1.1 General Overview

Today, information controls every thread with which we weave the fabric of our lives. Managers and industrialists need information for making the right decisions to upgrade productivity and sales performance. Housewives need information for making informed choices when shopping for food and household items, while students need to tap the latest information for study and research purposes and for passing examinations.

With the advent of Information Technology (IT), gradually and inevitably we are evolving a culture of global information sharing. (Ranee 1994) We have information brokers whose chief concern is to market the right information to key personnel in management and industry. On the other hand, in an academic environment we have librarians who are catalysts of another kind.

Librarians traditionally function as custodians and managers of information. But the librarians of today have more diversified roles to play. Besides disseminating information to interested user groups, they have to function as intermediaries between the technology and the library’s clients. In line with this, they are responsible to train users become autonomous interactors with the available CD-ROM computerised databases like University Microfilm International’s Proquest, Wilsondisc Indexes, The London Times and Sunday Times Index,
Microsoft Bookshelf, The ERIC SilverPlatter Information Retrieval System (SPIRS) and others.

Librarians perform the above-mentioned role, by giving clear explanations, instructions and advice to impart the know-how of search literacy to library user groups. Thus equipped, users can interact with these computerised data resources independently to tap relevant information for their research and study needs.

Before the introduction of CD-ROMs as compact disc storage devices for information retrieval from bibliofiles and databases, if the information needed was not available locally, librarians usually had to request it from libraries in other institutions or countries, under the inter-library loan or resource sharing system. This was a slow and inefficient process as the requested documents had to be sent by mail. Today, the scenario is very different.

Encapsulated in a service-oriented environment, librarians have to justify their existence largely through their own resourcefulness. They have to be familiar with their working tools and establish wide networks or links with key information personnel in private and public organisations. They need to keep themselves informed of the latest developments on the IT front. In addition, they have to be aware of the kind of discourse they have to engage at each phase of the CD-ROM session to function as effective intermediaries between the system setup and the library users.
It is a truism that well-managed information is a much valued asset. In a fast developing nation like ours, information literacy can enhance performance and productivity with the gilt edge of quality to hoist the nation to a position "poised at the cutting edge of technology ". This is the utopian dream of most developing countries. This is the ultimate objective which we are driving our combined efforts towards, to launch the country into the next phase of attaining fully industrialised status.

In a college environment, librarians can be groomed to play the crucial intermediary role, to educate student users with the know-how to take advantage of the available CD-ROM resources and to publicise them as sources of "instant" information. Malaysian students generally have very minimal or almost zero knowledge of computer literacy, let alone computerised information databases. Many first-time users are intimidated by the technology. Almost as many are overwhelmed by the alphanumeric codes and terms. Thrice as many get frustrated and give up when the system fails to respond according to their expectations.

There is thus, the need for a reference librarian to be there, to lend the personal touch, to show and tell, to clarify areas of doubt at point of use and to convince students that these CD-ROM information resources are useful sources to consult. To execute this three-fold "show-tell-sell" function successfully, what SL librarians need are
short cuts to competence and effective communication strategies. These will help bridge their linguistic lacks and enable them to structure their discourse with greater clarity and purpose.

It has been said that the cult of information may be seemingly stamping out its own usefulness by a gradual process of deterioration into masses of incoherent data. This disintegration may be partly attributed to bad management, keen competition among the key suppliers and system designers and poorly understood techniques of information storage, retrieval and dissemination. These factors will eventually accentuate the rift between the information "haves" from the "have-nots".

This emerging pattern of disequilibrium which besets our information age has spurred T.S.Eliot to voice his apprehensions ahead of his time when he posed these searing questions:

"Where is the wisdom that we have lost in knowledge?"

"Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

In his keynote address at a seminar on "Managing for the future success strategy in the 21st century", (Khan, 1994) Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, stressed that to forge ahead into the next stage of industrialisation one of the key issues we need to address is the uneven pattern of information use and distribution. Our main concern should focus on simplifying techniques to ease
information transmission and dissemination. These will help transform the vast stores of information into true knowledge which can be readily tapped and applied.

In an age when IT has the potential to project images of virtual reality onto our computer screens, academic libraries need to acquire the latest that technology can offer and what management can well afford. This is because to ignore updates in IT today, could mean a slip into the limbo of outdated redundancy and inefficiency. Viewed in retrospect, this may prove to be a costly planning decision for any organisation. (Underwood 1990) However, the acquisition of technology has to be matched by updates in staff development and concurrent user training programmes to ensure successful implementation at all levels.

1.2 Background of Study

In line with the objectives of Vision 2020, in 1990 the management of this government affiliated college library finalised the acquisition of CD-ROM (compact disc read only memory) computerised bibliofiles, databases and equipment as an initial step to promote information literacy among college students, faculty and administrative staff.

To date, the library has a total of 27 databases. The most frequently consulted are UMI’s Proquest General Periodicals Ondisc (GPO) and Business Periodicals Ondisc (BPO). The reason is with the full-image printing capabilities of these
systems, a student can research in armchair comfort to retrieve the full text of journal articles. However, the general frequency of use is still considerably low in relation to the total campus population. While an identified group of users who are conversant with these systems continually consult them, the uninformed majority remain apprehensive, reticent and unsure what these systems can offer. As a result, the computer remains idle and underused.

Given this scenario, it is necessary for librarians to mediate and promote information literacy among the college community. It has become increasingly imperative for the library staff to assume a more active role to publicise the use of the available CD-ROM databases to a wider user audience. Above all, they have to conduct more effective user training programmes to ensure that the volume of use of these CD-ROMs justifies the costs of their acquisition, installation and maintenance.

1.3 Area of Study

The librarians in this academic library have to assist the college community in a number of ways. Some of their main duties which McElroy (1984), Turner (1984) and Trezza (1990) detail are, the effective organisation, retrieval and dissemination of information and library materials and the provision of relevant support services and facilities to all user groups.
The area of investigation in this study centres on a subset of the support services that the SL college librarians provide to the college clientele. To be precise, it is focused on the CD-ROM search literacy training session which can be equated to an IT familiarisation programme. This is conducted for new intakes of students every year in a cursory manner as part of the library orientation exercise. However, when there are follow-up requests from academic staff or groups of students, the librarians will conduct the CD-ROM search skills programme in greater detail, to give students time for hands-on experience as well.

This programme is run for the benefit of post SPM or pre-university students, and involve a teaching-learning pattern of interaction. Thus, it will be interesting to find out what are the typical discourse patterns librarians employ in this context and whether there is the need for them to inculcate a more student-focused approach. This strategy is in tandem with the current paradigm shift towards user-friendliness, noticed in the writing of technical manuals and instructional procedures that originate from the Wilson Company. Nahl-Jakobovits declares this finding in her doctoral dissertation (1993) when she identifies the taxonomy of affective and cognitive speech acts from the text of Wilsondisc manuals written by a group of academic librarians.
1.4 : The Problem At Hand

The term Information Technology (IT) encompasses the enormous databanks set up to materialise a resource sharing world. It has been predicted that this age of the smart machines will result in the decentralisation of large corporations, more creative functions for top management and a subsequent trimming down of middle management personnel. (Trezza 1990)

This portends a threat to the continued existence of middle-rank librarians. In fact, an article from the New York Times (reprinted in the NST March 15 1995) describes librarians as "lonely beings" whose services are on the verge of redundancy.

"Librarians want to be the intermediaries, the ones that open the gates for people to enter the pastures of knowledge," said Laird Klingler, a Princeton University librarian. "Unfortunately, today there are no more gates to keep."

(NST 15th March 1995 p.39)

In the Third World however, where information literacy has not caught on with whirlwind speed like in the West, there is still a niche for academic librarians to establish roots and earn their status by staying ahead to anticipate users' needs and having ready tailored answers to inform, instruct, guide and advise as needs arise. But to have a secure place in this steadily changing environment demands a reviewing and redefinition of the librarian's role. SL librarians need an on-going training programme to ensure they have not only the content knowledge but also the necessary linguistic and presentation skills to keep up with each update of technology. They have to be able to simplify and verbalise what they
know to convince all user groups of the many benefits that computerised information retrieval systems on CD-ROMs can offer.

A pertinent point in this connection has been raised by Professor Datin Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin from UKM. (Ranee 1994) She believes that where Malaysian ESL students are concerned, it is "not enough to be computer literate". She emphasises that it is more important for them to be proficient in English which is the language of science and technology. Proficiency in the language will enable SL learners to interact effectively with the information systems and understand the relevance of the data retrieved. Her comments have implicitly reiterated the urgent need for SL college librarians to be linguistically competent as well, since they have to mediate between the system and the SL student library users.

Hill, (1994) in his state of the art article entitled, "Self-managed learning", also echoes similar lines of thought. Speaking from the context of language teaching and learning, he heightens the need for all support staff involved in IT ventures to have competent and effective communication skills in English. In his opinion, the crux of the success of global information networks and more widespread acceptance and use of CD-ROM databases lies with the English language industry. The precise and instrumental use of English is needed to educate users at a pace that parallels the development of
these IT resources to ensure that they will not remain under-exploited and only half-understood by users in general.

The linguistic problem faced by the library staff is much felt and very real indeed. From a preliminary investigation of their communicative needs, 82% (or 23 out of a total of 28 respondents) indicated there was a need for them to learn how to communicate better in English.

54% (or 15 of the respondents) strongly agreed English was very necessary in their work.

On the other hand, a modest 38% (or 10 of the respondents) confidently declared that they could speak English fluently. There was generally a willingness to learn and a want to improve their communicative competence to answer their workplace needs.

Random sampling of student views showed a marked preference for the library staff to converse with them in English. This, they reasoned, would provide them with more opportunity to practise what they were learning besides maintaining the academic climate of the college. As for the conduct of CD-ROM orientation sessions, lecturers and students indicated overwhelming preference for these to be conducted in English as it was easier for them to follow the operational procedures and the text displayed on the terminals.

In view of the prevailing user preference for English, the SL college librarian has little option but to comply. Librarians are generally familiar with the "How tos" of the systems
e.g. how to initiate the system, use available search options, use the index, modify search strategies and so forth.

However, librarians on the whole, have a greater propensity to assist rather than teach users acquire the know-how of information retrieval. As they are insulated from a classroom teaching-learning environment and have not been exposed to educational principles and methodology, they may not be sensitive to the importance of lowering student affective barriers to enhance receptivity. Neither do they consciously employ effective communication strategies to verbalise their input, trim redundancies, minimise stress and maximise students' learning opportunities. These, I feel are necessary to ensure more engagement and involvement for their student audience during programmes for CD-ROM familiarisation.

In addition, a user-friendly style of presentation will provide librarians with informed strategies to do the following :-

i) control the direction and volume of input for their CD-ROM sessions,

ii) distribute the load of demonstration-cum-talk among participants in a more equitable way and

iii) enhance students' awareness of what these computerised information resources can or cannot do.

This will dispel any preconceived notions students may have as it is generally observed that they have very high expectations from these computerised information resources.
1.5: Purpose of Study

This study is undertaken to investigate the discoursal patterns of spoken data generated in a SL context of instructional language use by 3 librarians during three CD-ROM familiarisation programmes. As a pedagogically-driven study, it has been intentionally trimmed to a modest scale to fulfill the requirements of a practicum.

SL librarian-library user interaction, although very limited in frequency, (since the golden rule of silence prevails in a library), should not be ignored as trivial. It is a phenomenon worth investigating as the librarians of today have to adopt a dynamic role to promote the available resources beyond the physical confines of the library. It is interesting to investigate for example, what discourse SL librarians naturally produce on their own in this instructional context and whether they are functioning effectively as the intermediaries between the technology and student user groups through the kind of discourse they employ.

As Riley postulates (1985:125)

"We need to know why we do what we do; we need to know whether it works; and we need to know how to do it better."

So through a systematic investigation of SL librarian-library-user discourse during CD-ROM introductory sessions, it is hoped to provide SL librarians with useful insights to i) understand and identify the kind of discourse they are engaged in, and

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ii) predict how it should be directed or structured to achieve their instructional objectives more effectively.

From the analyses of the verbal data, and relevant feedback from the 3 informants and 12 student participants, it is hoped to arrive at a better understanding of the patterns of target language use in this spoken "language in action" situation.

1.6 : Reasons for Choice of Study

I have chosen to dwell on this particular aspect of librarian talk because there is a research gap which can be clearly established. This dearth of literature and documentation is noticeable in two areas i.e.

i) discourse studies of librarian-library user interaction and

ii) the lack of guidelines from vendors and suppliers of CD-ROM databases to highlight the importance of a user focus in the SL librarians' conduct of familiarisation sessions to promote CD-ROM use among SL college students.

In my opinion, this study is feasible, doable, of currency and has direct application in a college library, managed by SL librarians to serve the information needs of SL college students and staff.

Another important reason worth mentioning here is, a great deal of attention is presently focused on CD-ROMs. (Hill 1994)

They are highly adaptable data and multi-media storage de-
VICES which have as yet, not been superseded by any other device which is cheaper to produce or use. To promote their use among SL students, there is the need for a more user-friendly strategy for training programmes to ensure users can obtain the operational know-how and reap the benefits of CD-ROM use. As Hill affirms:

"In the world outside, education satellites, computers, CD-ROMs, interactive video, multimedia, etc are already firmly established. If the technology and the pedagogical theory for realising the benefits of more learner-centred approaches exists, it is important that the issue of effective training to realise those benefits is not ignored."

(Hill 1994 : 216)

My final reason is one of personal inclination. I served as a reference librarian in an electronics company in Iran in the early 80's and I understand a librarian's commitment to service. As the library scenario today is a very challenging one, it is necessary for librarians to continually keep in the currency of developments in the info-science scene. As "guardians of the users' right to know", and as intermediaries between the technology and the users, they have to be ahead of their student clients to demonstrate convincingly how the system works. Also, they need a functional level of language competence and interactional skills to instruct, guide and monitor student interactions with the system so that they will view these programmes as engaging encounters with the technology.
1.7: Limitations and Delimitations

As this is not an empirical study, there is no conscious attempt to control the variables. It is exploratory in approach with the objective of describing the typical patterns and organisation of discourse that SL librarians naturally follow in this context. The description will be substantiated with explanation wherever relevant, to arrive at a better understanding of SL librarians' communicative needs in this context. Following that, the effectiveness of the strategies they use will be evaluated to find out whether there are better ways to enable them to achieve their objectives.

Certain parameters have been set to keep the study focused on the intended objectives. To begin with, I have selected at random, three practising librarians as my informants. When approached, they indicated an interest to participate in this project as their work involves the conduct of CD-ROM orientation sessions for newly-enrolled students every year or whenever there are requests for these user training programmes from the college staff or students.

Since these SL librarians exist in a "sociolinguistically anemic" environment (Hammerly 1991) and are acquiring the instrumental use of the second language while they are on the job, they will inevitably produce not the best examples of spoken data. However, the issue in question here is not to look for linguistic inaccuracies but rather analyse what they naturally do on their own without prior input from any lan-
guage instructor and recommend ways and strategies to help them improve and move progressively towards a more commendable level of competence.

My intention is not to explore, analyse and explain everything, otherwise the work will become unwieldy and lengthy. The focus is directed towards relevant episodes of recorded data, transcribed orthographically and analysed in accordance with a chosen model to arrive at reasoned answers for the research questions.

As such, phonological features, linguistic accuracy or grammaticality are not pertinent points for consideration here. Neither am I examining the success of any specific cognitive strategies. The objective is to codify and assemble the collected data in a form which enables me to identify patterns of recursion in the spoken data and to interpret and explain these quantified features by drawing upon qualitative data obtained from 4 avenues:

i) views of writers in the discourse analysis field,
ii) informants' responses indicated on questionnaires,
iii) students' views aired during the follow-up group session,
and
iv) my own observation notes.

The data collection process is limited to the following:

i) pre-study interviews with the 3 informants,
ii) 3 video recording sessions for the CD-ROM sessions and
iii) 2 follow-up feedback sessions with the 3 informants.
These had to be tightly scheduled over a period of 3 months. This was done firstly, to prevent the novelty from wearing off. Secondly, the period could not be prolonged to suit my convenience, as the informants had tight working schedules daily, while the students had fully packed class timetables from 8am - 4pm, 5 days a week.

On two occasions, for the video taping sessions there were last minute reshuffling of student participants when those who had previously volunteered to take part, forgot to show up or could not be located. These hitches however, did not dilute the dedication or enthusiasm of the three librarians. In fact, they displayed commendable patience in putting up with technical problems as well, and conducted these sessions to the best of their ability to ensure the time spent was beneficial for all parties concerned.

Bearing in mind that this study is only a practicum, I have kept my corpus of data fairly small. Only the video recorded data for the 3 CD-ROM familiarisation sessions conducted by the 3 librarians are transcribed orthographically and later analysed for the interactional structures. The recordings of the follow-up group discussion sessions are done to obtain a clearer understanding of the situational constraints that my informants encountered, to explain why what happened did happen that way and to arrive at some form of triangulation of views, as advocated by Candlin (1987).
1.8: Summary and Plan of Study

The intention in this chapter is to assemble the background information which contributes as justification for doing this study. The case is elaborated by tying up repercussions of advances in the IT scene and the local needs of a semi-professional group. Since the informants need to function as intermediaries between the technology and a target SL user audience, one way to see if they are capable of fulfilling this role on their own is through an investigation of their patterns of discourse and observing how they conduct CD-ROM programmes to student user groups.

In the following chapter, the background and related literature is reviewed. Wherever needed, this is performed in sufficient depth to elucidate the views of authorities in the discourse analysis, ESP and library fields to understand how developments in these three disciplines have contributed to the relevance of and need for this study. Besides establishing the research gap, the aim here is to obtain guidelines and models of feasible methods and procedures to adopt or adapt. From the literature reviewed, a wealth of experience is drawn into focus to gain more insights about tried and tested strategies and pitfalls and problems to avoid.

In Chapter 3 the research questions are detailed together with the methodology and procedures for data collection, organisation and analysis. Following the simple model pro-
posed by Gremmo, Holec and Riley (1985), the spoken data are coded and tabulated according to 4 interactive roles (i.e. Speaker, Addressee, Talker and Listener) and three communicative acts (i.e. Opening, Replying and Closing). The relevant critical terms used are defined in turn to establish a clear framework of application and analysis.

Chapter 4 deals with the presentation and discussion of findings. Here, the analysed data are displayed in tables or non-linear formats for ease of reference and interpretation. To establish relevance to the research questions, correlations are drawn wherever pertinent to substantiate discussions in preparation for valid conclusions to be drawn in the following chapter.

Finally, in Chapter 5 a summary of the major findings is provided followed by answers to the two research questions and their implications for pedagogy. Suggestions for further investigation and research are given to provide some guidelines to students and researchers who may be considering research in similar or related areas of discourse analysis.