

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

INVESTIGATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION DEMONSTRATED
AMONG STAFF AT UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA TERENGGANU (UMT)

A dissertation submitted by:

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Abstract

This study investigated the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of personnel employed at University Malaysia Terengganu to determine the interplay between their interpersonal communication patterns. The interpersonal communication examined included how they interpret, understand and assess their own and their colleagues' values and beliefs as well as their use of verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Also explored were their conflict management styles and their perceptions in relation to 1Malaysia Concept.

This study was framed within Hofstede cultural values theory, verbal communication theory (Hall, 1959 and 1966; Knapp & Hall, 2006) and cross-cultural communication theory (Hofstede, 1984, 1991, 2001, 2010 and 2012). Guided by these perspectives the study explored the respondent's perspectives and experiences. This study employed mixed methods as a research design with ethnography as a research approach. The methods selected for the study included both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods including an online survey and semi-structured interviews. A survey is used to identify the initial understandings of the respondents with interviews used to reflect the 'real' experiences of the respondents. Data were sequentially analysed using both SPSS and thematic analysis to explore in-depth experience of the respondents.

The study contributes to the area of intercultural communication in a Malaysian context. It recommends for example that UMT personnel need to recognise the importance of understanding of their colleagues' cultural backgrounds and how this contributes to effective workplace communication. The results also suggest that UMT needs to consider enhancing its institutional culture by raising the profile of and valuing multiculturalism.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor/s

Date

Signature of Supervisor

Date

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In the name of Allah, the most gracious and merciful

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Malaysia is a multicultural country consisting of three large ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians, as well as people of other ethnicities, and indigenous people. These cultures shape Malaysia with many different values, and ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Nevertheless, each group is unique and possesses its own cultural values.

Intercultural communication occurs when locals interact with international residents, but it also takes place when locals and locals interact. Intercultural communication not only refers to the interactions between locals and foreigners, but also refers to the individuals from the same culture (Sitaram, 1980). In the Malaysian setting, then, when Malaysian Chinese and Malays interact, this can be considered as intercultural in nature. Malaysian Indians interacting with Malaysian Chinese can also be considered intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is vital especially in the Malaysian setting precisely because of this composition of various ethnic cultures and cultural, religious and ethnic beliefs. Issues in relation to religious beliefs and ethnic tensions are currently being propagated by some Malaysian politicians and can disrupt ethnic collaboration (see Fuller, 2006; Mydans, 2010). Malaysia has a diverse population and has long been trying to maintain effectively its ethnic relationships. If the uniqueness of this mixture is overlooked, there are fears that a large number of talented non-Malays will migrate to other countries.

Ironically, ethnic groups can work together harmoniously when it comes to festival celebrations and culinary practices. Culinary practices are distinct and derived from the multi-ethnic population of Malay, Indian, Chinese, ¹*Nyonya*, Eurasian, and the indigenous people of Borneo. Across the world food it is known as Malaysian food without being split into its ethnic origins. But the blending of Malaysian ethnicity is not as simple or effective as the blending of food. This is because each ethnic group have their own ethnic identity, which is instilled in them and in which they proud of in order to fulfil the feeling of togetherness. This ethnic group has been analyzed by the concept of ‘group’ which function as “a seemingly unproblematic, taken-for-granted concept” (Brubaker, 2002). Yet Brubaker (2002) enlighten that group or groupism is more than ethnicity, race and nationalism. The blending of Malaysian ethnicity however matched Brubaker’s (2002) clarification in which ethnicity will relate to ethnic conflict and automatically it is all about the ethnic group. It explains the complexity of the Malaysian multicultural society as it is not easy to blend the different cultures. In fact, it is difficult as both dominance of the

¹*Nyonya* = also known as Peranakan Chinese and Baba-Nyonya, terms used for the descendants of late 15th and 16th-century Chinese immigrants to the Indonesian archipelago and Peninsular Malaysia, are among the oldest groups of foreign origin in Malaysia. Members of this community in Melaka, Malaysia, address themselves as ‘Nyonya Baba’. Nyonya is the term for the women and Baba for the men. It applies especially to the ethnic Chinese populations of the British Straits Settlements of Malaya and the Dutch-controlled island of Java and other locations, who have adopted Nusantara customs — partially or in full — to be somewhat assimilated into the local communities (Ruhana, 2006).

Malay culture means that the full potential of the other cultures are not acknowledged and lie beneath the surface as opposition or assertion made by these cultures are not listened to or encouraged. However, this study will not focus and go in depth in discussing the ethnicity issues, hence this need to be discussed on its own.

1.2 The context of the study

The study will investigate the issues of intercultural communication among the three main ethnic groups in the Malaysian university context. Malaysian higher education encompasses multi-ethnic groups in terms of both student enrolment and the composition of its staff. This multicultural setting offers a unique opportunity to analyse the intercultural communication problems between the different cultures that may exist in the workplace. Higher education institutions have a very important position in promoting diversity and multiculturalism, not only in the student body, but also in the global work environment with a diverse workforce (Pandian, 2008). Thus, this study is interested in investigating the communication among the different ethnic groups occurring among the multi-ethnic staff in a Malaysian University.

The study will focus on the East Coast of Malaysia, in the state of Terengganu. Generally, Terengganu is a multicultural state, with ethnic Malays the most dominant group ("Terengganu history," 2013). People in Terengganu use the formal Malay language during formal functions and in government affairs. In daily conversation and business affairs, the Terengganese Malay (dialect) is preferred. Sometimes, even government staffs use this dialect when dealing with locals or non-locals. The Terengganese Malay (dialect) is very different from formal Malay and other state dialects. When non-locals from different ethnic groups, or even individuals from the same ethnic group but from different states, have their first encounters with the locals there is the possibility of intercultural communication problems.

Terengganu has a population of 1,015,776 as of 2010 ("Terengganu history," 2013). As of 2006, Malays make up 94.7% of the population, with Chinese 2.6%, Indians only about 0.2%, and other ethnic groups comprising the remaining 2.4%. As of the 2010 Census, the population of Terengganu is 96.9% Muslim, 2.5% Buddhist, 0.2% Hindu, 0.2% Christian and 0.2% are followers of other religions or are non-religious. Malay people at Terengganu are largely Muslims and, since this state is a Malay-dominant state, there is a significant number of Malays and Muslims compared with other ethnic groups.

The education system can be divided into three eras: the pre-independence, the independence and the post-independence era, which incorporates Malay-medium schools and religious-based schools. During the pre-independence era, the educational system in Malaya (currently Malaysia) was based on ²*pondok* styles which were believed to expand along with the spread of Islam during the fourteenth century (Othman & Mohamad, 2011). Missionaries from Arabia and India were the agents who spread Islam and established the non-formal education of *pondok* in almost all states except Johore and Straits Settlements

²*Pondok* = a school, or also known as *sekolah pondok* in Malay, literally means hut, a religious school, a school establish by Muslims to teach Islamic knowledge.

³(Sufean, 1996 as cited in No & Hamid, 2010; Othman & Mohamad, 2011). The *pondok* system was based on non-formal education and the operations, which included agricultural and vocational skills, were funded by the surrounding community, with students not required to pay fees. In general, ⁴*sekolah pondok* (literally hut), also known as ⁵*madrasah*, were the original forms of schooling available across Malaya (currently Malaysia) (No & Hamid, 2010; Shamsul & Aziz, 2011). This also influenced the education system at Terengganu during its early years (Majid et al., 2012; Othman & Mohamad, 2011). The locals went to *madrasah* or *pondok* in their own districts and were taught by the ⁶*imam* or *ulama* (Othman & Mohamad, 2011; Talib, 1984). At an early stage, Islamic education was taught informally to the public. The topics included the revealed sciences (teaching the Holly Quran), good behaviour, morals, good deeds of worship, Islamic knowledge and spirituality (Shahril @ Charil Marzuki et. al, 1993 as cited in Majid et al., 2012). Memorisation of Al-Quran; learning the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (the prophetic tradition); theology; jurisprudence; history of Islam including the Prophet Muhammad's biography; fundamentals of arithmetic and logic (Rosnani, 2004 as cited in Othman & Mohamad, 2011) were also covered. These religious school aims were to produce virtuous Muslims who adhere to the religious commandments valuable to the society at large. This is in line with the study conducted by Asma and Lim (2001) where religion is one of the significant elements in the Malaysian workplace.

Mosques, prayer rooms, religious schools or *madrasah* were amongst the places where students learned the sciences of Islam. In Terengganu itself, it was noted that during 1838 every village around the royal town of Kuala Terengganu owned their *madrasah* (religious school) (Abdullah, 1960,p.47 as cited in Talib, 1984). Later Islamic education became more systematic in order to compete with the secular schools offered by the English coloniser. The first systematic Islamic school was introduced in 1908 during the opening of Iqbal School in Singapore. This system was later introduced to Penang, Muar, Kota Bahru, Terengganu and Alor Setar (Majid et al., 2012). The first *madrasah* in Terengganu was *Madrasah al-'Arabiah*, established in 1925 which used Malay language, Arabic and English as mediums of instruction (Mardman, 2011).

The national schools that are established today practice formal education that were founded during the western colonial era. During that time the English schools were set up for local people and the Malay vernacular schools established in 1856 (Majid et al., 2012). Secular schools in Malaysia were introduced by the British colonials with many established in the Straits Settlements of Penang, Melaka and Singapore (Othman & Mohamad, 2011). After independence, these vernacular schools were widely accepted by the Malaysian population. The schools became the medium of reformation especially when Malaysia becomes a multicultural country after independence (Othman & Mohamad, 2011). The school system was then revised and incorporated religion into its educational system with religious-based schools formed and Islamic knowledge offered at most of the national schools as well as the vernacular schools (Othman & Mohamad,

³Straits settlement = consisted of the individual settlements of Perak, Malacca, Penang and Singapore during British colonisation (Thukiman, 2010).

⁴*Sekolah pondok* = also known as *Pondok* school, same as above

⁵*Madrasah* = another name for *pondok* school , an Islamic school

⁶*Imam* or *ulama* = religious teachers or Islamic religious scholars

2011). These types of school were also introduced to Terengganu. Today, Terengganu provides religious-based schools as well as national and vernacular schools.

In Terengganu there are two main universities: University Malaysia Terengganu (after this known as UMT) and University Sultan Zainal Abidin (Unisza, previously known as University Darul Iman). There are also other universities but these are not based in Terengganu, such as University Technology Mara (UiTM) which is only a branch for a main university based at Shah Alam, Selangor. There are also colleges and private educational institutions in Terengganu. Specifically UMT is located in Mengabang Telipot, Kuala Terengganu and is the 14th public university in Malaysia.

UMT is situated at Terengganu State, East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. UMT was renamed on 1st February 2007, and was previously known as KUSTEM (College of Science and Technology Malaysia). UMT staff consists of multi ethnic groups. These ethnic and religious groups are reflected in the staff composition at the UMT. From 1,360 administration staff, 1,285 staff are ethnic Malays, 50 are ethnic Chinese, 13 are ethnic Indians and 12 staff are from other ethnic groups. Approximately, 94% of the staff at UMT are Malays, 4% ethnic Chinese and 1% ethnic Indian and 1% other ethnic groups such as Thais and international staff.

UMT has been selected as the place of study because of its unique composition of ethnic minorities. The majority of personnel at this university are local Malay (Terengganu born) rather than non-local Malays (non-Terengganu born) and other ethnic minorities. The site has been selected because it reflects the ethnic composition of Malaysia itself. Given the uneven ethnic mix, there is potential for intercultural communication problems to surface between local and non-local Malay staff, as well as between other ethnic groups in the same way as in Malaysia itself, with the Malay culture being dominant. Differences in ethnicity and religion have led to communication difficulties between the administrative staff which could affect the university's productivity and, in turn, students' experiences at university. UMT's work environment is also different from other universities as UMT is situated in the northern region and was not as influenced by the West during colonisation (History of Malaysia 2010). The other objective is to investigate whether communication patterns generate communication problems and conflict which may, in turn, affect the university's productivity.

1.3 The rationale for the study

In Malaysia there is potential for conflict arising between different ethnic groups, though superficially the Government has long been trying to maintain harmonious ethnic relationships. This is crucial in the Malaysian setting where society has become more aware of differences in ethnicity (Guan, 2000). Differences in culture, religion and ethnicity are easy triggers if intercultural communication skills are ignored. The recent issues of religious beliefs being used by some politicians in Malaysia can easily disrupt ethnic collaboration (see Fuller, 2006). Current issues such as churches being bombed by ethnic Malays and mosques being desecrated with pigs' heads can worsen ethnic relationships as reported by international and Malaysian media (see "Letak Kepala Babi di Masjid-masjid di Malaysia (Malaysia: Pig's head been place at the Mosques)," 2010; "Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, Mosques desecrated with pig's head," 2010; Mydans, 2010).

Most studies conducted by Malaysian researchers typically focus on higher education students as respondents, either internationally or locally (see Pandian, 2008; Pawanteh, 2000). Although some studies (see Dahlan, 1990; Lailawati, 2005; Lrong, 1998; Tamam, 2009a; Tamam, 2009b) focus on intra-cultural communication (ethnic relationships), the respondents were limited to students from different ethnicities and restricted to Malay or Chinese or Malay and Chinese. One small study discussed the interactions among the ethnic Indian population (see Naji & David, 2003).

There is a shortage of research about intercultural communication in Malaysia especially among the personnel who are actually working in a university. International researchers interrogate data for Malaysia based on the assumption of cultural homogeneity which is not fragmented into ethnic groups (Mamman, Sulaiman & Fadel, 1996, Newman & Nollen, 1996 and Sekaran & Snodgrass, 1990 as cited in Hofstede, 1991; Lrong, 1998). Malaysian Chinese and Malays do however have fundamental differences in their communication approaches (Dahlia, 2008; Lrong, 1998). Thus, while there has been research on Malaysian cultural values (see Asma & Lim, 2001; Dahlan, 1990; Dahlia, 2008; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Lailawati, 2005, 2008; Lrong, 1998; Lrong, 2001; Pawanteh, 2000; Tamam, 2009a, 2009b), these have generally overlooked differences in ethnic cultural dimensions, especially in intercultural communication. Some studies (see Dahlia, 2008; Gacho Segumpan, Christopher, & Rao, 2007; Hofstede, 1991) do focus on intercultural communication and cultural dimension issues, but were based on local or multinational companies, not universities.

In addition, most of the intercultural communication studies conducted by Malaysian researchers depend on quantitative methods (see Gacho Segumpan et al., 2007) rather than qualitative methods. The limited study that did focus on qualitative methods did so only in relation to international students' adaptation and was limited to multinational organisations (see Dahlia, 2008; Pawanteh, 2000). This study will use qualitative methods to complement the demographic and quantitative findings. Interviews will be conducted to capture the in-depth experiences of UMT personnel. The study will delve into their ethnic and religious experiences, as well as their cultural values and verbal, nonverbal and conflict experiences that they encounter. This study aims to provide insight into the minority experience in the Malay dominant society in the East Coast Peninsular of Malaysia. Previous research has focused on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, where the composition of the various ethnic groups is more evenly distributed and language usage is not so challenging (see Pandian, 2008). The language aspect shouldn't be ignored because language is important especially in Malaysia's case where Malaysian employees can be bilingual because of their educational background or trilingual or quadrilingual which leads to biculturalism (Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1997, Agar, 1991 as cited in Fontaine & Richardson, 2003). Also, the study investigates the nonverbal communication used by personnel at UMT based on the use of haptics and proxemics. The use of nonverbal communication at workplace plays an important role in creating a productive working environment. This aspect has not been explored widely by Malaysian researchers.

A further feature of the study is its intention to involve both local Malays and non-local Malays to investigate any differences in cultural values, verbal, nonverbal and conflict

experiences. Again this aspect has not been examined in depth in the context of Malaysian higher education.

1.4 Strengths of the research

The study will use a cross-cultural and communication theoretical framework to investigate the religious beliefs and cultural dimensions of UMT staff. For example it explore the staff's religious beliefs, see Lrong (2001) and Fontaine and Richardson (2003), by investigating the impact of ethnicity and religion on their communication patterns. This will rectify the lack of research (see Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim, 2012; Dahlan, 1990; Fontaine & Richardson, 2005; Fontaine & Richardson, 2003; Hamzah, 1991; Hofstede, 2001; Lailawati, 2005; Lrong, 1998, 2001; Pawanteh, 2000; Tamam, 2009a, 2009b) on the subject of intercultural communication in relation to personnel from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in Malaysian universities. Religion will be one of the patterns to probe since the state is Malay is dominated by and adheres to Islamic practices religiously. This is in line with Fontaine and Richardson (2003) who reported that religion was one of the important dimensions in Malaysian workplaces and needed further investigation (Asma & Lim, 2001; Dahlia, 2008; Lrong, 2001; Rashid, Anantharaman, & Raveendran, 1997).

Another strength also arises from the study's analysis of the cultural dimensions of cross-cultural communication. Though the study begins with the work of Hofstede (1991) who developed four cultural dimensions in his International Business Machines Corporation IBM (an American multinational technology and consulting corporation, with headquarters in Armonk, New York, United States) study, it also probes a fifth dimension: long-term orientation. Independent research by Michael Bond in Hong Kong added perceptions about the need for a fifth dimension to distinguish the difference in thinking between the East and West (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Hofstede then designed a Chinese value survey which was distributed across 23 countries. From these findings, and the influence of the teaching of Confucius on the East, the fifth dimension was founded. Long-term orientation characteristic are persistence, ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift, and having a sense of shame. Whereas short-term orientation characteristics encompass personal steadiness and stability, protecting your 'face', respect or tradition and reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts (Hofstede, 1991, 2001). Thus, although this study uses Hofstede's theories in analysing cultural values, it also puts these theories into perspective. For example, it enlarges Hofstede's (1991, p.6 as cited in Lrong, 2001) work which did not divide respondents into ethnic groups, perceiving them not to be 'culturally different' (Hofstede, 1991, p. 9 as cited in Lrong, 2001). Hofstede based his presumptions on neighboring countries such as Chinese Malaysians from Singapore and Malaysian Indians from India. Based on these assumptions Hofstede calculated the Malaysian cultural values that they hold. Furthermore, his data during 1967 and 1972 involved few educated Malays at that time were working as government servants (Puthuchear, 1987 as cited in Lrong, 2001). Fontaine and Richardson (2005) suggest that therefore western scholars missed the richness of the relationships within and between ethnic groups (see Asma, 1992, Lim, 1998, Asma, 2001 as cited in Fontaine & Richardson, 2005). Therefore this study will explore more deeply the different values of the ethnic groups, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian, in the Malaysian environment.

Another strength of the study lies in its capacity to recommend methods to reduce communication problems and to increase awareness between staff who possess different religious and cultural backgrounds. Skills here could include knowing the values of the different societies, their culture, religion, beliefs, language and cultural practices, as well as their verbal and nonverbal communication. This study will make recommendations in order to enhance the staff's communication skills effectively. This is especially important considering the staff members have different cultural backgrounds.

The findings will also assist university staff to solve intercultural communication problems between students who may be experiencing similar difficulties at university. This is because productive staff in a productive environment can boost university productivity. Thus, the findings may assist staff to provide students with better service and in turn help them in their experiences at university.

Furthermore, the study investigates the three main groups who are from a unique setting and are rarely discussed by other researchers either in western literature or in Malaysian literature (Fontaine & Richardson, 2003). By highlighting the issue of intercultural communication between staff of diverse ethnicities and their interactions in the workplace, whilst embedded with the uniqueness of their local culture, language and religion, the researcher expects their experiences to reveal new understandings. Therefore, the study aims to add information about a group of people who live and work in a particular university in the East Coast Peninsular Malaysia, that is to say the Chinese, Malays and Indians, to the existing body of the intercultural communication literature.

1.5 Limitations of the study

A limitation of the study is related to the setting, where Malays are dominant and the numbers of those in the minority groups quite small. This limitation is exacerbated by the withdrawal of some respondents from the minority groups. For example, there was only one Indian participant in the interviews carried out. As such, it was not possible to generalise or represent the Indian ethnic population of Malaysian. However, there was sufficient information obtained from the participant to establish a discussion. Rich information about the minority experience of living in the dominant Malay society was still collected nonetheless. As the analysis of results across the organisation may be limited in this respect, so too the analysis of results across organisations outside Malaysia will be limited. Nevertheless, the results in the research context will allow the findings to be used by Malaysian researchers.

Given the mixed method research, with more weight on qualitative research, the researcher's bias is another potential research limitation. As the researcher herself is Malaysian, bias is also a limitation in this research due to the prior working experience the researcher has had with the studied organisation. Nonetheless, the use of survey and interviews as well as the literature help to minimise the potential bias. The interview analysis was also reviewed by peers to ensure that it was not the researcher's own opinion.

1.6 Research purpose and objectives

This study will investigate the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the staff employed at University Malaysia Terengganu to determine how they interpret, understand and assess their own and their colleagues' values and beliefs, and whether these understandings, in turn, affect their interactions with their colleagues.

Specifically, the study pursues the following objective in investigating the effects of ethnicity and religion:

To investigate the intercultural communication patterns across ethnic diversity demonstrated by personnel employed at UMT.

The study aims to:

1. Analyse the cultural values held by the UMT personnel in relation to
 - a. power distance
 - b. uncertainty avoidance
 - c. long term orientation
2. Investigate their verbal communication
 - a. language use
3. Explore their nonverbal communication, including their use of:
 - a. proxemics,
 - b. haptics
4. Inquire into their management of conflict situations
5. Explore their views about 1 Malaysia Policy

1.7 Overview of methodology

1.7.1. Research design

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher goes to the site where the participants are (for example home or office) to conduct the research (Creswell, 2003). This suggests that by being in their environment, the researcher will have the opportunity to obtain firsthand information through the observations and identification of details that are related to research. The research design comprises a mixed method approach and ethnography. Ethnography permits reflections about the cultural values, language use, verbal and nonverbal, and conflict handling approaches at UMT, as well as reflections about the respondents' intercultural experiences at UMT. The mixed method design was used for this study to reflect the complexity of the study, using the partially mixed sequential (e.g. quan + QUAL) proposed by Creswell and Clark (2007 as cited in Nastasi, Hitchcock, & Brown, 2010). The quantitative methods thereby enable the demographic data and respondents' basic knowledge about the intercultural interaction to be collected, and better understanding to be appreciated about these processes. To complement the quantitative data, qualitative approaches including ethnographic-inductive techniques, will also be employed to describe respondents' experiences in

relation to their intercultural interactions. The ethnographic, qualitative and quantitative methods are interwoven to frame the experiences of the personnel involved. By taking the respondents' perspectives, the study is able to explore not only the ways in which they experience but also how they are constrained by cultural and social forces and, with this recognition, how they might empower themselves as they negotiate their relationships with their colleagues from various backgrounds. Below (refer figure 1.1) is the overview of the research design used in this study which will be explained in detail in Chapter 3.

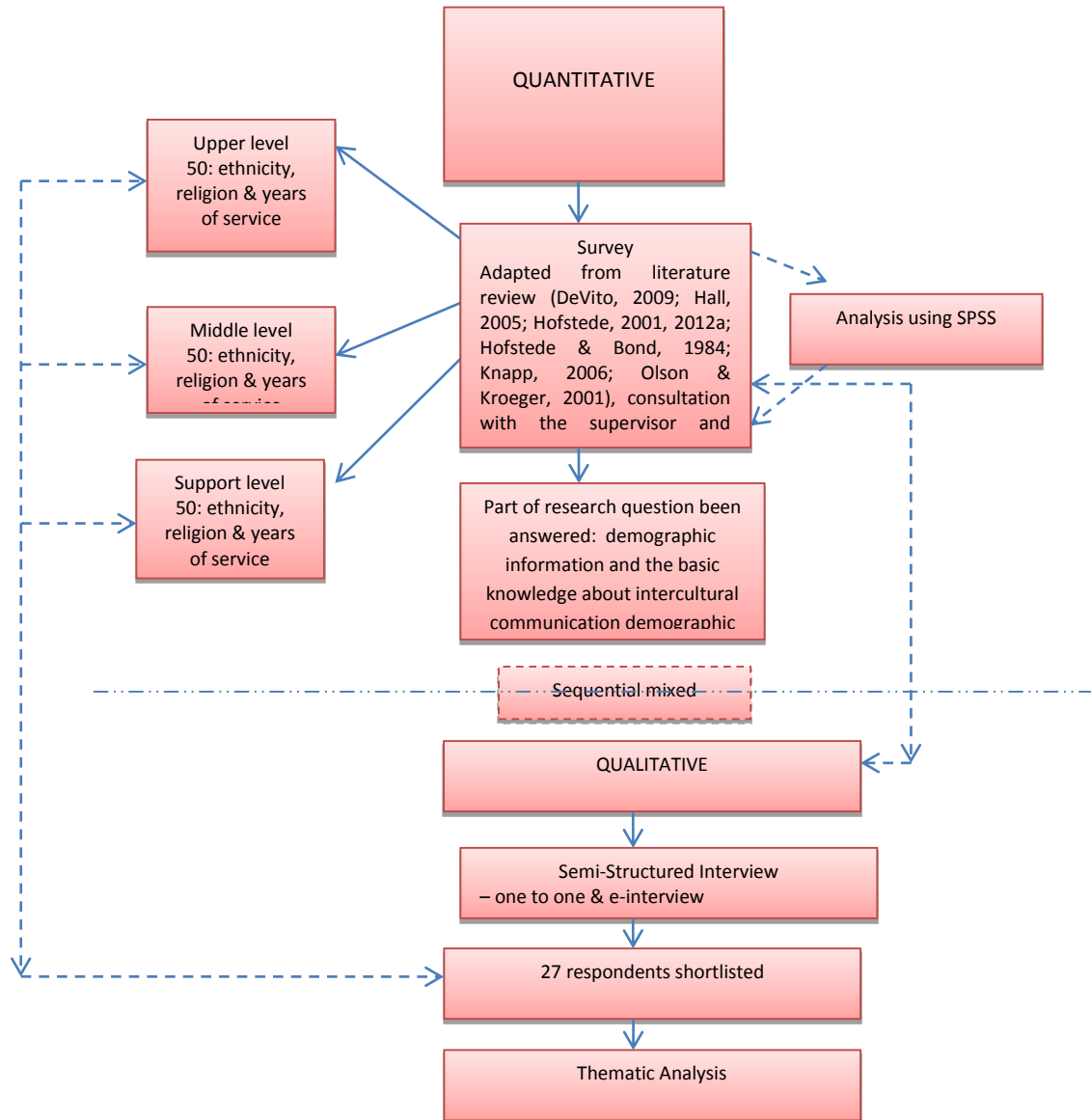


Figure 1.1: Overview of research design

1.7.2. Research instruments

The online survey was used to gather the basic information about the respondents' demographic data and their basic knowledge about intercultural communication. The survey was designed and administered using Survey Monkey, web-based survey software

available at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. This survey tool is a commercial product accessible since 1999. By using this tool, researchers can create more efficient surveys by using custom templates and e-mailing the survey to the respective respondents. Survey Monkey will generate results and report these back to the researcher as descriptive statistics. Then, the survey respondents will be contacted through their personal email to inform them about the study. In total 150 survey respondents were emailed the online survey. These were distributed across three organisational levels: the upper, middle and support level plus the academic personnel, during the period April until August, 2011. The research instruments were constructed after a thorough review of the available published literature, consultation with the supervisor and reflection upon the researcher's knowledge and professional experience. The final surveys contain the introduction of the study and six sets of questions included demographic information, questions regarding culture and cultural values, questions concerning language, questions about the use of nonverbal communication, conflict and 1 Malaysia response questions. The categorical scale was used, namely Yes/No in this online survey.

This was followed by the interview instrument which was constructed based on the responses from the online survey. The one-on-one interviews involved semi-structured questions and open-ended questions and lasted from a minimum of one hour to a two hour maximum. E-interviews were also conducted for respondents' convenience, and to encourage them to answer the more sensitive interview questions.

1.7.3 Respondents

One hundred and twenty respondents, selected using purposive sampling, completed the survey. Twenty respondents were shortlisted to be interviewed to investigate their personal experiences in relation to intercultural communication at University Malaysia Terengganu. UMT is situated on the east coast of Malaysia, in the State of Terengganu and encompasses 13 different states of Malaysia and three federal territories which are varied in their language, dialect, and religion, as well as their cultural background. This study will not discuss other higher educational institutions at Terengganu or in any other part of the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The 20 respondents were chosen based on purposive sampling to ensure that all of the three ethnic groups were represented.

This study will focus on the three main groups at the research setting namely Malays, Chinese and Indians who are born in Malaysia and are Malaysian citizens. The study will also investigate other Malays from different states, as they have different cultural backgrounds and dialects. This study will not discuss Malays from other countries although Malay populations also live in Indonesia, Brunei, Philippine with a lesser number in Singapore (Lailawati, 2005).

The ethnic Chinese in this study are referred to as Chinese Malaysians, who are different from people from Mainland China. Chinese Malaysians like to be called *huayi* or 'people of Chinese descent' or *Huaren*, literally known as '*Hua* people' or *Tionghoa*. Chinese Malaysians do not use *Huaqiao* which refer to '*Hua* sojourners', which means that one day they anticipate returning to their country of origin. Therefore, when referring to Chinese Malaysians, the term 'overseas Chinese' is not used. The use of Chinese

Malaysian (in English) emphasises local identity and Malaysian identity (Lee & Tan, 1999) and has lately been described as ‘unmistakably Chinese, genuinely Malaysian’ by Rita Sim Hai Soon (Fazaniza, 2012). The Chinese in this study were born and raised in Malaysia, and this study will not discuss Chinese from other countries as these Chinese may have different characteristics influenced by their surroundings, culture and adaptation. The study will also not distinguish the Chinese according to their sub-ethnic groups in order to simplify the data and due to the time constraints of the study.

Malaysian Indians in this study include all groups of Indians regardless of their origin and religion. Therefore this study will not separate Indian respondents according to their sub-ethnic groups, again in order to simplify the data and due to the time constraints of the study. All respondents work as personnel at University Malaysia Terengganu.

1.7.4 Rationale for sample choice

The study will focus on the three ethnic groups namely Malays (including local and nonlocal), Chinese and Indians at UMT because these three ethnic groups reflect the three major groups at this university. Also the respondents were chosen based on several characteristics such as ethnicity and religion which characterise the purposive sampling technique. The study will focus on three organisational levels: the upper, middle, and support levels plus the academic staff.

The concept of ethnic groups is significant for this study because:

Within the three ethnic groups, there is an ease of movement (that suggests) this ethnic paradigm is subject to constant manipulation by ordinary people. It would seem then that the majority of Malaysian recognise that the tri-ethnic scheme is an abstraction subject to change they can effect, in small but radical ways (Boulanger, 1996, p. 660 as cited in Fontaine & Richardson, 2003).

The study of “Malaysian” is undertaken by studying each ethnic group or the individual ethnic groups rather than grouping them as one group as recommended in intercultural research (Lim, 1998 as cited in Fontaine & Richardson, 2003).

1.8 Thesis outline

Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter Two** reviews the literature related to the Malaysian background, intercultural communication and its relation to the Malaysian situation. This chapter also expounds the key concepts and definitions as well as the theoretical underpinnings of this study. **Chapter Three** explains the methodology including the research paradigm, research design, research setting, the researcher’s role, data collection and analysis methods as well as etiquettes and procedures. The chapter also justifies the use of the methodology, assessing its validity. **Chapter Four** will discuss the respondents’ profiles, including the survey and interview respondents. **Chapter Five** is the first of three chapters which review the respondents’ profiles. This chapter outlines the respondents’ cultural profiles, including both quantitative and qualitative results in relation to cultural knowledge and cultural values, in particular power distance, long term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. **Chapter Six** discusses the respondents’

communication profiles in relation to verbal communication and nonverbal communication, in particular proxemics, and use of touch. **Chapter Seven** describes the respondents' conflict profiles including respondents' experiences in conflict and conflict resolution styles. This chapter also explores the 1 Malaysia concept and its issues from the respondents' perspectives. **Chapter Eight** will summarise the findings of the study and provide recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature on intercultural communication, cultural values, non-verbal and verbal communication, conflict and the One Malaysia policy in framing the research question this study seeks to explore. Section 2.2 will discuss the historical background of Malaysia and Terengganu state. A review of the literature on intercultural communication in relation to Malaysian contexts will then be described in section 2.3. Section 2.4 will outline the key concepts and definitions for this study while section 2.5 is a theoretical foundation. The theories are then related to the Malaysian setting and the study in order that the intercultural communication patterns across ethnic diversity demonstrated by personnel employed at UMT are analysed. This will include the cultural values held by the UMT personnel, their verbal and non-verbal communication, their management of conflict situations and their views about the One Malaysia Policy. The chapter concludes with a short summary of the chapter in section 2.6.

2.2 Background

This first section will set the scene by explaining the cultures of Malaysia and includes a description of the One Malaysia policy which has significance for the study. The Terengganu background will be described in detail including the demographic and geographic information, its history, politics and government, economy, culture and language as well as education in Terengganu. Lastly, this section will also describe UMT's profile, the site of the research.

2.2.1 Historical background

Malaysian history can be segmented into several eras and includes the arrival of the Europeans, the colonial era, and invasion by the Japanese. The table below simplifies Malaysian history.

1511 -1643	The Portuguese capture Melaka.
1800-1941	The Colonial era under the British influence.
1941	Japan invades and occupies Malaya, British north (now Sabah) and Sarawak in 68 days.
1942	Japanese soldiers launch ⁷ <i>sook ching</i> , executing thousands of Chinese in Singapore and Malaya.
1943	The Kinabalu guerrilla force attacks Japanese facilities in ⁸ Jesselton (at the time renamed 'Api' by the Japanese). They are captured and executed.
1945	The United States of America drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forcing Japan's surrender.

⁷*Sook ching* = cleanup operation by the Japanese troops to Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor and Pahang and killed over 20,000 Chinese. *Sook ching* struck terror into the hearts of the Chinese and hundreds fled into the jungle to join the MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army) (Kheng & Kratoska, 2006, p. 25)

⁸Jesselton = currently known as Kota Kinabalu, the capital of the state of Sabah, which is located in East Malaysia.

1945	Britain regains control over territories in the Malay peninsula and northern Borneo; establishment of the British military administration (in Sarawak, Australian Military Administration).
1945	The Malayan Union, merging all the Malay states into a single entity, is proposed. The sultans are pressured into ceding their sovereignty.
1946	The Malayan Union is established in the face of widespread Malay opposition. A new constitution is drawn up to replace the Malayan Union.
1948	The Malayan Union order in council is revoked; the federation of Malaya agreement takes its place. The federation of Malaya comes into existence.
1950	The Briggs Plan is introduced and New Villages are established to deprive the communists of supplies and support.
1955	Baling Talks are held between government and communist leaders with a view to ending the emergency. The talks are unsuccessful.
1956	<i>Merdeka</i> mission led by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra goes to London for talks on independence.
1957	Malaya gains independence.
1960	The emergency ends.
1961	Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra proposes the idea of a new federation: Malaysia.
1963	Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and the federation of Malaya are federated to form Malaysia.
1965	Parliament enacts the constitution and Malaysia (Singapore amendment) Act to expel Singapore from Malaysia.
1969	Following the general election, the 13 th May ⁹ tragedy leads to the declaration of a state of emergency and the suspension of parliament; Malaysia is administered by the national operations council.
1970	Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein becomes Malaysia's second Prime Minister. The Rukunegara (national ideology) is introduced as a pillar of national identity. Amendments are made to the constitution to remove sensitive issues from public discussion. The New Economic Policy is launched.
1976	Death of Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak. Dato' Hussein bin Dato' Onn Jaafar becomes third Prime Minister.
1981	Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad becomes the fourth Prime Minister.
1990	Vision 2020 is launched.
2003	Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi becomes the fifth prime minister. In 2005, he announced his vision of promoting <i>Islam Hadhari</i> as a model for development in Malaysia.

⁹ 13th May 1969 tragedy: The racial riots led to a declaration of a state of national emergency or *Darurat* by the head of state of Malaysia at that time, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, from Kedah state, resulting in the suspension of the Parliament by the Malaysian government, while the National Operations Council (known as the *Majlis Gerakan Negara*), was established as a caretaker government to temporarily govern the country between 1969 and 1971.

2009	Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak is the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia.
2010	One Malaysia (pronounced <i>One Malaysia</i> in English and <i>Satu Malaysia</i> in Malay) is an on-going programme designed by the Malaysian Prime Minister on 16 September 2010, with strong emphasis on ethnic harmony, national unity, and efficient governance. The eight values of One Malaysia as articulated by Najib Razak are perseverance, a culture of excellence, acceptance, loyalty, education, humility, integrity, and meritocracy.

Table 2.1: Malaysian history (adapted from Zakaria, 2006)

2.2.1.1 The coming of Chinese and Indians to peninsular Malaysia

Chinese migration to the Malay Peninsula spanned six centuries, from the time of the Melaka sultanate around 1400 to the formation of an independent Malaysian state in 1957 (Koon, 2006). The geographic, economic and social patterns of Chinese immigration and settlement have been formed by common geographic and linguistic origins in China. The Chinese in this country during the 1930s to 1950s were integrated, and also have participated fully and actively in building the political, economic and social institutions of their new homeland. As early as the 19th century virtually all the dialect groups could be found engaging in the full range of trades, crafts and professions. Nonetheless, certain dialect groups tended to be concentrated in certain occupational categories (Koon, 2006).

Dialect group	Economic specialisation	Occupations
Hokkien	Trade and commerce	Financiers of coolie labour recruitment, venture capitalists in tin and rubber industries, entrepreneurs and merchants.
Cantonese and Hakka	Artisans and craftsmen	Pioneering labour in tin industry, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, brick-makers and goldsmiths. Cantonese also excelled as chefs.
Teochew	Service-oriented	Hotel and coffee shop proprietors, housekeepers and domestic servants of European households and establishments.
Hookchiu (Foochow), Hokchia and Henghua	Transportation-related	Bus drivers, bicycle shop owners and rickshaw pullers.

Table 2.2: Occupational distribution of dialect group (adapted from Koon, 2006)

With the formation of the British Straits Settlements in 1826, waves of Chinese immigrants fanned out into the Malay states, lured by lucrative tin-mining concessions granted by Malay rulers. Up until the mid-19th century, immigrants arrived from various dialect backgrounds in Fujian and Guangdong provinces. Chinese immigration to the

Malay Peninsula peaked between the 1860s and 1930s (Koon, 2006), driven by the poor conditions in China such as constant rebellion, floods, famine and social political disaster (Kiong, 2006). British encouragement of Chinese migrant labour to engage in the commercial development of the Straits Settlements and to develop the tin mines and rubber plantations in the Malay states, attracted high in-flows of new arrivals. These immigrants came as free labour or as indentured labour on a credit ticket system. The first category financed their journeys with savings or loans from kinsmen and friends, while the second came on credit advanced by Chinese entrepreneurs and employers in Malaya and China who financed the recruitment, transportation and deployment of contract labour in tin mines and other enterprises (Koon, 2006).

The transformation of the Chinese population from transient sojourners to permanent settlers began after World War 1 when a quota on male immigrants in 1933 resulted in large-scale Chinese female immigration to Malaya. This laid the foundations of the recent-day domiciled Malaysian Chinese community. By 1947, the proportion of local-born Chinese comprised 63% of the total population in the country. Nowadays Chinese constitute the second largest ethnic group in the country, making up over 24% of the population (approximately six million in 2004) (Koon, 2006). Almost all Malaysian Chinese originated from the two south-eastern Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. Nowadays, to young Malaysian Chinese, China merely serves as a reminder of the source of their identity. Malaysian Chinese are cross-dialect rather than dialect-based and they continue to speak their respective dialects, yet Mandarin has become the preferred language of cross-dialect communication along with English and Malay (Fazaniza, 2012; Kiong, 2006; Koon, 2006).

Indian merchants traded in the Malay Archipelago as early as the first century CE, and established a settlement in Melaka in the 15th century. However, it was only in the 19th and 20th centuries that large numbers of Indian migrants, mainly from South India, arrived in the peninsula, brought as indentured labour primarily to work on the rubber plantations (Rajantharan & Subramaniam, 2006). The arrival of the British set the pace of large-scale and permanent Indian settlements in the peninsula. Indian prisoners were put to work on the construction of roads, buildings and other civil works in the Straits Settlements. The modern period of immigration dates from the foundation of Penang and became significant in the latter half of the nineteenth century subsequent to the consolidation of British in Malaya (Sandhu, 1993), when the British transported hundreds of thousands of labourers to the Malay Peninsula to clear the virgin jungles for plantation agriculture such as tea, coffee, rubber and coconuts and to lay the roads and railways that link the states. The migration largely from South India was due to its proximity to the peninsula, and the Malayan climate was identical, as well as the socio-economic conditions on the subcontinent at the time (Rajantharan & Subramaniam, 2006; Sandhu, 1993).

To run the government departments shaped by the colonial system of administration and the railways, English-educated staff were needed from the southern Indians and Sri Lankan Tamils. Generally, Indians came as commercial immigrants to capitalise on the growing Malayan economy. A number of North Indians, especially Sindhis and Gujeratis,

were involved in the textile industry as well as in the ranks of military and police (Sandhu, 1993). Chettiers from south India monopolised the money-lending business, and Indian Muslims engaged in import/export between the two countries (Sandhu, 1993). Chronologically Indian migration can be simplified as below:

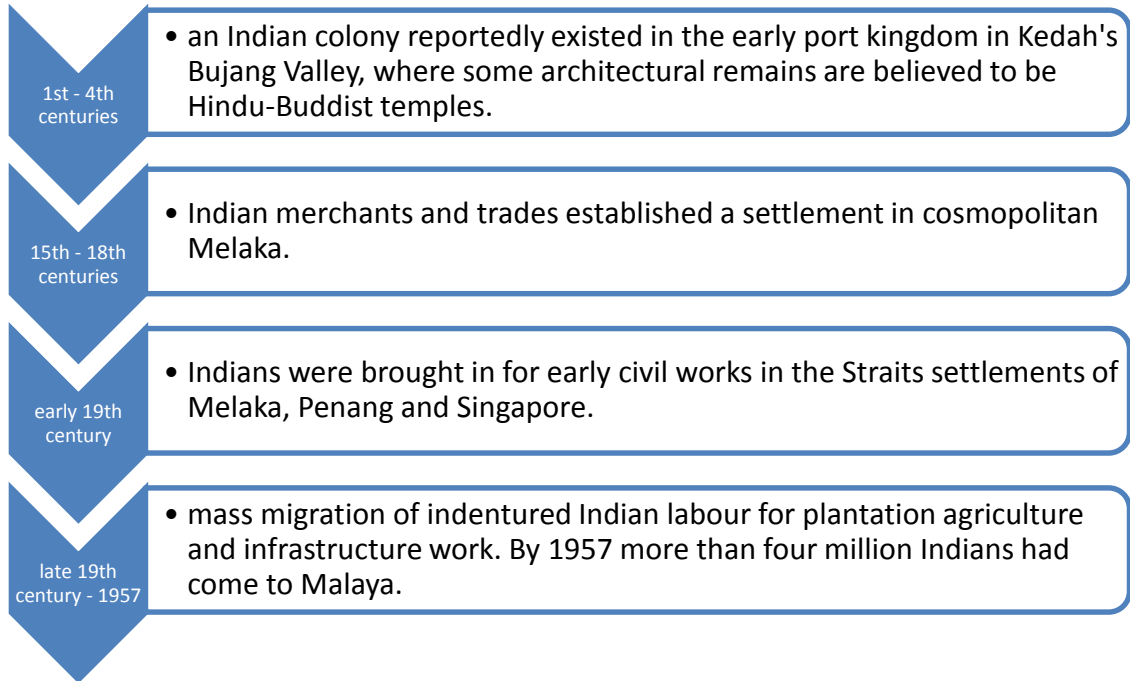


Figure 2.1: Chronology of Indian migration (adapted from Rajantheran & Subramaniam, 2006).

Migration to Malaya caused an explosion of mixed cultures despite the differences of religion, caste, social status, language and lineage. Generally the Indian communities divided into several subdivisions, namely Northern, Southern Indian and Sri Lankans. Northern Indians are people of Punjab, Sindh, Gujerat and Pashto. While the Tamils, Telugus, Malayalis and Kannarese fall under the Southern Indian subdivision. The Sri Lankans are Tamil and Singhalese descendants. They also practise a variety of religions; like the Punjabis, they adopt Sikhism, Christianity or Islam; and of the Telegus, most of them practice Hinduism. For the majority of Malaysian Indians the most popular religion is Hinduism (Rajantheran & Subramaniam, 2006). Another important fact is that the Tamils make up the largest sub-group in the Malaysian Indian population, which is about 85% or approximately 1.8 million in 2004 (Rajantheran & Subramaniam, 2006). Despite the diverse groups and culture, the Indians have merged well with other Malaysian residents and have played a part in the nation's development since Malaya got its independence.

2.2.1.2 Malaysian diversity

As Malaysia is made up of mainly the Malays, Chinese and Indians, thus its culture would naturally reflect all Malaysian residents.

Historically, Malaya was governed under a power-sharing arrangement; an arrangement that helped seal independence or 'Merdeka'. For a brief moment, Malaya was under control, communism wasn't spreading and the people were confident of the future. But as the state grew, economic changes happened and therefore caused some instability in the nation. Malays were lagging behind financially and at the same time non-Malays wanted more political power. The inevitable happened; racial tension exploded in the country and due to this event Singapore had exited from Malaysia. The main reason for the problem had yet to be solved (Nik Mohamed, Ramlah, & Adnan, 2006).

The racial problem finally reached its climax on the¹⁰13th May 1969 tragedy. The tragedy proved to the Malaysian government that the state was in turmoil and was politically divided. The Parliament was terminated and a council was called to manage the situation. As a result of the tragedy, new policies against social unrest were included in the constitution. Some of these policies were set up to balance the socio-economic differences. The political scene had also changed its face where¹¹UMNO, a Malay political body, had become the prominent and dominant party in the country (Nik Mohamed et al., 2006).

Notwithstanding, after the events of 13th May 1969, the Alliance coalition was stretched to incorporate various previously-restricted parties. Divisive issues were tended to sensitively, instead of through open showdown. Forced imparting remains a key peculiarity of this circumstance: each real ethnic gathering is spoken for in the Cabinet (Nik Mohamed et al., 2006). By looking at the assorted ethnic qualities has brought peace and congruity in excess of 47 years since the alliances' beginning, first under the Alliance and, since 1973, under a *Barisan Nasional* government (Nik Mohamed et al., 2006). The minorities' ethnic issues and priority were taken into accounts by the Barisan which believe among the major contribution to peace and harmony to Malaysia. The federal government has additionally needed to oversee territorial diversity, particularly in its association with Sabah and Sarawak. These states have special provisions within the federation, as contrasted with the peninsular states, and a cultural and ethnic structure that contrasts with that of the peninsular.

Malaysia is a diverse population and has long been attempting to keep up its ethnic relationships. In the event that the uniqueness of this mixture is disregarded some are afraid that the large amount of migration of talented non-Malays to other countries will rise (Tyson, 2011). Malaysia should take the opportunity to value each and every ethnic group in the environment. Along these lines, it can make better homes for all ethnicity. The differences ought to be taken as preference not as a threat. Ironically, the ethnics can get together when it comes to festival celebration and also the lavish mixture of the food. It seems that every ethnicity is being influence by other ethnic in their food choice. The foods are distinct and derive from the multi-ethnic population of Malay, Indian, Eurasian, Chinese, *Nyonya* and the indigenous people of Borneo. All over the world it is known as Malaysian food without splitting it into their ethnicity origin. The current atmosphere in

¹⁰13th May 1969 tragedy: The racial riots led to a declaration of a state of national emergency or *Darurat* by the the head of state of Malaysia at that time, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, from Kedah state, resulting in the suspension of the Parliament by the Malaysian government, while the National Operations Council (known as the *Majlis Gerakan Negara*), was established as a caretaker government to temporarily govern the country between 1969 and 1971.

¹¹UMNO = or the United Malays National Organisations, created in response to Malayan Union.

Malaysia seems to be tense with ethnic tension which somehow is not shown directly but is being kept underground (Crouch, 2001; Haque, 2003; Munusamy, 2012).

Malaysians, regardless of their ethnicity, are aware that different cultures operate differently and are viewed differently by the group members. Somehow, this special event of ethnic groups seem to bump each other, and there is a trend towards sharing celebrations such as 'DeepaRaya' (referring to the sharing of Deepavali and Hari Raya) and 'KongsiRaya' (referring to the sharing of Chinese New Year and Hari Raya) based on the Gregorian calendar (Sa'odah, 2006).

Malaysia's populace has in excess of 70 unique ethnic groups, each with its varieties. The ethnic, religious and cultural mix reflects the country's history and strategic geographical location. Malaysia has for centuries attracted rulers, dealers and explorers. Immigrants have settled in the nation since the earliest recorded times, underscoring the heterogeneity of the contemporary populace. The multi-ethnic society of present-day Malaysia was generally made amid the period of British administration, especially in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Ruhanas, 2006). Substantial numbers of Chinese and Indian transients were brought into the nation to work in the mining business and the plantations respectively. The Chinese are separated along dialect lines and their provincial origins in China (Koon, 2006).

The Indian community is differentiated too, compromising many ethnic sub-groups reflecting their roots and language. The number of inhabitants in Sabah and Sarawak are made up of no less than 70 ethnic groups, of whom around 50 are viewed as indigenous. The primary indigenous group in Sabah are the Kadazandusun, Bajau and Murut. In Sarawak are the Iban, Bidayuh and Melanau, each has its traditions, expressions, beliefs and languages (Jawan, 2006; Regis, 2006; Ruhanas, 2006). Adding to the multi-ethnic milieu are a few minority groups, for example, the Baba, Chitties, people of Portuguese-descent of Melaka and Jawi-peranakan of Penang. There are likewise small communities created later by migrants from different parts of Asia (Ruhanas, 2006).

The various ethnic groups have their own particular social, cultural and religious heritage. A large portion of the world's religions, for example, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are found in Malaysia. Malay culture which structures the centre of the national culture has been enriched by Arabic, Indian and other foreign components and by the animistic customs. In the meantime, the cultures of the immigrant communities have experienced changes and have become localised, especially in characteristics, for example, dress, language and food (Ruhanas, 2006).

Malaysians seem to live in amicability, and acknowledge or accept the standard of offering political and financial force; the cultural lives of the individuals for the most part stay limited to their respective ethnic groups. While cultural and religious contrasts have a tendency to propagate the heterogeneous nature of the populace, shared values and an eagerness among the communities to take an interest in each other's celebrations makes a personality that is built not in light of one society, yet on multiculturalism as a method for cultivating national solidarity in this plural society (Gudeman, 2002). There is no approach of assimilating minorities and their cultures into the dominant part and standard society, unlike the policy in some neighbouring nations. Not one or the other is a policy to impose

the cultural dominance and dominion of the larger group aggregate on the minority bunches, particularly since the last gatherings are themselves inheritors of incredible cultures and civilisations (Nik Mohamed et al., 2006).

Yet Malaysian researchers such as Guan (2000) contend that in spite of the fact that Malaysia is an exception to the rule of not pursuing an outright assimilation policy, the Malays, nevertheless, hold on the development of a national culture established in their society. The unequal connection between the Malay and non-Malay cultures was formally perceived and composed into the 1957 Constitution. Guan (2000, 2006) specifies that this was a radical flight from the frontier period where nobody ethnic group's culture was given favoured status and there was no conception of a typical national society. The colonial state additionally basically practiced an essentially non-intervention policy in the cultural improvement of the settlement, and every ethnic group had equal access to and could freely practice their culture in the colonial open space. In postcolonial state, however, interestingly, they did not intervene in the cultural development of the society and very enthusiast in promoting the general vicinity of Malay culture. In post-independent Malaysia, the site of cultural disputes was focused over the status and position of different ethnic groups in the general population (Guan, 2000).

To develop a national culture established on Malay culture would mean the development of an open space where Malay culture is ubiquitous, with the non-Malay cultures consigned to the periphery. On the other hand, to develop the Malay cultural symbols and Islam in the public space, the state would need to move back the historically-expansive presence of non-Malay cultural symbols, in the public space and in the urban space specifically. Intrinsically, since the assimilation of the idea was relinquished in Malaysia, the issue was finding a means by which to develop social strength without alienating the non-Malay communities and damaging their rights to practice and to proliferate their cultures as ensured in the constitution. In short, the irresoluteness around the inclusion and exclusion of the non-Malay's societies constitutes the key problem in the development of the modern Malaysia (Tyson, 2011).

In spite of the fact that Malay is the national language, languages of the other ethnic groups, for example, Mandarin, Tamil, Iban and Kadazandusun, are taught in schools and used in public life. Daily papers are printed in Malay, English, Chinese, Tamil and Kadazan. Malaysia has a unique multi-ethnic arrangement with a mixture of ethnic groups maintaining distinctive religious and cultural beliefs (Regis, 2006). This represents a test to the Malaysian government to keep up the peace and stability, fundamental for prosperity. A way for the government to prosper, for most of the years since accomplishing freedom in 1957, Malaysians have possessed the capacity to live together in concordance. This has been due largely to policies that cultivate solidarity whilst considering the historical, political, economic and social dimensions (Ramli, 2006).

The government eagerly promotes unity through the Rukunegara (national Ideology), the formation of the National Education Policy and the attention to social interaction programmes. In the meantime, individuals are encouraged to suit and acknowledge one another's religion and culture. The national education policy was formed in 1971. Certain key focuses in this policy have an immediate bearing on making unity among the younger population. These incorporate the utilisation of the Malay language as the medium of

instruction, a standard school curriculum, and mandatory primary education for all. The usage of Malay as the national language delivered numerous debates. The Government sees the language as a bringing together component among nationals. Then again, a few areas of society see the move as precluding the development from securing the different cultures and languages. Notwithstanding, the government has additionally perceived the need to upgrade the use of English in the educational system with a specific end goal to make Malaysians more positive about their dealings in the current globalized world (Ramli, 2006). Regard for one another's religions and systems constitute a key component in cultivating unity among the individuals. As a gesture of appreciation for the diverse religions in the nation, public holidays are given to all citizens. Along these lines, all Malaysians can join in the festival of the different religious and social celebrations.¹² 'Open house' is held with the goal being that the soul of solidarity through differences is fortified. Above all, the capacity to be tolerant of each other has been the sign of peace in Malaysia. Fontaine and Richardson (2003, as cited in Lailawati, 2005) indicate that non-Malaysians (who conducted research on cross-cultural management) seem to neglect this fact and portrayed the result as though Malaysians were a homogenous group. Nevertheless, every group is unique and holds its unique cultural values. These become part of the important criteria for the study which will discuss intercultural communication patterns among them at a workplace.

In 1980s, the state became pressured by the 'Malay Islamic nationalist'. The impact of the state Islamicization policy generated unease and anxiety among the non-Muslim population in general and the Chinese in particular (Guan, 2000). This was because as part of the expanded Islamicization, certain Chinese practices and symbols deemed offensive to the Muslims were either eliminated from or confined to the periphery of the public space. For example, in certain wet markets, the selling of pork was either banned outright or, if allowed to be sold, was confined to spaces hidden from the public, frequently a little hidden corner in the car park level. Indeed, there was a generalised attempt by the state to erase the 'pig' symbol from the public space, including text books, television and government cafeterias (Guan, 2000). Banks (1990, p. 531) reports that the use of 'head coverings' by Malay women, the growth of Islamic schools and village education, the national attention given to youth groups that draw upon Islamic ideals and values to inspire nationalistic fervour, and the growth of other social groups focused on propagation of the faith (*dakwah*), were among indications of Islamic awareness. Banks (1990, p. 531) argues that the fast growing numbers of the *Masjid* and prayer halls since the period of independence in 1957 were also indications of the emergence of Islamic awareness. The sharing celebration posed by religious and ethnic issues created tensions between the ethnic groups and incapacitates the ethnic relationship (see "Najib Says Will Look Into Mufti's View On 'Kongsi Raya'," 2006; Sa'odah, 2006; Sa'odah, 2006; "Ulamas want kongsi raya celebrations reviewed," 2006).

The reasons behind these lie with the festivals, as they are considered as one of the most unique features that distinguish the various religions and are among their most prominent symbols. This indicates that festivals are among the characteristics by which nations are distinguished, and it is not permissible to celebrate the festivals of the other religions. This

¹²'Open house' = the Malaysian custom, where one's home is visited by all races, such as during Chinese New Year, to celebrate the festival.

applies to every Muslim, not only within the Malaysian context but based on the teaching of Islam. Since Islam hold to the concept of ¹³ONENESS to Allah, which separates Islam from other religions and monotheistic religion that is based on the Quran and ¹⁴*As-Sunnah*.

However, Islam has guidelines about this issue. In the first place a Muslim should consider the location of the event. As long as the event takes place at the house, park or hall, they can attend for the sake of maintaining good relationships among neighbours and society as a whole. Every religion has its own places of worship and they should be left to the people of those religions. In spite of this, Muslims actually can enter the place of worship of other religions such as churches, temples and synagogues for the reason that it is not against any Islamic law. Muslims can go there for several reasons, such as interfaith programs or a special occasion, a seminar, discussion, the marriage or funeral of a relative or friend. So when Muslims visit other people's places of worship for an acceptable reason, they should be respectful but should not do anything that is forbidden in Islam such as bowing or kneeling before idols, statues, or priests. If there is a prayer service in which the congregation prays to something other than God, then a Muslim is advised to remain silent and should not sing or recite those songs or prayers (Mohammad Nidzam, 2009).

In the second place there is the purpose for attending the function, whether it is to socialise and preserve the relationship among society members or among family members (who are non-Muslim). Muslims can attend the event as long as the purpose of attending is not supporting others' religious beliefs because this is prohibited for a Muslim. What is important is the principle or the reason behind the action; as long as under the Islamic guidelines, a Muslim can socialise in approved manners by their religious guideline. Islam is not instilling feelings of hatred towards other religious beliefs; they in fact encourage their followers to respect others' beliefs and promote harmony. Unlike other religions where the rules tend to be limited to things that affect faith and worship, Islam touches on every aspect of life. Muslims must respect other people and their freedom of worship, but a Muslim does not compromise their faith just to show the courtesy which is severe to their Principle of Islamic Faith (Mohammad Nidzam, 2009).

This is the essence, the religion that influences the Malay, their culture and their ways of life. In the early days, before independence, they may be aware of the Islamic practices but did not put into practice in their lifestyle, which may be due to the influence of the colonisation. However after independence, they started to be more aware of the teachings of Islam and they try to obey these religiously. What is described by Banks in wearing head covers is actually a part of the awareness of the covering ¹⁵*Aurah* practice by religious or religiously minded Muslim women. Other issues other than Halal consumption include: formal Islamic education (which is different from the previous

¹³ONENESS = refer to *Akidah Tauhid*, a Principle of Islamic Faith

¹⁴*asSunnah*= the teachings and the way of life of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w). Note that Muslim regards Muhammad solely as a Messenger of God and his teachings and his way of life merely based on the Quran itself.

¹⁵*Aurah* = derived from Arabic words, *awrah* or *awrat* (Arabic: عورة), which means certain parts of the body that need to be covered properly according to Islam.(Baalbaki, 1995a)

¹⁶*pondok* system) and Islamic legislation such as ¹⁷*Hudud* (which Kelantan tried to propose). Therefore, describing someone as Muslim also reflects their lifestyle and choice of dress in addition to their religious beliefs. One can make a comparison from a picture of Malay women during 1943 (refer Figure 2.2) and today's appearances (refer Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.2: A Terengganu (Malay) women, at the village of ¹⁸Losong, near Kuala Terengganu, outside the house, making a fishing line (Adapted from Firth, 1943).

¹⁶*Pondok* =literally means 'hut' yet in this case it refers to the traditional Malay school system. The *Sekolah Pondok* System. Historically, the *pondok* type of education began in Malaya at the beginning of the 19th century in the northern Malay states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis. It originated from Patani or Sumatera. *Pondok* education in Kedah is said to have originated from Sumatera while *pondoks* in Kelantan and Terengganu came from Patani (Ibrahim, 1994 as cited in Ahmad Naim Zaid, 2010). The *pondok* institution is one type of education centre with no age discrimination. Muslims from all backgrounds are free to learn at these institutions without restrictions. Most *pondoks* are very small in nature. Historically, the term *pondok* is used because people used to come to study and build small houses (*pondok*) around the teacher's home or *madrrasah*. (Amran Kasimin, 1993, as cited in Ahmad Naim Zaid, 2010).

¹⁷*Hudud* = derived from Arabic word, also transliterated as *hadud*, *hudoos*; singular is *hadd*, ھ, literal meaning is "limit", or "restriction", the word often used in Islamic literature for the bounds of acceptable behaviour and the punishments for serious crimes. In Islamic law or Sharia, *hudud* usually refers to the class of punishments that are fixed for certain crimes that are considered to be "claims of God." They include theft, fornication, adultery (*zina*), consumptions of alcohol or other intoxicants, and apostasy.

¹⁸Losong = a suburb of Kuala Terengganu, where the famous *keropok lekor* (traditional fish snacks) cottage industry is (Muda & Sidek, 2006).



Figure 2.3: The Terengganu (Malay) women at Noor Arfah Complex in Terengganu do the ¹⁹*songket* weaving (Adapted from Randall, 2009).

Figure 2.2 shows the Terengganu women were not wearing proper clothes and exposed their bosoms and hair which is considered as not covering the parts of the body in Islamic ways (or *Aurah*). After this period, Islamic awareness becomes more apparent, and this empowers Terengganu Malay women to adhere more closely to the Islamic dress code as portrayed in Figure 2.3.

2.2.1.3 One Malaysia policy

The most fundamental theme for nation building has been national unity since the independence of Malaya (then the formation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963) (Jayasuria, 2010 as cited in Suhana, 2012). In conjunction with the Malaysia 52nd Independence Day in 2009, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Mohd. Najib Razak, mentioned that Malaysia's biggest challenge is 'to refurbish the bridge which stands strong today while demolishing walls of segregation amongst the people' and without unity, Malaysia could face failure in developing the country (Pandian, 2010 as cited in Suhana, 2012). In the Information Era, accomplishing unity among its multiracial populace is in reality a challenge for Malaysia.

One Malaysia or as it is also known, 1 Malaysia (as in Malay is *Satu Malaysia*), is a continuous program designed by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd. Najib Razak started from 16 September 2010. The official logo and slogan for One Malaysia is the symbol '1' and the word 'Malaysia'. This programme demands all government agencies and civil servants to more strongly accentuate ethnic harmony, national unity, and proficient administration. This is a supplication for all Malaysians to unite in the soul of 'One Malaysia: People First, Performance Now' and achieve harmony, unity and integration among more than 28 million citizens. This is not a simple undertaking -

¹⁹*Songket* = is a fabric that belongs to the brocade family (literally means 'digging under') of textiles of Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. It is hand-woven in silk or cotton, and intricately patterned with gold or silver threads. The metallic threads stand out against the background cloth to create a shimmering effect. In the weaving process the metallic threads are inserted in between the silk or cotton weft (latitudinal) threads (Teh & Yousof, 2006).

progressing collaborations, trust, mutuality and reciprocity (Hashim, Mazuki, Jahi, & Rahman, 2011).

About RM38 million was spent by the government to promote this concept. Various slogans have been used to promote One Malaysia as present below (table 2.3):

Year	Theme
2010	Menjana Transformasi (Generating Transformation)
2011	Transformasi Berjaya, Rakyat Sejahtera (Transformation Successful, People Prosperous)
2012	Janji Ditepati (Promises Fulfilled)

Table 2.3: Slogans of One Malaysia (Hasnul, 2010)

One Malaysia strives to satisfy the Malaysian plural society and to guarantee the equal distribution of wealth among the racial groups in order to advance Malaysia towards a strong society and to identify and enhance the unity and integration among Malaysians (Hasnul, 2010).

The concept functions as a guiding principle to build a united and progressive nation, and to encourage the spirit and values of togetherness and sense of belongingness, regardless of race, religion and creed. This concept proposes not to revoke the *bumiputra* privileges but to improve its implementation in a fair manner and to keep intact the spirit of 1955-1957 which has been agreed by the forefathers. The concept of One Malaysia was made up of various issues or values as mapped out in Figure 2.3. The axis of these values is evolved around the core 8 central values, i.e. culture of excellence, perseverance, acceptance, education, integrity, meritocracy, humility and loyalty. It is known that Malaysians do put in trust in this concept and hope that the government will deliver on all its premises (Hasnul, 2010).

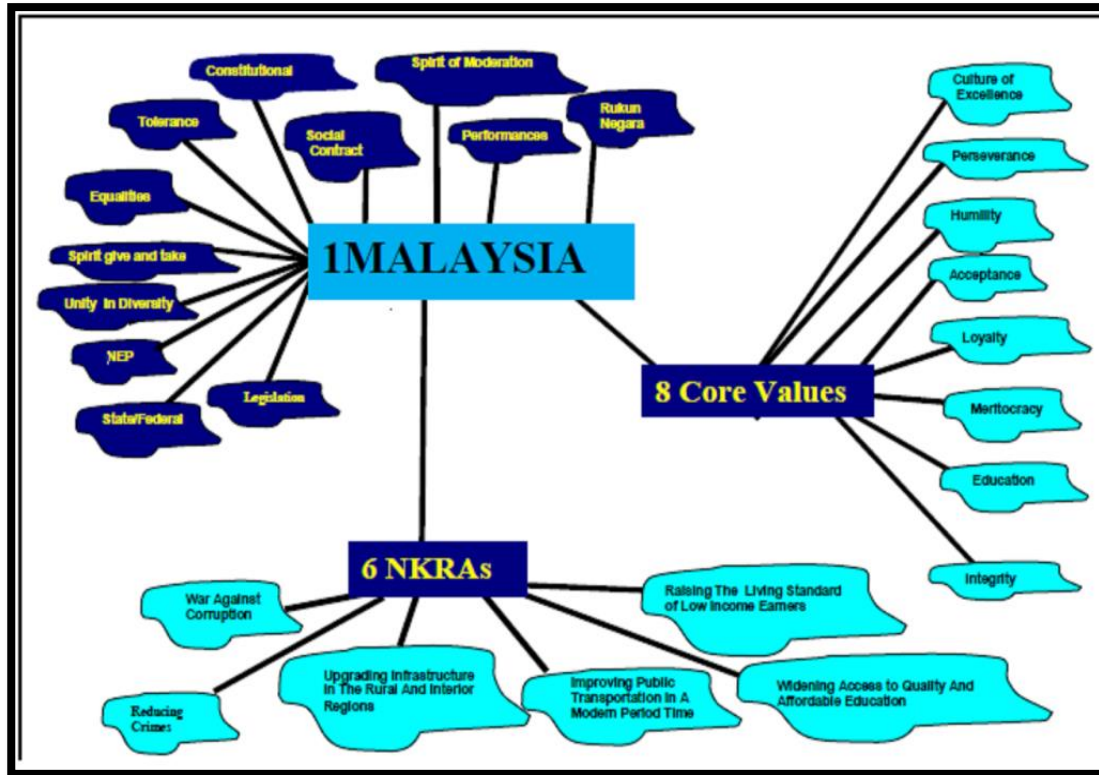


Figure 2.4: One Malaysia Key (adapted from Hasnul, 2010)

One Malaysia can be summarised as (Hasnul, 2010, p. 13):

- i. Concept not to abrogate affirmative action or privileges of certain groups rather to improve its implementation to keep intact the spirit agreed upon by our forefathers.
- ii. Unity in diversity in plural society to work together as one nation.
- iii. Unity not based on geographical factors or racial groups but focussing on all sectors of society.
- iv. To reciprocate trust and confidence – between government and people, among racial groups, between private and public sectors, different income groups, between State and Federal, and political differences.
- v. Merits taking priority over personal and political relations.
- vi. Integrity and meritocracy including non-trading e.g. education, etc.
- vii. To inculcate the spirit and values of togetherness and sense of belonging, regardless of race, religion and creed.
- viii. To allay fears through understanding, awareness and acceptance.
- ix. Arts, fashion, music etc. to portray the essence of unity; and
- x. Rukun Negara a mechanism towards better society and identity.

One Malaysia emphasises national unity and ethnic tolerance. In 2010, One Malaysia promoted the value of perseverance, a culture of excellence, acceptance, loyalty, education, humility, integrity, and meritocracy. The activities based on the concept were promoted by the government. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd. Najib Razak also ordered

the National Civics Bureau or ²⁰*Biro Tata Negara (BTN)* to use its courses and seminars to educate present and future civil servants, politicians, and community leaders about One Malaysia and promote national unity.

In the *BTN* course the One Malaysia concept and the eight values, including a high performance culture, accuracy, knowledge, innovation, integrity, strong will, loyalty and wisdom were incorporated into the module. The government's own media and the private television channel also promoted the idea of One Malaysia through their various programmes. They utilised multilingual TV hosts and actors from diverse ethnicities in order to stimulate the national unity and to enhance the concept to the public.

This unity became disunited and was gradually eroded in recent years, as highlighted by the mass media, which affected the integration of the three major ethnic groups. Recognising the need to close the gap, the One Malaysia concept was introduced to encourage citizens to work together with shared values and norms and a common purpose to transform the country to a higher level of development, wealth creation, security and society wellbeing. The Prime Minister also expected that One Malaysia could become a free and open forum to discuss the things that matter deeply to the nation (Hashim et al., 2011).

A year after the introduction of this concept, there was a comment from a former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad, that he still did not understand the concept. After two years, based on opinion polls conducted from 21 January to 26 April 2010, the public is still wary about the concept. The Merdeka Centre (as cited in ("Merdeka Center: 1 Malaysia tidak popular kalangan bukan Bumiputera (1 Malaysia is not popular among the non-Bumi)," 2010) reported that 46% of non-Malays believe that Najib administration's national unity agenda is only political to win the non-Malay votes. About 39% of non-Malays believe that this concept was a sincere drive to unite all races in Malaysia ("Merdeka Center: 1 Malaysia tidak popular kalangan bukan Bumiputera ("1 Malaysia is not popular among the non-Bumi)," 2010). Malays also feared that One Malaysia would challenge *Bumiputra* rights in favour of minorities in Malaysia.

2.2.1.4 Implications for higher education in Malaysia

This study thus arises from the current Malaysian situation. The study will investigate the issues of intercultural communication among the three ethnic groups in the Malaysian university context, illuminating the actuality of One Malaysia. Mostly, Malaysian universities encompass multiethnic groups either in terms of the students' enrolment or the composition of the staff. The Multiethnic and multicultural setting in Malaysian universities offers a unique opportunity to analyse the intercultural communication problems that may exist. According to Pandian (2008) higher education institutions

²⁰*Biro Tata Negara (BTN)* = National Civics Bureau is an agency of the Malaysian government in the Prime Minister's Department. BTN's stated objective is to nurture the spirit of patriotism and commitment to excellence among Malaysians, and train leaders and future leaders to support the nation's development efforts. BTN's programmes are controversial, and many accuse them of explicitly promoting *ketuanan Melayu* and the governing *Barisan Nasional* (National Front and commonly abbreviated as BN).

perform a very important position in promoting diversity and multiculturalism in the student body, the global work environment, the diverse workforce and the students' cultural differences in academic practices.

Thus, this study is interested to investigate staff multiculturalism through the communication which occurs among the multiethnic staff at the East Coast of Peninsular, Malaysian University. In the Malaysian perspective, everybody should emphasise communication among themselves to be productive. One Malaysia argues that Malays should appreciate the multicultural and multiethnic society, valuing differences to boost the Malaysian economy. These differences should not be as an enemy or as neglected by the community. The richness of the ethnicity should be seen as a blessing to enjoy, share and appreciate everyone's differences. Then the spirit of One Malaysia can be embedded through respecting each other regardless of ethnicity or religion. This study will investigate the perceptions of UMT staff in relation to their intercultural communication.

2.2.2 Terengganu background

2.2.2.1 Geographic and demographic background

Terengganu is situated in north-eastern Peninsular Malaysia, and is bordered in the northwest by Kelantan, the southwest by Pahang, and the east by the South China Sea. Several outlying islands, including Perhentian Island, Kapas Island and Redang Island, are also a part of the state. The state has a total area of 12,955 km².

In 2000, the state's population was only 48.7% urban; the majority lived in rural areas. Terengganu is divided into seven administrative districts (known as *Daerah* in Malay). Generally, Terengganu is a multicultural state; ethnic Malays (generally Muslim) are the most dominant group followed by ethnic Chinese, Indians and Thais (but the composition is not much apparent from ethnic Malays). As at the 2010 Census the population of Terengganu is 96.9% Muslim, 2.5% Buddhist, 0.2% Hindu, 0.2% Christian, and 0.2% followers of other religions or non-religious. The Malays are Terengganu's largest ethnic group, accounting for over 95% of the population and almost all Malays are Muslims.

Various records show that the Chinese traded with Malaysia for centuries, then settled in number during the 19th century when word of riches in the Nanyang, or 'South Seas', spread across China. Besides the tremendous number of immigrants who arrived in the east coast on their trading route from China to South East Asia, it is also believed that when the Admiral Cheng Ho from China first arrived in Kuala Terengganu, there were approximately 20,000 officers and crew landed here and these later become the permanent communities in Kuala Terengganu. The Chinese communities settled in Terengganu comprise of *Hokkien*, *Hainanese*, *Teow Chew* and *Cantonese*. Among these, *Hokkien* and *Teow Chew* are the major clans because most of them rely for their living on fishing and trading and will travel a thousand miles for this reason. Terengganu's Chinese community is small, about 50,000 people or 5% of the state's population, but they are keen to maintain their distinct traditions.

Indians had been visiting Malaysia for over 2,000 years from South India, fleeing a poor economy, and some were shipped from South India by the British. Most of them were put as coolies on the roads and railways construction as well as rubber tappers, while others as administrators and small businessmen. Because of the lack of earning sources and economic power, Indians were considered the minority group in Terengganu where they only consist of less than 1% of the total population in Terengganu state and most of them resided in the interior of Terengganu such as Kemaman.

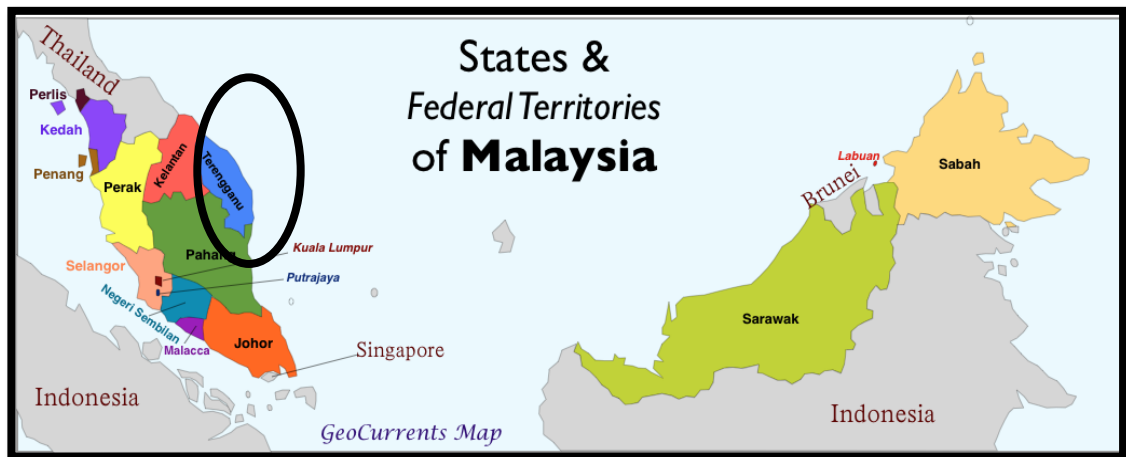


Figure 2.5: Terengganu, Malaysia (Lewis, 2013)

2.2.2.2 Culture and language

Due to its historical background and geographical location, Terengganu culture has been influenced by the neighbours in the north: Kelantan and Thailand. Terengganu imposed strict Islamic regulations and was perceived as a conservative Muslim state. Yet the general public is still enjoying the freedom of worship. However, beer or alcohol is not widely available in certain places especially Malay-owned shops.

The Terengganu dialect is very different from formal Malay and other states' dialects. The Dialect is a variation of one language which had been spoken by one particular speaker in one community of the language (Mario & Gaynor 1960). Nonetheless, a dialect has certain characteristics, which are spoken in a specific location; different in terms of standard of pronunciation, grammar and lexical, but the differences are considered to be too small to be deemed as a different language. The difference is described in detail by Kroeger (1989 pp. 193-202). Even the phonetics and phonology of this dialect is different from other states such as Kelantan, the neighbouring state (see Collins 1989, p. 242). Collins discusses in details the issues of diphthong and diphthongisation of the Terengganu dialect in his book *Dialek Hulu Terengganu* (Hulu Terengganu Dialect) (1983). The topography of the Malay dialect created a very distinctive dialect (Collins, 1989) based on the geographical areas of the Malay settlement and links to the river basin (during that time).

When non-locals from different ethnic groups, or even the same ethnic group but from different states, first encountered the locals, the possibility of intercultural communication problems began to emerge. In general, people in Terengganu use formal Malay language

during formal functions and in government affairs. In daily conversation and business affairs, they prefer to use Terengganu's dialect. Sometimes, even government servants will use the dialect when dealing with locals or non-locals in many affairs.

2.2.2.3 University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) profile

There are several institutes of higher learning in Terengganu. They are either categorised as *Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam* (IPTA) or public university, or *Institut Pengajian Tinggi Swasta* (IPTS) or private university. Among public universities which have a campus in Terengganu is the Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, situated in Gong Badak, in north Kuala Terengganu.

University Malaysia Terengganu is situated at Terengganu State, East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Specifically University Malaysia Terengganu is located in *Mengabang Telipot, Gong Badak*, in north *Kuala Terengganu*. This university is the 14th public university in Malaysia. University Malaysia Terengganu was renamed on 1st February, 2007, and was previously known as KUSTEM (College of Science and Technology Malaysia). University Malaysia Terengganu staff consists of multi-ethnic groups. These ethnic and religious groups are reflected in the staff composition at the University Malaysia Terengganu, a university on the East Coast of Malaysia. Out of 1,360 administration staff, about 1,285 staff are ethnic Malays, 50 staff ethnic Chinese, 13 staff ethnic Indian and about 12 staff are from other ethnic groups. Approximately 94% of the staff at University Malaysia Terengganu are Malays, 4% ethnic Chinese and 1% ethnic Indian, and 1% other ethnic such as Thais (of Malaysian descendant) and international staff (University Malaysia Terengganu Registrar Office 2011).

University Malaysia Terengganu has been selected as the place of study because of the unique composition of the majority versus the ethnic minorities. The site has been selected because, given the ethnic mix, there is potential for intercultural communication problems to surface between local and non-local Malay staff as well as between minority ethnic groups. There is a potential that differences in ethnicity and religion have led to communication difficulties between the administrative staff which could affect the university's productivity and, in turn, students' experiences at university. The University Malaysia Terengganu work environment is also different from other universities as University Malaysia Terengganu is situated in the northern region and has not been as influenced by the West during colonisation ("History of Malaysia," 2010). However, the influence of religion, dialect (which is distinct from other non-local Malay languages and the formal Malay Language), and the feelings of solidarity towards the state marked the differences among the staff.

This study will investigate the impact of ethnicity and religion on the communication patterns present at University Malaysia Terengganu as there is a lack of research, generally, on the subject of communication problems in relation to personnel from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in Malaysian universities. The objective is to ascertain whether these communication patterns generate communication problems and conflict which may, in turn, affect the university's productivity.

2.3 Definition

2.3.1 Intercultural communication

The term intercultural communication (IC) first originated in the United States in 1946 with the establishment of the Foreign Service Institute. It arose in response to the need to train foreign diplomats in the language and anthropological cultural understanding of different cultural groups. The term became ubiquitous and was associated with Hall's 'The Silent Language' in 1959, where he applied abstract anthropological concepts to the real world and later extended the anthropological view of culture to include communication (Jandt, 1998, pp. 36-37). Since then, culture and communication are associated in the literature investigating different cultures. The terms of intercultural communication have been debated by many scholars in this field where these term also known as *multi*, *inter*, *trans* or *cross* (Machart, 2015). Some scholar such as Welsch (1999 as cited in Machart, 2015) prefer to use intercultural whereas Song and Cadman (2012 as cited in Machart, 2015) choose *transcultural* to refer to the intercultural concept. Meanwhile, Holliday (2010) explains that intercultural communication should address a complexity of the elements that goes beyond the culture and it should acknowledge the smaller cultures and beyond. Practically, intercultural communication should be able to apply beyond the culture itself, "the ability to read the culture, which stems from underneath the universal cultural processes" (Holliday, 2010, p. 2).

Intercultural communication can become the analytical lens to see the differences and experiences during the interaction with people from different background and a process of understanding meaning of cultural differences (Zhu Hua, 2013). Zhu Hua (2013) describes intercultural communication as a way of understanding different culture by looking into the communication goals or linguistic differences in which should be appreciated and should be understood differently to ensure the interaction succeed.

IC can be defined as the 'art of understanding, and being understood by, the audience of another culture', and 'the audience could be one person or more and not necessarily a large group' (Sitaram, 1980, p. 92). Therefore, 'IC occurs whenever a person from one culture sends a message to be processed by a person from a different culture' (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009, p. 7).

This study defines IC as an interaction between individuals or groups from different cultural, religious and ethnic background, affecting the capacity to share meaning, behaviours, concepts and interpretations.

2.3.2 Intercultural communication in the Malaysian context

Intercultural communication not only happens when locals interact with international residents, but also can take place when locals and locals interact, displaying differences in terms of ethnicity, religion or language. Sitaram (1980, p. 93) verifies that IC not only refers to the interaction of locals and foreigners, but also refers to individuals from the same cultures. This can be explained in the Malaysian setting, when Malaysian Chinese and Malays interact or when Malaysian Indians interact with Malaysian Chinese.

Intercultural communication is vital to the Malaysian setting, as culture, religion and ethnicity trigger ethnic unrest. There are recent issues of religious beliefs being used by some politicians in Malaysia to break the ethnic collaboration (see Fuller, 2006). Issues include churches being bombed (Mydans, 2010) and a pig's head smeared over a mosque ("Letak Kepala Babi di Masjid-masjid di Malaysia [Malaysia: Pig's head been place at the Mosques]," 2010). In 2006, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi worried about the level of ethnic tensions caused by religious and racial issues (Fuller, 2006).

2.4 Key concepts and definitions

Culture and communication are inextricably interrelated (Jandt, 1998). For example Ting-Toomey (1999) argues that culture and communication have power over each other, exist in a complex relationship and that one should know the difference between the two concepts if communication patterns are to be investigated in the workplace.

2.4.1 Culture

Numerous scholars define culture in relation to the communication domain. Hofstede (1991) defines 'culture' as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes between the members of one group or category of people from another. Culture is everything that people have, think, and do as members of society (Ferraro, 2002). Culture is also characterised as a 'historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful' (Hall, 2005, p. 4).

Hofstede (1991) acknowledges the existence of variations in behaviour among the members of any culture. According to him, cultural patterns only show the possible and understandable reactions and behaviour based on one's past. It is impossible to have all individuals from one particular country behaving exactly the same. In relation to nationality, culture becomes the shared values among individuals within a certain national environment (Anwar & Chaker, 2003 as cited in Dahlia, 2008).

Drawing from these definitions, the study defines culture as the learned behaviour of a group of people including the norms, values, symbols, systems, thoughts, beliefs, ideas, myths, language, gestures, religion, artefacts and action. These are learned from an early age and stem from the background and environment. Therefore any action or ideas expressed by members of the group are informed by their culture. Their actions can be seen as their cultural practices which constitute their identity and influence their disposition towards conflict and conflict resolution.

Communication scholars have difficulty in explicitly defining communication. Gudykunst (1998) suggests that communication can function as the exchange of messages and the creation of meanings [e.g. assigning significance to messages]. Additionally Tyler (2005) explains that the meanings that we attach to the message actually are the most important and the process is in fact continuous and simultaneous. Communication can be described as both: interdependent, which refers to the communication cycle process where every person takes turns to be a listener and speaker and gives feedback; and as situational, which is the communication context influencing the communication process (Hall, 2005).

In this study the definition of communication is necessarily broad and involves a process which includes key communication components: communicators, the message, feedback, perception, communication barriers, context and channels.

On the critical aspect, the individual from one culture could see another culture as deficient, where intercultural communication looked at their cultural differences, cultural practices and the intercultural context (Ferri, 2014; Lawrence, 2009). A study by Knott, Mak, and Neill (2013) indicates that the individual (in this case students) may have an alternate view about the different cultures that they experienced including knowledge about the new environment and the people, and, furthermore, also the lack of intercultural abilities that made them take for granted others' culture. However, Ferri (2014) argues that 'the partial, contested and situated nature of language is where cultural self-awareness is the essential instrument used to translate the world'. Self-awareness opens up a dialogic dimension of communication that likewise includes critical engagement and sympathy towards the others, instead of straightforward tolerance towards a conceptual 'cultural other'. Ferri (2014) perspectives towards intercultural communication is seen as an appreciation about the self and other, an awareness of the intricacy of life in which communications happen, which includes the ideological constructions of culture and practices encompassing other's perception, the used of power dimensions in communication, and a responsible engagement where needs, beliefs, feelings, desires and interest were acknowledged and acclimatised.

2.4.1.1 Cultural values, Hofstede's and Hall's cultural dimensions

Cultural values also need to be defined as they are a core component in the study. Values can be explained as 'those things found in all cultures that are expected or hoped for, they involve embedded assumptions about what is right or wrong, good or bad; and they involve a set of standards by which behaviour is evaluated' (Ferraro, 2002, p. 26). That is because differences in cultural values can point to confusion and uncomfortable feelings in business relationships (Ferraro, 2002). 'Values are grounded in beliefs about the way the world should be rather than assumptions about the way the world is' (Hall, 2005, pp. 49-50).

Values are linked with culture since cultures may possess different values from other cultures. Values denote the deepest level of culture, invisible and can only be inferred from people's behaviour (Hofstede, 1991). For example, a person from an individualist culture values direct and explicit communication, in contrast to a person from a collectivist culture who may value indirect communication and appreciate contextual elements in communication strategies (Brew, 1993). This is where value and culture interlock and determine the behaviours of others towards other cultures. What is the function of value in intercultural communication? Value is used to learn, to understand, to identify and to prevent diverse cultural traits, and also create a cultural awareness in order to avoid miscommunication in intercultural communication (Ferraro, 2002).

Different cultures may hold different values in their community. Scholars such as Hofstede (1991), Hall (2005), Samovar et al. (2009), Ferraro (2002) and Mircea (2008) have numerous views on cultural dimensions. Hofstede (1991) value dimensions foreshadowed those of Gudykunst (1998), Samovar et al. (2009), Ferraro (2002) and

Mircea (2008). Gudykunst (1998) value dimensions verify five cultural dimensions similar to Hofstede (1991) such as individualism-collectivism. Samovar et al. (2009) discusses nine dimensions of cultural values and called this a 'cultural syndrome', while Ferraro (2002) identified ten cultural dimensions which were applicable to global business as well as intercultural communication. Hofstede was a prominent scholar in intercultural communication. He developed values dimensions based on his study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture, and formulated a model that identifies four primary value dimensions to assist in differentiating cultures: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) and Long-term Orientation (LTO). Power-distance dimensions (PDI) are cultural variations in the acceptability of unequal distribution of power in relationships, institutions, and organisations. Within the power-distance dimension there are two general levels: low-power distance and high-power distance. Low-power distance cultures do not focus on status in the ranking of people; people see everyone as equals. This type of culture is, in a sense, a horizontal culture, where there is equal distribution in power. High-power distance cultures are the opposite of low-power distance and separate people based on a social hierarchy. The higher status has more respect and authority, and this type of culture is vertical. It is a culture where people do not seem to question authority. High-power distance cultures are very often associated with individualistic, masculine, and low-context cultures (Hofstede, 1991).

Individualism (IDV) is the opposite of collectivism, alone versus togetherness. An individualist society is expected to look after their immediate family only. While on the collectivist side, people are integrated into 'strong, cohesive groups normally in extended family which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (Hofstede, 1991, p. 6). Masculinity (MAS) is the opposite of femininity and functions from relatively tough to relatively tender. The fundamental issue of this cultural dimension is the distribution of roles between the sexes. In some societies, women's values such as modesty and caring for men's values, from assertive and competitive, indicate the gap of the culture of the society or country.

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) is the fourth dimension introduced by Hofstede which classifies culture from being a flexible to a rigid society. This dimension refers to society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. The criterion for uncertainty avoidance is man's search for the Truth where it will program the members of the culture to feel comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. Hofstede suggests that uncertainty-avoiding cultures will try to reduce possibilities by imposing strict laws, rules, safety and security measures. The people are more emotional due to their inner nervous energy, while people in uncertainty-accepting cultures will try to have as few rules as possible, be more relativist in their religious level, and not expect their environment to express emotions.

Long-term orientation (LTO) the opposite of short-term orientation, a national value dimension originally found by Bond among students in 23 countries became Hofstede (1991) fifth dimension of national cultures. This dimension values persistence (perseverance), thrift, ordering relationships by status and observing this order and having a sense of shame, which is a contrast to the other dimension such as reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts, respect for tradition, protecting one's 'face' and personal

steadiness and stability. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth. They are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Lately Hofstede introduced the sixth dimension of culture: the Indulgence Versus Restraint (IVR) where indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

In this study, the researcher chose to focus on only three of the cultural dimensions namely: Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) and Long-term orientation (LTO).

2.4.1.1.1 Hall's cultural dimensions

Aside from adapting Hofstede's cultural dimensions, this study also uses Hall's (2005) dimensions as a foundation of this study. Hall is well known for his high- and-low context cultural factors. He divides cultures into high-context and low-context cultures. In a high-context culture, the society prefers to use high-context messages, where 'the meaning is either implied by the physical setting or is presumed to be part of the individuals' internalized belief, values, norms and social practices, very little is provided in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message' (Koester & Lustig, 2013, p. 102). There are many contextual elements that help people to understand the rule and, as a result, much is taken for granted. This can be very confusing for individuals who do not understand the 'unwritten rules' of the culture. Whereas in a low-context culture, more explanation is needed, it also means there is less chance of misunderstanding particularly when visitors are present and the information is depicted in explicit code.

High-context culture	Low-context culture
Indirect and implicit	Direct and explicit
Messages internalised	Messages plainly coded
Much non-verbal communication	Details verbalised (more focus on verbal communication than body language)
Reactions reserved (inward reactions)	Reactions on the surface (visible, external, outward reaction)
Distinct in-groups and out-groups (strong sense of family)	Flexible in-groups and out-groups (flexible and open grouping patterns, changing as needed)
Strong interpersonal bonds (strong bonds with affiliation to family and community)	Fragile interpersonal bonds (between people with little sense of loyalty)
High commitment (to long-term relationships, relationship more important than task)	Low commitment (to relationship, task more important than relationships)
Time is open and flexible (process is more important than product)	Time is highly organised (product is more important than process)

Table 2.4: Characteristics of Low-and High-context cultures (adapted from Koester and Lustig (2013, p. 105)

Hall also introduced the non-verbal communication, such as the use of proxemics or space. The concern of space is in many situations, from personal body space to space in the office, parking space, space at home. Some people need more space in all areas. People who encroach into that space are seen as a threat. This concept will be discussed in detail in the non-verbal section later.

2.4.2 Verbal communication

Language is a prerequisite in human life which is used as a very effective medium to interact with others. Language however is not a natural phenomenon yet it should be learnt in order to fulfil the need and the necessities of the individual. The process involves outside factors such as the background of the speaker, culture, and the status of language in certain countries. Language also can be seen as a verbal communication. Verbal communication can be in the form of spoken or written words. Table 2.5 demonstrates definitions of verbal communication.

Scholars	Definitions
DeVito (2009, p. 101)	Verbal message is the message that you send using words, the word <i>verbal</i> also refers to words, not orality, where verbal message include the oral and written word.
Mircea (2008, p. 64)	Language refers to social interactions where language is an outstanding factor establishing understanding and conditions for dialogue.
Hall (2005, p. 131 & 139)	Verbal communication is connected to context, where we may decide 'to use our words, written or spoken' (Hall 2005, p.139) which is always associated with frames plus become parts of the whole issues of understanding the context.
Ferraro (2002, p. 120)	Language can be described as a symbolic system of sounds which, when combined together, will give meaning to the speakers.
Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 85)	Language as 'an arbitrary, symbolic system that names ideas, feelings, experiences, events, people and other phenomena and that is governed by the multilayered rules developed by members of a particular speech community'.
Jandt (1998, p. 121)	Language is 'a set of symbols shared by a community to communicate meaning and experience'.

Table 2.5: Definitions of verbal communication in the literature

Language is a medium of communication although the way we pronounce it and the intonation may be different in some ways. In Malay language, objects or terms can represent several different things. Let say the pig, it can be describe as '*babi*' or '*khinzir*', which refers to the same animal, a pig. But mentioning '*babi*' in a conversation can be very different compared with using the word '*khinzir*'. The same goes for the term husband which means '*suami*', '*laki*' or '*orang rumah*', but the word '*suami*' is more formal, while '*laki*' or '*orang rumah*', is a bit informal and even a bit harsh. The other terms are '*perempuan*', '*wanita*' or '*betina*', which means a woman, a lady and bad attitude women. The meaning '*betina*' can also refer to a female animal. These terms can leave a very different emotional connotation depending on the social context and the function of the language. Linguistic scholars call this semantics, where the same words can have different meanings to other people from different cultural background (Spinks, Nelda, & Wells, Barron, 1997). It is because certain words can have different meanings in certain cultural contexts which can be positive or negative.

In the Malaysian case having a range of language varieties is linked to the geographical and district areas. The more speakers of the language, the wider the district and the distribution of the language and the more differences will transpire. In this study, the

Terengganu dialect must also be taken into consideration in language use. The Malay dialect in Malaysia generally can be divided into twelve dialect districts and then into sub dialects (Asmah, 1987). Malay dialects are based on the twelve districts; nine in peninsular Malaysia and three in Sabah and Sarawak (Collins & Bahar, 2000). The nine districts in peninsular Malaysia are from Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan.

Differences in context, patterns of communication and the different assumptions underpinning the use of verbal communication, can cause miscommunication especially in the workplace (Inon Beydha, Jamilah, Md. Salleh, & Abd. Hadi, 2009). For example, our culture educates us on how to use verbal messages in appropriate ways; for example, in some cultures they do not address their teachers by the teachers' first name, which others are far less formal (see Hall, 2005). Our gender, too, influences our verbal communication. Several studies show that women's speech tends to be more polite than men's speech, as well as in telephone conversations (Brown, 1980, Wetzel, 1988, Holmes, 1995, Smoreda & Licoppe, 2000 as cited in DeVito, 2009, p. 105).

In this study, verbal communication refers to the words themselves (the way words are spoken is non-verbal). The study is not concerned with the grammatical structure of the language or the linguistic approach; rather it seeks to concentrate on the verbal communication in terms of word usage among staff and the semantics that may arise.

2.4.3 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication has several definitions. Jandt (1998, 2010) and Tyler (2005) agree that non-verbal communication refers to 'non-spoken' and not using words. Gudykunst (1998) and Burgoon et al. (1988) as cited in Jandt (1998) refer to non-verbal communication as using symbols, which have a shared meaning, very distinctive and interpreted intentionally or unintentionally by the sender or receiver. Non-verbal communication cannot be silenced, as communication will still occur. Even if we are not replying to emails, or using words and cutting off our verbal communication, by doing such acts they actually become an act of non-verbal communication. This clarifies non-verbal communication both intentional and unintentional, in light of the fact that you may wind up communicating something specific non-verbally when you would like to stop all correspondence totally (Hazelwood & Finch, 2010). In intercultural communication, non-verbal functions as providing information, managing expressions, expressing emotions, regulating interactions and conveying relationship messages. These five functions are interrelated; numerous objectives are typically being fulfilled amid each communications (Lustig & Koester, 2012). Table 2.6 outlines these definitions.

Scholars	Definitions
Jandt (1998, 2010)	Describes non-verbal communication as ‘intentional uses as in using a non-spoken symbol to communicate a specific message...and non-verbal communication refers to a source of actions and attributes that are not purely verbal’.
Tyler (2005, p. 171)	Non-verbal behaviour literally means communication not using any words, which can be used in a certain context to interpret the act into a meaning, where this action can either be alone or associated with verbal behaviours.
Gudykunst (1998, p. 171)	Non-verbal is very distinct and invented in a basis of agreement among the members of a group using the non-verbal; they are arbitrary like symbols and do not involve displacement
Burgoon et al., 1988 as cited in Jandt (1998, p. 99)	Characterise non-verbal communication ‘as those actions and attributes of humans that have socially shared meaning, are intentionally sent or interpreted as intentional, are consciously sent or consciously received, and have the potential for feedback from the receiver’.

Table 2.6: Definitions of non-verbal communication in the literature

This study defines non-verbal communication as communication by all the means using symbols and body language to communicate the message to a receiver except the actual words themselves. The way words are spoken or written is therefore related to non-verbal communication.

2.4.3.1 Types or channels of non-verbal communication

There are several types of non-verbal communication discussed by the communication scholars including kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, paralinguistic and semiotics (see Tyler, 2002). Other categories include haptics, clothing and physical appearance, olfactory and oculesis (see DeVito, 2009; Jandt, 1998). Knapp (2006), suggests that ‘theoretical writings and research on communication can be broken down into the following three areas: the communication environment (physical and spatial), the communicator’s physical characteristics and body movement and position (gestures, posture, touching, facial expressions, eye behaviour and vocal behaviour)’. This study focuses on Knapp and Hall’s third area, concentrating on proxemics and touch.

2.4.3.1.1 Proxemics

The study about the use of space was pioneered by Edward T. Hall in 1959 where he describes this research area as proxemics. Proxemics can be divided into two categories: proxemics distances and territoriality (DeVito, 2009). Proxemics distances can be categorised into four types of distance: intimate relationship, personal relationship, social relationship and public relationship (see DeVito, 2009). Below are the two types of proxemics:-

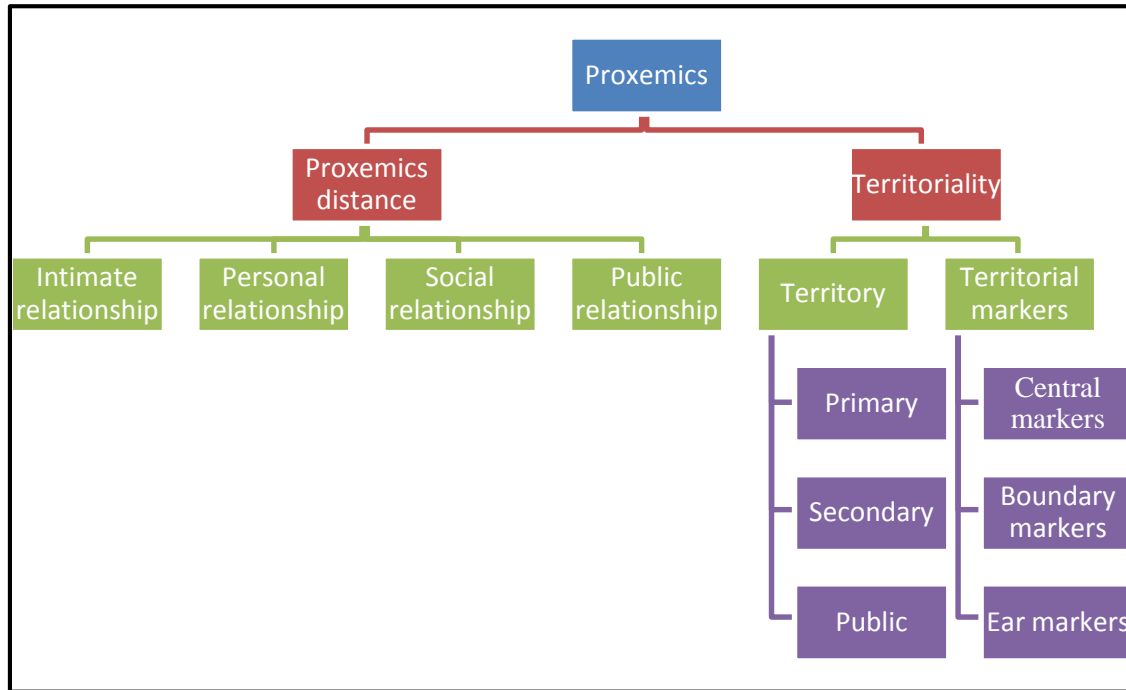


Figure 2.6: Types of territories (adapted from DeVito, 2009, p. 132)

All four types of distance allow us to determine our relationship with others, whom we keep our distance from, and whom we may not keep our distance from, because our use of distance is influenced by gender, personality (extrovert or introvert), age and familiarity [stranger and the people we familiar with] (Burgoon et al., 1996, Burgoon & Bacue, 2003 as cited in DeVito, 2009). Territoriality refers to ‘a possessive or ownership reaction to an area of space or to particular objects’ (DeVito, 2009, p. 133) and is divided into two types: territory types and territorial markers. There are three types of territories described by Altman (1975, as cited in DeVito, 2009): primary, secondary and public territory and three types of territorial markers: central markers, boundary markers and ear markers [refer to Figure 2.6] (DeVito, 2009). The study will look into this use of space across three ethnics groups in all managerial levels.

Marker types	Explanation
Central markers	Refers to an item that you put in a territory to reserve it such as a drink on a canteen table or books on a library table.
Boundary markers	Refers to a boundary that separates your place and the others such as on bus seats which separate by your bag in the centre or the moulded plastic seats.
Earmarkers	Refers to identifying markers that show your ownership of the territory or object such as a nameplate, student cards or initials on a shirt. These earmarkers indicate that you belong to a certain groups or territory such as a corporation or institution.

Table 2.7: Types of territorial markers (adapted from DeVito, 2009, p. 134)

2.4.3.1.2 Touch or Haptic communication

Touch can give us a plethora of meaning. There are five types of messages which illustrate the meaning of touch. First, touch can convey positive feelings to others when we touch people to give them support or appreciation. Secondly, touch conveys our intention to play affectionately or aggressively. Thirdly, we use touch to control the behaviours, attitudes or feelings of others. Touch is also used to gain attention and, finally, includes ritualistic touching such as when greeting people, either by shaking hands, hugging or kissing (DeVito, 2009).

Even though touching is part of communication, some people seem to avoid touching which is called touch avoidance. Touch is subject to cultural differences as every culture has rules about touching. Some cultures may be comfortable with lots of touching and some may be a touch-avoidance society. People from cultures that value lots of touching are labelled as contact cultures, and those who are from touch-avoidance cultures are labelled as non-contact cultures. Japan is a non-contact culture and northern Europe is a contact culture (DeVito, 2009).

2.4.4 Conflict

Hall (2005, p. 233) sees conflict as:

An expressed struggle between at least two parties who perceive incompatible goals and/or potential interference from the other party in achieving the desired goal. This conflict condition can turn into intercultural conflict when 'the incompatibility must be generated, where differences in meaning may emerge and understood differently'.

Deutsch (1973), Putnam and Poole (1987) and Wall and Callister (1995) as cited in Zarankin (2008, p. 167) defines conflict as:

Perception of incompatibility between values, needs, interests' fractions, is an inherent part of our daily life, both at work and in other settings. Regardless of context, the ways

people deal with conflict, or their conflict style, play a critical role in shaping both the outcome of the conflict and the future relationship between the parties.

Intercultural conflict can be defined as a ‘study of conflict that evolves, at least in part, because of cultural group membership differences’ (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 2). It is the experience of emotional frustration in conjunction with perceived incompatibility of values, norms, face orientations, goals, scarce resources, processes, and/or outcomes between a minimum of two parties from two different cultural communities in an interactive situation (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

There are several reasons according to Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) why intercultural conflict needs to be managed in a constructive and creative way. One reason is that a different viewpoint may offer various ways to solve problems. Secondly, diversity in a workplace should not be neglected, as this may result in: low morale because of culture clash, high absenteeism because of physiological stress, money would have to be spent to retrain individuals because of high employee turnover, time waste because of miscommunication between diverse employees, and the enormous amount of personal energy expended in being defensive and resistant to inevitable change.

A diverse workforce, too, has advantages such as:

Full use of the organization’s human capital, increased knowledge, enhanced mutual respect among diverse employees, increased commitment among diverse employees at all levels of organizational and across all functions, greater innovation and flexibility as others participate more constructively in problem-solving teams and improved productivity as more employee effort is directed at achieving the system’s goal and less energy is expended in dealing with cultural miscommunication issues (Loden & Rosener, 1991 as cited in Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 8).

This study focuses on culture-based situational conflicts (see Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001) and believes that ‘understanding conflict along a cultural variability perspective serves as the beginning step in understanding conflict variations among different clusters of cultures’. Also, the differences in value dimensions served by cultural variability perspectives will also influence conflict management processes (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

2.4.4.1 Types of intercultural conflict

There are three types of intercultural conflict: object, relationship and priority conflicts (Hall, 2005). Object conflicts refer to ‘conscious or unconscious disagreement and misunderstanding about something’. Objects in a very broad sense refer to anything that ‘may be perceived intellectually be it physical or abstract’ (Hall, 2005, p. 233). Here, the discussion is important for both cultures and has:

a strong relation to the issues either positively or negatively but the term or concept may be found in a variety of contexts and is often surrounded by greater cultural elaboration and restrictions, it provides an explanatory bridge between other concepts and finally the meanings associated with it are discrepant across particular cultural communities (Hall, 2005, p. 235).

Relationship conflict refers to the relationship between two or more people which normally ‘deals with how these identities affect and link each other together in actual, specific relationships’ and ‘often highlight the implications of human actions relative to one another’ (Hall, 2005, p. 236). Relationship conflict links with the issue, the relationship and the effect on the relationship. Priority conflict ‘involves a judgment of the relative moral worth of certain actions’ (Hall, 2005, p. 238). Often priority conflict links with the emotional state of the person and exposes people’s values and communities to different kinds of people and the different actions taken. Priority conflict can also occur in everyday life such as in marriage or in family matters, especially when there is intermarriage between two different cultures.

2.4.4.2 Cultural approaches to conflict

Essentially, there are five styles of handling interpersonal conflict: avoiding, accommodating (obliging), competing (dominating/controlling), compromising and collaborating (integrating) (Hall, 2005). An avoiding style is used to avoid the conflict topic (do not want to discuss) or avoiding the person or the conflict situation. An accommodating (obliging) style puts a ‘high concern for the other person’s conflict interest above and beyond one’s own conflict interest’ (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 46). A compromising style requires give-and-take in order to achieve an agreement in the conflict, and a collaborating (integrating) style ‘reflects a need for solution closure in conflict and involves a high concern for self and high concern for others in conflict substantive negotiations’. These five styles reflect a western approach: ‘it should be noted that ‘obliging and avoiding conflict styles often take on a Western slant of being negatively disengaged’ (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 46). In a collectivist group, this conflict style helps ‘to maintain mutual-face interest and relational network interest’ (Ting-Toomey, 1988 as cited in Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 46)

2.5 Theoretical foundations

2.5.1 Critical discourse over the Hofstede ideas

Hofstede’s work is the most cited research in his five-dimension cultural value system. However, Hofstede’s work has been criticized by many scholars in relation to methodology, application, generalisation, ecological fallacy and being descriptive rather than predictive. Fang (2003) discusses a number of weaknesses in Hofstede’s fifth national culture dimension, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation. There is first the Confucian dynamism (long-term orientation) which categorises the values into two opposing poles. Hofstede’s ideas are a ‘philosophical flaw because the Chinese Yin Yang principle is violated by the concept’. Fang (2003) believes that ‘values labelled as “short-term oriented” or “negative” may not necessarily be so, and values labelled as “long-term oriented” or “positive” may not necessarily be so either’ (Fang, 2003, p. 355). A second problem is the repetition among the 40 Chinese values in the Chinese Value Survey (CVS). Fang claims that ‘a number of values either mean essentially the same thing or are highly interrelated which leads to the fact that the two “opposite” ends of Confucian dynamism (long-term orientation) are actually not opposed to each other’ (Fang, 2003, p. 359). Thirdly, Fang contends that the ‘values focus too much on Confucianism; the Taoist

and Buddhist values are not considered in the design of the constructs leading to Hofstede's fifth dimension' (Fang, 2003, p. 361). Fourth, the imprecise English translation has been discovered in some values in the CVS, which could miscalculate the results in cross cultural surveys and end up with meaningless findings. Fifthly, Fang argues that Hofstede's fifth dimension is based on the opinions of a student population where the cultural values could not represent the average cultural values held by the public in their cultures at large. Finally, Fang (2003) also compared the first four dimensions and found that the fifth does not result from the same techniques of factor analysis as used earlier to validate the results; it does not have the same sampling background (students vs. IBM employees). Given the flaws inherent in its conceptualisation, Hofstede's fifth dimension's viability is questioned, and its relevance for the cross cultural management research and practice has been found and will remain limited.

Guðmundsdóttir (2010) listed several researchers who critiqued Hofstede's framework and the choice of organisations. Among the researchers were Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges And deLuque (2006), Fishcer, Ferreira, Assmar, Redford and Harb (2005), Latifi (2006), Smith, Dungan and Trompenaars (1996), House et al. (2004), Bond and Chi (1997), Kanter (1991), Bond and Smith (1996), Baumgertel and Hill (1982) and Lowe (1981) (as cited in Guðmundsdóttir, 2010). These scholars argued about the way the research was conducted, the choice of organisation which had other interests while the research was conducted due to the position of Hofstede (as an employee of IBM) at that time. They also argued that the strength of using an international organisation like IBM 'becomes a weakness if the results are used for interpretation of a nation's culture or values alone. It has been argued by researchers that work-related values obtained from a Western-minded organisation, for example in Iran, can neither be generalised to the whole nation nor organisations' (Bond, 1988, Latifi, 2006 as cited in Guðmundsdóttir, 2010, p. 215). Latifi (2006 as cited in Guðmundsdóttir, 2010) claimed that the respondents at Iran (IBM employees) 'were typically middle class, highly skilled, educated, white collar employees' which made it 'questionable how much work-related values of IBM employees, working in an Iranian subsidiary of an international organisation, can represent the people of a country like Iran as a whole' (Guðmundsdóttir, 2010, p. 215).

Other researchers such as Baumgertel and Hill (1982) and Lowe (1981) as cited in Guðmundsdóttir (2010), were also concerned about the limited number of dimensions identified by Hofstede. They argued that the instrument used in the survey was Western oriented; the comprehensiveness of the values under investigation is questionable. Some critics argued whether the dimensions developed from data collected between 1968 and 1973 were artefacts of the period of analysis. They also suggested that Hofstede's map was rather a descriptive document of a time period rather than a dynamic map of national cultures, and they argue that since the 1970s when the IBM data were collected a great deal of social change has occurred in many parts of the world. There have been technological advances such as the internet with easy communication, easier travel modes that allow people to travel extensively without as much cost, and all this adds up to a very different cultural map than was in the 1970s. They also contend that Hofstede's framework using the five dimensions relates to the classification of groups of people who are made up of different individuals and often labelled into categories such as Arab, Asian and European.

Kim (2007) is among the researchers who criticised Hofstede about the breadth, depth and import of his study into culture. Kim argues about the relevancy of the instrument, as a survey is not an appropriate instrument, he considers, for accurately determining and measuring cultural disparity. Kim (2007) criticises Hofstede's study which assumes the domestic population as a homogenous whole; nations are not the proper units of analysis as cultures are not necessarily bounded by borders (McSweeney, 2000 as cited in Kim, 2007), and he is sceptical of the Hofstede outcomes (in particular Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance) and claims that was partly due to political influences. Kim claims that the outcomes were sensitive to the timing of the survey where Europe was in the midst of the cold war and still recovering from World War Two, similarly there was the communist insurgence in Asia, Africa and Europe. As a result of the political instabilities of the time, the sample lacks data from socialist countries, as well as from the less affluent Third World Countries. Kim also claims that the Hofstede survey was a 'one company' approach, Hofstede's cultural dimension was out-dated, and that the cultural dimensions were too few and did not give sufficient information about cultural differences. As well there is the statistical integrity where Dorfman and Howell (1988 as cited in Kim (2007) have found that in his analysis, Hofstede used the same questionnaire item on more than one scale, and several have significant cross-loadings. Basically Kim (2007) criticisms focused on five points: (1) surveys are inappropriate instruments to measure culture, (2) units of analysis of nations are not the best units suited for studying culture, (3) one company can't provide information about entire national cultures, (4) the IBM data is old and obsolete, and (5) four dimensions can't tell the whole story, which was also highlighted by McSweeney.

Other researchers such as Safi (2010) and Shaiq, Khalid, Akram, and Ali (2011) also make similar claims about the relevancy, cultural homogeneity, national divisions, political influences, one company approach, outdated issues, too few dimensions and statistical integrity. McSweeney (2001) highlights the Hofstede flaws in cultural dimension theory based on four assumptions: every micro-location is typical of the national, respondents were already permanently 'mentally programmed' with three non-interacting cultures, the main dimensions of a national culture can be identified by questionnaire response difference analysis, and 'identified' in the workplace is unaffected by location. McSweeney then maintained that Hofstede's cultural dimensions were restricted to the workplace and ignored others and was not replicated at other types of location. He further identified two profound problems:

First, the generalisations about national level culture from an analysis of small sub national populations necessarily relies on the unproven, and unprovable, supposition that within each nation there is a uniform national culture and on a mere assertion that micro-local data from a section of IBM employees was representative of that supposed national uniformity. Secondly, is the elusiveness of culture in which it was argued that what Hofstede 'identified' is not national culture, but an averaging of situational specific opinions from which dimensions or aspects, of national culture are unjustifiably inferred. Even if we heroically assume that the answers to a narrow set of questions administered in constrained circumstances are 'manifestations' of a determining national culture, it requires an equally contestable act of faith to believe that Hofstede's overly contrived methodology successfully identified those cultures (McSweeney, 2002, pp. 107-108).

Many scholars criticised Hofstede's five-dimension cultural values system in relation to its methodology, applications, generalisation, ecological fallacy, being too descriptive rather than predictive and being too old to be of any modern relevance. However the dimensions are a useful first point of difference between the three cultural groups represented in the study. Their efficacy will also be tracked in relation to the present study to throw more light on the controversy about Hofstede's work.

Despite the critic on the Hofstede's works by the scholars mentioned, the researcher is in the opinion that Hofstede's theory helps in understanding the idea of cultural values which is regarded as a fundamental knowledge for this study. Hofstede is identified as a pioneer and pathfinder for the study of culture which is relevant to the study. The dimension of cultural values introduced by Hofstede has helped the researcher in organising the survey questions as well as interview questions. This cultural dimension presented by Hofstede was very useful for the study especially when it comes to analysing the data and arranging them into the themes. Hofstede's observations and analysis in cultural values and dimension have given a valuable insight into the cross-cultural relationship of the study. The researcher is aware of Hofstede's ideas of culture which has been criticised by other scholars. To this end, the researcher has also used Hall's dimension of culture in this study to complement the theory.

Therefore, the researcher considers that his theory, despite all the criticisms addressed, is still reliable and valid to be used as a basis for this study. The critique about the way the data was collected will be taken into consideration and to be used as a guideline for the researcher's data collection.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature related to the Malaysian background, intercultural communication and its relationship to the Malaysian situation. The chapter also expounds the key concepts and definitions as well as the theoretical foundation which forms the basic concepts of the study. This review of the literature observed that the current Malaysian studies focused on school students, multinational corporations, university students and international students for research purposes. The studies were mainly conducted quantitatively, though limited studies did focus on qualitative methods although only in relation to the international students' adaptation and were limited to multinational organisation. Furthermore, several previous studies investigated the three main groups, Chinese, Indian and Malay, separately, and rarely discussed the groups together. It is for the reason that this study will use a different approach to investigate the personnel in higher education system. The new approach conducts a mixed method approach to enrich the data obtained to date.

The Malaysian background fortifies the intricacy of the relationships between the three main cultures, Chinese, Indian and Malay, by describing their culture, cultural values, religion, ways of life and their interaction. It is likewise clarifying that the intercultural communication will permit the advancement of understandings about how the cultures and their world views interrelate in a higher education context and their interaction. The One Malaysia policy likewise has been executed by the government to foster the spirit of

unity and to maintain the amicable circumstances in order to remain peaceful and harmonious.

The study is significant because it develops understanding that intercultural communication needs to be lifelong learning especially in the Malaysian higher education context. Malaysian personnel, regardless of ethnicity, need to improvise their intercultural communication skills in order to empower the higher education where they nurture the students. Intercultural communication in this study context could be an eye opener for the dominant group to look into details of the minority group and understand them in order to live in a harmonious state and learn to appreciate the differences.

Next is **Chapter Three** which will describe the methodology including the research paradigm, research design, research setting, researcher's role, data collection and analysis methods as well as the etiquette and the procedure. The chapter also justifies the use of methodology and assesses its validity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents details of the research design and the methods employed in this research. The study will employ ethnography as a research approach. The methods selected for the study included both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods including an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The chapter will outline the research approach, the methods and procedures involved and the research settings. This chapter will also discuss the data collection techniques employed by the study.

3.2 The research paradigm

A paradigm is understood as a worldview, ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’ (Guba, 1990, p.17 as cited in Creswell, 2009), or epistemologies and anthologies (Crotty, 1998 as cited in Creswell, 2009), or broadly conceived research methodologies (Neuman, 2000 as

Characteristic	Post Positivist View	Interpretive (Constructivism) View	Pragmatic view	Transformative/ Critical (Advocacy/Participatory) View
Purpose	The researcher will predict and explain changes in intercultural communication knowledge of respondents at UMT	The researcher will interview the respondents and recognise the experiences and depth of the individual content.	The researcher will predict, interview the respondents and recognise their in-depth experiences.	The researcher will aim to critique, emancipate and recognise the previous social or historical context of other research paradigms.
Beliefs	One truth exists. Must be objective.	Many truths and realities. Different people have different perceptions, needs and experiences.	Biases in any single method could neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods.	Knowledge is subjective, highly contextualised, value-dependent.
Research Methods	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed Methods	Qualitative/action research
What Study Data is Based Upon	Measurable outcomes from questionnaire data.	Descriptive, explanatory and contextual words of interview data.	Sequential, both open-and closed-ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis.	Descriptive, explanatory and contextual words of interview data.
Study Sample	Clear and precise inclusion and exclusion data.	Representatives who are able to provide expertise	Employs the practices of both	Representatives who are able to provide expertise from

		from different points of view.	qualitative and quantitative research. Integrates the data at different stages of inquiry.	different points of view.
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Table 3.1: Summary of the Research Paradigms (Adapted from Snape & Spencer, 2003)

cited in Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009, p. 6) agrees that worldviews ‘provide a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds’.

Basically there are four different worldviews or paradigms: post positivist, interpretivist (constructivism), transformative (advocacy/participatory) research and pragmatism. Table 3.1 overviews the paradigms.

The quantitative approach shares its worldview with the positivist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). The positivist paradigm contests the ‘traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge’ (Philips & Burbules, 2000 as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 7) and belief that ‘we cannot be ‘positive’ about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). The positivist philosophy argues that ‘causes probably determine effects or outcome’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). Hence, as a consequence, research is validated only by the methods of natural sciences, observable inductively through the accumulation of verified facts, hypotheses to be tested empirically, observations are the final arbiter, and facts and values are distinct (2003). Thus, to the post positivist, ‘numeric measures of observations and studying the behaviour of individuals becomes paramount’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). In positivism, the rigid principles will be more focused on empirical observation and measurement (Creswell, 2009).

However, such inflexible beliefs did not have the capacity to accommodate the investigatory aspect of this study that explores social and human experiences. As a result, qualitative methodologies were also incorporated into the research design. The qualitative methodology shares its philosophical foundation with the interpretive paradigm which supports the view that there are many truths and multiple realities. This type of paradigm focuses the holistic perspectives of the person and culture which aim to discern the in-depth experiences and perspectives of the respondents (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Additionally, the interpretive paradigm is associated more with the social world, to understand and explore the social world through the respondents and their own perspectives (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Crotty (1998, as cited in Snape & Spencer, 2003, pp. 8-9) claim that ‘qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their views, seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally and the process is largely inductive’.

Due to the complex nature of the research study, therefore, the researcher found it necessary to combine the quantitative/positivist paradigm with the qualitative/interpretive paradigm, which thus places the research in the pragmatic paradigm. The pragmatic

paradigm provided the researcher with the ability to statistically analyse the scientific data whilst also recognising the complex psychosocial experiences of the respondents that influence the intercultural issues. This paradigm helps the researcher to understand the problem and provide the insights of the research questions.

3.2.1 Pragmatic approach: Inductive plus deductive research approach

It is essential to characterise the research approach whether it is inductive or deductive. Patton (2002 as cited in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) points out that a distinctive characteristic of the deductive approach is when data are analysed based on the existing framework, also known as testing a hypothesis, where the researcher creates a hypothesis or theory and designs a research strategy to test the formulated theory. Also, deductive refers to a method of observing the people, such as recording their behaviour, to create more mature fields of enquiry, and includes a logical leap; further than a hypothesis where data is gathered to be tested (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Secondly, the inductive approach, also known as building a hypothesis, is when the researcher begins with gathering the data by trying to develop a theory which involves discovering patterns, themes and categories (Patton, 2002 as cited in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Patton (2002 as cited in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) describes the inductive data analysis and creative synthesis as major principles of qualitative research which involve a variance of facts or data to a general theme or conclusion. Moreover, the inductive approach gives the chance to have more explanation of what is going on. The important characteristic of the inductive approach is negative case analysis, where no useful theory is accessible, and attempting to discover some order for this (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) where problems were solved using numbers and words (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

The current study is shaped using both inductive and deductive which refer to one term, a pragmatic approach. However, the combination of these approaches does not exhaust the full spectrum of possible methodological approaches. Theoretically, the study adopts pragmatism as an appropriate philosophical foundation for mixed-methods research (MMR). Pragmatism offers an appealing philosophical partner for MMR (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) which provides a framework for designing and conducting the research. The purpose of pragmatism is to find a negotiated ground between philosophical and methodological dogmatism and to locate a workable solution (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This method rejects traditional dualism and generally prefers more moderate and common sense versions of philosophical dualism based on how well they work in tackling the problems. Its assumptions rest on the idea that no one paradigm allows researchers to arrive at truth alone, rather a combination of paradigms is most useful in permitting us to completely comprehend a phenomenon.

Pragmatic worldview explains how research approaches can be blended productively (Hoshmand, 2003 as cited in Michell, 2003). The rationale of inquiry incorporates the utilisation of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of hypotheses) and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one's results) (de Waal, 2001 as cited in Migiro & Magangi, 2011). The pragmatic viewpoint consolidates deductive and inductive thinking by coordinating and integrating qualitative and quantitative study. It offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of

inquiry plus methods for selecting methodological mixes that help researchers better answer their research questions. As these epistemological assumptions depend on abductive reasoning (that moves back and forth between induction and deduction), it helps the study to elaborate the results (Good year, 2005, Beck, 2005, Creswell et al., 2008 as cited in Migiro & Magangi, 2011), question the quantitative result and extends the breath or range of inquiry by using both method (Migiro & Magangi, 2011).

Using an integrative model to intercultural communication in context, the current study combines both conceptual and methodological issues systematically based on established pragmatic perspectives to understanding intercultural communication. Therefore, it attempts to integrate seemingly contradictory philosophies and methodological issues for better understanding of competencies, perceptions and practices. Although the research operates primarily from a pragmatic perspective, the researcher's reflections and observations were also important. As an insider, it is pragmatically sound to contend that the researcher's reflective accounts can yield richer data. Few studies in intercultural communication recognise the need for conceptual and/or methodological pluralism (see Arasaratnam, 2012; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Gudykunst, 2005; Koch, 2009; Martin & Nakayama, 2006; Martin, Nakayama, & Flores, 2002; Tamam, 2010). Their argument falls under pragmatic philosophy to intercultural communication studies. These scholars justified the need for integrating possible perspectives and proposed conceptual integration. However, the authors failed to clearly show the demand for methodological pluralism. Since studies in intercultural communication are broad, diverse and deep (Koch, 2009; Otten & Geppert, 2009) they demand a holistic and comprehensive approach to research.

3.3 Research approach: Theoretical perspectives

3.3.1 Ethnography

In order for the researcher to gain different perspectives and delve into the experiences of the personnel experiencing intercultural communication at this institution, the ethnographic nature of the research was considered appropriate. Ethnography, also known as field research and defined as 'the direct observation, reporting and evaluation of the customary behaviour of a culture' (Jandt, 1998, p. 49). Berg (2012, p.171), suggests that 'ethnography involves the end product of field research, namely the written accounts of observation'. This technique requires an unlimited period of residence on the part of the researcher, knowing the language of the group, participating in the group activities, and using a variety of observational and recording techniques. Ethnography is mainly observation and informal interviewing of respondents as proposed by Agar(1980, as cited in Cousin, 2009) for 'the purpose of learning from their ways of doing things and viewing reality'. Also, ethnography ideally requires observation in natural settings (Jandt, 1998, p. 49).

Ethnography was chosen as a method for the study to unfold the events in the field through the framing of respondents' narratives. The tale from the study site is developing through the interface between site interaction and respondents' stories. Therefore this method was chosen to engage the personnel at this institution and give the researcher connection to the

community for a long period, so there will be advantages in understanding their local dialect, local culture and religion. The researcher understands that she also is a fraction of the social world(s) that she explores (Berg, 2012). Thus, this will also avoid needing to use any middle man or interpreter during the process. This method also allows the researcher to draw on many different sources of information which aids both cross-checking and countering a rounded views of the subjects. This study will note what the respondents say to draw some information from a wide range of sources, which differs from research that only relies on one main source. Yet the limitations of ethnography in this context of study are not being involved for a long period to observe any periodic changes. The study cannot assume any moment or changes in the ongoing condition of the respondents, their society and culture.

The impact of critical ethnography is facilitated through the mixed-method approach chosen for the research as it has allowed the incorporation of the social and human sciences research (Boneva, Kraut, & Frohlich, 2001 as cited in Creswell, 2009).

3.3.2 Mixed-method Approach (MM)

The nature of mixed-methods (MM) was traced back in psychology and in the multitrait-multimethod matrix of Campbell and Fisk (1959, as cited in Creswell, 2009). They inspired others in using the methods in data collection where the field methods, for instance observation and interviews (qualitative data), were combined with traditional surveys (quantitative data) (Sieber, 1973 as cited in Creswell, 2009). The researcher realises that all methods have their own limitations and that using MMs could neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, as cited in Creswell, 2009) suggest that the results from one method can help identify participants for the study or questions to ask for the other methods. Also both datasets can be merged into one large database, or the results used side-by-side to reinforce each other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007 as cited in Creswell, 2009). Plus, the methods can serve a larger, transformative purpose to advocate for marginalised groups such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, members of gay and lesbian communities, people with disabilities and those who are poor (Mertens, 2003 as cited in Creswell, 2009).

There are many different definitions for mixed methods such as integrating, synthesis, quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-method, and mixed methodology yet the latest writings prefer to use the term mixed methods (Bryman, 2006, Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003 as cited in Creswell, 2009). Guba and Lincoln (1989 as cited in Creswell, 2010) argue that methods and methodology are different, as methods focused on the procedures of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, whereas methodology included everything from worldview to the last procedures of the inquiry. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p.123 as cited in Creswell, 2010, p. 51) agreed that mixed methods (MM); is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration'. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008b, p. 8) also stated that mixed methods is where the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multiphase

study and among the MM criteria, is where the information ‘presented in both narrative and numerical forms’. The qualitative and quantitative methods ‘should be mixed in a way that has complementary strength and non-overlapping weaknesses’ (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p.299 as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008a, p. 35). Elliot (2005 as cited in Creswell, 2010, p. 51) suggests that ‘to view mixed methods from a methods perspective provided a clean way to view this form of research’.

In this study, MM was chosen in order to broaden the understanding of this study by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research. Both approaches were used to better understand, to explain and build on the results from the other approach. The use of MM can also impart a better understanding of the background in which the societies and personnel reside (Mertens, Bledsoe, Sullivan, & Wilson, 2010).

MM is neither new nor old to the research discipline and to research scholars. It has gone into a rapid growth spurt since it’s been introduced. An emerging community of practitioners and methodologists across discipline use this method and adopted it as a ‘third methodological movement’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). However the challenges for these kinds of methods are the extensive data collection that it is time consuming in analysing the text and numeric data, and requires skills from the researcher that need to be recognisable in both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher decided to incorporate the mixed method research (MMR), on the grounds that this method is focused on a particular paradigm, a designed set of assumptions concerning reality (ontology), knowledge of that reality (epistemology), and the particular ways of knowing that reality (methodology) (Guba, 1990 as cited in Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). Indeed, utilising just quantitative methods cannot get to a percentage that the researcher is interested in such as lived experiences, the respondent’s interaction with other ethnic groups, social interaction which involves their cultural values, verbal and nonverbal communication, conflicts, and their opinion towards the One Malaysia policy (Sale et al., 2002).

As pointed by Creswell, Shope, Plano, and Green (2006) mixed methods research (MMR) is compatible with qualitative research and through MM inquiry, one may be able to identify the important issues in the social, behavioural, and human science communities. This research intends to investigate and explore how intercultural communications are influenced by Malaysian cultural values, verbal, nonverbal, conflict, and the One Malaysia policy, and how they influenced the personnel at UMT, which is appropriate with this method.

Regardless of variety in a mixed method research design, MMR takes after an efficient methodology or model to create legitimate, genuine and substantial examination output and values both techniques (the quant and qual) as focal components dissimilar to few examinations which supplement qualitative and quantitative tools (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Embracing MMR, the current study aims at understanding intercultural communication in the higher educational context. It also seeks to investigate possible strategies on how to enhance communication and social integration in a higher education institution context. By using an exploratory sequential design (Creswell et al., 2006),

comprehensive data was generated to meet these purposes (as discussed later in this section).

MMR was chosen since the integration of qualitative and quantitative studies is one of the unique aspects of this study; justifications were needed to defend the chosen method. Firstly, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. In line with this, it is advised that intercultural researchers need to be reflective and avoid methodological ethnocentricity to yield substantial understanding (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2013; Otten & Geppert, 2009). This MMR offers a complete perspective of intercultural communication. The investigation concerning the context of interaction, nature of communication and connection among respondents requests richer data through unstructured interviews and ethnographic field notes. A simple survey would not assist to better clarify these critical variables. Then again, in-depth data created through qualitative study alone may not suffice to provide a generalisable report which requires the integration of qualitative and quantitative studies for the richer data, extensive and holistic understanding of intercultural communication in a given setting.

Second, the MMR supports and gives strength to the shortcomings of both quantitative and qualitative research. Merging these two research designs counterbalances the difficulties of mono-method empirical studies, for instance, when most scholars argue a purely qualitative study is inadequate due to overuse of subjective interpretation made by the researcher and the predisposition made by this (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore it is improper to generalise findings to a larger group and has also been criticised for departing from the original research objectives, plus the dependency on the experience level of the researcher (Symon & Cassell, 1998). In order to preclude the weaknesses of qualitative methods, researchers should clearly state the research purpose, crosschecking with the results of the quantitative analyses, and strong theoretical foundation of the research.

In contrast, quantitative methods depend intensely on the data gathered which is discouraged in intercultural research on the grounds that these methods are feeble in understanding the context of communication; and the voices of participants are not directly heard in the same. The shortcomings of this method, such as disappointment to provide information about the context of the situation, inability to control the environment, and pre-determined outcomes, are repaid by interaction with the research participants amid interviews, learning about the context, and uncovering new research themes.

By merging both methods into one could ensure high reliability data, better understanding of the contextual aspects of the research, flexibility and openness of the data collection, as well as a more holistic interpretation of the research problem. Concisely, this multiple method is considered quite rare to be employed so as to investigate intercultural communication, as an approach on how various methods can be utilised to depict the unpredictability of human experience. Various scholars suggest the benefits of utilising qualitative and quantitative methods as a part of the investigation of human behaviour. Few researchers have used qualitative data to back their quantitative findings (see Corrigan, Pennington, & McCroskey, 2006; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006).

However, this model is exceptional for its utilisation of exploratory mixed-method research that gives equal status to both qualitative and quantitative studies. Incorporating the researcher's experience is additionally an alternate essential perspective that contributes to the same cause.

Currently, MMR is described as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools, methods, approaches and concepts for richer and broader understanding. This kind of method, where researchers with purpose minimise the limitations of mono-method research to retain the quality and generalise findings. In MMR, the method is portrayed by methodological plurality and mix of *etic* and *emic* points of view as suggest by Bhawuk and Triandis (1996 as cited in Aneas &Paz Sandín, 2009) that *emic* approaches such as ethnographic techniques, systematic observations, content analysis, and in-depth interviews when initiating a study in culturally obscure situations with the goal of coming to know this reality either in depth or from a comprehensive however remarkable viewpoint. *Etic* applies when there is an enthusiasm toward summarising the results or in facilitating possible comparisons between the works under control and other comparable research, it is desirable, to utilize *etic* approaches as a part of mixed or exclusively quantitative methods (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996 as cited in Aneas &Paz Sandín, 2009).

However, MMR follows a systematic procedure or model to produce justifiable, legitimate and valid research outputs. In contrast with few researches which supplements qualitative and quantitative tools, MMR values both methods as central elements. Adopting MMR, the current study aims at understanding intercultural communication in higher educational institution and seeks to investigate possible strategies on how to enhance communication and social integration. By using an exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2011) comprehensive data was generated to meet these purposes (as discussed later in this section).

Based on these grounds, the study supports the intention to conduct an MM for this research, as it permits close interaction with the research subjects to gain a deeper insight into what they are experiencing. Through an MM, the entire organisation can be in-depth to identify the intercultural interaction between three ethnic groups, Chinese, Indian and Malay with regards to their cultural values, verbal and nonverbal communication, conflict, and their views about One Malaysia. As needs be, the researcher chose to utilise an MM approach to finish the aim of the study as most of the intercultural communication literature has to a great extent concentrated on quantitative studies that need deeper theoretical analyses (e.g Gacho Segumpan et al., 2007; Tamam, 2009b; Tamam & Krauss, 2014), and only a few qualitative studies in the Malaysian context (e.g Lailawati, 2005; Nordin, Vassekaran, & Grover, 2014; Pawanteh, 2000). The MM approach has helped the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the issues being investigated. It is an approach that has enabled the research questions to be answered by providing a rich picture on the actual conditions surrounding intercultural interaction among the personnel at UMT.

The researcher began the procedure by distinguishing the research problem, setting out the aims and objectives of the study, developing research questions, evaluating the related literature, selecting the research methodology and the methods that will be successful in answering the research questions, gathering the data from the respondents by utilising the

sequential exploratory MMs, and lastly analysing the data. The researcher tried to comprehend and understand the data to find a solution for the personnel at UMT to encourage better interaction among the members of different ethnic groups, with a conclusion that has been drawn based on the respondents' views regarding the issues being investigated and the One Malaysia policy.

The validity and the reliability of the instrument are crucial for the development of the tools for the quantitative method. Validity is 'whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instruments' (Creswell, 2009, p. 149). The three basic forms of validity are content validity, predictive or concurrent validity, and construct validity. The content validity is where the items measure the content that it is intended to measure. The predictive or concurrent validity scores predict a criterion measure and how the results correlate with other results, and construct validity is looking into the items that measure hypothetical constructs or concepts (Creswell, 2009).

3.3.2.1 Sequential explanatory strategy

In this study, the sequential mixed methods procedures were employed to elaborate and expand on the findings of one method with another method. This involves beginning with the quantitative methods such as the survey with a larger sample to generalise results to a population, and is followed by qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews for exploratory purposes (Creswell, 2009). This study employs the sequential exploratory strategy as a research design to give priority to the qualitative aspect of the study. Even though the study did not start with qualitative data collection at the first stage, yet the phases 'may or may not be implemented within a prescribed theoretical perspective' (Creswell, 2003, p. 215)

The combination of in-depth interviews and the survey will give greater depth and greater breadth to the results and produce more accurate assumptions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008a). The researcher chose this approach in order to broaden the understanding by incorporating both methods and to shape the results from both approaches. This research design is used to 'overcome weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods by complementary strength of each tradition' (Kelle, 2006, p. 295). Yet the weaknesses of this design are time-consuming, involving data collection with the two separate phases (Creswell, 2009). The design of this approach is explained in figure 3.1 below.

The sequential mixed methods procedures were implemented by stages. **Stage one** was a quantitative study, using online surveys to look at demographic data and the awareness of the respondents about intercultural issues and cultural values. **Stage two** looked within specific respondents, using qualitative methods and an ethnographic approach, a semi-structured interview and e-interview to better understand the respondents' in-depth experiences in culture, cultural values, verbal, nonverbal communication, conflict, and experiences at this institution and the One Malaysia concept. The data collected during the interview and e-interview will then be categorised into arising themes.

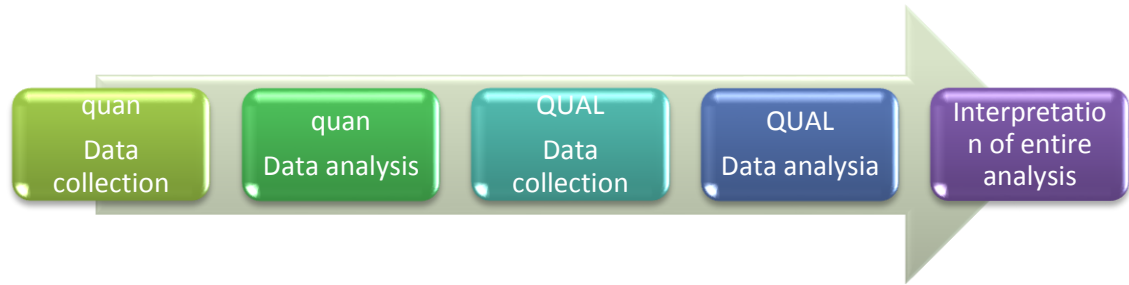


Figure 3.1: Sequential Explanatory Designs (adapted from Creswell, 2010)

The next section will explore the thematic concerns which put the interview data into several key themes. It also discusses the validity process of the themes identified in this study.

3.3.2.2 *Thematic concerns*

Thematic analysis will be applied to the study. This analysis identifies the key themes in the text and transforms them to a code (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). It is a ‘method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as ‘conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or folk sayings and proverbs’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1989, p.131 as cited in Aronson, 1994). Themes are identified by ‘bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences which often are meaningless when viewed alone’ (Leininger, 1985, p.60 as cited in Aronson, 1994).

The study uses thematic concerns to develop the findings in relation to both the quantitative and qualitative data. The use of thematic concerns was considered appropriate for this study as thematic analysis allowed the researcher to report the experiences of the study respondents captured during the interview process. Thematic analysis is a method for ‘identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Themes ‘capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). The qualitative data were analysed for unique and recurring themes. Thematic analysis is thought by many to be a useful method to analyse qualitative data and provide rich, detailed, and complex accounts of data. Thematic analysis has been shown to be flexible and an effective analysis method for interview data as it does not ascribe to any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is ‘the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set and the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research’ (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10). Therefore, the researcher believed that its use in this study would be suitable and beneficial. The phases of thematic analysis as proposed by Creswell (2009, p. 185) is seen suitable to undertake the analysis in this study. This suggests a linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to the top.

The coding process for the interviews was conducted to identify communication practices around the themes that emerged from the literature. This was done through coding and

analysis by the researcher, and ‘focussed on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data’ (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10). Open coding was used to manage the interview data. The researcher sought the occurring themes and important characteristics of the items. The data patterns were systematically explored by indexing the topics of interest. Below the major interest topics, several other subthemes emerged. This process is intended to establish the various topics to be indexed in the filing system (Berg, 2012). The codes used to identify transcript are the pseudo names for the respondents. Once the data was coded around the themes identified, detailed analyses were conducted and results classified into subheadings, which emerged from the analysis processes. The repeated processes of analysing and coding helped the researcher to produce findings about the ways in which cultural values were displayed in intercultural communication practices. In addition, if data collected were inconsistent or contradictory, the researcher went back to the respective interview to clarify the issues, and compared the findings with the existing literature.

This study then generated a general framework for processing the data, using it consistently across the case (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data were categorised into similar thematic concerns (Aronson, 1994). The thematic concerns encapsulated significant data with regard to the research objectives and represented levels of meaning within the data set at a semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings will be listed under categories by each key theme. Rules were explicitly developed for categorising the data, explicating what should be included or excluded in order to keep each theme internally consistent. The theme was determined by examining whether it captured the important information in relation to the overall research focus. The theme then was given a title to capture the essence of the theme. This process continued until the four criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985) –exhaustion of data sources, saturation of themes, emergence of regularities, and overextension – were achieved.

The coding process, which is the heart of the qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984) was conducted to identify the main themes that emerged from the literature. This was done through coding and analysis by the researcher which allowed the close situation of the data and the exploration and disconfirming evidence (Richards, 2009). Coding is the process of organising the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.171 as cited in Creswell, 2009).

The problem would arise during the transcription and translation of the data to report the findings in a later case. Translating the original data to the English language is not easy because to get the same meaning and maintain the originality will be an issue. Interpretation of meaning is vital in qualitative research, thus language diversities may have an effect on ‘the understanding and interpretation of meanings in different phases on the way from respondents to reader’ (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010, p. 315). To address these issues, the interviews will be translated into English whenever necessary without ignoring the original content of the interview. Back translation is a method that has been utilised to check if any ‘losses in translation’ have transpired during the process (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004).

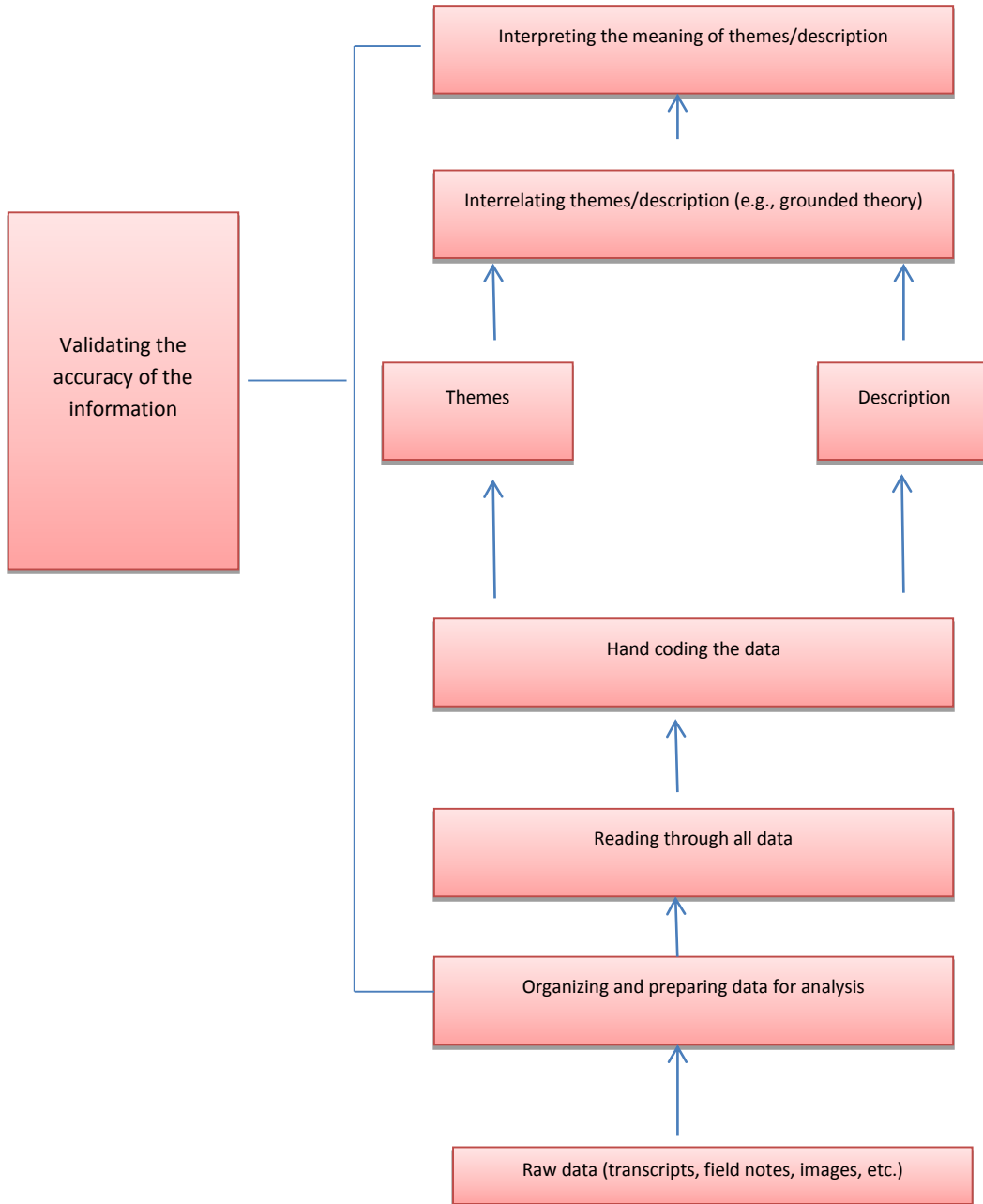
3.3.2.3 Validity of the themes

The researcher was also concerned with presenting the stories and experiences voiced by the respondents as accurately and comprehensively as possible. The researcher's native language is not English therefore translating the original data to English accurately is very important. Since the original data was in local dialect and the researcher's mother tongue, the translation of the transcription will be translated whenever necessary and did not deviate from the original data. A careful translation was required when the interview language was different from the reporting language. It is really challenging in transcribing and translating native language and local dialect to English. As the analysis goes through each phase, the meaning is also affected; in order to maintain its originality, the researcher needs to make sure that the meaning might not be lost during the process by back translation.

The recommendations are formulated for qualitative researchers who present findings in English, while the data were gathered in their native non-English language. Therefore the validity of the data will be maintained as proposed by some scholars such as Birbili (2000), Brislin (1970) and Hatim (1990 as cited in Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004). 'Qualitative research is considered valid when the distance between the meanings as experienced by the participants and the meanings as interpreted in the findings is as close as possible' (Polkinghorne, 2007 as cited in van Nes et al., 2010, p. 314). Whenever there is no possibility to translate the original words or sentences into English, the researcher will maintain the original language as long as possible until a proper translation comes together. Other ways to improve the validity of the research and of the quality of the transference of the findings to the readers of the publication is by paying for a professional translator although it will add to the costs of a study.

Apart from the details of ethnographic engagement, this research also applied the quantitative as complementary to the qualitative methods as in mixed-method approach to make sure of the rigorousness of the data collected.

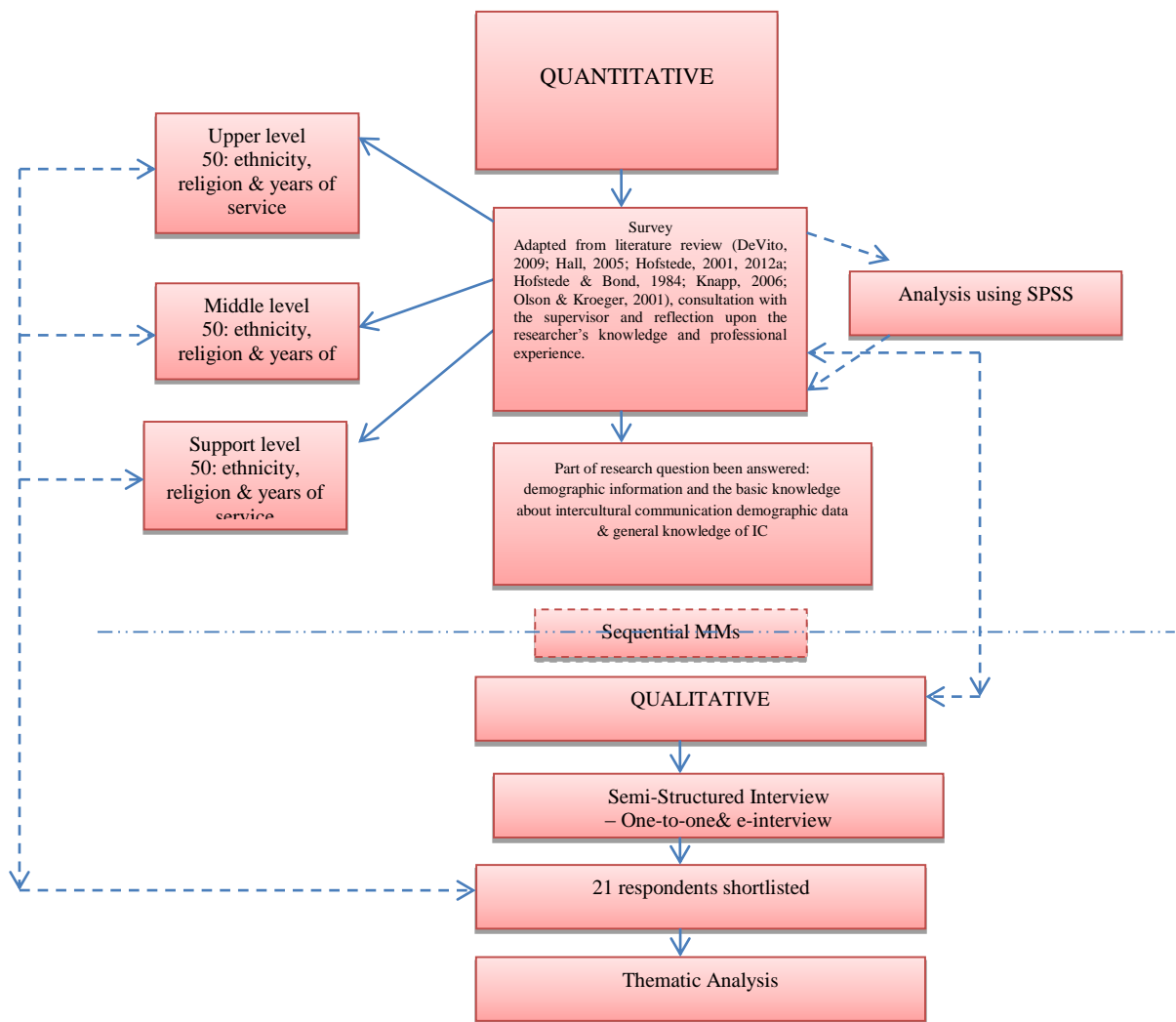
Figure 3.2: The Process of Validating the Data



3.4 Research method: Theoretical perspectives

In this descriptive study, qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques are used and include questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and e-interviews, as well as the researcher’s field notes of personal observations and conversations. Additionally, to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method with another method to provide a more complete and multidimensional understanding of the issues, a sequential MMs procedure was employed (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected across two stages from semi-structured online surveys, interviews and e-interviews. The research incorporated the quantitative and qualitative methods, which will be demonstrated below, to accumulate and analyse data for the study framework.

Figure 3.3: Research design employed in the study



3.4.1 Quantitative methods

The sequential MMs were used because quantitative data was involved, in which the respondents from the survey were shortlisted for the interview. Based on the demographic data and the survey question and answer, the interview questions were developed. The qualitative involved the semi-structured interview: one-to-one and e-interview. The details of the interview process will be described in detail at point 3.4.2.1. The thematic concerns then applied in analysing the interview and e-interview as well as in the process of grouping the findings, as explained in point 3.3.2.2.

A quantitative method is statistically reliable and can determine the better alternatives. Quantitative methods ‘employ meaningful numerical indicators to ascertain the relative amount of something’ while qualitative methods ‘employ symbols (words, diagrams and non-meaningful numbers [to indicate the meaning] other than relative amounts)’ (Frey & Kreps, 2000, p. 83) and ‘words to indicate the presence or absence of phenomena or categorize them into different types’ (Matveev, 2002, p. 59)

Furthermore, a quantitative method is also projectable to the population and in this study the use of survey research offers the quantitative and numeric description of the trends, attitudes or opinions of the sample population (Creswell, 2009). Utilising a series of tests and techniques, quantitative research will often yield data that's projectable to a larger population because it is so deeply rooted in numbers and statistics, quantitative research has the ability to effectively translate data into easily quantifiable charts and graphs (Kelle, 2006). This effectiveness of the quantitative method was applied to the study in extracting the respondent profile and basic intercultural knowledge of the respondents.

The quantitative method took place in the first step of this study. The respondents were chosen based on purposive sampling which had been grouped into three levels: upper, middle and support level, based on their ethnicity, religion and years of services. These criteria are important to group the respondents in order to answer the research question: the demographic data and the general knowledge of the respondents about intercultural communication. Then, the data was analysing using the SPSS.

The drawback for the quantitative method selected is that it is a much narrower and a sometimes superficial dataset. The result also will be limited as they provide numerical descriptions rather than detailed narrative and generally provide less elaborate accounts of human perception. The survey questions may also be open to ambiguity where the respondents might have problems in understanding the question. This is a possibility where the question is poorly defined, because unclear terms producing a biased estimation (Fowler, 1992). The quantitative method is used to complement the qualitative methods in this study.

3.4.1.1 Pre-test survey

A pre-test survey refers to ‘small scale version (s) or trial run (s), done in preparation for the major study’ (Polit et al., 2001, p.467 as cited in van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), and Baker (1994, p. 182-183 as cited in van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001) agrees that pre-test surveys signify ‘the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument’. This

study will use a broad survey in order to generalise results to a population and in a second phase focus on the detailed qualitative with open-ended interviews to go in-depth with the experience of the respondents (Creswell, 2010).

The pre-test survey was used in this study to test the online survey and its function. This will provide attention to the survey or 'where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated' (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001, p. 1). A pre-test survey could improve the study instruments such as the online survey and detect any errors in advance before introducing it to the respondents. Pre-testing is also to see what questions work well, what questions sound strange, what questions can be eliminated and what needs to be added. It is also to see whether the survey is too long which might make the respondents lose interest, and also their understanding towards the questions.

3.4.1.2 Survey

In this study, the survey was incorporated into the study design because the researcher believed that this will be the most efficient way to collect data from the population of respondents to get their basic knowledge about the intercultural issues. A survey designs 'provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinion of population by studying a sample of that population' (Creswell, 2009, p. 147), where the researcher can make generalisations or make claims about the population.

The history of surveys and surveying techniques can be followed back thousands of years (Erdos, 1983; Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 1983 as cited in Simsek & Veiga, 2000) until, in recent times, new techniques of surveying such as mail questionnaires, field interviews, and telephone surveys were utilised to gather study data (Simsek & Veiga, 2000). The advancement of electronic innovation and computer software contradicts the customary data collection techniques and changes the data collection methods today (Gates & Jarboe, 1987 as cited in Simsek & Veiga, 2000) Computer technology has been a principal force in utilising the alternative survey techniques and enhanced data collection (Malhotra, 1993 as cited in Simsek & Veiga, 2000) and influenced the data collection technique and each phase of the survey such as instrument design, sampling, field monitoring, coding and data editing, data capture, data cleaning, scale index construction, database organisation, database retrieval, data analysis, and documentation (Anderson & Gansender, 1995; Karweit & Meyers, 1983; Neal, 1989; Saltzman, 1995 as cited in Simsek & Veiga, 2000).

Choosing solely quantitative methods might affect the results of the survey, as they tend to be inconclusive either because of the low response rate or misunderstanding of the questions. Additionally, there is a possibility for the participants to exaggerate their answer in questionnaire surveys (Davies et al., 2002 as cited in Bryman, 2012), and they tend to give responses which may not be accurate but considered agreeable from the social standpoint. Surveys or questionnaires employing both closed and open-ended questions are a common source of mixed data (Bryman, 2012). In its most elementary form, combination occurs where a closed question is followed up with a request to respondents to provide comment, explanations, or illustration of their answer. The researcher can use the open responses to provide illustration quotes for their primary statistical analyses, and

the direct link between the two data forms allows for a more detailed assessment of other relationships between the text and numeric components of the data, such as through comparative analyses (Bryman, 2012).

Decisions about what software to use for linking and analysing text and numeric data in surveys will depend on the volume and depth of the data, as well as on available or preferred programs. Simple comparative types of text responses to particular questions according to values on a categorical variable can be achieved in any spreadsheet or database, but researchers will be quickly overcome by large and complex data sets if that is their only tool (Bazeley, 2009, 2010). By combining the survey and the interview, allowing the researcher to follow up in order to corroborate, illustrate or elaborate on the meaning of categorized or scaled responses to survey questions, continued to be the most common data-gathering strategy employed by MMs researchers (Bryman, 2006 cited in Bazeley, 2010). The researcher decided to choose a survey which best fits a quantitative approach because of the need to understand the views of participants in an entire population.

The purpose of the survey is ‘to generalise from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitudes or behaviour of this population’ (Babbie, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 178). The survey type of data collection is preferred because of the advantages of the designs: economical and borderless since the researcher chose to run the online survey. As Fink (2000 as cited in Creswell, 2009) points out, there are four types of the form of data collection, namely self-administered questionnaires, interviews, structured record reviews to collect financial, medical or school information, and structured observations. On the other hand, the data collection can also include creating a Web-based or Internet survey and administering the data online (Nesbary, 2000; Sue & Ritter, 2007 as cited in Creswell, 2009). The survey was built based on a thorough review of the available published literature (DeVito, 2009; Hall, 2005; Hofstede, 2001, 2012a; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Knapp, 2006; Olson & Kroeger, 2001), consultation with the supervisor and reflection upon the researcher’s knowledge and professional experience.

After the due date, if the researcher felt that the targeted respondents were still unresponsive, the researcher then contacted the respondents by phone and email to determine if their responses differed substantially from the respondents. Once the e-mail reached the respondents, the researcher followed-up with the respondents through reminders after monitoring the online survey. This was done repeatedly in order to remind the respondents to fill in the online survey and will eliminate the response bias in this study.

Quantitative data analysis was analysed using software provided by Survey Monkey and then transferred to SPSS. Demographic data and the basic knowledge about intercultural communication were analysed using SPSS. Pseudonyms were used to identify the respondents in this study.

3.4.2 Qualitative methods

The qualitative approach was selected in order to provide an in-depth perspective regarding the personnel experiences that cannot be measured through a straight quantitative approach. The study collected qualitative data through the application of semi-structured interviews and e-interviews conducted at UMT from April till July 2011.

Qualitative methods seek answers to questions by investigating various social settings and the individual who occupy the settings. This method is interesting in seeing ‘how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures and social roles’ (Berg, 2012). Berg (2012, p. 8) explains that ‘qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal traces (such as letters, photographs, newspaper accounts, diaries, and so on)’. Consequently, this method allows researchers ‘to share in the understandings and perceptions of others, to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives and examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others’ (Berg, 2012).

Creswell (2009) listed several attributes of qualitative research such as using a natural setting where the research can be led, or in the field site where respondents encounter the issue and are not being tried in a lab, rather that they will be approached straightforwardly, observing their behaviour inside their setting plus having one-on-one interaction with the respondent over time. The second attribute the researcher considers a key instrument is where the qualitative researcher accumulates information by inspecting documents, observing behaviour or talking with participants, and utilises an instrument for data collection, yet at the same time the researchers are involved in assembling the data. The third attribute involves multiple sources of data where the data can be numerous types of information such as interviews, observations and documents, instead of relying on a single data source. This data needs to be reviewed by the researcher to make it sensible and the researcher will then orchestrate the data into classifications or subjects that cover the majority of the data sources. The fourth attribute includes the inductive data analysis in which the researcher will structure their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up, by arranging the information into progressively more edited compositions / units of data. This procedure inductively clarifies that the researcher needs to work back and forth between the themes and the database until he/she builds an exhaustive set of themes. It might likewise include teaming up with the participants interactively, so participants have an opportunity to shape the themes or abstractions that rise up out of the procedure.

The fifth attribute engages participants’ meanings, which means that amid the qualitative process, the researchers concentrate on taking in the implying that the participants hold about an issue, or the meaning that the researcher bring to the research or writers convey in the writing. The sixth attribute includes the emergent design which implies the initial plans for research are not unbending, where the periods of the process could change or move once the researcher enters the field and begins the data collection. The seventh attribute comprises the theoretical lens where most of the time the researcher will utilise the lens to view their studies, for example, concept of culture, gender or racial differences

from the hypothetical organisations. Another attribute includes interpretation in which the researcher will make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand. The interpretation personally connected with the researcher's own experiences, history, settings and prior understandings. Different perspectives will rise up out of the readers', participants' and the researcher's interpretations. The last attribute is a holistic explanation in which through the qualitative process, the complex picture of the issue will be created which includes reporting various points of view, recognising various variables included in a circumstance, and outlining the bigger picture that will appear.

Qualitative research is flexible, highly-focused, and obtains detailed feelings, impressions and behaviour patterns of the respondents. This type of design still has its limitations: 'indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees, information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting, researchers' presence may bias responses and not all people are equally articulate and perceptive' (Creswell, 2009, p. 179).

To overcome this shortfall, the requirement for a detailed understanding of the issue from the perspectives of the participants, especially in the Malaysian setting, warrants the utilisation of qualitative inquiry due to its fundamentally interpretive nature (Creswell, 2009). This empowers the researcher to investigate the participants' feelings, beliefs and values pertinent to the issues under study (Schwandt, 2000).

3.4.2.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews can generate data obtained from open-ended questions which are an efficient way to collect data from the respondents. Interviews are 'exchanges in which people provide information orally' (Frey & Kreps, 2000, p. 99). This type is suitable to the study design because the respondents cannot be directly observed, they also can provide more information to the study and it permits the researcher to have control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2009).

Frey and Kreps (2000) divide the interview sessions into two question formats. First, the funnel format is where 'open questions are used to introduce the question, followed by narrower, closed question to seek more specific information'. Second is the inverted funnel format, 'which begins with narrow, closed questions and build to broader, open questions' (Frey et al. 2000, p.101). Whenever a question may address a taboo or personal topics, the researcher is advised to use inverted funnel format 'because one can pose low-risk, closed, fixed-choice questions first and, after respondents are comfortable with the topic, move on to more probing, open question' (Frey et al. 2000, p.102).

Applying inverted funnel format meant that a taboo or personal question could be asked in a way that helped make respondents more comfortable. Semi-structured interviews are the main, preferred data collection method because respondents are able to freely discuss their experiences (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). The semi-structured interviews also allowed the interviewer to make their own clarifications or add or delete enquires between subjects (Berg, 2012). The open-ended questions used during the interview process were based on recommendations from the literature and the online survey and survey results. The one-on-one interviews involved semi-structured

questions and generally open-ended questions intended to prompt views and opinions from the respondents. The semi-structured interview is less structured, questions were reordered during interview and wording is flexible with language levels adjusted according to the interviewees' understandings (Berg, 2012). The researcher sometimes needs to localise the terms and explain further to aid the interviewees' understandings.

The one-to-one and the e-interview followed the stages proposed by Snape and Spencer (2003) (refer Figure 3.4) in order to achieve the perspective of the interview and the issues that the researcher wishes to hear.

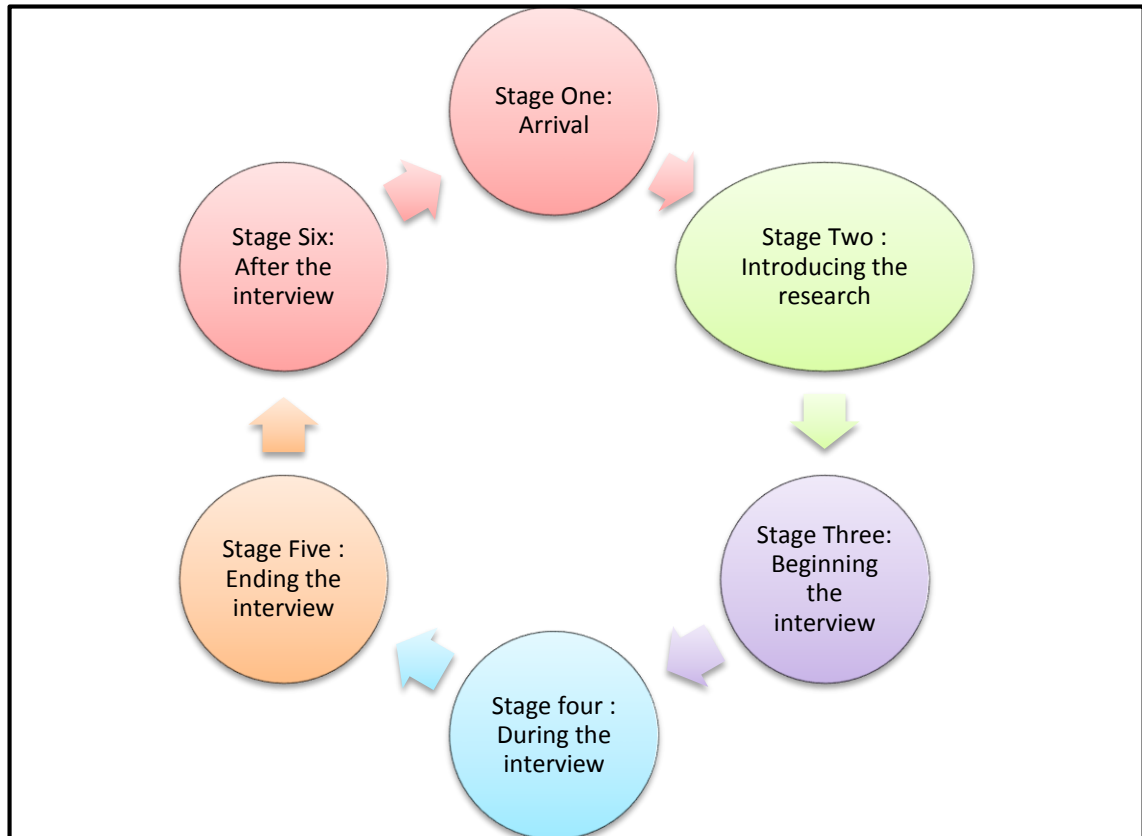


Figure 3.4: The interview stages (adapted from Snape & Spencer, 2003)

Stage one involves the arrival of the researcher to the setting. The first few minutes will be used to establish a relationship with the respondents. The researcher needs to be aware of the respondents' feelings such as anxiety. It is important to make sure the respondents feel comfortable and are in control at their own pace. The interviewees' schedule, availability and comfort will be considered the researcher's priority (Berg, 2012). The setting should be away from distractions and one where respondents feel comfortable to speak about their intercultural experiences (Cousin, 2009). Once the respondents are comfortable with the presence of the researcher, the interview will be continued to the next stage. This allowed the researcher to focus on the content of the interviews providing as they do "an accurate verbatim record of the interview, capturing the language used by the respondents including their hesitations and tone in far more detail

than would ever be possible with note-taking” (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003, p. 166) because Terengganu dialect relies on the tone of the words which differentiate the meaning of the context.

Stage two presents the nature and purpose of the research, emphasizing the necessities of privacy and seeking permission to record the interview. The researcher additionally needs to verify the surrounding is fit for the interview that is peaceful, private and far from any distraction (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Schostak, 2006). **Stage three** includes the opening inquiries and the gathering of the important contextual information. Opening the interview with the individual details of the respondent will help the researcher to formulate question and make the respondent to ‘open up’ in the subject that they familiar. Suggested interviews is around 45 minute to one and a half hour, this will be recorded to allow the researcher to concentrate on the substance of the interviews (Creswell, 2009). This permitted the researcher to probe in a more in-depth, accurate way while data was recorded verbatim, capturing the language used by the respondent (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Stage four will look into the general principles that shape the interview. The researcher will guide the respondent through the key themes, both those anticipated by the researcher and those that emerge during the interview. The topic will be explored in depth followed by the follow-up questions whenever necessary to ensure respondents are more focused and reveal the ideas, thoughts and feelings that they have experienced. Useful tools for the interview were used, such as serial interviews, or an interview series was considered as a means to gain more insightful information from the respondents. Serial interviews allow the conversation to become less formal, with both parties feeling more open (Cragg, 2007). Serial interviews were used in this study especially e-interviews when the researcher feels that the answer given by the respondents needs more clarification and elaboration. This interview series will continue through e-interviews until the researcher is satisfied with the answer.

Stage five was the signal to end the interview. Researchers can signal the end of the interview by using such phrases such as ‘the last topic is...’. It is useful to check that respondents have not been left with unfinished feelings or issues left unmentioned. The last stage, **Stage six**, involves the end of the interview session, where the tape recorder is switched off and the researcher thanks the respondents for their participation and their contribution to the research. The assurance of confidentiality and use of interview data should also be emphasised at this stage. If the respondents still want to talk about the interview subject, the researcher should be prepared to stay longer. The process is then complete, with feelings of satisfaction demonstrated by both respondents and the researcher.

3.4.2.2 E-interview

The term ‘e-interview’ is utilised because some respondents may find the topics were too sensitive for religious, linguistic or cultural reasons (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). As previously described by Bampton and Cowton (2002), e-interviews create reassurance for the interviewees, making them more open and also suitable for the research students who conduct the research in their home country. Berg (2012) chooses web-based in-depth

interviews to describe the use of email in the interview process. Moreover, e-interviews can generate feelings of comfort for interviewees and make it easier for them to discuss these issues without feeling embarrassed or discomforted by the presence of the interviewer.

This type of interview, even though not identical to the traditional one-to-one interview, does help in the approach as similar to one-to-one interview. As explain by Berg (2012, p. 113) ‘when a respondent answers a question, the interviewer has the ability to ask probing question to elicit additional information, or to run in an entirely different direction, similar to the interviewer’s ability in a one-on-one interview’. Therefore, the researcher can probe into the area by asking structured questions or spontaneous questions during the e-interview exchange. Another advantage in doing e-interviews is that no one can add, delete or interrupt during the exchange of the e-mails (Berg, 2012). Also, it serves the need of the busy interviewer, giving time to them to respond at their convenience (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). This was a very convenient serial interview with the respondents whenever the researcher thought that she needed to get back to or required clarification from an interviewer.

Yet the weakness of this data collection is the loss of visual cues – ‘both those that occur between interviewer and respondent as part of the conversational flow of the interview and those that serve as social markers in the transactional process (e.g., age, gender, race, dress style)’. The ‘spontaneity of the probing and chasing down interesting topics that will arise in the interview’ as well as the limitation of the subject in computer literacy, technology savvy or not having a computer can also become part of the drawback (Berg, 2012, pp. 113-114). Bampton and Cowton (2002) similarly address that this procedure could have a possible delay from the interviewee partly due to their work commitments, or being disappointed about the message received. This could affect the data collection process and become a frustrating experience for the researcher. Therefore in order to avoid this happening it is possible to consider the reminder to be sent to the respondents. Along with the revised interview question, making it shorter and appealing to answer.

For e-interviews, language issues may occur during translation of the email that uses the native language. Normally such issues will appear in the first phase of a qualitative study when interview data needs to be translated to English (van Nes et al., 2010), because publications are often produced in English. Furthermore, the native language may not have equal meaning in English, making translation into English difficult. The challenges in ‘interpretation and representation of meaning may be experienced in any communicative action, but are more complicated when cultural contexts differ and inter-lingual translation is required’ (van Nes et al., 2010, p. 314). Because the interpretation of meaning is important in qualitative research and text is the medium to transfer meaning to the reader, language differences create additional challenges that might impede the meaning and, as a consequences, a loss of meaning and validity may appear.

3.5 Participants

The survey and interview respondents were selected through purposive sampling based on ethnicity, religion and years of service. Random sampling was not possible due to the

study design. Purposive sampling involves ‘recruiting people on the basis of shared characteristics which will help you in your inquiry’ (Cousin, 2009, p.79). The population will be identified from selected individuals who are knowledgeable or experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark, 2011 as cited in Palinkas et al., 2013). This group is available and willing to participate, communicate their experiences and opinions openly, eloquently and reflectively (Bernard, 2002 and Spradley, 1979 as cited in Palinkas et al., 2013). The population involved in this study is expected to be 150 respondents from three managerial levels. The potential respondents were chosen from the organisation website which was easy to gain their cultural background and email addresses.

The single-stage sampling procedure was employed where the researcher retrieved the names in the population and sampled the people and other elements such as their ethnicity, managerial level and religion directly (Creswell, 2009). Purposive sampling involved the researcher making a conscious decision about which individuals will be suitable to participate in the survey and the interviews. This type of non-probability sampling was chosen in order to provide the researcher with the most appropriate respondents. Purposeful sampling was employed so that the individuals selected for the study are those who have experienced the central phenomenon. This study involved the mixed method sampling where sequential sampling was used, where the sampling in the first stage informs the second stage (refer Figure 3.5).

The study also involved stratification which refers to the specific characteristics of individuals such as ethnicity, managerial levels and religion which will be represented in the sample in the same proportions as in the population (Creswell, 2009). Other characteristics used in stratifying the population included gender, level of education, locality and years of service. Such a sampling technique was appropriate and advantageous for this study because the researcher required specific respondents who experience intercultural communication in their workplace, and were limited to respondents from other ethnic groups at this institution. This was because the respondents were majority Malays and it was not practicable or economical for the researcher to include a larger group of personnel due to the minority populations in this institution. In total, the two groups of research respondents were recruited including survey respondents and interview respondents. The recruitment process for each group will be discussed below.

All respondents were given pseudonyms to hide their identity and their real position in the institution is not mentioned; they are categorised into the three managerial levels. Any sensitive issues arising during interviews or e-interviews will only be addressed if the respondents agreed and are comfortable to discuss the issues with the researcher.

3.6 The researcher’s role

This study gives more emphasis to the qualitative research ‘with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). Therefore, in this section, the researcher explains her experiences, steps taken to gain the information and permission from the institution, and the sensitive ethical issues that may arise from the study and the steps taken to address the issues.

The researcher was involved in 'Backyard' research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992 as cited in Creswell, 2009) where she was engaged with the researcher's own institution, friends and work setting. She was aware that it 'compromises the researcher's ability to disclose information and raises difficult power issues'. The data collection would be convenient and easy, yet the reporting data are open to be 'biased, incomplete or compromised' (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study.

The researcher's perception of culture, religion, language and conflict has been shaped by her personal experiences. Since 2003, the researcher has lived and worked in this dominant Malay institution at Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu. As a member of this institution, the researcher was involved directly with personnel working in this institution plus their local culture, language, religion and cultural values. The researcher believes that this understanding of the context and role enhances her awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to many of the challenges, decisions and issues encountered and assists her in working with the respondents. The researcher brings knowledge of those cultures, language, religion and cultural values, as particular attention will be paid to the cultural values, language use, nonverbal communication and conflict which arise at this institution.

Since the researcher already knows the community of this institution and its main language (excluding the minority ethnic language such as Mandarin or Tamil, in which the researcher is not fluent), there was no need to learn the community language. The researcher has been in this community since 2003 and is already expert in the local dialect as well as Malay language (as per her mother tongue). As a lecturer with this knowledge there is no need for a researcher to learn and spend time to acquire special training to learn the local dialect and Malay language. Therefore, mastering the language and engaging with the respondents' culture and language will be untroubled. The interviews conducted will be in the local dialect, namely the Terengganu dialect and the Malay language to avoid being too formal in getting their lived experience. The need to use interpreters to communicate, especially in the local dialect, i.e. Terengganese dialect, is not appropriate given the researcher's connection to their language and culture for a long time. The researcher chooses to use Malay language as this language is more familiar to all the ethnic groups.

However, due to previous experiences working with the respondents (as a colleague and staff at the institution), the researcher will bring certain biases to this study; although every effort will be made to ensure objectivity, these biases may shape the way the researcher views and understands the data. Therefore, the researcher commences this study with the perspective that the respondents are diverse and sometimes in a difficult position. Thus the researcher views the respondents' experiences as critical, filled with adjustment, frustration, unanticipated, surprise and challenges.

3.7 Research etiquette and procedures

This study already meets ethical research practices, and an Ethical Clearance Application was submitted to USQ's Postgraduate and Ethics Office. All interviews were recorded

with permission; respondents were sent consent forms and respondents' information forms, all dialogue transcripts and surveys were anonymous and a pseudonym used to preserve the confidentiality of the respondents. With regard to the use of e-mail in the study, the account will only be accessible by the researcher and for security reasons the password will be changed on a regular basis.

This research was subjected to the policy dictated by the USQ Postgraduate and Ethics Office and ethical clearance guidelines drawn by the USQ, in which the low-risk research involving human participants' approval was granted. Prior to conducting this research, ethical clearance was also obtained from the organisation where the case study research was conducted. On top of this, an announcement was made in an e-mail to inform staff of the research; the Vice Chancellor also received the introductory email with regards to the intended research prior to the data collection. In other words they were all aware that the researcher would be interviewing their staff and those who would be participating.

Before any particular interview was carried out, the participant was given a consent letter to sign as an agreement that their participation would be voluntary, confidential and private (a copy of the consent form is attached in the appendix). The organisation is referred to as University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) throughout the thesis, while interviewees are referred to by pseudonym in order to protect their identities. Thus, all interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the research paradigm, research approach, research methods, the participants, researcher's role and etiquettes for this study. The chapter also discusses the interplay between the research approaches, which include the use of ethnography and thematic concern in the study. Also, this chapter explains the relationships between the research methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection. It justifies the adoption of methodology, which provided the opportunity to explore a real life phenomenon of how Malaysian cultural dimensions are evidenced in the organisation. The following chapter will present the data collected and its analysis.

CHAPTER 4: THE PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the quantitative and qualitative data generated by the survey and the interviews. It begins by firstly explaining the setting and then presents the survey stages and the interview stages. The survey and interview respondents' demographic data were explicated in detail in this chapter. The survey asked respondents (n = 88) their age, gender, educational background, length of service, residency status, administrative position, religion and ethnic group. The chapter also presents the demographic profile of interview respondents (n = 21), including their cultural and academic backgrounds, the frequency of interactions with other ethnic groups, as well as their intercultural experiences.

4.2 The setting: UMT Background and Profile

In Terengganu state there are several higher learning institutions categorised as *Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam (IPTA)* which are the public universities and *Institut Pengajian Tinggi Swasta (IPTS)*, the private university. University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) and University Sultan Zainal Abidin (Unisza, previously known as University Darul Iman) are among the other public universities at Terengganu. There are also a number of private universities or *Institut Pengajian Tinggi Swasta (IPTS)* and colleges such as the TATI University College in *Kemaman*. UMT is situated in Terengganu State, on the East Coast of the Peninsular of Malaysia. UMT is located in *Mengabang Telipot, Gong Badak*, in north *Kuala Terengganu*.

UMT is the 14th public university in Malaysia and began as the Centre for Fisheries and Marine Science of University Putra Malaysia (UPM). At that time, it provided facilities for students from the Fisheries and Marine Science programs to conduct their practical and theoretical work while also providing research facilities for lecturers. In June 1996, the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Science of University Putra Malaysia (UPM) in *Serdang* was transferred to *Kuala Terengganu*, and the Centre transformed into a branch campus, being renamed University Putra Malaysia Terengganu (UPMT). Then on 5th May 1999, it was established as Terengganu University College (KUT) passed by the Cabinet of Malaysia as an associate campus of UPM. Following that on 1st May 2001, Terengganu University College (KUT) was given autonomy, and was renamed Malaysian Science and Technology University College (KUSTEM) on 20th June 2001. Finally, on 1st February, 2007, Malaysian Science and Technology University College (KUSTEM) was given the status of a qualified university and changed to the current name of University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT).

Gender	%
Male	52
Female	48
Religion	%
Islam	96.5
Buddha	2

Hindus	0.5
Christian	1
Ethnicity	
	%
Malay	95.5
Chinese	2
Indian	0.6
Other	1.9
Age	
	%
<=25	4.14
26-35	59.21
36-45	23.66
46-55	9.24
<=56	3.75

Table 4.1: Distribution of UMT staff: gender, religion, ethnicity and age (as at 2011)

Table 4.1 shows that 52% of the UMT staff in 2011 were male and 48% female. UMT staffs are from three main ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. From 1360 administration staff, 94% of the staff are Malay; the minorities consist of 2% Chinese, 2% of other ethnic groups and 0.6% of Indian personnel. Nearly 97% of the UMT staff is Muslim (primarily Malay) with 2% Buddhist (primarily Chinese), 0.5% Hindu (primarily Indian) and 1% Christian. The Malay (Muslim) staff make up for the overwhelming majority which is indicative of their dominance at the institution.

As the majority were Malay Muslims there was no surprise that Malays provided the highest number of responses for the survey. That other ethnic groups were very small in number may at first appear to be a limitation of the study; however this situation reflects the Malaysian University population as a whole. This apparent imbalance may also be viewed as strength in this study as it provides an opportunity for gaining insights into the intercultural communication processes occurring in Malaysian institutions and to some extent serves as a proxy for work-life relations in Malaysian society.

UMT has been selected as the setting of study because of the unique composition of the ethnic minorities. The unique composition of the ethnic groups is where UMT does not have an equal distribution of ethnic minority groups at the organisational level compared with the other public universities in the west coast area where there is more ethnic minority if compared to UMT. Other public universities on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia are more likely have an equal distribution. In 2013, the entire number of Universiti Malaya's staff is 6,176 this includes 2,386 academicians and 3,790 non-academic, without breaking down into ethnic group as this information is confidential (Annual Report University Malaya, 2013). Due to the confidentiality of this information, the researcher had to rely on the annual online book for the information about the composition of the staff at the higher education of the west side of Malaysia. This lacks of transparency suggests that ethnic group information remains a sensitive issue in Malaysian higher

education, perhaps due to an imbalance in the ethnic groups accessing university at the organisational level.

UMT is also situated in a Malay-dominated state which increases the focus on the Malay culture and religion. UMT's work environment is also different from other universities as UMT is situated in the eastern region and has not been influenced as much by Western ideology during colonisation (Shaffie & Zainuddin, 2000). Within the Malay culture however there are also differences between the local and nonlocal Malays which could also lead to clashes of culture and language. The local Malays (the Terengganu) are in the majority in both the state and UMT. This means that the local Malays are more dominant and that when differences occur the local Malay culture and language are more accepted. The local Malay language or dialect is distinct from both the non-local Malay dialects (each state has its own dialect or language variations) and from the formal or standard Malay language (*Bahasa Melayu*) used by all government agencies and institutions.

In this study, the chosen population is the administrative and academic personnel at UMT, Terengganu, Malaysia. The study will focus on three levels of management namely the upper, middle and support levels. The upper level can be defined as top level, and normally consists of Board of Directors, and their main role is to determine the objectives, policies and plans of the organisation. They involved in thinking, planning, organising, deciding and preparing long-term planning for the organisation. They also have been called administrators and the brains of the organisation. They have maximum authority and responsibility to the organisation - its failure or success largely depends on their proficiency and decision making.

Middle level management normally consists of the departmental heads (HOD), and senior and junior executives. Their task is giving recommendations or advice to the top level management. They also implement the policies and plans made by the top level as well as co-ordinate activities of their departments. Apart from that they become a middle man between the top level and the support level of management. They participate in coordinating, communicating and preparing short-term plans of their departments. They however have limited authority and responsibility and are directly responsible to the chief executive officers and board of directors.

The support level is also known as lower level of management and consists of foremen and supervisors. They are normally selected by the middle level management. They are direct workers and spend more time in directing and controlling. They normally make daily, weekly and monthly plans. They are involved in informing the management about the performance, difficulties, feelings, and demands about the workers. They have limited authority but are responsible for getting the work done. They will report to and are directly responsible to the middle level management.

UMT has been selected as the setting of the study because of the unique composition of the ethnic minorities. Given the ethnic mix, there is the potential for intercultural communication problems to surface between the personnel from different ethnic groups. Differences in ethnicity and religion could lead to communication difficulties between the administrative staff, which could affect the university's productivity. UMT's work

environment is also different from other universities due to the influence of religion and language (the dialect is distinct from other non-local Malay languages and the formal Malay Language) that influences the personnel interaction towards their colleagues from various cultural backgrounds. The setting was chosen because of the unique cultural background and language environment of higher education at Terengganu. Obviously Malay is very dominant at this institution as well as at this state; this will contribute rich data to the study where major culture will affect the minorities.

4.3 Survey

4.3.1 Pre-test survey

A pre-test survey referred to 'small scale version (s) or trial run (s), done in preparation for the major study' (Polit et al., 2001, p.467 as cited in van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), and Baker (1994, p. 182-183 as cited in van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001) agree that pre-test surveys signify 'the pre-testing' or 'trying out' of a particular research instrument. This study will use a broad survey in order to generalise results to a population, and in a second phase focus on the detailed qualitative with open-ended interviews to go in-depth with the experience of the respondents (Creswell, 2010).

The pre-test survey was used in this study to test the online survey and its function. This will give caution about the survey or 'where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated' (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001, p. 1). A pre-test survey could improve the study instruments such as the online survey and detect any errors in advance before introducing it to the respondents. Pre-testing is also to see what questions work well, what questions sound strange, what questions can be eliminated and what needs to be added. It is also to see whether the survey is too long which might make the respondents lose interest, and also their understanding of the questions.

Before the online survey was released to the respondents, the researcher performed a pre-test survey with five respondents. The emails were sent to colleagues who are similar to the population that the researcher plans to study, together with the researcher's background, information about the research, the dateline, the comment form and the link to the online survey. This would give a better idea of how the real sample would really react. Within a week, the researcher received feedback from all five respondents together with their comments for improvement of the instrument.

Feedback included the length of the questions and the time concerns in answering the survey. Process feedback included the importance of saving the data automatically after the respondents completed the survey and the ability to return to the online survey after taking a break. The technical aspects also had been questioned by the respondents including data retrieval, saving capacity and also repeated questions. This feedback was reviewed and integrated into the survey design later on in the study.

The pre-test survey was used to test the survey. This testing is important to establish content validity of the instrument and to improve the questions, format and scales. The

five respondents were tested for the pre-test survey and their comments were incorporated into the final survey revision. The researcher feels that the pre-test survey for this research is a crucial element of a good study design. However, this will not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase its likelihood. It is believed that this pre-test survey fulfils a range of important functions and can provide valuable insights for other researchers.

4.3.2 The survey stages in the study

The study uses quantitative methods in collecting demographic information and the basic knowledge about intercultural communication from the three ethnic groups' viewpoints. Quantitative methods were used in collecting demographic data through the application of a survey conducted online at UMT from April till July 2011. The use of the quantitative method in this study will be complementary to the qualitative method in that this data will summarise the demographic characteristics and the basic knowledge about intercultural communication obtained from the respondents.

Individuals included in the survey and interview respondents were those personnel and professionals who were employed as administrators, academics and support staff. They included the three levels of management namely upper, middle and support levels. Academic personnel considered essential for inclusion were those identified as being involved with students and personnel.

The survey respondents comprised 150 respondents sampled from a list of University Malaysia Terengganu website and confirmed with the registrar office. The surveys were emailed by 1st April until August, 2011 into three organisational levels mainly the upper, middle and support level which also include academicians and approximately 37 to 38 respondents for each level. Prior to the researchers' arrival in Malaysia by May 2011, the email was sent by 1st April 2011, to the respondents informing them of the researcher's research intention and requesting them to provide all possible assistance where necessary. The email introduced the researcher as well as explaining in detail the research intention. Subsequently, once the researcher was in Malaysia, the researcher began to work with the respondents.

The respondents were contacted in two steps, step one the survey respondents and step two was the interview and e-interview respondents. All respondents were selected using purposive sampling in order to access a particular subset of respondents based on religion, ethnicity and years of service. By selecting the respondents this way, the interviewer is in fact selecting who she thinks is a key source of variation to add to the depth and plausibility of her analysis (Cousin, 2009). Out of 150 respondents, about 93 respondents participated in this survey and about 61 respondents either did not respond or did not complete the survey. Of the 93 surveys returned, and after data interpolation, about 88 respondents were valid for the study, discarding the 32 unfinished and unanswered survey questions. The response rate is considered high, and many observers presume that higher response rates assure more accurate survey results (Babbie, 2010). The response rate was over 50% which is considered good since academic surveys are not easy to get better replies (Westwood & Everett, 1996). Respondents were given a certain due date so that

they would respond accordingly and encouraged to inform the researcher about any delay. The survey used Malay language instead of English due to the reason that the personnel at this institution are fluent in Malay. In total 150 survey respondents were emailed the online survey. The respondents received soft reminders; however, they were allowed to extend their answers by informing the researcher about the delay. The researcher also took the initiative to call respondents who had not yet answered including the minorities in order to maintain their participation.

Secondly, after receiving responses from the survey respondents, the researcher identified the desired interview respondents from the three levels of management. The researcher first emailed the respective respondents about whether they would be interested in participating in the study and be interviewed in a face-to-face or e-interview. The email also contained information about the researcher, the research project, the level of commitment of the respondents towards the research project and the choice of interview. Once the respondents agreed to participate, a time and place for an interview was fixed at the respondents' convenience. As for the e-interview, once the respondents decided to participate, they were sent the interview questions in three stages with the consent form. The researcher also informed the e-interview respondents the dateline to submit the interview questions. Once they finished the first stage, they were sent the second and the third stages of the interview question along with the dateline. They were allowed to extend the answers by informing the researcher about delays. The researcher also sent them a soft reminder if they still had not submitted their interview question as per the dateline.

The researcher was aware of the issues of response bias where the effect of non-responses on survey estimates (Fowler, 2002 as cited in Creswell, 2009). In order to avoid the response bias, wave analysis was used to examine returns on selected items week by week to determine if average responses changed (Leslie, 1972 as cited in Creswell, 2009). The respondents were given a due date to answer the survey. In order to enhance the participations, the researcher did offer the respondents a lucky draw. Those who were lucky will be notified through their e-mail and the researcher will send the lucky draw to their office by hand. The lucky draws were sent batch by batch based on the responses that the researcher got from the online survey.

4.3.3 The survey validity

When the researcher was developing the instrument, the concern was whether the measurement tool and the items it contained were representative of general intercultural knowledge which was what the researcher intended to measure. To tackle the issues of content validity, the researcher conducted the pre-test survey to examine the questionnaire's content. The researcher wanted to ensure that the tool focused on fundamental and essential intercultural concepts. The personnel approached by the researcher mostly work at public higher education at Malaysia and were asked to review and examine the questionnaires for accuracy and content. Comments on items and their relevance were clarified and modified according to the comments from the reviewers. Minor modifications to the layout and wording were made prior to its use in the study. Similar or confused questions were deleted and refined. For instance, pre-test survey respondents' made suggestions about the wording of some of the questions, sentence

structure and the presence of language inconsistencies. The language and sentence structure of every question were examined carefully. In total, five respondents who work at Malaysian public university agreed to review the questionnaire for content and to provide answers to questions specific to their experiences.

As well as validity, it was essential to consider the reliability of the questionnaires. Reliability means consistency that can be divided into two: consistency over time (or stability) and internal consistency (Punch, 2005). Consistency over time or stability refers to the measurement over time where the same instruments given to the same people, under the same circumstances but at different times get the same scores. Internal consistency refers to the concept-indicator idea of measurement where the items are consistent and working in the same direction (Punch, 2005). To address the issue of questionnaire reliability in this study, five experienced personnel from public university were asked to complete the questionnaire twice. Two weeks after completing the questionnaire, the five personnel were asked to complete the same questionnaire again. All of the personnel completed and submitted the second questionnaire. The scores from both questionnaires were evaluated and the tool assessed for consistency and reliability of answers.

The main objectives of the online survey were to identify the demographic data of the respondents and their general ideas towards the research issues. The additional objectives included their cultural values, verbal communication which specifically referred to language use, nonverbal communications such as proxemics and haptic that they practice and the conflict issues.

4.3.4 Survey respondents' profile

Table 4.2 illustrates the age, gender, educational level, years of service and religion of the survey respondents.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Age	20-25 yo	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	26-30 yo	14	18.4	3	37.5	1	25.0	18	20.5
	31-35 yo	21	27.6	2	25.0	3	75.0	26	29.5
	36-40 yo	13	17.1	2	25.0	0	.0	15	17.0
	41-45 yo	14	18.4	0	.0	0	.0	14	15.9
	46-50 yo	7	9.2	0	.0	0	.0	7	8.0
	51-55 yo	4	5.3	1	12.5	0	.0	5	5.7
	56-60 yo	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
	61-70 yo	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	
Gender	Female	43	56.6	2	25.0	0	.0	45	51.1
	Male	33	43.4	6	75.0	4	100.0	43	48.9
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Educational level	Secondary School (SRP/PMR/SPM)	8	10.5	0	.0	0	.0	8	9.1
	Post-Secondary (STPM)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	College/Higher education (Certificate/Diploma)	17	22.4	0	.0	0	.0	17	19.3
	Higher Education (PhD/Master/Bachelor)	51	67.1	8	100.0	4	100.0	63	71.6
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Years of Service	1-5 years	26	34.2	5	62.5	3	75.0	34	38.6
	6-10 years	25	32.9	3	37.5	1	25.0	29	33.0
	11-15 years	11	14.5	0	.0	0	.0	11	12.5
	16-20 years	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
	21-25 years	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	26-30 years	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	31-35 years	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Religion	Islam	76	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	76	86.4
	Christian	0	.0	1	12.5	0	.0	1	1.1
	Buddha	0	.0	7	87.5	0	.0	7	8.0
	Hindus	0	.0	0	.0	4	100.0	4	4.5
	Other	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4.2: Age, gender, education, years of service and religion of respondents

Table 4.2 illustrates the age of the respondents. In keeping with a case study research they were selected using a purposive method (see Chapter Three). Table 4.2 indicates that the large group of respondents were 31-35 years of age (29.5%) and were representative of junior university staff in their respective departments. The oldest respondents in this survey were between 56-60 years of age (2.3%) while personnel from middle and support levels were between these two age groups. The three levels of the organisation, the upper, middle and support levels were included in this sample. The majority of respondents are

relatively young compared with the Australian university workforce which is heavily concentrated in the older age groups (Hugo, 2005).

4.3.4.1 Gender

About 51.1% of the respondents who participated in the study were female and 48.9% male. The gender distribution of the survey respondents' profile was skewed to a moderate degree because of maternity leave and the fact that job attrition was greater among females. There were more female respondents at the support and middle levels compared with male respondents who were more prevalent in middle and upper levels. While gender is not the main issue for the study it nonetheless has relevance and since the above findings were from UMT staff one needs to exercise caution in generalising about the other institutions of higher education settings.

4.3.4.1.1 Gender and position

Table 4.3 shows that 12.5% of male respondents dominated the upper levels of administration compared with female respondents. On the other hand, 35.2% of female respondents dominated the middle level compared with the males. The same scenario is repeated for the support levels, where there were 10.2% of female respondents at this level compared with 5.7% of males.

		Gender					
		Female		Male		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Position	Support level	9	10.2	5	5.7	14	15.9
	Middle level	31	35.2	27	30.7	58	65.9
	Upper level	5	5.7	11	12.5	16	18.2

Table 4.3: Gender and position of respondents

While the findings represent only part of the population of university staff it provides a reasonable cross section distribution with representation of both genders at every level. This is also comparable to a Department Labour Force Survey Report (as cited in Ng, 2011) which showed that for the second quarter of 2011, 47.6% women were participants in the country's labour force. Recent statistics have shown that 97.3% of females enrolled in primary school finished their last grade in 2011 contrasted with only 97.1% of males who enrolled in the same year. Furthermore Malaysia's ratio for female to male university graduates is 60:40. Gender workforce disparities continue to exist today; most notably women on average earn significantly less than men. This gender disparity maybe in part due to the tendency for more women to prefer flexible working hours which allows them to combine work and home (or domestic) labour including child-rearing in many cases. However the Malaysian government launched a campaign in 2011 to reach a short-term target of transitioning a further 30% of women out of low earning into higher-paying

positions (Ng, 2011). Once again gender disparity in earnings is common internationally and quite prominent in universities (Currie & Hill, 2012) and so these findings need to be understood in this wider context. This is one of the reasons why the represented workforce is more female than male in this study.

4.3.4.1.2 Gender, position and ethnicity

Respondent's positional levels at the institution were cross-referenced with their gender.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Position	Lower level	14	18.4	0	.0	0	.0	14	15.9
	Middle level	47	61.8	7	87.5	4	100.0	58	65.9
	Upper level	15	19.7	1	12.5	0	.0	16	18.2
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Gender	Female	43	56.6	2	25.0	0	.0	45	51.1
	Male	33	43.4	6	75.0	4	100.0	43	48.9
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4.4: Level of position and gender according to ethnicity

As shown in Table 4.4, 65.9% of respondents were at the middle level of management, 18.2% at the upper level of management and 15.9% at the support level. Ethnic Malays were represented at all three levels with 61.8% at the middle level, 19.7% at the upper level and 18.4% at the lower level. 87.5% of Chinese respondents were at the middle level with only 12.5% at the upper level. All Indian respondents were at a middle level. There were no Indian respondents at an upper level and no Chinese and Indian respondents at a support level. This is consistent with the ethnic distribution of the general population of UMT where Malays are in the majority; it also shows the dominance of the Malay ethnicity and culture at the university.

As for the Malay personnel, about 56.6% of the respondents were female and 43.4% were male, whereas Chinese personnel consisted of 25% female and 75% male, and 100% of Indian personnel for this study were male. The Indian respondents were male yet it cannot be concluded that the institution does not have Indian female personnel. Indian female employees are very small in number; however there is a possibility that Indian males may be more responsive compared with female Indian employees participating in the survey. This is due to their small number and the lower rate of returned surveys from female Indian respondents. This information provides a foundational demographic profile of respondents for this study and draws on the respective background of the respondents.

4.3.4.2 Educational background

The Malaysian school system starts from pre-school and continues through primary school, secondary school and post-secondary school. Normally, when the child turns 5 years old, they will start their schooling even though there is no fixed rule on when a child needs to start preschool education. Children then proceed to primary school at age 7 for a period of six years. At age 13 they will start their secondary education of five forms. Each form will take about a year and they will sit for two big examinations, namely ²¹*PMR* (formerly known as ²²*SRP*) in Form Three and *SPM*²³ in Form Five. After they finish all five years of study in the high school, the students may then proceed to post-secondary education in two forms: lower six and upper six. At this level, the student takes two years of study, before proceeding to the ²⁴*STPM* examination. The *STPM* level is equal to Year 12 (Senior Secondary Certificate of Education) in the Australian school systems.

Table 4.5 shows that 71% of the respondents in this study came from a higher education level and possessed a doctorate, masters or a bachelor's degree. This is followed by 19.3% of the respondents who achieved a diploma or certificate from a college with, 9.1% of the respondents coming from the lowest educational background, starting from *PMR* (formerly known as *SRP*) and *SPM*. This level of education is equal to secondary school in the Australian school system. None of the respondents came from the post-secondary educational level (*STPM* level). The *STPM* certificate is also recognised by many Malaysian universities. The majority of Malay respondents hold a higher education degree (67.1%) while all Chinese and Indian respondents possessed degrees. Of the Malays 22.4% had obtained a certificate and diploma and 10.5% possessed a secondary school certificate. The respondent's educational background is significant in that it illustrates their connections with the ethnic groups during their school days and at their workplace. The majority of Malay respondents in this study hold a higher education degree, about 67.1% of them, followed by 100% Chinese and 100% Indian respondents. About 22.4% of Malays obtained a certificate and diploma and 10.5% of the other Malay respondents possessed a secondary school certificate.

²¹*PMR* = commonly abbreviated as *PMR*, in Malay as *Penilaian Menengah Rendah* or Lower Secondary Assessment. A Malaysian public examination taken by all Form Three students in both government and private schools throughout the country. It was formerly known as *Sijil Rendah Pelajaran* (*SRP*; or Lower Certificate of Education).

²²*SRP*=*Sijil Rendah Pelajaran* or Lower Certificate of Education (LCE).

²³*SPM*=Malaysian Certificate of Education

²⁴*STPM*= Malaysian Higher School Certificate examination

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Educational level	Secondary School (SRP/PMR/SPM)	8	10.5	0	.0	0	.0	8	9.1
	Post-Secondary (STPM)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	College/Higher education (Certificate/Diploma)	17	22.4	0	.0	0	.0	17	19.3
	Higher Education (PhD/Master/Bachelor)	51	67.1	8	100.0	4	100.0	63	71.6
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4.5: Educational background

Respondents' educational background is significant for the study in order to illustrate their connection with other ethnic group during their school days and at their workplace. Therefore respondents' education background sets as basic information for the researcher to learn about the respondent's experiences and connection with other ethnic group.

4.3.4.3 Years of service

As Table 4.6 illustrates, 38.6% of the respondents have served university as employees from 1 to 5 years with the majority at junior level at service sections or lecturers in their respective faculties. Then 33% of respondents have served the university for between 6 to 10 years, and appear to be on the track for promotion to more senior levels. The third group, comprising 12.5% of respondents, had served UMT from between 11 to 15 years and were at senior levels in the organisation. As shown by Table 4.6 below, only 3.4% of respondents had served at UMT for over 30 years.

A year of service is regarded as sufficient for the respondent in order to establish basic information about the background and culture of the organisation. It is due to the cultural, language and religious values which are different from their primary hometown or states and that could influence their knowledge and interaction towards their colleagues at this institution.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Years of Service	1-5 years	26	34.2	5	62.5	3	75.0	34	38.6
	6-10 years	25	32.9	3	37.5	1	25.0	29	33.0
	11-15 years	11	14.5	0	.0	0	.0	11	12.5
	16-20 years	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
	21-25 years	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	26-30 years	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	31-35 years	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4.6: Years of service of survey respondents

4.3.4.4 Religion

Table 4.7 indicates that 86.4% of respondents are Muslim and ethnic Malays. Around 8% are Buddhist and 1.1% are Christians most of whom are also ethnic Chinese. About 4.5% are Hindus who are predominately Indian. Since the majority are Malay it is of no surprise that the majority are Muslim.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Religion	Islam	76	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	76	86.4
	Christian	0	.0	1	12.5	0	.0	1	1.1
	Buddha	0	.0	7	87.5	0	.0	7	8.0
	Hindus	0	.0	0	.0	4	100.0	4	4.5
	Other	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4.7: Religion

Religion is important for the study as it's highly relevant to the daily lives of Malays (Ragman, 2003). How they manage and interact with their beliefs in mind is an intercultural communication issue for those with differing religious backgrounds. Their religion influences every facet of their lifestyle including values and behaviour (Mastor, Jin, & Cooper, 2000). For example Malays are prohibited from being involved in premarital sexual relationships so this could influence their interactions towards their colleagues and could raise proximity issues whenever they are alone with their colleagues.

Other examples in aspects of behaviour are where they were accustomed to greet others with:

salam, a special greeting taught by religious teaching, normally followed by a handshake, and both parties lightly touches their own chest with the fingers of both hands. Guided by Islamic values, this handshake is only performed between members of the same gender (Mastor et al., 2000, p. 97)

4.3.4.5 Local and non-local residency

Local residents in this study refer to the respondents who were born in the state of Terengganu whereas non-local residents in this study refer to the respondents who are not born in, or were originally not from, this state. As table 4.8 demonstrates, 53.4% of the respondents are Terengganese people. Malays are at 52.3%, 1% are Chinese and none of the Indian respondents were local. Only 46.6% of the respondents are not citizens of Terengganu. These respondents belong to one of the other 12 states such as Perak, Selangor, Kelantan, and Pahang as well as from East Malaysia such as Sarawak. Among the non-local were 34.1% Malay, 8% Chinese and 4.5% Indian respondents.

		Ethnic							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Local or non-Local	No	30	34.1	7	8.0	4	4.5	41	46.6
	Yes	46	52.3	1	1.1	0	.0	47	53.4

Table 4.8: Local and non-local resident

This information provides background demographic data about respondents and gives indications as to exposure to the local culture and intercultural communication among the ethnic group. Locals (Terengganese) may have less interaction with ethnic Chinese and Indians compared to those who are non-local. This kind of data will provide a background to the respondent's views and interactions for the interview phase of this study.

4.3.4.5.1 Locality and ethnic group

Around 17% (refer Table 4.9) of the male and 17% female respondents were ethnic Malay Muslims and belonged to different states as shown in Table 9. About 1.1% of female Chinese and 6.8% of male Chinese were non-local. Likewise all 4.5% of the male Indian respondents for this study were non-local. Yet this number does not represent the whole population of UMT personnel and shows that the majority of the respondents for this study were local.

	Local or non-Local											
	No						Yes					
	Gender						Gender					
	Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Malay	15	17.0	15	17.0	30	34.1	28	31.8	18	20.5	46	52.3
Chinese	1	1.1	6	6.8	7	8.0	1	1.1	0	.0	1	1.1
Indian	0	.0	4	4.5	4	4.5	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0

Table 4.9: Locality, gender and ethnic groups

Malaysia has 13 states and three federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya) and has a variety of Indian concentrations. Previous distributions of Indians have been influenced by the expansion of trade, transport lines, and the plantation industry such as rubber. The Indian concentrations are most prominent in Penang and the rubber zone, southern Kedah through to the south Johor around central Malacca, Kuala Selangor and Kinta Valley at Ipoh, Perak. At present, ethnic Indian residents have migrated into urban centres most notably Penang and Kuala Lumpur (Sandhu, 1993). Only 0.2% Hindus (Terengganu history, 2013) settled at Terengganu including those working at UMT. Terengganu has only attracted very few ethnic Indians because the activities in the region did not interest them. These industries included petroleum production and related industrial activities, fishing and agriculture and also boat-building.

4.3.4.6 Summary

Sixty per cent the staff at UMT, in this study, were in age range of 26-35 years followed by 24% in the age range of 36-45 years and 9% aged between 46-55 years old, 4% less than or at ≤ 25 years and 4% are less than or at ≤ 56 years of age. This is consistent with the age of respondents participating in the study with most in the age range between 26-35 years and has served the university for around 1-5 year onwards. 51.1% of respondents were female and 48.9% were male. This shows they were committed respondents compared to males. The majority of respondents were ethnic Malay Muslims and they dominate all three levels of the organisation. However neither ethnic Chinese nor Indians worked at the support level and most of them is at middle level. In terms of educational levels all respondents had completed a bachelor degree or either masters or doctoral degrees including the junior service level workers. The majority of staff at UMT were local Malay (Terengganu born) and also consisted of non-local Malays (non-Terengganu born and coming from various states other than Terengganu) and other ethnic minorities (including Chinese and Indian who are non-Terengganu born and come from various states other than Terengganu).

4.4 The Interview

4.4.1 The interview and e-interview stages in the study

Within the framework of the interview stages proposed by Snape and Spencer (2003) (refer to Figure 3.4, Chapter 3: Methodology, page 83), these stages were used by the researcher in order to direct the respondents through the interview process thus avoiding any misleading information and leading to long interviews.

During the interview process, this study employed all the stages proposed by Snape and Spencer (2003), starting from stage one. All of the discussed steps in **stage one** were applied during the first interview and in choosing the place for the interview. However, some of the interviews had to either be cancelled or rescheduled should the targeted interviewees have other work commitments. However, in respect to the organisation's policy and hierarchy, the interviews with the upper level normally were fixed through their secretaries, who then confirmed their availability. The locations for the interviews were either in the office's meeting rooms or the interviewers' respective offices on in their own space. All of the interviews were recorded upon acquiring verbal consent.

For **stage two**, the researcher starts the introduction about the nature of the study by using e-mail. Prior to the researchers' arrival, the email was sent to the respondents informing them of the researcher's research intention and requesting them to provide all possible assistance where necessary. The email introduced the researcher, the length of the interview, as well as explaining the research intention. After obtaining the responses from the respective respondents, the researcher began to work with the respondents in making appointments to be interviewed. During the interview session, the researcher again introduced the nature and purpose of the study, explaining about confidentiality and once more asking permission to record the interview. The researcher also explained some intercultural terms considering not every interviewer understands the terms used in intercultural communication.

In **stage three**, the researcher first opened the questions by asking personal details of the respondent and a subject that is familiar to the respondents. They also briefed the interviewees so that they could understand the flow of the interview. After the introduction question, the researcher then started asking the main question and guided the interview questions based on the semi-structured interview question. The interviews were around 45 minute to one and a half hours depending on the interviewees' elaboration of the question. Each interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder, downloaded to a folder, and labelled - not according to names, but according to the sequence of the interviews and the date. Only the researcher had access to the recorded information and the computer password was changed from time to time. This process gave the researcher an opportunity to analyse the quality of the interviews and decide whether a second interview was needed. The interviews were then saved in a folder with a pseudonym to maintain the interviewees' anonymity.

In **stage four**, the researcher then guided the respondent through the key themes and the questions that emerged during the interview. The questions explored the respondents'

experience, ideas, thoughts and feelings. During the interview the researcher encouraged respondents to e-mail any material that they remembered that was pertinent to the interview. The researcher used the serial interviews to get more information through the use of emails. Several respondents e-mailed their answers and the e-interviews took place until the researcher felt that saturated information was within reach. At **stage five**, the researcher gave the sign to end the interview through verbal and nonverbal indication. This was to ensure that the respondents had not been left with unfinished feelings or issues left unmentioned. In the last stage, **Stage six**, the researcher then switched off the tape recorder and thanked the respondents for their participation and their contribution to the study. The researcher again ensured that the confidentiality and the use of interview data were purposely for the study. Researchers also prepared a few minutes extra, just in case the respondents would want to talk more about the interview topic.

The researcher also took precautions in order to avoid difficulties in the transcribing process. During the interview, the researcher made sure that the batteries were fully charged and spare batteries were brought along should the interview go on longer than expected. Secondly, the researcher will try to avoid any probable distractions and check the tape recorder now and again during the interview to ensure a smooth interview. Once all interviews were secured and downloaded to the laptop, they were all individually transcribed by the researcher.

All the interviews were conducted by the researcher and recorded. Each interview was recorded on a digital recorder, which was then downloaded to a laptop accessible by the researcher alone. The interviews were then saved in a folder with a reference index understood by the researcher, and maintaining the anonymity of the interviewees. Once all interviews were secured and downloaded to the laptop, they were all individually transcribed and translated where necessary by the researcher. Though the interviews were fully transcribed and translated, attention was not given to heavy notation of the text as the focus was on getting the content of the interviews related to culture and communication practices. As the data from the interviews were analysed, focus was given to similar responses to each question in looking for recurring regularities, which was then coded according to the five main themes derived from the literature.

Notes taken during the interviews were also focused on identifying the particular themes during the communication between the interviews. This was done while interviewing the respondents, using field notes. As soon as a particular observation was done, the observation sheet and field notes were converted into write-up to ensure details were correctly captured and recorded. This helped to avoid losing important details as 'raw field notes themselves are usually partially illegible and notating many private abbreviations' (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 50) which might be understood by the researcher at the time notes were taken. Thus, pointed out by Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 50) a 'write-up will usually add back some of the missing content, since the raw field notes, when reviewed, stimulate the fieldworker to remember things said at that time that are not in the notes'. Similarly the data collected from the interviews, and the observations data were then analysed and coded according to the themes. In other words, guided by the literature, attention was given to data that was only relevant to this research, then a framework was made to organise the result.

4.4.2 Interview Respondents

In total, there were 21 interview respondents, 14 respondents for the one-to-one interview and 7 e-interviews. All of the one-to-one interviews took place during a three month period. The e-interviews continued for more than three months due to the slow response rates of the respondents; the researcher provided them ample time to finish all the three stages of interview questions. The emails containing the interview questions were saved in a folder and labelled with the respondents' name and date of the data collected. Occasionally the researcher also noted down information and observed the respondents' behaviour during the one-to-one interview just in case this helped in explaining the findings. The interview respondents also were encouraged to email the researcher if during the interview they did not remember any of the information asked.

Six e-interview respondents did not finish the e-interview but informed the researcher that they could not commit to the e-interview until the last stage. They declined to participate in the interview and e-interview due to their work commitments. Malay respondents who did not respond to the e-mail were actually on maternity leave, no longer working at this institution or on study leave. The majority who failed to participate were from minority ethnic groups. This troubled the researcher in finding matches of the respective respondents for the interview. Chinese and Indian respondents were therefore small in number in this study due to their commitment to the job, leaving in the middle to further their study and are lesser in number at this institution. In fact the researcher had already sent emails to the respective Chinese and Indian respondents and several failed to respond. The Chinese and Indian respondents who responded gave their justifications for not participating.

There was one Indian respondent who responded and agreed to participate in the one-to-one interview. The researcher tried to arrange the time and date to meet the interviewee but failed to do so because there was last minute information that he was on leave. The researcher then tried again to arrange another interview before the three months period ended. The particular Indian respondent agreed to meet another time but when the time came he informed the researcher that he needed to attend a meeting at his department. The researcher then proposed that the respondent be e-interviewed due to his commitment to his job. All of the information needed including the consent form and the dateline were e-mailed to the Indian respondent. After the due date, the researcher then emailed the reminder to the respondents but did not get a reply from the respondent. After a final attempt and a final reminder to gain access to the interview and e-interview, the researcher then assumed that the respondent was not interested in participating. The researcher however also needed to consider if her status as a Malay Muslim also influenced the number of minority group respondents, including this participant as she was aware that she represented the dominant culture in UMT.

Therefore, of the 150 survey respondents who were originally invited to participate, starting from April 2011 until the dateline, and even though the dateline had been extended for a few times (until August 2011) there were only 93 (62%) responses to the survey with only 88 (59%) valid respondents completing the survey, which is a good return rate (refer Table 4.10).

Number of respondents invited to participate	Number of respondents who answered the survey	Percentage of the response
150	93	62%

Table 4.10: The respondents' percentage

Of the twenty-seven interviews and e-interview respondents who originally accepted invitations for the interview, fourteen interview and seven e-interview respondents participated in the study. Below is the flowchart showing the respondents' process of response during the study.

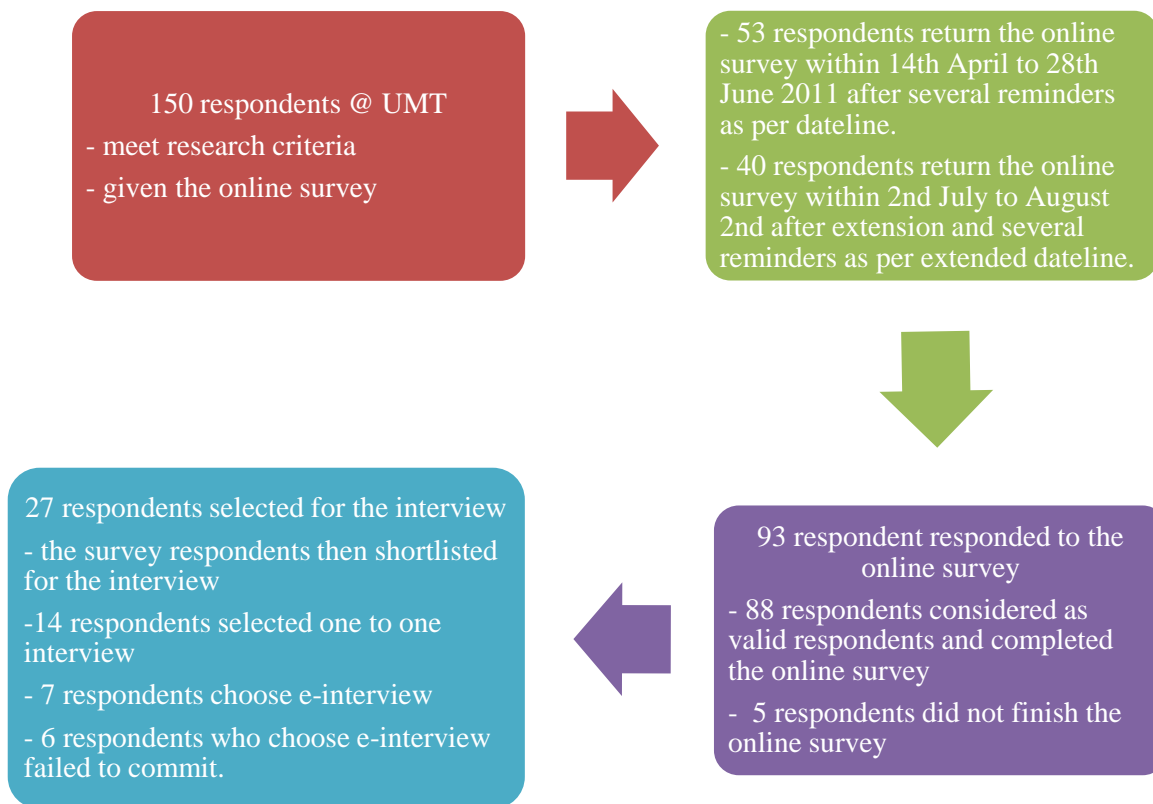


Figure 4.1: Respondents' process of response

4.4.3 Interview respondents' profile

4.4.3.1 Cultural background

Overall, from the twenty-seven targeted respondents, there were twenty-one respondents who completed the interview phase of this study. Fourteen were interviewed one-to-one and seven via online interviewing or conversation also known as e-interviewing. Among these respondents only one respondent did not belong to any of the groups investigated; a Melanau Muslim from Sarawak, East Malaysia. However her experience was to prove

useful as a more neutral or detached observer and so she was encouraged to continue contributing her views and responses to issues of interest.

As depicted in Table 4.11 the majority of interview respondents were Malays, with a further four Chinese and one Indian respondent. Other potential Indian and Chinese respondents withdrew due to work commitments and study. It was quite difficult to obtain respondents from these ethnic groups to participate in the interviews because they are small in number.

No.	Respondent (with pseudonym)	Address form	Gender	Level	Ethnic groups	Religion	Locality	School type	
								Primary school	Secondary school
1	Mek Na	Dr	Female	Middle	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	²⁵ SK	²⁶ SMK
2	Steven	Mr	Male	Academic	Chinese	Christian	nonlocal	²⁷ SRJKC	SMK
3	Sumaiyah	Mrs	Female	Upper	Melanau	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMK/ ²⁸ MARA college
4	Yahya	Mr	Male	Middle	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	²⁹ SMKA
5	Aishah	Mrs	Female	Support	Malay	Islam	local	SK	SMKA
6	Lei Hua	Dr	Female	Upper	Chinese	Buddhist	nonlocal	SRJKC	SMK
7	Khadijah	Mrs	Female	Academic	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMK
8	Adam	Tuan Haji	Male	Upper	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMKA
9	Mohammad	Mr	Male	Academic	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMKA
10	Daud	Mr	Male	Support	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMK
11	Awang	Tuan Haji	Male	Upper	Malay	Islam	local	SK	SMK
12	Fatimah	Mrs	Female	Support	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMK
13	Amina	Miss	Female	Academic	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	³⁰ Methodist girls school	Methodist High Girls school
14	Yusuf	Mr		Upper	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	SK	SMK

Table 4.11: The profile of the one-to-one interviewed respondents

Three of the Chinese respondents were interviewed through e-interviews because they felt that this was a more comfortable medium for them. One Indian respondent also participated through e-interview due to work commitments. Three Malay respondents also nominated for e-interviews due to work and busy lifestyle. One-to-one interview

²⁵SK – Sekolah Kebangsaan (Primary national school)

²⁶SMK – Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (National High School)

²⁷SRJKC – Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (Primary Chinese School)

²⁸ MARA – *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (Bumiputra Trust Council; commonly abbreviated as MARA)

²⁹SMKA – Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (National Religious High School)

³⁰Methodist girls school – a national school, previously owned by the colonial missionary

respondents also had been followed up through e-interviewing at later stages where further explanation and clarification were needed after face-to-face interviewing. This allowed the researcher and respondents to stay in contact during later stages in the research, for instance during data transcription and analysis.

Even though the e-interview response caused delays, they were useful in that the interviews were able to be completed in phases. The majority of interview respondents from other ethnic groups in this study are from the middle level, with none from the support level and only one Chinese respondent from the upper levels.

No.	Respondent (with pseudonym)	Address form	Gender	Level	Ethnic groups	Religion	Locality	School type	
								Primary school	Secondary school
1	Ramlah	Dr	Female	Upper	Malay	Islam	local	SK	³¹ Sekolah Asrama Penuh
2	Hawa	Dr	Female	Upper	Malay	Islam	nonlocal	Methodist girls school	Methodist High girls school
3	Sarah	Miss	Female	Support	Malay	Islam	local	SK	SMK
4	Liang	Mr	Male	Academic	Chinese	Buddhist	nonlocal	SRJKC	SMK
5	Aditya	Mr	Male	Academic	Indian	Hindu	nonlocal	SRK	SMK
6	Chin Hong	Mr	Male	Middle level	Chinese	Buddhist	nonlocal	SRJKC	SMK
7	Jessica	Miss	Female	Academic	Chinese	Not stated	local	SRK	SMK

Table 4.12: Profile of e-interview respondents

4.4.3.2 School experiences and integration

In the survey the researcher did not ask respondents school-type categories (national primary school or the vernacular school) because it was believed that respondents would provide their most recently-obtained educational qualification. Yet, for the interview session, the respondents were asked about their school types. The school type is important to know because it helps in forming basic information about their intercultural communication in their life long interactions (see Enloe, 1968; K. H. Lee & Tan, 1999; Malakolunthu, 2009; Wang, 1978). Given that the integration and interaction among the three principal ethnic groups in Malaysia after independence was difficult, education was

³¹*Sekolah Asrama Penuh* – Boarding School

used to unify those three ethnics - Malay, Chinese and Indians (Singh & Mukherjee, 1993).

		Ethnic									
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Other		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Primary school	Malay-medium National School	14	100.0	1	20.0	1	100.0	0	.0	16	76.2
	Vernacular school	0	.0	4	80.0	0	.0	0	.0	4	19.0
	other	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0	1	4.8
	Total	14	100.0	5	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	21	100.0
Secondary school	National secondary school	9	64.3	5	100.0	1	100.0	0	.0	15	71.4
	Vernacular secondary school	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Religious secondary school	4	28.6	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	4	19.0
	Technical school	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Residential school	1	7.1	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	4.8
	MARA Junior Science College	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0	1	4.8
	Total	14	100.0	5	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	21	100.0

Table 4.13: Interview respondents' school type

Table 4.13 illustrates that all Malay respondents obtained their primary school at Malay-medium national school or *Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK)* where Malay language is the medium of instruction. About 20% of Chinese respondents acquired their primary school at Malay-medium National School and 80% from vernacular school or non-Malay-medium national-type school which is also known as National-type School (Chinese) or *Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)* [SRJKC], where Mandarin-medium and Chinese writing is a medium of instruction. The only Indian respondent obtained their primary schooling at Malay-medium national school or *Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK)*. The final respondent is a *Melanau (the native of Sarawak)*, from Sarawak, in East Malaysia attended English medium school.

Table 4.13 shows that the twenty-one, one-to-one interview respondents attended various school types and experienced various mediums of instruction. About 64.3% Malay, 100% Chinese and 100% Indian, attended the national secondary school or *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*. The other 28.6% of Malay respondents attended a religious school with the medium of instruction in Malay and Arabic language. Only 7.1% of Malays attended a³²residential school and other ethnics attending a³³MARA Junior Science College.

The Chinese basically started their early education at vernacular school and switched to national secondary school where the medium of instruction is the Malay language. Malays continue to national school or boarding school or religious school or to MARA Junior Science College where the medium of instruction is Malay language or Malay language and Arabic (for religious school). Indian respondents in this study however, started their early education at a national school and continued to national secondary school. Their school experiences may affect their relationship with other ethnic groups because different schools have different compositions of ethnic mix. For example, the Malay respondents who attended a religious school experienced uncomfortable feelings, negative perceptions and sometime prejudiced feelings towards other ethnic groups when they started their high school where normally there was an ethnic mix. The details will be explored in interview findings below.

On the other hand, the respondent from Sarawak, where the medium of instruction was English, varies from her counterparts' experiences from Peninsular Malaysia. Her experiences during her school years were unique compared with other respondents. According to this respondent, during that time in the 1970s, the school (where she stayed) was initiated by an expatriate who developed³⁴*Miri* (at Sarawak) in a quest for natural gas. The school that the respondent attended was actually multiracial which consisted of

³² Residential school = types of boarding school

³³ MARA Junior Science College = types of boarding school, in Malay known as *Maktab Rendah Sains Mara (MRSM)* is a group of boarding schools created by the People's Trust Council in Malay is *Majlis Amanah Rakyat*, commonly abbreviated as MARA, a Malaysian government agency. The institution provides learning facilities for bright students in local schools throughout Malaysia.

³⁴*Miri* = a city in northern Sarawak, Malaysia, on the island of Borneo. It is the second largest city in Sarawak, with a population of about 300,000. The region is the birthplace of Malaysia's petroleum industry, which remains the major industry of the city.

many ethnic or 'natives' of Sarawak such as ³⁵*Melanau*, ³⁶*Iban*, ³⁷*Kayan* and ³⁸*Dusun* aside from the British (the expatriates) and the Chinese.

...from primary school to secondary school we were multiracial. Even our neighbours mostly were Iban, Dusun...we seldom get Malays. Very rare...in Sarawak they were many Iban; even Melanau was a minority group. Kayan was also a minority group. Mostly Iban were dominant here. At school they were many Iban... (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) went on to share her experiences during her school days.

...during primary One, as far as I remembered...the communication...at home I used to speak Melanau, same with my other friends. If she's Iban, she will speak Iban, so they have their own languages. When we got into the class, everyone speaks their own language, so then the teacher decided to teach us only one language, which was English...almost 20 different ethnics, even me myself, as a Melanau could not converse with other Melanau, because of different dialects that we have is totally different from mine. When I went to boarding school, during the orientation week, when we introduced ourselves, I could see they were many Melanaus. But they spoke different languages which I could not understand. It was because we were from different area. (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

According to Sumaiyah, at that period most of the teachers were from the Philippines, Indonesia and Britain, who could not converse in Malay language. After Sarawak became part of Malaysia, the integration process began with the implementation of Malay language at every school. Sumaiyah elaborates further on her experiences:

...even my primary school teacher could not speak Malay language. In the past, most of them couldn't speak Malay...at that time, my Additional Mathematics teacher mostly Indonesians, even Chemistry. In 1970s when I was in form 3, form 5, Chemistry, Additional Mathematics were all Indonesians, either Indonesians or Filipinos. Also local

³⁵*Melanau* = a people who live on the island of Borneo, primarily in Sarawak, Malaysia, but also in Kalimantan, Indonesia. They are among the earliest settlers of Sarawak, and speak a Northwest Malayo-Polynesian language (Jawan, 2006).

³⁶*Iban* = a branch of the *Dayak* peoples of Borneo. In Malaysia, most *Ibans* are located in Sarawak, a small portion in Sabah and some in west Malaysia. They were formerly known during the colonial period by the British as *Sea Dayaks*. *Ibans* were renowned for practicing headhunting and tribal/territorial expansion and had a fearsome reputation as a strong and successful warring tribe in ancient times (Jawan, 2006).

³⁷*Kayan* = are an indigenous tribe from the island of Borneo. The *Kayan* people are categorized as a part of the *Dayak* people of Borneo. The population of the *Kayan* ethnic group may be some 27,000. They are part of a larger grouping of people referred to collectively as the *Orang Ulu*, or upriver people. They are known for being fierce warriors, former head hunters, adept in dry-rice cultivation, and having extensive tattoos and stretched earlobes amongst both sexes. They have settled in Sarawak on the middle *Baram* River, the *Bintulu* River and along the *Rajang* River, having been pressed back a little during the late 19th century (Jawan 2006)

³⁸*Dusun* = is the collective name of a tribe or ethnic and linguistic group in the Malaysian state of Sabah of North Borneo. Due to similarities in culture and language with the *Kadazan* ethnic group, a new unified term called *Kadazan-Dusun* was created. Collectively, they form the largest ethnic group in Sabah. A small minority of *Dusuns* can also be found in Sarawak, Brunei where they are defined by the constitution to be one of the seven *Bumiputera* groups (Jawan 2006).

teacher... at that moment, even local teacher could not speak Malay. (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Sumaiyah's experiences may be different from the rest of other respondents due to the geographical area, different generation experiences and period of time before and after national independence.

The majority of respondents did not have experiences like Sumaiyah's because they were from Peninsular Malaysia and had experienced different kinds of events because of the diverse period of time and policy changes that had occurred during their generation. Each generation and age may experience different kinds of educational policy and different settings which also contribute to their different experiences.

Malay interview respondents normally started their primary education at national school and only mixed with the same ethnic group. When they started their high school, where normally there was an ethnic mix, they developed uncomfortable, negative and sometime prejudiced feelings towards other ethnic groups. This was shared by Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) for example:

At that time plus the school environment, we were the majorities, the Malay with high spirit, and they were minorities at the school, where they only mixed among themselves. And also I guess at that time, I was not that mature. During that time, I was only a high school student... Yes I did have a negative perception towards Chinese, like the food they consume which was indecent to Malay. Well I guess it is normal for Malay to have that kind of perception. This created gaps among us.

Yusuf noted that this kind of difference in perception produces cultural tensions (see Neo, 2011).

Respondents who attended a national primary and secondary school in a Malay dominant state such as Terengganu and Kelantan only mixed with one group until they progressed on to their higher education studies. This trend was reinforced by responses from Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic), Sarah (female, Malay, support staff administration) and Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) all of whom attended their primary education locally at their state of origin. They did not mix with different ethnic groups during their primary school and high schools. They only received significant exposure to other cultures during their university years while doing their degree. It is because they were coming from a Malay dominant state such as Terengganu and Kelantan.

Other respondents: Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration), Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) and Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), shared similar experiences; comments made by each of them are below beginning with Yahya:

I went to Sekolah Kebangsaan Othman Talib, at ³⁹Pasir Mas, Kelantan until year 6 and continue my high school at Sekolah Menengah Maahaad Muhammadi at ⁴⁰Pasir Puteh and continue to the same school at ⁴¹Kota Bahru, Kelantan...I went to study at ⁴²UPM from 1997 till 2001. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

...when I was at my primary and secondary school, the school environment was not multiracial...but yeah, I remember one of the Chinese boys at my village which I called him B L, I befriend with him and I knew his family which live nearby the A.B shop now.(Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

At my primary and my high school, there was only one ethnic group, all Muslim Malay (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Awang (above) attended his education at Kuala Terengganu, where the majority were Malay and Terengganu itself was a Malay dominant state. Yet he mentioned that he did befriend other ethnic groups that lived nearby but not during his school years. He became familiar with Chinese celebrations because of his Chinese friends. Whereas Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) had only mixed with one ethnic group during his primary school and continued his high school at a religious school where only Malay students attend. In addition, he was educated at ⁴³Kelantan, where Malays are also dominant.

Some Malay respondents did have exposure to other ethnic groups during their primary education but not during high school.

My primary school was at my village where there was a mixed ethnic group such as Chinese and Siamese. There were many Chinese and ⁴⁴Peranakan Chinese, a mixed between Chinese and Siamese, where village people call them ⁴⁵'Cina kampung' at Pasir Mas. The percentage was about 5% while there was no Indian at all. When I went to

³⁹Pasir Mas = a town and territory of State of Kelantan, Malaysia. The district of Pasir Mas covers an area of 577 square kilometres and is bordered by the districts of Tumpat to the north, Tanah Merah to the south, Kota Bahru to the east, and the Thai district of Sungai Kolok or *Sungai Golok* to the west. Due to its geographical location, it acts as the main gateway of the East Coast of Malaysia to Thailand and is also traversed by major road transport routes from the West Coast to the state capital of Kota Bahru.

⁴⁰Pasir Puteh = a territory and town in Kelantan, Malaysia. The town of Pasir Puteh is situated on the bank of Semerak River, about 30 kilometres to the south of Kota Bharu.

⁴¹ Kota Bahru = or referred as Kota Bharu, a city in Malaysia that serves as the state capital and Royal City of Kelantan. It is also the name of the territory in which Kota Bharu City is situated. The name means 'new city' or 'new castle/fort' in Malay. Kota Bharu is situated in the north-eastern part of Peninsular Malaysia, and lies near the mouth of the Kelantan River. The north-eastern Malaysian city is close to the Thai border.

⁴² UPM = *Universiti Putra Malaysia*

⁴³ Kelantan = is a state of Malaysia. The capital and royal seat is Kota Bharu. Kelantan is positioned in the north-east of Peninsular Malaysia. As of 2010 the population of Kelantan is 95.2% Muslim, 3.8% Buddhist, 0.3% Christian, 0.2% Hindu, 0.5% follower of other religions or non-religious.

⁴⁴Peranakan –This term is particularly used in Malay Archipelago to refer to a specific type of sub ethnic group, viz., Peranakan. In this context, Peranakan can be defined as ethnic group whose members are believed to be off springs of ethnic/race-mixing due to the practice of interethnic marriages between non-indigenous (i.e., immigrants) and indigenous groups. Influenced by predominant local environment, they (read immigrants and their descendants) became indigenised or localised culturally in many aspects, from their everyday lifestyle and behaviour to customs, norms and values adhered to. There are various Peranakan groups in Malaysia, including Peranakan Jawi, Peranakan Sikh and Peranakan Chinese' (Hun 2009, p. 1).

⁴⁵*Cina kampung* – literally means Village Chinese, localised culturally and born locally, among Kelantan people, they are referred to as *Cina Kampung* ('Village Chinese') due to their settlement concentrated in rural areas (Winzeler 1985 as cited in Hun 2009, p. 3).

⁴⁶*'sekolah arab', there was 100% Muslim and there was no other ethnic group...* (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

This could affect his perception and relationship with others because of his limited experience mixing with other ethnicities. The years of high school were spent at the religious school where the majority were Malay. The perception could influence his ways of treating and interacting with others during university and at the workplace.

Some Malay respondents did interact with other ethnic groups in every phase of their education. Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) and Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) mixed with different ethnic groups from primary to high school. Daud is originally from Perak where ethnic distribution is evenly distributed and his local environment consisted of different ethnicities. He compared this environment with Terengganu School where only one ethnic group was enrolled at the school. He also befriended other ethnic groups as he described in the interview.

As I remembered I had two Indian friends, S daughter of R...I remember because they were my best friend. They were one Chinese friend A.S, which was a village name for him. I do have many Chinese and Indian Muslims, as well as friends. (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

Well there is a Chinese in my classroom, about one or two, because they are many Chinese but not Indian. Yet still the majority community is Malay. (Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic)

Khadijah is from Kedah and during her school years she mixed with a variety of ethnic groups. Her local community included many Chinese, rather than Indians and this influenced the discourse in the classroom. Since Kedah is not a Malay dominant state and the composition of ethnic mixed is more evenly distributed, there was diverse ethnicity at the school level.

Some respondents did attend a national primary school but then continued their high school at religious schools. This had been shared by Aishah (female, Malay, support staff administration) where she attended a national primary school and went to religious school for her secondary education. The school environment was 100% Malay Muslim. Other respondents such as Fatimah (female, Malay, support staff administration) disclosed that her school environment was completely Malay even though she did not attend a religious school, but the national secondary school where she received her secondary education was a Malay dominant school. Some Malay respondents such as Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic) and Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) went to missionary primary school as well as secondary school and mixed with many ethnicities but only of the same gender.

Chinese respondents however started their school at a Chinese primary school and then continued their high school at the national secondary school. This is explained by Lei Hua

⁴⁶*Sekolah arab* = religious high school

(female, Chinese, upper level academic) where she started her primary school at a Chinese school and only experienced mixed ethnic groups during her secondary schooling at a national school. She revealed that she had no problem mixing with the other ethnic groups at her high school because of her local environment where a mixed ethnic group lived around them.

I guess I have no problem mixing with them, I'm not feeling uncomfortable because my house actually sold groceries. So we used to it because the neighbours around were majority Malays. They came to buy their groceries and I normally would help my father at his shop. So this was kind of normal for me. Yet there was less Indians in this local area, even among my classmates at my high school there were no Indians. Yeah I did feel that there were less Indians but Malays were the majority there. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

She assumed that she has no problem mixing at her school because her local area was multiracial even though she went to a Chinese primary school for early education.

Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level professional) and Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) received their early education at a Chinese primary school and then proceeded to national secondary school. Another Chinese respondent, Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) stated that he went to a Chinese school and continued his high school at national school where Malays were the majority or where almost all ethnic groups were represented at high school.

I went to Chinese primary school where they were also other ethnic group. There were Malay and Indian, we are all friends. Since this town is small, the racial line is thin. To me ethnic group and religion is not a problem. I can share with them, I have Indian friend who lived at the estate. My Malay friend, during ⁴⁷'hari raya', they sure brought me a ⁴⁸'kuih'. And my dad open up a rubber shop, where we bought a rubber from the villagers, and 90% of our customer were Malay. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Steven indicated that he did have many friends from various ethnic groups because in his local area there were many ethnic groups living together in a small town. Jessica (female, Chinese, middle level academic) is a local (a Terengganese Chinese) and attended primary and secondary at the national school; the majority were Malay because the school that she attended was in a Malay dominant state.

Whereas the single Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) went to a national primary and secondary school where mixed groups were represented.

I went to Sek. Ren Keb Tambun; ⁴⁹Ipoh, ⁵⁰Perak from Year 1 to Year 5, and continue to other national school at Kedah and went to Sek Men. Keb Aman Jaya, Sungai Lalang,

⁴⁷kuih = Malay cake or dessert like

⁴⁸Hari raya=Muslim celebration *Eid-ul- Fitr* or *Eid-ul-Adha*.

⁴⁹ Ipoh =is the capital city of Perak state, Malaysia. It is approximately 200 km (125 miles) north of Kuala Lumpur on the North-South Expressway. Ipoh developed into one of Malaysia's main cities around the turn of the 19th century due to the booming tin mining industry.

⁵⁰ Perak =one of the 13 states of Malaysia, is the second largest state in Peninsular Malaysia. It borders Kedah and the Thai, Yala Province to the north; Penang to the northwest; Kelantan and Pahang to the east; Selangor to the south, and the Straits of Malacca to the west. The state's administrative capital is Ipoh.

⁵¹*Kedah for my high school from Form 1 to Form 5 and continue for Form 6 at Sek Men Keb Khir Johari, ⁵²Sungai Petani, Kedah. Then enter higher education to futher my bachelor in Maritime Management (marina development) at UMT, Terengganu.* (Aditya, male, Indian, middle level academic)

The school that he attended was at Ipoh, Perak and Sungai Lalang, Kedah where the ethnic groups were evenly distributed. Some like Ipoh were populated with more Chinese compared with other parts of Perak.

Overall the respondents experienced a variety of school systems. The schools that they attended influenced their early encounters with the other ethnic groups. These experiences were instrumental in the formation of their perceptions and cultural awareness of others with different ethnicity to their own.

Ever since 1957, after independence, the Malaysian government promoted integration and unity through various education policies. The vernacular schools at the elementary level have a centralised curriculum and the medium of instruction is their native languages - Malay, Mandarin or Tamils (Malakolunthu, 2009). These school types influenced their early experiences in mixing with different ethnic groups, having less knowledge about others' cultural backgrounds and involve 'very little in honest discussions about their similarities and differences' (Montesino, 2012, p. 121). The Malays from Malay-dominant states such as Terengganu and Kelantan had fewer interactions with the other ethnic groups because they attended a national school with majority Malays. That they normally interacted outside their school environment and were supported by their multiracial population at their local area was mentioned by Awang (male, Malay, upper level academic).

Similarly Chinese respondents attended Chinese primary schools and only started to interact with other ethnicities when they started high school and when their local areas were comprised of a multicultural community as explained by Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) and Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic). The one single local Chinese respondent was only exposed to one ethnicity, Malay, compared to her own ethnic group because the school she attended was in the Malay-dominant state (Jessica, female, Chinese, middle level academic). This suggests that the local environment and the school system they experienced influenced their interactions with other ethnic groups. This could affect their relationships with their friends from various ethnicities, their perceptions, their treatment and attitudes towards them also.

Some Malay respondents, together with the single Indian respondent, had interacted with other ethnic groups since primary up to high school and continued to do so to university level, such as Daud (male, Malay, support staff administration), Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic). Some Malays

⁵¹ Kedah = a state of Malaysia, located in the north-western part of Peninsular Malaysia. The state covers a total area of over 9,000 km², and it consists of the mainland and Langkawi. The mainland has a relatively flat terrain, which is used to grow rice. Langkawi is an archipelago of islands, most of which are uninhabited.

⁵² Sungai Petani = or abbreviated as 'Sg. Petani' or 'SP' is a town in the State of Kedah, in the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. Sungai Petani is the largest town in Kedah followed by the state capital Alor Setar.

even attended a previous missionary school such as Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic) which integrated other ethnicities even though the school was of the same gender. The findings indicate that the ethnic groups have less opportunity for learning about different cultures during their primary school yet the interaction increases during their high school years. Even though there is a dominance of the Malay or Chinese cultures at their primary school, the multiracial environment and local community provided opportunities to interact with other ethnic groups.

4.4.3.3 University experiences and integration

Respondents were asked about their interactions with the other ethnic groups during their university years. This is due to their educational background, the type of school that they attend during their secondary education might influence their adaptation towards their friends from different cultural background. This information was mention in section 4.4.3.2.

Some Malay respondents indicated that they started their interactions with other ethnicities at university level because they only attend a religious school during their secondary. There are several reason mention by the respondent, such as to accomplish the task given by the lecturer as mention by Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional):

When I entered university, I guess at that time, I had already matured. I started to socialize with the other ethnic groups in a very close way. Some of the reasons were because we needed to accomplish our project and group assignments. And I find out that other ethnic groups are very cooperative and highly committed to the group. This had opened my eyes and I could actually collaborate with them effectively. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Due to his educational background, Yusuf feels that age does matters in socializing with other ethnic group especially when they have some goals to achieve. This indicate that the paradigm might shift especially in relation to socialising with the other ethnic group when the people become more mature at age. Yusuf started to learn to accept his friends from different ethnic groups during his university years.

Also because they curious to learn about other ethnic groups as mention by Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional).

They accepted me as what I am. I couldn't see any issues about that. I remember this boy; G (Indian) from ⁵³Klang who did teach me a few Tamil words. Every night we had some chit chat and shared our culture. From there I gained several pieces of knowledge about intercultural groups, I did take this as an opportunity for me to learn. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Awang started to mix with different ethnic groups when he started university. Even though he was from a Malay school and living in an almost majority Malay community he easily

⁵³Klang = old alternative spelling is Kelang, is the royal city and former capital of the state of Selangor, Malaysia. It is located about 32 km to the west of Kuala Lumpur. Port Klang, which is located in the Klang District, is the 13th busiest transshipment port and the 16th busiest container port in the world.

accepted others and did not have any rules in accepting others. He prefers to have many friends from various ethnic groups. Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) believed that he had matured over time especially after he graduated from the university, because he met many people from many different backgrounds.

Some of other Malay respondent admitted that they felt awkward and some might not. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level professional) and Aishah (female, Malay, support staff administration) admitted that they felt uncomfortable when they first mixed with their friends from different ethnic groups.

I did feel awkward at the first time...but I did take the 'hubungan etnik' (ethnic relationship) subject, so there was no problem...my lecturer made it compulsory for every group to have a mixed group member. There shouldn't be only Malay, or only male, we were given this as an order, so we had to. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level professional)

University is supposed to promote integration among the students from various backgrounds. One way to help ensure this happens is by mixing them at any stage of the university program, e.g. assignments and courses. When this become compulsory, they need to be in mixed group and this made the intercultural communication as necessary in order to accomplish their goals for certain task and help in adjusting the Malay towards mixing with the other ethnic.

Whereas, Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) admitted that he felt more relaxed, however he did feel inferior in relation to language use.

I didn't feel awkward but more inferior in terms of communication, may be because they can speak English well. But I noticed that they too used broken English. So I tried to speak up, why not? Even though I was from religious school my English is not bad. I know I can speak well too.

This indicate that language barriers could also become one of the reason why some Malay feels uncomfortable when mingle with the other ethnic group. Whenever the spoken language is not familiar to them, they might withdraw from the communication or feel inferior as shown by Adam. However, Adam confessed that interactions during his university years helped him in mixing well with the other ethnic groups at his workplace.

Chinese respondents also revealed that during their study at higher education they did mingle with different ethnic groups.

When I was at ⁵⁴'Maktab Perguruan Ilmu Khas', I did mix with different ethnic group. When I was at Manhattan, there were lots of ⁵⁵'orang putih' there... (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

There was no problem. When I first been here, I was the only Chinese, with two other Chinese lecturers which I did not know very well. I always stick together with my course

⁵⁴Maktab Perguruan Ilmu Khas = Institute of Teacher Education

⁵⁵Orang putih = westerner, western people, usually use by the Malaysian to call upon the westerner.

mate and complete our assignment together. To me there was no problem. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Lei Hua studied at the East Coast University, where Malays are the dominate group. She was the only Chinese respondent who stated that it was compulsory to merge with Malays who were the majority in her programme. Yet she felt that she had no problem in blending in. She felt that there was no problem even with the language and acceptance from her Malay colleagues. Indeed she felt that she was closer to Malay course mates because there were not many ethnic Chinese in her course. She also mentioned that she furthered her study overseas and did socialise with *orang putih*.

The 'Orang putih' if they are not familiar with you, they are normally unfriendly. They are like that; at first step, they need to be familiar with you. Compare to what occur here, we can always talk lots of things even though we are not that close but it seems very close even we are first meet. But this is not what happened there. They will not be friendly to you if they don't know you. It's like you need to make the first move and then they will start to speak to you. I guess it's their culture which is different from us.

The data in this study suggests that ethnic Malays tend at first to have negative feelings and perceptions towards other ethnic groups, but these were likely to abate as they experience contact with other ethnicities. Whereas the Chinese and Indian respondents tended not to hold any strong negative perception towards their Malay counterparts and were inclined to find that their university years were helpful in forming relationships with other ethnicities.

Respondents, regardless of ethnicity, all indicated that their experience during university or in some cases college years helped them in terms of learning how to integrate with other ethnicities at their current workplace. Malay respondents seemed to experience more exposure during university years and continued to experience the multiracial relationships when they started their careers. This trend was also reported by Ibrahim, Muslim, and Buang (2011) in their study into higher education. This was also the case for Chinese and Indian respondents where they emphasise the importance of their university years helping them integrate in their workplace. This is also consistent with Zaharah et. al (2010 as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2011) study which reported that 'university activities have successfully helped in creating awareness and increasing students' motivation to interact with other ethnic groups'.

In general the Malay respondents in this study who went to national school and interacted with only one ethnic group, experienced negative, prejudiced and uncomfortable feelings towards other ethnic groups at first when they started university. This is in line with the Sanusi (1984 as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2011) and Agoes (1983 as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2011) studies which indicate that there is an ethnic polarisation between Malay and non-Malay students. The same issues have also been highlighted by Abdul (2003, as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2011), where he indicates that 80% of his respondents still develop negative prejudices towards other ethnic groups when they realised the difficulty in spending time together in social activities such as having meals, studying in groups, and in sharing accommodation.

One Malay respondent revealed his feeling of inferiority and inadequacy in relation to language where he perceived that other ethnicities could speak English much more fluently compared to Malays. Chinese respondents however said that they had little difficulty in interacting with their Malay peers. Yet first exposure to other ethnicities for both Malays and Chinese in high school and university was similar. The single Indian and Chinese respondents in this study did not discuss their feelings of discomfort, prejudice or negative perceptions towards other ethnic groups. This could be because the Malays are dominant and the others do not want or feel able to voice their discomfort. Yet this still can be refuted as mentioned by Abdul Samad (2003 as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2011) that on the surface, the relationship between different ethnicities appears satisfying, but the findings indicate that students tend to encounter difficulty or discomfort in spending time together at social functions.

The finding suggests that people with different ethnicities in Malaysia find it much easier to interact in formal and workplace settings than in more informal social type settings. This happened because of the language barrier, different values, food intake or restriction and religious values which might restrict them in enjoying each other's company during the informal occasion. For example, a Chinese colleague might be more comfortable in going out for lunch with his or her friend from the same ethnic background rather than going out with his or her Malay colleague due to different food intake especially because the Chinese eat pork while the Malays prohibit this. Eating together, while the Chinese have pork in front of their Malay friends might be considered insensitive or rude in the Malaysian context. Nonetheless, difficulties in social contexts may ultimately affect their ability to communicate efficiently with colleagues in the workplace. This was also reported by Montesino (2012) when he witnessed that most Malaysians of different ethnic backgrounds seemed to be able to interact well with each other during work time, but not in social type activities such as lunch or after work functions. Montesino (2012) concluded that for economic reasons they could work together but preferred to be separate in social settings.

4.4.3.4 Workplace and friendship

Respondents were asked to provide information about whether they knew people from different ethnicities with whom they had interactions with or were close to at their workplace. Some of the Malay respondents had from five or more friends from other ethnicities at their workplace.

I guess I may have more than 10. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

I guess, my Indian friends are around 5 because they are not many here. My Chinese friend maybe about 6...It is because I am involved in sport, mostly Chinese and Indian join in. I play golf; I met them there and they become my golfer friends. (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

In my department, I knew Mr K, he is Indian. Last time when we were in one faculty, they were many of them like S (Chinese, female) and P (Chinese, male). Since UMT are majority Malay, I knew almost all of them at my faculty. I did also interact with other Chinese friend from other faculty but the interaction is limited compared to my own

faculty. Ever since this faculty had been separate into two different entities, I guess the interaction is less (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

I guess about 10% maybe from Chinese, Indian, Siamese, Sabahans and Sarawakians.(Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level)

These Malay respondents befriended more than five colleagues from different ethnic groups. Daud, for example, was involved in social activities including golf where he made friends with colleagues from various ethnic groups. Other Malay respondents have between one to five friends from different ethnic groups from their workplace.

Among the reasons given by Malay respondents for their friendships with less than five colleagues from different ethnic groups were that there were fewer people from these groups at the institution. The Chinese and Indian respondents however, argued that they had befriended more than ten people from a different ethnic group at their workplace.

... More than 10. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

I got many, more than 10...I actually got many friends (from different ethnic groups) (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

I mixed with every ethnic group. (Chin Hong, male, Chinese, middle level professional)

So far, I got many friends from various ethnic groups such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, ⁵⁶Kadazan, Iban, bumiputra from Siamese decent. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

I guess I got many friend from various ethnic group. (Jessica, female, Chinese, middle level academic)

I guess I got more friends from other ethnic group compare to the same ethnic groups. (Aditya, male, Indian, middle level academic)

Malay respondents did not have many friends from different ethnicities compared to the Chinese and Indian respondents in this study. That they are such a large majority is likely to be of influence because of this, yet they still formed relationships with ethnic minorities. However some of the Malay respondents did experience discomfort when they first started their jobs in a multiracial workplace.

Overall, the Malay respondents understand that by having a friend from a different ethnic background is enough to prove that they know about the other's culture. By having a friend from various ethnic background is not a prove of good ethnic relation. However, this is not the case because this indicates that they only know the tip of the iceberg, yet there are many more that they could explore. This is mentioned by Hall (1976) in his theory of Cultural Iceberg model where culture can be visible and invisible, where there are many

⁵⁶Kadazan = are an ethnic group indigenous to the state of Sabah in Malaysia. They are found mainly at Penampang on the west coast of Sabah, the surrounding locales, and various locations in the interior (Regis, Lasimbang, & Baptist 2006).

aspects that should be explored under the surface such as values, religious beliefs, attitudes, approaches to problem solving, assumptions, views, roles, verbal and nonverbal, perceptions and norms and many more. This is non-observable criteria and can only be learnt through the interaction or being part of the society of a certain ethnic group.

4.4.3.4.1 University experiences and workplace integration

Respondents were asked if they thought that their interactions during university years helped them integrate well at their work places. Malay respondents in general perceived that their interactions during university years helped them in dealing with other ethnic groups at their workplace as well as when dealing with students from various backgrounds.

It helped me. Especially when I started working, previously at ⁵⁷UUM, where lots of the students came from different ethnic groups. But here the non-Muslim is small in number, so it's rarely that I can communicate with them, except with lecturers who are non-Muslim... (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

My classmates during my masters study majority were Chinese and Indian while only a few were Malay. This experience was really helpful. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Khadijah admitted that she felt a bit shy and worried about the acceptance of her friends from different ethnic groups. But when they started to form a relationship, she saw that it was satisfactory and faced no problems with them. She also highlighted that there were no language problems when she began to mix with new friends from different ethnic groups.

Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic), Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration), and Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) believed that mixing with different ethnicities during their university or college years influenced their interactions with colleagues from various ethnic groups at their workplace. They testified that the experience was exciting as they could share different stories with their friends from various ethnic groups and had never felt awkward.

Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) stated that even though his background was from a religious school this was not a barrier for him in getting to know people from different ethnic groups. He believed that those who feel awkward when interacting with other ethnic groups was due to individual issues, but this was not the cause with him as he enjoys making new friends. Daud (male, Malay, support staff administration) observed that interactions with different ethnicities during his school years influenced his communications with colleagues from various ethnic groups at the workplace. He made many friends from Chinese and Indian ethnic groups when he socialised with friends from his workplace.

⁵⁷ UUM = Universiti Utara Malaysia is a public university in the town of Sintok, Kedah. Utara means 'northern' in the Malay language

The Chinese respondents together with the single Indian respondent also shared the same views that their interactions during university years helped them during their interaction with other ethnic groups at their workplace. This included Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic), Jessica (female, Chinese, middle level academic), Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic), Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration), Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) and Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic).

...the first day I started my job here, I will always be cautious of not using a harsh language to everyone...I believe as a human being we should respect everyone, this is my principle ...I will try to form a healthy relationship with my colleagues by not looking into their religion or ethnicity. This applies to the student as well, as I will not look upon their skin colour because I'm here to perform my duty. I will do my best, this is my fundamental belief. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Respondents in this study, regardless of ethnicity, appeared to share similar experiences in that they saw their experiences during university, college or school helped them integrate well with other ethnicities at their current workplace.

4.1.1. Work experiences outside Terengganu

Many Malay respondents had also worked outside Terengganu a few years before starting at their present institution. Their work experiences outside of Terengganu revealed that they did interact with other ethnic groups in other states with higher numbers of ethnic minorities. These respondents included Yusuf, Yahya, Khadijah, Aishah, Fatimah, Adam, Amina, Hawa and Ramlah. Yusuf started his job at one university on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia where there were various ethnic groups in the institution. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) started his job at the ⁵⁸HUKM at Kuala Lumpur and had been at Terengganu since 2005. During his years at his previous workplace, he did work together with other ethnic groups as well as foreigners.

When I was at HUKM, I handle many of the foreigners...I did mix with other ethnic group as well such as Indians and Chinese... (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) started her first job at Selangor as a teacher and experienced a multiracial environment at her previous workplace. Aishah once worked at Kuala Lumpur for about 8 months. Her workplace environment was multi-racial.

I felt awkward at first, working at multi-racial workplace. I guess maybe I normally mixed with my own ethnic group and working with other ethnic groups around me made me feels uncomfortable and afraid. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Aishah mentioned her feelings towards her non-Muslim superior who was a Christian, which was influenced by the fear that Christians will convert Muslims to Christianity (Breiner, 1991; Lee, 1988). At her previous workplace they talked about dress codes

⁵⁸ HUKM Hospital = recently known as UKM Medical Centre, formerly known as *Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*, one of the four university hospitals in Malaysia. It is located in Bandar Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur and is administered by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (The National University of Malaysia).

where the ⁵⁹*baju kurung* was discouraged but skirts and dresses were promoted. She thought that was related to the image of the company where they perceived that kind of dress was more professional and elegant.

Fatimah (female, Malay, support staff) disclosed that when she first started her first job, she did struggle in her interactions with her colleagues from different ethnic groups in terms of communication. She confessed that she was not that close with non-Malay staff.

I was not that close with non-Malay colleagues. Yet whenever we met, we did greet each other by saying 'Hi, Hi' or 'bye'. But never get along together. I feel a bit uncomfortable doing that. (Fatimah, female, Malay, support staff)

Fatimah feels uncomfortable when trying to befriend others from different ethnic groups because it was not a normal practice for her during her school. She also admitted that she experienced 'culture shock' when she first started her job at a non-government agency where her superior was an Indian. She perceived her experiences while working at this non-government agency was difficult in terms of adaptation and socialisation. She was closer to her Malay friends compared with other ethnic groups. She also focused more on her job rather than socialising with her colleagues from different ethnic groups. When she first started her current job, she felt happy and content because the work environment consisted of majority Malay staff.

Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) started his first job at Kuala Lumpur and had already been in government service for about 30 years. Adam shared his experiences when working at his previous institution in comparison to his current workplace.

When I was at ⁶⁰SUK, the majority of staff there was Malay. The only Chinese was an ⁶¹EXCO ADUN Bandar. But when I started my job here, this place is so multiracial especially the lecturer posts. But not the management staff or senior staff from Chinese ethnic groups...the majority is Malay.

Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) first started her work at Kuala Lumpur, outside the Terengganu state. At her previous workplace, staff were 80% Malay and 20% other ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indians. Regardless of many Malays in her previous workplace, she had experienced a multiracial workplace environment. Similarly, Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) had been working at Selangor state for about 7 years before settling down at her current job at Terengganu. She admits that her previous workplace consisted of a variety of ethnic groups and she mixed freely with them.

A small number of Malay respondents had never worked outside Terengganu state which indicates that they may not have much exposure to other ethnic groups. This was clarified by Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) who had never worked outside Terengganu state. She started her first job at UMT, Terengganu. She believed that

⁵⁹*Baju kurung* = is a traditional Malay costume which loosely translated as 'Enclosed Dress', normally worn by the female, in Malaysia.

⁶⁰SUK = State Secretary

⁶¹EXCO ADUN Bandar = State assembly man

communicating with her friends from different ethnicities is not too different because of their small number at this university.

As for the Chinese respondents, they did work outside Terengganu for a few years before they remained at this institution. Their working experience outside Terengganu indicates that they did interact with the other ethnic groups since other states comprise of an even number of ethnic minorities compared to Terengganu. They worked with various ethnic groups at their previous workplace. This is mentioned by Jessica (female, Chinese, middle level academic), Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) and Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration).

Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) shared his views in relation to intercultural communication at the workplace and he noted that there is less intercultural communication at his current workplace.

I guess it rarely happens at my workplace. This is because I only attend the formal functions where everything was arranged in a proper manner. I guess no intercultural communication happens. But I did observe that a small number of the students which shows that they mixed with students from different ethnic groups. This phenomena was something rare, normally they only wanted to get together with different ethnic groups when it was involved with the assignment or directed by the lecturer.(Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

He was the only respondent to openly offer an opinion about the intercultural communication.

Yet a small number of Chinese and Indian respondents had never worked outside the Terengganu state; Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level) and Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) started their first job at this institution. However, they did experience interactions with other ethnic groups during their school and university years. They felt that that they had no difficulties in their interactions with their colleagues from different ethnic groups based on their school and university experiences.

Overall, the Malay respondents usually mixed well with other ethnic groups when they started their job compared to their interactions during their school years. The exposure they received during their service in the other states helped them to interact well with the other ethnic groups when they started their jobs in a multiracial environment. This was also shared by the Chinese and Indian respondents in that they too mentioned exposure in their multiracial workplaces before they started their jobs at the current institution. The interaction and exposure with other ethnic groups that they experienced during their service in the other states showed that they already had in mind how communication and relationships should be conducted at their current workplace. As noted, the Malaysian government promoted excellence in interaction among members of different cultural groups in the workplace (Gudeman, 2002). The interaction at the workplace as reported by Gudeman (2002) opens up chances to appreciate people across ethnic boundaries and form working relationships and friendships. Yet the difference at this workplace is in relation to the ethnic distribution where ethnic Malays are in the overwhelming majority.

4.5 Conclusion

The respondents had experienced a range of schooling from national schools, vernacular schools or specialised schools catering for Chinese and Indian communities, and missionary schools managed by Christian churches (Montesino, 2012), as well as those for religious school for Malay Muslim communities. This study has found that overall, respondents, regardless of ethnicity, believed that they had developed rich and meaningful understandings as a result of previous interactions with people of other ethnicities, particularly in their years of university study. During their university years, some respondents reported that they had shared their first really meaningful experiences as they developed relationships with other ethnic groups while studying at the same university. In relation to making friends with people from other ethnicities, Malay respondents in this study overall had substantially less experience with cross-cultural experiences than with fellow colleagues with differing ethnicity, when compared with Chinese and Indian respondents. This could influence their integration, interaction and communication with other ethnic groups. However Malay respondents began to mix more regularly with the other ethnic groups once they began working. Interestingly the majority of Malay respondents revealed that they experienced a significant amount of exposure during their university studies and believed that through observation they learned how to interact once they found themselves in a multi-ethnic work environment.

This chapter outlined the UMT contexts and demographic information of the respondents. The chapter discussed the survey and the interview stages in this study. The profiles of the survey respondents and also the profiles of the interview respondents were also explained in this chapter, which included their cultural and schooling backgrounds, university and workplace histories and experiences, including the nature of their relationships and interactions when encountering people with different ethnicities from their own.

The next chapter will further explore respondents' cultural profiles including their cultural knowledge and cultural values in relation to the colleagues they work with who have an ethnicity different from their own.

CHAPTER 5: RESPONDENTS' CULTURAL PROFILE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings stemming from the quantitative and qualitative data. SPSS is used to analyse the quantitative data while the qualitative data is analysed through thematic analysis (see Chapter Three). The qualitative data is derived from one-on-one interviews and e-interviews conducted with twenty-one respondents. The findings verify the intersections between the quantitative and qualitative data. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data (see Table 5.1). These themes are discussed here, and include consideration of the implications.

	Theme	Sub theme
1	Culture and cultural values (based on the Hofstede dimensions) present in the workplace	Cultural knowledge Power distance Uncertainty avoidance Long-term orientation
2	Language use by staff at the university (including local, non-local and ethnic variations)	Verbal communication
3	Nonverbal communication variations used by staff from the various backgrounds (cultural and geographical)	Proxemics Haptic Silence
4	Conflict (that can arise as a consequence of any differences identified in objectives 1, 2 and 3 above).	
5	1 Malaysia	

Table 5.1: Thematic framework

5.2 Cultural knowledge

This section outlines the findings of the first theme: culture and cultural values. The subthemes involve cultural knowledge, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Cultural knowledge will specifically examine respondents' perceptions about cultural differences, knowledge about others' culture, relationships with other ethnic groups, language practice, decision-making practices and interactions with others.

5.2.1 Cultural differences

The survey data demonstrates that 88.2% of Malay respondents (see Table 5.2) noticed cultural differences between their culture and others. However 11.8% of Malay respondents were unaware of the cultural differences in their own culture. The one Indian and 75% of the Chinese respondents were aware of the cultural differences. This suggests that, in general, all ethnic groups were aware of cultural differences that exist at the institution.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul1	During your service at UMT, do you notice cultural differences compared to your own culture?	No	9	11.8	2	25.0	0	.0	11	12.5
		Yes	67	88.2	6	75.0	4	100.0	77	87.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.2: Cultural differences between respondents' own culture and others

The interview data highlights the survey findings in that the respondents shared their experiences in relation to their perceptions of cultural differences. A majority of interview respondents regardless of ethnicity did notice cultural differences. Yet some Malay respondents admit that they did not notice any differences.

... No, I was not aware of the differences because it is very seldom we communicate with difference ethnic groups, especially at this institution. (Yusuf, male, local Malay, upper level professional)

The small number of interview respondents who did not notice any differences put this down to the dominance of the Malay culture which meant they were oblivious to others' culture.

5.2.2 Knowledge about others' culture

Table 5.3 shows that 52.6% of Malay respondents reported that they do not know a lot about their colleagues' cultures. This contrasted to 87.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents who possessed knowledge about diverse cultural backgrounds.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul2	I know a lot about my colleagues' culture.	No	40	52.6	1	12.5	1	25.0	42	47.7
		Yes	36	47.4	7	87.5	3	75.0	46	52.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.3: Knowledge about colleagues' culture

Malay respondents thus demonstrated limited knowledge about different cultures despite the integration policies and the 1 Malaysia concept propagated by the government. For example:

I know a little bit about the Chinese. (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

I know about Chinese and Indian cultures in general. (Hawa, female, Malay, upper level academic)

In answering these questions, it needs to be acknowledged that the respondent might have a very different understanding of the idea of cultural differences and/or culture compared to that of the researcher. Somehow, the Malay respondent such as Hawa might refer the

term “culture” to only a surface of the culture, the visible section or “the tip of the Iceberg” (1986 as cited in Hanley, 1999, Mindness, 2014). She refers to the tangible side of the culture, as the word “general” here refer to the Chinese celebration, food and clothing. The Malay respondent does not touch on any of the layers of culture such as the concept of time and space, the relationship to things for example to animals, physical space, social contexts, group norms, concept of faith and many others which actually influence their interaction. These are the invisible sections that they are not aware of in which contain a bigger section of assumptions, values and belief (Mindness, 2014). This finding indicates that the Malay respondent has a simplified understanding towards the term “culture” and she does not really explain the complexity of working in multicultural environment where many ethnic background exists.

Chinese respondents however indicated that they were aware of other ethnic cultures such as Malay, and ⁶²*Kadazan* and Indian. For example, a Chinese respondent gives an interesting response when asked if he knows about his colleagues’ culture.

I’m not comfortable to admit that I really know a lot about cultures of the other ethnic groups, especially the Malays, but I know their cultures a lot more than they know about my culture. (Liang male, Chinese, middle level academic)

The Indian respondent too recognises his cultural knowledge.

*I’m familiar with Malays and Islam. I know about their daily routines such as their prayer times which are five times a day, their fasting month, their festivals, their food in terms of ⁶³*Haram* and ⁶⁴*Halal* and many more.* (Aditya, male, Indian, middle level academic)

This statement indicates that the marginalised cultures do need to learn about the dominant Malay culture. Even though the minorities need to adapt to the culture of the majority, still there is a need for the majority culture to take notice of the minority’s culture at this institution. The majority culture should acknowledge the minority culture so that they can integrate well, avoid misunderstanding and promote strong unity among the Malaysian multicultural society. The study shows that there is a practice of biculturalism among the minority culture where they understand and work within the dominant culture in order to develop their economy and physical well-being. At the same time, they also communicate with the majority culture. The minority are also able to retain their own culture in order to ensure survival in the majority culture (Hanley, 1999). It is also indicated that the minority ethnic group in this multicultural workplace are aware of the in-depth layers of the culture such as beliefs and religion as mentioned by Aditya about the halal and haram concept

⁶²The Kadazan or also known as Kadazandusun is one of the largest ethnic groups in Sabah. The people of Sabah and Sarawak have more complex ethnicity compared with the Peninsular Malaysia. The Kadazandusun are a collection of tribes classified as speakers of languages of the Dusunic family and traditionally occupied the fertile plains of the west of Sabah (Regis, Lasimbang, & Baptist, 2006)

⁶³ The opposite word of *Halal* is *Haram*, an Arabic term meaning sinful or typically prohibited, and in this case refers to food consumption or dietary rules or food that is not to be consumed (Wheeler, 2013).

⁶⁴*Halal* means permissible, a term designating any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law. The term is used to designate food seen as permissible according to Islamic law as in this context (Wheeler, 2013).

which based on his own awareness and below the waterline in the “iceberg model of culture” (Samovar et al. , 2014).

Malay respondents describe how their relationships with other ethnic groups, such as Chinese and Indians, can increase their cultural knowledge.

Here we have lot of Chinese from ⁶⁵Kelantan. They can speak Malay fluently. That helps me in learning their culture as well. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

The interview findings indicate that the Malays may not really be aware of the cultural differences in detail, but are aware of some differences through their relationships with people of another culture. Malays however acknowledge that they know only the most obvious differences between the cultures, for example, food and festivals but not the in-depth layers of the culture which is not easily observable such as perception, beliefs and values.

5.2.3 Considering others in decision-making and problem-solving

Table 5.4 illustrates that 93.4% of Malay respondents, as well as 87.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents, consider their colleagues’ culture when making recommendations, solving problems or making decisions. Malay respondents were aware that the cultural background of their colleagues influences their problem-solving and decision-making.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul4	I consider my colleagues’ culture when making recommendations/solving problems/decision making.	No	5	6.6	1	12.5	1	25.0	7	8.0
		Yes	71	93.4	7	87.5	3	75.0	81	92.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.4: Considering others in making recommendations, solving problems and decision-making

Interview data support these findings with Malay respondents aware that they need to make allowances for different cultural views:

Well, normally if we deal with different ethnic groups, we should take their sensitivity into consideration. Maybe for Malays, certain issues are not sensitive to us, but for other ethnic groups some subjects may be sensitive to them... (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

When we are in the situation where they do not understand our beliefs, we should not get into a clash. It’s not good, because they may be ignorant about our religion. That’s the reason why

⁶⁵Kelantan is a state of Malaysia and is positioned in the north-east of Peninsular Malaysia.

they sometimes act like that. For example, in the ⁶⁶Karpal Singh case, after we, as Muslims, explained about our beliefs, they accepted the explanation... (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

One Malay respondent, Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) explains that as a Muslim, one should consider that other ethnic groups may have limited knowledge about Islam and they may behave accordingly, either positively or negatively towards Islam, based on their limited knowledge. Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional), in relation to monthly staff assemblies or religious talks, presumes that these are no problems for non-Muslim personnel as these meetings are not compulsory for non-Muslim staff. However Awang's view suggests that he remains unaware that if important business is addressed in these meetings then non-Muslims are excluding themselves from this information.

5.2.4 Interaction with others

Table 5.5 shows 96.1% of Malay, as well as 100% of Chinese and Indian, respondents believe that they do have positive interactions with their colleagues from various cultural backgrounds.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul6	I have good interaction with my colleagues from different cultural background.	No	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
		Yes	73	96.1	8	100.0	4	100.0	85	96.6
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.5: Interaction with others

The interview data, however, suggest that while respondents had interactions with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, these interactions remained relatively superficial. For example, even though Mohammad signifies that he does have close relationships with his colleagues from Chinese and Indian backgrounds, he does not describe a depth of knowledge about the Christian and Buddha faiths.

Like my friends, I will try to get to know them. For example, Steven (a Chinese), is a mature man, very caring, is very kind to his mum and always tries to impress her. As a family man, he can talk about his wife, what he likes about her, as if we are back at his village. Aditya (an Indian) and V (an Indian), live separately with their wives but we share their thoughts; their sorrows...And also the religions like being Christian or a Buddhist, I am familiar with these religions as well as their culture. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

He believes that, by being close to his friends, knowing a little of their personal lives and having some knowledge of their religion and culture, means that he has good relationships with them. Likewise a Chinese respondent, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level

⁶⁶Late Karpal Singh was one of Malaysia's most prominent lawyers and opposition politician also known by his nickname the Tiger of Jelutong (Yoon, 2006).

academic), reflected that she did interact a lot with Malay colleagues. She felt that she is close to her Malay colleagues; however she too did not explain in detail what she actually knows about the Malay culture and religion.

5.2.5 Summary

Generally Malay respondents have limited knowledge about their colleagues from different ethnicity compared with their Chinese and Indian colleagues. Nonetheless, a small number of Malay colleagues did have exposure to the food from different ethnic groups. The majority of Chinese and Indian respondents understood and recognised the dominance of the Malay culture. The majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, indicated that they have pleasant experiences in terms of their interactions with their colleagues from different ethnicities. The findings, however, indicate that these relationships are more one-way than an equal two-way relationship. It seems that Malay staff restricts their relationships with other cultural groups, interpreting the impact of their religious restrictions on the other cultures. While Islam does not prohibit being friends with non-Muslims and provides guidelines to be followed to ensure the success of a relationship, it could be argued that Malays need to improve their knowledge about others cultures in order to enhance their interactions with their colleagues from different ethnicities.

The evidence suggests that informal circumstances such as playing golf and socialisation at their workplace increase the Malays' knowledge about other's cultures. However these interactions only touch the surface of their relationships with other ethnic groups including their feelings and their views towards their colleagues from various ethnicities. This demonstrate that they only know the tip of the "Iceberg" of the culture while ignoring the more in-depth knowledge of their colleague's culture such as their definition and perception towards certain issues or terms, approaches to problem solving and their definition of several concepts and ethnic words and many more. Although some Malay respondents did demonstrate that they wanted to learn more about others, a small number of Malay respondents did not show any interest. Chinese and Indian respondents are much more aware of others' cultural practices compared with their Malay colleagues. This indicates their levels of understanding and tolerance of others is higher compared with Malay respondents and suggests an uneven balance between the dominant and minority cultures.

5.3 Cultural values dimensions

This section investigates the cultural values dimension. Respondents were asked about their knowledge of cultural values at UMT. The study focuses on three cultural values, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. These cultural values were selected based on Hofstede's dimensions and divided into high power distance and low power distance. The survey data and the interview findings are presented in sequence with interview questions based on the survey feedback.

5.3.1 Power distance

Two categories of power distance, high power distance and low power distance, are discussed, first in relation to the influence of the forms of address, including the use of kinship terms, and the context and affiliations that respondents share with each other.

5.3.1.1 The influence of form of address in relation to power distance

Form of address differentiates power distance designations from high to low power distance. Table 5.6 below demonstrates that 84.2% of Malay respondents as well as 50% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents feel uncomfortable in calling their superiors by their first name without using their appropriate title. This suggests high power distance (Hofstede, 2012a).

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul7	I am uneasy calling my boss by his/her first name without using his/her title i.e. Professor, ⁶⁷ Dato' or ⁶⁸ Tan Sri.	No	12	15.8%	4	50.0%	1	25.0%	17	19.3%
		Yes	64	84.2%	4	50.0%	3	75.0%	71	80.7%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.6: Questions related to high power distance

This is further explained by the interview respondents when they were asked why and when they normally used a particular form of address. Malay respondents admit discomfort if they do not use the appropriate form of address, mainly to show respect and appreciation to their colleagues. They normally would ask beforehand to avoid mistakes in using form of address. They prefer to address those with a PhD as Dr and a senior lecturer who is a professor as Professor. They will also consider an honorific term, such as *Dato*, and will use this title when they address the bearer.

...that's why I normally asked them beforehand. I'm afraid that I'm not using the right forms of address for the right designation. When I learn this later on, it makes me feel guilty... (Yusof, male, Malay, upper level)

...And if he/she is a professor, I would prefer to address him/her as a Prof. If I do not use the appropriate address form, I will feel uncomfortable because you know everyone is different. So if we address someone in a lower way than what they expect, they may feel upset... and our relationship with them may turn out to be unpleasant...the impact can be negative. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Malay respondents emphasised that the use of forms of address depends on context and cultural practice even though one can be the same age and at the same level. The form of address becomes more important during formal functions. Malays use informal forms of

⁶⁷*Dato* is a variant of *Datuk*, a traditional Malay honorific title commonly used in Malaysia.

⁶⁸*Tan Sri* is the second most senior federal title and an honorific used to denote recipients of the *Panglima Mangku Negara* (PMN) and the *Panglima Setia Mahkota* (PSM). The PMN and PSM rank seventh and eighth respectively in the order of Malaysian Federal Awards. The wife of a *Tan Sri* is called *Puan Sri*.

address such as ⁶⁹*mu* and ⁷⁰*aku* (you and me) outside of formal events and also when communicating informally through email. They also use *tuan* to address their subordinate as shared by Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional). Yet the use of *mu* (you) in addressing the subordinate formally may have a negative impact on their relationship. Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) is the only respondent who shared his experiences in communicating through this medium.

.... And also when I send a message through SMS or e-mail to my subordinate, I prefer to use ⁷¹'Tuan'. I will certainly not use 'mu'; never. I prefer to use 'Tuan'. I need to consider the situation... (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Malay respondents themselves also prefer to be addressed by the appropriate form of address in formal contexts, for example as 'Dr Ramlah'. In situations like meetings they prefer to use the proper honorific term and the appropriate forms of address to show respect and to acknowledge the formality of the situation. One Malay respondent, Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic), addresses her former Head of Department by his name and addresses her new Head of Department with the title of Dr even when the person she mentions is not present. These examples show the importance of forms of address in the application of power distance by Malay respondents.

Some of the Malay upper levels confess that they are not fussy with the form of address that someone uses to address them as long as they do not use an inappropriate form of address. Superiors are addressed as *Encik* or *Puan* (Mr or Mrs) by their colleagues and subordinates, unless they have a title in front of their names such as *Dato*, *Tan Sri* or *Datin*. A female Malay colleague prefers to be addressed by her superiors by name or as *Puan* (*madam*). Some of the female Malay personnel would prefer colleagues address them as *kak* (sis), for instance *Kak Jah* (with the addition of their names at the end). Addressing them as *kak* (sis) makes their interactions less formal. This form of address indicates an age gap but not their seniority in service. Yet they will address their superior formally, even though their superior is one of their friends, whenever they are in a formal situation. Formal and informal functions also determine the way they need to behave and address superiors.

...As for my subordinates, as Malays, they should know our culture and I don't have problems if they want to use my name, but up till this moment, no one does that. Normally 'Encik' is the common form of address they use...As for my superiors, they can use my name. I have no problem with that. (Yusof, male, Malay, upper level professional)

... As for my subordinates, those who are close with me address me as 'kak'. Those who are not really close greet me with my name like 'Khadijah' or 'Kak Jah', which is not that formal or strict. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

It is common to those in superior positions not to address their subordinates with the appropriate form of address such as *Puan*, but to prefer to address their subordinates by

⁶⁹*Mu* (*g*) is a pronoun normally used by Malays from the Eastern Cost of Peninsular Malaysia. This pronoun is used by the local dialect such as Terengganu (with the addition of 'g') and Kelantanese dialect.

⁷⁰*Aku* is a pronoun which is normally used by Malays from the Eastern Cost of Peninsular Malaysia. This pronoun is used by the local dialect such as Terengganu and Kelantanese.

⁷¹*Tuan* (in this case) refers to mister.

their name. If the superior is younger in age, they will then address their subordinates who are older by using the formal form of address such as *Puan* or *Cik*. They admit that someone who insists on an appropriate form of address is normally one who takes their title seriously. The awareness of the support staff in using the right form of address is more intense compared with other levels.

A single Malay respondent, Awang (male, Malay, upper level), compares the use of forms of address at Terengganu with other Malays at Bukit Tinggi, Padang, Indonesia. He observes that Terengganu Malay is stricter in addressing others compared with their counterparts at Padang.

Terengganese people have their own way to show respect to people. Some may judge that their way is a bit rude, not like everyone else. I have just come back from Bukit Tinggi, Padang (Indonesia). The people there, even though they did not know my designation at UMT, they respect me as a head of the troupe. They address me as ⁷²'Tuan'. To me 'Tuan' and ⁷³'Puan' are very comfortable forms of address when we do not know their backgrounds. If we know that they have some title like 'Tan Sri', of course we will address them with the appropriate title. Our people like this kind of recognition.

Several Malay respondents believe that age and personality are important in deciding how you address the other party. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) reflects that she treated her former Head Department just like a friend by addressing him using his name. She used the pronoun *aku* (me) and *engkau* (you) to refer to him when they speak. She also clarified that her subordinates will normally address her as *Cik* (Miss), but she acknowledges herself as *kakak*(sis) or *kak Na*. Her superior normally will address her with her name. Aishah (female, Malay, support level administration) also explained that her colleagues address her by her name except those who are younger who address her as ⁷⁴*kak Aishah*.

If that individual is a friendly person, I may not address him/her by the appropriate address form. But then if they were the type who wants us to address them with their proper form of address, I will normally do that...My superior generally addresses me just like my friend used to address me. Last time, my Head of Department was F. Now there is a new person, Dr Z who has a different approach. With F, I will normally use 'aku' and 'engkau' even though he was my Head of Department. But Dr Z has a different style. My subordinate normally will address me as 'kakak'. They actually address me as 'Cik' (Miss) but I will address myself as 'kakak' to them. Also some of them may address me as 'Cik Amina' as to maintain the formality. (Amina, female, Malay, academic)

Other Malay respondents such as Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) prefer to be addressed informally yet will consider the formal form of address whenever necessary.

⁷²*Tuan* (Master) = the form of address for male staff in a government institution but normally not outside the organisation.

⁷³*Puan* (madam) = the form of address for female staff in a government institution but normally not outside the organisation.

⁷⁴*Kak* is equal to sister or sis in English yet there is no family relationship involved.

As for me, I prefer to be informal; I don't really mind...My subordinates normally address me as 'Tuan Haji'. Other departments address me as ⁷⁵'Pok Wang'. This is because they have known me long before I achieved this position. I am comfortable with this address form. I have no problems with it. But when it comes to formal functions, I would not prefer to be addressed informally. This makes me feel uneasy. They should be formal when the function is formal. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Pok is equal to uncle in English and is in the Terengganu dialect as the appropriate form of address in order to show respect to a person who is older than you. It has nothing to do with family relationships. In this case, Awang is addressed by his subordinates as *Tuan Haji* or *Pok Wang* (a short name for Awang). The form of address will vary depending on who and how close the person is. The situation also plays an important role in whether to use an appropriate form of address. Awang also explains that he would prefer to be addressed as *Pok* in informal situations, where he feels respected, honoured and senior, rather than ⁷⁶*bapak* or ⁷⁷*pokcik*. He is uncomfortable when someone addresses him as *pokcik* -this visualises for him that someone with the title *pokcik* should be home with their grandkids.

...I prefer someone to address me 'pok', as it shows that I'm older than they are. I feel honoured...The forms of address like 'pokcik' seems a bit disrespectful to me.

He prefers his colleagues, subordinates and superiors to use *pok* as an informal form of address which he thinks sounds nicer than *pokcik*. Using *pok* as a form of address also shows respect to his senior age and makes him feel good about himself.

Despite Malay respondents showing high power distance in relation to the form of address, there were still respondents who prefer their colleagues not to use their appropriate form of address. One Malay respondent, Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) prefers her subordinates not to use formal forms of address because she believes that this will create gaps between herself and the staff. She feels that using informal forms of address will make her appear more approachable and friendlier.

...As for me, I wouldn't mind that others do not use the right forms of address for me. I think this will create a gap between me and my subordinates. Without asking them to use the right form of address, they actually know their boundaries, even though they are close and friendly to us. When there is a pleasurable workplace, the teamwork will work well. I had been shown a very good example by my supervisor when I was at UPM. She was a renowned Professor yet I addressed her as 'kak' but I knew my boundary as a student. Our relationship lasted until now. Just like Prof MKI said: 'The PhD will not vanish if someone does not address you as 'Dr''. (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

Ramlah reflects that even without acknowledging her by using the appropriate address form, she believes that subordinates know their limits. They will not go beyond the limit because they know their status with their superiors. This view is interwoven with the hierarchical practices in Malaysia. For example, Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) prefers to be addressed informally. Mek Na does not think this is necessary,

⁷⁵*Pok* is referring to the proper address form for the elderly to show respect and normally used at Terengganu or Kelantan.

⁷⁶*Bapak* is also an address form for the elderly in order to show respect.

⁷⁷*Pokcik* is in Terengganu dialect while in standard Malay it refers to *pakcik* which literally means uncle but has nothing to do with family relationship.

but the majority of the academics in Malaysia regard this very highly. Considering that her position is at a middle level, this may be an indication that she would prefer her subordinates to address her using this name. In Malaysian academia, those who obtain a PhD deserve to be addressed as ⁷⁸Dr. Avoiding this title when addressing someone with a PhD can be crucial especially if the person is very fussy about the appropriate address form. This view is shared by an Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic), who reports that addressing someone using an appropriate form of address is a way to show them respect.

Other than the culture, the workplace environment itself encourages the use of an informal form of address. This is highlighted by Malay respondent, Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) who addresses her intermediate officer by his name and not *Encik* (Mr) at his request.

... But for the Head of Department, I will certainly use the appropriate address form. At ⁷⁹INOS, culturally, elder colleagues were not called 'Encik' (Mr) but instead we used to address them as 'abang' (brother) with his name at the back. That's what we apply here. So my immediate officer prefers me to greet him that way.

This indicates that a reduced power distance is encouraged by some superiors in the workplace environment.

Chinese respondents indicate that they prefer their colleagues and subordinates to address them by their name. They believe that entitlement is not important, yet they do not ignore formality if it is required too. They will consider the person and the context because they feel there is a need to use the appropriate form of address in order to respect others' achievements. They also feel able to treat their subordinates just like friends based on the length of the relationship that they have formed. Formality is also determined on how close the relationship is that one has developed with the other party.

...It does not mean I'm not comfortable when it comes to formality. As long as that person feels comfy, I will feel fine. If they want to be formal, I will do as they wish...this is part of the culture. Sometimes when someone is addressing me as 'Steven' and they don't feel comfy about it, then it is fine with me... (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

I don't mind about the form of address form but it should be applied at the right place and for the right function. I believe it is the way that I show my respect to others for their achievement. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) shared her experience in relation to power distance:

...Sometimes, with outsiders, I do not mention my name as 'Dr Lei Hua'. Yet I can feel the difference with their treatment towards me, when I said 'Just call me Lei Hua'...But when I wrote my name with the title 'Dr.', like 'Dr. Lei Hua', in a formal letter and then they know you have this 'Dr' title, you can feel the difference. Their treatment will not be the

⁷⁸ Dr = refers to philosophical doctor, not to be mistaken with a medical Doctor.

⁷⁹INOS=Institute of Oceanography

same as when you do not use the title. They treat you with respect and speciality. I don't know whether they have a double standard. Maybe it is an isolated case; I'm unlucky to encounter this... When they saw the title, they seemed to be surprised, 'Eh Dr Lei Hua, a 'Dr'?' they then treated you differently....Normally I don't like it (using the title 'Dr'), even when I check in at the hotel, I would not tell them I'm a 'Dr'. I say nothing; I prefer to be a regular person.

Lei Hua indicates that she received better treatment when she used her title. She presumes this is a double standard but cannot confirm this, inferring that it might lead to discrimination.

The findings suggest that Malay personnel from upper and middle managerial levels could address their colleagues by their names but not someone from the support level. They also prefer to be formal with their subordinates and expect that their subordinates use the appropriate form of address to indicate power distance and respect. Perceptions like these reinforce the hierarchical nature and power distance underlying the organisation. A small number of Malay and Chinese respondents choose to be informal to develop positive relationships with their subordinates. They will also consider switching to a formal form of address according to the context.

5.3.1.2 Kinship

This section explains kinship in relation to forms of address which indirectly influence the findings about the use of power distance extracted from the interview findings.

The findings indicate that forms of address and pronouns are involved in determining power distance among the respondents with their superiors, subordinates and their peers from various backgrounds. Generally in Malaysian culture, addressing someone only by their name can suggest inappropriate forms of communication and conduct. There are formal forms of address and informal forms of address that are used within UMT.

Formal address form	Abbreviation	To whom	Equal to
<i>Tun, Tan Sri, Dato, Datin, Toh Puan</i> (for Terengganu only)	-	Used to refer to Professor or upper managerial level with all those titles.	Lord (Tun)
<i>Dr</i> (PhD)	<i>Dr</i>	Used to refer to Senior Lecturer with PhD and Associate Prof with PhD.	PhD, DPhD
<i>Tuan Haji</i> (male) <i>Hajjah</i> (female)	<i>Hj</i> <i>Hjh</i>	Anyone who completed the Hajj regardless of their position and normally senior in age.	-
<i>Tuan</i>	-	Used to refer to upper level male staff but sometimes it depends on the individual.	Master
<i>Encik</i>	<i>En</i>	Used to refer to middle level male staff.	Mr
<i>Puan</i>	<i>Pn</i>	Used to refer to upper, middle and support level, married female staff.	Madam
<i>Cik</i>		Used to refer to middle level unmarried female staff.	Miss
Informal address form	Abbreviation	To whom	Equal to
<i>Abang</i>	<i>Abg</i>	Used to refer to seniors in age (regardless of managerial level, but normally middle and support level), this is not necessarily family relationship.	Brother/bro
<i>Pak cik</i>	-	Used to refer to seniors in age (regardless of managerial level, but normally middle and support level) this is not necessarily family relationship.	Uncle
<i>Makcik</i>	-	Used to refer to seniors in age (regardless of managerial level, but normally middle and support level) this is not necessarily family relationship.	Aunty
<i>Kakak</i>	<i>Kak</i>	Used to refer to seniors in age (regardless of managerial level, but normally middle and support level) this is not necessarily a family relationship.	Sister/sis

Table 5.7: Formal and informal forms of address at UMT

Table 5.7 shows the formal forms of address that are normally used within the organisation. *Tuan Haji* or *Hajjah* is used to refer to those who completed their *Hajj* (Pilgrimage, the Fifth Pillars of Islam). This form of address is customarily used around Malaysia and Indonesia. *Tuan* is considered out-dated but still used if preferred by the individual. In the state of Kelantan, an individual whose name starts with *Tuan* represents

one of the royal families. Therefore, this is not to be confused with the general forms of address that have been previously discussed in this chapter. *Puan* does not refer to Mrs in Malay, nor to some of the Chinese Malaysians who are married but do not use their husband's names or surnames. Therefore, they are addressed as *Puan* (Madam). For example, 'Isma Rosila Ismail' is married to 'Ahmad Zamani' and is supposed to be addressed as Madam Isma Rosila not as Mrs Ahmad (this is her husband's name) or Mrs Ismail (this is her father's name). This form of address is considered crucial and should be used appropriately. For example, Fontaine and Richardson (2003) argue that the name could be a problem for academics from Malaysia because they generally prefer the western style of address. For example, Asma Abdullah would be referred to as 'Abdullah A'. This is not appropriate as 'Abdullah' is the father of Asma, thus it would not be referring to herself. Single ladies will normally be addressed as *Cik* (Miss). For example, Yahya will address his superiors with a standard form of address such as *Encik/Cik* (Mr / Miss) or *Tuan/Puan* (Sir/Madam), if these superiors do not have the title of *Dato*, *Tan Sri* or *Datin*. These are the standard forms of address for all government servants.

In the Malaysian situation, *Dr* is used for those who have PhD qualifications and *Dato* for those who have received an honorific title which is commonly highly regarded in Malaysia. This title can only be awarded by a hereditary royal ruler of the Malaysian states. This title should not be confused with *datuk* which refers to grandpa or grandfather. The difference is the capital 'D', which is used at the front of a name such as *Datuk Nurhaliza*. But the other *datuk* normally will be expressed with a small 'd' and only be used to refer to a grandpa or the elderly where sometimes there is not even a family relationship with the speaker.

For Malay colleagues, forms of address seem crucial when it comes to formal functions. This illustrates that Malays value high power distance since Malays are also very hierarchical. Another important factor in deciding the appropriate form of address is the age and designation of the person. The older the person and the higher the designation, the higher the need to use a suitable form of address. Malays normally will use a formal form of address for their superiors with honorific titles. This honorific title can vary, for example *Tun*, *Tan Sri*, *Dato*, *Datin* or *Toh Puan* (for Terengganu only). If the superior is much older, they earn more respect. If the superior is the same age or a bit younger, they will definitely need to use the appropriate address form. In Asian countries, old age is golden and the aged are seen to have acquired more knowledge and maturity. Therefore their culture is known and does not need any explanation from superiors. It is consistent with the study by Asmah (1992a, 1997 as cited in Hei, Jaafar, & Dhanapal, 2012) and Jamaliah (2000 as cited in Hei et al., 2012) which states that the Malay community is hierarchical when at home and in the corporate world.

Table 5.7 also shows the informal forms of address which has been used widely in the institution. Even though it sounds inappropriate, these forms of address have their role in maintaining relationships among the ethnic groups in the institution. Informal forms of address are mainly used among the departments which already know each other and are close. Technically this form of address is not used with first encounters. The more formal form of address is to convey that they welcome the person, are showing respect and that they have been well brought up (Hei et al., 2012).

The use of *abang* (brother/bro) to address senior colleagues mainly relates to age. *Abang* (brother/bro) does not necessarily mean that they have a family connection. This sometimes confuses others who come from different cultures especially those from other ethnicities or who are foreigners. This is because Malay women will use *abang* to refer to their husband, which is equal to ‘darling’, or their fraternal brother, the elderly or their seniors at their workplace. In this context, most of the Malay respondents, male and female, refer to their senior colleagues and especially their Malay colleagues as *abang* to respect their age and seniority. Also, *Kak* is equal to sister in English and *Kak Jah* literally refers to sis Jah. *Kak* in the Malay language indicates that someone is older than you which also deserve respect even if it is only one year of age difference. For example, Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) prefer to be addressed as *kak* (sis).

... At INOS, culturally, we will not use ‘Encik’ (Mr) to address elder colleagues instead we address them as ‘abang’ (brother). (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)... As for my subordinates, those who are close to me, they address me as ‘kak’. Those who are not really close greet me with my name like ‘Khadijah’ or ‘Kak Jah’. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

This finding shows that age is also considered when addressing and dealing with each other at UMT. The informal forms of address reduce formality but maintain hierarchy based on age. Such a claim has been confirmed by Hei et al. (2012) in a study about the typology of forms of address used in Malaysian government agencies. The kinship terms, for instance *kak* (elder sister) or *dik* (younger sister/brother), are used in professional settings (Hei et al., 2012).

5.3.1.3 The personal pronouns and power distance

The use of personal pronouns in a dialect or language also influences the level of power distance and the relationship (van Compernelle & Kinginger, 2013). To choose which personal pronouns are important is reflective of a person’s relationship with superiors or subordinates because it also shows the politeness or impoliteness of the action within that particular context (Holmes, 2012). Relationships can be formal or informal based on the personal pronouns that are used. Appropriate forms of address will impact on relationships and establish long-lasting impressions while poor forms of address will negatively impact on relationships and may lead to less than perfect reputations. The list below displays the personal pronouns used in the institution based on the interview findings.

Personal pronoun in dialect use	Practice	Standard Malay personal pronoun	English personal pronoun
<i>Aku</i>	This personal pronoun is used to represent the speaker when speaking with friends and close friends.	<i>Saya</i>	Me
<i>Mu</i>	This personal pronoun is used to represent the receiver and used when speaking with friends and close friends. Normally used by the people at the Eastern coast of peninsular Malaysia such as Terengganu and Pahang.	<i>Awak</i>	You
<i>Hang</i>	This pronoun is used to refer to the receiver and used when speaking with friends and close friend. Normally used by the people of the western coast of peninsular Malaysia such as Kedah, Penang and northern part of Perak.	<i>Awak</i>	You

Table 5.8: List of personal pronouns extracted from the interview

Mu is the personal pronoun used in Terengganu and Kelantan dialects as well as Pahang. The pronoun *mu* (you) when ‘g’ is added at the end of the word becomes *mung* (you) which is an influence of local dialect and a common pronoun used at Terengganu. This pronoun however needs to be used appropriately. The use of *mu* (you) in addressing superiors or subordinates will negatively impact on the relationship. For Malay respondents, relationship is important in the high power distance society (Holmes, 2012), which is why even though someone is at an upper level of management, they still need to choose the appropriate form of address for example by also considering the age of the other party. This special word is to show respect and reflect the formality and the politeness (Holmes, 2012). Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) prefers to use *mu* and *aku* in informal contexts but still maintain a formal form of address whenever he is in a formal context. He also explains that the inappropriate use of the personal pronouns such as *mu* will reflect his relationships with his subordinates.

... And also when I send a message through SMS or e-mail to my subordinates, I prefer to use ‘Tuan’. I will certainly not use ‘mu’ (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Hang (you) and *aku* (me) are only used with close colleagues. *Hang* and *aku* (you and me) are personal pronouns in the dialect of Kedah in the northern part of Perak, Penang and the surrounding areas. This is verified by Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) and observed by the researcher during the interview, when the intermediate officer came to her office and they conversed in an informal way, addressing each other by using the personal pronouns *hang* and *aku* (you and me). This is the informal form of address and they were comfortable using these pronouns during their informal interactions. This is because the use of the personal pronouns also depend “on whether one is addressing members of an in-group or an out-group” (Holmes, 2012, page 399). This is considered as a niceties in their relationship.

Some of the Malay respondents did have a Malay title by inheritance but this is not highlighted here because it is not the concern of the study. However, the researcher did notice the use of Malay titles by inheritance used in the institution with a form of address such as ⁸⁰*Yang Mulia Sharifah...* followed by the name (Her Grace *Sharifah...*) or abbreviated as *YM Sharifah* followed by the name, which is used to address those who come from royal lineage. Despite the position in the institution, the formal form of address is compulsory for use even though the staff themselves may not consider this to be a serious matter. The researcher also needs to apply the appropriate forms of address during the interview process to develop and maintain her relationships with respondents (who are also the researcher's colleagues). Some of the respondents were addressed as *Tuan Haji* concurrently during the interview in order to show respect to the respondents due to their age compared with the researcher, regardless of their managerial level. The forms of address mentioned above (refer to Table 5.8) do not include other royal hereditary and reserved titles for the royal families of the nine royal states of Malaysia and other Malay titles by inheritance such as *Sharifah*, ⁸¹*Awang*, *Syed*, *Wan*, *Megat*, *Tengku* and many others. This courtesy is important to develop the relationship because it may contain the polite speech and message that the receiver enjoy receiving. Also, this communication style may promote harmony and mutual support to group-oriented cultures (Holmes, 2012)

As for Chinese and Indian colleagues, the survey and interview findings suggest that they are aware of the appropriate forms of address that they need to use in formal and informal contexts. However the formal form of address is limited to high-status colleagues in a formal context. The researcher did not notice whether they were aware that their Malay colleagues also have special forms of address due to royal lineage apart from the formal forms of address that they employ. For example, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) admits that she is comfortable addressing her colleagues by using *aku* (me) – a pronoun which demonstrates the close relationship she has with her colleague.

5.3.1.4 Context and affiliation

Another criterion of power distance is context. Context influences the actions of respondents when addressing their superiors and subordinates with the forms of address suited to the designation and title of the other parties. Malay respondents will consider using an informal form of address when the context is informal or their relationship with the other party is informal, or where the superior is also their friend or colleague of the same level.

...I feel comfortable to greet my superior with a formal form of address which suits their title, like I said earlier. When not in formal situation, I will use different form of address for or will consider different way of socializing with them. This depends on the context. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

⁸⁰*Yang Mulia* translates to *His/ Her Grace*, used for heirs and heiresses, who are the descendants of royal families.

⁸¹*Awang* = but not *Awang* in this study, the name is not related to any royal lineage, it is a common name at Terengganu.

... If we are not appropriately addressed in the form of address or title, the impact can be negative. That is the reason why I'm comfortable using appropriate forms of address along with their title or designation, if any. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Relationship is important in a high power distance society because it reflects how they treat others and use the appropriate form of address. It is because high power distance values hierarchy. How close and how long you know someone will then influence the pattern of communication with superiors, colleagues or subordinates. Malay respondents will consider all these criteria in their relationships with the people they are working for in determining power distance and the appropriate form of address that they should use.

Chinese respondents too consider who the person is in order to decide to address them formally, or they may choose to be more informal. They believe that formality is indicated based on how close they are with the other parties, which refers to the relationships developed with others. The gap will be less if they have developed a relationship over a long time. Relationship is thus also important in determining the appropriate form of address to use.

5.3.1.5 Appearance and power distance

Respondents were asked their views about appropriate attire at the workplace. Appearance also can affect perceptions of power distance among colleagues. Respondents were asked if they felt uneasy if they are not dressed appropriately at work: 92.1% of Malay respondents responded 'Yes', as well as 50% of Chinese and 50% of the Indian respondents (refer Table 5.9). Those high in power distance stress more about a definitive dress code (Dubedout, 2012; Dysart-Gale, 2006).

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul8	I feel uneasy if I am not dressed appropriately for work.	No	6	7.9%	4	50.0%	2	50.0%	12	13.6%
		Yes	70	92.1%	4	50.0%	2	50.0%	76	86.4%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.9: Dressing appropriately for work

Table 5.10 below indicates that 85.2% of the respondents do care about their appearance at work and feel they cannot simply wear anything that they like. 90.8% of Malay, 50% of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents feel that they need to think before putting on their work attire.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul12	I do not care much about my appearance at work and feel free to wear anything that I like.	No	69	90.8%	4	50.0%	2	50.0%	75	85.2%
		Yes	7	9.2%	4	50.0%	2	50.0%	13	14.8%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.10: Care about appearance

Appearance is important because professionals' attire and choice of clothing demonstrates differences in power distance. A formal dress code signifies high power distance and an informal dress code can signify low power distance (Thatcher et al., 2007, pp. 138-139). The interview findings support the survey results.

Malay respondents agreed that personnel should wear the same dress code imposed on students. Malay respondents describe the appropriate dress code as ⁸²*baju kurung*, a ⁸³*kebaya*, neck tie and suits.

... Here there is ...a certain dress code for lecturers because any rules practiced by students, like wearing a long sleeve or short sleeve shirt and tie, should also be practiced by lecturers. (Mohamad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Malay respondents also based their explanations on their religion, especially the female Malay personnel. Based on the researcher's observations, the majority of female Malay respondents did conform as they all wore ⁸⁴*hijab* and *baju kurung* during the interview (to respect respondents' privacy, a photo is not provided as an example). Malay male respondents also disclosed that their expectations of an appropriate dress code at their workplace are based on their religion. They assume that female staff should not wear a t-shirt when at their work place and that Muslim female personnel should adhere to Islamic rules in choosing their dress. In general, the Malay respondents prefer their colleagues (especially the upper level) to be meticulous in their dress code in order to provide a good impression. Attire indicates formality and determines how they interact with others informally or formally. The Malays seem to put their religion first in choosing their attire as their religion requires a dress code to be their lifestyle. Attire also reflects their identity as Muslim.

Officially at UMT there is no dress code which requires the 'baju kurung'. At one time you can wear 'kebaya', or pants, depending on the day. For me, I wear what suits me like

⁸²A *Kebaya* is a Malay women's blouse usually worn with a sarong or *batik kain panjang*, made from sheer material such as silk, cotton, nylon or polyester, adorned with brocade or floral pattern embroidery (Teh & Yousof, 2006).

⁸³The *baju kurung* is Malaysia's traditional dress, a traditional Malay costume; the *baju kurung* is the traditional Malay dress often worn on occasions like weddings and official functions. *Baju kurung* is available in different styles like the *baju kurung labuh*, *baju kurung moden*, *baju kurung Kedah* and often tailor made. The modern *baju kurung* commonly expresses lively colours and geometric patterns (Teh & Yousof, 2006).

⁸⁴*Hijab* is a veil which covers the head, particularly worn by Muslim women beyond the age of puberty and in the presence of non-related adult males, and perceived as Islamic dress code. It can further refer to the traditional head, face, or body covering worn by Muslim women. It is worn by Muslim women as a symbol of sanctity, modesty, privacy and morality (Ali 2005; Sherif 1987).

'baju kurung' or 'kebaya'; I also consider my religion when it comes to choosing what I'm wearing. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

For me, in my profession, appearance should be taken care of. It does not mean that we should be fashionable but we should also suit the context. However, as a Muslim woman I still follow the fashion as long as I cover the⁸⁵ 'aurah'. Religion is the basis in choosing what I wear. I feel comfortable when I follow the rules of my religion. (Khadijah, female, Malay, academic)

Muslims choose their dress according to their religion. As Terengganu holds Islamic values, the appropriate dress code is essential, especially for female Malay personnel. The wearing of *hijab* and appropriate *baju kurung* (which must not be too fancy, be without slits or form-fitting as in a modern *baju kurung*), is seen as the suitable dress code at the workplace.

A single Malay respondent, Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic), who is non-local, shares her experience about what is appropriate and what is not with regard to attire at UMT.

...Before I came here, I needed to order lots of 'baju kurung'. At my previous workplace, I used to wear long skirts and suits. This was not a uniform but at my previous workplace, there were no requirements to wear 'baju kurung'. Even at the other university, I sometimes could wear jeans...But here I need to adjust... because during the induction course, they did tell us that lecturers shouldn't wear pants. But I'm wearing one today just because the students are having a break. Back to induction course, they did mention that female lecturers liked to wear funny dresses and did not want to wear 'baju kurung'. Well, I need to listen to what I am being told. One thing I don't like to create is controversy. That's the reason why I just follow what they want me to wear. I would prefer to wear jeans and a shirt. It is easy for me to move around and do my job. When there are not many students around, I wear pants; slacks but not jeans. Here, I can see that they emphasize this matter very much. I just obey because I don't like controversy.

Chinese and Indian respondents perceive that dress code should function as a way of reinforcing cultural harmony in the work place. They agree that suitable attire needs to be neat, tidy and professional. They feel that a short sleeve is acceptable at the workplace and are very careful about what to wear because this reflects their professionalism. They are aware that the students also have a dress code, so they anticipate that they should be role models to the students by wearing dress that reflects professionalism and charisma.

I guess an appropriate and neat outfit should look more professional. (Aditya, male, Indian, middle level academic)

At my workplace, there is a dress code to follow. I believe that dress code was created to consider the feelings of different religions and ethnicities. So that we can observe multicultural practices in Malaysia. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

⁸⁵*Aurah* is Arabic terms (also spell as *Awrah*), means private parts also means vulnerable and should properly cover from the sight of others. Women should cover the whole body except the two hands up to the wrist and face. Exposing the intimate parts of the body is unlawful in Islam (Baalbaki, 1995a).

A Chinese respondent, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level), however is uncomfortable following a dress code.

I'm not that comfortable to follow the dress code. Frankly, when we report for duty, they explain the dress code. Then it relies on us, whether we follow the rules. I guess if we do have a dress code, we should follow it. But I don't feel comfortable wearing a skirt, I like slacks better. But here, the management is okay. They don't say ... 'you cannot wear this at all'. So I choose the outfit that I feel most comfortable with because my job involves lab work and lots of moving. If I wear a skirt, I feel restricted. The skirt is suitable for a formal function, when you just sit and eat. But when I do my lab work, I prefer to wear just slacks or pants. 'Cheongsam' is sexy and not suitable to wear to the office. It's sexy because it has slits high up to the waist or hip. 'Samfoo', I think for the men's. We normally don't wear these dresses to work, I think it is too overwhelming, and I don't see anyone wearing a cheongsam to work except for a special occasion.

Even though Lei Hua admits that there is no clear rule about a dress code at her workplace, she is willing to observe a dress code as it values high power distance and conveys professionalism.

5.3.1.6 Disagreement and power distance

Survey respondents were asked about their ways of showing their disagreement, as it is linked closely with power distance. In a high power distance society, there is a tendency to be afraid of expressing disagreement, possibly due to the threat of a loss of face and the consequences of offending (Walkinshaw, 2007). In Table 11, 90.8% of Malays, 100% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents demonstrated that they will not always agree with their superiors and feel capable of expressing their disagreement. This implies low power distance (Hofstede, 2012a) where the hierarchical order is ignored and people are freer to express their views.

The respondents also expressed their disagreement with superiors. As Table 5.11 indicates, 73.7% of Malays, 100% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents will not simply agree with their superiors' decisions. This suggests the majority of survey respondents possess low power distance characteristics.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul9	I will always say yes to my boss without much disagreement even though I may not agree.	No	69	90.8%	8	100.0%	3	75.0%	80	90.9%
		Yes	7	9.2%	0	.0%	1	25.0%	8	9.1%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%
Cul10	I will agree with my boss on any decision made by him/her.	No	56	73.7%	8	100.0%	3	75.0%	67	76.1%
		Yes	20	26.3%	0	.0%	1	25.0%	21	23.9%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.11: Disagreement and power distance

In a high power distance society superiors are perceived as mentors. The way they express their disagreement is different from a low power distance society. As a high context society they will engage their feelings in the relationship (Hall, 2005), but they cannot

simply show their disagreement directly. Yet the survey respondents indicate that they value low power distance where they state that they will openly express their disagreement towards superiors. The interview respondents expressed a greater range of responses in relation to expressing disagreement.

5.3.1.7 Ways of handling disagreement

This section reports ways of handling disagreement with superiors. Position and the work environment influence respondents' attitudes towards handling disagreement. Table 5.12 indicates that about 80.7% of respondents prefer to express their feelings if they disagree with their superiors. All respondents, regardless of ethnicity, agree with this statement. This signifies low power distance among the respondents. Individuals in a low power distance society tend to voice their disagreement with superiors (Hofstede, 2001). The result is consistent with question Cul15 (*I will try to speak out and express my feeling of disagreement towards my boss if I disagree*) where respondents show characteristics of low power distance rather than high power distance. There is a shift of paradigm in handling disagreement and expressing it, as mentioned by Hofstede (2001) that Malaysia is high in power distance might contradict with this survey result. This is supported by Kennedy (2002, as cited in Bakar et al., 2007) who indicated that power distance in Malaysian context is less extreme as portrayed by Hofstede. The interview below will reveal in-depth result of this survey.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul15	I will try to speak out and express my feeling of disagreement towards my boss if I disagree.	No	16	21.1%	1	12.5%	0	.0%	17	19.3%
		Yes	60	78.9%	7	87.5%	4	100.0%	71	80.7%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.12: Expression of disagreement

The interview findings provide more details about the survey results. Malay respondents indicate that they will show their disagreement with superiors if the results are for the betterment of the institution in the long term. But they will disagree with their superior if the issue goes beyond university rules and regulations. They also convey that they will voice their disagreement by choosing appropriate language, talking in a very polite way, providing enough justification and being mindful of their intonation in order to receive positive feedback from their superiors. They will try to be as *tertib* (mannerly, the Malay politeness system) as possible in expressing their dispute with their superiors. The Malay politeness system includes *hormat* (respect) which is practiced by Malays to show that they possess good manners otherwise they will be considered as *kurang ajar* (uncouth) (Dahlan, 1990). Therefore they need to use this politeness system in order to confirm that their voice is heard by their superior or else it will be meaningless.

Respondents are also aware that disagreements will not be solved through e-mail or text. They prefer to meet personally to settle disagreements. A superior's response towards the disagreement will depend on how good the suggestion is:

One thing that I will choose is using appropriate language, such as 'I would like to apologise' ..., 'for this issue can be solved using this way'. I will not bang on the desk or whatever... (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

...I will tell them politely (...Saya cakap secara tertib la kan ...) what I thought should be done... (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

In a high power distance society, superiors have control over the decision-making. As Daud is from a support level this is a constructive approach, as suggestions from the support level could be overlooked by superiors. Respondents tend to be more vocal if the disagreement is with someone at the same level. But if the disagreement is with a superior, they need to consider obeying the decision especially if the decision can be achieved consensually. This finding indicates low power distance is exercised at the institution, but only in a minor case. However, Malay respondents at the upper levels tend to express their disagreement more easily than the other levels. Yet, one Malay respondent, Aishah (female, Malay, support level administration), indicates that she is free to show her disagreement but does so with care to avoid hurting the feelings of her superiors or by trying to show off. She reveals that her constructive culture at her workplace allows her to express her disagreement even with her superiors. Other Malay respondents, like Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), choose to use a 'middleman' in expressing his disagreement.

I preferred to wait and see before voice out my disagreement. This is because sometimes it's only me who disagrees with the boss. I will consider my friends' views as well. If many of them disagree, then I will find a dominant individual to represent us. If I'm the only person who disagrees, that means I may not be right. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Mohammad prefers to conform to the majority. When the majority disagrees, then he would prefer to use a middleman. The use of a middleman is important in resolving disagreement usually through an indirect approach (Ansari, Ahmad, & Aafaqi, 2004). Normally a middleman is a respected, influential person or someone higher in status. This will make the other party feel inferior in term of status, expertise or intellect which causes them to accept the resolution.

Chinese and Indian respondents report that they will disagree with superiors if there is a need to and describe how they handle disagreement with their superiors. They feel that superiors are also human beings and are not free themselves from making mistakes. They express disagreement whenever their superior does something that they perceive as unprofessional. They will first think carefully about the channel of communication. They also will consider who the superior is. For example, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) indicates that since the superior is her previous course mate, she felt comfortable voicing her disagreement. She considers that expressing disagreement within the same level is easy to do. As she had developed a relationship with her superior, this lessened feelings of uneasiness.

I prefer to meet them personally, talk with them or discuss the matter through email. (Jessica, female, Chinese, middle level academic)

I do have my own views, ideas and my own ways of doing things. (Aditya, male, Indian, middle level academic)

One Chinese respondent, Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic), adds that he never disagrees with his superiors as this is not a Malaysian cultural characteristic. He also indicates that when the disagreement comes from a lower rank it is not accepted by the superiors. However he will try to suggest to a superior a suitable course.

I will never show my disagreement. I notice that in the Malaysian culture there is rarely disagreement especially from a lower position. My way is to suggest ideas to my superior so he/she can choose and pick which one is the best and more reasonable one. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Liang, from a Chinese background and at a middle level, tries to preserve his relationship with his superior. Therefore expressing disagreement is something he considers to be taboo. He however will try indirectly to express disagreement, such as by using appropriate words like *cadangan* (suggestion). Individually he demonstrates high power distance in expressing agreement because he tries to deal with this indirectly and apply a saving-face technique.

Chinese and Indian respondents exercise low power distance in expressing their views and ideas towards superiors compared with Malay respondents. Some Chinese and Indian respondents will express disagreement because they believe that superiors should respect their views. Only a small number will try to be mindful in expressing disagreement towards superiors. The majority of Malays will be very careful in voicing their disputes with superiors which indicates that they tend to value both high power distance and hierarchy in the organisation. Different cultural values are also displayed between respondents from support and higher levels, their position also signifying power distance. Yet the work environment also influences expressing disagreement, with some respondents preferring to use email as a strategy.

5.3.1.8 Ways of expressing opinions

There are a variety of ways of expressing opinions described by respondents from different levels. Their level or position in the management and their work environment influences respondents' attitudes towards expressing their opinions. Expressing opinions is where they try to suggest their views and ideas to their superior.

The upper levels are more comfortable in voicing their opinions to superiors. If their opinion is not accepted, they believe that the superior had already made a better choice and therefore they do not feel disgraced. They can be receptive to decisions made by superiors and perceive that their religion teaches them to be grateful in any situation, including workplace situations. Middle level Malay respondents feel comfortable enough to suggest ideas to their supervisors when their superiors are open to suggestion. They are given opportunities to express views during meetings. For example, Yahya's (male, Malay, middle level administration) superiors listened to his suggestions even though he is at a middle level. Whenever he voices his opinion, the feedback from his superiors is

pleasing. However he still regards his superiors as more experienced, more senior and more reliable.

Some Malay respondents, however, admitted that their character prevented them from voicing their opinion. Personality influenced their action in not voicing their opinion. For example, Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) prefer to agree with their superiors and try not to voice their opinions even though they may not agree with their superiors' choices.

...I will not voice my disagreement, but it doesn't mean that I agree. I have a tendency to always say yes even though I'm disagreeing. Maybe it is because of my personality. (Mek Na, female, Malay, middle level academic)

One is because I'm only a subordinate, second my experience in this academic world is very new to me, and third my title is still 'Encik'. And one more thing, a culture of disagreeing with others' views is not that appreciated by the upper level of management at this workplace. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Mohammad's academic position represents the individuality in the academic world of the Malaysian higher institution. The suggestions or opinions of someone without a PhD will be rejected. Title and position are very important in voicing opinions and in being heard. Another of the Malay respondents, Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic), on the other hand, is very vocal when expressing her opinion and received unpleasant reactions from her superior.

They were unhappy, because they prefer us just to listen to what they say. In meetings there was no negotiation, an alternative of choices either A, B or C. They just want us to agree about what actually they choose. Actually the only choice is only A, no B or C exist. No meaning.

She describes her superiors as very authoritarian with meetings normally held just to confirm what has been chosen. She feels disappointed in this attitude.

Chinese respondents describe different ways of expressing opinions with different levels of people. Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) explains that normally she voices her opinion in the meeting room and usually this is taken positively by her colleagues. But when she needs to express her view to upper levels, she tries to be careful. She will not openly voice her opinion to the upper levels due to her respect for the Dean of the Faculty. However, she will convey her views and feels more comfortable when with colleagues.

The findings suggest that the respondents in general concur when considering with whom they voice opinions. The higher levels can voice their opinion more easily than middle and support levels. This indicates that high power distance was involved in expressing their opinion.

5.3.1.9 Superior involvement in relation to power distance

Respondents were asked about their feelings and perceptions towards their superiors when they were involved in their work or doing work with them. It is assumed that ethnic groups may have different feelings and perceptions in this regard.

Interestingly, Table 5.13 indicates that 85.2% of respondents felt pleased if their superior was involved in their work or was working with them. Around 84.2% of Malays, 87.5% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents felt pleased if their superior was involved directly with their tasks. Respondents were also asked if they feel annoyed by their superiors' intervention in their job or when they work together. About 77.3% of respondent (refer table 5.13) indicate they are happy that their superiors intervene or worked together with them. Almost of 73.7% of Malay, 100% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents also signify that they feel content about their superiors' involvement with their jobs. This is consistent with the findings of question Cul13 (*I feel delighted if my boss could be involved in my work or we are doing the work together*) where 85.2% of respondent felt pleased if their superior were involved with their task and did not feel disturbed at all. Overall 90.9% of respondents prefer their superior to consult them when making decisions that involve their expertise.

The findings signify that respondents exhibit lower power distance where they are thankful and feel appreciated if their superior is involved in, or intervenes in, their tasks. They also appreciate their superior consulting them before making decisions based on their area of expertise.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul13	I feel delighted if my boss could be involved in my work or we are doing the work together.	No	12	15.8	1	12.5	0	.0	13	14.8
		Yes	64	84.2	7	87.5	4	100.0	75	85.2
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul14	I feel annoyed if my boss is involved in my work or we are doing the work together.	No	56	73.7	8	100.0	4	100.0	68	77.3
		Yes	20	26.3	0	.0	0	.0	20	22.7
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul16	I will expect my boss to consult me if he/she makes a decision which affects my area of expertise.	No	6	7.9	2	25.0	0	.0	8	9.1
		Yes	70	92.1	6	75.0	4	100.0	80	90.9
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.13: Superiors' involvement

The interview evidence expands the survey data in relation to superiors' involvement in relation to power distance. Malay upper level respondents prefer their superiors' attention but not their direct involvement. Their ideal involvement would be their supervisor guiding, understanding their progress and giving feedback. They prefer their superior to only be partially involved in their duties. The Malay middle level believes that intervention from a superior is necessary because the end product will be assessed by their superiors. They appreciate superiors' involvement if it involves guiding and coaching. Those at the Malay support level appreciate their superior being involved in their tasks.

They believe that superior intervention could build a better working environment and help make their work simpler. They prefer the direct involvement of their superiors in their work and their superiors to be involved, as long as the involvement enhances their work. They understand that they will submit to their superiors' demands and instructions. It is presumed that they appreciate their superiors' involvement in order to assist them in doing their duties.

I prefer superior involvement yet I do not mean solely involved in my work. At least they ask me my progress, give me guidance and constructive comments, I will appreciate this. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

I believe every task that I've done will be assessed by my superior. I guess her involvement is a must which can guide me to do the right thing. Sometimes we too should give our opinions, so our superior knows that and can assess that... (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

When it comes to the technical parts, I received help from my superior who is expert in the area, which makes my work easier. (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)

I guess this is positive and can help me to enhance my work(Sarah, female, Malay, support level administration)

In general, Malay respondents explain that they can accept their superiors' involvement with their job as long as this can improve their work. They appreciate their superiors' attention and prefer the superior to guide and coach them during their job processes. They feel pleased if their superior asks about their task's progress when it has been assigned by the superior.

Some of the Malay respondents accept their superiors' interventions, yet behind this acceptance are still preconceptions about the action. These respondents' perceptions towards their superior can be either that the leader has a personal problem with them or is an attempt to sabotage their hard work. Ramlah, at an upper level, prefers to be directly involved with her subordinates' work, but admits that this may create negative perceptions among staff.

I will be happy if my superior helps me and gets involved in my work especially when it's almost due. But the perception is when the job had been done... and the superior is unsatisfied, this will leave me with a negative perception. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

I would say I have a perception that they don't trust my ability in performing my job. I said so because I have a problem delegating tasks. I assume that I can do the job better than my subordinates. I know I need to change this attitude. (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

This perception only occurs, however, if these respondents are trying their best and receive negative feedback. A small number of Malay respondents are not happy with their

superiors' involvement or intervention when they are in the middle of completing their work, and are very disappointed if this happens.

...When I'm doing my job, and then suddenly he (my superior) interferes. I would not like that; he should allow me to do my job until it's finished. If I face any difficulties, then I will ask for his advice. (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

Well, I would prefer my superior not to interrupt me if I am in a middle of my work. Especially when he/she does not refer to my expertise, and all of a sudden, he/she arranges a meeting with other departments and organizes something which is out of my knowledge ...this will upset me. (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

This indicates that some Malay support levels exercise high power distance where they prefer the leader to be indirect in supervision. Direct involvement is perceived as intervention and breaches the formality of the hierarchy, whereas indirect involvement indicates trust from superiors. On the other hand, upper level respondents prefer their superiors to involve them in decisions especially if related to their expertise.

Chinese respondents believe that superiors' involvement should depend on the circumstances. They perceive that superiors' involvement is important and could enhance team spirit. They welcome the superior's involvement if he/she has good intentions and go about accomplishing it in an appropriate manner. They appreciate intervention if their superior respects their right to make their own decisions in performing their duties.

I normally welcome the involvement of the superior provided it is given with a decent intention and a polite approach. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Chinese respondents from the middle level see that any involvement should depend on circumstances, or they could perceive that their superior may not trust them and respect their abilities in performing tasks. Any negative perceptions could jeopardise their reputation.

It depends, if the involvement is absurd, I will have a perception that they do not respect me and do not believe in my capabilities. (Jessica, female, Chinese, middle level academic)

Yet part of the Chinese middle level perceives that the involvement and intervention of the superior in their task is a good sign. They believe this will improve their efficiency based on the superiors' suggestions and prefer the direct involvement of their superior. However, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) suggests that the leader's involvement can enhance team spirit.

The leader's involvement is important. He/she should always monitor subordinates. At least ask about their progress. If they can get fully involved with the task, we can feel the team works well. So then it is not talk the talk but also walk the talk. I believe this will lift team spirit when the leader comes and we do the work together. So then they will do their jobs seriously and know that their superiors care about the tasks given to them. It is better than if handing over the job and not asking about progress but then requesting the end product. Then I will feel that the superior does not recognize the value of my work.

A Chinese respondent, Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) and the Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic), request an explanation before allowing superiors to interfere with their tasks. The Indian respondent explained that superior involvement can distract him from his job, while Steven preferred to get clarification from his superior before letting his superior get involved in his job. That Steven is an academic infers the traditional idea of ‘academic freedom’: that superior should not be involved in teaching and learning tasks.

I would prefer to know their reason behind it. Is it because the job is not perfect enough? Or may be some issues about which they have their own interpretation. I would prefer to understand the issue, why do this and this?

The findings show that generally the support level prefers direct involvement; some middle level managers perceive the involvement of their superior as a threat to their career; with upper level managers choosing indirect involvement. Malay personnel from mixed levels, particularly the upper level, support the indirect involvement of their superiors, with one respondent from the support level preferring this method. Malay respondents from the support level of management prefer direct involvement from their superiors. The support level normally would submit to their superiors’ demands and instructions as the direct involvement of the superior is perceived as helping them to meet the demands of the job and ease their tasks.

Chinese and Indian respondents perceive the involvement of their superior as a threat to their performance and decision making. They prefer their superior to only provide them with assistance when needed, providing advice, assistance and performance review rather than getting directly involved in their work. Interestingly, two Chinese respondents, one from the upper level and one from the middle level, prefer the direct involvement of their superiors in their work. Their perceptions about their superiors’ involvement were mostly positive. This view of indirect involvement suggests low power distance. Even though some of the respondents seem agreeable to their superiors’ participation, others hold negative perceptions. This negative perception, regardless of ethnicity, could affect their communication and relationship with their superior.

5.3.1.10 Treating colleagues in relation to power distance

This section discusses how power distance is connected to the way colleagues interact in terms of age, communication and status.

5.3.1.10.1 Respecting the elderly

The survey respondents were asked whether or not they would treat their colleagues equally, or whether they needed to consider age and seniority, even though they may be at a more superior position. Table 5.14 indicates that 65.8% of Malay, 62.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents agreed that they needed to consider their colleagues’ age and seniority (in service).

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul11	I cannot give my colleagues equal treatment; I need to consider their age and seniority in service, even though I am at a higher level of management than them.	No	26	34.2	3	37.5	1	25.0	30	34.1
		Yes	50	65.8	5	62.5	3	75.0	58	65.9
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.14: Age and seniority

Table 5.14 indicates that 61.4% of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, agree they will treat their colleagues equally regardless of their age and seniority in service. This suggests a low power distance orientation.

However, question Cul11 (*I cannot give my colleagues equal treatment; I need to consider their age and seniority in service, even though I am at a high level of management than them*) scored 65.9% compared with question Cul17 (*I will give my colleagues equal treatment regardless of their age and seniority in service*) where only 61.4% of respondents felt that they could treat their colleagues equally by ignoring other criteria such as seniority in service and age, even though they were at an upper level of management. This suggests that while respondents do value high power distance and are hierarchical in orientation, at the same time, they practice quite excessive low power distance.

In the survey, as shown in Cul18 (*I cannot give my colleagues equal treatment but need to respect their age and seniority in service*), 51.1% of respondents would need to respect their colleagues' age and seniority. The three ethnic groups show consistent results, however question Cul18 (*I cannot give my colleagues equal treatment but need to respect their age and seniority in service*) received a lower percentage compared with the other two questions. It can be concluded that the three questions which investigated attitudes to colleagues based on age and seniority received both positive and negative feedback. This implies that regardless of ethnicity high power distance is valued, which may affect their interactions with their superiors as well as their colleagues from different levels but not from different ethnicities. This is highlighted by Cody & McLaughlin (1985) and Wish and Kaplan (1977 as cited in Brew & Cairns, 2004) who report that power distance in superiors' and subordinates' relationships has been identified by researchers as an important variable that can influence communication among them.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	
Cul17	I will give my colleagues equal treatment regardless of their age and seniority in service.	No	29	38.2%	4	50.0%	1	25.0%	34	38.6%
		Yes	47	61.8%	4	50.0%	3	75.0%	54	61.4%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%
Cul18	I cannot give my colleagues equal treatment but need to respect their age and seniority in service.	No	36	47.4%	4	50.0%	3	75.0%	43	48.9%
		Yes	40	52.6%	4	50.0%	1	25.0%	45	51.1%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.15: Age and seniority versus equality of treatment

The findings illustrate that the respondents tend to consider the seniority of their colleagues, their age, rank, cultural and religious values. The interview findings enhance the survey results explaining respondents' conduct towards the elderly and most senior staff though they are from the highest level of management. This kind of respect is shown through their communication with elderly staff or subordinates as explained below.

5.3.1.11 Communication, status, position and education in relation to power distance

Communication, status, position and education are related to power distance. The respondents tend to treat their colleagues differently, which shows that the use of power distance depends on these criteria as well. Communication also differs according to age, with respondents tending to be sensitive in choosing the 'right' words when they communicate with their older subordinates. When communicating with younger subordinates, or with the same level of management, respondents tend to be more expressive.

In communicating their messages, they also need to consider others' feelings. One Malay respondent, Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) describes how he needs to pay attention to the feelings of older colleagues before criticising them, especially as he is a junior at his workplace. Communicating with seniors is not the same as communicating with juniors.

For those who are older than me, I need to pay attention to their emotions, for example seniors, especially when I need to give them some advice. I admit if I'm a junior staff, there will be a discomfort about this, like 'oh you are new here'. For instance as I'm a new staff member and he may be senior than me then I need to consider how to convey the message; I cannot just request them to see me and give some advice.

One Chinese respondent, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) notes that she will be more considerate when dealing with elderly subordinates. She needs to be mindful of her language; even though she is at the upper level of management she needs to address older subordinates appropriately. This is because she needs to acknowledge their seniority. But she will be more expressive when dealing with younger subordinates. Younger age is perceived as a lack of experience and this explains why she's expressive and exercises her authority easily.

I guess I will give priority to seniority as well as age. Normally those who are elderly differ in their thinking. The way we communicate with them will be different too. I cannot easily shout at them, yet I still can instruct them. But when they make me annoyed, I will try to lessen it by using a word such as 'Oh...next time could you please prepare this a bit earlier'. If my subordinate is younger than me, then I can get easily irritated. They can just see this from my face. I wouldn't say anything, they will know from my expression.

One Malay respondent, Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) will lower his status in order to show respect to his senior staff even though they may be in a lower position. Lowering status like this is perceived as a way to develop goodwill and preserve relationships with subordinates. This is something to do with *jaga hati* (fear of hurting others) in Malay culture (Romlah, 2013).

Sometimes you need to consider seniority. Not all the time but when we would like to seek their opinions. Also I should respect them as a senior, when it comes to their age. I would prefer to create a familial situation, where the youngest should respect the eldest, and the eldest should appreciate the youngest, even though they are younger in age.

In seeking opinions, Yusuf considers his senior subordinates' viewpoints. He expects that mature age is equal to having lots of experience, especially as he is actually new to the department. This indicates that he practices high power distance which values respecting elders and lowering status to create harmonious relationships.

Position and education are also associated to power distance. Interview evidence suggests that respondents treat their colleagues differently based on their position and the level of education. Malay respondents value hierarchy where their interactions can become more formal or informal whichever they consider to be appropriate. This indicates high power distance. Malay respondents cannot behave toward their superiors in the same ways as to their friends. They prefer to maintain boundaries and be careful in choosing appropriate jokes especially when they are mingling with superiors. Their colleagues' educational background also determines how they interact.

If the Head of Department has the title of Professor, I will treat him differently...It does not mean that I will not treat them equally, it is not my intention but in order to fit the context I need to consider this. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

I may choose different words when communicating with upper levels. I will not use the same communication techniques when I'm dealing with the support level... I will communicate with them using their level of thinking... (Mek Na, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Malay respondents value high power distance, compared with their Chinese and Indian colleagues, in communication and position.

5.3.1.12 Other factors intertwining with power distance

Religion and culture interact with power distance. Malay respondents consider their cultural and religious values when communicating with their colleagues. Physical contact is prohibited between men and women, and being respectful towards the elderly is not only because of their Malay culture but also because their religion urges them to respect

those who are wiser. Most agree that whomever they respect, they will receive respect in return.

... If I am with a male colleague, I am not allowed to have any physical contact with him.
(Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

It also involves a cultural thing and I also consider religious viewpoints which promote respect for those who are expert and wiser. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Depth of relationship and status also interact with power distance.

I will base my treatment of my colleagues depending on how close we are. (Sarah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Chinese respondents too note that mutual respect influences the power distance they observe with colleagues.

I believe we should respect them. But it does not mean that we should obey them 100%. The decision should follow work norms and discretion ('budi-bicara'). (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

As long as work is based on work norms and discretion (*budi-bicara*), Liang will perceive this as permission to treat others equally. The Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) believes that considering his colleagues' seniority may invite a conflict of interest.

5.3.2 Summary

In general, attire is important for all personnel regardless of their ethnicity which suggests high power distance. However, there are slight differences in choices, as Chinese personnel prefer to be more casual, are easy-going when choosing their attire and concerned that the attire should reflect their professionalism. The Indian respondent agrees with Chinese respondents who suggest that an appropriate dress code demonstrates professionalism. For Malays, aside from concern that their attire reflects their professionalism, their dress code is also connected to their Muslim identity and their life style. High power distance suggests feelings of comfort with displays and signs of social status. Dress code is important at the workplace, which is again consistent with high power distance. As Dysart-Gale (2006) points out, professionals in a high power distance culture have special dress codes, conducts and competencies. The majority of the interview respondents agree that they feel uneasy if they are not dressed appropriately at the workplace. However they also agree that dress code is, as well, a way they express their individuality or social status in the organisation and the people around them judge them by their appearance.

Malaysia is known as a collective society which values high power distance where being vocal is not normally accepted (see Hofstede, 2001, Zawawi et al., 2010, Bakar and Mustafa, 2012, Ismail and Lu, 2014, Hei et al., 2011). However, this dimension can shift in relation to the people and context involved. Modern Malaysia is not viewed as

collective by all; contrary to traditional values and practice, which view disagreement as negative and conflict, new Malaysian generation could accept being vocal and well received by as well. A small number of Malay respondents in this study, who are vocal in expressing disagreement, even though they were supported by facts, still invited controversy. In a high power distance society showing disagreement is an 'indication of assertiveness and confrontational behaviours' (Wood & Jogulu, 2012, p. 112). Respondents' unwillingness to express their disagreement centres on their 'apprehension of being seen as arrogant' (Schermerhorn, 1994 as cited in Wood & Jogulu, 2012, p. 112). Therefore, for the Malay personnel, showing disagreement is something that they will only do cautiously in order to preserve a harmonious relationship and to show respect to their superiors (Abdullah, 1992 as cited in Lailawati, 2005, p. 8). Middlemen are used to maintain harmonious relationships in which direct disagreement can be seen as 'face threatening' (Brown & Levinson, 1987 as cited in Hei et al.). They agree with the notion of a collective consensus and are reluctant to show their disagreement because they need to prioritise the welfare of the group which should come before personal interest (Wood & Jogulu, 2012). Malay personnel from the support level generally will not disagree because they believe that by doing so they are exercising authority over their superiors due to their respect towards their 'superiors and people with power are a fundamental living custom' (Wood & Jogulu, 2012, p. 112).

The way to voice disagreement should be handled in an appropriate manner to be accepted by the other parties positively. The majority of Malay and Chinese respondents believe that they cannot voice their disagreement openly because this will generate a negative impact on both the individual and to the relationship itself. It is related to the self-regard of the person or 'face' which respondents try to preserve before disagreeing with their superiors. 'Face' is seen as something that can be lost, maintained or enhanced (Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp 66 as cited in Hei et al., 2012). Respondent's inferiority in voicing their opinions was due to their lack of experience in the academic field, not having a PhD. Other factors that influence ways of expressing their opinion are personality and religion. Sometimes when the issue is for the improvement and the welfare of the group, respondents prefer to remain silent rather than expressing their disagreement. This corresponds to Hofstede's theory (1991 as cited in Wood & Jogulu, 2012) which suggests that communal culture is actually made in collective consensus and should assist the group rather than individual.

Power distance also connects with how well respondents respect their colleagues. They also need to consider their colleagues' position, educational background, religion and culture and the depth of their relationship, which show power distance is being practiced among colleagues. The findings indicate that both Chinese and Malay personnel across the levels were aware that they needed to admit their power and authority can only be enforced to certain levels. Only Malay colleagues discuss lowering their status, a view not observed in Chinese and Indian respondents. However, the way Chinese and Indian respondents consider seniority and age demonstrates similar values in terms of power distance. Findings show that the closer the relationship, the less power distance is applied and the more informal the treatment. Malay personnel also revealed that the depth of the relationship influences their behaviour towards their colleagues. Malay and Chinese respondents change their ways of communicating to adapt to their colleague's position

and educational levels before treating them accordingly. Malay personnel seem to put more value on religious and cultural values compared with Chinese and Indian colleagues. This somehow, without their consciousness, restricted their interaction and relationships with their colleagues from various ethnicities, which is contrary to the 1 Malaysia concepts and the integration promoted by the states.

5.3.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede argued that a society with a higher level of uncertainty avoidance (HUA) prefers strict codes of belief and may be intolerant of nonconformist behaviour and ideas. HUA societies will prefer to work with clear rules and a regulation, believing that anything different is dangerous, and they value formality and worry about the future. Low uncertainty avoidance (LUA) cultures are more open for new things and changes, do not feel uncertainty about the future, avoid complex rules and formality, and easily accept new ideas (Hofstede, 2012b; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

This section analyses data in relation to the respondents' expectations towards rules, changes and creativity which is linked to uncertainty avoidance. This section investigates if there are differences between respondents' behaviour in relation to HUA or LUA and if these differences affect their communication.

5.3.3.1 Expectations towards rules, changes and creativity

The HUA criteria refer to strict codes of belief including: an intolerance of nonconformist behaviour and ideas, a preference for clear rules and regulations, a consideration that change (or transformation) is dangerous, a valuing of formality, worry about the future, and a valuing of an absolute Truth. LUA, meanwhile is characterised by an acceptance of new ideas and change, a lack of worry about uncertainty and about the future, an avoidance of complex rules and formality, and an acceptance of new ideas, as well as a keenness to stimulate ideas (Hofstede, 2012b; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This section investigates respondents' in-depth experiences in relation to uncertainty avoidance and how rules, changes and transformation, future and creativity at the workplace could indicate if they value uncertainty avoidance.

5.3.3.1.1 Expectations towards rules

Table 5.16 suggests that 92% of the respondents are uneasy if there are no clear rules at their workplace. The findings indicate that 93.4% of Malays answered 'Yes' to this question, 75% of Chinese respondents also chose the same answers followed by 100% of Indian respondents. However 6.6% of Malay and 25% of Chinese respondents were able to tolerate it if there are no clear rules. The findings suggest Malays are likely to demonstrate high uncertainty avoidance (HUA) as well as the majority of Chinese and the Indian respondents.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul.19	I am uneasy in situations where there are no clear rules in my workplace.	No	5	6.6%	2	25.0%	0	.0%	7	8.0%
		Yes	71	93.4%	6	75.0%	4	100.0%	81	92.0%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 5.16: Rules in the workplace

People in a HUA society tend to follow rules faithfully. The interview data demonstrate that Malay respondents differed in relation to HUA or LUA. Those at the upper professional levels observed that rules were important to them. They considered that obeying the rules is vital, because they are the rule makers and are charged with putting rules into practice.

...every rule, big or small at the workplace, is a rule that I should follow because this had been decided by the management. Plus I'm involved in outlining the rules. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Malay respondents, who are not involved in outlining the rules, regard rules and regulations as important at the workplace. They will follow rules, as long as the rule is in line with their work etiquette, culture and religion. They prefer to obey the rules in order to avoid controversy, and perceive that disobeying the rules would result in deficiency, delinquency and negatively affect institutional production. This finding identifies that religion too provides a basic principle for their actions. Malay respondents thus may possess HUA because religion is an important criterion for HUA, as it relates to the value of absolute Truth.

... I'll obey the rules not because I want to be accepted, but I prefer to observe the rules, it is my personality. I will not disobey any rules as long as the rule is not against etiquette, culture and my religion. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

I don't want to create controversy...so I just obey. (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Furthermore, Malay respondents at the administrative support level prefer to observe rules and regulations. In some situations this comprises part of the nature of their job. As Daud (male, Malay, support level administration), explains, his workplace requires everyone to follow rules because this will convey a good impression about his department. His job scope is to enforce the rules and regulations and it is important to him to respect the rules and regulations. To Fatima (female, Malay, support level administration), following the rules is important since her job is related to laboratory work which requires procedures before and after the use of the laboratory. The entire laboratory at her workplace follows the same rules, and this helps her in her job. Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration) prefers to obey the rules which are stated clearly in the circular at her workplace. She believes that not obeying these rules will create problems for her.

All the Malay respondents, regardless of their level, perceive that they follow the rules which demonstrate that they value HUA. This value supported by their religion. Thus obeying rules does not only mean blindly following it but concurs with the basic tenets of their faith. This is supported by Kling (1995 as cited in Lrong, 2001) which signifies that Malays are fatalistic and take the will of God as a justification for events. Lrong (2001) also reports that government rules in relation to the New Economic Policy to lessen and evade ambiguities is a political outcome of the Malay psyche which suggests that Malays need assurance (Sendut, 1991 as cited in Lrong, 2001).

One Chinese respondent, Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) revealed that she is uncomfortable having too many rules at the workplace. She is uneasy about having extensive rules and regulations which she thinks will prevent her creativity. She also feels, however, that it is inappropriate if somebody violates the basic rules of the institution. Even though she does not really adhere to the rules herself, she prefers that no one should disobey the specified rules established by the institution.

I believe too many rules will restrict you. Yet you cannot be free all time, you need be under control sometime. But not too much because it will restrict your job... (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

She considers that it is important not to deviate from the stated rules. This indicates a leniency in observing rules which shows indications of LUA. Following extensive rules is distressing to her which indicates that individually Chinese too can value low uncertainty avoidance. Her position in this institution influences her perception, which suggests that an employee's position can also influence their actions about observing rules.

Chinese respondents seem to vary in their attitudes towards observing rules. Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) believes that not obeying the rules results in being warned and then prosecuted by the management. However Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic), from the upper level, is uncomfortable with extensive rules. The single Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic), perceives that rules should be obeyed because he is professional and because he regards rules as a guidelines. He believes that following rules and regulations can also lead to an excellent career.

In summary, survey respondents signify HUA regardless of ethnicity which is generally consistent with the survey findings. The Malay, Chinese and Indian respondents in the interviews all perceived that rules should be observed, indicating that they value high uncertainty avoidance. In general, this refutes the generalisation by (Hofstede, 1991) which indicates that Malays in general are LUA. In some conditions they did observe HUA. Yet the Hofstede finding as a generalisation does not explain that within their ethnic culture individuals are different. This indicates that there are not many differences for these three ethnic groups in relation to observing rules, as they consensually agreed that observing the rules is important. This finding is verified by several studies which explain that Malays, Chinese and Indians share common HUA values in observing rules and regulations (e.g Dahlia, 2008; Hamzah, 1991; Lrong, 2001).

5.3.3.1.2 Changes and adaptation

Table 5.17 indicates that 80.7% of respondents were able to accept change. Ethnically, 82.9% of Malay, 62.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents indicate that they are comfortable with changes or reorganisations. The findings appear to demonstrate that their reactions to changes at the workplace display signs of LUA where they feel comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. The results signify that respondents indicate LUA in that 86.8% of Malay, 75% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents were confident to accept changes which could affect them directly at their workplace. Only a small number of Malay, Chinese and Indian respondents felt threatened by change. The three ethnic groups signify LUA which indicates that they value transformation and feel competent enough to face challenges. This in line with the Hofstede (2001) generalization that Malaysia in general is a LUA society.

Table 5.17 demonstrates that 81.8% of respondents are not worried about being transferred to other departments which signifies LUA. Malay respondents (84.2 %) can adapt to departmental change. Moreover 62.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents (refer Table 5.17) signify acceptance to processes of transformation. This portrays LUA where the society is open-minded, less concerned about ambiguity and uncertainty and readily accepts change, as well as a willingness to take risks (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This is followed by 95.5% of respondents (refer Table 5.17) who prefer to face challenges and feel more adventurous at their workplace. Ethnically, 94.7% of Malay, 100% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents prefer to be challenged rather than be bored by routine tasks. This indicates that regardless of ethnicity, all groups value LUA and feel comfortable about the ambiguity and uncertainty. Yet a small number of respondents felt threatened by change.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul21	I don't like changes or being transferred to another department.	No	63	82.9	5	62.5	3	75.0	71	80.7
		Yes	13	17.1	3	37.5	1	25.0	17	19.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul22	I'm afraid changes in my workplace will affect me directly.	No	66	86.8	6	75.0	3	75.0	75	85.2
		Yes	10	13.2	2	25.0	1	25.0	13	14.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul23	I prefer changes at my workplace and I'm not worried being transferred to another department.	No	12	15.8	3	37.5	1	25.0	16	18.2
		Yes	64	84.2	5	62.5	3	75.0	72	81.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul24	I prefer challenges in my work rather than being routine.	No	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
		Yes	72	94.7	8	100.0	4	100.0	84	95.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.17: Changes and challenges at the workplace

Interview findings support and expand the survey data in relation to uncertainty avoidance. HUA signifies that change (or transformation) is seen as dangerous, where new things and new ideas pose a threat and people are more worried about the future, compared to LUA which accepts new things, is keen on new ideas and change and is less

worried about uncertainty and the future. Malay respondents generally accept changes or being transferred to other departments for the sake of the institution. Adaptation to a new place and being prepared when new situations arose was very important. Malay respondents, regardless of their managerial level, were aware that as government servants, they may be transferred to other departments not to their liking, yet they were prepared to face the challenges. Nonetheless, it is a university policy that after five years in a certain department, the officer should be relocated to another department. Malay respondents at the upper professional level had experienced reshuffles and restructures during their employment at several companies and institutions before settling at UMT. They accepted changes and adaptation as normal for government servants. They usually viewed changes positively and had no problems in adapting to being reshuffled or moving to other departments. Due to their experiences, they believed that change offers an approach to the problems that they encounter at their workplace. In this case, attitudes towards change are influenced as much by Malay policy as cultural orientation.

Malay respondents perceive change in positive ways and are ready for challenges in their jobs. They view change as characteristic of an energetic environment, creating new experiences, enhancing their productivity, creativity and efficiency as well as being valuable to the advancement of the institution. They perceive transformation is a positive mechanism in producing better results in terms of becoming more efficient, meticulous, and systematic.

Basically, when we were moved to some other departments, normally we ask for these ourselves, which we really love to do. It will be no problem to me. (Khadijah, Malay, middle level academic)

They also consider that transformation is essential as they believe that change increases their potential for learning experiences and knowledge. They are also able to appreciate other cultures and different societies that they are able to work with. For example, Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) mentions that, during his years at HUKM (*Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*), he experienced being transferred from department to department. And now, at UMT, as the same experience is happening to him, he is prepared to face the challenges. He has no problem with this policy and is ready to serve the institution.

Despite this perception, there are still a small number of Malay respondents who object to change. They perceive change as troublesome or a burden for them. They experience distress if required to be transferred to another department. Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), prefers transformation to occur slowly and with appropriate planning to be able to change once he's ready. To Mohammad, in making a transformation, one should have a strategy and an appropriate plan.

If the changes that had been made are something put upon me, I'll reject it. Let say, a punch card issue, that it should be punched twice, is an issue I feel really uncomfortable with. I think it will not fit with my flexi hours of working. (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Chinese and Indian respondents share a common value towards uncertainty avoidance in transformation. They seem ready to move to other departments to experience different

things. Their view towards transformation is positive. They are not afraid to face change and perceive this as a way to be self-confident. They admit that doing routine tasks can be boring and tiresome. Chinese respondents also consider that in a university, transformation is useful in order to advance and improve. They observed that as a university, they should be prepared to compete competently within the higher educational context. They believe that change could improve performance, generate new environments at work and produce a healthy workforce. Restructuring and transformation are also helpful in avoiding any favouritism that may occur in the department.

Changing the management and a new work environment could enhance our performance and promote healthy work etiquette. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Yet a Chinese respondent did view change negatively-she feels afraid that change will affect her directly.

I guess, like every one, any transformation or changes will frighten me. (Jessica, female, Chinese, middle level academic)

Considering Jessica's position, it was surprising to see that she views change negatively. Jessica is a lecturer, thus her reaction towards change is negative despite being well-educated.

Overall, all the three ethnic groups indicate LUA, with only a small number indicating HUA. The Malay attitude towards change is linked with age and seniority in the management level. The findings also indicate that there is little difference in terms of the uncertainty avoidance in relation to changes or transformation held by the three ethnic groups of this study. This is supported by several studies (e.g Dahlia, 2008; Hamzah, 1991; Lrong, 2001) which note that these ethnic groups perceive changes positively, and oppose the findings suggested by Hofstede (1991) that Malays are characterised by HUA. The Indian respondent signifies that he values LUA and believes that he can face any challenges. The finding is in line with Dahlia (2008) and opposed to Hofstede (1991) findings which report that Malaysian Indians value HUA. However, it is made aware in this study that by only referring to one Indian respondent it is not representative of the general Indian population in Malaysia. Yet his response did contribute to the study and highlighted a matter of fact that Malaysian Indians also have a shift of paradigm in uncertainty avoidance. And this finding is also consistent with the Uncertainty Avoidance Index which indicates that Malaysia is basically low in uncertainty avoidance compared to the Far East Asian countries such as Hong Kong or Japan (Oluwabusuyi, 2011). Yet, surprisingly, a small number of Malay and Chinese middle level academics did show HUA criteria. The reason lies with their personal experiences and feelings of contentment with their current department or position⁸⁶. As Saracheck et al. (1984, as cited in Lrong, 2001, p. 187) and Rosner and Kleiner (1998, as cited in Lrong, 2001, p. 18) remark, Malays believe that the future is too intricate, ambiguous, unpredictable and hostile to plan efficiently.

⁸⁶ It is recognised that while in the analysis deviation from the general norm is suggested as indicative of a 'personal' understanding the researcher understands that this is not always the case and that this understanding could be more generalised in terms of culture. But, for the purposes of the analysis here this was an interpretation that occurred only in this instance in the data collected.

5.3.3.1.3 Creativity

Table 5.18 signifies that 83% of respondents believe that they could express their creativity freely at their workplace. The survey respondents, regardless of ethnicity, signify signs of LUA where they appreciate creativity and innovation, and accept variety and experimentation (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Sánchez-Franco, Martínez-López, & Martín-Velicia, 2009). This also contradicts Hofstede's generalisation (2001, 2012a), and yet is consistent with Ayoun and Moreo (2008) who describe Malaysia as a LUA country with regard to its ever-changing business environment.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul25	I can express my creativities freely in my workplace.	No	15	19.7	0	.0	0	.0	15	17.0
		Yes	61	80.3	8	100.0	4	100.0	73	83.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.18: Creativity at work

The interview findings support the survey data. Creativity is among the LUA characteristics which acknowledge new ideas, compared to HUA which is more intolerant of new concepts. In general, Malay respondents in this study view creativity positively which they believe will allow them to provide the best service to the campus community. Malay respondents from each level perceive that creativity is necessary for their duties, for example, by solving everyday problems with the least budget expenses. In some departments they were encouraged to be involved in *Kumpulan Inovasi dan Kreativiti* (Innovation and Creativity Group or abbreviated as KIK).

The upper levels share their creativity through their ideas such as the formation of an 'Idea Bank'. The value of creativity also depends on the position and seniority of the employee. Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional), supports and encourages his subordinates to be creative and inventive in their jobs. At his stage of career, he is expected to provide ideas and expects his subordinates to implement these ideas. He also explains that he appreciates those who are creative in doing their jobs and who do not always follow instructions from the upper levels. At his workplace, they also tried to implement the work ethics practiced by the Japanese people and adapt them to the local environment. This work ethic, referred to as 2S [*sapu* (sweep) and *susun* (systematise)] relates to a tidy and organised office environment. This reflects that the upper level values LUA in that they try to be innovative and accept experimentation. This is due to the fact that being at an upper level has allowed them to implement creative ideas in the system which has helped the institution to excel by providing excellent service. They also put a high value on creativity by inspiring their subordinates.

Another example is shared by Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration), who explains that in his units, he needs to deal with very important people (VIPs), their protocols and last-minute changes. When this happens, he needs to act fast and creatively and, at the same time, minimise errors and to make sure all VIPs are satisfied with the service. Middle level Malay academics felt free to express their creativity such as in

writing, publishing papers, and in research and teaching and learning tasks. Management does not impose restrictions in presenting ideas in teaching and lecturing. This includes preparing exam questions and marking papers where they were allowed to be creative as long as they obey the basic rules. Malay support levels were allowed to be creative in their jobs such as in scheduling the lab schedules, taking minutes and organising the information, and helping to plan office interiors.

If there are any changes in office interiors, we are allowed to organise them according to our creativity without many limitations from the upper levels. Provided it is appropriate for the office ambiance and does not go beyond the regulations. (Sarah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Yet one Malay respondent viewed creativity negatively. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) decided to do her PhD in her field of interest but this was not supported by her Dean. However, after she provided evidence about what she was really interested in, she was allowed to research her chosen area for her PhD. But she had to fight for what she wanted to do. This is the reason why she views creativity as under-appreciated at her workplace.

Chinese and Indian respondents, in general, perceived creativity as positive. They appreciate creativity if this could improve productivity and reduce the organisation's costs. Those who are in academic fields were allowed to be creative in learning, teaching, research and initiating new ideas at their work place, as indicated by Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic), Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic), Jessica (female, Chinese, middle level academic) and Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic). They were allowed to use resources, ways and methods in conducting their research. The upper management did not limit the way research was undertaken and the way results were presented. As academics, they believed that teaching and learning should be improvised from time to time and not rely on old-fashioned styles of learning. They were allowed to use humour during their sessions, as part of the creativity. Yet they cannot change the syllabus.

I guess creativity should relate to productivity and reduce costs because this will increase efficiency. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level administration)

The findings indicate Malay respondents value LUA in relation to creativity. Yet for the Malay respondents from the upper level, their LUA is also influenced by their positions and seniority. Surprisingly, one Malay from a middle level did have a negative experience in relation to creativity and concluded that creativity is undervalued at her workplace. This is only an exception considering that she is from the middle level management, which explains her status in the organization where hierarchy is important and suggestions are taken as serious matters or have been silenced by the organization (see Ayoun & Moreo, 2008, Bakar et al., 2007, Dahlia, 2008, Kim & McLean, 2014). Interestingly all Malays in a support level indicated that they were allowed to be creative and were supported by the management.

The majority of Chinese respondents indicate LUA in appreciating creativity and new ideas expressed either by their colleagues or employers. There are fewer differences in

uncertainty avoidance exhibited by the Indian respondent compared with the other two ethnic groups. Overall, the findings indicate that all ethnic groups signify LUA by appreciating new ideas, creativity and innovation. There are fewer differences among the three ethnic groups as they all indicate low uncertainty avoidance in relation to creativity and invention. This is in line with Hofstede (2001) generalisation which indicates that Malaysia is a LUA society, holds relaxed attitudes towards ambiguity, and appreciates innovation and creativity. However Hofstede's cultural dimensions should not be considered as static and the evidence shows that people move within them, thus confirming criticisms of Hofstede (see McSweeney, 2001).

5.3.4 Summary

Uncertainty avoidance characterises a situation where the society can tolerate ambiguity. Generally, uncertainty avoiding cultures will try to minimise uncertainty by applying rules, religious beliefs and security measures (Hofstede, 2012b). In a multicultural society such as Malaysia, ethnic groups deal with ambiguities and uncertainties in different ways. The findings suggest that Malay personnel from three levels could be flexible, embracing HUA: the need to follow clear rules to avoid ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001), and LUA depending on circumstances. The Malays also observed that rules and regulations are important and are underpinned by their religion and lifestyle. As rules and religion are perceived to be the basis for cultural identity in multiracial Malaysia, Malay attitudes are also determined by their commitment to Islamic teachings (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1999; Hamzah, 1991) which highlight the search for the One Truth, and feel obliged to follow rules which relate to their Islamic ethics (Hofstede and Bond, 1988 as cited in Lrong, 1998). However, Hofstede perceived Malaysia in general to be more a LUA society.

The Indian respondent's evidence suggests HUA, yet views change and creativity positively which signifies LUA criteria. The Indian and Malay respondents appear to embrace similar values of uncertainty avoidance. Sharing the same cultural values such as strong religious beliefs may be due to the influences of South Indian philosophies and Sanskrit in Southeast Asia during the last century. Moreover, Indians and Malays are closely connected to the values, traditions and strong religious influences derived from the Islamic and Hindu faiths (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). Interestingly still a small number of Malay and Chinese respondents imply that they are uncomfortable with extensive rules and regulations. Lrong (2001) argues that Chinese are believed to value LUA for the reason that they are believers in multiple religions. It is interesting to note that although Ayoun and Moreo (2008), Hofstede (2001, 2012a), Hofstede and Bond (1984), Goodwin and Goodwin (1999) and Herbig and Genestre (1997) report that Malaysia in general is considered to be LUA, the interview findings show that the respondents in this study, especially the Malays and Indians, explicitly value HUA in observing rules. These findings suggest that ethnically there are differences in their cultural values in relation to observing rules.

The interview findings indicate that in general all respondents from all levels perceive that transformation is positive and inspiring. The Malays and Chinese at the upper levels possess positive attitudes towards change influenced by their age and seniority. Mature age might be a factor in easily accepting transformations. Furthermore, it may also

influence their attitude towards change. This is because as a senior in an organization, they should inspire others in accepting change and maintain a positive image. Considering that the upper level is where the decision maker is, the attitude towards transformation is expected and this is supported by Halib and Salleh (2006) who pointed out that managers have value shifts towards Western-oriented ideals such as low in uncertainty avoidance. This is in line with Hofstede and Bond (1988 as cited in Lrong, 1998) and Lim (1998) who concluded that Malays value HUA due to their Islamic faith, which acknowledges one truth and favours stability. This contradicts with the general idea of Hofstede which indicated that Malaysia is considered LUA, but when referring to the ethnic itself, it does have a different view. It is interesting to note that Malays from the upper and support levels hold different attitudes from the middle levels towards uncertainty avoidance. This finding suggests that Malays at the middle levels feel that they need security, in this case their continued employment. This suggests their risk-taking attributes (Chee, 1986 as cited in Muhammad, Syahoera, & Isa, 2004) are lower than those of personnel at other levels. Middle level Malay personnel confirm Hofstede's (1991 as cited in Alarussi, Hanefah, & Selamat, 2012) findings which indicate that Malays value HUA influence by their religion (Haniffa and Cooke, 2002 as cited in Alarussi et al., 2012) which illustrates a low tolerance to ambiguity and uncertainty. This suggests that Hofstede's cultural values dimensions are actually more flexible than he recognises in which the cultural dimension such as HUA or LUA can change in time and practice according to the current situation and context.

In comparison with their Chinese colleagues across the levels, the Malays share similar values in relation to LUA about change and transformation. . This finding is in line with Hofstede (2001) when he reports that Malaysia scores 36 for uncertainty avoidance, signifying an openness to change, risk-taking and an appreciation for innovation (Nasrul, Masrom, Nor, & Syarief, 2012). Chinese are perceived to possess more perseverance and prudence and are able to acclimatise to risk (Lrong, 1998). On the contrary, Chinese respondents seem to be consistent in their attitudes towards uncertainty avoidance. This finding is in line with Lim (1998), Lim (2001) and Hofstede and Bond (1988 as cited in Lrong, 1998) which suggests that Malaysian Chinese tolerate multiple religions and teachings. Yet a small number of Malay and Chinese respondents, middle level academics, did view change negatively. They could gradually accept change but needed time for planning and adaptation.

Malays respondents also embrace LUA in appreciating innovation and creativity. Only a small number of Malay (especially in middle level) respondents in this study undervalued creativity, which indicates HUA attitudes. Chinese and Indian colleagues across all levels also share similar values (LUA) about creativity in the workplace. Creativity is accepted by these three ethnic groups who believe it will enhance their communication and productivity. They exhibit signs of LUA where they work together to achieve their best for the improvement of the institution. This is essential especially in multicultural institutions and in countries like Malaysia.

5.3.5 Long-term orientation (LTO) and Short-term orientation (STO)

The long-term orientation dimension can be interpreted as dealing with the society’s search for virtue. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). People with a long-term orientation show an ability to adapt their traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth. They are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

During the interview, respondents were asked how they planned their work, their future, their expectations towards their jobs, their preferences in outcomes, their views about awards, and their religious orientation and how they connected with their workplace.

5.3.5.1 Work, future and award expectations

This section will review the respondents’ expectations towards their work and the future, and their award expectations, as these are connected to the cultural values of long-term orientation.

5.3.5.1.1 Work expectation

Table 5.19 indicates that 98.9% of respondents prefer to plan their work ahead so that they can use their time wisely, showing LTO criteria, and 84.1% of respondents prefer to plan their work by being told by their superior, also indicating LTO. Whereas 18.4% of Malays choose to be told by their supervisor rather than plan their work, thus indicating that only a minority of Malay respondents show STO. The majority of respondents regardless of ethnicity show LTO for questions Cul30 and 31.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul30	I prefer to plan my work ahead so that I can use my time wisely.	No	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
		Yes	75	98.7	8	100.0	4	100.0	87	98.9
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul31	I prefer to plan my work by being told by my superior.	No	14	18.4	0	.0	0	.0	14	15.9
		Yes	62	81.6	8	100.0	4	100.0	74	84.1
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.19: Planning work

Table 5.20 signifies that 95.5% of respondents prefer to plan their work and not depend on superiors’ instructions. Ethnically 96.1% of Malay, 87.5% of Chinese and the one Indian respondent prefer to plan their work ahead and not depend on their superiors’ instructions. Overall respondents, regardless of ethnicity, show LTO.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul33	I do not plan my work and work as directed by my superiors only.	No	73	96.1	7	87.5	4	100.0	84	95.5
		Yes	3	3.9	1	12.5	0	.0	4	4.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.20: Preferring not to plan

However the interview findings reveal a different perspective from the survey findings.

Malay respondents explain that every cent of their salary should be from the duties that they perform at work, which they believe will impact on their family life in the future. As Muslims, Malay respondents believe doing their best for their job, meaning avoiding any bribery, cheating and any prohibited actions that are against the Islamic ethic. They emphasise performance rather than hoping for rewards. They also state that being patient is important in obtaining promotion, as well as viewing duties as obligations which need to be performed diligently. They believe that this will result in promotions and awards being granted in the future. When the question 27 (*I am willing to do anything in my profession in order to get a good income in the future*) was asked, the majority of Malay respondents chose 'Yes' and once the question added 'religious prohibition' such as question 28 (*I will do anything that may give me a good outcome in the future without considering my religious prohibition*), the majority of Malay respondents chose 'No'. This is due to religion, where they avoid any actions which are illegal or *Haram* in Islam such as bribery, cheating, corruption, stabbing others in the back and many more, in order to outdo rivals.

I suppose that every task given to use should be done on the basis of the religion. And I do not need a person to assess me. What I mean I'm only doing my job not to get compensation in return...I believe if you have religious knowledge, you can excel in your job. Whether you are performing or not it's a different story because sometimes those who are awarded as excellent are not necessary performing; only God's knows. (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

As long as I perform my duty and there is no complaint from the students. How the superior will assess me, it's their business. I will make sure I do my job and deal with my clients, students. As long as they satisfied, I will be happy too. (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Malay respondents take their jobs seriously and plan accordingly, which suggests STO, but also LTO when they organise and are persistent in managing their tasks.

Chinese respondents prefer to plan their time and work schedules ahead. For example, Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic), brings work home or works on Sundays in order to complete important tasks. As a devoted Christian, he bases his future plans on his religion, he believes that this world is mortal and there is another world which is immortal.

That Chinese plan their jobs suggests that, along with Malay respondents, Chinese respondents value STO (the involvement of their religion) and also LTO (when organising and managing their tasks at the workplace).

5.3.5.1.2 Future expectations: retirement, savings and education

Respondents were asked about their future plans. Table 5.21 illustrates that 93.2% of respondents prefer long-term results when they planning their savings or business, even though they know the result is delayed. Ethnically, 92.1% of Malay as well as 100% of Chinese and the one Indian respondent scored 'Yes' for this question. Regardless of ethnicity, respondents show a strong propensity to save and invest thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results, which indicate that they prefer a long-term orientation (LTO).

Whereas question Cul27 (*I am willing to do anything in my profession in order to get a good income in the future*)(see Table 5.22) shows that 56.6% of Malay respondents chose 'Yes' to this question and 43.4% chose 'No'. This finding signifies that Malay respondents consider the sacrifice that they need to perform before agreeing to the statement. This aligns with the Malay concern for the absolute Truth which is related to their Islamic ethics. However 62.5% of the Chinese respondents as well as 75% of Indian respondents selected 'No'. The finding indicates that regardless of ethnicity, respondents perceive that their willingness to achieve a better income should not go against morality or religiously prohibitions, which signifies short-term orientation (STO). This may be related to question Cul28 which is explained later.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul26	I prefer long-term results when I am planning my savings or doing any business, even though I know the result will be in a longer period of time.	No	6	7.9	0	.0	0	.0	6	6.8
		Yes	70	92.1	8	100.0	4	100.0	82	93.2
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Cul27	I am willing to do anything in my profession in order to get a good income in the future	No	33	43.4	5	62.5	3	75.0	41	46.6
		Yes	43	56.6	3	37.5	1	25.0	47	53.4
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.21: Long term results

Table 5.22 explains that 92% of respondents do not prefer immediate results in their job, because they know it involves risk. And 93.4% of Malay, 75% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents seem to prefer long-term benefits rather than short-term gains which could risk their job. All three ethnic groups show perseverance in achieving results, which indicates LTO.

		Ethnicity									
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total			
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul32	I prefer quick results in my job, even though I know it is risky.	No	71	93.4	6	75.0	4	100.0	81	92.0	
		Yes	5	6.6	2	25.0	0	.0	7	8.0	
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 5.22: Result preferences

Interview findings reinforce the survey findings in that Malay respondents perceive future planning is important to reduce future uncertainty.

Well I plan everything such as my career expansion. In my financial plans, I organize my saving for my kids as an insurance to guarantee my family future. (Mek Na, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Because the future is uncertain, we need to plan for the future; my religion influences me in planning my future life. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Malay respondents understand that the future is unpredictable, which is shown for example in their attitudes towards family savings, education, financial planning, and retirement and insurance plans.

Whenever I have a surplus, I bank it into my children's account. This is for their future, for their education... (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malay respondents did plan for their children's' education and future by guiding their children in choosing the university programme. They raise their children according to Islamic ways, so then when the children turn into adults they will be responsible and confident. They save for their children's education because they know that it is difficult to get educational loans especially for someone from a high-income family. Some of the Malay respondents who are both working parents need to consider this. In Malaysia, when the parents' salary is more than average, they are expected to fund their own children's schooling as well as higher education. Malay respondents seem concerned in planning their children's education. This attentiveness seems higher compared with the former Malay generation who received more support from the government.

...I took a⁸⁷Takaful educational plan to prepare for their education ...As a⁸⁸Bumiputra, we know that we are eligible for a sponsorship yet we both work. We need to be prepared just in case our kids are not eligible for sponsorship because they expect that we are capable of funding our own children...That's why I took⁸⁹'Takaful siswa' for my kids for educational saving.... (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

⁸⁷Takaful= originally is Arabic term (تَكَافُلٌ) is defined as an Islamic insurance concept, observing the rules and regulations of Islamic law.

⁸⁸Bumiputra= Malaysian term to describe Malay race and the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak).

⁸⁹Takaful siswa = one of the takaful product for education

I registered my children in⁹⁰ 'Simpanan Pendidikan'. This will be easier if someday they need money for their education. So they do not need to apply for a loan at⁹¹ PTPTN because they have already got this educational saving... (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Malays emphasise the stability of education for worldly matters and hereafter. They believe that this will help make their life more meaningful both in this world and hereafter. Every Muslim acknowledges that the world is only a temporary place and that they should perform good deeds that will be repaid in the hereafter.

As for my kids, I believe that I should educate them, teach them the Quran. I taught them by myself... Normally after⁹² 'maghrib' I make sure that they learn Quran (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

... I want my kids to get a proper religious education for this world and hereafter. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Malay respondents also plan their children's educational journey.

For instance, my first son, he is really keen on IT, but I told him, do look into other areas, because my wife and I are already in this field. I give my views, told him to go for economic, pure economic. Alhamdulillah... (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Upper level Malay personnel explain that planning is important for their department and they prefer to be organised.

My future planning is linked to my religious belief. In Islam, it is promoted that we should always value time to achieve our targets. At work when the due date is on 1st, I should try my best to complete my task before the due date. If I cannot accomplish the job by that date, I need to justify why this happened. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional), is near retirement, and planned for his future. He plans to get involved in NGOs, religious activities around his community, as well as contribute some of his knowledge to his neighbourhood. Whereas Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration) and Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic), believe that one should manage their savings and be debt-free, own a comfortable home, have sufficient savings when they are old and enough pensions to survive on:

I don't have black and white future plan. But I do know that I want a lovely house and enough savings for my retirement period ...My religion is my basis. It is an obligation. And I would love to be debt-free... (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

⁹⁰Simpanan pendidikan = The National Education Savings Scheme (SSPN) to enable parents/guardians to save for the purpose of the higher education of their children.

⁹¹PTPTN = known as National Higher Education Fund Corporation, responsible for giving study loans for potential Malaysian students to further their education to any local university.

⁹²maghrib= referring to the formal daily prayers of Islam, as maghrib prayer prayed just after sunset, is the fourth of five formal daily prayers performed by Muslim.

Shahar, Earland, and Abd Rahman (2001) reported that a high percentage of elderly people live with their family. Elderly people in a developing country such as Malaysia tend to live in multi-generation households and extended family systems where they live with their children (married or unmarried) (Shahar et al., 2001; Yusnani, 2006). The Malays value preserving face or *malu* if their parents are left alone doing house chores or daily activities without assistance from their relatives (Goddard et al, 1997 as cited in Yusnani, 2006). This is because their housing environments are more communal. Some Malay families form units in a single place which can transcend into a community which results, in turn, in community bonding. Malays, especially the elderly, are self-supporting and look out for one another by using this community bonding, for example, using the community to seek help in the form of ‘lending a hand’ or *gotong royong* (Yusnani, 2006).

This is the reason why Malay respondents do not explain their retirement plans in detail. It is a cultural issue which they need to deal with only when they live in retirement villages and not with their children. Their cultural dimensions of *malu* and their relatives’ support indicate that most value STO. Furthermore, as Muslims, Malays have obligations to be responsible for their parents when they get older. Therefore, most of the Malay respondents expect their children to take care of them, which explain why they do not plan to settle down at retirement villages.

However one Malay respondent preferred not to plan for her future. In her late 30s, she is still single, and is not afraid of her future. The money she had saved for retirement will be spent on a pilgrimage with her mother. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) thinks that when she grows older, the pension will be enough to support her.

I don't really plan my future. I would prefer to use the money for pilgrimage with my mother. When I die, my money will belong to someone else. It is better for me to use this EPF money now my decision was based on my religion. I don't care much about my future but still I will not be extravagant in spending my money... (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

In Islam, when someone is like Amina and does not have any children, her siblings will inherit. The wealth will be distributed under the Islamic jurisprudence under the general rules of inheritance, and that is the reason why she does not save for her retirement. Her attitude points to STO. This attitude is related to the Islamic concept of *redha* or contentment, which makes her feel safe about her future. She does make an attempt to secure her future by having a pension (this is another Islamic virtue referred to as ⁹³*tawakal*). She also describes that she will be satisfied, which is related to the Islamic virtue of gratitude (⁹⁴*syukur*) and *tawakal*. This helps her (as a Muslim), to live with peace of mind, because she knows Allah will take good care of her as long as she performs her duties as a servant to the Almighty.

⁹³*Tawakal* = empowered, be given power of attorney, to be retained, to be commissioned (to do or with) (Baalbaki, 1995b) in this case showing your effort in improving the condition and after all the effort, you will leave your hope to the Almighty.

⁹⁴*Syukur* = to thank, express or show gratitude or appreciation, be thankful (Baalbaki, 1995c), in this case, being thankful for what you have, for what you're given, to praise His blessings upon all.

Chinese and Indian respondents do plan for their future. For example, the Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) believes that the future should be planned accordingly so that the family will live happily and be restrained from doing anything 'bad' in the future. They are conscious that educational and financial planning is important.

I believe that financial planning is very important... you cannot simply submit to fate, this is stupid. God gives you a brain to use, you should use the brain... I believe if you always submit to fate, you will be dependent, you cannot be independent. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

They are concerned about their retirement plans if they do not have children. In this situation they comprehensively plan for their retirement because they know that no one will take care of them.

...I need to plan because I do not have any kids, so I need to think, when I turn old, I need to keep enough cash, to pay for the retirement village. I would not expect my nephew will take care of us... so I have to be independent. At least I can use my pension to pay for the retirement village... (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

I married at a late age. I don't have any children, even though my wife is well but I believe we should plan...I guess if we don't plan, we plan to fail, everything should be planned. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

They seem to be more independent and will try not to trouble anyone, even their close relatives, suggesting LTO. Yusnani (2006) reported that there is an emerging trend for older people in Malaysia to seek different living arrangements, which is reflected by these Chinese respondents.

Another of the Chinese respondents was also aware that that their future plans may be different from their parents due to the influence of modernisation. They also believed that a healthier lifestyle is important, not only having a lot of money. This quality of life includes their mental health which relates to the use of brain and their physical being. They called this as *Tau Chian* (in Mandarin) which means taking care of their health.

I believe that we should not only be active physically but also cognitively. In Chinese culture, we refer to this as 'Chang Yen' or in English is long term planning...'Chang' refer to long and 'yen' refer to far. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

In Chinese culture, there is a principle called *Chang Yen* (in Mandarin) meaning long and far, which emphasises long-term planning. It involves educational planning for their children, their future planning and quality of life. Their culture plays a role in determining their future plans as well as the influence of Confucius teaching. To the Chinese respondents, being healthy and wealthy also reflects their future planning.

The findings indicate that as Muslims, Malay respondents engage in absolute truth which signifies STO, but at the same time embraces LTO in being persistent and thrifty in planning their future. Compared with Chinese and Indian respondents, Malay respondents do not relate their future expectations to their religion but are more connected to their culture and Confucius teaching. This indicates LTO, which confirms Hofstede (1991)

assumption. Compared with their Chinese colleagues, Malay respondents indicate LTO in saving money for their children's future, particularly for educational purposes. The Chinese respondents in this study do not have children and their concerns are more involved with their retirement plans. The interview data also indicate that Malay respondents did not describe in detail their retirement plans compared with the Chinese respondents.

5.3.5.1.3 Award expectations

This section explores expectations about jobs.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul29	I will try my best to achieve the most excellent awards in my organization.	No	6	7.9	1	12.5	0	.0	7	8.0
		Yes	70	92.1	7	87.5	4	100.0	81	92.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.23: Expectations towards awards

The awards in this organisation include the monthly awards, teaching awards, yearly awards and excellence service awards. Thus awards are an important indicator and become part of the merit when they go through the promotion process at this university. In order to be competitive with the rest of the candidates, the awards that they gain could help them during the promotion procedure. 92% (see Table 5.23) of respondents indicate that they will try their best to achieve excellent awards from their organisation. Ethnically about 92.1% of Malays, 87.5% of Chinese and the Indian respondent scored 'Yes' to this question. This finding shows that the majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, will do their best in order to achieve an award which indicates LTO. Interview respondents however provided a different perspective.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Cul34	I will let fate take control in order to achieve the excellent awards in my organization.	No	55	72.4	6	75.0	3	75.0	64	72.7
		Yes	21	27.6	2	25.0	1	25.0	24	27.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 5.24: Awards and fate

Table 5.24 illustrates that 72.7% of respondents will not prefer fate control their achievement of excellent awards: 72.4% of Malays, 75% of Chinese and 75% of Indian prefer to put their effort into their jobs to achieve awards while only a minority prefer to leave it to fate, suggesting LTO.

Malay respondents prefer fate to take control, as long as they know that they did their best in their job; an award is not the purpose. They would rather work to achieve their best,

regard that as an obligation and believe that they will deserve awards only after hard work. As Muslims, they imply that religious values influence their actions in planning and in guiding their etiquette at work. They also mention *rezki* (which is an Arabic word) meaning providence. Providence can be granted through strategies such as a salary, extra work, food, wealth, health and good friends which can sustain them. The award does not really matter to them: if they are rewarded, they will be grateful; if they are not, they will not be disappointed. This is the concept of ⁹⁵*Redha* or contentment, to be pleased whatever the outcome. This will make them feel less upset whenever they are not rewarded. Someone who works purely for the sake of the award will be de-motivated if they are not rewarded.

... As for the award, I don't really mind. I know everyone off course would want it, but I believe as long as I do my job perfectly and on time, I need not to worry....the award is not merely the objective, but if someday I will be rewarded, I would be very happy to accept that. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Some Malay respondents however wanted to achieve awards:

I believe that we still need to struggle for the award. Once you see the opportunity such as promotion, you need to grab it. Do whatever you need to do, but I will not try the dirty way to get the award, such as begging others to recommend me. It is not my thing. I will do my best, if I get that award, it is good. But if I don't, I would say it is not my 'rezki'. ...It is not that you need to always surrender by doing nothing... (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

... I did get rewarded as an excellent in teaching. I believe I will make an effort to gain the award. Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic)

The Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academician) shared the same views as most Malay respondents, perceiving that awards are not important and that carrying out their responsibilities is vital.

Chinese respondents also preferred to let fate take control. They believed that as long as they performed well, some day they would receive rewards. They believe too that superiors are also involved in assessing their performance in order for them to be rewarded. They however feel that some of the superiors do not always appreciate those who work hard.

... I would prefer to let fate control this. I will not work purposely for awards. I suppose that if the superior believe I'm the best, they will know. But if they feel that I'm not fit to get the award, I can't say anything. It's all depends on their assessment. I will not complain if I do not get an award. That is not my style.... (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

I'm not purposely aiming for an award; though I had been awarded several times with teaching and publishing awards...to me to excel you need to give your effort. I do have a target, I will write one article a month, this you may consider as a short time, but I

⁹⁵*Redha* = Originally derived from Arabic words (رضا) or *Ridā*, satisfaction, contentment, gratification, acceptance, willingness, an Islamic concept rooted in the Qur'an (Baalbaki, 1995d), in this case literally means content with God, blessings, a feeling of gratification and happiness with what one has which leads to a relief from fear and anxiety.

normally utilise my four weekends to finish this. The most important thing is focus.
 (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

The findings suggest that Malay respondents are flexible, embrace STO in certain conditions, while displaying LTO in organising and showing their persistence in managing their tasks at work. This is shared by the Chinese and Indian respondents.

5.3.6 Religious orientation

Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with the absolute Truth (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This appears in this study in questions Cul28, 35 and 36.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Cul28	I will do anything that may give me a good outcome in the future without considering my religious prohibition.	No	75	98.7	8	100.0	4	100.0	87	98.9
	Yes	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1	
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	
Cul35	I will give a thought to my actions in the religious view (sin and rewards) before I make any decision or take any action in my profession.	No	1	1.3	3	37.5	1	25.0	5	5.7
	Yes	75	98.7	5	62.5	3	75.0	83	94.3	
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	
Cul36	I will balance my life and my job in worldly affairs and heavenly affairs / spiritual affairs.	No	0	.0	0	.0	1	25.0	1	1.1
	Yes	76	100.0	8	100.0	3	75.0	87	98.9	
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 5.25: Religious orientation

Table 5.25 illustrates that 98.9% of respondents will not put aside their religious prohibitions for the sake of future outcomes, including 98.7% of Malay, 100% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents. 94.3% of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, consider their religious orientation will impact on their future life and profession. Table 5.25 reveals that 98.9% of respondents, regardless of their ethnicity, believe that they should balance their life and their jobs in worldly and heavenly affairs.

Malays are very attached to their religion and have strong beliefs about Allah the Almighty as explained by Awang et al. (2012), Dahlan (1991), Collins and Bahar (2000), Fontaine and Richardson (2005), Mastor et al. (2000), Storz (1999) and Lrong (1998, 2001). This study replicates these findings. In some questions a small number of Malay respondents in the survey indicated STO. For example, question 34 (*I will let fate take control in order to achieve the most excellent awards in my organization*) where respondents preferred to let fate take control in achieving awards at their organisation and have strong beliefs about absolute Truth. This attitude is reflected in another three questions (Cul28, 35 and 36) in line with Malay attitudes towards religion and their adherence to Islamic ethics. Hofstede (1991) suggests that Malay culture has more of a short-term orientation while Chinese and Indian cultures are more long-term orientations. This indicates that their relationship and

interaction will possibly conflict if they are not aware of and sensitive about each other's values.

Chinese respondents are influenced by Christian and Confucian philosophy. This is exemplified by Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) and Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic). Lei Hua admits that her religious views (sin and rewards) determine her decisions and professional actions. She tries to balance her life and her job in worldly and heavenly affairs (spiritual affairs). She explained that as a Chinese, she also believes in goodness versus badness and this can be returned in the future. As a lecturer, Lei Hua feels she should perform her job by delivering good lectures and giving good evaluations. This good deed will have a return effect, if not to her children, maybe to the next generation such as her nieces, or her nephews' children, who may in the future become a good lecturer like she is. She believes that good deeds and bad deeds receive either punishment or compensation, maybe not to her, or her children, but to other generations. As a devoted Buddhist and committed to Confucius teaching (even though she admits that she does not visit the temple regularly), she believes that in her job she holds a huge responsibility and this is governed by her religion. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism constitute the essence of the traditional Chinese culture. Lei Hua displays STO which depends on absolute truth, but also show LTO, where she is persistent and thrifty in planning her future. Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic), a committed Christian, admits that his religion influences most of his life. In the long term basis, he believes that there is a world and a heaven, one day everyone will die and will settle at one place. He assumes that this world is temporary which he thinks is important and influences his actions in long-term planning.

5.3.6.1 Islamic virtue and its influence: Muslim and non-Muslim colleagues

Malays base their ways of life on their religion; whatever they do, act, decide, wear and eat are in line with their religion. Religion to a Muslim is a way of life not only limited to marriage, divorce, death or birth. It is related to the way of life, even the smallest things like how you treat an animal.

There are several concepts in Islam that the Malays (as well as Muslims worldwide) practice in their life such as *redha*, *tawakal*, *syukur* and *rezki*. *Redha* (رضا) is an Arabic term which means satisfaction and content with God's blessings. *Redha* on the part of humans also includes a determination to accept Allah's decree irrespective of whether it is favourable or unfavourable. This concept aligns with STO which is related to absolute Truth as well as LTO when it is related to openness for change, with less concern about uncertainty in the future. The *Redha* concept helps followers both to be open with new things (LTO criteria) and submit to absolute Truth (STO criteria) because their dependence on a mighty power releases stress in their lives, helping them to be happier which is positive for their mental health, helping them not to be easily upset, and able to deal with pressure and grievances with a positive attitude. Religion is known to help followers deal with crisis and psychological problems (A. Haque & Masuan, 2002; Schieman, Bierman, & Ellison, 2013). Ramlah's comments about '... awards come later' is where the concepts of *redha* and *tawakal* are linked.

... *I believe that if we are outstanding, management will see the potential in us and awards will come later.* (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

There is another Islamic virtue present in this finding; the concept of *tawakal* (توكل) and *syukur* (شكور). *Tawakal* (توكل) means Trust in Allah and reliance upon Him. Although adherents attempt to achieve an objective it is not these efforts alone that produce the desired objective (Islamic Encyclopedia, 2012). One should take the required action and then depend on Allah for the results. Another Islamic virtue arising from the findings is *syukur* (شكور), which means gratitude or thankfulness, which also includes the meaning of ‘praise for good’, ‘gratitude’, or ‘revealing God’s blessings to the surface’, which covers the heart of gratitude, thanksgiving with tongue, and thanks with the deeds (Syukur-Gratitude, 2011). Thanksgiving with tongue means that a Muslim should always been thankful to His Lord through his words such as praising Him everywhere and every time one can. A Muslim also should express thanks with deeds; by behaving accordingly as a Muslim; doing good for others and completing actions which praise Allah is part of *syukur*.

Another concept of Islamic virtue reflected in interview findings is that of *rezki* or providence. It can exist in a various forms, such as the salaries we earn, an extra job that helps us to earn more, food provided by next door neighbours, friends who sustain us for a day or anything that can help. For example, Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) explains why he does not expect an award because he believes Allah will grant him providence or *rezki* if the times comes. Thus he believes if the award is his *rezki*, he will be rewarded and surely feel *syukur* or gratitude. But first, he needs to work to his best ability, not for the purpose of the award but merely because he feels responsible in his job. Islam does not allow for any heresy that compromises moral standing in the sight of the Almighty. It is important never to associate Allah with others as Muslims believe in the Oneness of Allah, which is also known as ⁹⁶*tawhid* in Arabic terms. Therefore, when asking for providence, there are many things that someone has to consider, such as oneself, which requires us to work for that providence and find ways to earn a living with our capabilities. If you are strong, go out and work; if you are weak, then do something within your capability. Second is submission, an act to completely surrender to Allah. One should never despair but continue to surrender wholeheartedly to Allah and to not lose hope. Thirdly, it is important to beseech and pray for Allah’s help, and fourthly there is effort. As long as an effort is made, providence will be provided. Muslims believe that Allah's pleasure with servants is expressed through Allah’s gifts, both material and spiritual.

In this study, Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) describes how he should first try to do his best for his institution and then surrender to whatever the results may be. The concept of surrender here refers to *redha* or contentment, which means adherents should be pleased with any outcome. Therefore, even if an award is not received, Muslims will

⁹⁶*Tawhid* = Originally an Arabic term (توحيد) also also spelled *Tauheed*, *tawhīd*, *Tawheed* and *Tauhid*, “making one,” “asserting oneness”, translated as, doctrine of Oneness [of God], in the sense that he is one and there is no god but he, as stated in the shahādah (“witness”) formula: “There is no god but God and Muḥammad is His prophet.” *Tawhid* further refers to the nature of that God—that he is a unity, not composed, and not made up of parts, but simple and uncompounded, the concept of monotheism in Islam. (“Tawhid,” 2013)

not be too frustrated if the concept of *redha* is applied. The concept of *tawakkal* is connected with the concept of *redha*. *Syukur* later intertwines with an acceptance of whatever results Allah grants. Another example is Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic), who plans her future based on her religion. This attitude has a relationship with *redha* or contentment, which makes her feel safe about her future. To someone who does not have knowledge of Islamic virtues, Amina's future seems very uncertain. But she actually has *redha* or is contented about whatever happens to her. But she still makes an attempt to secure her future by having a pension (which intertwines with *tawakkal*). She then explains that she will be satisfied with whatever she has for retirement. This relates to the Islamic virtue of gratitude or *syukur*. This allows her (as a Muslim) to live with peace of mind, because she knows Allah will take good care of her as long as she performs her duty as a servant to the Almighty.

The interview findings suggest that Malays display strong beliefs about the Supreme Being, Allah the Almighty, and adhere to Islamic virtues as a way of life. In this study, Islamic virtues however, are not only practiced by Muslim colleagues but also by non-Muslim colleagues, who also show indications of Islamic virtues indirectly in their life. For example, the words *halal* and *rezki* are widely used by non-Muslim respondents. The Islamic beliefs influence non-Muslim colleagues' relationships with their Muslim colleagues. Chinese respondents made interesting remarks about *Halal* and *Haram* which they relate to their jobs and understanding of Malay religion. What does *Halal* exactly mean? *Halal* is lawful or permissible and its opposite is *Haram*, and not only involves eating and drinking but also includes actions and matters of daily life. Actions can also relate to the job that someone acquires: being a teacher is a permissible (*Halal*) job in Islam, but not a bartender, prostitute, drug dealer or a shopkeeper who sells liquor (which is *Haram* or unacceptable). Actions also include deeds at work such as being at work on time, being committed and responsible, and having integrity; versus displaying dishonesty, corruption, lateness, irresponsibility, stealing and backstabbing. A salary is described as a *Halal* salary if it is not gained from stealing, robbing and scams, etc. An analogy is that being a teacher is a permissible job. This permissible job should obtain a permissible act which results in a *Halal* salary.

I'm not a Muslim, but I like to use the word 'Halal'. I will offer 100% of my commitment to my work, so I will not feel guilty whenever I got paid. I have passion for my work. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

... It does not mean that I see only the material parts; because working at the university is not the place that gains much money. But we need to find this 'rezki' in a legal and 'Halal' way. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Thus Chinese respondents are exposed to the use of Muslim terminology. Even though the *Halal* definition may not be as precise as the actual definition defined by Islam, this is still connected to the idea of *Halal* in Islamic teaching. It is interesting to note that Steven's (male, Chinese, middle level academic) explanation displays the influence of Arabic and Islamic words such as *rezki* and *Halal*. Being in a dominant Malay environment means that the minority cultures need to adjust and adapt their use of terms and beliefs to maintain harmonious relationships with the majority. They may try to apply a 'blend in' method (Hun, 2009) where harmonious interactions are taken into

consideration by imposing ‘Malayness’ in a predominantly Malay society and by trying to suppress their minority identity when socialising with Malay colleagues. They also use ‘coping mechanisms’ (Hun, 2009) which involve indirect actions (in this case using Islamic terminology and Islamic teaching in their actions) that allow them to highlight their identity without being a threat to the Malays, and by helping them to be recognised at their workplace by their Malay colleagues. This is in line with Awang et al. (2012) who indicate that Malay values are not exhibited exclusively by the Malays, but also by other ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indians.

5.3.6.2 Religious and spiritual well-being in relation to the future

Interview respondents described their future plans which are linked to their religious and spiritual well-being. One Malay respondent, Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) plans to spend his retirement period by doing something related to his religion.

Currently, I am one of the masjid committee. I think I will be involved in this activity when I retire. I love to be with NGO, join JKKK and also the masjid committee as a Treasurer. I'm the President of Volkswagen Club, which I think will fill most of my free time later. Other contributions that I would love to share with the society are to open one of the teaching centres for IQRA (to teach Qur'an) to the children in the community.

It is in this way that Malays prefer to spend their retirement. They want to be close to their religion and close to God by doing things that God accepts and, in return, they will be rewarded. This is considered as a ‘saving’ that they can use for the hereafter. This concept of hereafter is one of the six pillars of Islamic belief. This has an impact on all Malay respondents and their attitudes towards work, interactions and lifestyles.

According to Islam, the present world is not an eternal abode. The Qur'an tells followers that man is placed here only temporarily, so that his moral fibre may be tested in terms of his obedience to God's wills. He must always remember that there will be the life hereafter or *Akhirat* as it is known in Islamic terminology. This is also referred to as *Ma'ad*, which means a place to which one returns. This is in line with Yusnani (2006), which indicates that spiritual well-being plays an important role in the Malay housing environment where there is a well-established connection between religious places, spiritual work and activity. This incorporates the spiritual orientations of the community because it has been observed that older people with a strong sense of spirituality are less likely to be depressed (Davies, 2002 as cited in Yusnani, 2006).

Chinese respondents also plan their futures carefully, perceiving that worldly matters are not lasting and they should prepare themselves for life hereafter. They also associate their life with their religion in planning their future.

I guess Confucius teaching taught us to perform good deeds which can guarantee us from going to Hell. But well, it is not really easy to follow that 100%, yet I'm trying. In this world, especially, we cannot avoid talking about other people, which is wrong, so I'm trying to stop myself talking badly about others... (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

I involve my religion in my long term planning. We as Christians also believe that there is life after death, because one day we will die. I admit that this world is just temporary. (Steven, male, middle level academic)

Non-Muslim respondents believe that spiritual well-being also helps them in preparing for their future, yet they do not explain in detail about the preparation and religious education that they need to plan for the hereafter. The different world view of planning for the future (which relates to LTO) in this study really depends on the respondents' backgrounds, their religion and culture, as portrayed by the Malay and other ethnic groups.

5.3.7 Summary

The survey findings show a distribution of LTO and STO in the respondents' attitudes towards their future, work ethic and religious orientation. It is interesting to note that Malays are perceived as STO (Hofstede, 1991), but develop LTO in some areas. Although Chinese are perceived as LTO (Hofstede, 1991), they also display STO. Indian respondents had been observed as LTO, yet also suggest STO. Overall, the findings suggest that there is no apparent difference between the ethnic groups in their orientations, which is in line with Lrong (2001) study. There are minor differences in Malay orientations, but this arises because of their dependence on the Absolute Truth and their religion. The findings suggest that the majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, oppose achieving quick results by taking risks, preferring to plan their work. This suggests LTO criteria are present in all ethnic groups. This finding however does not match the Hofstede (1991) assumption that Malays exhibit more STO characteristics compared with their colleagues, and Chinese and Indian colleague. This indicates that Malay respondents at some point show an indication of LTO in par with their Chinese and Indian colleagues. The Malays may have gone through modernisation and this could change their orientation towards certain issues such as future planning involving their job development, which shows the differences in cultural values between ethnic groups. It is also suggested that this value is not exclusively displayed by other ethnic groups, yet includes the Malays (Awang et al., 2012; Fontaine & Richardson, 2005).

5.4 Conclusions

Generally Malay respondents have limited cultural knowledge about others compared with their Chinese and Indian colleagues. While a small number of Malay colleagues did have exposure to the food and festivities of different ethnic groups, this is not applied to other religions. Most Malay respondents do not know details about their Chinese and Indian colleagues' culture and religion. In contrast, the majority of Chinese and Indian colleagues understand and recognise the dominant culture in which they reside. They are aware of their Muslim colleagues' restrictions in terms of *halal* and *haram*, festive and religious rituals. The finding indicates that a one-way relationship exists.

In relation to interactions, Malay respondents considered that they have pleasant contacts with their colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. A majority of Chinese did recount similar experiences; however a small number of the Chinese respondents considered that the Malays did not know much about their culture. This finding suggests

that Malays need to explore more about their colleagues from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. As Chinese and Indians in this study reside in a Malay dominant culture, they know more about the Malay culture in order to adapt to the dominant culture. Nonetheless, this should not be taken for granted by their Malay colleagues, as they also need to learn about their colleagues' culture and religion in order to gain better understandings about each other. It seems that Malay colleagues restrict their relationships with their colleagues from different backgrounds; hence there are limited interactions between them. While Malay colleagues may feel restricted due to their religious restrictions, Islam does not prohibit being friends with non-Muslims and provides guidelines to ensure the success of relationships. Therefore, the Malays somehow need to enhance their knowledge of their own religion so as to not use this as a limitation to interact with their colleagues from different ethnicities. By educating and empowering their religion through practice, Malay respondents could help in maintaining harmonious relationships and construct a two-way exchange of intercultural knowledge. Furthermore, educational system can also become a place where the integration is supposed to be promoted at an early age in order to maintain harmonious relationships in the Malaysian context.

Cultural values such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation were addressed in this study. Power distance was identified in address form, dress code, dealing with superiors and expressing disagreement. In terms of the form of address, the majority of Chinese respondents prefer to be addressed informally, which indicates that they value low power distance. However, in order to conform to the generally-held values of the organisation, they normally practice forms of address accordingly. The majority of Malay and Indian respondents prefer to be addressed formally, which shows that they value high power distance. They believe that a formal form of address should be maintained to show respect for others' achievements; to respect the age and the designation of superiors. Generally, they also prefer their subordinates to address them accordingly, depending on the context. But this should be used in combination with other rules such as with whom, where, when and how long the relationship is. While the survey data show that respondents did not care about the form of address, evidence from the interviews reveals a different perspective. Regardless of ethnicity, respondents tended to prioritise the age gap in order to determine the most appropriate form of address with which to address their colleagues, especially those who did not have a title. Power distance is used to maintain harmonious relationships and to develop long-term relationships, a situation which also depends on designation and educational background (especially those with a PhD). The interview findings suggest that the more complex the form of address, relationship and hierarchy, the higher respondent's value power distance.

The dress code also indicates the power distance practiced by the personnel at UMT. The survey and the interview findings show that most respondents were not able to dress freely at their workplace, and they highlighted wearing appropriate outfits. The majority of Malay respondents based their views on their religious values which emphasises appropriate dress guidelines for men and women (or *Aurah* in Arabic terms). Appearance is important in respondents, presenting themselves as positive role models for students and the institution. In this study Malay respondents particularly view spiritual elements as part of their way of life and demonstrate their religious expressions through their choice

of dress (Schermerhorn, 1994). That a small number of Malay and Chinese respondents preferred a more casual form of dress at workplace implies lower power distance.

The way the respondents deal with their superiors also reveals their attitudes towards power distance. Generally they feel pleased if their superior is involved in their work or when they work together. The survey findings indicate that they value low power distance. Yet interview findings indicate that a superior's involvement in their job is also sometimes viewed negatively, which implies high power distance. In Malaysian culture, superiors are there to support, build and accommodate their subordinates (Schermerhorn, 1994). They are expected to build relationships and express concern for subordinates' welfare (Asma, 1996 as cited in Lailawati, 2008, p. 306). There are two types of involvement, as highlighted by the interview respondents: direct and indirect. Direct involvement refers to a superior's involvement with subordinates to complete work. In contrast, indirect involvement refers to where the superior guides mentors, advises, assists and monitors their subordinates' progress. But it is important not to become directly involved in the subordinates' duties as this will create negative perceptions of their job reputations. Yet respondents at support levels prefer direct involvement, compared with upper level personnel. This is in line with the Malaysian view that regards superiors as having more power and belief in their expertise so they agree to whatever is being proposed (Schermerhorn, 1994). They are expected to show their expertise in technical and human management (Asma, 1996 as cited in Lailawati, 2008, p. 306). Interview results show that, regardless of ethnicity, respondents' perceptions towards a superior's involvement were divided into two categories; positive and negative perceptions. Generally, the survey findings are verified by the interview results, illustrating that respondents from various ethnicities have the same feelings towards their superior's involvement in their duties. These results are consistent with the view put forward by local researchers (see Asma, 1996 & Sendut, 1989 as cited in Halib & Salleh, 2006; Lailawati, 2005; Lailawati, 2008) who argue that Malaysians share 'deep seated Asian values' such as collectivism, context, culture and are high in power distance.

Survey results show that respondents expect their superiors to consult them before making any decisions when their expertise is involved. This is confirmed by the interview findings which indicate that, regardless of ethnicity, they expect that their superior will consult them before making any decisions when it involves their expertise. As shown by the survey results, they also need to consider colleagues' age and seniority even though they are in a superior position, this indicating high power distance. The survey findings show that the respondents, regardless of ethnicity, were not extreme at either end of high or low power distance. Younger personnel may prefer to be addressed informally and treat colleagues fairly, which demonstrates low power distance. In relation to differences among the ethnic groups, Malays are seen to value high power distance more than their Indian and Chinese colleagues, who portray lower power distance. Lrongs (2001) confirms that Malays respect authority and hierarchy.

In expressing disagreement, regardless of ethnicity, all respondents feel uneasy in voicing disagreement. It is considered important not to embarrass individuals with direct disagreement, as it is believed that this will undermine the harmony of relationships. Rank and position seem to influence their views towards expressing their disagreement, and

they need to consider expressing disagreement in a polite manner or using the Malay politeness system which is referred to as *budibahasa* where ‘one should not only be *berbudi* (ethical) but also *berbahasa* (rhetorically skilful)’ {Lim, 2003, Dahlan, 1991). This is conditional as long as it is expressed in an appropriate manner so as to not embarrass hearers where the issue of saving face is also involved. As Malaysians generally recognise and accept hierarchies across the organisational structure, the act of disagreeing with the superior is seen as assertive and confrontational behaviour (Wood & Jogulu, 2012). The study by Goodwin and Goodwin (1999), suggests that Malaysia is perceived as high power distance which proposes an unwillingness to mention issues directly with employers. Malay attitudes towards such issues may be influenced by the strong commitment to Islamic teaching. Other factors also include the personality of the respondent, such as introvert versus extrovert, and evasive versus being outspoken. The culture at the workplace also influences their actions in expressing disagreement.

Power distance not only deals with the hierarchy but also involves other issues such as form of address, appearance and expressing disagreement. All of these factors indicate that regardless of ethnicity, all respondents adopt high power distance. Only a small number of respondents display low power distance characteristics. However, high power distance is not definite because, in some aspects, the respondents also show traits of low power distance. Power distance may be embraced similarly by the three ethnic groups, especially the Malays and Chinese, but they differ in direction and strength (Lrongs, 1998). Asma (1996 as cited in Lailawati, 2008), argues that they may differ in symbolic expression but that they share common values. Indians adopt a low power distance, as indicated by the respondents. However, high power distance characteristics are not as definite in the Malays and Chinese because in some aspects they also show traits of low power distance, as implied by the survey and interview findings. This is in line with Halib and Salleh (2006) who suggest that there are shifts in power distance exhibited by managers and middle managers in Malaysia.

Other cultural values include uncertainty avoidance, a situation where societies can tolerate ambiguity. Generally, uncertainty avoiding cultures will try to minimise uncertainty by applying rules, religious beliefs and security measures (Hofstede, 2012b). In a multicultural society such as Malaysia, ethnic groups deal with ambiguities and uncertainties in different ways. The findings disclose ethnic interpretations to explore whether there are any differences among the three ethnic groups with regard to their views towards rules, change and creativity. The findings suggest that Malay respondents believe that it is essential to follow rules, indicating HUA, the need to follow clear rules to avoid ambiguities (Hofstede, 2001). They underpin their actions by their religion, and their attitudes are determined by their commitment to Islamic teachings (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1999; Hamzah, 1991). They value HUA when it comes to rules and order which stems from their religion, their Islamic faith, which highlights the search for the One Truth (Hofstede and Bond, 1988 as cited in Lrongs, 1998). Yet still there is evidence which suggests that some Malay respondents could be more flexible, embracing HUA and LUA depending on the circumstances. However, Hofstede perceived Malaysians in general to be a more LUA society. The Indian respondent observes rules at his workplace, which indicates HUA, yet he views change and creativity positively, which signifies LUA. The

Indian and Malay respondents therefore appear to embrace the same values of uncertainty avoidance at their workplace. Sharing the same cultural values may be due to the values, traditions and strong religious influences derived from Islamic and Hindu faiths (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). Interestingly, a small number of Malay and Chinese respondents imply that they are uncomfortable with extensive rules and regulations. Lrong (2001) argues that Chinese are believed to value LUA for the reason that they are believers in multiple faiths. Malays and Indians put a high value on uncertainty avoidance in rules and regulations, which could be at odds with their Chinese colleagues. This needs to be considered when dealing with rules and regulations. It is interesting to note that although Ayoun and Moreo (2008), Hofstede (2001, 2012a), Hofstede and Bond (1984), Goodwin and Goodwin (1999) and Herbig and Genestre (1997) report that Malaysia is in general considered LUA, the interview findings show that the respondents in this study, especially the Malays and Indians, explicitly value HUA in observing rules. Even though general culture confirms that Malaysians value LUA, these findings suggest that ethnically they differ in their cultural values in relation to observing rules.

Chinese colleagues across the levels share similar values in relation to LUA about transformation in the workplace. This finding is in line with Hofstede (2001) who suggests that Malaysia scores 36 for uncertainty avoidance, signifying openness to change and risk-taking and an appreciation for innovation (Nasrul et al., 2012). Chinese are perceived to possess more perseverance and prudence, and are able to acclimatise to risk (Lrong, 1998). To the contrary, Chinese respondents seem to be consistent in their attitudes towards uncertainty avoidance. This finding confirms the work of Lrong (1998); (Lrong, 2001) and Hofstede and Bond (1988 as cited in Lrong, 1998) who suggest that Malaysian Chinese tolerate multiple religions and teachings.

In contrast, a small number of Malay and Chinese respondents viewed change negatively. Considering their status and positions as middle level academics, it is interesting that they value HUA in transformation. They gradually accept change but still need time for planning and adaptation. Creativity is accepted by all these three ethnic groups who see that it may enhance communication and productivity at the work place. They demonstrate LUA towards creativity which indicates that they could work together to achieve their best for the improvement of the institution. This is essential, especially in multicultural institutions in a country like Malaysia. When it comes to creativity, all levels, regardless of ethnicity, embrace LUA in creativity and apply this at the workplace.

The third cultural value is long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. Long-term orientation is where the society's search for virtue exhibits a pragmatic, future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term perspective. People with this orientation show an ability to adapt their traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results. Short-term orientation societies generally have strong concerns with establishing the absolute Truth. They are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for tradition, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). The findings conclude that Chinese respondent's value LTO, and Malays are considered as STO. However, Islamic views should be considered as LTO because this religion not only emphasises how to survive in the world but prepares the

followers for the eternal world. The religion guides followers and gives guidelines about how to be prepared for the eternal world, by giving followers a manual, Al-Quran and Hadith. So the follower can be prepared, know what to do and what not to, and avoid all the mischief in this world so they can surpass at the eternal world. Hofstede however did not have a clear idea of how Malaysians value long-term orientation because there is no score available for Malaysia in this dimension.

In summary, power distance is seen as a way to maintain the hierarchy. Still, a majority of the respondents, regardless of ethnicity, note that power distance is important and would not breach the practice. A small number of younger personnel prefer to avoid formality and minimise power distance in order to become closer to their subordinates. The majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, also value LUA due to the changes that they experienced during the last decade. Still, a small number of the respondents value HUA. The Chinese in the study value LTO compared with Malay colleagues, yet they also can be considered to value LTO based on their religious beliefs. Each ethnic group is duty-bound to increase their understanding of the cultural values of others which could, in turn, enhance their relationships, especially if the dominant group understand the minorities better and not to take things for granted, as they may overlook this in their relationships with their colleagues from different ethnicities.

After all, the issues represented in this section will facilitate the researcher to come up with several recommendations to further encourage, promote and instil the intercultural communication among the personnel at this institution. The findings indicate that there is a need for Malay colleagues to acknowledge other cultures and cultural values by learning some of their language, in-depth culture such as the perceptions and many other on top of utilising their differences to achieve productivity. As for their colleague from different ethnic group, they are aware of the dominant culture and the cultural values and it is good if they were given an opportunity to share their cultures with the majority through discussion, seminars or presentation.

To conclude, this section has discussed cultural values, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation displayed by the personnel at UMT. The next chapter explores the respondents' use of language and nonverbal communication.

CHAPTER 6: RESPONDENTS' COMMUNICATION PROFILE

6.1 Introduction

This section will outline the findings in relation to the verbal and nonverbal communication use by personnel at UMT. The first section will discuss the verbal findings where the survey and interview respondents were asked about the language use. The next section will outline the use of nonverbal communication exhibited by the UMT personnel from various backgrounds. This section will look at two aspects of nonverbal communication: proxemics, and haptics.

6.2 Verbal Communication

In the survey respondents were asked to specify their mother tongue, how many languages they can speak and their experiences of speaking these languages (even if they were not fluent). Interview respondents were asked more probing questions which included the use of local dialects and ethnic variations in language use as well as their experiences of misunderstanding either these local or other dialects and languages.

Respondents were also asked about their use of language at UMT, their knowledge of the use of language and any misunderstandings they may have experienced at UMT when they deal with their colleagues from different ethnicities and local or nonlocal backgrounds. Respondents were asked if they had experienced any misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words in the Terengganu dialect, their awareness that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnic groups, their awareness of the topics or words that they use when communicating with the other ethnic groups and about their experience(s) of any misunderstandings in relations to the usage of words from other ethnic languages such as Mandarin or Tamil.

6.2.1 Mother tongue, spoken language and combination of spoken language

Malaysia is multicultural and this feature intertwines with language practice during interactions. English is complementary to intergroup communication at Malaysian schools which influences their spoken and written language (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012). The survey respondents were asked about their mother tongue such as Tamil, Mandarin, Malay language and English as shown in Table 6.1 below:

Please state your mother tongue		
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Tamil	4	4.5
Mandarin	6	6.8
Malay Language	75	85.2
English	3	3.4
Total	88	100.0

Table 6.1: Respondents' mother tongue

Among 88 respondents, 85.2% of respondents choose the Malay language, 6.8% choose Mandarin, 4.5% choose Tamil and 3.4% choose English as their mother tongue.

The respondents were given seven choices in selecting the combination of the languages that they can speak. Table 6.2 below displays the survey findings.

Number of languages	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1 language	11	12.5
2 languages	54	61.4
3 languages	19	21.6
4 languages	1	1.1
5 languages	3	3.4
Total	88	100.0

Table 6.2: The number of languages respondents speak

The findings indicate that overall respondents could speak between two and three languages with only a small number of respondents speaking four to five languages. The findings indicate that the survey respondents were bilingual or multilingual at their workplace. Table 6.3 show the combination of spoken languages that respondents speak.

Please choose the combination of language that you can speak			
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Language	Malay language only	12	13.6
	English only	1	1.1
	Malay and English	51	58.0
	Malay, English and Tamil	4	4.5
	Malay, English and Arabic	7	8.0
	Malay, English and Mandarin	9	10.2
	Malay, English and Japanese	4	4.5
	Total	88	100.0

Table 6.3: Respondents languages

The data show (refer table 6.3) that the majority of respondents were able to speak more than one language. Although the Malaysia national language is the Malay language, other languages, such as English, Tamil and Mandarin, have their place as a language spoken in this multicultural country.

6.3 Use of language and language issues

Survey respondents were asked how many verbal languages they used in a combination of standard or formal Malay with English as well as other languages such as Tamil, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, French and Japanese. Standard Malay here refers to the national language that Malaysian used in formal situation such as at school or official business while dialect in this case refer to Terengganu dialect (Terengganu speak). As the standard or formal Malay language and Terengganu dialect might have a difference. These differences will be elaborate in details as this chapter continues.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Please choose the combination of language that you can speak.	Malay language only	12	15.8	0	.0	0	.0	12	13.6
	English only	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	Malay and English	50	65.8	1	12.5	0	.0	51	58.0
	Malay, English and Tamil	0	.0	0	.0	4	100.0	4	4.5
	Malay, English and Arabic	7	9.2	0	.0	0	.0	7	8.0
	Malay, English and Mandarin	2	2.6	7	87.5	0	.0	9	10.2
	Malay, English and Japanese	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	Malay, English and Spanish	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Malay, English and French	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 6.4: Language use according to ethnicity

Table 6.4 illustrates that, alongside Malay and English, Malay respondents also use other languages such as English, Arabic, Mandarin and Japanese to communicate. None of the Malay respondents in the survey were able to speak Tamil, Spanish or French. Chinese respondents (87.5%) are able to speak three languages such as Malay, English and Mandarin. Only 12.1% of Chinese respondents speak two languages, such as Malay and English. None of the Chinese could speak Tamil, Arabic or Japanese. The Indian interview respondent is proficient in speaking three languages; Malay, English and Tamil. The Indian respondent is unable to speak Mandarin, Arabic and Japanese.

The findings signify that majority of respondents normally use Malay and English as the verbal language and medium of communication at the institution. Other than the combination of Malay and English, they also use only Malay language as communication. As Muslims, Malays also learn Arabic in order to understand their religion. This may influence their ability to use this language. It is also surprising to note that Malay respondents are also able to converse in Mandarin and Japanese. Compared with their Chinese and Indian colleagues who are only able to speak in three languages, Malay respondents in this survey are able to converse in four languages. Chinese colleagues use Mandarin as their formal language. Indian respondents, however, use Tamil as they perceive this language as their mother tongue. But both Chinese and Indian respondents are able to speak Malay and English in order to communicate with other ethnic groups and consider that Malay is the dominant ethnic language at the institution.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Lan1	Do you find that other ethnic group (including non-local Malays) understands your use of language?	No	7	9.2	2	25.0	2	50.0	11	12.5
		Yes	69	90.8	6	75.0	2	50.0	77	87.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan2	Do you use Malay language (formal) in your daily conversation at UMT?	No	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
		Yes	73	96.1	8	100.0	4	100.0	85	96.6
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan3	Do you use English in your daily conversation at UMT?	No	48	63.2	0	.0	0	.0	48	54.5
		Yes	28	36.8	8	100.0	4	100.0	40	45.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan5	Do you use a mixture of various languages in your daily conversations at UMT?	No	10	13.2	2	25.0	2	50.0	14	15.9
		Yes	66	86.8	6	75.0	2	50.0	74	84.1
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan7	Do you feel left out if someone talks i.e. in a gathering, using their own dialect/ethnic languages that you do not understand?	No	46	60.5	3	37.5	1	25.0	50	56.8
		Yes	30	39.5	5	62.5	3	75.0	38	43.2
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 6.5: Respondents' use of language

The survey findings indicate that the majority of respondents, regardless of their ethnicity, realise that their language is understood by their colleagues and use formal Malay in their daily conversations at this institution. English is rarely used in their daily conversations considering that this institution is Malay dominant. It is not that the Malay does not know how to speak English, but majority of Malays in this institution prefer to use the Malay language as the main language in their communication across ethnic groups. Yet in general they do not feel ignored whenever other people around them use a dialect or another ethnic language that they do not understand.

Interview findings elaborate the survey findings. The interview respondents were also asked about their use of language at UMT, their knowledge of the use of language and their experiences of language. In general, Malay respondents normally use the formal Malay language in daily conversations at UMT. The formal Malay language is used during meetings and conversations with colleagues and staff. They rarely use English unless it is necessary to do so. They believe that both the Malay language and the Terengganu dialect are easy to understand. This is clarified by Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) and Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional).

Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) is a non-local Malay and uses the formal Malay language in his daily conversations at UMT. He uses Malay language during meetings and conversations with colleagues and staff. He rarely uses English except when dealing with or having meetings with vendors from Singapore. Normally during the presentation, English is used. Yusuf feels left out if someone talks for instance in a gathering or meeting, using a dialect/ethnic language that he does not understand. He specifically gave an example of a meeting with a Chinese representative where other Chinese in the group were speaking to each other in Mandarin: this offended him. Some other Malay respondents such as Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) attended a religious school and thus speaks moderate Arabic. He normally uses Arabic whenever he communicates with Arab students' but uses English when communicating with colleagues and international students and communicating with subordinates through email. He uses Malay in formal functions but occasionally uses standard Malay. Upper level Malay respondents in general prefer to use standard Malay in their daily communication and will switch to English or any other languages whenever necessary. They do not think that language differences are a setback in communicating with their colleague from different ethnicity. Yet they easily feel offended if other colleague from different ethnicity uses their language to communicate while they do not understand. Upper level respondents in general masters more than one languages.

Middle level Malay respondents such as Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration), Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) also uses several languages in their day to day interaction. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) uses English with visitors from overseas or when communicating with foreign lecturers when they need advice or need to organise programs. Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) uses the Malay language in daily conversation because there she assume that there is no need to communicate using the English language. She admits that she is comfortable using Malay as her language of conversation. She reports that she does not encounter any problems in relation to language use. Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) normally uses Malay language in daily conversation with her colleagues from the various ethnic groups, so they will understand her better. However, she does use English when required to do so. She admits that she only uses English during her lectures. When someone uses their own ethnic language, she does not feel displeased because she considers that everyone should be proud of their own language. Middle level Malay respondents do not think that they face any problem in using multiple languages in their daily interaction with their colleague. They too masters more than one language such as English in order to understands their colleague from difference background

Malay support levels report more difficulties in balancing language use in a multicultural campus. Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) can speak Malay and English. However she uses Malay most of the time which she believes is understood by the other ethnic groups. She uses English whenever she needs to converse with foreign lecturers but not with her colleagues from different ethnicities.

It depends, if he/she is a foreigner, I will use English. But if they are Malaysian, regardless of whether they are Indian or Chinese, I definitely will converse in Malay.

When asked whether she feels ignored in a meeting if someone uses a language she does not understand, Fatimah revealed that she feels nervous:

Let's say I'm in the middle of handling some tools with a student, and then students speak using their own language, such as Chinese. I will say, please speak Malay; if you want to use your language, please go out. I feel uncomfortable when they use language which I do not understand.

She explains that students should respect her by not using their own language if she is nearby.

They should at least show some respect to me because I'm there. Why should they use their language to talk to each other? Am I an alien? This only happens when I deal with students. I have never experienced this with staff.

When asked about student reactions, she said that normally students will apologise and switch to Malay language.

They normally will not leave because they need to use all the utensils for the whole project. They normally will follow the instruction, because they are obedient but also because of their own interests as well.

Aishah (female, Malay, support level administration) also recognises the need to balance language use in a multicultural setting. She speaks Malay with her superiors but normally uses English when she communicates with foreign students, though not with staff.

When I mingle with my colleagues, I use the Terengganu dialect. But when I meet my superiors, I switch to standard Malay, because I think this is appropriate and easily understood.

Unlike Fatimah, Aishah does not feel ignored if someone uses an ethnic language, such as Mandarin or Tamil, which she does not understand. She is afraid that she will hurt their feelings by telling them that she does not understand them so she prefers to politely ask them to explain things to her.

Chinese and Indian, speak a bit fast in term of pace. When they speak Malay, they tend to speak faster ...Sometime I don't understand, so I ask my other colleagues.

Aishah feels that superiors should remind staff to practice appropriate language use because of their exposure to foreign staff, foreign students and outsiders. This concern reveals staff's awareness of the complexity of language use at UMT as well as the need to consider their audience. In addition, Malay support staffs are less proficient in using multiple languages such as English. Some of them are very sensitive if anyone does not use Malay and feel uneasy if they do not understand the language however some of them is more open and sensitive towards their colleague feelings.

The choice of language often depends on the position and ethnicity of the audience. For Malay respondents there are always choices involved. Upper level staff such as Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) speak three languages; Malay, English and moderate Arabic. He uses Malay as the medium of communication as well as the

Terengganu dialect whenever he communicates with local colleagues. Awang uses the Malay language only during formal events and English only if the people he is communicating with do not understand Malay. He too feels left out if someone uses a language he does not understand. This he perceives negatively. To overcome this, he prefers to clarify meaning with the speaker, if it is suitable to do so. If not, he will leave and remain silent. Choices here depend on the level of the speaker. If they are subordinates, he will ask them to speak a language which everyone can understand.

...let's say they are from support level, I will tell them, please do not use your own language, please use the language that others can understand.

Awang maintains that there are no problems in terms of communication with colleagues from different ethnicities. It is his observation that colleagues from other ethnic groups cannot speak Malay fluently. They will communicate in English whenever necessary. He compares this with local Chinese colleagues who are more fluent in Malay and the Terengganu dialect. He feels that non-local Chinese colleagues speak faster compared with his Malay colleagues. Awang sensitivity towards the use of Malay language is the reflection of his concern of the saying '*Bahasa jiwa bangsa*' (language is the soul of the people) (Teo, 1996) that had been promoted into Malaysian setting.

From her upper level academic position Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic) demonstrates confidence and proficiency in her use of language. She uses the Malay language in daily conversation and perceives that English is not needed in this environment. In spite of always using the Malay language, she tries to learn others' dialect or language whenever possible and does not feel offended if the individuals use a dialect or language she does not understand. She believes that she does not have any problems in relation to her colleagues' language use, either in terms of ethnicity or the pace of the language spoken. She contends that she does not encounter any misunderstandings in relation to the use of Terengganu words because she tries to understand the dialect and will ask colleagues whenever she does not understand. Whether her upper level position means that colleagues may not feel comfortable expressing their lack of understanding remains a question to be answered however. In contrast, Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) felt left out when her Chinese and Indian colleagues talk with each other in their own language. She suggested that they should use standard Malay so everyone will understand.

Middle level staff like Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) has been at Terengganu almost five years. She uses the Malay language with her colleagues and subordinates and English when communicating with Chinese friends.

While support level staff like Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration) assumes that other ethnic groups will understand her if she talks in a Terengganu dialect. She uses the Malay language and Terengganu dialect most of the time because she believes these languages are easy to understand. She rarely uses English in daily conversation because she's not fluent in English. When asked whether she feels ignored if an individual speaks their own language/dialect which she does not understand, she maintains that it is their right and is not interested about what they are talking about. She also believes that she

does not have any problems in the language use by her colleagues from different ethnic groups.

It is interesting that the backgrounds of some staff dictate their language choices. For example, Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) views English as a colonial language and stands by his principle not to use it. This is because his childhood was during the British colonisation era. He flashbacks to the time when his late father sent him to a Methodist school at Ipoh. He recounted that he ran away, instead preferring to go to a religious school. Yet he understands English and at a support and administrative level is not so exposed to different ethnicities.

Other Malay respondents who can speak up to three languages (Malay, Arabic and English) have more choices. Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) admits that he actually speaks excellent Arabic and Malay but moderate English. However, like almost everybody, he uses Malay as the medium of interaction, which he believes is well understood by the university population. For example Mohammad uses Malay whenever he speaks with his colleagues from other ethnic groups. His observation is that ethnic minorities try to blend into the Malay culture and language in their daily interactions.

I realized at UMT, the majority actually try to merge with the Malay culture. They speak in a slow pace. Mr P (Indian) as well as Mr K (Indian) tries to make us understand what they are trying to say. They may be afraid that we may misunderstand what they saying. They are the minority. I can see they try to understand us better. Maybe there is not much of a problem on our side; maybe the problem is on their side.

While Mohammad recognises that the minorities face problems in terms of language and cultural adaptation he also demonstrates the dominant Malay positioning by saying that they may encounter more problems than the majority Malay.

A Malay respondent discusses the use of e-mail as a medium of communication and its relationship with language use. His views reveal that he is aware of the nonverbal messages sent through email that can offend recipients and the care that needs to be taken in terms of multiple emails. Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) advises that capital letters should be avoided when sending messages through email. It is similar to yelling at people. Then the salutation should also be taken into consideration as it can be used to portray a good image with the sender perceived as well-mannered and educated. The use of the email menu such as 'Reply' and 'Reply all' should also be taken seriously, because sometimes a private message is incidentally send using the 'Reply all' button, can cause humiliation for either a section or particular person. Such an action cannot be reversed and can cause havoc in the institution.

The Melanau respondent uses Malay, English and little ⁹⁷Hokkien. Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) explains that her mother tongue is Melanau but that

⁹⁷ Hokkien = among the various dialect groups, Hokkien (Southern Min group) is the large stone, comprising 37.66% of total Chinese population. A group of mutually intelligible Min Nan Chinese dialects spoken by many overseas Chinese throughout Southeast Asia. Hokkien originated from a dialect in southern Fujian. At Malaysia Hokkien dialect were occasionally used in coffee shops only (language use in public setting). (Wang & Chong, 2011).

she can speak Malay, English and understand the Hokkein dialect. At her previous institution, where the Chinese were the majority, she experienced language related issues.

...at my previous office, they used Chinese to communicate. At one time I did speak up, during a meeting where they used Chinese. I told them "excuse me; do you want me in the meeting?" Then they apologised...

Sumaiyah's comments are interesting in that while they reveal her sensitivity towards the use of dialect, especially when she is around, she appears unaware that at UMT the reverse is the case that Chinese and Indians have to use Malay. She does admit though that 98% of daily conversation will be in Malay language.

6.3.1 Chinese respondents towards language use

Chinese respondents demonstrate their awareness that their audience determines their language choice. They are also mindful of their lesser status in the dominantly Malay institution. For example Chinese respondents prefer to use ⁹⁸Mandarin whenever they talk with their Chinese colleagues and friends but their mother tongue or the Chinese dialect when communicating at home. They will adapt their language use to their colleagues' ethnicity, for example if their Chinese friends speak Mandarin, they will use Mandarin or English if they do not know Mandarin. Normally at UMT however, they use Malay.

Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic), for instance, prefers to use Mandarin whenever she talks to her Chinese friends. Her mother tongue is actually the ⁹⁹Teochew dialect. She normally uses this dialect when communicating at home. She can speak three languages, Malay, English and Mandarin, plus several Chinese dialects such as ¹⁰⁰Cantonese, Teochew and Hokkien. Normally however, she uses Malay in daily conversation at UMT; with support staff as well as with the upper managerial level. She normally uses English in her lectures, with a mixture of Malay as well. Her choice of language however depends on the individual she is talking with; if the person normally uses English, she will speak English or Malay.

You know when you see the person; automatically you will use their language. Like with J, I normally use the Malay language. So whenever we communicate I prefer to use Malay.

Lei Hua is from the upper level and displays her confidence in accommodating and negotiating the multicultural language context at UMT. For instance, she says that she

⁹⁸ Mandarin = literally means "speech of officials", which become the widely spoken dialect across at China and also the native language of two-thirds of the population (Higgins, 2014). Mandarin also been used by most Malaysian Chinese and become the preferred language of cross-dialect communication along with English and Malay (Koon, 2006).

⁹⁹ Teochew = About 11.3 percent of the Chinese population is Teochew dialect group but not the largest dialect group among Chinese Malaysian, however, the dialect homeland of this group is the same as the northern coast of Guangdong in the Shantou area (Cartier, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Cantonese = variety of Chinese spoken by more than 55 million people in Guangdong and southern Guangxi provinces of China, including the important cities of Canton, Hong Kong and Macau. Throughout the world it is spoken by some 20 million more. In Vietnam alone, Cantonese (Yue) speakers (who went there as soldiers and railroad workers) number nearly 1 million. Cantonese preserves more feature of Ancient Chinese than do the other major Chinese languages; its various dialects retain most of the final consonant of the older language and have at least six tones, in contrast to the four tones of Modern Standard Chinese, to distinguish meaning between words or word elements that have the same arrangement of consonant and vowel sounds. ("Cantonese language," 2014)

does not feel left out if someone speaks their dialect which she does not understand. She feels that she should not be involved in the conversation if she does not understand; she prefers to just listen to the conversation. To date, she has not experienced any misunderstandings in relation to the word usage of other ethnic groups or with the Terengganu dialect.

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) can speak five languages namely Malay, English, Mandarin, French and Japanese. He can also speak a Chinese dialect such as his own dialect ¹⁰¹Hakka, as well as Hokkien and Cantonese. He can speak English fluently because it was his minor in his first degree. He explains the Chinese dialect during the interview.

R: Is Mandarin a formal language that Chinese community normally use? Or are Hakka, Hokkien and Cantonese dialects used by the Chinese sub ethnic?

S: Normally in Malaysia, Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese are used widely but Hakka is more widespread. Hakka is my dialect, it is customer friendly, you know.

Steven also mentions that the majority Chinese from ¹⁰²Kedah state use the Hakka dialect, as well as those from ¹⁰³Seremban. By sharing an example of the younger Chinese generation's use of language and dialect, Steven reveals his understanding that language use can convey power and status:

The parents said that though they trained their children to use formal language, the children will switch to dialect whenever they meet their friends. This happened to one of my close friends who uses Teochew with his wife, but at home they speak mandarin. So the children will become proficient in Mandarin, because this language will turn out to be an asset.

Steven also explains that Hakka has a resemblance to Mandarin. In former days, this dialect was a formal language used by the government servants on Mainland China. He also expressed his pride that several famous people use the Hakka dialect, such as ¹⁰⁴Lee Kuan Yew and ¹⁰⁵Deng Xiaoping. Steven indicates that most of the Terengganese Chinese use Hokkien with the influences of the local dialect. He admits that most of the Chinese dialects in Malaysia are influenced by the local dialect and context. For example, a Chinese dialect from Kedah will be slightly different to the Chinese dialect at Sabah. The sound will be localized and sometimes they use local words in the Chinese dialect as well.

¹⁰¹ Hakka = Chinese language spoken considerably fewer than the estimated 80 million Hakka people living mainly in eastern and northern Guangdong province but also in Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangxi, Hunan and Sichuan provinces. Hakka is also spoken by perhaps 7 million immigrants in widely scattered areas, notably Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The best-known dialect is the Hakka of Mei county (now in Meizhou), in Guangdong, which has the same initial and final consonants and the same syllabic nasal sounds (nasals that function as vowels) as standard Cantonese but has a vowel system resembling that of modern standard Chinese ("Hakka language," 2014).

¹⁰²Kedah = a state of Malaysia, located in the north western part of West Coast, Peninsular Malaysia. The state covers a total area of over 9,000 km², and it consists of the mainland and Langkawi.

¹⁰³ Seremban = a capital for Negeri Sembilan, West Coast of Malaysia.

¹⁰⁴Lee Kuan Yew (Chinese: 李光耀; pinyin: *Lǐ Guāngyào*; Peh-ōe-jī: *Lí Kong-iāu*.) a former Prime Minister of Republic of Singapore for three decades.

¹⁰⁵Deng Xiaoping (邓小平 "Dèng Xiǎopíng") was a Chinese politician, statesman, and diplomat of People's Republic of China from 1978 to 1992.

Steven uses both Malay and Terengganu dialects when he communicates with his colleagues. He even uses ¹⁰⁶*mek* to address some of his local colleague. He believes that using this dialect reduces relationship gaps and helps to make the other individuals feel more relaxed and accepted.

Other Chinese respondents note the complexities of language use in the dominant Malay context that however has practices dating back to former times. Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) for example suggests that Malaysia is very complex. He argues that whenever an international event is held, English should be a medium. But Malay language should be recognized as the Malaysian national language. He believes that the establishment of the languages clubs can attract language lovers to learn the language. Liang describes the Malaysian Chinese who are diverse in their dialect and subcultures and who are also influenced by times gone by.

To my knowledge, the Chinese dialect is different from state to state. In ¹⁰⁷Penang, they use Hokkein, I'm not sure about Kedah but I do have a Chinese friend from Kedah who uses Hokkien and Hakka. ¹⁰⁸Ipoh is more Cantonese, as ¹⁰⁹Setiawan uses Foochow and ¹¹⁰Manjung speaks Hokkein. Kuala Lumpur has a mixture of Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese. Johor uses Mandarin and Hokkien. ¹¹¹Kuantan Chinese speaks Cantonese which is different from Kelantan and Terengganu where they use Hokkien. At least a fourth and more of the current Malaysian Chinese generation reside in Malaysia. They came here with their culture and way of life. While Chinese on Mainland China is going through a lot of revolutionist culture wars with Japan, the civil war between the ¹¹²Kuomintang and communist ideologists discourage religion. All those revolutions what makes the Malaysian Chinese different from the mainland Chinese. The Chinese who are migrating are going through a process of adaptation and assimilation with the local culture. These make the Malaysian Chinese unique. For example American born Chinese generally cannot speak Chinese and lose their cultural identity. Malaysian Chinese adapt themselves with the local ethnic and merge their language. They also like local food such as ¹¹³sambal, ¹¹⁴satay etc. The Chinese dialect is also influenced by local language such as 'panlai' (pandai or clever) and 'suga' (suka or happy).

¹⁰⁶ *Mek* = local address form for a young lady or a lady.

¹⁰⁷ Penang = is a state in Malaysia and the name of its constituent island, located on the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia by the Strait of Malacca.

¹⁰⁸ Ipoh= is the capital city of Perak state, Malaysia. Ipoh developed into one of Malaysia's main cities around the turn of the 19th century due to the booming tin mining industry. During the British colonial era, Ipoh was Malaysia's second city for administrative purposes.

¹⁰⁹ Setiawan =also known as Sitiawan, Malaysia, originally from Malay words means *Setia Kawan* (loyal friend) is a region in the Manjung district of Perak, Malaysia.

¹¹⁰ Manjung= previously also known as Dinding, is a district in the south-western part of the state of Perak, Malaysia. It is well known for Pangkor Island, a major attraction in Perak and the home of the Royal Malaysian Navy (TLDM) Lumut Naval Base and dockyard.

¹¹¹ Kuantan = is the state capital of Pahang, the 3rd largest state in Malaysia. It is situated near the mouth of the Kuantan River and faces the South China Sea.

¹¹²*Kuomintang* = also called Nationalist Party, political party that governed all or part of mainland China from 1928 to 1949 (Pletcher, 2013).

¹¹³*Sambal*= is condiment that has a chilli-based sauce. *Sambals* are popular in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

¹¹⁴*satay* = or sate, is a dish of seasoned, skewered and grilled meat, served with a sauce which may consist of diced or sliced chicken, goat, mutton, beef, pork or fish.

Liang speaks Malay and English. He supposes these two languages are well understood by his colleagues though he also can speak Mandarin and Chinese dialects such as Hakka and Cantonese. These three dialects, he believes, his colleagues may not understand. He generally uses the Malay language in his daily conversations while English is used in classes or seminars. Liang does not feel left out if someone speaks using a language or dialect which he does not understand. He respects those who speak their own language or dialect, but when there is time for discussion or working environment, he prefers they use standard language so that everyone will understand and the working environment becomes more effective. He did experience some misunderstandings in relation to the language spoken by his colleagues. He indicates that this is related to the proper nouns such as food names and trees. Liang states that his colleagues speak faster; he would appreciate if they can slow down their pace while speaking with him.

Some respondents illustrate that they have not had to become as skilled in manipulating their language use. For example Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration) takes a neutral approach to language. He believes that his colleagues understand his Malay language. He uses Malay and English when he thinks they are suitable. He does not feel left out whenever someone uses their ethnic language or dialect because he does not understand the language. He has not experienced any problems in relation to speaking to colleagues from other ethnic groups. He also does not feel that they speak too fast in their language.

Similarly the Indian respondent, also from middle management, takes a low key approach to language use. Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic), uses the Malay language in his daily conversations with his colleagues or in formal functions such as meetings. English is used in a classroom with students or colleagues. He does feel ignored if someone uses a dialect or language he does not understand. He explains that he does not face any problems in relation to speaking to his colleagues from different ethnicities.

6.3.2 Summary

Malay respondent tend to use Malay language, Terengganu dialect and little English. Two Malay respondents speak Mandarin and Japanese. However, a small number of non-locals Malay prefer to use Malay because they are not fluent in the Terengganu dialect, as they do not want to offend their local colleagues and or plan to settle here. It is because nonlocal Malay may sound mocking of the Terengganese if they speak the dialect inappropriately. Chinese and Indians use a mixture of languages such as Malay, English and their mother tongue. They will switch to another language to suit their colleagues' background.

6.4 Use of the Terengganu dialect

Other than Malay and English, another major language is the Terengganu dialect. This dialect is widely used in Malay's daily conversations and is also used by Chinese and Indian colleagues. The Table 6.6 (see below) illustrates that 70.5% of respondents use the Terengganu dialect in their daily conversations at UMT. Ethnically about 76.3% of Malay followed by 50% of the Chinese use Terengganu dialect in their conversation at UMT.

23.7% of Malay and the one Indian respondent did not use Terengganu dialect and were presumed to be non-local.

About 51.1% of respondents find that Terengganu dialect is difficult to understand, especially those who are non-local. Ethnically about 48.7% of Malay respondents followed by 87.5% of Chinese and 25% Indian respondent share the same views. The respondents who found the dialect are difficult are presumed to be non-local Malay, Chinese and Indian respondents. Yet about 51.3% of Malay respondents and 75% of Indian respondents report that the Terengganu dialect is not that difficult to be understood, even for non-locals. Chinese respondents find that Terengganu dialect is hard compared with their Indian and Malay colleagues.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Lan4	Do you use Terengganu dialect in your daily conversation at UMT?	No	18	23.7	4	50.0	4	100.0	26	29.5
		Yes	58	76.3	4	50.0	0	.0	62	70.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan6	Do you find Terengganu dialect difficult to understand especially those who are not local?	No	39	51.3	1	12.5	3	75.0	43	48.9
		Yes	37	48.7	7	87.5	1	25.0	45	51.1
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 6.6: Use of Terengganu dialects

The interview findings reveal that Malay respondents use the Terengganu dialect when talking with their colleagues. Overall non-local Malays demonstrate their efforts to learn the local dialect. Normally local colleagues will converse using the Terengganu dialect.

The majority Malay respondents report that the Terengganu dialect is easy to understand. The dialect is considered to be easy for non-locals because students who come from all over the states to study at UMT can speak and understand Terengganu dialect in just a short time. The Terengganu dialect is normally used when staff converse with their local colleagues. Some Malay respondents admit that the dialect will spontaneously appear whenever they speak. Most of the time, the Terengganu dialect and English are used as the mediums of interaction. Malay respondents will thus use the Terengganu dialect or the combination of Terengganu dialect and the Malay language depending on the context, situation and the people with whom they are communicating.

The (H) Ulu Terengganu dialect is more difficult to learn. Some Malay respondents try to use the dialect according to their colleague's background. If the colleague is from Kedah state, he will switch to the Kedah dialect, the same goes when he meets a Terengganu colleague or a Kelantanese colleague. The Malays are also comfortable using the Terengganu dialect when they are joking with their colleagues. They also use the Terengganu dialect when conversing with their local Chinese colleagues.

Yusuf, Adam, Awang and Ramlah, from the upper levels, have various levels of confidence with the Terengganu dialect. Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) for example is confident despite being a non-local Malay. He likes to learn the dialect and thinks that the Terengganu dialect is easy to understand. It is because he has been exposed to the dialect since his first year at the university, where his housemates were from Kelantan and Terengganu. He found the dialect easy to understand and he likes the way the language is pronounced. Whenever he does not understand the dialect, he will be confident and ask for clarification.

It is easy to understand, but if I don't get what they mean, I will ask. Normally during a Monday morning, we have a meeting and a presentation from staff. Normally I will catch the Terengganu dialect but if I don't understand then I'll ask.

Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) finds certain terms from the Terengganu dialect difficult to understand. Adam adjusts the dialect according to his colleagues' backgrounds. If the colleague is from Kedah state, he will switch to a Kedah dialect, the same goes when he meets a Terengganu colleague or Kelantanese colleague.

It depends, when I communicate with one of my colleagues, an officer at INOS, who is a ¹¹⁵Kedahan, I will use Kedahan dialect. Such as WI, who is from Kedah greets me with 'hang ni orang sapa ni?' (Where do you belong to?). I will reply 'Aku asal orang Kedah tapi besar kat Terengganu' (I'm originally from Kedah, but grew up at Terengganu.)

Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) uses the Terengganu dialect when he converses with his local Chinese colleagues and Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) believes that her colleagues from different ethnicities understand her Terengganu dialect. Whenever she met with her local colleague and Kelantanese colleague, she automatically speaks in a Terengganu dialect.

I will speak Terengganu dialect outside of a meeting or formal job scope, such as at lunch time, outside the lecture, or even once in a while during meetings. Normally, when I meet my colleagues from the same state, I automatically will speak the Terengganu dialect.

While some middle level personal also use the Terengganu dialect with confidence, others have more difficulty. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) states that since working at the institution for almost five years, he finds that the dialect can spontaneously appear when he speaks. He is a Kelantanese and finds the Terengganu dialect is not difficult to understand. However, Yahya also suggests that the (H)Ulu Terengganu dialect such as ¹¹⁶Kuala Berang dialect is not as easy to absorb, especially if it is spoken quickly. As his office services students, he uses the standard Malay language:

I will not care whether students are from Terengganu or ¹¹⁷Sabah or where ever, I will use the standard language (Malay language) so that whatever I explain, it will be clear and devoid of confusion.

¹¹⁵ Kedahan = a people from state of Kedah (a state of Malaysia, located in the north western part of Peninsular Malaysia).

¹¹⁶ Kuala Berang = is the largest town of Hulu Terengganu District, Terengganu, Malaysia. The town serves as a gateway to Lake Kenyir. The historical Terengganu Inscription Stone was found near Kuala Berang in 1899.

¹¹⁷ Sabah = is one of the 13 member states of Malaysia, at easternmost state. It is located on the northern portion of the island of Borneo. It is the second largest state in the country after Sarawak.

Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) prefers to use the Malay language in daily conversation, augmented with a mix of Terengganu dialect depending on with whom she is speaking. She conveys that sometimes terms can cause misunderstanding but this depends on the individual. Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) states that her local colleagues influence her by using their dialect at work. Yet, she concedes that she is not fluent enough in speaking the dialect. She can only pronounce words which are actually used a lot in the context, such as ¹¹⁸*sokmo* (always) or ¹¹⁹*tak mboh* (do not want too).

R: Do you speak Terengganu dialect with the support staff?

Khadijah: I can speak the dialect but I am not that fluent. I can actually understand what they say, but I cannot speak very well in the Terengganu dialect. I'm not that expert. But I actually can pronounce 'sokmo' or 'tak mboh'.

For Khadijah, familiar words of the Terengganu dialect are easy to recognize and are mostly used by local colleagues at all levels. The local support staffs that Khadijah deals with are not hard to comprehend and are considerate of her non-local background. Yet she finds the Terengganu dialect used by village people difficult to understand. Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) is also not local and finds that her language use is influenced by local colleagues. When they mingle, she will pick up several words. She also judges the ordinary Terengganu dialect easy to learn and understand while the (H)Ulu Terengganu dialect, which she refers to as ¹²⁰*hok pekat*, as more difficult.

I can say the ordinary dialect is not difficult to understand, but I guess 'hok pekat' is hard for me...

Support level staffs have learnt to be mindful about their use of dialect. Aishah (female, Malay, support level administration) prefers to use the Terengganu dialect whenever she communicates with her subordinates or with local staff.

When I mingled with my colleague, I certainly will use the Terengganu dialect. But when I meet with my superior, I will switch to standard Malay, because I think this is proper and easily understood.

Aishah believes that the Kuala Terengganu dialect is not that difficult to understand compared with the (H)Ulu Terengganu dialect. Yet a small number of Malay respondents consider that the Terengganu dialect is difficult for non-locals. Some Malay respondents choose to use the formal Malay language whenever they interact with their colleagues especially those who are academics. Interestingly this appears to be the case for all levels of the organisation, for example, Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic), Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration), Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic) and Aishah (female, Malay, support level administration).

¹¹⁸*Sokmo* = Terengganu dialect, in English refer to always

¹¹⁹*Tak mboh* = Terengganu dialect, in English refer to do not want too.

¹²⁰*Hok pekat* = Terengganu dialect, literally refer to pure Terengganese dialect; normally refer to the dialect spoken by people from Kuala Berang.

It's like what Arabic language defines as 'iqtal wal iqlal', which literally refers to the substitution or the words chosen sometimes may be difficult to notice. This happened when I communicate with my students (Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic)

I believe the Terengganu dialect sometimes have different meaning which are unique. For example, the word ¹²¹'gong' refers to someone who is arrogant and also refer to a hilltop. (Sarah, female, Malay, support level administration)

There is so many shortened words, which include ¹²²'sabdu'. Sometimes there is an old Terengganu dialect which has no standard meaning in Malay. The one which relate to 'sabdu' such as 'ikang making kkucing' (the cat eat the fish). In Malay it can be translate as 'ikan dimakan kucing, bukan ikan makan kucing!' (Fish been eaten by the cat, not fish eat the cat!). And there is one word which is originally from Terengganu dialect, 'nnebeng' which means 'berlebih-lebih' or over (show off). (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

The word *kkucing*, the double *kk* is the one which made a different in pronunciation of this word. The same words in standard Malay can be pronounced as *kucing* with no punctuation. The differences in pronunciation sometimes can be very hard for non-locals to learn. The word *nnebeng* also use *sabdu*, known as ¹²³*shaddah* (germination), in which the pronunciation of the word will give a different meaning. *Nnebeng* is most likely to be 'show off' in English or 'over' in ¹²⁴Manglish. Some words in the Terengganu dialect may sound alike but have different meanings from the standard Malay language such as *gong* as mention by Sarah. This could cause confusion for non-local colleagues including Malay colleagues. Aishah believes that the Hulu Terengganu dialect is a problem for non-locals as even the locals sometimes have difficulty in understanding the Hulu Terengganu dialect.

Other Malay respondents choose not to speak Terengganu dialect even though they may have the opportunity to for several reasons. Some think that because they are not local, they prefer to use standard Malay when communicating with their colleagues. Others feel that they don't want to sound like they are mocking Terengganese people when they try to speak Terengganu. Other Malay respondents feel that they are not good in speaking the dialect and do not want to take risks. Some think that as they are not planning to settle

¹²¹*Gong* = in Terengganu dialect, refer to a places named after a feature of the land or a raised piece of land such as *Gong Badak*. Or the other meaning of *gong* in Terengganu dialect is arrogant as portray in this sentence: "You are *gong* if you strut around, full of yourself and being far from humble" (Goneng, 2007). *Gong* in standard Malay is a musical instrument with the round brass instrument used in *joget*, *dikir barat* and *silat pulut*.

¹²²*Sabdu* = originally from Arabic words, connected with the proper recitation of the Qur'an (tajwid), has little relevance to standardspeak. *Sabdu* literally refer as dual or double, while in pronunciation it can be said as punctuation. In Terengganu dialect, *sabdu* is a must because it can change the meaning of a word (Goneng, 2007, p. 316).

¹²³*Shaddah* = is the stress on the consonant. In Terengganu dialect, *shaddah* is used to make a verb as in *jjalang* (walk) as opposed to *jalang* (road). It is used to shorten words, normally those beginning with the prefix *ber-* attached to them in standard Malay. As *jjalang* in standard Malay is *berjalan* (walking) while *jalang* in standard Malay is prostitute. (Goneng, 2007, p. 316)

¹²⁴Manglish = is a Malaysian colloquial form of English, normally use to hold ordinary conversations, give ordinary directions or make ordinary remarks (Murugesan, 2003). Manglish differ in vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics from their foreign ancestors (Young, 2008). Malaysian English is indeed a complex entity used by Malaysians of different ethnic, geographical and educational backgrounds, with different levels of proficiency. The extent to which English is used in everyday communication also depends on factors like geographical location and profession (Pillai, Mohd, Don, Knowles, & Tang, 2010).

down at Terengganu, they do not need to learn the dialect. Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic), Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) and Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) all feel this way:

...I think that I don't belong here. When I retire, I will go back to my hometown. (Amina)

Hawa does not use the Terengganu dialect because she is not local and prefers to use standard Malay. She considers the Malay language as her mother tongue and the national language. Daud as non-local; he settled down at Terengganu in 1982 because he married a local Terengganu women. He can speak the Terengganu dialect but prefers not too because he is afraid this could sometimes sounds like he is mocking the Terengganese people. He then chooses to use standard language such as the formal Malay language. He is aware about this and tries not to offend local colleagues. In contrast, he did not think that the Terengganu dialect is difficult. It was based on one incident where he concluded that this dialect was easy to learn. He then concluded that if the foreigner can learn the Terengganese dialect, he should have the initiative to also learn this dialect. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) admits that this dialect is not hard to learn but she does not want to take the risk of learning it because she fees that she will not be good at speaking the dialect. At her workplace the subordinate majority is local. They normally use the Terengganu dialect when communicating among themselves. She admits that sometimes she does not actually understand what they are talking about, and feels that they enjoyed the moments where she looked confused. In spite of that she did not feel mad at them because she feels that sometimes they just babbling about something that has nothing to do with her. She also presumes that their colleagues' emotional state sometimes influence their attitudes when dealing with non-local staff. She revealed that majority of the support staff do not speak the Terengganu dialect when they are communicating with her.

The only Melanau respondent felt that she should know how to speak the Terengganu dialect in order to communicate with local colleagues. She admits this will not change her identity as a Melanau even though she is able to speak the dialect. Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) shares her experiences:

I'm still a Melanau, I'm still myself...but yeah I know I can catch up on the dialect pretty fast. I think I can speak quite a lot of the Terengganu dialect.

Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) sees that her local colleagues speak faster in terms of pace, yet she will tell colleagues to slow down so she can understand them. She makes a clarification if she does not understand what her colleagues propose especially during a phone conversation. Besides, she thinks that locals should be proud of the local dialect, and whoever comes to Terengganu should know how to speak the Terengganu dialect. She made a comparison from the place she came from where everyone had to learn the Melanau dialect so then they can communicate with Melanau people. She mentions that she is proud as a Melanau and still can speak better Melanau. Thus language is served as a medium of interaction and connection among them with the local colleague. Able to use local dialect or other languages too shows how powerful the language could be in binding the interaction within the colleague from different cultural background.

Chinese respondents rarely use the Terengganu dialect during conversation as they are not local. They however understand the dialect. In general they would prefer to use standard Malay. Though they try to use the Terengganu dialect when communicating with their local colleagues, they believe that the Terengganu dialect is not easy for those who are non-local. They admit that the pronunciation of the dialect is different and there are some words which have totally different meanings from what they actually know. They disclose that Terengganu people who speak the pure Terengganu dialect are difficult to understand. Local colleagues, especially support staff, will communicate using standard Malay or a mixed local dialect when talking to them. They assume that the communication issue is not complex. In terms of pace, they think that their local colleagues speak a bit faster and sometimes they may miss what their colleagues are actually referring to. Normally they will ask what is the meaning is and assume that their colleagues may consider them as nonlocal and use the language that they familiar most. This is mention by Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic), Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) and Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic).

Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) understands the dialect but in general she will use standard Malay. She explains that the Terengganu dialect appears spontaneously when she speaks. She also indicates that normally the words will have ¹²⁵*kanG* influence where she normally added in the words to sound like the Terengganu dialect. Normally, English and formal Malay language is preferred when she converse.

I know that here (at UMT), normally they will add 'kanG' ... 'kanG' ...at the end of the words...that's all.

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) wishes to learn more about the Terengganu dialect, if time permits. He even imagines that if there is a course to learn about Terengganu dialect, he would love to enrol. He feels that the dialect is part of the heritage and should be compiled into a dictionary such as Terengganu dialect dictionary. He said this because before the establishment of the formal Malay language, the language use at this area was the Terengganu dialect. He feels that this heritage should be compiled and made into a legacy of East Cost. He perceived that the Terengganu dialect should be taught to the children and preserved because it is part of the culture or subculture, which, when being neglected, will disappear over time. But he has not suggested that this dialect to be taught as the school curriculum.

Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) uses the Terengganu dialect with support staff but he admits that he is not fluent in the dialect but tries his best to use the dialect. There is no preferred language that he uses, yet he will use any language depending on the context.

A single Chinese respondent did not use the Terengganu dialect in his daily conversations though admitting that he is not good at this dialect. Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration) believes that the Terengganu dialect is not difficult but maybe a bit alien to him because he not used to this dialect. He normally will not mix the language

¹²⁵She means *kanG* is actually the addition of 'G' at the end of the words such as *ikanG* (fish, as in Terengganu dialect) which means *ikan* (fish, as in standard Malay), without the addition of 'G' at the end of the words. This will explain in details in the section 6.4.3 (Formal Malay and Terengganu dialect: A semantic problem).

and only use a mixture of language if he feels a need to do so. He prefers to use the Malay language because he supposes that everyone will understand this language.

The Indian respondent does not use the Terengganu dialect in his daily conversation at UMT because he perceived it to be non-professional. But Aditya did understand the Terengganu dialect and revealed that the Terengganu dialect was easy to learn and be understood.

Malay respondents who are local do not have problem when it comes to understanding the Terengganu dialect. Even though they admit that the Hulu Terengganu dialect is difficult they do not think that it is a big problem in the usage of language at UMT. Nonlocal Malay colleagues did express their concerns about the difficulty of learning the dialect. Their views were shared with the Chinese and Indians. Yet they did show an effort to learn the dialect even though they perceived the dialect to be difficult to understand and to pronounce. Even one of the Chinese respondent such as Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) concern about the persistence of the use of Terengganu dialect among the society. He thought that Terengganu dialect should be preserved because losing the dialect could eventually lose the cultural identity. Language and in this context a Terengganu dialect is actually shape the culture and the cultural identity of the Terengganu Malay. They obviously can be identified through the use of their dialect and this influences their interaction among their colleague as well.

6.4.1 Terengganu dialect: The Misunderstanding in usage of words and the awareness

Respondents were asked if they experience any misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words in Terengganu dialect and their awareness that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnic groups.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Lan8	Do you experience any misunderstandings in relations to the usage of words in Terengganu dialect?	No	48	63.2	2	25.0	3	75.0	53	60.2
		Yes	28	36.8	6	75.0	1	25.0	35	39.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan9	Do you experience (s) any misunderstanding in relations to the usage of words such as from other ethnic languages i.e. Mandarin/Tamil?	No	45	59.2	5	62.5	3	75.0	53	60.2
		Yes	31	40.8	3	37.5	1	25.0	35	39.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 6.7: Misunderstandings of Terengganu dialect and other ethnic languages

Table 6.7 portrays that 63.2% Malay followed by 25% Chinese and 75% Indian had not experienced any misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words in the Terengganu dialect. Yet 75% Chinese did experience misunderstandings in relation to the word usage of the Terengganu dialect compared to Malay and Indian respondents. About 59.2% of Malay, 62.5% Chinese and 75% Indians did not experience (s) any misunderstandings in relations to the usage of words from other ethnic languages such as Mandarin or Tamil. A

small percentage (39.8%) of respondents did experience misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words of other ethnic languages such as Mandarin or Tamil.

The interview respondents were then asked if they ever experienced any misunderstanding of the words in the Terengganu dialect when they started their jobs at this institution. They were also asked to elaborate and giving examples of the words which they had misunderstood or were unfamiliar with. They also were asked about their feelings if someone speaks a different language or dialect which they do not understand.

Malay respondents, especially nonlocal respondents, did experience misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words in the Terengganu dialect but did not experience any misunderstanding in relations to the usage of words from other ethnic languages such as Mandarin or Tamil. They always choose their words carefully when communicating with other ethnic groups, because they fear that they will mispronounce them and that this can lead to misunderstanding words or meanings. They believe that their colleagues from minority groups speak Malay in a slow pace and some perceive as fast. From their observations, they assume that ethnic minorities at this institution try to blend into the Malay culture and language in their daily interactions. For example, Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional), Yahya, Daud and Mohammad describe some examples.

I mispronounce words and the staffs do not understand what I mean. It seems like ¹²⁶‘idgham’ is not right. I’m sure it’s a word. I mispronounce the ¹²⁷‘bunyi’. I used to use the words, eventually in one morning while having a meeting, when I pronounce it, my staff point out. It’s the way I pronounce it. ¹²⁸‘dengung’ is not right (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

...I realized at UMT, the majority actually try to merge with Malay culture. In terms of language they speak in a slow pace, for instance Mr P, as well as Mr K. I guess they tried to make us understand what they are trying to say. They may be afraid that we will misunderstand what they saying. They are minorities; I can see they tried to understand us better. Maybe there is not much problem on our side, maybe the problem is on their side. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

The fact the other ethnic groups have to blend in means that the Malays are dominant, however the others are not substandard. Rather, they assimilate and try to adapt to the environment. Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) remembered that he mispronounced words, when he started his job. Some words described by Yusuf are influenced by Arabic words. Muslim should know how to read Quran, therefore, some of the nuances and terms may influence them in their usage of words. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) mentioned his experiences of misunderstandings in relation to the pronunciation of words of his colleagues from Sabah (East Malaysia), where the pronunciation is thicker and he couldn’t pick up meanings. He then mentions that he will not feel left out or offended if someone talks in a meeting using their own dialect. Normally in a meeting, the members will joke in the Terengganu dialect and he is aware

¹²⁶*Idgham*- Arabic words which refer to partial assimilation, a rules in reading a Quran (*tajwid*).

¹²⁷*Bunyi*- standard Malay language means ‘sound’

¹²⁸*Dengung*- whizzed, a rules in reading a Quran (known as *tajwid*, in Arabic term)

of what they have actually said even though he does not understand all of the content. Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) admits that when he first started in this institution, he struggled to understand the dialect.

I can speak and understand the dialect a little bit, sometimes I even use this dialect when I go back to my hometown, Perak such as 'Guane' (how are you doing?), 'cuba mu kabor' (do tell me)...I can speak a simple dialect, but not much.

Daud also discloses that whenever a local colleague speaks to him, they speak slowly.

I can still understand them, normally they will talk in a slow pace with me, but if they speak among themselves, I can see it's quite fast (in term of pace). Sometimes I can understand what they said, normally if I don't understand; I will just keep quiet, and will ask later...

Normally, Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) usually will tries to understand what others are saying, and if she faces any problems, she will ask immediately. Whereas Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) responds to languages she does not understand by advising the student to use the Malay language, the language with which she is most familiar. A Malay respondent shares her experiences of misunderstanding others' ethnic languages. Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) illustrate her experiences:

...There is one Chinese word which can cause misunderstanding if you pronounce it wrongly, shi-shi and shieh-shieh. I think it means 'terima kasih' (thank you) and the other one is 'gila' (crazy). I also mispronounce one of my Indian colleagues as 'ane' which means 'abang' (a brother). I should address him as 'thambi' which is 'adik' (a little brother).

Ramlah is aware that the use of others' ethnic languages can cause confusion such as the use of kinship terms and the mispronunciation of some words. She admits that she did not have any problem in relation to language spoken by her colleague from different ethnicities as they normally use Malay or English or a mix of both. But she felt that her Indian colleagues may speak faster in term of pace whenever they communicate. She also uses the Terengganu dialect when communicating with her colleagues because she feels that this dialect seems to be more welcoming and approachable.

Some Malays (either local or nonlocal) reveal that non-locals may find the Terengganu dialect to be difficult with a number of Malays (either local or non-local) arguing that the Hulu Terengganu dialect is quite difficult to understand and to learn. Some Malay respondents assume that as long as the dialect originated from Malaysia, they will have no problem understanding the language. Some of the words may be appropriate but others may not be. The Kelantanese dialect should not be used at Terengganu due to differences in the meanings of words which sometimes can offend the Terengganese. This is described by Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic), Daud (male, Malay, support level administration), Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration), Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic),

Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic), Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) and Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration). Mek Na (non-local Malay) is a Kelantanese and believes that she will have no problem understanding the language as long as the dialect originates from Malaysia. Yet, she did experience misunderstandings in relations to the usage of words in the Terengganu dialect, where the word is appropriate at Kelantan but not at Terengganu. Misuse of words can cause confusion and misunderstanding among the Terengganese and Kelantanese Malays as well as other ethnic groups. She gave the example of the word *sisa*, at Terengganu, this word refer to leftover (*sisa*) while Kelantanese understand that word refer to a door gift especially during wedding reception. Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) also experienced misunderstandings in relation to the usage of words in the Terengganu dialect especially from Hulu Terengganu such as Kuala Berang.

When a colleague from Kuala Berang speaks, they speak with a very deep sound, so we assume that they are mad at us. He once mention 'merah' (red), which actually refers to a colour, but I mistakenly thought that they were 'marah' (mad) at us. So I asked him, we are outsiders, are you mad ('marah') at us?

The pronunciation of *merah* (red) and *marah* (mad) sounds alike but the meaning is totally different. The way people from this area, Kuala Berang, pronounce this word can cause confusion for non-local Malays or non-Malays.

Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) also admits that Terengganu dialect is not easy to understand especially for non-locals.

It's like what Arabic languages define as 'iqtal wal iqlal' which literally refers to the substitution or the words chosen sometimes may be difficult to notice. This happened when I communicate with my students, at my previous workplace, a school. That student said: 'awok tu bising bango' (they are so noisy). I thought him referring to me; I'm the one who are being noisy. I asked his little brother, why did he refer me as a noisy one? He then explained to me that, 'awok' here did not denote as 'you', but actually refers to a couple of people 'mereka' (they). I guess there are so many words with double meaning (different meanings). So even though Terengganu dialect does have a similar word to Kelantanese dialect, but still there is a different meaning for the same words. I admit that this can be a problem.

In Terengganu dialect, the words *awok* denotes to a group of people, while in formal Malay, *awak* (the pronunciation is the same, but not in writing form) refers as you (a personal pronoun). *Awok* in Terengganu dialect is equal to *mereka* (they) in formal Malay which refers to a few people.

Supik (plastic bag) and *sumpit* (blow pipe) have similar pronunciation but the meaning is totally referred to different thing. This somehow can confuse the non-local Malay and non-Malay who is the first timer at this institution. Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration) admits that at first she faced a problem understanding certain words in the Terengganu dialect which bears a different meaning from what she actually knows.

I remembered, during lunch time, when I just started my job here, I took some rice and a side dish, the lady asked me, 'nak makan slalu ke'? (You want to eat instantly/here/now?) So, I was thinking, it must be boring if I always eat the same dish, I then replied : I don't

want to eat this every time, I love to choose other dishes as well. My colleague laughs at me; she then explains that the lady asked whether I want to eat now/here/instantly...

A word *slalu* (now/here/instantly, depends on context) in the Terengganu dialect is always mistakenly assumed by non-local as *selalu* (always or every time) in standard Malay. She also state that whenever she misused words such as *toho* and *koho*, this will be corrected by her local colleagues. She accepted and admits that at first she felt quite ashamed but not humiliated and considers these experiences as funny. She discloses her experiences during the interview:

It happened spontaneously, when we chatting, and then I misused the word 'toho' and 'koho', they laughed at me, then they explained to me, these words should be used with this context and this words for this context. They corrected me on the spot. I'm not angry, I feel a bit ashamed, but that's ok. I feel funny...in term of the language use.

Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) shared her experiences in relation to Terengganu dialect.

I admit that I'm not that good at this dialect. One thing, when I talked with this lady, a local here, she said that it is very weird if an outsider comes here and tries to speak Terengganu, an action she calls ¹²⁹'menganjing'. So I asked her, what does that mean? She said it is kind of mocking Terengganese people. So, there is a drawback for me in learning Terengganu dialect, because I don't want the locals here to feel offended, and refer to me as 'menganjing'...

If an individual does not know the exact meaning, he/she may assume that it derived from the root words *anjing* (dog) with the addition of 'meng-'. Suggesting that someone is doing something which normally dogs do or it is behaving like a dog. Actual words in standard Malay refer to *mengejek* or *mempemli* (mocking). The word *menganjing* may sounds very rude to non-locals which can actually make someone angry and create misunderstandings. Hawa (female, Malay, upper level academic) observes that the Terengganu dialect is easy to understand.

From my observation and analysis, the Terengganu dialect normally will add 'G' or drop the 'G' compared to the standard Malay language. It will be difficult then if the word purely originates from the Terengganu dialect and is rarely used in Malay language.

She believes that for sometimes the Malay language has been localised by the locals. For example the word *ikan* (fish) will then be pronounced as *ikang* (fish) by the locals, with the addition of 'G' at the end of the word. The difficulty is when the words are actually derived from purely Terengganu words which are not used in Malay language. For example, *netakalang* (topsy-turvy), *barbir* (stubborn) or *doktong* (gallivanting) (see Bustaman, 2004). Even though Sarah (female, Malay, support staff administration) is a local, she also misunderstood some of Terengganu words:

For instance the word ¹³⁰'ngepong', I had been told this word refers to someone who is naive or unprofessional.

¹²⁹*Menganjing* in Terengganu dialect refer as derisive, mocking, teasing, belittle, mimicking and it can be varied depends on the context. At some point it can be refer as proud or arrogant.

¹³⁰*Ngepong*= is a Terengganu dialect means which means *kurang bijak* (naïve) in standard Malay.

This word has different pronunciations in standard Malay. Ramlah (female, Malay upper level academic) also faced a misunderstanding of the use of words in Terengganu dialect.

The same words can produce a different meaning from a different district at Terengganu. Such as 'gong' at Kuala Terengganu are refers as 'sombong or angkuh' (arrogant). But the same word, when used at ¹³¹Besut, can refer to 'bodoh/lembab/lemban'.

The word *gong* (Terengganu dialect) when used at Kuala Terengganu refers to proud/arrogant. However this word can signify other meanings to people from Besut which means *bodoh or lembab or lemban*(stupid/ foolish) in standard Malay.

A single Melanau respondent considers the Terengganu dialect is not easy to learn, because the dialect is very different from other dialects. She mentions that there are no problems for her if in a meeting where the majority of her colleagues will use the Terengganu dialect because she familiar with the dialect since she married with the local. Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional):

Well, there is a misunderstanding, where the meaning is different from my understanding. At that time I felt a bit mad. One of the words is 'suku-suku'. There was one time; they asked me if I wanted this 'suku-suku', of course I would say I want it full, then why did you ask me to choose 'suku-suku'.

Suku-suku in Terengganu dialect means to be put separately while *suku or suku-suku* in formal Malay means a quarter. It is really confusing for non-locals and for the first timers who work at this institution like Sumaiyah.

The majority of Chinese respondents are nonlocal and find that the Terengganu dialect is difficult, different in many ways. In order to understand the meaning you need to listen carefully. These respondents also share their experiences during their conversations with their local colleagues regarding the use of Terengganu words at their workplace. They are willing to ask whenever they feel is necessary and are willing to learn from their local students as well. They reveal incidents in relation to misunderstanding words in the Terengganu dialect. Mostly the support staff will use the Malay language and rarely use the Terengganu dialect when conversing with them. But they admit that whenever they do not understand the dialect, they will directly ask the staff to explain it to them. Lei Hua (female, Chinese, upper level academic) finds that in order to understand the dialect someone needs to listen carefully. She shares her conversations with her local colleagues:

Sometime when they told their story eagerly...I will be like... (Showing the emotion of face: confusion), but I'm too shy to ask. What actually are you talking about? If there are any Malay friends I surely ask them. But normally when they are keen to share their story, especially the elderly or the village people, I will smile and ask them later when they have finished with their story. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

¹³¹ Besut = is a district in the Malaysian state of Terengganu. It is bordered by the state of Kelantan and the northern gateway to Terengganu. Besut is further subdivided into 15 districts which are Keluang, Kuala Besut, Bukit Puteri, Pengkalan Nangka, Hulu Besut, Jabi, Kerandang, Pelagat, Lubuk Kawah, Pasir Akar, Tembila, Tenang, Kubang Bemban and Bukit Kenak. Besut people speak the Kelantanese Malay.

She reveals her experiences when she talks with local village people on her field trip. Lei Hua shows her respect and tries to be polite to the village people that she deals during her field trip to the village. That is the reason why she was not asking for clarification at the first place.

Normally when I was out in a village, I will first smile before I ask them any questions. Usually when they start to have a joke in the Terengganu dialect, I will directly say I do not understand what they are talking about. Sometimes they just laugh, but not explain the joke, I don't mind. Maybe it is just a joke that they laugh at. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic), Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration) and Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) have experienced misunderstandings in relation to word usage in the Terengganu dialect.

The words 'buat slalu' which I misinterpreted actually mean 'buat segera'. (Chin Hong, male, Chinese, middle level administration)

When they asked me 'lima ¹³²amah', I thought that seller means fifty cents. It is actually RM2.50 cent!(Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) admits that he needs to be familiar with and learn the dialect. He is willing to ask for help whenever he feels it is necessary and is willing to learn from his students as well. Steven does not have problems about the spoken language due to the use of standard Malay. But there are cultural issues that he has encountered. These issues however do not relate to any of his colleagues but more to the local people who live nearby.

Not here on campus, but the locals that I meet outside the campus, they sometimes ask me where I work. I know this is not in a negative thing, it just shows their concern. But maybe I have been too long at KL, because KL people will not ask that kind of question. Sometimes they even ask about my salary, how much I earn. But then this is grey area, I'm not assuming this as a bad thing. I know this is related to their cultural upbringing...

Steven also shares his experiences of when his bike was punctured and he was helped by the locals as well as UMT students. He was amazed at the spirit of helping others and said this kind of spirit was not observed when he was at KL. He also mentions that if you are lost in Terengganu, the locals willingly show you the way but this does not happen at KL. He presumes that the people of KL seem more individualistic and sceptical compared with Terengganu people.

The Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) disclosed his experiences about his misunderstanding Terengganu words. He too misunderstood the word *supit* with *supik*.

I thought 'supit' is a 'sumpit'. But 'supik' in Terengganu dialect actually is a plastic bag.

¹³²Samah or amah = in Terengganu dialect equal to 50 cent, other example: dua amah = RM1.00, tiga amah = RM1.50.

Overall, the respondents, especially the Malays seem not to have any problems in relation to word usage in the Terengganu dialect compared with Chinese and Indian respondents.

6.4.2 Kuala Terengganu and (H)Ulu Terengganu dialect: Any differences?

Kuala Terengganu is the largest city in the state and royal capital of Terengganu State. Kuala Terengganu people speak Terengganu dialect. Besut is one of the seven districts of Terengganu, bordered by the state of Kelantan to the north and the South China Sea to the east. It is the northern gateway to Terengganu. Besut people speak the Terengganu dialect with the influence of the Kelantanese dialect. Terengganu has seven districts and one of the district's is (H)Ulu Terengganu, which is an inland district of Terengganu (refer Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2). (H)Ulu Terengganu dialect is different from the central part of Terengganu such as Kuala Terengganu (Collins 1983, 1989; Collins & Hassan, 1981). It is located 40 km from the centre of Kuala Terengganu, consisting of seven districts such as Kuala Berang, Tanggol, Tersat, Penghulu Diman, Jenagor, Hulu Telemong and Hulu Berang ("Background of Hulu Terengganu," 2012).

A number of studies (see Collins, 1973, Ismail Hussin, 1973, Asmah Hj. Omar, 1983, Mohd Ismail Abdul Rasheed, 1985, Zuraidah Omar, 1985 and Zaleha Awang, 1988 as cited in Kob, 1997) agreed that the phoneme and the words of this dialect are apparently different from standard Malay. They conclude that the Terengganu dialect is distinctive in terms of phonology, oral presentation, phoneme, morphology, sentences and lexical.



Figure 6.1: Map of Terengganu

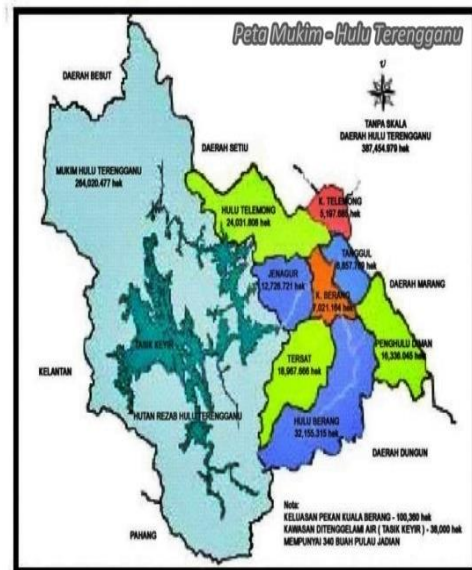


Figure 6.2: (H)ulu Terengganu District

The Terengganu dialect is also different in phonetic and morfositaxes which make this dialect unique compared with other dialects (Collins 1983).

The Kuala Terengganu dialect has a distinctive ubiquitous velar nasal *ng* in word final position. Terengganu folks add a lot of *ng* in their words. For example, in standard Malay: *Kamu nak makan ikan?* (Do you want to eat this fish?), will become *Mung nok makang ikang?*, in Terengganu dialect ("Terengganu Malay language," 2012). Lei Hua (female,

Chinese, upper level academic) notes that Terengganu people will normally add 'g' at the end of some words which is distinct from other Malay dialect.

I know that here, normally they will add 'kanG' ... 'kanG' ...at the end of the words ...that's all.

Some Terengganu words such as *ikan* (fish) when 'ng' is added at the end will alter the sound of the word from *ikan* (fish) to *ikang* (fish). The meaning is still the same but the pronunciation is different.

Hulu Terengganu dialect shows phonology retention and has an ancient pronunciation derived from Old Malay language (Collins 1983). The word *merah* (red) can be mistakenly heard as *marah* (mad) where the pronunciation is alike but has a totally different meaning. This is what the respondents either local Malays, nonlocal Malays or non-Malays, try to explain when they indicate that the Hulu Terengganu dialect is hard to learn and to differentiate meaning from.

6.4.3 Formal Malay and Terengganu dialect: A semantic problem

Semantics is the study of meaning which focuses on the relation between signifiers, such as words, phrases, signs and symbols and what they stand for, their connotation. Semantic is the study of the relationship between words and what the words represent for (Koester & Lustig, 2013). In order to communicate inter-culturally, someone needs to learn the semantic rules; even they speak the 'same' language as they will confront new meanings for words (Koester & Lustig, 2013). Semantics can be categorized into two meanings, the denotative meanings and connotative meanings. Denotative meanings refer to the meanings which are used mainly by the public, objective and legal meanings of a word which can be found in the dictionary or any law books, while, connotative meanings are personal, emotionally charged, private and specific to a particular person (Koester & Lustig, 2013). Connotation is an interpreted meaning which can be understood differently by different people (due to their different perceptions). This semantic result will be displayed in the interview findings later.

The interview findings indicate that several words have the same connotation but with different pronunciation and other words share a similar pronunciation but nevertheless refer to a different denotation.

Terengganu dialect	Meaning in Terengganu dialect	Meaning in Standard Malay	Meaning in English
<i>awok</i>	Them/they	<i>awak</i>	you
<i>gong</i>	Referring to someone who are arrogant or a hilltops	<i>gong</i>	musical instrument
<i>Slalu</i>	Now/instant/immediate/prompt	<i>Selalu</i>	Always
<i>Supik</i>	Plastic bag	<i>Sumpit</i>	blowpipe
<i>Suku-suku</i>	Separately/individually	<i>suku</i>	quarter

Table 6.8: Meanings in the Terengganu dialect and Standard Malay

In the Terengganu dialect, the words *awok* (they) denotes to a group of people, while in formal Malay, *awak* (the pronunciation is the same, but not in writing form) refers to as a personal pronoun 'you'. *Awok* in Terengganu dialect equals *mereka* (they) in formal Malay which refers to a group of people. Nonlocal Malay and other ethnic experience this semantic problem because of the same pronunciation referring to different meanings.

Apart from the same pronunciation having different meanings, there are also several Terengganu dialects which are unfamiliar to nonlocal Malays and other ethnic groups. The table below illustrates the Terengganu dialect which is unfamiliar to nonlocal Malays and other ethnic groups.

Terengganu dialect	Meaning in English	Standard Malay
<i>Nnebeng</i>	Exaggerating	<i>berlebih-lebihan</i>
<i>Menganjing</i>	mocking	<i>mengajuk</i>
<i>Sokmo</i>	always	<i>sentiasa</i>
<i>tak mboh</i>	do not want too	<i>tidak mahu</i>
<i>Netakalang</i>	Topsy-turvy	<i>lintang pukang</i>
<i>Belohok</i>	spluttering	<i>tersembur</i>
<i>Mmolek</i>	charming	<i>cantik</i>
<i>Panggilang/Ngilang</i>	Wedding ceremony	<i>kenduri kahwin</i>
<i>Parok</i>	Extreme damage	<i>rosak teruk</i>

Table 6.9: Originally in the Terengganu dialect

The Terengganu dialect is not easily understood by the non-locals even Malays themselves. The Hulu Terengganu dialect is even more confusing in terms of the pronunciation. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) experienced a semantic problem when one of the locals mentions the word *menganjing*. To her surprise this word does not refer to someone as dog or having dog behaviour but merely denotes someone who mock others, as in this case, a nonlocal who mocks Terengganese people by speaking Terengganese incorrectly. Since the word *menganjing* does not come from the root word *anjing* (standard Malay) which means dog in English, referring someone as 'dog' is a very

serious act. This is especially applicable when someone uses this term to a Muslim Malay who regards dogs as impure to Islam. Despite this perception of impurity, Islam does not encourage abuse to this animal, nonetheless, there is a restriction in keeping dogs and rules in having contact with dogs as outlined in Islam¹³³.

This semantic problem could cause confusion and create misunderstanding if the hearer does not clarify and ask for an explanation from the local or expert. Therefore learning the denotative and connotative meanings of the dialect and language is vital in order to understand their culture's verbal code.

6.4.4 Summary

In this section, verbal communication refers to the use of words by the respondents. They use a variety of languages which includes their mother tongue, such as Mandarin and Tamil. Yet the daily language that they prefer to use to communicate with each other is the standard Malay language and Terengganu dialect. Generally many respondents speak more than one language which reflects Malaysia as a multicultural and multilingual society.

Respondents also experience misunderstandings in the Terengganu dialect with some respondents trying to avoid using the dialect in a fear of mocking local colleagues. They are aware that their language use could be sensitive to some of the ethnic groups. Those who are nonlocal perceive that Terengganu dialect is not easy to learn. Even some of the local colleagues admit that the Terengganu dialect is not easy to be understood especially those of Kuala Berang dialect (Hulu Terengganu). The non-locals normally confuse the local dialect with the standard Malay. It is because the sound is almost the same but the meaning is totally different. The local dialect can have the same meaning but a different pronunciation. Non-locals are aware about this but they are willing to ask and learn the dialect to avoid misunderstandings. Chinese and Indian colleague may have a problem in understanding the local dialect compare to their nonlocal Malay colleague.

The respondents are also aware that some of the words might be taboo to some of the ethnic groups. Yet the majority Malays are not exposed to other ethnic taboo words compared to the other ethnic groups who know more about the Malay taboo words. This is a disadvantage to the Malays because this information may be crucial in developing good relationships with the others who live around them. They are also aware that topics should be chosen carefully when they communicate with the other ethnic groups. Yet

¹³³ The rules to keep the dog : let the dog stay outside by providing adequate shelters, food, water and veterinary care, use the dog only for the purpose of farming such as taking care of the sheep but not as a pet or work purposes, dogs is not allowed to go into the house. The rules to touch the dog: if you touch the dog when it is not wet, you do not need to wash seven times (explain below). If you touch the dog when it is wet, you need to wash your hand seven times. The same goes to the saliva of a dog, if the saliva touches you on any part of your clothing, you need to wash the part touched and the item of clothing touched by the dog's mouth or snout. Seven times wash refer to the washing by using one time of the earth water, and six times with the normal water. It is not Haram to own a dog for the purposes mention above. Though it is not hygienic to keep a dog in the house and it is not Haram to touch the dog with the purpose mention above.

compared to Chinese and Indian respondents, Malay are generally less aware about what may be taboo for others.

The findings demonstrate only a small number of Malay respondents experienced misunderstandings in the Terengganu dialect. These Malay respondents are believed to be non-local Malays from other states such as Perak, Selangor, and Kedah etc. A Malay respondent also experienced a misunderstanding in relation to the usage of words from other ethnic languages such as Mandarin or Tamil. Where Chinese and Indian respondents experienced dialect misunderstanding they were happy to ask for clarification from their local colleagues to avoid misunderstandings. They also are trying to learn the dialect in order to be able to communicate fluently with their local colleagues and communities.

6.5 The Taboo words and the language

Survey respondent was also asked if they choose their topic or words carefully when communicating with the other ethnic groups.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Lan10	Do you choose your topic or words carefully when communicating with the other ethnic groups?	No	1	1.3	1	12.5	0	.0	2	2.3
		Yes	75	98.7	7	87.5	4	100.0	86	97.7
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
Lan11	Do you aware that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnics (i.e. pigs to Muslim)?	No	9	11.8	0	.0	0	.0	9	10.2
		Yes	67	88.2	8	100.0	4	100.0	79	89.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 6.10: choosing topic and awareness of the taboo words

Table 6.10 illustrates that 98.7% of Malays followed by 87.5% of Chinese and 100% of Indians are aware that they need to choose their topics or words carefully when communicating with the other ethnic groups. Around 88.2% of Malays and 100% of Chinese and Indians are aware that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnics such as pigs in front of their Muslim colleagues. Only a small percentage of Malays (1.3%) and Chinese (12.5%) do not choose their topic or words when they communicate with other ethnic groups compared with their Indian colleagues. Similarly about 11.8% of Malays are not aware that there are some objects or animals that are not mentioned in front of others. These indicate that the colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds are much more aware of the issues compared with their Malay respondents in this survey.

The interview respondents were asked if they aware that some ethnic groups have taboo words. The interview respondents were also asked if they had to choose their topic or words carefully when communicating with the other ethnic groups.

Malay respondents were aware that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnic groups such as Indians. They were also aware of taboo words and that some words can be perceived as vulgar words related to ethnic slurs and may be an

obscene expression. When asked about which ethnic group they think may be sensitive to certain words, some confidently nominated the Indian ethnicity. Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration), Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic), Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) and Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) shared their views:

I can say not all ethnic groups have that kind of thing. But some tell me that this word is not appropriate in front of our ethnic group or this is considered a vulgar word (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Indians may feel insulted by the word pariah. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

You cannot mention pariah, or keeling also is a very taboo word. These kinds of words can actually ruin the friendship. I do have Indian friends during my school days. Normally if you want to be friends with Indians, do not mention these two words.¹³⁴ 'Pariah' is one of their castes, the lowest caste...do not also called them¹³⁵ 'keling' or mocking their religion, Hindu. Chinese wouldn't mind if we mention 'babi' (swine/hog) in front of them, but do not call them 'kong sai', this they will not tolerate. 'Kong sai' is the same thing as pariah, the lowest caste... (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

Let say, with Chinese, I would not say directly in front of them the words 'babi'; this to avoid any hard feelings. Even though, some of them may not consume pork, we know that some of them do eat pork, so it is their way. The same goes to Hindu's. If I meet them, I will be careful not to mention 'lembu' because I know the cow is sacred to them. (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) is aware that *pariah* and *keeling* (a derogatory term in Malay) are viewed as humiliating, impolite, coarse and degrading words for Malaysian Indians (Ting, 2009; Yoga, 2009). This word once triggered a very controversial issue and created ethnic tensions among the multicultural society as reported by the Malaysian newspaper (Chooi, 2011; Shankar, 2012; Yoga, 2009).

Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) believes that the word *babi* (swine/hog) can upset the Chinese and *lembu* (bull) can cause offense in front of Indian colleagues. The cow or bull in Indian society is traditionally identified as a caretaker and a maternal figure and Indian society honours the cow as a symbol of unselfish giving. He understands that pork is normally consumed by the Chinese while the bull is perceived as sacred by Indian communities. In the interview, Adam refers to Hindu as an ethnicity, not a religion. The actual fact is that Hindu refers to a religion and the people who embrace Hinduism are Indians. This shows that some Malay colleagues cannot distinguish the religion and the ethnicity. The fact is Malaysian Indians can be a Hindu or Christian or Islam, but they are seen ethnically as Indians.

¹³⁴pariah =social outcast, lower caste (Othman, 2010)

¹³⁵*Keling* is (a derogatory term in Malay) viewed as humiliating, impolite, coarse and degrading word for Malaysian Indian.

Some Malay respondents shared their experiences of the taboo words from Kelantan and other states and also the more general taboo words in the Malay society. They explain that *babi* (swine/hog) is a taboo word and represents a negative image for the Muslim community, particularly the Malays at this institution. They also mention several words which are related to the food perceived as delicacies for Malay community but can actually ignite conflict if the food is perceived as a joke by certain states or some Malay sub-ethnic groups. Some Malays explain that the word *lembu* is one of the sensitive words in the Malay community. This finding indicates that the word *lembu* is not only taboo to the Indian community but also to some Malays at Terengganu. They also reveal that some Terengganu Malays can be very sensitive towards the words *anjing* (dog) which other ethnic groups should take into consideration when dealing with Malay colleagues. Other sensitive issues which can insult a Muslim Malay is religion related, associated with the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, *Qur'an* and ¹³⁶*Hadith* have also been delicate subjects for Malay respondents and the Malay community at large.

Mohammad (nonlocal Malay) is aware that *babi* (swine/hog) is a taboo word and represents a negative image for Muslim community, particularly Malays at this institution. He also mentions several words which are related to the food perceived as delicacies by the Malay community but which can actually ignite conflict. The words such as *budu* and *tempe* could anger the Kelantanese and Javanese if used as a bad joke. Ramlah (female, Malay, upper level academic) explains that the word *lembu* is one of the sensitive words for the Terengganu Malay community. Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) recommends replacing *babi* with ¹³⁷*khinzir* or ¹³⁸*kerbau pendek*.

Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level academic) cites several words which have obscene meanings such as *pantat*. These words, when used at Kelantan will not create controversy but become obscene words when used at Terengganu. Some dialects refer to the back of the wok as *bontot* but in the Kelantanese dialect it is referred to as *pa'-tat* (in pronunciation and *pantat* in writing). This word is considered as obscene word by those who are not Kelantanese. Another word that complicates communication is the word *jate tinno*:

The Kelantanese sometime mention 'jate tino', but you will not pronounce that word as 'jantan', it should be 'jate'. For example, 'anak saye dua ore jate, dua ore ttino' (I have two sons, two daughter) - you cannot translate that into 'anak saya dua org jantan, dua org betina' (I have one male and two female children). It's wrong; it should be in the language and the dialect context itself.

Jate (referred to as man/male/human) in Kelantanese or *jantan* referred to as male animal, in standard Malay, not the male human because it consider as inappropriate to use for humans. *Ttino* refers to lady, women in Kelantanese dialect or *perempuan* in standard Malay (female/girls/ladies/women). The word *ttino* in standard Malay refers only to female animal which is unsuitable to use when referring to a female/girls/ladies/women.

¹³⁶*Hadith* = also spelled Hadīth (“News” or “Story”), derived from Arabic word, (حديث, plural: hadith, hadiths, or aḥādīth) record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (prophetic tradition) (Baalbaki, 1995e).

¹³⁷*Khinzir*= is an Arabic word which refers to swine.

¹³⁸*Kerbau pendek*= a local term for *babi* (pig) and sound more polite to refer to swine which literally means as short bull.

Those who are not Kelantanese will feel disrespected because *jantan* (*jatte* as sound in Kelantanese dialect) and *betina* (*ttino* as sound in Kelantanese dialect) in standard Malay normally refers to an animal's gender. Human is referred to as *lelaki* (man) and *perempuan* (women). But this is not the case for Kelantanese as *ttino* is not equal to *betina* (female animal) but is equivalent to *perempuan* (women). It is normal to use *ttino* in Kelantan, but is strictly forbidden to use *betina*. As *betina* refers to immoral women, *ttino* refers to high moral ladies. *Betina* considers taboo words for non-Kelantanese and the Kelantanese as well. Even they are almost the same in sound and almost the same in writing, those words are different. What makes it more confusing is that the pronunciation of *ttino* (pronounce as *Ttee-nor*) is almost the same as *betina* (pronounce as *be-ttee-nor*). This is the reason why some non-Kelantanese will easily be insulted when the Kelantanese use the word *ttino* even though the meaning is originally 'decent'. These words could confuse the non-Malay as well as Malays from other states. These words if being used in Kelantanese context will be no problem but will cause chaos if used outside the Kelantanese context. Misuse of these words can cause confusion and misunderstanding among the Terengganese and Kelantanese Malays as well as with other ethnic groups.

The differences in dialects recently sparked a conflict between two political parties in Malaysia when the opposition leader of PAS, Nik Aziz Nik Mat was accused of saying that women who dress-up indecently deserve to be raped (¹³⁹the original sentence: *perempuan tidak tutup aurat 'patut' dirogol*). This issue manipulated by the Women ¹⁴⁰MCA leader who misunderstood that PAS condones the raping of non-Muslim women. The issue is because of the word '*patut*' used in his text which was said in Kelantanese dialect (*perempuan tidak tutup aurat 'patut' dirogol*). '*Patut*' in the Kelantanese dialect has a different contextual meaning as compared to the one in standard Malay. In standard Malay, the connotative meaning of the word '*patut*' has the element of encouragement. According to the standard Malay, the phrase '*patut dirogol*' in this sentence referred to the action of condoning and encouraging rape towards women who do not cover their *aurat*. The MCA president understood the following: "...Nik Aziz had said that women who do not "*tutup aurat*" (protect their modesty) "deserved to be raped" (Hoong, 2012). However the actual meaning said by the opposition leader was contextual to the Kelantanese dialect, where '*patut*' means 'no wonder' they were raped because the women did not cover their *aurat*, which means the women themselves became the contributing factor.

This suggests that disruption may occur when two cultures co-exist and when the code-switching is practiced among the members. When one or more of the rules of the verbal codes such as phonology, morphology, semantics, syntactic and pragmatics is distinct, these could produce differences in the languages and dialects that people use. In this context semantics is involved which relates to connotative meanings where emotions,

¹³⁹This translation is the nearest that the researcher could explain as the word is rich with contextual and socio-cultural meaning.

¹⁴⁰ MCA = Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) is a uni-racial political party in Malaysia that represents the Malaysian Chinese ethnicity; it is one of the three major component parties of the ruling coalition in Malaysia called the *Barisan Nasional*(BN) in Malay, or National Front in English.

culture, feelings and thoughts that are evoked in others' minds as the result of the words used in conversation.

Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) notes that scissors should not be presented to someone in a book as this will be a negative sign to the Kelantanese. It is perceived that someone will stab you in your back or that you will cut your way to success in your career. The word *babi* (pig/swine) and *sial* (swear words, equal to 'shit') is a negative word for a Kelantanese and viewed as a swear word. They express their anger by saying the word *sial* (known to most Malaysians, as a swear words). Daud (male, Malay, support level administration) mentions that Malays are sensitive when swearing using their parents' names or referring to their ethnic groups or their community. He also feels that the other swears words such as *anak haram* (illegitimate child/bastard) and *anak sial* (retarded child) are very offensive.

'Anak haram' (illegitimate child / bastard) is so sensitive when you mention to someone else or even to an illegitimate child itself. It is not their mistake. They are innocent and a pure soul. The act of their parents was 'haram' (involved in unlawful sexual intercourse), but they are innocent, normally they got mistaken by this... they wrongly accused the children as 'anak haram' (bastard/ illegitimate child) and another thing is 'anak sial' (retarded child). There is more in a regional dialect I believe.

Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) referring to her first experiences with a local lady (Malay), refers to herself as the outsider as *menganjing* (derisive, mocking, teasing, belittle or mimicking) which she suspected that the lady had hard feelings about her and used the word *menganjing*. This word is now sensitive to her.

Sarah (female, Malay, support level administration) is aware that the word *babi* is sensitive to other ethnic groups which can be interpreted as teasing. Yet she is not sure about her own community sensitivities or taboos. Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) admits that any disputes related to her religion and *Al-Qur'an* will easily spark conflict. As a Muslim, they belong to each other and should defend their religion in any way, by mouth, heart, words and hands so as to protect their fellow Muslims and their religion. However acts of terrorism are not promoted as a way to show the significance of Islam.

A Malay respondent was aware that he should choose a topic which was not sensitive when communicating with different ethnic groups. Awang (male, Malay, upper level academic) believed that sensitivity should be applied to all ethnic groups to avoid prejudice.

I believe everyone should be sensitive to every ethnic group. Why we only be sensitive to Indian but not Chinese, this is not right. I think we should be sensitive to every ethnicity.

A small number of the Malay respondents are not aware of and are uncertain about taboo objects, animals or words that can offend other ethnic groups. They are also not aware that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnic groups. They believe some objects are perceived as having a magic power and cannot be interfered with. Some Malays are also unclear whether their own community finds something taboo in relation to objects, words or animals, which other ethnic groups should take into

consideration when communicating. Hence the researcher encouraged them to respond through email whenever they remembered any details.

Chinese respondents are alert about the objects, animals or words that may be sensitive to other ethnic groups. They know that the word *babi* (swine/pig/hog) is not appropriate to mention in front of other ethnic groups such as Malays. They will try to avoid mentioning the words *babi* (swine/pig/hog) yet assume the word *anjing* (dog) is acceptable to other ethnic groups like Malays. They are conscious that dogs and dog droppings are considered taboo in Islam. They are also aware that figurines could offend their Muslim colleagues. They know that in some places, this figurine should not be displayed as they represent a human, deity or animal. Figurines may be realistic or iconic depending on the skill and intention of the creator. Islam prohibits statues and three-dimensional figures of living creatures. The prohibition is stressed in a case the statue is already dignified as angels, prophets, the Virgin, or idols like animals. Islam's stand on this issue is a means of safeguarding the concept of monotheism ("Islamic Views on Erecting Statues .", 2012).

The Chinese respondents also put effort in learning others' cultures. They are also aware that communication will be easier if they know about the culture of their colleagues.

I know several taboo words which should not be cited in front of other ethnic group such as bodoh (stupid), biadap (rude), lembu (cow), anjing (dog), babi (pig), Keling, syaitan (demon).(Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

I don't like to mention 'babi' (pig) in front of Malay colleagues I will try to avoid. I guess only 'babi' (pig). Yet I did mention the word 'anjing' (dog). (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Figurines may not be appropriate in some places, such as you putting figurines on the roadside, this is not proper... I tried to learn others' culture...I love this... if we do not understand others culture, it is difficult to communicate. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic).

They also explained about their own taboos that other ethnic groups should sensitive to. Whenever there is a funeral, someone should not mention a merry topic such as a wedding ceremony and vice versa. This is offensive for the Chinese community when there is such a sad event. They believe a happy event should not be mixed with a sad event. The enclosed community should be aware of this situation whenever there is a funeral in the area. They explain that whenever there is a funeral occasion, the coffins will be around for four to five days. If there is a wedding, the community should hold the wedding at another place. This shows respect to the family. This should be made known to the other ethnic groups living in a multicultural country such as Malaysia. Apart from that, they prefer to use positive words in their ritual ceremonies. For instance in celebrating the birthday, the word *mati* (die) or any word related to death should be avoided. They also explain that any rude or vulgar words which are used to tease the family or individuals are also perceived as a taboo. Yet this is just a guideline and cannot be applied to all Chinese. Swear words are perceived as a taboo to their community. Yet they do explain words that may cause misunderstandings for themselves or others' ethnic groups.

I can say a cat. For Chinese community, the funeral can be 5 to 7 days, the shortest is about 3 days, the problem will be when the neighbour has lots of cats, nearby a Chinese funeral, and they may feel offended because cat is seen as bad omen to their funeral process. Even myself, I'm not keeping a dog at my home, because I understand that Muslims may not like this. Dog droppings are considered taboo for them. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) also mentions that a rude word should not be mentioned in front of the students or staff. He supposes this word portrays that the individual is not professional. These taboos should be acknowledged by other ethnic groups in a multicultural country such as Malaysia.

The interview findings reveal that taboo to Kelantanese Malay is scissors which is a negative sign. Whereas the majority of the Malay respondents agree that several words such as *babi* (pig/swine) are negative words and perceived as taboo in Malay community.

The majority of Malay respondent were not aware of others' taboo words, animals or objects but did notice that swear words generally applied to all ethnic groups. Yet a small number of Malay respondents did describe others' taboo objects and animals. Even though the description of the taboo object was not detailed, they perceived that objects could be seen as magic and sacred to other ethnic groups.

I believe some object is been perceive as having a magic power and cannot be messed it...
(Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) was the only Malay respondent who explained that Chinese may sensitive to the word *babi* (pig) because they consumed pork. He believes that Malays should respect what others consume so not to hurt their colleagues' feelings. He believes that the word *lembu* (cow) is vulnerable to the Indian colleague so it is important not to mention cows in front of them because the cow is a sacred entity to the Hindus.

Let say, with the Chinese, I would not say directly in front of them the words 'babi' (pig), this to avoid any hard feelings. Even though, some of them may not consume pork, we know that some of them do eat pork, so it is their way. The same goes to Hindu's. If I meet them, I will be careful not to mention 'lembu' (cow) because I know the cow is sacred to them. (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

He also suggests other words to lessen sensitive words such as *babi* (pig) to *kerbau pendek* (literally short bull) or *khinzir* (Arabic term) literally and politely to replace *babi* (pig) which sound harsh and impolite to Malay community. Yet one Malay respondent (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional) did not feel that the word *babi* (pig) is sensitive to him but also revealed that the word is vulnerable for the Malay community at large.

A small number of Malay respondents however were aware that some food consumed by Malays from different states could create conflict if they were mocking for this food: such food is *tempe* (fermented soybean) for sub ethnic Javanese Malays and *budu* (fermented fish sauce) for Kelantanese and Terengganese Malays. One Melanau respondent did

explain that *ulat mulong* (sago worm) did become a joke to her colleagues and this annoyed her.

...some people mention 'budu'(fermented fish sauce) or 'tempe'(fermented soybean), 'budu' (fermented fish sauce) is very popular for the Kelantanese, and 'tempe' (fermented soybean), for the Javanese. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

... They sometimes make a joke about ¹⁴¹'ulat mulong'. I don't consume this 'ulat'. I know Melanau eat this delicacy, but I never have it. To me it is not proper to joke about this. They even asked me 'Eh, do you eat this 'ulat'?' it is not right to do that. This has not happened once but many times. I know they detest this food but they don't have to joke about that... (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) is a Muslim Melanau who has never tasted *ulat mulong*. Only non-Muslim Melanau consume this as a delicacy, but her colleagues assume that all Melanau consume this delicacy. She expects her colleagues to respect her as she respects them and their delicacies and prefers not to show it to *jaga hati* (care about others feeling).

...Even if I dislike what they eat, I prefer not to show it. When I first arrived here, I could not eat ¹⁴²keropok lekor. It looks like uncooked keropok. Even though my husband said it was already boiled. But I couldn't eat it, but I never show my dislike (at the same time showing an expression of disgust). I wouldn't do that. (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Apart from food, all Malay respondents take very serious offence if other ethnic groups make any bad remarks about their religion. This includes any matters in Islam, the Prophets, *Al-Qur'an* and *Hadith*, the Islamic scholars and even to their Muslim brothers and sisters as mention by Khadijah (nonlocal Malay).

I guess, when it is related to my religion, whenever someone said bad things to Al-Qur'an, this can actually make me feel infuriated. Or something that refers to my religious interest such as slaughtering a bull for Aidil Adha; when someone refers to this as an act of not respecting other religious beliefs. I believe this is just for my religious celebration; there is nothing to do with theirs, so I guess all these things may be very sensitive issues for me. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) is the only Chinese respondent who mentions Malay sensitivity towards figurines. The majority of other Chinese and Indian respondents indicate *babi* (pig) and *anjing*(dog).

¹⁴¹*ulat mulong* = is the neonate larvae of *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* , red palm weevil, , is a species of snout beetle also known as the Asian palm weevil or sago palm weevil, yellow-white, segmented, legless, and have a chitinous head capsule (characteristic for curculionids) that is a darker brown than the rest of the body. Lived in the Asian palm tree, eaten by deep fried the larvae, contents lots of protein. Known as *sokot* among the Bidayuh, *ulat mulung* among the local Malay and *siet* among the Melanau ("Ulat," 2014)

¹⁴²*Keropok lekor* = long and chewy, look like dough, made from grind fish, mix with sago and steamed or boiled and deep fried to like ("Keropok lekor," 2014).

However, it is not certain if he knows that dogs are allowed in Islam. But Muslims treat dogs as dogs; they are not to be household pets, sleeping indoors and dressing them up in clothes. For Muslims it is permissible to keep a dog for hunting, guarding livestock or guarding crops. It is lawful to own a dog and to touch dogs (with reason) as Islam provide guidelines about washing the body part and the item of clothing touched by the dog's mouth or snout (Banderker, 2012). The dog and swine are the issues that widen the gaps between Malays and the minority groups.

Other Chinese respondents admit that their culture does not have or only have limited restrictions about objects, words or animals. Yet only small numbers are aware the taboo issues in their community. Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) notices cats, Jessica (female, Chinese, middle level academic) about swear words and Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) knows about death taboos. Malays need to acquire more knowledge of their religious restrictions because narrow understandings of their own religious restrictions widen the gap in knowing other ethnicities.

6.5.1 Summary

Information about a taboo object, animal or word in other communities would help Malays to understand their colleagues from a range of ethnic groups. Normally Malays know about taboos during the Chinese New Year celebrations but, for example, not about their burial ceremonies, weddings, religious taboos, words, objects or animals that are considered taboo. Malay personnel believe that knowing others' food and cultural celebrations is enough to know about their colleagues cultural taboos. However it can be argued that this is not sufficient if they are to understand their colleagues from different backgrounds. There are areas that they need to explore, for example, the ones under the "Iceberg" such as other ethnic groups' religious values and practices. They could also develop greater understanding by showing an interest in exploring others' views. This would help to close gaps between the various cultures. Knowing others' religious taboos or restrictions does not mean embracing their religions yet this can enrich their information about other groups. They also need to share their religious restrictions with their colleagues so they develop the appropriate information about the restrictions applied by their Muslim colleagues. All of these may be interpreted as a set of guidelines but the analysis also shows that if these guidelines were implemented, cultural relationships in the institution would be improved.

Listed below is the table of other taboo word which is sensitive to every ethnic.

Taboo words	Meaning in English	Sensitive group
<i>sial</i>	damned	Malay
<i>anjing</i>	dog	Malay
<i>babi</i>	pig/swine	Malay/Chinese
<i>pariah</i>	low caste/untouchable	Indian
<i>Anak haram</i>	illegitimate child/bastard	Malay
<i>Anak sial</i>	retarded child	Malay
<i>lembu</i>	cow/stupid	Malay/Indian
<i>bodoh</i>	stupid	Malay
<i>biadap</i>	rude	Malay
<i>keling</i>	equal to nigger	Indian
<i>syaitan</i>	demon	Malay
<i>Mati</i>	death	Chinese (during happy occasion)

Table 6.11: Taboo words to the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities

The findings suggest that all respondent regardless of ethnicity aware that they should select their topics of conversation carefully while communicating with other ethnic groups to avoid any hard feelings. However, the some topic is difficult to discuss when the society takes issues of culture and religion too seriously. Some topics can be discussed privately and with very carefully guided discussion. Any topic which touches any ethnic group culture and religion could easily been misinterpreted even though the intention is about learning each other. This may make them reluctant to discuss these issues in public. This finding also indicates that the majority of Malay respondents believe that they do not have any problem in relation to language use by colleague from different ethnicities. They also assume that there is no problem because they did not encounter any but minorities see this differently. To conclude, Malay personnel need to acquire more knowledge of their own religious knowledge and others taboos stemming from their religions, words, objects or animals in order to integrate proficiently and ethically with others.

6.5 Learning Minorities Language

The findings show that a small number of Malay respondents indicate that they are trying to learn the minorities' languages such as Mandarin or Tamil in an effort to understand these minorities. Even though a few Malay respondents do know Japanese and Mandarin, they have learnt these through formal education and are small in number. The interview findings reveal that some respondents know a limited range of Tamil and Chinese meanings.

Ramlah is the only Malay respondent who describes her ability in learning a minority language. Yet her ability to speak the language is very limited. Other Malay respondents did not relate any experiences regarding other minority languages.

Chinese and Indian colleagues, however, have made the effort to understand their surroundings by trying to learn the local dialects. These respondents indicate that they are receptive towards the issue of dialect and try to blend into the Malay environment. They believe that learning the local dialect will help them fit into the majority Malay culture. For example Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) uses a local form of address with his local friends, such as ¹⁴³*mek* (miss/Mrs.) to *ambil hati or jaga hati* (care about others feeling) in Malay terms. This local address form provides goodwill especially for Easterners (from the East Coast of the Peninsular of Malaysia). *Ambil hati or jaga hati* refers to certain actions or jobs with the intention of easing someone's feelings. This quality is part of the *budi* structure in Malay: qualities such as *murah hati* (generosity), *hormat* (respect), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *mulia* (righteousness), *timbang rasa* (considerate), *jaga hati* (caring), *budi bicara* (discretion) and many more (Dahlan, 1990). The findings show that the non-Malay respondents exhibit Malay qualities in order to adapt to their environment. Dahlia (2008) reports that Indian respondents adopt the value of piousness just like the Malays and the Chinese embrace the similar value of the Malays such as ambition, filial piety, honesty, knowledge and trustworthiness.

On the other hand, the Terengganu dialect is perceived to be difficult for nonlocal Malays. A small number of non-local Malay staff prefers to use standard Malay because they are not fluent in the Terengganu dialect. They also do not want to offend their local colleagues because nonlocal Malays may sound as if they are mocking the Terengganese if they speak the dialect incorrectly. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) is one of the respondents who are reluctant to learn the Terengganu dialect. She recounted her experience where one of the local ladies said that non-locals speak the Terengganu dialect as if they were *menganjing* (mocking) the Terengganese. That she does not plan to stay longer reinforces her reluctance to learn the dialect.

However, there is a small number of nonlocal Malay staff (married to the locals) who are aware that they should learn the dialect and recognize that the Terengganu dialect is unique in nature. Daud (male, Malay, support level administration), Khadijah (female, Malay, middle level academic) and Sumaiyah (female, Malay, upper level professional) all display an initiative to learn the dialect and mix with the community. For instance Khadijah tries to use the local dialect so that she can blend in with her local colleagues:

I can speak the dialect but am not that fluent. I normally use the Terengganu dialect such as 'sokmo' or 'tak mboh' in my conversations with local colleagues.

Malay respondents display an initiative to learn the local dialect but not the minority dialects such as Mandarin or Tamil. Knowing more than one language is an advantage especially in a multicultural society like Malaysia. As far as the school curriculum, there are no subjects that allow the student to acquire language subjects other than English, Malay and Arabic. This actually could marginalise people by using only one language at school and make the other language feel at sideline. The majority of personnel, regardless of ethnicity, at this institution did not notice any problematic issues with regard to language use. Yet the Malay personnel were encouraged to learn minority languages such

¹⁴³*Mek* = is the local address form to a young lady, married or unmarried.

as Mandarin or Tamil in order to narrow the gap between the ethnic groups and connect them with other cultures.

The Chinese and Indian respondents use a mix of languages such as Malay, English and their mother tongue. They will switch to the appropriate language to suit their colleague's background. They also try to learn the dialect even though they perceive the dialect difficult to understand and to pronounce. This effort impresses their Malay colleagues as indicate by Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) and Fatimah (female, Malay, support level administration).

...G (an Indian colleague) can speak Malay fluently. He really sounds like Malay.

Even after 55 years of independence, Malay respondents in this study seem impressed whenever non-Malays can speak Malay fluently especially if they can do so without an accent. Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) observes that some non-Malays cannot speak Malay fluently because they use English more than Malay during their conversations. He concludes that non-Malays are still not fluent in Malay even though they work with Malays and are born and raised in Malaysia, whose national language is Malay. Yet he admits that he uses Malay with non-Malay personnel at the university unless they cannot understand Malay. He is aware however of the purpose of using language so that people can understand and communicate with each other.

I guess the majority of non-Malays in Malaysia understand what we said. Yet there is some places where non-Malays do not understand Malay. This is maybe from the previous generation...as for the new generation, they can speak English and Malay but yet the emphasis is on English. I'm afraid this will contribute to their not speaking Malay...I certainly will only use English if the recipient cannot understand Malay. The purpose of using language is to make others understand and communicate with us, isn't it?(Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Non-Malay with imperfect command of Malay language normally will be highly praised for being able to use appropriate forms of address, pronouns and lexical choices. Those Malay respondents react amiably towards non-Malay speakers who show a little genteelness in their speech are supported by Teo (1996). Maybe this is the reason why Malays are impressed whenever non-Malay colleagues can speak Malay fluently; because non-Malays are perceived not to know how to speak Malay fluently even though they learn this at school, at higher educational institutions and live in majority Malay states or environments. Acculturation¹⁴⁴ is the right word to describe what the Malays expect from their colleagues of different ethnic. They expect that non-Malay should be able to speak Malay assertively because they assume that they already intersect within Malay language and cultures of the Malay.

Learning the Malay language is considered essential in order to understand Malay culture. To Malays, language is not merely a language it is associated with religion, culture,

¹⁴⁴ Acculturation: It can be described as cultural change associated with social group movement, be it movement within or across nations, that results in persons who have different cultures intersecting. As persons from multiple social groups and cultures intersect, it would be expected that their thoughts, attitudes, values, behaviours, and (in most cases) language would be influenced (Carvajal & Granillo, 2008).

gestures, postures, manners, norms, values, taboos, interaction, and beliefs. It is essential in Malay society that someone follow the “rules of language use’ for proper interaction as ignorance of the proper use of language is interpreted as “*tak tahu bahasa/tak reti bahasa*” (literally ‘not knowing language/lacking language skill, figuratively ‘ill-bred’). Hence, to Malays, language is not simply grammar but interpreted as a system consisting primarily of a socio-cultural grammar such as ‘appropriateness’ and ‘etiquette’ (Teo, 1996).

Chinese and Indian respondents are seen to try to understand their Malay colleagues as well as their dialect and culture. Some Malays do recognise this. Mohammad (male, Malay, middle level academic) notices that minorities could possibly face difficulties in relation to language and culture adaptations while working in the Malay dominant culture. He expects that this is more of a problem for the minorities but not for Malays. Malay colleagues seem to take things for granted while their minority colleagues cannot.

.... They are minorities; I can see they try to understand us better. Maybe there is not much problem on our side, maybe the problem is on their side.

This actually is not a one way problem but a two way problem. The minorities need to adapt in order to fit in while the majority Malays are not aware that they need to acknowledge the minorities. This widens ethnic gaps and creates ethnic tensions. Understanding needs to come from both parties so they can learn about and respect each other’s cultures and practices. If only the minorities know about the majority culture but their Malay colleagues only superficially know the ethnic minority’s’ culture and religion, this is where a gap can emerge. However, where these topics are only discussed in private and with a very careful guided discussion the opportunity for increased understandings remain very limited. Any topic which touches on an ethnic groups’ culture and religion could easily be misinterpreted even though the intention may be to learn about each other. This makes them reluctant to discuss these issues in public. The majority of Malay respondents believe that no problems arise in relation to the language used by their colleagues from different ethnicities. They assume that there is no problem because they do not encounter any. However the minorities may see this differently.

Chinese respondents describe that Chinese dialect in Malaysia is different compared with other overseas Chinese dialects. The localization of the Chinese dialect and the Malay loanwords or borrowings which are derived from other languages, influences the dialect and their use of language. Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) and Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) indicate that Chinese dialect has been localized by the Terangganese Chinese and Kedahan Chinese. Steven is Kedahan Chinese and explains that they also use the local pronouns if referring to someone.

The accent is different... We also use our own dialect, and sometimes refer to ‘awak’ (you) as ‘hang’ (you).

In the Kedahan dialect, *hang* (you) is the local pronoun equal to *awak* (you) in standard Malay. This local dialect influences the Chinese dialect used by the local Chinese, which could occur to the Chinese language across many states of Malaysia. This could be explored by the language researchers to reveal how locality influences Chinese language. Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic) explains the Malay language’s influence on the Chinese language and why Malaysian Chinese is different to overseas Chinese.

Liang describes how Malaysian Chinese are unique in their adaptation and assimilation with local food and languages. This includes some words from standard Malay such as *pandai* (clever) being used as *panlai* (clever) in Chinese language (dialect). Also *suka* (happy) in standard Malay had been used as words in Chinese language (dialect) as *suga* (happy). It can either be Mandarin, Cantonese or Hokkien or other Chinese dialect.

The interview findings indicate that one Malay respondent, Adam (male, Malay, upper level professional) was the only respondent who discussed the use of email in communication. This type of communication has been overlooked in maintaining harmonious relationships among personnel from various backgrounds. Adam believes that this type of communication has its own influence in conversations among colleagues. Mistaken use of the 'Reply' button could have a huge impact on the person and their reputation. This could be another area of interest for communication researchers: to investigate the impact of the technology on communication, specifically on intercultural communication in the Malaysian context or institution. Malay language is highly social and cultural in context and therefore any mistake in grammar is less tolerated by Malays with the person being considered impolite or ill-bred (Teo, 1996).

Respondents were asked if they felt uncomfortable when someone speaks a different language that they do not understand. A small number of the Malay respondents perceived that individuals may have something to hide, so they converse in a different language while others state that they may also feel ignored. Awang, Ramlah and Fatimah who are all Malay explain their feelings but do not understand the implications of the reverse for the minority groups.

They should at least show some respect to me because I'm there. Why should they use their language to talk to each other? Am I an alien? This only happens when I'm dealing with a student... (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)

...I would not feel happy if they use different language to talk to each other while I'm around. To me, it's like they have a secret to hide. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

When the Chinese and Indians speak with each other using their own language they should use standard Malay so others can understand too. (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level professional)

This perception could give rise to negative feelings towards each other. The findings show that some Malay respondents with these perceptions are willing to ask for clarification from the speaker or suggest that others use the standard language. A majority of Malay respondent do not have any negative perceptions, acknowledging that others have their own rights to speak any language they prefer and are comfortable even though they did not understand the language. The findings also suggest that Chinese and Indian respondents do not make any presumptions or assume something negative if others speak a language that they do not understand. Yet they did notice this action could be a destructive behaviour in the organisation.

The findings suggest that all respondents, regardless of ethnicity, are aware that they should select their topics of conversation carefully while communicating with other ethnic groups to avoid any hard feelings. They are also aware that some objects or animals should not be mentioned in front of other ethnic groups. Yet compared with Chinese and Indian respondents, there are a small number of Malay respondents who do not seem aware that there are taboos in mentioning some objects or animals in front of other ethnic groups.

6.6 Nonverbal communication

6.1 The proxemics and haptics

This section summarises the findings from the nonverbal data retrieved in the study. The table in Appendix 1 outlines the survey data collected on the use of proxemics (use of distance) and haptics (touch) from UMT personnel from various background.

6.1.1 Proxemics

The survey respondents were asked if they believed that non-verbal communication generally has the same meaning everywhere in the world. Table 1 (refer Appendix A) shows that 59.1% of respondents did agree that non-verbal communication generally has the same meaning everywhere in the world. Sixty one percent of Malays and 75% of Indian agreed compared with only 25% of Chinese respondents. This suggests that Malay and Indian colleague were not aware that non-verbal communication has different meanings at difference place(s). Whereas 75% of Chinese respondents understand that nonverbal communication can represent different meaning in different places.

Proxemics, the nonverbal element in relation to the use of space and distances can be categorized into four types: intimate, personal, social and public relationships. The survey findings discuss the use of territoriality, ‘a set of behaviours that people display to show that they ‘own’ or have the right to control the use of a particular geographic area’ (Koester & Lustig, 2013, p. 194) including primary, secondary and public territories. The survey findings also highlight central, boundary and ear markers. From Table 2 (refer Appendix A) , the survey respondents were asked about their general idea of proxemics regarding the space, the finding depicts that 92% of respondents were aware that ethnic and religious groups in UMT have their own interpretations of the use of space, including 92.1% of Malays, all the Chinese respondents and 75% of Indians. The survey findings also disclosed that 75% of Malay and 50% of Indian respondents feel uneasy if their male colleagues get too close to their working space, area, desk or chair. Yet 75% Chinese and 50% Indian respondents tolerate this action compared to their Malay colleagues. The Malays may have less tolerance towards the space due to their religious practice in which restricts man and women from being too close if they are not a married couple. This is to forbid the causes, ways and means that might lead to adultery or fornication among a man and women. Islam regards adultery as a hideous and dangerous form of immorality in which the consequences have the effects on one’s religion as well as to the Muslim’s society. The prohibition also works as a preventive means in which to protect the Muslim family lineage from this immorality. This is why the prohibition of adultery is an indisputably established fact of religion that should be known by all Muslims.

Table 3 (refer Appendix A) revealed that 83.7% of female Malay respondents compared to only 63.6% of male Malay respondents feel uneasy if their male colleagues get too close to their working space. This finding indicates that the Malay male colleague might have less concern about proximity compared to their Malay female colleague. Almost 100% of female Malay respondents are uncomfortable if someone from the opposite gender stands too close at their work place compared to 50% of female Chinese respondents. Female Malay respondents thus feel more uncomfortable compared to female Chinese respondent which may be a consequence of their religion where proximity between genders is important. Although the Indian respondents were male, 50% still revealed their discomfort if male colleagues were too close to their workspace and if the opposite gender stands too close to them. The findings indicate that female Malays are more concerned about the proximity of a member of the opposite gender, an element related to their religion as explain above.

There are several categories of territories including primary, secondary and public territories and these were asked during the survey. From the survey data, 72% of Malays, 62.5% of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents feel more comfortable in communicating ideas in their own workplace compared to other places or sections. The survey findings indicate that, regardless of ethnicity, respondents tended not to initiate conversations outside of their comfort zone. This is probably due to cultural values such as power distance, where respect for authority and hierarchy are treasured and it is perceived that only those with authority can appropriately initiate conversations (Lrongs, 2001). The majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, also admit that they feel comfortable at their own workplace and more content in expressing their ideas in their comfort zone compared to when they are at other places. This indicates that in general, they value primary territories at their workplace, especially the Malay respondents probably because of the Malay values hierarchy that may be confining their interaction with their superior.

The survey also asked about their sensitivity of the use of secondary territories. The majority,= of 81.8% of the respondents, regardless of ethnicity, feel *someone is not respecting their privacy if they just take what they want from their desk* which indicates their attitudes towards secondary territories. Ethnically, 78.9% of Malays and 100% of Chinese and Indian respondent believed that this action does not respect their privacy. Their sensitivity towards the use of secondary territories indicate that it might be a sensitive issue to them if anyone violates their personal space. The survey respondents were also asked about their attitudes towards public territories. A total of 75% of Malays, 87.5% of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents prefer to express their ideas freely rather than being asked too. The findings revealed that 50% of Indian respondents feel free to express their ideas without being asked indicates that they feel that they can communicate their ideas publicly without feeling restricted by public territories within the organization. Indian respondents in this study tend to be more expressive compare to their other colleague as propose by Dahlia (2008) in her study which stated that the Indians value Self-confidence and Self-respect as being assured enable them to excel. This depicts the individualist culture valued by the Indian respondent in this study. As presented by Dahlia (2008) that Indian cultural values and beliefs in the caste system and the concept of

'rebirth' influenced their way of life where their beliefs focused on individuals being of their best behaviour in order to be reborn into a higher caste.

The interview however revealed that the majority of Malay respondents indicated that although they did not ask their colleagues from different ethnicities about the proximity that they happy with, they did admit that knowledge about the use of proxemics is useful. This is admitted by Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) as he elaborate:

It is important to know this information. Whenever you communicate with others, there should be a distance or else they will feel uncomfortable. Even I myself feel uncomfortable. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

However, there is a small number of Malay respondents who feel that it is not important to acknowledge this issue. They feel that this should come naturally and they should know the right distance for themselves, in which they feel there is no need to ask them about this issue.

A single Malay respondent reveals her experiences in relation to proximity issues.

I don't mind if the ladies are close to me but not the guys. There is one lecturer who I did yell at because he was so close to me when he talked, it was like he whispered to my ears. This happened during a meeting (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Amina dealt with this experience by being open and able to show her disagreement and dislike for the behaviour of her colleague. She expects that as a Muslim man, he should know the boundary that exists between the male and female. But her experience shows that her expectation should be followed by an aggressive expression. She also stressed on her stand about the practice of proximity among them. She then explains how close someone should be.

To me, it is inappropriate if we can feel their breath. I am very vocal about this and will certainly tell them to keep their distance. I became very strict and uncomfortable whenever he was around. It's my status. I'm a single woman, 'anak dara tua'; I should honour my reputation. He is a married man.

Amina's (female, Malay, middle level academic) background however justify her actions towards the proximity issue. She is known as *anak dara tua*¹⁴⁵ as label by Malay society. But Amina is a highly educated and successful professional woman. In the Malay Muslim society, the definition of 'single women' should be under the four definitional criteria of singleness which are (1) never-married, (2) over 30 of age, (3) not co-habiting, and (4) childless. Sex outside marriage is forbidden for Muslims and 'never-married' should also refer to non-cohabiting and childless or more precisely, never having given birth hence without any biological child (Rozita Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009). In the Malay society, there is a negative label for *anak dara tua* which labelling theory implies that is contributed to

¹⁴⁵ *Anak dara tua* = or also known as *andartu* literally translated as 'old virgin', a never-married women who past the normal marriageable age, yet still virgin. This word denotes a negative connotation as the word 'spinster' and signifies failure and a mark of shame in Malay society. *Anak dara tua* in this case may refer to neutral term as 'a single woman' with occasional usage of the terms 'unmarried women', 'never-married women' and '*andartu*' (Rozita Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009).

their perception towards them and is part of one's self-concept (Henslin, 2005 as cited in Rozita Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009). This negative label shows inferiority and how problematic it is just because it does not adhere to the stereotypes that are expected of them (Rozita Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009). This often invites cynical remarks such as 'what a pity', 'she has not experience it (sex) yet', and 'she's not sellable (*'tak laku'*)'. There is also the perception where single women as suspected to have illicit sexual activities due to them not having a husband (Rozita Ibrahim & Hassan, 2009). This explains Amina's action towards her male colleagues of the same religion and ethnicity. Amina emphasizes the need to maintain her distance because the male colleague is a married man and she is an *anak dara tua*. Therefore she needs to be very sensitive about her status and to preserve her dignity by avoiding any man and thus evading any controversial issues. She is aware of the negative remarks with which society may label her. She believes that culture and religion shape her actions in dealing with proximity and how she reacts.

A single Melanau respondent, Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) however has never asked colleagues about issues of proximity. She develops her information about proxemics based on her observations. Chinese respondents too do not ask their colleagues because they feel it is not necessary and there is no reason why they would be in close proximity with them. They believe that everyone should know their own social or private space and that this may be different from person to person. They are in the assumption that proximity depends on the relationship with the person: either you are close friends, colleagues or acquaintances. They also do not mind being closer to their colleagues from a different gender at the workplace if there is a limited space around as elaborated by Liang (male, Chinese, middle level academic):

...I guess I do not need to ask. Every human being should know their social distance and intimate distance which differs. The distance depends on the relationship, how close you and your friends, and colleague. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Some Chinese and Indian respondents admit that knowing the appropriate distance is important, yet they do not feel it is necessary to ask their colleagues because they assume that they will automatically distance themselves except for a close friends.

The interview reveals interesting facts about the primary territories (PT) that the respondents describe and share. The finding explains that the use of primary territories among the respondents signifies that respondents either feel comfortable or not due to their position in the management level, which in itself may be a reflection of their cultural orientation. Some respondents are able to express ideas while others are not because of the position they hold. The lower they are in managerial level, the more they may feel constrained in expressing their opinion. As in this study, there are not many differences among the ethnic groups but there is a slight difference when it comes to the managerial level. This is due to the Malaysian culture being hierarchical in nature. It shows that 'authority is defined to positions that denote a steep hierarchy' (Mansor and Ali, 1998 as cited in Lrong, 2001). In companies and in general life, there are clear hierarchies in status based on age, title, and income. As indicated by Thong and Jain (1987 as cited in Lrong, 2001) that subordinates should accept centralized power and depend on superiors for

direction where they perceive managers' ability to make independent decisions is more important than their ability to work as team members.

The finding also indicates that some respondents value their public territory when they are in a higher position or in charge of their own space. These respondents tended to control the situation in their own section but not when they were in another section. Respondents' positions did influence their actions in the use of public territories. This may be a reflection where Malay-dominant institutions are seen to be a more masculine (Rashid et al., 1997). However the differences among these three ethnic groups are apparent in applying their public territories as in interrupting conversations because the Malays prefer to be more informal when interrupting such as using jokes, but the Chinese prefer to raise the hand and voice out as Indians would intrude politely. Rashid et al. (1997) reports that the Malays and Chinese have low power distance as compared to the Indians that value high power distance. This in turn would explain the act of the Malay and Chinese in this study that relate to their use of public territories. Yet some of the Malay and Chinese respondents did feel awkward to interrupt during meetings. The results of the study are in contrast to Hofstede's (2001) finding where he found that Malaysian respondents are in high score of power distance (score of 104).

6.1.2 Haptics (touch)

Touch can provide a plethora of meanings, so the survey asked respondents about their use of touch and their sensitivity towards this element of nonverbal communication at UMT. Touch is subjected to cultural differences as every culture has rules about touching. Some cultures may be comfortable with a lot of touching and some may constitute a touch avoidance society.

Table 7 (refer Appendix A) demonstrates that 89.5% of Malay, 50% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents are aware that every ethnic and religious group in UMT may be sensitive to the use of touch or haptics. Similarly 97.4% of Malay, 62.5% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents feel uncomfortable touching their colleagues of the opposite gender although they may be from the **same** religion and ethnic group. The survey data shows that the respondents feel comfortable touching their colleagues of the **same gender** although they are from different ethnic groups and religion which portrays 50% of Malays, 75% of Chinese and 75% of Indians. Another 50% of Malay respondents feel uncomfortable touching their colleagues of the **same gender from** different ethnicities and religions. Questions NV24, NV26 and NV27 (refer Appendix A) asked about the respondents' awareness of touching at UMT. The survey revealed that respondents, regardless of ethnicity, were aware that certain ethnic groups may have taboos in touching practices with some ethnic groups not liking to be touched in some areas of their body because of their cultural and religious beliefs and those ethnic groups have different greetings practices. However, only a small percentage, 44.7% of Malays and 37.5% of Chinese feel uncomfortable simply touching their inferior or superior of the same gender from a different ethnic group and religion. To conclude, Malay respondents were more concerned in terms of touching practices compared with their Chinese and Indian counterparts. This is primarily due to their religious practices.

This issue was elaborated more during interview process. The interview respondents then were asked about their awareness of touching among ethnic groups, taboos in touching practices, the use of touch in their cultural and religious beliefs including their greeting practices. They were also asked concerning their feelings about touching colleagues of the opposite gender of the same religion and ethnic group, colleagues of the same gender but from different ethnic group and religion group and touching inferiors or superiors of the same gender with a different ethnicity or religion.

Malay respondents were aware about touching colleagues. It is appropriate to shake hands with colleagues but hitting someone's head is not allowed. They also shared their experiences about how they use touch in their work section. They touch whenever they met and leave, shaking hands and hugging each other three times, left and right. They are also aware that these greetings may be different from other ethnic groups. Some of the Malay respondents were not sure which ethnic group have sensitivity about the use of touch, have a taboo practices or disapprove of using touch for religious reasons. In their culture and community, they practice touch but that also depends on the individual. Some Malay respondents explained that they feel uncomfortable touching their colleagues with the same gender but from a different ethnicity and religion. They mentioned that they know that Chinese and Indians have several touch taboos but they were not able to give examples. As Muslims, they are aware that touching practices are important. They are comfortable when touch is limited only to the same gender.

The explanation for the Malays to restrict their touch is based on the requirements of their religion that prohibit handshakes between a woman and man for is the fear of provoking sexual desire or enjoyment or even for the fear of temptation. This is based on the general rule that stipulates that blocking the means to evil is obligatory, especially if the signs are clear. There is a dispensation in shaking hands with old women/old men with whom there is no fear of desire. The same applies to the young girls and young boys. Shaking hands between males and females who are non-*mahrims* is only permissible when there is no desire or fear of ¹⁴⁶*fitnah*. But if there is fear of *fitnah*, desire, or enjoyment, then handshaking is no doubt *haram* (unlawful). Handshaking between males and females who are non-*mahrims* should be restricted to necessary situations such as between relatives or those whose relationships are established by marriage. It is preferable not to expand the field of permissibility in order to block the means to evil and to be far away from doubt. Also, it is preferable for the pious Muslim, male or female, not to stretch out his/her hand to shake the hand of anyone of the opposite sex who is non-*mahram*.

Different geographical areas also have different practices: the west coast of Malaysia and the east coast of Malaysia as explain by Muhammad (male, Malay, middle level academic):

At the east coast, touching is considered sensitive, especially among men and women. While at west coast it is between the young and the elderly. I once met with a granny at

¹⁴⁶*fitnah* = Refers to "causing problems between people" or attempting to create a chaotic situation that tests one's faith (Noresah, 2010b), also known as *fitna* or *fitnat* (فِتْنَةٌ), derived from Arabic word.

the age of 70's when I was teaching at ¹⁴⁷Melaka. There was no problem when I shake hand with this granny. But here (at Terengganu), when I did the same thing, shaking hands with the 70 years old granny was still unacceptable. (Muhammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Some Malay respondents are uncomfortable touching superiors or inferiors even though they are of the same gender. Other Malays are uncomfortable touching colleagues of the same gender yet from a different ethnic or religious background. Their touching practices really depend on how close their relationship is with the other individual helping them decide who they will shake hands or kiss cheeks with. Some prefer to shake hands rather than give a body hug yet will still choose not to stand too close when shaking hands with colleagues from different religions. As Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) observes that men and women at UMT do not shake hands with each other, even with the Vice-Chancellor.

I can see there is a good practice here, where men and women do not shake hands. Do you notice that? Even our Prof ¹⁴⁸VC did the same thing.

He then compares this practice at the pervious institution where he works.

It's not the same here. At first I remembered our ¹⁴⁹TNC HEPA who did shake hands. When he first started his job, he attended one occasion and shook hands with female students. Then, when he knows later that we don't practice that here, he didn't do it. That is a good thing, he asked Prof VC about this, and he told him that here we normally did not shake hands with the ladies. He also asked why and after the incident, he is really aware of it.

This suggests that the upper management was concerned about the general practice of touch which is also related to their sensitivity of the religion.

Some Malays never ask colleagues about their touching practices as they feel that this is not important since they themselves do not like to be touched and some presume that it is important to have the knowledge. Some Malay respondents assume that there is no differences in the use of touch in terms of region.

Some Malays are aware that ethnic groups have certain restrictions in the use of touch. Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) reflects that Chinese with Siamese descent do restrict the use of touch, he knows that there is discomfort sometimes even between male and male body contact:

¹⁴⁷Melaka = or Malacca is the third smallest Malaysian state, after Perlis and Penang. It is located in the southern region of the west coast of Malay Peninsula. Malacca is situated roughly two-thirds of the way down the west coast, 148 km south of Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia.

¹⁴⁸ VC= Vice Chancellor

¹⁴⁹ TNC HEPA= Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs (*HEPA = Hal Ehwal Pelajar*)

As far as I know, Chinese Siamese descents do have some constraints in the use of touch. They are not that comfortable with the body contact. As a Muslim, if the body contact is between male and male, there will be no problem, but body contact is not allowed with a women.

They mention that Malays are more polite (*beradap*) and reserved, which influences their use of touch. In general, Malays are very sensitive if the section of the head is touched. They assume that all ethnic groups are also sensitive about this part.

Chinese respondents explain that in their community they rarely practice the use of touch. However the touch is used for handshakes or to help the needy. Yet the use of touch in their community is not prohibited. They also feel uncomfortable touching their colleagues from a different gender even though they may be from the same ethnicity and religion. They explain that shaking hands is not a problem but not normal practice. Handshakes across gender are not prohibited yet touching practices are limited. For instance, hugging is only allowed among couples and hand shaking is only allowed among friends. They are also aware of the touching practices at this institution whenever they are dealing with students. They admit that it is a sensitive issue and they should be mindful of cultural practices related to their Muslim colleagues' and students' religious practices. They believe that this will create a conducive environment for students as well as his colleagues from diverse backgrounds if they understand the Malay practices. The Chinese respondent are aware and perceive that Malays are sensitive to the use of touch.

I know that Malay have certain restriction, the do's and don'ts. I guess they cannot simply touch anyone? As far as I know, they cannot touch at all. Indians, I guess, should be ok. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

The interview findings indicate that the Chinese respondents in this study were very knowledgeable about the use of touch. They have learnt a lot from their observation and by mingling with their Malay colleagues. They adapt very well to the nonverbal practice of touch and are sensitive about this practice. Yet it is unknown whether they are aware the reasons why the Malay Muslims seem very restricted about the use of touch because no respondent seems to explain the reason why Malay colleagues cannot simply shake hands with a different gender as explained above.

The single Indian respondent explains that his community practice touch especially when they part from their parents and seek their blessing. Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) explains Indians normally touch the feet or prostrate themselves to show respect to parents. Prostrating or touching feet is also an appropriate greeting in the Indian community. He also feels uncomfortable in touching colleagues from different gender even though they may be from the same ethnic group or religion, regarding this as ¹⁵⁰*tidak manis* (improper).

This information shared by Aditya is very valuable because the researcher is also unaware that touching feet is a way to show respect to the parents and considered as a greeting in the Indian community. Yet the experience shared by Aditya cannot be generalised to all

¹⁵⁰*tidak manis* = literally means unpleasant or unlikeable action

Indians in Malaysia as different sub-Indian ethnic group may have different ways in the practice of touch.

6.1.3 Summary

Overall, in terms of proxemics, all respondents valued their use of distance at the workplace though it may be varied among the different ethnicities. The Malay respondents, due to their religious and cultural beliefs, reported that their use of distance varied in terms of gender. However it was not clear whether Malay respondents were also aware that the other ethnic groups such as Indians were also sensitive to the use of distance in their community and with different genders (Dahlia, 2008). The study by Dahlia (2008) reported that Indians hold their cultural values of Rituals and Traditions which include the relationship between boys and girls (which is believed that the use of space was involve), marital arrangement and ways of eating. However as Malays are devout Muslims, the issues of *mahram* will be raised whenever issues of distance occur. However, this does not mean that Chinese and Indians ignore its importance but the results revealed that it was not an important issue for them compare

to the Malay respondents. Furthermore, the Chinese and Indian respondents suggested that they were aware that they should know about the use of distance because they had to deal with this daily when interacting with Malay colleagues.

The respondents also described their experiences in the use of haptics (touch). Its use also varies among the ethnic groups. Malays seem to be more serious about this nonverbal practice compared with Chinese and Indian respondents. This is also due to the religious and cultural reasons outlined above. Yet the majority of the Malays do not seem to be aware that other ethnic groups also have several restrictions in relation to the use of touch. Similarly, Chinese and Indian respondents were more aware about the taboos and the restrictions of their Malay colleagues than vice versa. This reinforces the dominance of the Malay culture and the inferiority of the minority cultures in this higher education context, a finding found throughout the study.

6.7 Conclusions

That each ethnic group differs in terms of the verbal and nonverbal communication is displayed by the selected personnel at UMT. The findings touched on language use, the variety of languages spoken and the local Terengganu dialect. The findings also covered the use of local dialects and ethnic variations in language use, experiences in misunderstanding local or ethnic dialects, taboo words, objects or animals in relation to the use of words and semantic issues related to the local dialect and standard Malay. The data revealed that Malay respondents could use Malay and English yet had very limited skills in other ethnic minorities' languages such as Mandarin or Tamil. Malays felt no need to learn minority languages or dialects, reaffirming their dominant status despite that fact this could help the integration processes as well as developing healthier relationships with minority cultures. Chinese and Indian respondents agreed that Malay language is not the only language that could help this integration process and hoped that Malay colleagues could at least learn their language or dialect to avoid misunderstandings.

Findings from the data collected in relation to nonverbal communication show that the three ethnic groups have different interpretations of the uses of proxemics and haptics with the Malays being more sensitive compared with their Chinese and Indian colleagues. The use of proxemics and haptics is related to Malays' religious obligations and not adhering to these could affect their faith as well as generate negative impressions especially from fellow Muslims. Malay respondents remained unaware that the Chinese and Indians have their own understandings of the use of proxemic and haptics, again reinforcing the pervasive dominance of the Malay culture in the institution and the marginalisation of alternative groups. The use of verbal and nonverbal communication among the ethnic group in this study did generate various result which differentiate each ethnic group in using the verbal and nonverbal communication during their interaction with their colleague from diverse background, culture and religion. The Malay colleague, take for granted their verbal and nonverbal communication towards the minorities which limits their awareness about other ethnic restrictions in verbal and nonverbal communication. Vice versa, their colleagues from different ethnic group were fully aware about the Malays, a reality of the marginalisation which characterises the Malay dominance in this institution. The dominance of the Malay practice of verbal and nonverbal somehow make the potential of the other practices of this type of communication not being acknowledged and lie under the surface which results in the ignorance of practices from other cultures.

The findings indicate that there is a need for a Malay colleague in this study to learn if not be fluent in of the language of others in order to close the gap among the ethnic groups. However other ethnic groups in this study might have a difficulty in understanding the Terengganu dialect. It is recommended that informal events could encourage the effort in learning other languages in addition to the local dialect. Moreover, the interaction at these informal events can be an informal class for them to exchange their knowledge of each other's languages and dialect.

Chapter Seven explores the conflict experienced by the respondents in relation to their ethnicity, religion, the use of language and their styles of resolving conflict. The chapter also discusses the One Malaysia concept in relation to the Malaysian situation nowadays. Chapter Eight reviews the conclusions and recommendations stemming from the findings.

CHAPTER 7: RESPONDENTS' CONFLICT PROFILES AND ONE MALAYSIA POLICY

7.1 Introduction

This section discusses the conflict which emanates from the cultural values and verbal and nonverbal communication practices of the respondents. The section covers the survey data and interview findings, exploring the respondents' general experiences of conflict as well as their strategies for dealing with conflict. The data here is analysed based on the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict: avoiding, accommodating [obliging], competing [dominating/controlling], compromising and collaborating [integrating] (Hall, 2005, p. 229). These findings are also discussed in relation to the One Malaysia policy.

7.2 Conflict

7.2.1 Experiences of conflict: ethnicity, language, religion, nonverbal

Different cultures use a variety of ways to handle conflict, and this can become a source of multicultural conflict. Table 7.1 below shows how respondents had experienced conflict with regard to their ethnicity, use of language and religion at UMT.

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
CF1	Have you ever experienced conflict with regard to your ethnicity at UMT?	No	67	88.2	5	62.5	4	100.0	76	86.4
		Yes	9	11.8	3	37.5	0	.0	12	13.6
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
CF2	Have you ever experienced conflict with regard to your use of language at UMT?	No	68	89.5	5	62.5	4	100.0	77	87.5
		Yes	8	10.5	3	37.5	0	.0	11	12.5
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
CF3	Have you ever experienced conflict with regard to your religion at UMT?	No	71	93.4	7	87.5	4	100.0	82	93.2
		Yes	5	6.6	1	12.5	0	.0	6	6.8
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 7.1: Experience of conflict in relation to ethnicity, language use and religion

Table 7.1 indicates that 13.6% of respondents had experienced conflict in relation to their ethnicity at UMT. Reported frequency of ethnic-related conflict was 11.8% by Malays, followed by 37.5% of Chinese while the Indian respondents reported that they did not experience any conflicts with regard to their ethnicity. Next, 10.5% of Malays and 37.5% of Chinese experienced conflict with regard to the use of language at UMT. The next finding indicates that 6.6 % of Malay and 12.5% of Chinese respondents experienced conflict in relation to their religion. The findings indicate that minority respondents did experience conflict with regard to their ethnicity, use of language and religion. Chinese respondents revealed small percentages of reported incidents of conflict in relation to their ethnicity, use of language and religion.

Interview respondents shared their experiences in relation to conflict pertaining to their ethnicity, religion, use of language and nonverbal communication. One of the Malay respondents explains how local dialect can cause misunderstandings.

It's the pronouns. I thought it is okay for me, I believe that this is a good thing to say because whenever we make ¹⁵¹du'a to Allah, we always say 'Ya Allah, aku...' (Ya Allah, I...) To me, every colleagues whomever close to me, I will use 'kau'. To Terengganu colleagues the word 'aku' is harsh. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Aku is equivalent to the first pronoun: 'me' or 'I', a personal pronoun of English. *Ngko* is equivalent to 'you' as a second personal pronoun of English. The word *aku* is sometimes perceived as a harsh word for some Malays from different sub-ethnic groups. The meaning also depends on the location. In this case, local colleagues felt annoyed that the respondent had used this word. Yet the word is accepted by the Javanese Malay sub-ethnic group. The same case applies to *ngko* because not all local Malays prefer to be addressed as *ngko* or refer to themselves as *aku*. Therefore, Mohammad was aware that this word was not used at this institution. *Kau* is equivalent to 'you' as in a second personal pronoun of English. The words *kau* and *ngko* refer to the same thing, yet *ngko* is more colloquial. Mohammad also shared his experiences in relation to religious values. As a new academic (previously he taught at boarding school) he felt that some colleagues practice different religious values and this could become a significant source of conflict.

Mohammad was the only Muslim respondent who raised this as an issue. He also referred to issues of hierarchy, where address forms can cause conflict with colleagues.

Sometimes if we do not address them properly, as 'Dr' or as 'Prof', this could be a mistake.

One Malay respondent experienced discomfort with male colleagues who moved too close.

I was forced to take action when he was so stubborn. I needed to tell him verbally otherwise he moved closer until he almost kissed my cheek. (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Amina uses silence as her typical nonverbal strategy for avoiding people and conversations, but in this instance silence did not work. In meetings, speaking out can create conflict, especially when a meeting is held to get support from members. If members give their views on matters not accepted by the chairman, this prolongs meetings and generates animosity. Amina believes that handling conflict depends on ethnicity.

Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration), explained that the management should understand employees' cultural and ethnic background when seeking to solve conflict.

This is important because the higher your position the more the employees under your control could include variety of ethnic groups. Management needs to consider their employees' cultural and religious backgrounds in handling conflict.

¹⁵¹*Du'a* = refer to a prayer, an act of the servant in appeal for a wish to be fulfilled to his/her master, Allah, the Most Gracious and the most Merciful.

However, Yahya believes that this is often not the case at UMT, but that it is important because he sees that UMT expansion will lead to a more complex and multi-racial staff profile.

Sumaiyah (female, Melanau, upper level professional) believes that individual traits and religious beliefs influence approaches to handling conflict. She also made the point that management should be more sensitive towards employees' cultural and religious backgrounds.

I observed that they sometimes make fun about your ethnicity. For instance, they make fun of me by asking me if I eat¹⁵² 'ulat mulong'.

This delicacy is forbidden for Muslim Melanau.

They insisted I eat 'keropok lekor' which I tried until I vomited. This was because I want to¹⁵³ 'jaga hati' so they should at least be sensitive to others culture as well. Up till now, they sometimes tease me by saying I eat raw fish which is another Melanau delicacy,¹⁵⁴ 'umai'. This 'umai' is not raw or uncooked.

Jaga hati is important, with Malays being taught to be more concerned about others' feelings than their own feelings (*manusia Melayu dididik menjaga hati dan perasaan orang lain lebih daripada kepentingan perasaan sendiri*) (Saidatul, 1999 as cited in Lim, 2003). Even though Sumaiyah is a Melanau, she employs several Malay values in her daily life because of the influence of the locals around her. Hall (1976 as cited in Lailawati, 2005) notes that a high context individual is sensitive to feelings in relationships.

The majority of Chinese respondents reported that they had experienced conflict with regard to their ethnicity and use of language at UMT. Liang believed that conflict can be avoided if everybody is more rational in their interactions. Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) suggests:

... I can see at UMT there is a racist element. This is such a shame as I expect all UMT members should be responsible in implementing One Malaysia, where we try to achieve harmony, not conflict based on skin colour. Once I needed to attend to my religious obligations and I just wanted the authorities to know so that they will know how to deal with this issue the next time, but they just ignored my request. This is not right.

Steven feels that One Malaysia did not bring any substantive changes to the various ethnicities at UMT, and there needs to be more work to implement the concept rather than have it remain as a concept in theory.

7.2.2 Styles of resolving conflict

¹⁵²*Ulat mulong*= scientifically known as *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* or sago worms can be found on the fell trunks of the Sago palm (refer picture of sago tree) and is a delicacy for Melanau ethnic. Melanau is one of the indigenous majority ethnic groups in Sarawak, East of Malaysia (Kay, 2007).

¹⁵³*Jaga hati* = literally means being sensitive about others feeling.

¹⁵⁴*Umai*= is one of Sarawak's traditional dishes famous among the Melanau ethnic. *Umai* is basically made from a variety of sea food such as fish, prawns or salted fish and mixed with a lemon.

Survey respondents were given six types of conflict situations and fourteen potential solutions that they could choose from, using a drop down box. The conflict situations were:

- CF4 *When there is a conflict between my colleagues from different ethnic groups but similar religion, I will...*
- CF6 *When there is a conflict between me and my superior, I will...*
- CF7 *When there is a conflict between me and my inferior, I will...*
- CF8 *When there is a conflict between my colleagues from the opposite gender, I will...*
- CF9 *When there is a conflict between my colleagues from the same ethnicity but different in religion, I will...*
- CF10 *When there is a conflict between my colleague with different ethnicity, religion and cultural background, I will...*

The potential solutions included:

1. *... gunnysacking.(AV)*
2. *...will try to be overly polite. (AV)*
3. *...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict. (AV)*
4. *...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)*
5. *...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur. (AV)*
6. *...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)*
7. *... elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)*
8. *...deny my responsibility towards the conflict. (CP)*
9. *...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)*
10. *...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person. (AC)*
11. *...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us. (AC)*
12. *...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)*
13. *...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found. (CLL)*
14. *...compromise whenever a conflict arises.(CPM)*

Table 7.2 below displays the results in terms of frequency of respondents' choices of preferred solution styles. From the fourteen choices, no. 13 (*... collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) received the highest frequency score and was selected more frequently by the respondents for all of the situations given. This was followed by choice no. 5 (*... avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) then by choice no. 4 (*... by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*) and choice no. 14 (*... compromise whenever conflicts arise*).

The respondents liked least no. 7 (*... elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it*) and no. 10 (*... sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person*) while no. 11 (*... not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us*) received the lowest score out of the fourteen alternatives. The choice of styles indicates that all respondents try to avoid conflict (Cai & Fink, 2002). This suggests that collective cultures prefer to compromise and integrate more than individualist cultures (Cai & Fink, 2002). Choice no. 6 (*...lying in order to avoid conflict*), no. 8 (*...deny my responsibility towards the conflict*) and no. 9 (*...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation*) were not chosen by any of the respondents. All respondents avoided lying and denying responsibility, in essence reinforcing their passive approach to resolving conflict.

		CF4		CF6		CF7		CF8		CF9		CF10	
		Frequency (n)	Per cent (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Valid	1. ... gunnysacking. (AV)	1	1.1	8	9.1			1	1.1	1	1.1	3	3.4
	2. ... will try to be overly polite.(AV)	-	-	5	5.7	2	2.3		-	1	1.1	1	1.1
	3. ... using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	3	3.4	1	1.1	1	1.1	1	1.1	1	1.1	2	2.3
	4. by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	7	8.0	5	5.7	5	5.7	4	4.5	8	9.1	4	4.5
	5. ... avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	14	15.9	2	2.3	1	1.1	10	11.4	9	10.2	18	20.5
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict.(CP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7. ... elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	-	-	-	-	1	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict. (CP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9. ... being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	10.... sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person. (AC)	-	-	2	2.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	11. ... not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us. (AC)	-	-		-	-	-	1	1.1	1	1.1	-	-
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	1	1.1	9	10.2								
	13. ... collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	57	64.8	52	59.1	73	83.0	68	77.3	64	72.7	55	62.5
	14. ... compromise whenever conflicts arise. (CPM)	5	5.7	4	4.5	5	5.7	3	3.4	3	3.4	5	5.7
Total	88	100.0	88	100.0	88	100.0	88	100.0	88	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.2: Frequency of respondents' chosen solution styles

Table 7.3 below indicates that 64.8% of respondents chose solution no.13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) in order to manage conflict between colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds. Ethnically 64.5% of Malay, 75%

of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents preferred this solution, whereas 20% of Indian respondents chose solution no. 3 (*using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*) and another 25% preferred solution no. 5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*).

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF4 When there is a conflict between my colleagues from different ethnic but similar religion, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	1	25.0	3	3.4
	4. ...be using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	7	9.2	0	.0	0	.0	7	8.0
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	13	17.1	0	.0	1	25.0	14	15.9
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until I satisfy with it.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	10. ...sacrifices my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	11. ...not care whose who going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	49	64.5	6	75.0	2	50.0	57	64.8
	14. ...compromise whenever conflicts arise.	3	3.9	2	25.0	0	.0	5	5.7
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.3: Solution based on ethnicity (CF4)

The no. 5 solution (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) is also the second most popular solution chosen by Malay respondents at 17.1%. The other solutions considered (from high to low score) by respondents included no.4 (*...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*), no. 14 (*...compromise whenever a conflict arises*), no. 3 (*...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*), no. 1 (*...gunny sacking*) and no. 11 (*...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us*). The

findings show that the majority of Malay and Chinese respondents preferred to collaborate to resolve conflict, while Indian respondents choose a variety of solution types, such as avoidance, in addition to collaboration. There were other small percentage frequencies for solution types chosen by Malay and Chinese respondents such as avoiding, compromising and accommodating.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF6 When there is a conflict between me and my boss, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	3	3.9	0	.0	0	.0	3	3.4
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	4. ...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	5	6.6	0	.0	0	.0	5	5.7
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	10. ...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	11. ...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	8	10.5	0	.0	0	.0	8	9.1
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	49	64.5	7	87.5	4	100.0	60	68.2
	14. ...compromise whenever a conflict arises.	4	5.3	1	12.5	0	.0	5	5.7
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.4: Situation 2 (CF6) and solutions chosen by the respondents

Table 7.4 shows that 64.5% of Malay, 87.5% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents preferred solution no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) to solve the conflict between them and their superior. The second highest score was solution no. 12 (*...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes*) which was chosen by 10.5% of Malay but no other ethnic groups. Malay respondents also chose solution no. 1 (*...gunny sacking*), no. 2 (*...will try to be overly polite*), no. 3 (*...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*), no. 4 (*...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid*

sensitive topics), no. 5(...*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*), no. 7(...*elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it*), no. 11(...*not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us*) and no 14. (...*compromise whenever conflicts arise*). 12.5% of the Chinese respondents preferred solution no. 14 (...*compromise whenever a conflict arises*) rather than no. 13 (...*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*). They also favoured a variety of solutions including avoidance, accommodating, compromising and competing. This indicates that the majority of respondents prefer to try to collaborate with their superiors rather than using other solution styles.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF7 When there is a conflict between me and my inferior, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	4. ...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	3	3.9	1	12.5	1	25.0	5	5.7
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	10. ...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	11. ...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	63	82.9	7	87.5	3	75.0	73	83.0
	14. ...compromise whenever conflict arises.	5	6.6	0	.0	0	.0	5	5.7
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.5: Situation 3 (CF7) and solution types chosen

Table 7.5 shows that 82.9% of Malay respondents preferred no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) to resolve the conflict between them and their inferior. Other Malay respondents also chose no. 2 (*will try to be overly polite*), no. 3 (*using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*), no. 4 (*by using*

discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics) and no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arises*) as preferred methods for solving conflict between themselves and an inferior. About 87.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents also preferred solution no. 13(*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*). The Chinese and Indian respondents also chose other solutions such as no.4 (*...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*) as a palatable way to resolve conflict.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF8 When there is a conflict between my colleagues from the opposite gender, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	4. ...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	9	11.8	0	.0	1	25.0	10	11.4
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	10. ...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	11. ...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	58	76.3	7	87.5	3	75.0	68	77.3
	14. ...compromise whenever conflict arises.	2	2.6	1	12.5	0	.0	3	3.4
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.6: Situation 4 (CF8) and solutions chosen

Table 7.6 shows that 76.3% of Malay respondents favoured solution no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) when trying to solve conflict between themselves and colleagues of the opposite gender. Other Malay respondents chose solution no. 1 (*gunnysacking*), no. 3 (*using humour to distract from the real issues*)

in a conflict), no.4 (*by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*), no. 5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) and no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arise*) as preferred methods for resolving conflict between themselves and colleagues of the opposite gender. About 87.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents also preferred solution no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*). Only a small percentage of Chinese respondents preferred no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arise*) and a small number of Indian respondents selected solution no. 5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*).

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF9 When there is a conflict between my colleagues from the same ethnicity but different in religion, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0%	1	1.1%
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0%	1	1.1%
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0%	1	1.1%
	4. ...be using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	8	10.5	0	.0	0	.0%	8	9.1%
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	8	10.5	0	.0	1	25.0%	9	10.2%
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	10. ...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	11. ...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0%	1	1.1%
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0%	0	.0%
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	54	71.1	7	87.5	3	75.0%	64	72.7%
	14. ...compromise whenever conflicts arise.	2	2.6	1	12.5	0	.0%	3	3.4%
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0%	88	100.0%	

Table 7.7: Situation 5 (CF9) and chosen solution types

Table 7.7 shows that 71.1% of Malay, 87.5% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents favoured solution no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) when trying to solve conflict with colleagues of the same ethnicity but different religion. Only a small number of Chinese and Indian respondents chose solutions no. 5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) and no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arise*). Other Malay respondents favoured no. 1 (*gunnysacking*), no. 2 (*will try to be overly polite*), no. 3 (*using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*), no. 4

(*by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*), no. 5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) and no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arises*) as preferred methods for trying to resolve conflict with the same ethnicity but different religion.

		Ethnicity							
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
CF10 When there is a conflict between my colleagues with different ethnicity, religion and cultural background, I will	1. ...gunnysacking. (AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	1	25.0	3	3.4
	2. ...will try to be overly polite.(AV)	1	1.3	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
	3. ...using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict.(AV)	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
	4. ...by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics. (AV)	4	5.3	0	.0	0	.0	4	4.5
	5. ...avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur.(AV)	18	23.7	0	.0	0	.0	18	20.5
	6. ...lying in order to avoid conflict. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	7. ...elevate one's own arguments until satisfied with it.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	8. ...deny my responsibility towards the conflict.(CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	9. ...being passive towards the conflict, so I can win the situation. (CP)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	10. ...sacrifice my own goals for the sake of the other person.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	11. ...not care who's going to win when there is a conflict between us.(AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	12. ...giving in to my colleague/ my boss wishes. (AC)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
	13. ...collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found.(CLL)	46	60.5	6	75.0	3	75.0	55	62.5
	14. ...compromise whenever conflicts arise.	3	3.9	2	25.0	0	.0	5	5.7
Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0	

Table 7.8: Situation 6 (CF10) solutions chosen

Table 7.8 indicates that 60.5% of Malay, 75% of Chinese and 75% of Indian respondents chose solution no. 13 (*collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) when dealing with conflict involving colleagues with different ethnicities, religions and cultural backgrounds. Only 25% of Chinese respondents preferred no. 14

(*compromise whenever a conflict arises*), while 25% of Indian respondents preferred no. 1 (*gunnysacking*). Other Malay respondents also chose no.1 (*gunnysacking*), no. 2 (*will try to be overly polite*), no.3 (*using humour to distract from the real issues in a conflict*), no. 4 (*by using discreet/prudent remarks to avoid sensitive topics*), no.5 (*avoiding the topics where conflicts may occur*) and no. 14 (*compromise whenever a conflict arises*) as a way of solving conflict between colleagues of different ethnicity, religion and cultural background.

The survey findings suggest a collaborative style is preferred by people regardless of ethnicity. Other styles favoured included avoidance followed by compromising and to a lesser extent accommodating. This is in line with the Cai and Fink (2002) study which found that individualist cultures prefer avoidance styles, while collectivist cultures tend more towards compromising and integrating. Respondents chose collaborative styles which tend to indicate that they were from a collectivist culture where goals are highly valued and given precedence over individual obligations and goals (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Hofstede (1980 as cited in Brew & Cairns, 2004) and other researchers specify that Western nations are more individualistic compared with East Asian nations (Smith, Trompenaars & Dugan, 1995, Smith, Dugan & Trompenaars, 1996 as cited in Brew & Cairns, 2004), and that this influences their ways of resolving conflict.

The interview data demonstrates that Malay respondents considered that preferred methods for solving conflict depend on the individual as well as on culture, background and religion. This includes an individual's emotional state, their education and religious upbringing. These factors influence the way in which people are likely to approach resolving conflicts. Individual traits and professional experiences and attitudes are also intertwined with the culture, religion and ethnic background in relation to preferred approaches to conflict management.

I believe those who have higher educational background will be more expert in handling conflict and making decisions. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level administration)

Malays preferred to use explanation as a method of handling conflict with colleagues from different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

I would say it depends on the situation. When we give our views, they will listen... (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

One Malay respondent, whilst disagreeing that silence was an effective strategy for resolving conflict still used silence because it was the organisational norm in the culture of his department.

At my previous workplace, I will not keep silent whenever there is a conflict or disagreement. I was free to criticise my colleagues like they were my siblings. When I first came here, it is so different. So I decided to follow the norms. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Yahya tries to solve the problem without using others.

...I will try my best to settle the problem, whenever I can. I will not simply pass that to someone else. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

The Malay respondents believe that the best way to solve conflict with colleagues from different backgrounds is by working together to solve conflict. They consider that in trying to resolve conflict, individual traits, ethnicity, religion, culture and educational background had a significant influence in their decision-making when choosing their approach and method. They believed that silence is not a wise or effective strategy for resolving conflict and preferred to try and address conflicts by meeting with individuals, for open discussion, with honesty and transparency.

I normally will not criticise during a meeting. Normally after the meeting I will meet that person, discuss it with them but I will not say it directly, just give them a clue. It is not often I can say it directly. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

The Malay respondents' approach to conflict may be connected to their traditional culture which encourages humility, observing hierarchy, having respect for elders and also avoiding conflict wherever possible (Kuang, Wong, & David, 2010).

However, they also agreed that in order to solve the conflict, it is important to set limits.

Sometimes we need to show disagreement in order to remind others. For instance, parking officers may issue you a summons to resolve conflict between you and the parking authority. To remind you that you should not park in that area, which works better than seeing you and talking to you. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

The Malay respondents believed that expressing disagreement is productive and that suspicions and prejudice can be minimised. They also believed religion influences the way someone handles conflict and said they advise tolerance as an important strategy. They also maintained that individual traits were important factors influencing the way people try to deal with conflict. These views were centred on their own observations and experiences.

It depends on individual traits. I assume that the way someone handles conflict will not be based on religious differences. (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

Ramlah prefers to try to find the source of the conflict whenever there is a conflict among colleagues. This holds regardless of whether they are from the same background or a different background.

For instance, currently there is an issues of ¹⁵⁵Punjabi male trainee at ¹⁵⁶PLKN, whose long hair was cut off by PLKN management. This clearly show that PLKN management did not understand the culture of the Punjabi which believes that long hair is a symbol of dignity for the Punjabi men. I guess this would not havehappend if they had asked and understood the Punjabi culture.

¹⁵⁵Punjabi - are a small minority among the approximately two million Indians in Malaysia, originally from Punjab region in India and Pakistan (Project, 2012).

¹⁵⁶PLKN – Program Latihan Khidmat Negara (The National Service Training Programme)

However the example shows that she did not realise that the lack of understanding of the role of culture was a major agent of conflict. That the management were mostly Malay and made no effort to understand the Punjabi culture suggests the dominant role of the Malays despite the fact that they profess sensitivity in conflict resolution.

Some Malay respondents preferred to be indirect in addressing conflict with colleagues. They try to give clues and presume that the colleague will automatically understand the clues and respond accordingly.

They really got the message because after I gave them a clue, from the way they talked to me, they were alert and reacted to what I said indirectly. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Yahya (male, Malay, middle level administration) suggested that the management should understand the diversity of the workplace and use this knowledge in dealing with conflict.

...I can see there were varieties of ethnic groups at UMT as the university grows. There were many students from Sabah and Sarawak as well. And when some of these graduate, some will be employed by the university. I guess indirectly this is important to note that the management should be sensitive about their cultural backgrounds when dealing with the conflict.

Malays at the upper level also become like 'middle men' whenever subordinates face conflict. Malays at lower levels actually prefer their superiors to act as middle men.

Some colleagues asked me to settle their conflict. I believe because of my age, being the seniors and oldies here, I became their reference. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level administration)

When our colleague made a big mistake, I guess we should voice this to show our disagreement. I will ask my superior to inform my colleagues (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Handling conflict wisely is important because it stands as a reflection of personality. When someone is in a very tense situation, arguing and quarrelling tends to be seen by others as a sign of impatience.

I believe that I may not save others' face but also mine. Quarrelling shows that we are not patient and people would label us as ¹⁵⁷'kaki gaduh'. This is not good. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malays tend to show more concern about their colleagues' feelings in an effort to preserve harmony and safeguard their colleagues (Lailawati, 2005).

Yusuf (male, Malay, upper level professional) prefers to apologise if he feels it is warranted to get the work done.

I will apologise, maybe I misunderstood when he/she gave an explanation. I will then ask for permission to do it again based on what they want.

¹⁵⁷Kaki gaduh = a quarrelsome chap, someone who will pick a fight.

Some Malay respondents however decide to keep silent or use a middle man to help resolve conflict. This middle man should be their superior as they are afraid that the conflict will have a long-term effect if they decide to resolve it by themselves.

I prefer not to be too direct in showing my disagreement. Normally I will think twice and find the best method to express how I feel. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academician)

Some of the Malays choose to be silent if they face a conflict with their colleagues from different ethnicities. They prefer to be silent rather than revealing themselves as a bad tempered person. Fatimah (female, Malay, support staff) prefers to keep silent and tries to forget. Mek Na (female, Malay, middle level) explains that even though she feels uncomfortable when someone is using her workplace or computer without her permission, she chooses to be silent and does not tell colleagues about her feelings. She feels that it's related to her individual traits, as she is a reserved person. Kuang et al. (2010) suggests using silence is attached to Malay culture which promotes humility, observes hierarchy, respects elders and also avoids conflict where possible

Chinese respondents believe that personality and culture influenced their ways of resolving conflict. They also admitted to being too outspoken in handling conflict, but that this depends on the relationship that they have established with their colleagues whether from the same or a different religion, ethnicity and gender.

When you know them well, you will know how to settle conflict. But when I don't really know them or they are just normal colleagues, then I will not be too outspoken. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Our relationship is still good. We are still friends. I criticise him because I want him to learn from a mistake. Normally he will accept my criticism... (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Chinese respondents prefer to use discussion and meet the person as a method to resolve tension in order to avoid any awkward feelings. They prefer not to keep the conflict quiet, choosing to express it.

...When we are in a discussion, normally I will allow them to voice their views. I'm actually an open minded person. When I share my views, I'm hoping that they also can share theirs. ...When you don't discuss it, it stays inside you. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

I experienced this with one of my colleagues. We were joint authors but before the presentation started, he went missing. I was so upset with him. I asked him to see me, so as to not embarrass him in front of the public. I know that I need to save his face. But I did tell him, and I'm very firm about this. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

In the Chinese culture, influenced by Confucianism, Steven's example relates to the concept of a great man (¹⁵⁸*junzi*) (Yu, 2009 as cited in Kuang et al., 2010), where it is

¹⁵⁸*Junzi* (a great man) = is fast of action and slow of words and this notion has been taken by most Chinese seriously (Kuang et al. 2010, p. 3).

important to avoid being labelled by others as a non-*junzi*. It is also important not to discuss controversial issues in public which might affect their image or ‘face’ (Kuang et al., 2010).

...I would prefer to discuss the conflict. I appreciate those who can give feedback. I'm very open; I'm not saying I'm always the right one. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Lei Hua feels that when someone holds a grudge, the discussion is less likely to meet with a positive result.

Some of the Chinese respondents choose to be more vocal and prefer not to use silence when in conflict. For example, Steven will criticise someone even if he is his superior. He acknowledges that this may annoy or upset a superior, but he thinks it is a better way to solve conflict. He also explains this is the best way to deal with conflict with students and the staff.

Every culture has harsh language. There are students who are stubborn and never listen to me, but I will be professional and never use unpleasant language.

Yet, one Chinese respondent prefers to keep silent whenever there is a conflict with her colleagues from either the same or opposite gender, or from different ethnicities or religions, until she feels the time is right to discuss the conflict. She only uses silence to cool down the situation and then later will try to discuss the conflict by focusing on the issues relating to the conflict.

In dealing with conflict, I will focus on the issue. I will not take into consideration whether you are Chinese or Malay. Even if you are Malay or Chinese I will still use the same method. I will discuss the issues. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Whereas other Chinese respondents, for instance Chin Hong (male, Chinese, middle level administration), suggest that an email can help in resolving conflict, perceiving that trying to solve a conflict in an open way is often helpful.

Steven (male, Chinese, middle level academic) explains the role of ‘moderation’ to help facilitate harmony.

... Moderation is a Chinese culture. We use the term ‘wen ho’ in Chinese language to prioritise moderation. ‘Ho’ means harmony or can be moderation and ‘wen’ means warmth. This is a very importance aspect in Chinese culture. Christianity promotes this. We should not hurt feelings or their personality, even though some people may take this as an opportunity for them to excel while the other person is facing hardship... (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Chinese culture strives to achieve harmonious relationships in their interactions with others.

The only Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, middle level academic) believes that silence as a strategy can actually create more tension. He does not agree that by keeping silent one can resolve the conflict. To resolve conflict, a person should voice their issues. He prefers to discuss conflict directly and considers this way to be more professional. This attitude towards silence contradicts the findings of Kuang et al. (2010) which suggests that Indians prefer silence due to their upbringing and ways of showing respect to other

communities in sensitive issues such as religion and politics which can stimulate controversy.

The findings indicate that Malays prefer to choose compromising and obliging types of conflict-handling styles due to their collective nature (Abdullah, 1996 and Tamam et al., 1997 as cited in Lailawati, 2005). This is followed by their Chinese colleagues who also prefer to use compromising style and open discussion in solving the conflict. Several studies propose that culture influences a person's preferred approaches to handling conflict (see Ting-Toomey 1986, Ting-Toomey et al., 1991, Pearson & Stephan, 1998, Oetzel, 1998 as cited in Cai & Fink, 2002) and this has also been shown in this study for different ethnic groups with differing cultures.

7.2.3 Summary

There were fourteen solution types that survey respondents could choose from for the conflict scenarios they were given. Popular solutions included no. 13 (... *collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) and no. 14 (... *compromise whenever conflicts arise*). The collaborative style was preferred by the majority of the respondents regardless of ethnicity for all given conflict scenarios. Other popular styles included avoidance, followed by compromising, and the least common was accommodating. Malay respondents considered religion, culture, ethnicity and individual traits as influential factors in a person's approach to resolving conflict. They also indicated that silence was not a wise strategy in conflict situations. Yet some Malays prefer to use silence if they have conflict with their colleagues from different ethnicities. Melanau respondents, however, prefer to compromise and collaborate with their colleagues in handling conflict. Chinese respondents considered personality and culture in conflict resolution. However, they were more inclined to be outspoken if their relationship with a colleague was close. Ideally they prefer discussion as way of solving any conflict.

Several studies propose that culture influences a person's preferred approach to handling conflict (see Ting-Toomey 1986, Ting-Toomey et al., 1991, Pearson & Stephan, 1998, Oetzel, 1998 as cited in Cai & Fink, 2002), a view reinforced in this study. The findings here indicate that Malays prefer to choose compromising and obliging conflict-handling styles due to the collective nature of their culture (Abdullah, 1996 and Tamam et al., 1997 as cited in Lailawati, 2005). Chinese colleagues also prefer to use a compromising style as well as open discussion in solving conflict. Respondents reported experiences in relation to conflict with regard to their ethnicity, use of language, and religion, especially the Chinese. The Malays believe that solving conflict also involves personal emotion, as well as culture, religion and ethnic background. This influences their ways of handling conflict. They also suggest that the institution should be more sensitive towards employees' cultural and religious backgrounds in handling conflict. The Chinese assumed that other factors influence someone's approach to solve conflict and that it also involves individual traits and experiences. They advise that conflict in terms of ethnicity and religion can be avoided at UMT by being more reasonable in interactions and communications.

7.3 One Malaysia (1Malaysia)

The last part of the survey asked respondents about their awareness of the One Malaysia concept introduced by the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, which in itself has significance to this study. The respondents were asked about their understanding of this concept, their expectations, their doubts and the challenges to the concept.

7.3.1 One Malaysia concept: Understanding and awareness

Table 7.9 indicates that 97.7% of respondents were aware of the One Malaysia concept. Ethnically 97.4% of Malays, 100% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents were aware of the concept.

		Ethnicity								
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
M1	Are you aware of One Malaysia concept?	No	2	2.6	0	.0	0	.0	2	2.3
		Yes	74	97.4	8	100.0	4	100.0	86	97.7
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
M2	Do you fully understand One Malaysia concept?	No	32	42.1	5	62.5	0	.0	37	42.0
		Yes	44	57.9	3	37.5	4	100.0	51	58.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 7.9: Awareness about the One Malaysia concept

Only 2.6% of Malay respondents said that they were not aware of the concept. It is surprising to see that even though Chinese and Indians are very small minorities at UMT (while the 2nd and 3rd largest ethnic groups in Malaysia), their awareness is very high. Their concerns towards this concept are how it affects their status in Malaysia. The table also shows that 58% of the respondents understood the One Malaysia concept, while the remaining 42% of respondents did not. 57.9% of Malay respondents fully understood the concept compared with 62.5% of Chinese respondents. These findings suggest that overall respondents are quite conscious of the One Malaysia concept, and only a small number were not aware or did not have a clear understanding of the concept. This is in line with the ¹⁵⁹survey organised by the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research relating to the Prime Minister's 100 days in office, which found that Malaysians are generally unclear about the One Malaysia concept. Hasnul (2010) refers to this in terms of the proverb of 'Five blind men and an elephant'. (Where there are five blind men investigating and guessing what the animal that they touched might be - a snake or a monkey or a wall or a hill or a tree, instead it is an elephant.) This is an analogy for One Malaysia where people might have plethora of interpretation, where they might think One Malaysia is an approach or a policy or a slogan or a vision or a formula.

¹⁵⁹ As published in the news release dated July 8th 2009.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
M4	Do you believe that One Malaysia means equality, is non-discriminatory and gives no privileges for one ethnicity over others?	No	44	57.9	4	50.0	1	25.0	49	55.7
		Yes	32	42.1	4	50.0	3	75.0	39	44.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
M5	Do you believe that One Malaysia means unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's privileges?	No	4	5.3	1	12.5	0	.0	5	5.7
		Yes	72	94.7	7	87.5	4	100.0	83	94.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 7.10: Definition of One Malaysia

Table 7.10 shows that 57.9% of Malay, 50% of Chinese and 25% of Indian respondents fail to agree that One Malaysia means equality, is non-discriminatory and gives no privileges for one ethnicity over others. Whereas the other 44.3% of respondents consisting of 42.1% Malays, 50% Chinese and 75% Indians agree that One Malaysia refers to equality, is non-discriminatory and allows no ethnic group privileges. 94.7% of Malay, 87.5% of Chinese and 100% of Indian respondents agreed with the definition that One Malaysia means unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's ¹⁶⁰privileges. Compared to the first definition, the second definition is well accepted by all three ethnic groups. Only 5.7% of the respondents disagreed with this definition compared to the first definition at 55.7%.

The Malay respondents also agreed with question M5 (*Do you believe that One Malaysia means unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's privileges?*) compared to question M4 (*Do you believe that One Malaysia means equality, is non-discriminatory and gives no privileges?*) especially when the question was changed by replacing 'no privileges' with 'recognising each other's privileges'. For M5 question (*Do you believe that One Malaysia means unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's privileges?*) almost all Malays agreed that One Malaysia should be defined as meaning unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's privileges. And almost all Chinese and Indian respondents also agreed with the description of M5 question (*Do you believe that One Malaysia means unanimity, harmony, and recognising each other's privileges?*). This finding indicates that Malays may be sensitive about the issues of Malay. The Chinese respondents were divided equally - half agreed and half disagreed. This could be related to the privileges issues where many may feel that the privileges are unfair.

The interview findings detail respondents' understandings about One Malaysia. Two statements in the survey defined One Malaysia as (1) equality, non-discriminatory and no privileges, and (2) unanimity, harmony and recognising each other's privileges. Malays and the single Melanau respondent defined One Malaysia as a sharing act, accepting each other's cultures and ways of living, multiethnic were given priority in welfare and equal

¹⁶⁰ Privileges here refer to the Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia where the special position of the Malays and natives (including those from the States of Sabah and Sarawak) and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article will be safeguarded by *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*.

rights, a harmonious way of living, respect and accepting each other's cultures and values, and equality which includes the concept of opportunity.

I understand that One Malaysia is a sort of sharing thing, where we share the economy, politic and social... Respect the other ethnic groups as well as the differences in religious and culture, so that we can live together harmoniously. That's what the government tries to imply. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

One Malaysia means harmony to me... (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

To me One Malaysia is where different ethnicities respect each other, Chinese understand Malay ... (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Malay respondents explained that there shouldn't be prejudice about other ethnic groups. They described how there should be one unifying Malaysian culture accepted by everyone and agreed that this concept is a constructive and positive concept which had strong potential to unite various ethnic groups. They were strong in their belief that this concept can strengthen relationships among the ethnic groups.

I guess all ethnic groups who work in the same place can go for coffee at one shop and that this will reinforce relationships and avoid misunderstandings. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

This simple interpretation suggests the superficial approach being undertaken. While starting from a basic concept, there is little appreciation of the complexity of fully realising its laudable aims. At the very least, progress will take a long time to ensure that everyone comes to accept the concept. Malay respondents thought the process should start at an early stage in the educational system.

This should be encouraged starting from the early age. Take Kelantan as an example, what makes Kelantanese Chinese speak Kelantanese fluently and embrace the Malay Kelantanese life style? It's all because they started as kids. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Kelantanese Chinese assimilated with Malay culture, speak fluent Kelantanese and also wear Malay dress such as ¹⁶¹*baju kurung* and ¹⁶²*baju kebaya*, especially women (Hun, 2009). They are also compliant with Malay's code of (*budi bahasa*) (Raybeck, 1983, p.24 as cited in Hun, 2009) which includes practices such as the way they walk, gesticulate, shake hands, eat, chew betel leaves and areca nuts, smoke *rokok daun* (straw cigarettes), sit and squat, expectorate, defecate, laugh and talk (Teo, 2003, p.60 as cited in Hun, 2009).

¹⁶¹*Baju kurung* = a loose-fitting full length dress, consisting of a skirt and a blouse. The skirt is made from a long cloth with folding on one side; the blouse is collarless, has long sleeves, and extends to between the hips and knees. Traditionalists prefer fabric from peninsular Malaysia's eastern states of Terengganu and Kelantan, where the culture of batik and other hand-designed fabrics is still strong. A woman will often wear a *baju kurung* with a hijab (known as *tudung in Malaysia*) in the more conservative states in eastern part of Malaysia.

¹⁶²*Baju kebaya* = is a traditional blouse-dress combination that originates from Indonesia and is worn by women in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Southern Thailand. Made from sheer material such as silk, thin cotton or semi-transparent nylon or polyester, adorned with brocade or floral pattern embroidery. *Kebaya* is usually worn with a sarong or batik *kain panjang*, or other traditional woven garment such as *ikat songket* with a colourful motif. Believed to be inspired from Arab region clothing; the Arabic word *abaya* means clothing.

Researcher understood that Awang (male, Malay, upper level professional) did not mean that Malaysian Chinese should be like Kelantanese Chinese, but he wanted to hint that learning others' culture should start from early age. Awang felt that from an early age children should be allowed to be friends with other ethnic groups, exposing them to other languages and cultures. Trying to implement this at a mature age, such as at university level, is not as effective.

I guess the key success for this concept is to start from school ... There shouldn't be a Chinese medium school, Tamil medium school or Indian school. Suppose there should be only one school, the national medium school which can offer elective courses such as Tamil, if they want to learn. So when Malays want to learn Tamil, they can do that too. I suggest it should be from primary school, and then we can see the impact. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Yahya recognises that the Malaysian educational system will constitute a challenge for One Malaysia to be instilled into Malaysian culture. Currently, the Malaysian educational system can be divided into two categories; one is Malay medium national schools or national schools. The other category is vernacular schools which have two mediums a Chinese Mandarin medium school and a Tamil medium school. Currently, national schools only use Malay as a medium of instruction and do not offer any of the other ethnic languages during school hours. If students are interested in learning other languages they have to seek classes outside of school hours. Normally the Malays at national schools only use Malay and some English, but not Mandarin or Tamil. The irony is that Chinese and Indian students normally know three languages even though they attend vernacular schools. At university level, the universities offer a variety of foreign languages, which include Mandarin and Tamil, at Malaysian public and private universities. The educational system in Malaysia has become part of the effort in promoting nation building, with the need for a common cultural value system to promote national identity and nationhood (Sandra, 2004 as cited in Suhana, 2012).

The Malaysian educational system thus ensures the dominance of the Malay culture. This point was reinforced when the Vision Schools project was proposed on February 19, 1997. This school had the same objectives of the singular system of education as intended in the 1950s, which was to produce a tolerant and understanding generation. Sadly, the idea of Vision Schools was discouraged by some Malaysians due to communal politics that champions the perpetuation of vernacular schools based on mother tongue education (Shakila, 2006 as cited in Suhana, 2012). It can be seen that education and language issues are complex in the Malaysian setting due to ethnic identity (Suhana, 2012).

The Malay respondents also believed One Malaysia should be inclusive of all ethnic groups not exclusively for Malays. However, they admit that they did not really understand the concept but believed that this concept referred to one word 'harmony'. They obtained information about One Malaysia through their reading and from a speech and came to the interpretation of harmony. It cannot be presumed that they have a fairly good grasp of the concept.

... We are still tied to this privilege. Every 'bumiputera' embrace this, so I disagree with the statement. I can accept if the definition defines One Malaysia as equality. Even though Chinese and Indian argue about this special privilege. It is clearly stated in Malaysian

constitution, about this privilege is for 'bumiputera'. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

We cannot assume privilege is the same as equality. This One Malaysia concept should be understood that the things already mentioned in a constitution cannot be overwritten. I believe One Malaysia concept does not solely mean equality. Privilege should remain for Malays. Other ethnic groups should understand that this privilege is vital. But other aspects promoted by One Malaysia should be enhanced. This is what I understand...I don't think when we have One Malaysia we cannot preserve this privileges. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Malays thus question the word equality and speculate about whether it refers to religion or language. They admit that One Malaysia is a good concept but they do not agree about the use and meaning of equality. They believe it involves very sensitive issues for the Malaysian public at large. They disagreed that the term equality also refers to equality in religion, as Islam has a special place in the constitution. However they acknowledge that provision should be made for other religions to be practiced. They believe that a small number of privileges should be preserved, such as those mentioned in the constitution, for instance, the special position of *bumiputeras*, while other privileges, such as the right to education, should be offered equally to all ethnic groups, not only to *bumiputeras*.

Religious and ethnicity topics are complicated issues in Malaysia, and ones which trigger public sensitivity. Normally they will not be discussed openly. For example Yusuf concluded that one can still be a Chinese or an Indian and become a Muslim and still obtain the full privileges received by native Malays. From his understanding, privileges are acquired not because they are Malay or convert to Malay, but solely because they are. During the old days, there was a misconception when a Chinese or an Indian converted to Muslim they were presumed to become Malay (Cheng, 2012). This misconception affects relationships and makes things worse, because if their family is a Chinese or Indian family, they will lose their Chinese or Indian identity (Cheng, 2012; Khairul, 2011) because they change their name, for example Han Wee Sheng into Ali Abdullah. They abandon family names and add a Muslim name with their father's name, becoming Abdullah, which is viewed by many as weakening their Chinese identity (Cheng, 2012).

This was a controversial situation and was debated by the Islamic scholars in Malaysia. Today however, with more exposure to other ethnicities and being educated, means that becoming Muslim does not necessarily mean forsaking their Chinese or Indian ethnicity. You are still who you are, a Chinese or an Indian, with the Chinese or Indian names and identity, but then also be Muslim as well. The Malays too have started to realise that Islam is not exclusively for Malays, as it is now seen more as a universal religion. Some Muslim converts, who are also Malaysian public figures, still maintain their Chinese or Indian names, for example¹⁶³Ann Wan Seng and¹⁶⁴Dr Ravi Farid (also known as ¹⁶⁵*Ustaz* Ravi

¹⁶³Ann Wan Seng = a member of the Perkim national council (Muslim Welfare Organization Malaysia), a Muslim missionary and a prolific speaker.

¹⁶⁴ Dr Ravi Farid = a member of the Perkim national council (Muslim Welfare Organization Malaysia), a Muslim missionary and well-known prolific speaker.

¹⁶⁵*Ustaz* = religious teacher (in Malaysian context).

Farid). They believe that Malay privileges should be upheld in order to guarantee that Malaysia is ruled by Malay Muslims.

Malay respondents however agreed with the second statement which equated One Malaysia with unanimity, harmony and recognition of each other's privileges, received by *bumiputera*, with no discrimination. Faruqi (2010 as cited in Suhana, 2012) explains that the Malaysian Constitution has a special and unique meaning of 'social contract' which remains difficult to explain but which pertains to compromises between the ethnic Malays, Chinese and Indians about their respective rights and privileges. It includes bargaining for citizenship and residency with the native Malay Rulers of Malaysia, and was complicated further by British colonisation and the creation of a democratic, federal, non-theocratic system of government based on constitutional monarchy (Suhana, 2012, p. 120). The social contract describes Malay privilege as entitlement to political and administrative authority, in return for non-interference in Chinese control of the economy. This included the grants to the Bumiputera of reservations of land, quotas in the civil service, public scholarships and public education, quotas for trade licences, and the ability to monopolise certain industries if the government permits. The Constitution also included elements of Malay tradition as part of the Malaysian national identity, the Malay rulers were preserved, with the head of state, the ¹⁶⁶*Yang di-Pertuan Agong* drawn from their ranks, Islam would be the national religion, and the Malay language would be the national language.

Malay respondents agreed that Chinese and Indians should respect privileges because of this social contract (*quid pro quo*) granting citizenship to the non-*Bumiputera* in exchange for privileges for Malays (see Article 153, Constitution of Malaysia). Malay respondents also agreed that new Malaysian generations should learn this history to understand why privileges are so important for the Malay community.

We should look back and learn the history, where the privileges were allowed. I guess the special privileges should be preserved. When all parties achieve equal status, understand each other,, respect our laws, be tolerant, then at that time it is okay to eradicate this special privileges, just like the UK. I can see from 54 years of independence, we are still in a stage of development; still there is a need to conserve the rights of the Malay and 'bumiputera'. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

Hasnul (2010) however suggests that the Ministry of Education and the administrators of the universities should be more open and transparent about their intake procedures and open up more placements for all races, with selection based more on merit and less on ethnicity. Others disagree maintaining that inequality still exists and that Malays seem left behind (Chandra, 2010 as cited in Suhana, 2012, p. 120):

Since independence, the top 20 per cent of income earners in Malaysia have benefited much more from economic growth than the bottom 40 per cent. It is significant that the report of the National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) on the New Economic Model

¹⁶⁶*Yang di-Pertuan Agong* = the head of state of Malaysia. A literal English translation of the title is 'He who is made Lord'. However, common alternatives are 'Paramount ruler' or 'King' and are elected for a period of five years from among the nine Malay Rulers. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected monarch as head of state. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* is one of the few elected monarchs in the world (H. Singh 2006).

(NEM) admits that the bottom 40 per cent of households have experienced the slowest growth of average income earning less than RM 1 500 per month in 2008. The wage trend in Malaysia recorded only 2.6 per cent growth during the past 10 years compared to the escalating cost of living during the same period. It explains why almost 34 per cent of about 1.3 million workers earn less than RM700 a month below the poverty line of RM720 per month. This is an urgent challenge that must be addressed to achieve nation building through One Malaysia.

Chinese and Indian respondents demonstrated awareness and basic understanding and knowledge about One Malaysia. Some agreed with both definitions while others disagreed with the principles of unanimity, harmony and the recognition of each other's privileges.

Malaysia is the only nation that gazetted this (constitution)? 'It is the privilege for 'bumiputera' which put the differences between its citizens'. I hope you understand that I do not deny this act. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Liang's view was that the 'privilege' principle hindered equal rights.

The Chinese respondents also noted that even after 54 years of independence, the country still uses the same formula as colonisation - a¹⁶⁷'Divide and rule' system. They believed that ¹⁶⁸MCA is designed for Chinese while ¹⁶⁹MIC is for Indians and ¹⁷⁰UMNO for Malays. They stated that the government should strive to compete with other countries and not focus so much on Malaysian internal issues or what is called a 'cake'. Chinese and Indian respondents argue that 50 years ago, Malaysia was economically stronger or on par with other Asian countries, with the exception of Japan. But now they perceive that Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines have become much more progressive than Malaysia. These respondents wished One Malaysia could be a tool in building a stronger Malaysia to prevent it from falling behind on the world stage.

I guess everyone should be the same. This is what I believe, a Confucius teaching. We should treat everyone with love. Not to say, I need this, and you don't. You should share with others and don't be so self-centred. Whatever we have we should share...What I

¹⁶⁷ 'Divide and rule' system refers to a strategy that breaks up existing power structures and prevents smaller power groups from linking up. During British colonisation, with their divide and rule policy, they did not intend to establish rapport between the different races in Malaya through a standardized education system. Hence, the various vernacular schools that were present catered to only a particular ethnic group and were run by missionaries, rubber and coffee plantation owners, and local residents' association. The British felt that it was enough for each ethnic group to be educated in their own language and learn to accept their roles in life. That meant that the British were to govern, the Malays to cultivate the fields, the Chinese were to run the mining industry and businesses, while the Indians would be confined to plantations and estates. This had contributed much to preserving the status quo of the different races in Malaya and identifying them with their various economic activities (Nik Mohamed et al., 2006).

¹⁶⁸ MCA = Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) is a uni-racial political party in Malaysia that represents the Malaysian Chinese ethnicity; it is one of the three major component parties of the ruling coalition in Malaysia called the *Barisan Nasional* (BN) in Malay, or National Front in English.

¹⁶⁹ MIC = Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) is a Malaysian political party and is one of the founding members of the ruling coalition, *Barisan Nasional*, previously known as the Alliance, that has been in power since the country achieved independence in 1957. The MIC was established in August 1946, and ceased to exist at the end of World War II, to fight for Indian independence from British colonial rule.

¹⁷⁰ UMNO = The United Malays National Organisation (New), (abbreviated as UMNO or in Malay is *Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (Baru)*) is Malaysia's largest and longest ruling political party; a founding member of the National Front coalition, which has played a dominant role in Malaysian politics since independence.

observe now that this One Malaysia emphasizes more for certain ethnic groups ...They should take care of every ethnicity, to try to narrow the gap between all ethnic groups. Every ethnic group has those who are poorer... (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Lei Hua uses an analogy to point out the discrimination:

...everyone who is born here should get equal opportunity. I don't know, you may want to protect your privilege, but to me if you are brilliant, you deserve it. That's all. The analogy will be like when I'm marking my student papers, if they deserved to be given an A, I will give them an A. Regardless of their ethnicity, Malay, a Chinese or an Indian. Even if I need to add extra marks, I still need to consider their papers and look back at their answers. I cannot simply add the marks; it will not be fair to others.

The Chinese respondent expressed her desire that the policy be practically applied to achieve real results.

...this One Malaysia is not a new agenda; to me I would help everyone in need regardless of their ethnicity and religion. Whose children they are, is not important to me, this is what I meant as One Malaysia. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Chinese respondents hoped that One Malaysia would not simply remain as a slogan but were realistic in saying that more implementation would probably not create a harmonious 'big cake' of unity, in other words a utopia. The Indian respondent commented that he wished that One Malaysia could unite all the ethnic groups and uphold the country's vision and mission.

The findings reveal respondents' own definitions, interpretations and views about One Malaysia. Several issues were highlighted in relation to One Malaysia such as implications for the educational system, language, ethnicity and religion. Regardless of ethnicity, most respondents said that they had not read a great deal about the One Malaysia concept but heard about it from other sources. Yet most of respondents agreed that the concept could help them strengthen ethnic relationships and were also aware that the concept was not new. Their testimony gives credence to Suhana (2012) who maintains that One Malaysia is not a new project for nation building purposes with its foundations in the Federal Constitution, various laws and policies, the Rukunegara, Vision 2020, the National Mission and the Malaysian view of unity and fairness.

7.3.2 Doubt and beliefs about the One Malaysia concept

The next question asked about the respondent's belief about One Malaysia. Below are the survey findings.

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
M3	Do you consider the One Malaysia concept is only for one ethnic group?	No	74	97.4	7	87.5	4	100.0	85	96.6
		Yes	2	2.6	1	12.5	0	.0	3	3.4
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
M7	Do you believe that the One Malaysia concept will help you build a good relationship with other ethnic groups?	No	11	14.5	0	.0	3	75.0	14	15.9
		Yes	65	85.5	8	100.0	1	25.0	74	84.1
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
M8	Do you believe that the One Malaysia concept is only for ethnic political agenda and is not concerned about the aspect of harmonious communication among the ethnic groups?	No	64	84.2	5	62.5	4	100.0	73	83.0
		Yes	12	15.8	3	37.5	0	.0	15	17.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 7.11: Beliefs about One Malaysia concept

Table 7.11 shows that 96.6% of respondents did not consider that the One Malaysia concept was only for one ethnic group. Ethnically about 97.4% of Malay, 87.5% of Chinese and the Indian respondents opposed the idea that One Malaysia was meant to only serve one ethnic group. The next question suggests that 85.5% of Malay, 100% of Chinese and 25% of Indian respondents believe that the One Malaysia concept will help them build a good relationship with other ethnic groups. However 75% of Indian respondents did not believe that One Malaysia could build a good relationship with other ethnic groups, which is in sharp contrast to their Malay and Chinese colleagues. There is a possibility that Indian respondents have doubts about this concept and the practicality of the concept in terms of applying it effectively. Then 84.2% of Malay, 62.5% of Chinese and the Indian respondents did not believe that One Malaysia was high on the ethnic political agenda, and had little faith in realistically achieving harmonious communication among the ethnic groups. This section indicated that the majority of respondents felt that One Malaysia was not really on the political agenda. They were aware that the concept emphasised harmonious interactions among the multiethnic groups across social and professional settings. However 37.5% of Chinese disagreed, which indicates their doubts about the One Malaysia concept and its real agenda.

The interview data revealed doubts, views and beliefs towards the concept. The Malay respondents believed that One Malaysia was not designed to serve only one ethnic group. The Malay respondents did have some doubts regarding the implementation of the One Malaysia concept and confessed that so far (within the interview period) there was no attempt to explain the concept on the UMT campus.

Formally, there is no serious talk being organized so far for campus members or any special discourse, as far as I know. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

The Malay respondents realised that the promotion of the One Malaysia concept is not heavily promoted as compared to¹⁷¹*Islam Hadhari* which was promoted by the former Prime minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi. During Tun Abdullah's term, *Islam Hadhari* was promoted at all levels. Malay respondents disagreed that One Malaysia was implemented as a political agenda.

I disagree because when the statement mentions that this concept did not touch the communication aspect. We can see that our government tries to encourage this relationship, where Malays try to understand their Chinese colleagues; Chinese try to understand their Malay colleagues as well as their Indian counterparts. It is implemented through a programme such as¹⁷² 'open house', also a national policy where they share cultural events, so that they can understand each other. This in fact exists. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

The Malay respondents also expressed their doubts on the clashes of opinions between political leaders such as Najib and Muhyiddin regarding the concept. They believed it would create public confusion and therefore doubted its implementation.

I'm able to understand a basic idea about this concept. However you could see in terms of implementation there was a clash of opinion between Najib and Muhyiddin. When it comes to implementation, they did not really touch on this issue. I guess I need this kind of information, the latest one. It looks great in theory, but when it comes to implementation, people will question it. Whether you walk the talk or remain as talk the talk. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Malay respondents also have doubts regarding the application and significance of the concept for states which have a small group of ethnic minorities such as Terengganu. Amina (female, Malay, middle level academic) admitted that she is comfortable living in a Malay dominant state such as Kelantan and Terengganu.

I'm comfortable with the two dominant Malay states, such as Kelantan and Terengganu. I suppose One Malaysia is only relevant to the states which have small number of Malays, where there are many Chinese and Indians. I'm happy that other ethnic groups actually embrace Malay style, they become more humble. Can you imagine when you go to Ipoh; the Chinese they were so arrogant. One time, when I wanted to buy something from their shops, they yelled at me. What is this? Then we please them with One Malaysia? I don't see how One Malaysia can help a lot actually.

Amina used the example of the Kelantanese and Terengganese Chinese to support her view that Malays at UMT were less integrated than in other states. The Kelantanese and Terengganese Chinese who had assimilated into the Malay culture through cultural

¹⁷¹*Islam Hadhari* = or in Arabic *يراضح لامل اسلام* or Civilizational Islam is a theory of government based on the principles of Islam as derived from the Qur'an. Belief it was originally founded by Tunku Abdul Rahman in 1957 (but under a different name) and has been promoted by the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. *Islam Hadhari* should be viewed as the renewal of the old concept *Islam Madani* or *Islam Hadhari* so that the maxims of the teaching of Islam can help to solve the problems or dilemma of the Muslim *ummah* efficiently and effectively, in the new age of modernisation.

¹⁷²Open house = or *rumah terbuka* in Malay language, part of Malaysian culture, an open house is a concept where all are welcome without any formal invitation to join in the festivities. Open house is normally held during the four main religious celebrations in the country, namely, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and Christmas. Normally the traditional dishes will be served during the open house. ("Open house a 'must do' activity," 2012).

acculturation, interethnic marriage and their close contact with local people had become agents in their localisation and were later known as the *Peranakan* Chinese. This default ethnic identity was based on three main aspects, phenotypically characteristics, language and bloodline (Tong, 2006 as cited in Hun, 2009). Yet this assimilation processes did not obliterate their ethnicity. They technically remain Chinese descendants by bloodline (Hun, 2009). The Kelantanese and Terengganese Chinese are fluent in the local dialect, and even as fluent as the local Malays (Hun, 2009).

...from my observation, Malays at this institution are less integrated. Maybe because they are dominant here... (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Amina also believed that the Malays had become victimised in tolerating other ethnic groups compared to other neighbouring countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

...One Malaysia I suppose only becomes an approach to our PM to show that we Malay, who are dominant, should tolerate everybody. That's what I understand. If this wants to be implemented here, I guess I'm comfortable with this situation compared to my previous experience at Penang. I was in Penang for 10 years. At one time I saw a motorcyclist publicly carrying a pig using a motorcycle ignoring Muslims who also use the road. Are you happy with this? I'm not...why One Malaysia? If One Malaysia is beneficial to Malay interests I guess it's good. But what if One Malaysia brings harm to the Malay? We were always being reminded to be tolerant, but how far can we go if this conduct is permitted. I remembered when I was in Thailand; they did not celebrate Chinese New Year. They consider themselves as Thais, not looking to their ethnicity. As well as Philippine Chinese, even though they were wealthy, they were looked down upon because they are not originally a Filipino.

Amina's evidence demonstrates that some Malays are still self-centred and perceive that One Malaysia should also consider them a priority. Sumaiyah (female, Malay, upper level professional) also looks at One Malaysia negatively. She voiced her concern that some minority ethnic groups might take advantage by using One Malaysia as a way to get what they want.

I guess even before One Malaysia, we were fine. But I can see with this concept other ethnic groups seem to demand more. Such as the Chinese who demand this and that, which all this while was okay, right? They should respect and know the rules, because they live in the Malay Archipelago, they should know the rules.

She is worried that One Malaysia might be used as a way to achieve personal goals or to be used mischievously by some other ethnic groups.

However other Malay respondents held alternative views. The Melanau respondent remarked that even without One Malaysia, she actually practiced the concept long before One Malaysia was promoted.

The Chinese respondents doubted whether the implementation of this concept could be achieved. They see the confusion of political leaders in the same political party like Najib and Muhyiddin contradicting each other whenever they give comments on One Malaysia. This has created confusion and makes them question the whole concept of One Malaysia,

or at least ask which version is One Malaysia: Najib's version or Muhyiddin's version? Two versions of One Malaysia confuse the public. This was a consequence of the controversial incident when DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang challenged Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister, to resign if he refused to admit that he is a Malaysian first and a Malay second as proof that he was in full support of the One Malaysia concept. As a response to Lim, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin declared he is Malay first but that this does not mean that he is not a Malaysian at heart. According to Muhyiddin, this did not mean that he did not support the One Malaysia concept which was based on the Federal Constitution and ¹⁷³*Rukunegara* (The Star April 1, 2010 as cited in Suhana, 2012). Muhyiddin's statement contradicted the concept of One Malaysia and created speculation that there was a split between NAJIB's inaction (Suhana, 2012). The incident confused the respondents regarding the meaning of One Malaysia itself. They perceived that there should be one solid meaning of One Malaysia so that the concept is actually applicable and worth maintaining and strengthening the relationships among the ethnic groups.

One Chinese respondent compared this concept to the slogan *Bersih, Cekap, Amanah* (literally means Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy) which was promoted a long time ago during the former Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohammad's era which she felt was ineffective in terms of its implementation.

There are lots of slogan such as 'Bersih, Cekap dan Amanah', there were lots of talk the talk but I couldn't see walk the talk? Many of them were slogans, rights? Even though there were lots of slogans we can spot the corruption. The idea is in fact good, but to apply this concept really depends on the government enforcement. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level professional)

The findings show that Malay and Chinese respondents doubted the concept of One Malaysia in relation to its implementation. Malay respondents were also sceptical about whether it could be accepted by other ethnic groups or only by Malays. They were concerned that if only Malays were aware of this concept and not other ethnic groups, then there was no point in implementing it. The clash of opinions between the national leaders, Najib and Muhyiddin, generated issues about whether the Malay and Chinese respondents thought the concept had a consistent explanation. The majority of the respondents, regardless of ethnicity, doubted the continuation of this concept.

I want to know how long this concept will last. Will it continue if we get a new prime minister, will he carry on promoting this concept? As I can see, during Tun Mahathir period, there is ¹⁷⁴Vision 2020, I can see the continuation of this vision, but lately the vision is not that popular anymore. It just disappears; I'm afraid that this One Malaysia concept will suffer the same thing...(Yahya, male, Malay, middle level)

¹⁷³*Rukun Negara* = National Principles is the Malaysian declaration of national philosophy instituted by royal proclamation on Independence Day, 1970, in reaction to a serious race riot known as the May 13 Incident which occurred in 1969. The incident proved at that time that Malaysian racial balance and stability was fragile. Immediately thereafter, the Malaysian government sought ways to foster unity among the various races in Malaysia. One of the methods used to encourage unity is the *Rukunegara*.

¹⁷⁴ Vision 2020= or *Wawasan 2020* is a Malaysian ideal introduced by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad during the tabling of the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991. The vision calls for the nation to become a self-sufficient industrialized nation by the year 2020, and encompasses all aspects of life: economic prosperity, social well-being, educational world class, political stability, as well as psychological balance.

The majority doubted whether the concept would continue when the leadership changed or whether it would be replaced with a new concept as happened with *Islam Hadhari*. Would One Malaysia be continued until it reached its objectives or would it remain a slogan? Malay and Chinese respondents doubted how far this concept could be implemented. They also questioned its success and practicality for all Malaysians. The Malay respondents believed that the concept would only succeed if it did not harm Malays' interests. Some Malay respondents were curious about its significance in the Malay dominant states such as Kelantan and Terengganu.

Overall, the findings reveal that none of the ethnic groups were comfortable with or committed to the concept. The discussion actually revealed more of the tensions that exist between the dominant and minority ethnic groups.

7.3.3 The role of national language in One Malaysia

		Ethnicity								
		Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total		
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
M6	Do you believe that using national language is among the ways to elevate the One Malaysia concept?	No	8	10.5	3	37.5	2	50.0	13	14.8
		Yes	68	89.5	5	62.5	2	50.0	75	85.2
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 7.12: National language should elevate One Malaysia

Table 7.12 signified that while 89.5% of Malay, 62.5% of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents agreed that the usage of the national language is among the ways to elevate the One Malaysia concept, 50% of the Indian respondents and 37.5% of Chinese respondents did not agree with this statement.

The interview findings reveal the reason behind this survey result. Malay respondents felt that Malaysians from other ethnic groups should follow their fellow neighbours (the Indonesians) in using their national language regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

So I would love our fellow Malaysians to admire our fellow neighbour (Indonesia), and follow their example especially in speaking the national language fluently. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malay respondents considered that the usage of the national language should be applied in order to achieve One Malaysia, supposing that it can enhance the relationships among the ethnic groups. However a Malay respondent disagreed, believing that it could be propagated by using other languages as well. These included the languages spoken in East Malaysia, and the two states of Sabah and Sarawak.

...there was one teacher from peninsula Malaysia that I knew during my duty at Bario, Sarawak. His name was ¹⁷⁵Cikgu Asri, he was from Johor. He was fluent in ¹⁷⁶Kelabit

¹⁷⁵Cikgu - teacher

¹⁷⁶Kelabit - an indigenous people of the Sarawak/East Kalimantan highlands of Borneo with a minority in the neighbouring state of Brunei

dialect. When I first met him, at first I thought he was one of the members of the tribe. That's why we need to learn many languages, not only Malay. There was one incident at ¹⁷⁷Dataran Merdeka, KL when I was there and I asked one Chinese lady, and one Indian lady, if they understand Malay, they said they don't, they were fluent in English. I guess to promote the concept; it should not only be Malay, but needs to be diverse languages. (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

From his observation, the natives of Sabah and Sarawak were not fluent in the Malay language and they were more receptive whenever the information conveyed was in their dialect.

However the Chinese respondents did not believe in using national languages to elevate the One Malaysia concept.

... well I admit that using one language can achieve harmony but relying only on one language, will not guarantee that we can achieve harmony. We should consider other elements as well. (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

The One Malaysia concept is not all about having one national language.

Way before One Malaysia, we actually had our national language as a formal language. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Malay respondents basically agreed that the usage of the national language should be applied in order to achieve One Malaysia. They worried about the language issues and emphasised that the usage of one language could unite all Malaysians, whereas the Chinese and a small number of Malay respondents disagreed with the one language practice. They believed that bilingualism could help in promoting One Malaysia successfully. A variety of languages should be used to promote this concept and should not be limited to only using the Malay language. They did not deny that Malay language should become the national language, yet the practice of using only one language to promote One Malaysia is not practical to convey this concept to the Malaysian public. Furthermore, the government should not rely on only using one language to achieve harmony but to incorporate the usage of other ethnic languages as well in the promotion of One Malaysia.

7.3.4 Applicability at UMT

The table below represents the findings of the survey about whether One Malaysia could be applied at UMT.

¹⁷⁷*Dataran Merdeka* – or Merdeka Square is located in Kuala Lumpur. Since then, Merdeka Square has been the usual venue for the annual Merdeka Parade

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
M10	Do you believe that the One Malaysia concept will form a feeling of respect and tolerance among the staff from various ethnic groups at UMT?	No	9	11.8%	2	25.0%	0	.0%	11	12.5%
		Yes	67	88.2%	6	75.0%	4	100.0%	77	87.5%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%
M11	Do you believe that the One Malaysia concept will form a feeling of unanimity among the staff from various ethnic groups at UMT?	No	10	13.2%	1	12.5%	0	.0%	11	12.5%
		Yes	66	86.8%	7	87.5%	4	100.0%	77	87.5%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%
M12	Do you believe that the One Malaysia concept brings no changes to the unanimity among the staff from various ethnic groups at UMT?	No	62	81.6%	6	75.0%	2	50.0%	70	79.5%
		Yes	14	18.4%	2	25.0%	2	50.0%	18	20.5%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%
M13	Do you believe that you can contribute to the One Malaysia concept at UMT?	No	10	13.2%	0	.0%	0	.0%	10	11.4%
		Yes	66	86.8%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	78	88.6%
		Total	76	100.0%	8	100.0%	4	100.0%	88	100.0%

Table 7.13: Applicability of the One Malaysia concept at UMT

Table 7.12 indicates that 88.2% of Malay, 75% of Chinese and the Indian respondents believed that the One Malaysia concept will help establish feelings of respect and tolerance among the staff from various ethnic groups at UMT. Responses to the next question showed that 86.8% of Malays followed by 87.5% of Chinese and the Indian respondents believed that the One Malaysia concept will form feelings of unanimity among the staff from various ethnic groups at UMT. 81.6% of Malay, 75% of Chinese and 50% of Indian respondents believed that this can bring some positive changes to the unity of the personnel at UMT, whereas 50% of Indian and a small percentage of Malay and Chinese respondents judged that it would not have any impact on the staff at UMT. Responses to the next question showed that 86.8% of Malays followed by 100% of Chinese and Indian respondents believed that they can contribute to the One Malaysia concept at UMT. A smaller percentage of Malay respondents felt that they cannot participate in promoting the concept at UMT, in contrast to their Chinese and Indian colleagues.

The interview findings supported the survey results about respondents' views of One Malaysia being implemented at UMT. The interview data also provided some examples from university events and occasions. The majority of Malay respondents assumed that they have no problems at UMT. They believe in order to achieve One Malaysia, harmony and tolerance are important, regardless of whether their colleagues are Chinese, Indian or Malay. However hindrances may come from the people who like to create antagonism between the ethnic groups.

...I guess the challenge maybe to those people who like to create problems. For example we are friends with Ah Ching, but not close to Ah Leng, but then Ah Leng creates

something which can break our relationship with Ah Ching, because of the jealousy or what not. (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Malay respondents explained that most of the programmes at UMT which involve various ethnicities are mostly conducted at the student level. The university is dominated by Malays with only a small number of Chinese and Indian staff. However a Team Building program at UMT was seen as a great success.

The positive impact was so obvious. I could see during that program, there was one staff member who personally had a conflict with the other staff member, but when we put them in one group, they actually could work well together... (Daud, male, Malay, support level administration)

The Malay respondents observed this in the workshop organised by the management they sat in a mixed group. The Malay and Melanau respondents felt that the seminar events were more successful with this ethnic involvement.

I could say that we succeed even better this time. In terms of working attitude, they were very committed. They managed to get hundreds of participants! So this made the seminar a benchmark for the next one...so last year a seminar was a yardstick to the next one and the committee was really diligent! (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

We did collaborate, especially when we organized international seminars. Last time, in organizing the seminars, we needed to communicate and cooperate with colleagues from various ethnicities, such as Indian colleagues who were appointed as the logistic committee. Chinese colleagues handled sponsorship and managed the accounts and Malays were involved in other committees. In order to make the seminar succeed we needed to work together, tolerate each other and communicate so that the entire job can be done effectively. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malay respondents felt that conducting such seminars improved their relationships with colleagues from different ethnicities.

*There was a healthy competition among them. When I was in the *IMB as a committee member, I felt that I was back at home. Sarawak does have multicultural ethnicity. When everyone at the workplace worked together...* (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Taking advantage of different religious days, such as *Aidilfitri*, Chinese *New Year* or *Deepavali*, was also an advantage.

...Well, it is beneficial if we have different ethnicity work at the office. Especially when everyone is going for a holiday to celebrate¹⁷⁸ 'raya'. The office has to close business if there is no one to manage the office. At least when we have a colleague from different ethnicity, this will solve the problem. And I suppose they can compete in their profession in healthy ways. (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

The Malay respondents also believed that if UMT can maintain the inspirational values of high prestige, knowledge culture, integrity and consciousness, this university could

¹⁷⁸ *Raya* – from a Malay word meaning festive, in Malaysian context, and normally refers to Muslim celebration of *Aidilfitri* or *Eidul Fitri*.

become a leading university earlier than originally expected. They also felt that they could contribute to One Malaysia in practising and implementing their values of culture which would then match UMT's status as a higher educational level.

Evidence can be seen through the student body as well as programmes conducted at the university level. For example, students' activities have helped to establish a university culture which promotes the acceptance and value of ethnic groups such as Indian and Chinese students.

They invite us to attend and be involved in their activities so then the campus could learn about their culture and know them well. I guess the main key for One Malaysia is 'Acceptance'. (Ramlah, female, Malay, upper level academic)

I can see the spirit of unity at UMT when the Chinese students organized a Chinese cultural night for Chinese New Year. They normally performed this at Sultan Mizan Hall. I can say that whenever the programme was staged, the hall was swarmed by Malay. I can see that Malay and Indian colleagues give their full support to their Chinese colleagues in organising the programme. There is no problem, no conflict at all...the staff also joined in, and the staffs were not only Malaysian, there were also foreigners such as Arab colleagues. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

The Malay respondents also proposed that UMT should at least promote an understanding of Islam among staff from different backgrounds to enhance their knowledge about Muslim colleagues' sensitivities.

I can say that this faculty should promote this. To me it is very important that we understand each other. I love this topic because it really relates to Islamic practices, our ¹⁷⁹'usrah' principles, knowing each other or ¹⁸⁰'taaruf',¹⁸¹'tafahum' which means understanding each other. Since this faculty is small and we are perceived as one family, I guess the program which relates to 'tafahum' should be introduced. I suggest that our faculty should organise a consistent programme in theory or may be practical as well, to encourage awareness about the intercultural, not only among the Chinese or Indian but also Malay. (Muhammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

One Malay respondent suggested that the family day was an enjoyable and effective programme to promote One Malaysia at UMT. Yet in order to avoid the gap among the participants she suggested the idea of asking people to put aside their position or rank which can make other personnel feel restricted, especially with upper management.

...Family day should enhance our relationships with colleagues. But practicing the way we interact at the office during family day will not be right. Last time we sat in a middle of the park but all VIP's sat under a canopy. There should be a feeling of togetherness...When there is a family day, we should be like a family, put aside our ranks and positions, all those disparities... (Khadijah, female, Malay, middle level academic)

¹⁷⁹Usrah – originally derived from an Arabic word, literally means family, and in this case refers to small and solid groups of people which discuss and share Islamic knowledge in a familial environment.

¹⁸⁰Taaruf – originally derived from an Arabic word, literally means, getting to know each other,

¹⁸¹Tafahum – originally derived from an Arabic word, literally means to understand one another.

One Malay respondent at a higher level also encouraged other ethnic groups to present an exhibition about their culture. He thinks this kind of activity is only active among the students rather than staff from various ethnicities at UMT.

So far, we at the library normally will provide a space for our students from different ethnicities to perform an exhibition. Last time during Chinese New Year, we invited Chinese students to do an exhibition. We also provided a room for our Indian students in doing their art work such as ¹⁸²Kollam. (Yusuf, male, Malay, upper level professional)

One Malay respondent however did not feel that programmes such as Team Building have much impact on ethnic relations in terms of unity of personnel from various backgrounds if management do not follow up after the programme.

I can see there was a waste of money. From my point of view if we want to establish a mutual understanding, there is actually a lot of other programmes that we can organize such as family days, academic events and knowledge talks such as ¹⁸³'Israk Mikraj'. We can look into the humanity aspect, social aspect. Omit the religious or Islamic programme; change the title into something else. What is important is the content. I would suggest there should be a consistent programme to achieve better results. The programme should be continuous just like the motivational talk for the students. It should be short but often. As in Islam, there is a ¹⁸⁴'khutbah' once a week during ¹⁸⁵Jumaah prayer, which only men attend. So those men will then share the khutbah with their families. Then next week, they will listen to new khutbah, again and again until the day you die. I suppose we should follow the same thing here. (Mohammad, male, Malay, middle level academic)

One Malay respondent could not provide an example or specify any programme at UMT that would strengthen respect and unity among staff. Amina said that she was not aware of any difficulties with regards to ethnic minorities' relations at UMT. She also mentioned that non-Malay students adapted to the dominant Malay culture in order to sustain themselves at UMT.

I guess non Malay try to adapt to Malay culture. Since Malay is dominant group, they try to become like Malays.

A small number of Malay respondents were unsure if One Malaysia had the potential to bring changes at UMT. Whenever there has been a programme where all ethnicities needed to work together, including in small groups, they thought that One Malaysia did not have any significant impact in terms of building greater unity among the staff. However they supposed that this could be achieved if everyone was to be honest with each other. They suggested that UMT should create opportunities for staff to attend programmes in relation to intercultural communication. Leaders could promote such intercultural communication programs at UMT by taking the lead and undertaking such courses themselves.

¹⁸²Kollams = are traditional designs drawn with rice flour, mostly in south Indian houses, to welcome prosperity (Pain, 2012).

¹⁸³Israk mikraj - the Night Visit and Ascension, the important event in Islam.

¹⁸⁴Khutbah—in this conversation, khutbah refer to regular sermons on (noon) congregation Friday prayer and similar sermons are called for on the two festivals, EidulFitri and EidulAdha.

¹⁸⁵Jumaah—also known asJumaat, Friday.

Other Malay respondents thought that One Malaysia at UMT was more a slogan rather than something which was being implemented. Since UMT is Malay dominated and has fewer groups of other ethnicities, they are less concerned about its effectiveness and the significance of this concept to UMT.

I can say that One Malaysia is the reintroduced slogan with which to reinforce existing government policies. We have our Rukunegara (National Principles), all those things were already there during ¹⁸⁶Tuanku Abdul Rahman period...But then being reintroduced again with this concept...it shows that there is still unfinished business, such as our unity among Malaysians, the issues of ¹⁸⁷Wawasan school, One Malaysia school, we are still not united enough. I guess the feeling of uncertainty is still in our society which makes this concept recur. (Adam, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Well, this One Malaysia...merely a motto....a slogan, but I don't think this concept suits here; because at UMT, there are not many of the staff from other ethnicities, I guess it is ineffective. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

These respondents do not think that this concept was useful in helping them to socialise with other ethnic groups any better than in the past, and also that it is ineffective in terms of developing tolerance among various ethnic groups at UMT.

For instance a ¹⁸⁸'Bubur Asyura' program, they use the theme such as I UMT.... they only use this concept as a slogan. The public overuse this slogan. The programme is attended by mostly one ethnicity. If there is 90% Malay, then 10% Indian, 10% Chinese, and then you can say it is multiracial. Well, I can say the people just like to overuse the concept. (Aishah, female, Malay, support level administration)

In contrast, Chinese respondents believed that One Malaysia can actually instil feelings of respect and tolerance among the staff from different ethnicities.

¹⁸⁶Tuanku Abdul Rahman = or Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah, AC, CH (الهاجا ب نالمرحوم سلطان عبدالرحم بجال يمشي ون كوء بدالرحمن قون را) born in February 8, 1903 – December 6, 1990 was Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya from 1955, and the country's first Prime Minister from independence in 1957. He remained as the Prime Minister after Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore joined the federation in 1963 to form Malaysia. He is widely known simply as Tunku or The Tunku (a princely title in Malaysia) and also called Father of Independence (*Bapa Kemerdekaan*) or Father of Malaysia (*Bapa Malaysia*) (Ahmad, 2006)

¹⁸⁷Wawasan school = or also known as Vision School; the Malaysian government decided to introduce a new type of primary school in 2004 under the name of Vision Schools. Vision schools are primary schools with the concept of children learning together within an area without regard for race or religion. Under this concept, two or three primary schools of different streams are placed in the same area. Each school will have its own building which can be joined to the other schools by a link-way. This system is at its testing period and there are just five of them throughout Malaysia. In this system, as it has mentioned before, three main types of schools (National, National Chinese and National Tamil) gather together at a same place under the name of Vision School Complex. Each school is separated from the other one and acts independently from its administrative system to its curriculum. Each school follows its national curriculum without interfering with the other one. The most important factor which makes this type of school different from the ordinary schools is the notion of making students from different ethnic backgrounds being able to interact with each other during the break times and also some other joint co-curriculum activities. This plan is being considered as an innovative option to address the main issues of preserving ethnic cultures and supporting inter-racial integration to sustain the national unity of the country (Yusof 2012).

¹⁸⁸Bubur Asyura – Asyura porridge, normally there are two types of different recipes from the two sides of peninsular Malaysia - east coast of peninsular and west coast of peninsular Malaysia has different recipes for this porridge. One with lot of spices and the other is with spices and minced meat.

I can see teamwork at UMT (Steven, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Another Chinese respondent also perceived that One Malaysia did not bring any changes as she felt that this kind of philosophy actually existed earlier than the One Malaysia concept.

I guess, before One Malaysia was being promoted, I can actually feel that our unity is there. It is not necessary that with this concept our unity becomes stronger. It has nothing to do with One Malaysia. Even without this concept, I feel my relationship with my colleagues is close, with this concept, it is still the same. We still can work together. That's what I have experienced. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, feel that One Malaysia can produce respect and tolerance among UMT colleagues. Respondents' positive views were supported by their observations and experiences in activities organised by UMT and they felt that such activities and programmes should continue. They believed this would enhance their relationships and built better intercultural interactions among staff. They suggested increasing the number of various ethnic groups in every staff level. The respondents also explained that students' activities also brought them closer together and united them. Therefore respondents suggested that activities similar to the ones practiced by students be implemented for staff.

The majority of Malay respondents acknowledged that having different ethnicities at the workplace helped them organise their holidays, especially during ethnic religious celebrations such as *Aidilfitri*. They also felt that by having various ethnic staff working together with them helped to create healthy competition in job circles. However, there is no actual programme that specifically addresses the One Malaysia concept at UMT at this time. The majority of respondents felt that this concept is similar to the national integration that had been promoted long ago, and hence were sceptical about the continuation of this kind of concept. Yet they believed that UMT could implement this concept and felt that One Malaysia could help to develop feelings of respect and tolerance among the staff.

7.3.5 Misunderstandings, challenges and recommendations for One Malaysia

Respondents then were asked about the challenges facing the One Malaysia concept, such as the potential to create misunderstandings, and any recommendations that they may have regarding this. Malay respondents felt that at this university, the One Malaysia concept was useful in stimulating student activities.

At this university, One Malaysia concept was promoted by the students. There is a multicultural society which includes Indian, Chinese, and students from Borneo. Whenever they organise a programme they will appoint a committee from various ethnic groups. Such as in organising a Chinese cultural performance, the committee is not only Chinese but consists of a variety of ethnic groups, this has happened at UMT. I notice this has also occurred among the staff. In organising a seminar, a program, or convocation ceremony, the committees were multicultural.(Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malay respondents believed that the One Malaysia concept should be fully explained by the managerial level of the university, who, however, said that they could not explain the government's agenda because they felt that they were not being provided with clear and precise information about the concept. Respondents at the upper level held strong views on this. They tended to think that objectively One Malaysia does help ethnic groups to enhance their multi-ethnic relationships, yet the concept needed to be explained more thoroughly and in detail for the public.

I guess if they want people to understand the concept, they should talk to the leader, the superior. In the UMT context, the leader should give them information about the concept because they should know this since they are a government servant. I myself did not have any opportunity to implement this concept, because they did not provide any. I notice only the national leaders mention this: that we want to implement One Malaysia. (Awang, male, Malay, upper level professional)

Malay respondents proposed that it would be helpful to increase the number of support staff from various ethnic groups. This concept also can be applied to the graduate student interactions in order to encourage positive relationships through informal activities among students as well as staff from various ethnic backgrounds.

Sports can actually build up relationships; among the staff as well as the students from various ethnicities...Post graduate students will be ok, as they have their postgraduate centre. From there on the relationship will develop in positive ways. (Fatimah, female, Malay, support level administration)

Some Malay respondents suggested that One Malaysia should be made clear to the managerial level of the university so that they can disseminate the government agenda clearly and precisely to staff below. They also agreed that government should be more practical in promoting One Malaysia rather than being theoretical. They felt that One Malaysia could be advanced further if a detailed explanation about it was provided, and that leaders should avoid politicising the concept. Providing information and transparency can help preserve equality in a way which also preserves Malay privileges.

I guess, in this modern age, any irrelevant custom should not be practiced. For example, when an Indian meets an Indian, they will use Tamil, and others around them who do not understand may make an assumption that they may slander him/her. Look at Indonesia, whomever they meet, they always use Indonesian language, this of course will avoid conflict. (Yahya, male, Malay, middle level administration)

Malay respondents also related this to religious consciousness which they thought could potentially hinder One Malaysia.

I guess we become more religiously conscious. So we stop going to the Indian or Chinese teashops. Religious mindfulness makes One Malaysia more difficult to achieve. (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

Religious consciousness becomes a challenge which actually generates gaps. Amina supposes that religious consciousness could strengthen relations among the ethnic groups if the ethnic minorities obtain more explanation and information about Islam. It is clear that she wants the minorities to be well informed about Islam and aware that Islam (in

Malaysia, particularly) creates gaps between them. Other Malay respondents agreed that language can be an obstacle to the realisation of this concept.

One Malaysia is where different ethnicities respect each other, Chinese understand Malay, and respect each other. I guess now there were lots of misunderstandings, they thought One Malaysia means we are all the same, to me this is not so. One Malaysia means you will not go beyond each other's rights. (Sumaiyah, female, Melanau, upper level professional)

Sumaiyah does not want the public to have a perception that One Malaysia also means one religion. This concern is due to the Muslim practices (code of conduct) which prohibit Muslims from celebrating their fellow non-Muslims' religious celebrations. But then Chinese New Year is not seen as being related to religion but rather to the mythology of Chinese culture and is therefore more accepted.

It is nothing to do with a religion...That's why our Muslim scholars gave a legal pronouncement that Muslim can join in during the celebration...that is the reason when the Chinese revert to Islam; they still join in with their Chinese family to celebrate for Gong Xi Fat Choi. (Amina, female, Malay, middle level academic)

This also has been pronounced by *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)* or Department of Islamic Development Malaysia which encourages Muslims to attend an open house organised by non-Muslims as long as they observe the Islamic guidelines in attending the festival. Chinese Muslims in Malaysia celebrate Chinese New Year together with their non-Muslim family members by adhering to the Islamic guidelines (see Hung, 2012; Kamsari, 2012). Chinese New Year is the time when they get together with their extended family and for Chinese Muslims, being a Muslim does not necessarily require them to cut off their relationships with family, therefore Chinese New Year has become the model event showing the spirit of Islam to their extended family (Cheng, 2012).

In contrast, the overtly religious celebration *Deepavali* or *Diwali* praises the goddess *Lakshmi*. Hence Muslims do not engage in the celebrating of this festival with Indian friends. However, Islam does not prohibit them to attend their fellow non-Muslim festivals as long as they adhere to the Islamic guidelines. Muslims should follow several guidelines provided by Islam and at the same time could maintain their relationships with their fellow non-Muslim friends. There are two important rules that a Muslim should follow: the venue of the festival (invitations should not be a place of worship such as temple, church or ¹⁸⁹*gudwara*). Yet if the invitation is at their house, park or halls, and therefore not displaying any religious interpretation, and is a mixed social program, then Muslims are allowed to attend with the intention to strengthen ethnic relations. Normally there will be nonreligious ceremony, people simply attend and socialise as well as eating together; not to glorify others beliefs/ religion (glorifying others' beliefs is a big felony for Muslims). Therefore the intention to come to the festival is supposed to be limited to socialising only and maintaining relationships (Mohammad Nidzam, 2009). As long as this guideline is

¹⁸⁹*Gudwara* = or in Punjabi: ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ, *gurdūārā* or, *gurdwārā*, meaning the Gateway to the Guru, is the place of worship for Sikhs, the followers of Sikhism.

adhered to, attending any celebratory event organised by others will not be a problem to any Muslim.

Amina suggested that informing minorities about Islam in order to overcome the issues of misunderstanding and sensitivity would help make them more conscious and sensitive when dealing with related issues. This could strengthen ethnic relations and help develop better understanding. Amina believed that providing information would help to avoid confusion and also educate them about Muslim sensitivity. There is a possibility that other ethnic groups misunderstand that One Malaysia also refers to one festival and one religion where this is actually a vulnerable issue for Muslims. For example, *Deepavali* could be celebrated by all Malaysian regardless of religious belief, but this is not the case for Muslims; or Islam is for all but this is not the case for other ethnic groups such as Chinese or Indian. They should not be confused that One Malaysia refers to one religion embraced by all Malaysians or one festival which is celebrated by all Malaysians, because this may not be the case for some fellow Malaysians.

However the reverse is not understood; that Malay Muslims should also learn more about the Chinese and Indian cultures and religions. Lei Hua believes that when you share with others, others will share with you. Nothing can be done if individuals close their hearts and be close-minded.

..I guess each individual should open their heart, they should learn to accept. There will be a waste if the other party can accept you, but you close your heart. Everyone should learn to share. Free your mind from prejudgement, then you can be approachable. This is an individual effort, if she/he opens up their mind, there will be no problem. But when they don't want to accept, you cannot use any workshops or seminars, even if there are any, but they don't want to attend, it will be a waste because they don't want to. (Lei Hua, female, Chinese, upper level academic)

Chinese respondents presume that One Malaysia can only bring changes to the unity of the staff from various ethnicities if the ideology, the theory, is interpreted correctly and implemented. Chinese respondents believe that One Malaysia can be successful if the unity and equal rights among the citizens are ensured.

The government should enlighten the rights of other ethnicities so there will be no misunderstanding and no one can use this issue for their own interest. Every transformation that government tries to make should be transparent in order to establish a competent state and be respected by the fellow citizens. (Liang, male, Chinese, middle level academic)

Chinese respondents suggested that the true meaning of One Malaysia should be explained to the public. Chinese respondents saw the information about One Malaysia as being obscure and that it does not cover enough of the sensitive issues– as they have been avoided and not disclosed and explained to the public. Chinese respondents felt that the concept should get approval from the public or at least two thirds of the public before progressing with implementation. All senators should be banned from using racial and religious issues in their political campaigns in order to get support from the public. They recommend that in order to achieve One Malaysia there needs to be an open discussion and promotional activities among groups from the various cultural backgrounds. At the

same time, campus members should be open-minded and open their hearts to accept new things during any workshop which is conducted by the management. The Indian respondent, Aditya (male, Indian, academic), believes that in order to unite all staff from various ethnicities, they should adopt a university programme such as a university social responsibility programme, which he believed would be effective in promoting One Malaysia. He also believed that by working together people can promote One Malaysia at UMT and also begin to think that One Malaysia can come into realisation if there is sufficient information provided and sufficient collaboration among the ethnic groups.

Among the issues highlighted by respondents is stubbornness within each ethnic group in their efforts to try and preserve their own culture and customs. Respondents suggested that language can be a hindrance as well as religious consciousness. They suggested having multicultural groupings in committees to help promote One Malaysia more effectively.

Malay and Chinese respondents also suggested that One Malaysia information should be provided to the public and that it should focus solely on harmonious relations among the three ethnic groups. This has also been proposed by Hasnul (2010) who recommends reintroducing the *Tatanegara*¹⁹⁰ subject to the national school's syllabus. The subject is perceived as an instrument to instruct and educate the younger generation and would help the betterment of the country as a whole. He also proposes that there is a need for local universities to provide better arrangements in terms of the placement of students from all races in public universities. Chinese respondents also suggested seeking public opinion before the implementation of any concept. They proposed open discussion and activities to promote intercultural interactions. Both minority ethnic groups also advocate not using racial or religious issues in political campaigns to gain support. They also agreed that the information should not be too theoretical and should emphasise practical application.

7.3.6 Summary

Most respondents defined One Malaysia as encapsulating respect, understanding, living together with respect, accepting others' cultures and the valuing of diversity and harmony. Also encompassed are notions of helping everyone, regardless of ethnicity and religion, promoting unity among all Malaysians, as well as equality, the inclusion of all ethnic groups, and opportunities to contribute to their country. Respondents were aware that this concept is not only for one ethnic group but includes all other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Malay respondents felt that One Malaysia should be implemented from an early age through the educational system. They also expressed concern about religious issues linked to this concept, as there is a degree of fear that the other ethnic groups would mistakenly misunderstand that One Malaysia also means to comprise one religion. They felt that such misunderstandings of this concept could confuse the public. They also held concerns about the concept in relation to Malay privileges, yet they were nonetheless aware about principles of equal rights implications for all ethnicities. Chinese respondents however

¹⁹⁰ Tatanegara subject= subject introduce to the youngster to instill the spirit of patriotism.

felt that One Malaysia should be used to help highlight the issues of equality to all ethnic groups.

Respondents, regardless of ethnicity, expressed some level of doubt about the effectiveness of the concept. They are suspicious about the national leaders' stand towards this concept as they see that leaders clash over the concept. Malays were sceptical about whether the concept could be accepted by the other ethnic groups, or that only Malays care. The Malays were also concerned about the acceptance of the opposition parties towards the concept. This has also been reported by Hasnul (2010) who states that Malaysians are still confused with the ¹⁹¹'Malaysian Malaysia' concept, and One Malaysia could be identical, with national unity or kindred spirit amongst Malaysia's diverse population known as '*semangat muhibbah*'. Pong (as cited in Hasnul, 2010, p. 3) also feels that the One Malaysia concept must be properly explained as it involves governance in order to allay fear and provide a better understanding for the public. The respondents, regardless of ethnicity, claimed that they needed more information. Issues that arose included: its continuation; implications for the public; its application; its real potential for effectiveness; the current level of acceptance by ethnic groups; support from opposition parties; transparency on the issues of social rights and equality; and information about the philosophy of One Malaysia as well as its communication to all levels of the public including layperson.

Most respondents agreed the concept can strengthen relationships with ethnic colleagues, and they were also aware that this concept is not a new concept. This is in line with Suhana (2012) who also claims that One Malaysia is not a new concept in terms of nation building, and the vision to achieve social cohesion has failed to effect any significant change. One Malaysia is actually based on Malaysian values and the principles of the Federal Constitution as well as ethnic identities of each race so that we can live together and have mutual respect among us (Suhana, 2012).

Respondents also shared their views about the applicability of this concept at UMT. They believed that One Malaysia could promote feelings of respect and tolerance among their colleagues. This is also reflected in a survey organised by Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research which indicated that 46% of respondents were confident that One Malaysia would be able to achieve its goals, and 60% of respondents were confident that the Prime Minister would be able to improve ethnic relationships in this country (Hasnul, 2010). The activities organised by UMT in all faculties and departments involving various ethnicities should be an effective way of instilling the One Malaysia spirit into the institution. Respondents hoped that the concept can be implemented not only in UMT but also across

¹⁹¹Malaysian Malaysia is proposed by the People Action Party (PAP). After Singapore was expelled from Malaysia in 1965, some PAP members in Malaysia mostly Chinese established the Democratic Action Party (DAP). The essence of the idea was that Malaysia was conceived as belonging to Malaysians as a whole and not to any particular community or ethnic group. This concept emphasised that public policy should address all Malaysian citizens as equals. This aroused strong communal sentiment in the Chinese community (In-Won Hwang 2003).

The Malaysian Malaysia concept is a policy that seeks to effectively disintegrate the basic foundation that the community is built on. The fairness that is espoused in the Malaysian Malaysia blindly takes advantage of the utilisation of the total equity version. Malaysian Malaysia is limited to equitable rights and does not consider reality and Malaysian history. (Suhana, 2012)

the country and not remain merely as a slogan for the public. Otherwise there will be a lot of barriers along the way before this concept can be absorbed by the public.

Other Malay respondents felt that One Malaysia could be successful if the concept could provide convincing answers to social rights concerns and questions. This is a major issue for the minority groups as it is widely accepted that it is a provocative issue. Malays are in a dilemma as it is very difficult to implement social justice without sacrificing Malay privileges. The additional obstacle that One Malaysia faces relates to Malay attitudes, in respect to the idea that there needs to be changes to their attitudes. These considerations make the realisation of the concept difficult.

7.4 Conclusions

This chapter has documented experiences of conflict undergo by respondents and their choice of style in relation to attempting to resolve conflict. Respondents preferred the two standard styles for resolving conflict: (a) no. 13 (... *collaborate to solve conflict until a mutually agreeable solution is found*) and (b) no. 14 (... *compromise whenever conflicts arise*). The majority of respondents indicated that they would try to avoid confrontation as a way of handling conflict. The issues of One Malaysia were also discussed in this chapter as it is relates to the multicultural composition of the ethnic group in this study.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that in handling a conflict and resolving it one should consider the background of the respected individual as their cultural background alone does influence their decision in resolving conflict. Therefore, it is suggested for one to look into individual details in solving conflicts and to use the appropriate styles so that the conflicts can be resolved in a proper manner. As for the One Malaysia issue, it is suggested for the concept to be clearly explained to the managerial level, so that confusions can be avoided. Aside from that it is advised that the doubt, beliefs and misunderstanding be addressed by the government and passed around to higher education institutions to ensure better understanding of the issues at the lower level of the society.

This study will elaborate in the next chapter about the several recommendations for the university and the future researcher who might be interested to delve more into the topic. The next chapter also will report on the strengths and limitations of the study, its theoretical contribution, its contribution to practice, and it will also provide recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The study explored the intercultural communication of the personnel from three ethnic groups at UMT. It has identified the cultural values, verbal and nonverbal communication and conflict with regards to these in their interaction. The study has also sought to investigate whether the One Malaysia Policy was understood by the personnel. This research was prompted by an inquiry into the investigation of intercultural communication among the personnel at a higher educational institution in east Malaysia. What warranted this inquiry is the idea that intercultural communication provides added value to ethnic interactions, and recognised that intercultural communication is an essential aspect of the ethnic integration, and that it therefore has its role to play in the development of personnel at higher educational institution.

The study sought to investigate the intercultural communication patterns across ethnic diversity demonstrated by personnel employed at UMT

The objectives were to:

1. Analyse the cultural values held by the UMT personnel
2. Investigate their verbal communication
3. Explore their nonverbal communication
4. Inquire into their management of conflict situations
5. Explore their views about the One Malaysia Policy.

This chapter will begin with strengths and limitations of the study presented in section 8.3, which is followed by theoretical contributions in Sections 8.4 and contributions to practice in section 8.4.1. It concludes with an exploration of possible future for the research.

8.2 Lessons learnt: Malaysian perspective of the multicultural country

The findings reveal that Malay respondents in this study need to improve their intercultural interaction with the other ethnic groups by knowing their taboos, culture and religion, in order to avoid prejudice and uphold the integration among them. By knowing only a tiny part of their colleagues of different cultures such as their festive celebration, they cannot assume that they know everything about their colleagues' culture in general. The Malay respondents seem to take for granted the minorities, and presume that they should not learn any of the minorities' culture. This could fabricate prejudice and see other culture as a deficit. Language could be one of the problems, where only a few Malays in this study understand other languages such as mandarin. The language barrier could be one of the reasons why the Malays still have prejudicial feelings towards their colleagues from other ethnic groups. Yet, there are some Malay respondents that actually mingle with the different ethnic groups since they were kind, and appreciate the differences.

The minority Chinese and Indian respondents, who live among the Malay Muslims in this study, seem to understand the Malay lifestyle, culture and religion in order to get along in their workspaces. It is understood that they need to blend in with the dominant group, yet not everything they know about Malays, the culture, the lifestyle and the religion is assured. The findings reveal that there are some Chinese respondents who assume that

they know about Islam, but actually still need more information about this religion in order to avoid conflict and misconceptions as well as maintaining their relationship with their Malay colleagues. Language is not a problem for the Chinese and Indian respondents in this study, since they were multilingual compared with their Malay colleagues except for the dialect used in informal contexts. Briefly the intercultural interaction is like the tip of an iceberg, where the things hidden underneath are the ones that need to be explored and understood in order to preserve ethnic relationships and live harmoniously.

Muslims and Malays in a multicultural country such as Malaysia should be more aware of cultural differences. Muslims need to be aware of and decrease gaps with other ethnic groups. Misunderstandings, a consequence of religious beliefs, can cause a lack of knowledge and exacerbate intercultural problems. The findings suggest that both verbal and nonverbal practices as well as differences in cultural orientations can generate distances with colleagues from different ethnic groups. Muslims misinterpret others' behaviours from a lack of understanding of their own religious knowledge which can lead them to be close-minded. Only when they travel abroad or when they begin to deal with intercultural conflict do they begin the journey of accepting others' views.

Islam in Malaysia is so closely linked with the Malays to the point that becoming Muslim is synonymous with becoming Malay; this creates confusion and misunderstanding however for the Chinese-Malaysian community. Muslims reverting in Malaysia could become a bridge to forging understandings among the different ethnic groups. They could help to educate fellow Muslims about their former religion and culture. This connection could act as a bridge in understanding colleagues from ethnic groups (Seng, 2011).

Muslims in Malaysia seem dependent on ¹⁹²Al-Shafi'i's opinion to the point of neglecting other scholars' opinions such as ¹⁹³Hambali, Hanafi or Maliki. Practically, Islam is not difficult, yet the followers who do not fully understand their own religion contribute to making this religion look difficult. It seems that Malaysian Muslims take their privileges for granted because they are born Muslim and live in a largely Muslim community. They do not encounter problems (even though problems actually exist). This also has a special challenge where the Muslim Malay majority or society may feel other groups' practices are deficit. Therefore educating Muslims to understand the assumptions underlying their

¹⁹² Al-Shafi'i= real name is Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i. He was a Muslim great scholar, also called an 'Imam' meaning 'profoundly learned scholar', who lived from 767 — 820 CE (150 — 204 AH). He was active in juridical matters and his teaching eventually led to the Shafi'i school of fiqh named after him. Hence he is often called Imam al-Shafi'i. He was among the four famous Muslim jurists who include Hambali, Hanafi and Maliki. ("Shafii," 2014)

¹⁹³Hambali, Hanafi or Maliki = they are among the four famous Muslim Jurist or 'Imam'. Hambali's real name was Imam Abu Abdullah Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Hanbal (RahimahuAllahuTa'ala), was born in Marw on the 20th of Rabi-ul-Awwal 164 A.H. he was a very pious scholar who devoted all his life to the Science of Ahadith and Fiqh. The most famous among his books are: Kitaabul A'maal, Kitaabut Tafseer, Kitaabul Naasikh wal Mansookh, Kitaabul Zahid, Kitaabul Masaa'il, Kitaabul Fadaa'il and Kitaabul Mansiq. His most famous book is his "MUSNAD", a kitab in which he collected about 50 000 to 70 000 Ahadith. He then became an imam al-madhab known as Hambali's school of fiqh. ("Hambali," 2014)

Hanafi's or Abu Hanifa's real name was Numan. He was the first of the four great imams of the Ahl as-SunnahWalJama'ah. He was brought up so as to become a great judge, but he became an imam al-madhab known as Hanafi's school of fiqh. ("Abu Hanifah," 2014)

Maliki or also his full name Malik bin Anas learned and memorized the Qur'an in his youth. It is reported about the Imaam that he had the best memory in the knowledge of Hadith and Fiqh. He then became an imam al-madhab known as Maliki's school of fiqh ("Malik bin Anas," 2014).

privileged status and question their dominant beliefs is necessary to improving their understanding of their own religion. Likewise some of the Malay values such as not expressing disagreement may also become one of the challenges in promoting an understanding of Islamic knowledge. The Muslims in Malaysia should be aware that they live in a multicultural society; hence it is necessary to know how to communicate with their non-Muslim colleagues and not exacerbate misconceptions and misunderstandings that may arise between them. Understanding their religious practices would also assist in this process.

Educational talks and multi-faith discussions should be encouraged to enhance these understandings. This could help initiate harmonious relationships and reduce prejudice towards other ethnic groups. Thus, based on the findings, everyone, regardless of ethnicity, should learn from the people around them, to not look down on them, be open minded, and confirm perceptions by talking to them to avoid misunderstanding or prevent negative expectations and stereotyping. The findings suggest that it is important to try to avoid being emotional when discussing any issues including religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, and perception about different ethnic groups, as this can spark ethnic tensions.

In terms of language, learning others' ethnic language, such as Mandarin, Cantonese or Tamil, will also help in decreasing the gaps among the ethnic groups. This is especially for Malays who may be fluent in two languages, such as Malay and English, but lack a third language compared, with their non-Malay colleagues who are fluent in more than two languages.

Non-Malays need to learn the Malay language because it is decreed the dominant language and thus is part of their responsibility as Malaysians in embracing the national identity. That they are more multilingual compared with their Malay colleagues gives them lots of advantages in the work environment. This could be used to decrease the gaps among the ethnic groups and not be seen as an obstacle in integrating with other ethnic groups. The ability to speak in many languages should be encouraged, and increasingly code-switching¹⁹⁴ (from dialect to Malay to English) should be noted as a sophisticated communicative strategy (Isabelle de Courtivron as cited in Koester & Lustig, 2013, p. 155). Moreover, learning the connotative meanings of words is essential in achieving competence in another culture's verbal code.

Therefore, based on these findings, it is advisable for Malaysian personnel to appreciate the differences be it in religion, culture, skin colour or language as we are all Malaysians. We share this country and we need to build the country together with harmonious attitudes, unity, tolerance and understanding. Respecting each other's beliefs is crucial in the Malaysian environment.

8.3 Strengths and limitations

The study has a number of limitations and some of the inconsistencies in results may be due to these limitations. Small sample sizes for the survey, particularly with regard to the number of Indian respondents, may have weakened the results relating to ethnic origin. It

¹⁹⁴Code-switching = the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance (Koester & Lustig, 2013, p. 155)

is useful if there is an independent study about this group, to investigate their cultural orientations in an organisation like a Malaysian university in more detail, for example Indian personnel on either the eastern or western side of Peninsular Malaysia. Further, future research could be conducted across a range of academic institutions to ensure that the results were not weakened by this factor.

As this was a single organisation case study research, replications of results across other organisations or industries are limited. As such, the replication of the results across organisations outside of Malaysia will be the main limitation of this research. Nevertheless, the use of the single case in this research context allows the findings to be used by any Malaysian organisation undergoing change, or individuals seeking to better understand how Malaysian culture influences communication practices.

Given the fact that this is largely qualitative research, the researcher's bias is another potential research limitation as this method opens opportunities for bias in data interpretation. Thus, the researcher's ethnicity as a Malay and previous working experience in the institution in the research study, also may have contributed to research bias. Nonetheless, the use of interviews, observations, independent judges' evaluation, as well as supporting literature helps to minimise this potential bias.

The findings suggest that it may be dangerous to draw conclusions based on national culture, without considering differences within an ethnicity. As societies are becoming increasingly multicultural, this issue is also one that is worthy of further research.

8.4 Theoretical contributions

This study has specifically shed light onto how Malaysian culture influences communication practices in an organisation. Even though existing Malaysian studies have looked at cultural values, no specific studies have looked at how such values (which are addressed as culture dimensions throughout this thesis) influence the communication practices in a largely Malay university.

As mentioned earlier, studies on intercultural communication highlight that 'the culture of a group of people can be distinguished from others by its shared *values* and practices expressed through *symbols*, which evoke meanings in people, *rituals* that form bonds of communication and what their *role models* do to inspire members with how to behave' (Asma, Epps, & Wan, 2000, p. 2). In other words, culture might influence members' behaviour and the way they communicate as our 'behaviour at work is a continuation of behaviour learned earlier' (Hofstede, 1991, p. 4).

Based on the previous assertion, it is suggested that this research contributes to previous intercultural communication especially in the Malaysian context. Evidences of the Malaysian cultural dimensions in terms of the Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures as well as their verbal and nonverbal communication were identified during the study. In other

words, the findings show that the cultural dimensions and verbal and nonverbal communications influenced the personnel interactions between them.

8.4.1 Contributions to practice

The research was conducted to investigate the cultural value orientations and communication of selected staff members at UMT. The findings as presented in chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7 are relevant for academic and professional personnel in understanding how Malaysians interact interculturally and how they communicate in a higher education environment. This is especially important in relation to the various ethnic groups in this multicultural country as well as the growing incidence of overseas students venturing into Malaysian higher education, as the country grows into one of the world's educational destinations. The findings also provide insights into how intercultural communication may be used as a strategy to integrate personnel in the organisation. Thus, data findings will be relevant to practitioners to understand the impact of intercultural communication across ethnicities.

8.5 Recommendations

8.5.1 For Universities

This study recommends university management should:

- promote One Malaysia and encourage ethnic groups to understand each other. This would assist in promoting the concept to students as well.
- offer a short workshop on hands on activity or experiencing the real intercultural context to facilitate the process of integrating for university personnel for example support level, middle level, academic level, foreign personnel and upper level.

8.5.2 Recommendations for further research

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge about the experiences of the personnel from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds accessing and working in a university. However, as with any other study, it is not all-inclusive, suggesting further research directions and recommendations. These include:

- Research attention to be given to ways of making visible the implications provided for both current and prospective personnel to promote their capacity to positively influence personnel's effectiveness in managing intercultural communication in the workplace.
- Research attention is directed at investigating other ethnic groups from East Malaysia, for example Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia), where the intercultural communication is more complex as the culture is richer and diverse.
- Research could facilitate the process of integrating other groups of personnel accessing a university administration, for example, support level, middle level, academic level, foreign personnel and upper level.

- Research is directed at ascertaining the viability of a training program to be developed whose primary objective would be to facilitate personnel.

As this research looked at only one organisation, it is suggested that future research should consider conducting comparative studies, either between two organisations in the same country, or between organisations in different countries. Perhaps a comparative study between two different cultures like the western and eastern worlds can be conducted, in exploring the intercultural communication that influences personnel interactions in organisations.

8.6 Closing comments

The literature reveals that culture and cultural dimensions as well as verbal and nonverbal communication can be manifested through communication in an association with members from various backgrounds. Different background of the members also affects their ways of handling conflict in an intercultural communication context. While policies introduced by the government also plays an important role in promoting the intercultural communication. Thus, the information exhibited in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 demonstrates that Malaysian culture dimensions, use of verbal and nonverbal, and ways of handling conflict have impacted their communication towards their colleagues from distinctive backgrounds. Furthermore their conclusions towards the One Malaysia approach do shed a light on their comprehension towards the arrangement with a specific end goal to extemporise and make it into reality.

Besides, the study did provide information particularly about other ethnic cultures, taboos, verbal and nonverbal and the ways they handle their conflict. This impacted the researcher's interaction towards other ethnic groups and to dependably think of them at whatever point it come to decide or do anything so as not to understate of their presence. Indeed, the differences of the ethnic group ought to be making into valuable substance so that this could enhance relationship among the colleague in this institution.

This research has led to investigate how cultural dimensions, verbal, nonverbal, conflict and policy are proven in intercultural communication, in an organisational setting. In investigating the interaction of intercultural communication and strategies utilised, interviews were used to see how these cultural dimensions, verbal, nonverbal, conflict and policy, distinguished from the literature, are shown in their interaction. The discoveries serve as direction for the experts to further comprehend the research of intercultural communication of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. In any case, as noted prior, more research ought to further investigate the relationships between culture and communication in higher educational organisations by looking at the personnel working in the institution from various ethnic groups.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Outlines the survey data collected about the use of proxemics (use of distance) and haptics (touch).

6.6 Nonverbal communication

Proxemics (use of distance)

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
NV1	I believe that non-verbal communication generally has the same meaning everywhere in the world.	No	29	38.2	6	75.0	1	25.0	36	40.9
		Yes	47	61.8	2	25.0	3	75.0	52	59.1
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 1: General question of nonverbal communication

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
NV2	I'm aware that every ethnic and religious group in UMT have their own interpretation of the use of space.	No	6	7.9	0	.0	1	25.0	7	8.0
		Yes	70	92.1	8	100.0	3	75.0	81	92.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV3	I feel uneasy if my male colleague gets too close to my working space/area (desk or your chair.)	No	19	25.0	6	75.0	2	50.0	27	30.7
		Yes	57	75.0	2	25.0	2	50.0	61	69.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV4	I feel uncomfortable if someone of the opposite gender stands too close to me at my work place.	No	11	14.5	6	75.0	2	50.0	19	21.6
		Yes	65	85.5	2	25.0	2	50.0	69	78.4
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 2: Respondents general idea of proxemics

				Gender					
				Female		Male		Total	
				Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Ethnicity	Malay	I feel uneasy if my male colleague gets too close to my working space/area (desk or your chair.)	No	7	16.3	12	36.4	19	25.0
			Yes	36	83.7	21	63.6	57	75.0
			Total	43	100.0	33	100.0	76	100.0
		I feel uncomfortable if someone of the opposite gender stands too close to me at my work place.	No	1	2.3	10	30.3	11	14.5
			Yes	42	97.7	23	69.7	65	85.5
			Total	43	100.0	33	100.0	76	100.0
	Chinese	I feel uneasy if my male colleague gets too close to my working space/area (desk or your chair.)	No	1	50.0	5	83.3	6	75.0
			Yes	1	50.0	1	16.7	2	25.0
			Total	2	100.0	6	100.0	8	100.0
		I feel uncomfortable if someone of the opposite gender stands too close to me at my work place.	No	1	50.0	5	83.3	6	75.0
			Yes	1	50.0	1	16.7	2	25.0
			Total	2	100.0	6	100.0	8	100.0
Indian	I feel uneasy if my male colleague gets too close to my working space/area (desk or your chair.)	No	0	.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	
		Yes	0	.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	
		Total	0	.0	4	100.0	4	100.0	
	I feel uncomfortable if someone of the opposite gender stands too close to me at my work place.	No	0	.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	
		Yes	0	.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	
		Total	0	.0	4	100.0	4	100.0	

Table 3: Preferences towards the use of proxemics based on gender and ethnicity

			Ethnicity							
			Malay		Chinese		Indian		Total	
			Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
NV22	I'm aware that every ethnic and religious group in UMT may sensitive to the use of touching or haptic.	No	8	10.5	4	50.0	0	.0	12	13.6
		Yes	68	89.5	4	50.0	4	100.0	76	86.4
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV23	I'm uncomfortable touching my colleague of the opposite gender although they are from the same religion and ethnic group.	No	2	2.6	3	37.5	0	.0	5	5.7
		Yes	74	97.4	5	62.5	4	100.0	83	94.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV24	I'm comfortable touching my colleague of the same gender although they are from different ethnic group and religion.	No	38	50.0	2	25.0	1	25.0	41	46.6
		Yes	38	50.0	6	75.0	3	75.0	47	53.4
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV26	I'm aware that some ethnic group do not like to be touched in some areas of their body because of their cultural and religious beliefs.	No	17	22.4	3	37.5	0	.0	20	22.7
		Yes	59	77.6	5	62.5	4	100.0	68	77.3
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV27	I'm aware that every ethnic group may have different ways of greetings when they meet.	No	7	9.2	1	12.5	0	.0	8	9.1
		Yes	69	90.8	7	87.5	4	100.0	80	90.9
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0
NV28	I'm feeling comfortable touching my inferior / superior of the same gender even though they are from different ethnic group and religion.	No	34	44.7	3	37.5	0	.0	37	42.0
		Yes	42	55.3	5	62.5	4	100.0	51	58.0
		Total	76	100.0	8	100.0	4	100.0	88	100.0

Table 4: Respondents awareness and comfort in relation to touch

Appendix B: Consent form (Survey and Interview)



University of Southern Queensland

**The University of Southern Queensland
Consent Form (Interview)**

TO: Participants

Full Project Title: Managing Intercultural communication problems between staff at the University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysian University

Principal Researcher: Dr. Jill Lawrence

Student Researcher: Isma Rosila Ismail

Associate Researcher(s): Dr. Chris Kossen

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that audio tape will be use in this study, all the recording will be stored in electronic and digital form, and will be securely stored on a computer hard disk that is password protected. Additional copies of the data will be stored on CD-ROMs and USB drives that will be secured in a locked cupboard. Hard copies of any data (such as questionnaires, transcripts, discussion/forum print outs), once analysed, will also be placed in a locked cupboard and stored for the required period of time.

- I understand that I will be audio taped during the study.

Name of participant.....

Signed.....**Date**.....

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: ethics@usq.edu.au

Appendix C: Participant information sheet



University of Southern Queensland

The University of Southern Queensland Participant Information Sheet

Full Project Title: Managing Intercultural communication problems between staff at the University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysian University

Principal Researcher: Isma Rosila Ismail

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project. The research project involves participants across three organizational levels: the upper, middle and lower management. This study will investigate the intercultural communication problems in relation to personnel from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds present at UMT, which could affect the university's productivity and, in turn, students' experiences at university. The information you provide me will be kept private and confidential. I really hope for your cooperation and involvement.

Thank you very much for your involvement in this research and your participation is highly appreciated.

1. Procedures

Participation in this project will involve a:

- One one-hour email questionnaire
- One one-hour semi-structured interview (either a face-to-face or an e-interview).

The research will be monitored through a questionnaire, interviews and e-interviews.

The benefits will include:

- Reduced communication problems between staff from different cultures and backgrounds;
- Increased skills in intercultural communication by providing insight into communication patterns at the university;
- Strategies to assist UMT staff's intercultural communication;
- Strategies to assist UMT students' who may experience intercultural communication problems at university.

In addition the research will add to the existing body of knowledge by providing information about intercultural communication in a university context on the East Coast Peninsular of Malaysia.

The risk to the staff is low. The study involves the staff across three levels of organizations to work with the researcher on the study by giving feedback and sharing their intercultural communication experiences at UMT. The study requires participants to share their experiences in intercultural communication as part of the research aims. Data to be collected will not affect staffs' progress in their workplace. Data will come only from participants who have consented to participate in the study.

2. Voluntary Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Any information already obtained from you will be destroyed. Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your *relationship with UMT*. Please notify the researcher if you decide to withdraw from this project (especially when you later feel do not want to be interviewed).

Should you have any queries regarding the progress or conduct of this research, you can contact the principal researcher:

Isma Rosila Ismail

University of Southern Queensland, Faculty of Arts, School of Humanities and Communication

OR 5080, Kg Teluk Pasu, 21200 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: **ethics@usq.edu.au**

‘Participant information sheet’ in Malay version

Maklumat am berkenaan ‘Participant information sheet’

Secara amnya, ‘Participant information sheet’ menerangkan berkenaan kajian yang akan dilakukan ke atas kakitangan UMT daripada tiga kategori, iaitu peringkat atasan, pertengahan dan sokongan. Dalam ‘Participant information sheet’ ini juga diberi pencerahan berkenaan prosedur yang perlu peserta kajian lalui, iaitu menjawab soalan kajian yang dianggarkan mengambil masa selama 30 minit. Peserta kajian juga akan ditemuramah (dianggarkan 1 jam atau lebih) untuk berkongsi pengalaman tentang komunikasi silang budaya di tempat kerja mereka. Data yang dikumpulkan tidak akan memberi kesan kepada pekerjaan harian di UMT dan hanya boleh diperoleh daripada peserta yang memberikan kebenaran untuk menyertai kajian ini.

‘Participant information sheet’ juga menerangkan penyertaan peserta adalah sukarela. Jika peserta ingin menarik diri atau tidak mahu menyertai kajian ini atau peserta telah pun menyertai kajian dan kemudiannya mengambil keputusan untuk menarik diri, semua maklumat berkenaan peserta kajian berkenaan akan dihapuskan. Semua maklumat yang diberikan oleh peserta adalah sulit dan hanya digunakan untuk tujuan kajian sahaja. Sebarang permasalahan berkenaan penyertaan, ingin menarik diri dari kajian ini (terutamanya jika anda telah pun bersetuju untuk ditemuramah, kemudian menarik diri) atau masalah-masalah lain, peserta perlu memaklumkan kepada penyelidik melalui e-mel di bawah:

Isma Rosila Ismail

ismarosila@umt.edu.my

‘Participant information sheet’ juga menerangkan jika peserta mempunyai sebarang persoalan berkenaan kajian ini dan hak sebagai peserta, boleh menghubungi University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer:

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: ethics@usq.edu.au

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview and E-interview Question

Semi-structured Interview Question and E-Interview (Phase 1)

A. Intro (ice-breaking and general questions about cultural experience):

1. How should I address you?
2. Are you local?
3. How long have you been settled in Kuala Terengganu?
4. How long have you been working here?
5. Is this your first job?
6. Can you tell me about your educational background?
7. Did your school consist of many ethnic groups?
8. Did you mingle around with them?
9. Could you tell me about your experience in mixing with various ethnic groups, from school time up to university years?
10. Do you think that your interaction with other ethnic groups during your school years/university years helps you when you mix with them in the workplace?
11. How many among your friends are from different ethnic groups, especially at UMT?
12. From your survey results, I can see that you do not really know about your college culture, can you tell me which ethnic group is of interest and what is the thing that you want to know about their culture?

B. The use of Power Distance

1. Explain the most preferable ways that you want your subordinates/superiors to address you.
2. Explain why you don't feel comfortable if you do not use the proper address form to your superior.
3. Do you think your workplace allows you to practice free dress?
4. Does your culture/ethnic group/religion have some etiquette/dress code at the workplace?
5. Explain why you cannot treat your colleagues equally, and why you need to consider their age and seniority.
6. Does your culture/ethnic group/religion have an etiquette whenever you interact with people older than you/your subordinate/your superior?
7. What is your perception when your superior tries to get involved in your task; does this have some importance to you?
8. Explain why you don't simply agree with your superior.
9. Explain what type of decision that you normally will agree with your superior.
10. Explain how you express your disagreement towards your superior? How normally will your superior react towards your disagreement?

11. Do you feel comfortable in expressing your opinion to your superior?

C. Uncertainty Avoidance

1. Based on the survey result, you answered 'No/Yes' for this question: (any related question), why did you choose this answer?
2. Why do you not feel afraid about the changes and do you mind if you will be transferred to another department?
3. Is creativity being encouraged at your workplace?

D. Long Term Orientation

1. Do you plan for your future, such as your finances, life, children, education and your retirement? Please state the reason.
2. Did your future planning involve your culture/ethnic group/religion?
3. What will you do in order to get the award (*Anugerah Cemerlang*) offered by your organisation?

Semi-structured Interview Question and E-Interview (Phase II)

E. Verbal Communication-Language Use

1. Based on the survey result, you answered 'No/Yes' for this question: (the specific question); to confirm, does this refer to your mother tongue?
2. When and where do you normally use Malay language at UMT?
3. Where, when and with whom do you normally use English at UMT?
4. Explain why you don't use Terengganese dialect at your workplace?
5. Do you understand Terengganese dialect?
6. To confirm, does the mixed language that you use refer to Malay and English?
7. Explain which language you prefer to use when you interact with your colleagues at UMT and why.
8. Explain why you think Terengganese dialect is easy/not easy for those nonlocals (those who are not from Terengganu).
9. Explain why you feel ignored/all right when individuals use their ethnic language/dialect that you don't understand.
10. Do you experience a problem with regard to the language use by your colleagues from various ethnic groups?
11. Do you think your colleagues speak too fast when they communicate with you?
12. Do you experience any misunderstandings with regard of the use of Terengganu dialect? Please give one example.
13. Do you experience any misunderstandings with regard to language use in other ethnic languages/dialect? Please give one example.
14. Explain any object/animal/words that you feel other ethnic groups might not like when you mention these particular object/animal/words in front of them.

15. What are the object/animal/words that are a taboo for your community and that other ethnic groups should be sensitive about?
16. What are your suggestions with regard to the use of language and dialect at UMT?

F. Nonverbal : Proxemics and Haptics

• Proxemics

1. Do you ever ask your colleagues about the comfortable distance that they prefer? If 'Yes/No', why do you think this issue is important/not important to be addressed?
2. Based on the survey data, you answered 'Yes/No' to this question: (specific question from survey), please explain why.
3. Explain why you don't really care if a person moved your personal belonging or sits at the place that is assigned to you.
4. Are you a privacy type of person?
5. Does the use of space in your community/culture/religion influence your interaction with your colleagues from the same religion, different religion, different gender and the same gender?

• Haptics

1. In your culture/ethnic community, do you practice the use of touch, for example when you are saying goodbye or when you meet? How you do that?
2. At the workplace, why do you think that you feel comfortable or uncomfortable to touch your colleague from a different gender although you are the same ethnic group and embrace the same religion?
3. Which ethnic group do you think has a taboo in the touching aspect? Elaborate what is....
4. Which ethnic group do you think does not like to be touched in some body areas for religious/ belief reasons? Explain ...
5. Which ethnic group has a different way of greeting? Explain how...
6. Do you feel comfortable if your subordinate/superior from a different gender touches you?
7. Do you ever ask your colleagues from different ethnic groups if they have a taboo/ethics/prohibition in the aspect of touch? If yes, explain more. If no, why do you think this is not important for you to know?

Semi-structured Interview Question and E-Interview (Phase 3)

G. Conflict

1. Does the way you manage conflict depend on the individual, or their culture, or religion or their ethnic background? Please explain why.
2. Which factor influences your decisions in solving the conflict?

H. 1 Malaysia

1. Give your own opinion on the 1 Malaysia concept.
2. Explain what you understand about 1 Malaysia.
3. Based on the survey response, why do you disagree/agree with this statement: Do you believe that One Malaysia means equality, is non-discriminatory and gives no privileges for one ethnicity over others?
4. What is the other information about 1 Malaysia that you need to know?
5. Do you agree/disagree that 1 Malaysia could bring changes to the unity of staff members from various ethnic groups in UMT; give one example that you can see in this institution.
6. In your opinion, what is the key success for 1 Malaysia?
7. In your opinion, what are the obstacles for this concept?
8. Give your recommendation/suggestions/alternatives in making sure that 1 Malaysia is a success.

Final question

1. Give your suggestions on how to enhance the intercultural communication in this institution.