

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In starting this study, the researcher had aimed to expose the communicative events of one case of a working world situation to benefit teachers, especially ESP practitioners. On a personal level, the researcher had wanted to get in close contact with the products of the Malaysian education system and see for herself, how they function in the working world of sales and marketing. After conducting the fieldwork, the researcher realised that unlike her assumptions, near-native perfection in the English language is not the most important criteria. What is important is that the members of the community must be able to get whatever message they have across in as fast and effective a way as possible.

When the researcher first met the S & M Manager, he asked her about the study. The researcher pointed out that all details had been stated in her earlier letter. He then commented that the letter was “too full of words”, in other words, too long. This was the researcher’s first eye-opening experience to the field of sales and marketing. The style preferred is brisk and paragraphs must be to the point in order to get the message across fast. Point-form letters are preferable as the points are usually clearly presented and easier to remember. It was pointed out that long sentences with complicated words would only confuse and take too much time to

digest. In a world where time means money, this need for fast and effective communication is a recurring feature of the communicative events of the particular community.

Besides the emphasis on effective and fast communication, another dominating feature of this community is the need to make the customer comfortable. This need is reflected repetitively in all the communicative events relating to the customer. Eventually this means that all communication is moulded to the customers' needs. Members of the community have to be adaptable to the situation.

The researcher will now present the summary of findings in relation to the communicative events of TM staff.

## **5.2 Summary of Findings**

### **5.2.1 Internal Communications**

The internal communications of this community is very much affected by the addressor-addressee relationship. Who speaks to whom will affect other features of the communicative events namely topic, setting, channel, code, key, purpose and the rules for interaction.

For the discourse community of TM, hierarchy exists and this does affect communication to a certain extent. The pinnacle of the hierarchy is occupied by the GM. Communications between the GM and his junior staff are affected by the

difference in ranking. The topics discussed in GM-Junior-GM communication are related to serious issues only. For the setting, there is a kind of rigidity where the GM's office is the prime location for this type of communicative events. Most of the communicative events are face to face oral sessions initiated by the GM. Rarely are they initiated by the junior staff except where the S & M Manager is concerned. As he reports directly to the GM, he has the privilege of being able to discuss with the GM work matters as and when he perceives that there is a need. Written communication is limited to personnel matters. The code or language used of the communicative events between GM and junior staff is predominantly English. However, for non-management level staff, a certain amount of code mixing and switching is used. The distance maintained by the staff can be seen as a sign of respect, a rule for interaction where the GM is concerned.

The S & M Manager's communication with his juniors is more flexible compared to GM-Junior-GM communications. As a middle management staff, the distance in terms of rank between him and his juniors is not so great. Communication consists of face to face oral meeting which is sometimes substantiated with written communication in the form of reports in a spreadsheet format. The channel of oral and spreadsheet written communication emphasizes the need for fast and efficient communication. No "wordy" written reports are expected from his juniors as he finds that it takes too much time to digest. The rules for interaction are more flexible compared to the GM's communicative events. The S & M Manager's office is doorless and it is there that the fax and internet connected computer is

located. Thus his subordinates can come in and out as they please for any business related to the office automation or just to talk to him. The topics discussed range from serious issues such as discussion on sale strategies to 'trivial' ones like meal times. Code switching and mixing are observed especially when discussing informal or 'trivial' issues but again English is the predominant language.

Among colleagues, the ranking distance is negligible. Among all the internal communicative events, the topics discussed among colleagues have the most range or variety. All sorts of issues are discussed ranging from work-related to personal matters. There are more emotions involved in the communicative events when colleagues speak to each other. Thus the key or tone of the communicative events can range from serious to light-hearted. The channel of communication is limited to oral except when handling bookings. Bookings are jotted down and this information is passed over in the written form so as to avoid confusion and miscommunication. The communicative events of colleagues have various purpose including sharing of experience, informative discussion and collaboration with regards to getting/seeing clients. Though English is predominantly used, code switching and mixing are rampant in this type of communicative events which could be initiated by anyone. Thus the rules for interaction are very flexible.

Section to section communication only involves the Finance Section and Sales & Marketing Section. Thus the issues and purpose of the communicative events are directly related to dollars and cents. Both the oral and written channels are used.

The written channel is especially important as it is proof of transactions where records of bookings and seminar arrangements are stored. The oral communication is also limited to queries regarding the bookings. Thus only limited issues are discussed in a business-like manner. The language used is mostly English. Rarely is there code-mixing or switching.

As stated above, internal communications are very much affected by addressor-addressee relationship. However, the researcher has also observed that the ethnic background of the participants also influence the language used especially with regards to code mixing and switching. Among subjects of the same language background, more code mixing and switching are used. This can be seen especially in communication among colleagues of the same race, including the staff of the Finance Section. However, although code mixing and switching do exist in senior-junior communication, they are less used even though both participants of the communicative events are of the same race. For example, when speaking to the GM who is a Malay, a Malay junior staff code switches or mixes less than when he or she speaks to a Malay colleague.

### **5.2.2 External Communications**

External communicative events are mostly limited to communications with clients or potential clients. The overriding feature of these events is the need to make the customer comfortable which could lead to sales and success for the company.

Though emphasis is on fast and effective communication, satisfying the customer's needs is crucial to the company's success. Thus the staff's most important skill is to be able to adapt to the customer's demands in relation to business needs as well as communicative needs.

For call-in or walk-in clients, the topics are limited to queries or bookings of rooms. The setting is limited to teleconversation for call-in clients and face to face oral communication for walk-in clients. The adaptability of the staff to respond to the clients' code or language is very important. If a client speaks in English or Malay or code-mixes and switches between the two languages, the staff must be able to respond correspondingly. They must be adaptable. The tone when responding to a call-in is mostly business-like with short and clear responses as there is a need to keep the phone lines free. Thus there is a great emphasis on fast and efficient communication for call-ins. There is a need to gather or disperse information in a fast and effective way but at the same time, a civil and unhurried tone must come through when handling phone calls. Of all the external communication, call-ins can be considered the most impersonal as at times, the caller does not even know whom he or she is talking to.

Face to face meetings could have more than one purpose but the idea behind them is to sell the services that LCH has to offer. The purpose could be to express appreciation for past patronage, to 'service' or remind the clients of the services LCH has to offer, to introduce or suggest new services like family day, to deliver

products of LCH (such as the pre-paid coupons) or simply to gather background information on the clients. Thus the topic discussed depends on the purpose of the visit. At all times, during these meetings, a friendly and accommodating tone is observed from the exchange of business cards to handshakes to abundant smiles. The setting is usually dictated by the client. However, if the purpose is to express appreciation by entertaining the client, the setting could be set by the staff. It could be at a restaurant or a karaoke lounge. At most of the meetings that the researcher attended, the code used is predominantly English. However, the code is set by the client. As the staff's duty is to ensure that the client is comfortable, the staff must be able to adapt to the client's use of language. It is inappropriate to use near-native English when the client code mixes and switches or vice versa.

For communicative events related to seminar arrangements, the topics discussed are understandably limited. Issues discussed are obviously related to negotiations on prices and the arrangement for the actual seminar. Again, the code used depends on the customer's linguistic abilities. Mostly, English is used especially where private companies are concerned. For government or bumiputra companies, code mixing and switching are normal. The TM staff must be very sensitive to the client's linguistic abilities. During seminar or conference arrangements, the channel used ranges from phone calls to face to face meetings to written letters sent through the fax. The written communication is a very important part of the arrangements as it usually deals with quotation and the details of the seminar. By getting all these in black and white, the risk of miscommunication is minimised.

Miscommunication is very dangerous as it could lead to dissatisfaction and loss of patronage. However, fast and efficient communication means that a clear and concise way of writing is expected. A standard format with details in point form rather than paragraphs filled with long sentences is preferred. The letters are mostly sent through the fax for fast delivery.

For communications with clients requesting for sponsorship of prizes or discount rates, the written mode is preferred by the staff of TM. This type of communicative events is usually initiated by the client and the response is usually through a standard reply in English using a clear and simple presentation style. Requests for discount rates and prizes are usually entertained as they could lead to a win-win situation. Free publicity is obtained for TM while the company (or client) receives a discount or prizes for their members or patrons. For discount rates, the standard reply will also consist of a contract or an agreement between the two parties. The need for the contract is to ensure that certain rules, regulations and conditions are met before a discount is given. This ensures that no misunderstanding will occur. Another interesting feature in these replies is the opportunity taken by TM to introduce services such as seminar and conference facilities. Though the client is considered important, there is less need to adapt to the client's communicative needs compared to other external communicative events. This can be seen by the fact that though some requests are made in Malay, the reply is always in English. This could be due to the fact that the request is usually initiated by the client.

Furthermore it is too much of a hassle to reword the contract in Malay as the agreement carries with it legal connotations.

Of all the external communicative events, it is felt that those associated with travel fairs offer the most personal touch of all. The face to face oral communication demands selling skill at its most basic. Here, the staff is expected to attract customers and persuade them to buy LCH's services. The use of exhibits namely pictures, banners and brochures is to help the staff sell LCH. However, it is the oral persuasive skill which will ultimately attract customers. The staff has to be persuasive but must stop at being aggressive as this is too much of a taboo for Malaysians in general. Though English is used in the exhibits, the staff must still be able to adapt to the potential clients' linguistic abilities. Thus the language used is again dictated by the customer although the conversation might be initiated by the staff of TM in English. At all times, the staff must be friendly and be ready to answer any queries of the customer.

### **5.3 Implications of Study**

This study is ethnographically influenced whereby the culture of the company is highlighted. The researcher hopes that the findings will ultimately assist new members of the discourse community related to sales and marketing in the hotel industry to acculturate themselves to the environment. The study does not aspire to

cover all aspects of discourse in the community. It only focuses on the cultural aspects as well as the patterns of communicative actions of the community.

The study has several implications. Firstly, the researcher has found that a presentable knowledge of and ability to use English rather than a native-like perfection is a criteria for admittance into the world of sales and marketing in the hotel industry especially where local or domestic tourism is concerned. Linguistic prowess is more linked to the ability to make the customer comfortable and thus the members of this community must be able to converse in the same code that the customer uses. As the customers can come from any background, their own linguistic abilities will range widely. Thus the members of the sales and marketing industry must be able to adapt to the clients' needs.

There is also more emphasis on oral rather than written communication. The staff have to be friendly and to a certain extent extroverted and confident when communicating with clients. They need to be able to persuade, suggest ideas and gather information from the client as to their (the clients') needs. Thus public-speaking skills are really a necessity to become a member of the community. Though written communication is important, the need for good writing abilities is not as vital as oral abilities. Most of the written requirements in this community are standardized and there is an emphasis on clear and concise presentation. Past examples of written letters or reports could be followed or copied. There are no major reports to be prepared.

ESP teachers who are training students in the field of sales and marketing in the hotel industry must realise the need to implement more public speaking modules. This will increase the students' confidence as well as their oral skills. The students must be taught of the need to adapt to the customers. Using inappropriate language or code could lead to the alienation of the customer. For example a sales and marketing staff who speaks in near-native English complete with a foreign accent might offend a potential client who code mixes or switches. Students aspiring to be sales and marketing staff must be able to judge and adapt to the client's requirements even though it is not explicitly stated.

Where written skill is concerned, there is a need to refer to past examples. The formats used by a predecessor or a colleague should be used as a model on which to base his or her own work. Though perfect grammar is commendable, there is a need to avoid sesquipedalian words and long sentences. There is also a need to impress customers but this should centre on the products. The customers and other parties involved in the communication usually prefer to save time by reading easy to understand language rather than waste time on searching in the dictionary for complicated words.

#### **5.4     Suggestions for Further Research**

It is felt that more ethnographic-style studies should be conducted to increase the information available on the real world, especially the working world. As teachers might not have the time to actually go out and investigate each and every field for themselves, ethnographic studies would help them in better understanding the chosen field.

As this study is on a local company which is mainly involved in domestic tourism, it is recommended that other branches of the tourism industry be investigated. This is because the tourism or hospitality industry has been and is still expected to be a very vital industry to the Malaysian economy. It is also unique in the fact that English is its lingua franca. Thus it is therefore suggested that studies on other fields related to the industry be investigated. Studies on as airport communications, tourist guides and government tourism personnel on overseas mission could be conducted.

#### **5.5     Conclusion**

Though the research does not pretend to be groundbreaking in its discovery, it is hoped that it could fill a small niche in the academic world of ESP. The researcher's main aim is to observe reality in context beyond the four walls of the classroom and by going into the field, the researcher has achieved that purpose for

her own personal benefit. It is hoped that other ESP practitioners would also benefit from this study.