his mistake. (C17)

D. Being Considerate - Ex. Not saying it too loud so that others can hear. (C18)

Giving Clear Explanations (M&C) and **Being Agreeable** (C) and **Polite** (M) were identified as recurrent themes in both organizational and social settings. As mentioned earlier, the conflict took place in task oriented situations where preference for clarity may be perceived as significant .

Both ethnic groups categorized explaining, asking, and being direct under the theme **Giving Clear Explanation**. These acts display a task-orientation. The other similarities were **Being Agreeable** (M) and **Giving Polite Explanation**. The themes may show a relationship-orientation and desire to reinforce or maintain the relationship.

The behaviors in social settings that were described by the respondents were task and relationally-oriented. The task was buying or selling something, and their relationship was professional. In these situations, both groups displayed a strong preference for clarity. Hence, both groups perceived **Giving Clear Explanation** as an appropriate/effective verbal message.

According to Hofstede's (1980) second dimension of cultural variability, uncertainty avoidance is "the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these" (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, p.419). Members of such cultures display behaviors that demand direct and explicit instructions or messages show a high uncertainty avoidance behavior. When the Malays and Chinese took the time to explain their messages, they may have been trying to avoid conflict; both parties were explicit in conveying their messages and eliminating uncertainties. As mentioned by Levine (1985), they seemed to be

aiming for the precise representation of fact, technique, or expectation. The results support Hofstede's prediction that both groups would avoid uncertainty. Because the social setting was task-related, the need to reduce uncertainty is all the more expected.

The results also support Hofstede's (1980) categorization of Malaysia as Collectivistic. Speech acts such as **Being Polite, Being Helpful, Being Cooperative**, etc. indicate the groups' orientation to the other or adjustment to the relationship. Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal (1988) state that relationally-oriented behaviors are common in collectivistic societies. According to Hofstede, Malaysia is classified as a collectivistic society, and in social situations the respondents here fit the description.

Research Question #6 addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of inappropriate/ ineffective verbal messages in intercultural conflict in social settings. The Malays described **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation**, and **Giving Unclear Explanation** as inappropriate / ineffective verbal messages in social settings. However, the Chinese described **Rude Explanations** and **Unclear Explanations**. The results are summarized in the following table.

Table 8. Inappropriate/Ineffective Verbal Messages in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Insensitive	14	70	Rude Explanation	7	35
Giving No Explanation	2	10	Requesting	2	10
Being Harsh	1	5	Threatening	1	5
Putting Down	4	20	Giving Rude Remarks	4	20
Ignoring	1	5	Unclear Explanations	8	40
Giving Poor Service	3	15	Poor Explanations	4	20
Being very Direct	2	10	Passive remarks	4	20
Showing Anger	1	5			
Lack of Cooperation	2	10			
Unclear Explanations	2	10			
Nothing	1	5	Nothing	2	10
No Response	1	5	No Response	3	15
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

The speech acts described were:

Malays

I. Being Insensitive

A. Giving No Explanation - Ex. She no time to talk to me and simply refused to give her explanation as to why she was not prepared to make reorder for any merchandise. (M1)

B. Being Harsh - Ex. If you are not happy with my price you can go elsewhere. Don't waste my time. (M3)

C. Putting Down - Ex. Malays don't think of money but prefer power to money. (M4)

D. Ignoring - Ex. Ask to wait some more even though we have waited for nearly 2 hours. (M14)

E. Giving Poor Service - Ex. Now, if you cause the bike to fall you must pay for the damage. You must not sit on the bike. You are not really thinking of buying it are you? (M16)

F. Being Very Direct - Ex. I told her that just because we are Malays that she discriminated us. (M1)

G. Showing Anger - Ex. Scold him in a high voice. (M5)

II. Lack of Cooperation

Ex. The TV broke not because of normal use. You must have caused it somehow. You must pay for the repair. (M16)

III. Unclear Explanation

A. Being Very Direct - Ex. It may be your orders. But I always get in without a pass. You should know that I work here. They will tell you that. (M2)

Chinese

I. Rude Explanation

A. Requested - Ex. Don't you have any small change? It will help if everyone brings small change. (C1)

B. Threatening - Ex. I have reminded him to render his fullest cooperation as I had confronted enough problem with him in the past. (C16)

C. Rude remark - Ex. Don't tell me you agree 100% with that rubbish you call fact. (C8)

II. Unclear Explanation

A. Gave Poor Explanation - Ex. Don't worry, I have been driving for over ten years and I know what I am doing. (C7)

B. Gave Passive Remarks - Ex. It is an old pants anyway. (C12)

Themes that coders labeled **Being Insensitive (M)** and **Rude Explanation (C)** include similar speech acts and were relationally-oriented. Coders from both groups described a theme labeled **Unclear Explanations**. These themes were task-oriented. This showed that in task-related situations, not only do the Malay and Chinese have a preference for clarity, but also an expectation for professional courtesy to each other.

A difference emerged in the theme **Lack of Cooperation** which was mentioned by the Malays. In task-orientation situations, inappropriate and/or ineffective nonverbal messages can result in misunderstandings and misperceptions. Lack of Cooperation shows a Malay's concern with relationships in the organization and perhaps with power.

The recurrent theme of **Clear Explanation** was preferred by both groups. Both groups seemed to prefer explicit messages, both verbal and nonverbal. Respondents apparently wanted to know precisely how to behave and what to do and why others behaved in a particular way. An example of this would be the statement " She had no time to talk to me and simply refused to give her explanation as to why she was not prepared to make reorder for any merchandise." This example is representative of a high uncertainty avoidance culture (Lustig & Koester, 1993). Both groups were able to limit uncertainties by asking and giving clear messages.

Research Question #7 addressed similarities and differences in descriptions of appropriate/effective nonverbal messages in intercultural conflict in social settings. The Malays described **Being Rational, Being Agreeable** as appropriate/effective nonverbal messages in social settings. The Chinese only had one theme, **Being Agreeable**. The table below summarizes the results.

Table 9. Appropriate/Effective Nonverbal Messages in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Rational	8	40	Being Agreeable	12	60
Giving Clear Explanations	3	15	Ignoring	2	10
Polite	3	15	Smiling	4	20
Patient	2	10	Calm	3	15
Being Agreeable	10	50	Polite	3	15
Do own work	1	5			
Being Polite	2	10			
Keeping Quiet	1	5			
Apologized	2	10			
Being Friendly	2	10			
Being Helpful	2	10			
No Response	1	5	Nothing	4	20
Nothing	1	5	No Response	4	20
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

The speech acts that made up the themes were:

Malay

I. Being Rational

A. Clear Explanation - Ex. Pointing to the girls at the desk to acknowledge that they know me. (M2)

B. Polite - Ex. Tell him politely to wait for his turn. (M5)

C. Patient - Ex. I am still waiting with full patience (M8)

II. Being Agreeable

A. Do own work - Ex. She was sitting on her chair, busy doing her work which I tend to understand her situation. (M1)

B. Polite - Ex. Politely showing me the desk to get the pass. (M2)

C. Ignoring Remarks - Ex. Just ignored the remarks given to him. (M3)

D. Keeping Quiet - Ex. Keep Quiet. (M4)

E. Apologized - Ex. Facing to me and smiled together with an apology. (M6)

F. Being Friendly - Ex. He came forward and introduced himself on the first day and talked about the company's business in general. (M10)

G. Being Helpful - Ex. Willing to assist in delayed payment for work done. (M11)

Chinese

I. Being Agreeable

A. Ignoring - Ex. just ignore the remarks. (C2)

B. Smiling - Ex. Smiled and nodding her head showing approval. (C6)

C. Calm - Ex. Waved me to stop. He did not really show any anger. (C5)

D. Polite - Ex. Gestured to the queue to understand. (C11)

Both groups had themes labeled as **Being Agreeable**. Under this category both groups included speech acts like being polite, ignored, smiled, and being friendly. These showed behaviors that were relationally-oriented. The theme Being Agreeable is similar to Owen's consideration/respect theme (1984). It showed how individuals make sense of the relationship and follow norms.

The difference was in **Being Rational** (M) which was task-oriented. The Chinese included the speech act **Polite** in the theme **Agreeable**, but, the Malays included **Polite** in both the themes, **Being Rational** and **Being Agreeable**. The speech acts however, hold similar meanings.

Although individuals were free to behave according to their national norms and practices, the results showed behaviors that were still controlled and structured. The Malays showed a high degree of uncertainty avoidance in task-related situations.

They preferred explicit messages both verbally and nonverbally.

On the other hand, the themes like **Being Agreeable**, suggest relationship orientations. Speech acts like ignored remarks, smiled, kept quiet, and being friendly support Hofstede's description of Collectivism. The desire to control situations and validate the relationship are representative of collectivistic groups. This can be achieved when groups showed respect for each other.

Research Question #8 addressed similarities and differences in respondents' descriptions of inappropriate/ineffective nonverbal messages in intercultural conflict in social settings. The Malays described **Being Insensitive, Being Unresponsive**, and **Avoidance** as inappropriate and/or ineffective nonverbal messages; the Chinese cited **Rude Expressions** and **Aggressive Actions**. The following table summarizes the results:

Table 10. Inappropriate/Ineffective Nonverbal Messages in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

Malays	Frequency	%	Chinese	Frequency	%
Being Insensitive	13	65	Rude Expressions	7	35
Ignoring	2	10	Ignoring	1	5
Being Aggressive	1	5	Delayed	2	10
Giving Poor Service	2	10	Walking Away	2	10
Showing Anger	1	5	Being Rude	2	10
Being Rude	3	15			
Influencing Others	2	10	Aggressive Actions	7	35
Showing Disapproval	2	10	Being Aggressive	3	15
Lack of Cooperation	2	10	Arguing	3	15
Avoidance	1	5	Being Harsh	1	5
No Response	2	10	Nothing	2	10
Nothing	2	10	No Response	4	20
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

The speech acts that made up the themes were:

Malays

I. Being Insensitive

A. Ignoring - Ex. She did not even bother to look at me and she should not have shown her anger to me. (M1)

B. Being Aggressive - Ex. Stepping in front of me and stopping me from getting to the lift. (M2)

C. Poor Service - Ex. Carried out work rather slowly. Given priority to clients paying cash. (M11)

D. Being Angry - Ex. Showed my anger too. (M1)

E. Being Rude - Ex. Brushed his arm away when he wanted to stop me. (M2)

F. Influencing Others - Ex. Made other customers notice the problem between me and the shop manager. (M3)

G. Showing Disapproval - Ex. Shook my head

II. Avoidance

Ex. Accepted her invitation to discuss on the matter. (M20)

Chinese

I. Aggressive Actions

A. Being Aggressive - Ex. Snatched the bill from me. Shoving the change back at me, and shouting loudly, "next please!" (C1)

B. Arguing- Ex. To argue (C17)

C. Being Harsh - Ex. Doing it harshly. (C18)

D. Ignoring - Ex. Ignoring my pleas to not drive dangerously. (C8)

II. Rude Expression

A. Ignoring - Ex. Ignoring the remarks. (Q.26/5)

B. delayed - Ex. He took his time. (Q.26/6)

C. Walking Away - Ex. Walking away in disgust. (Q.26/12)

D. Being Rude - Ex. Cover her mouth with her hands.
(Q.26/20)

Themes that emerged as similar were **Being Insensitive, Aggressive Actions, and Rude Expressions**. They showed relationally-oriented behaviors. Both parties had overtly showed dissatisfaction in their relationships. **Avoidance** was the only differing theme.

Relationally-oriented behaviors are characteristic of collectivistic cultures. The results showed the respondents' feelings and emotions, thus supporting a collectivistic orientation.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter will present the findings and implications of the study, limitations of the study, and also directions for future research.

The intent of this study was to find similarities and differences in the Malays and Chinese' communication styles. The results showed some similarities in their perception of appropriate and/or effective verbal and nonverbal messages in organizational and social settings. The results also showed some similarities in their perceptions of inappropriate and/or ineffective verbal and nonverbal messages across ethnic group lines.

The findings indicated that behaviors by both groups were task and relationally-oriented. In both settings, both groups described behaviors salient to High-Uncertainty Avoidance, High-Context, and High-Power Distance. The following Tables summarize the results.

Table 11. Appropriate/Effective Messages in Organizational Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

	<i>MALAYS</i>				<i>CHINESE</i>			
	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%
1	Giving Clear Explanation	50	Being Agreeable	40	Giving Clear Explanations	55	Being Agreeable	65
2	Being Agreeable	30	Being Rational	50	Giving polite Explanations	10	Showing Proof	10

The Malays showed a preference for clear and explicit verbal messages in organizational settings. The themes **Giving Clear Explanation** and **Being**

Rational had speech acts that described the need for clear explanations in situations that were task - orientation. **Being Rational** may suggest a style of behavior. The themes **Being Agreeable**, had speech acts that described their attitudes toward their counterparts, which were courteous. Together, the themes *seemed to suggest a professional attitude that the Malays undertake when in organizational settings.*

The Chinese also showed a preference for clarity. The themes **Giving Clear Explanations, Giving Polite Explanations** and **Showing Proof** point to their need for explicit messages. The findings showed that Chinese may have a higher preference for nonverbal messages. *They described feelings and emotions that may suggest a preference to create a balanced and harmonious climate.* For example, the theme **Being Agreeable**.

Table 12. Inappropriate/Ineffective Messages in Organizational Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

	MALAYS				CHINESE			
	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%
1	Being Insensitive	50	Being Insensitive	60	Unclear Explanations	50	Rude Expressions	30
2	Lack of Cooperation	20	Lack of Cooperation	15	Rude Explanations	40	Aggressive Actions	40
3	Being Defensive	10	Negative Actions	20				
4	Avoidance	10						

In organizational settings, the Malays showed a dislike to unprofessional behavior and attitudes. Both the themes in the verbal and nonverbal messages such as **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation, Being Defensive, Avoidance, and Negative Actions**, *seemed to suggest a dislike for behaviors that seemed to undermine the completion of a task.*

The Chinese showed an aversion to behaviors that may disrupt the balance and harmony of a relationship. Themes like **Unclear Explanations, Rude Explanations, Rude Expressions, and Aggressive actions**, had speech acts that described their sensitivity to the maintenance of relationships. Although the findings may show the Chinese preferred clear messages, it is the *delivery of the messages that seemed more important to them.*

In social settings, both groups showed similarities and differences in their perceptions of appropriate and effective messages. The following Table summarizes the results.

Table 13. Appropriate/Effective Messages in Social Settings
Frequencies and Percentages

	MALAYS				CHINESE			
	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%
1	Giving Clear Explanation	35	Being Agreeable	50	Clear Explanations	45	Being Agreeable	60
2	Being Agreeable	35	Being Rational	40	Polite Explanations	40		

Giving Clear Explanation, Being Agreeable and Being Rational were identified as recurrent themes in both organizational and social settings. The speech acts described their preference for clarity especially in task-related situations. Although the findings showed that Malays were more concerned with *pleasant or agreeable behaviors in social settings than in organizational settings, their preference for clarity was not much less.*

The Chinese categorized **Clear Explanations, Polite explanations and Being Agreeable** as appropriate and effective messages in social settings. Being Agreeable totaled at 60%, included speech acts that may show a relationship-orientation. They *focused more on behaviors that showed a desire to*

maintain or reinforce relationships.

The findings showed that both groups increased their preference for the theme **Being Agreeable** in social settings, compared to organizational settings. In organizational settings, members work together to accomplish organizational task that were given. Their behaviors are externally controlled. In social settings, however, tasks are set by individuals, which means that behaviors are internally controlled.

Table 14. Inappropriate/Ineffective Messages in Social Settings Frequencies and Percentages

	MALAYS				CHINESE			
	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%	VERBAL	%	NONVERBAL	%
1	Being Insensitive	70	Being insensitive	65	Rude Explanations	35	Rude Expressions	35
2	Lack of Cooperation	10	Lack of Cooperation	10	Unclear Explanations	40	Aggressive Actions	35
3	Unclear Explantions	10	Avoidance	5				

The Malays labeled **Being Insensitive, lack of Cooperation, Unclear Explanations, and Avoidance** as inappropriate and ineffective verbal and nonverbal messages in social settings. The theme **Being Insensitive** included speech acts that seemed to suggest *a dislike for behaviors that were not conducive to the completion of task*. However, Malays seemed to focus more on the theme **Being Insensitive** in social settings than in organizational settings.

The Chinese had themes such as **Rude Explanations, Unclear Explanations, Rude Expressions** and **Aggressive Actions** categorized as inappropriate and ineffective messages in social settings. All the themes seemed to suggest *a dislike for behaviors that were a hindrance to relationship building and disruptive to maintenance of relationship*. Comparison of the two

groups showed that they were more concerned with communicating in the social settings. Overall, *Malays showed a higher preference for clarity, whereas the Chinese focussed more on maintaining and stabilizing relationships.*

To summarize, in conflict in the organization, Malays preferred verbal messages like **Clear Explanations** and **Being Agreeable**; nonverbal messages included **Being Rational**, and **Being Agreeable**. Inappropriate and/or ineffective verbal messages to the Malays included themes such as **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation, Being Defensive** and **Avoidance**; nonverbal messages were **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation** and **Avoidance**.

The Chinese preferred verbal messages such as **Giving Clear Explanations** and **Giving Polite Explanations**; nonverbal messages included themes such as **Being Agreeable** and **Showing Proof**. Inappropriate and/or ineffective verbal messages included **Unclear Explanations** and **Rude Explanations**; nonverbal messages were **Rude Expressions** and **Aggressive Actions**.

The similarities can be explained by shared orientations to uncertainty, large degrees of power distance and collectivism. The difference may be due to cultural dimensions that are situationally variant. Nonverbal cues may cause misinterpretation of relational messages. The findings showed that the Chinese may be higher context than the Malays and prefer more structure in their communication.

In social settings, Malays described appropriate and/or effective verbal messages such as **Giving Clear Explanations** and **Being Agreeable**; nonverbal messages included **Being Rational** and **Being Agreeable**. Inappropriate and/or ineffective verbal messages included themes such as

Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation, and Giving Unclear Explanations; nonverbal messages included **Being Insensitive, Lack of Cooperation** and **Avoidance**.

The Chinese preferred verbal messages that included **Giving Clear Explanations** and **Giving Polite Explanations**, and nonverbal messages like **Being Agreeable**. Inappropriate and/or ineffective verbal messages were **Rude Explanations and Unclear Explanations;** nonverbal messages included themes such as **Rude Expressions and Aggressive Actions**.

Like in organizational settings, the similarities in social settings can be explained by shared orientations to uncertainty, large degrees of power distance and collectivism. The difference may also be due to cultural dimensions that are situationally variant.

Being different from each other (racially, ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically) both groups must learn to acquire competency in intercultural communication, in order to avoid misperception, miscommunication, and misinterpretation. Although the process of bridging the gap takes long time, Malays and Chinese have already showed signs of adjusting and accommodating to each other. By acknowledging their differences, they are taking a step forward to harmony. A Malay Bank Manager said "We know we have different religions and different beliefs. These, however, must not stop us from accomplishing a task. The best way to go about it is to respect and give each other common courtesy...which in this case may mean having a professional attitude."

The Chinese in Malaysia today are no longer Chinese from China. In the past, their parents inherited from their parents beliefs and ideologies from China, because their parents were immigrants from China. Today, however, is

different. The new generation of Chinese are Malaysian-born, their parents too are Malaysian born. Hence, their link to China is twice removed. As a new generation of Malaysians, Malays and Chinese must develop their own identity as Malaysians. They must build the future together as Malaysian. As aptly put by Grace Teh, a Chinese student at Oregon State University, "The past acts as a reminder, as respect to our fore-fathers. Now we must move on and live united as Malaysians."

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The data in this study was acquired through the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The respondents answered questions that described their feelings, emotions and real life experiences. Qualitative responses provide increased cultural validity and are appropriate, given the exploratory nature of this study.

The speech acts described by the Malays and Chinese respondents were identified and then coded by persons from their own ethnic background. The use of coders enabled the researcher to compare themes across the two cultures.

Although there were advantages to using open-ended questionnaires, there were also disadvantages. The returned questionnaires pointed out that answering the open-ended questions was problematic for some respondents. Despite the pre-test, many respondents did not answer all the questions, especially those questions pertaining to conflict in social settings. There could be several explanations.

One of the setbacks of writing the questionnaire in English is the question of validity. Some respondents, may not have understood all questions, hence had difficulty in expressing their ideas and thoughts. Although the pretest showed that respondents could read, write, and talk in English, their responses showed some limitations. For example, the responses showed some grammatical errors. In some cases, the researcher felt that the respondents were not very fluent in English because they had difficulty in expressing their ideas. Gudykunst, et al., 1992, state that the logic individuals use to reconstruct a sequence of events and the factors on which they focus in

their accounts are influenced by their culture and native language.

Also, the findings indicated that the respondents' perceptions of nonverbal communication is different from the researcher's interpretation. Speaking, writing, and trying to express ideas and feelings in a second language in which individuals are not fluent can create misunderstandings.

The majority of the respondents (60%) indicated that they were educated overseas. They lived abroad nearly four to five years. They learned to adapt to their Western host cultures. Their perceptions on what is right or wrong or what is appropriate and inappropriate communication may have changed during their sojourn experience. This may also have influenced the results of this study. By answering the questionnaire in English, they may have responded according to the norms and practices dictated by English native speakers and their experiences in other countries.

A time constraint was another factor that may have influenced the outcome of the study. The researcher was informed by the interviewees in Kuala Lumpur that the questionnaire was too long and that the respondents did not have the time to complete them. When asked to take the questionnaire home, some respondents said that home is for the family. Also, many of the executives that were approached were in middle-management positions. This meant many of them were away from their offices for long periods of time.

Malaysia is an Asian country where the people are rather shy and afraid of answering questionnaires that are perceived as sensitive. Being members of high-context cultures, the respondents may be afraid to displease their superiors and neighbors. A common but legitimate excuse given for not participating was fear of reprisal. Many of the respondents voiced concern

about getting involved in this study. They were afraid that management would read their responses. Some even said that the questionnaire was the management's tool for checking on them. Despite assurances of complete anonymity, respondents were still fearful and anxious to do the questionnaire. To overcome this problem, the interviewers gave a self-stamped envelope to the respondents so that they could mail their questionnaire back.

By far, the most common excuse cited by the interviewers was denial of conflict. Many respondents said that they had never experienced conflict and that conflict did not exist in their organization. This finding has implications about conceptualizing conflict in research.

One of the limitations of this study was the definition of social settings. The definition was confined to situations that were task-oriented. This had a bearing on the overall results. For future study, the definition of social settings should include situations that are free from task-orientation, for example, at social gatherings and parties. Such a setting would allow observation of more informal relationships.

This study was based on a relatively small sample, 40 respondents. For future research, larger samples are needed. Further and more extensive testing should be done before generalization can take place.

Also, future research could include members of a society that do not belong to any organizations or individuals that are not working. By limiting this study to organizational members, the results showed some biases. For example, all of the respondents were highly educated. They work as executives of large organizations. As educated members of a society, they are viewed as role models of their society. It is possible that they do not want others to perceive them as incompetent communicators. So to avoid this, they

might trivialize the conflict or at worst deny its' existence.

Norms are patterns of appropriate ways of communication that may change over time. It possible that the cultures in Malaysia are going through the process of adaptation. The influence of the West as well as the media play a role in the changing norms and patterns of behaviors of the Malaysians. As stated by Collier, members of a culture must learn to understand, to share, and apply the same codes appropriately (Collier, In Press).

Application

Facilitators and trainers may be able to incorporate the findings of this study into their training programs. Activities like role-reversal, perspective taking, and bilateral strategies could help members develop basic tools for improving intercultural communication competence such as: tolerance for ambiguity, display of respect, understanding, conflict management, and relational and task-management (Lustig & Koester, 1993).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For future research, the questionnaire could be written in the respondents' own languages. For despite their knowledge in English, writing in their own language would encourage them to express their ideas and thoughts more freely.

This study only touched the surface of two cultures, Malays and Chinese. Understanding their perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate communicative behaviors can lead to further research on face issues and concerns, conflict management styles, and comparison of low or high context conflicts between the two groups (Ting-Toomey, 1985), communication styles between Malay and Chinese primary and secondary students, comparing leadership styles of managers between the two cultures, intimacy of relationship (Gudykunst, et al., 1991), and many more.

Malaysia is made up of many ethnic cultures. Since each of these cultures have their own unique cultural norms and practices, patterns of thought and behaviors, future research can examine and make comparisons between any one of these cultures.

The results of this study might be beneficial to the citizens of Malaysia, the foreign investors and guests, and especially those people in the workforce. This study is a step for organizations, government agencies, universities and schools to design training programs in intercultural communication competence.

As a developing nation that is exploring their geographical territories in search of economic resources, so should they explore each others cultural boundaries in search of understanding, tolerance and harmony.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

Dear Respondents:

My name is Mariani Omar. I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication at Oregon State University, USA. This questionnaire is part of a research study on intercultural communication between the Malays and Chinese in Malaysia. Please be assured that your participation will remain anonymous, with the results kept confidential. If you have any questions please call: Mr. Salim Ishak (03-7749953) or Ms. Peony Lye (03-2322411). Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Please answer all the questions. Your candid response is most appreciated.

1. What is your ethnic or cultural background?

At Work

Recall a recent situation at work where you experienced a conflict with a **Chinese person** who works for the same organization as you. Conflict here includes disagreement, discord, hostility, and/or argument.

2. Describe the other person's position in the organization. (Superior? Subordinate? Equal? Other?)
3. In what language did you talk with each other?
4. Where were you?
5. What was the disagreement about?

Verbal Talk

6. In your opinion, what did the other person **SAY** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / EFFECTIVE**?
7. In your opinion, what did the other person **SAY** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
8. In your opinion, what did you **SAY** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
9. In your opinion, what did you **SAY** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?

NONVERBAL

10. In your opinion, what did the other person **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / EFFECTIVE**?
11. In your opinion, what did the other person **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?

12. In your opinion, what did you **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / EFFECTIVE**?
13. In your opinion, what did you **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
14. How could this conflict situation have been avoided?
15. What would you have wished the other person **SAY** or **DO** that would be more **APPROPRIATE /EFFECTIVE**?
16. What could you have said or done that would be more **APPROPRIATE /EFFECTIVE**?

Social Setting

Recall a recent task-related situation outside of work where you experienced a conflict with a **Chinese person**. The situation should be one in which you visited a business such as a restaurant, bank, or marketplace to make a purchase or conduct business. Conflict here includes disagreement, discord, hostility, and/or argument.

17. Describe the other person's position in the organization. (Superior? Subordinate? Equal? Other?)
18. In what language did you talk with each other?
19. Where were you?
20. What was the disagreement about?

Verbal Talk

21. In your opinion, what did the other person **SAY** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / EFFECTIVE**?
22. In your opinion, what did the other person **SAY** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
23. In your opinion, what did you **SAY** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
24. In your opinion, what did you **SAY** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE /INEFFECTIVE**?

NONVERBAL

25. In your opinion, what did the other person **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE /EFFECTIVE**?
26. In your opinion, what did the other person **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE / INEFFECTIVE**?
27. In your opinion, what did you **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **APPROPRIATE/EFFECTIVE**?
28. In your opinion, what did you **DO/GESTURE** (if anything) that was **INAPPROPRIATE/INEFFECTIVE**?
29. How could this conflict situation have been avoided?
30. What would you have wished the other person **SAY** or **DO** that would be more **APPROPRIATE/EFFECTIVE**

31. What could you have said or done that would be more **APPROPRIATE** /**EFFECTIVE**?
32. Within your organization, what could be done to improve intercultural relations between Chinese and Malays?
- The following are demographic questions:
33. What is your sex? Male _____ Female _____
34. What is your age? _____
35. What is your occupation? _____
36. Is your company a government agency, private or public organization _____
37. What is the nature of business? _____
38. What is the estimated number of employees? _____
39. What is the estimated racial composition? _____
40. What is your highest academic qualification? _____
41. Where did you receive your highest qualification? _____
42. What generation Malaysian are you? _____

Thank You