

## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTERACTIVE FEATURES OF BLOGGING AMONG TERTIARY STUDENTS

#### 5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five aims to present the interactive features of blogging when the participants in this study interact online via blog forums set-up for this study. Data for analysis consists of blog forums, Questionnaire II and interviews. Questionnaire II was distributed to the participants at the end of the study when they would have become bloggers in the study for one year. The participants were profiled from the responses elicited from Questionnaire I at the beginning of the study. The interactive strategies and tactics identified in the data are listed, described and exemplified with extracts from the data. Data collected were from blog forums in the discussion of all three categories of topics, namely, national, social and gender. The chapter begins with an overview of participation analysis in blog forums. Throughout this thesis, the following codes are used to identify the gender and ethnicity of the participants for data obtained from the blog forums and interviews.

MM - Male Malay

FM - Female Malay

MB - Male Bajau

FB - Female Bajau

MK - Male Kadazan-Dusun

FK - Female Kadazan-Dusun

MC - Male Chinese

FC - Female Chinese

The excerpt that follows illustrates how blog postings are produced as examples for analysis for the chapters in this dissertation.

Excerpt

. . . I do agree with you...I don't believe with things like "HANTU"  
[ghost] there is no such thing..But not 100% agree. Bcoz i am still a gurl  
who known as "bdk yang percayakan tahyul" [a superstitious person]

(FK25 B3:102 - 105)

In the above excerpt, (FK25 B3:102 - 105) refers to Female Kadazan-Dusun, participant No 25, Blog Issue No. 3 and excerpt from the responses to the blog issue lines 102 to 105. The dotted lines ‘...’ and ‘..’ were originally produced by the blog participants. Therefore, when parts of the excerpts are omitted, this will be indicated with the ellipsis (i.e. . . .). The italicized words in parenthesis [ghost] and [a superstitious person] are inserted by the researcher as either an explanation or a translation. Each excerpt is consecutively numbered and a running count is kept for each chapter. It must be noted that the excerpts produced as examples may have structural and grammatical errors as these are not edited to maintain the originality of the blog postings. To facilitate discussion of the strategies identified, certain words or phrases are highlighted either in **bold** or underlined (depending on which is required). This format is used throughout the thesis.

### **5.1 Frequency of Blog Postings**

As mentioned in Chapter Four, 36 blog issues were used in the collection of data for this study. This section presents the frequency of blog postings received by all the 36 blog issues under national, social and gender topics as shown in Table 5.1 below. The categorization of data does not show any order of data collection procedures.

**Table 5.1: Blog Postings and Words Collected as Data**

<b>Blog Topics</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Blog Issues</b>	<b>No. of Postings</b>	<b>No. of Words</b>	
National	1	<b>Equal Rights to All</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4479</b>	* <b>198</b>  ** <b>19980</b>
	2	What is Happening to Malaysia?	23	1983	
	3	Bangsa Malaysia [Malaysian Race]	12	983	
	4	English a Malaysian Language	15	1908	
	5	Give Peace a Chance	18	1760	
	6	Malaysian Identity	20	2225	
	7	Nuclear Power	9	999	
	8	Sex Education	30	3649	
	9	The Sprit of Merdeka [Independence]	15	1994	
Social	10	Gay Marriage	29	3372	* <b>253</b>  ** <b>30016</b>
	11	The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair	29	3156	
	12	What Feeling is This?	23	2160	
	13	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	25	2245	
	14	Black Metal	22	1884	
	15	Cats and Dogs are all PETs!!!	12	1489	
	16	Is it not Hypocrisy?	10	1026	
	17	Are Chatrooms and SMS Bane or Boon?	11	2066	
	18	Dirty Habits	12	1346	
	19	Kid Violence	16	2001	
	20	Mat Rempit [Illegal Bikers]	17	2197	
	21	Respect ‘Aging Parents!	4	1249	
	22	Selfish	23	2018	
	23	What are the Kids Up to?	10	2365	
24	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	10	1442		
Gender	25	Beautiful People	18	1862	* <b>283</b>  ** <b>34278</b>
	26	To Be or Not to be	22	3022	
	27	Men Handbags	29	2616	
	28	Gender Equality	13	1594	
	29	Anybody for a House Husband!!!	34	3260	
	30	Battle of the Sexes	20	2939	
	31	Who should Pay on the First Date?	38	4359	
	32	Girls should Make the First Move	31	2944	
	33	Metro-Sexual Guys	24	3965	
	34	Should Housewives be Paid Salary?	8	740	
	35	<b>The Beginning and the Ending</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4954</b>	
36	Think Before You Wed	15	2023		
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>734</b>	<b>84274</b>	

\*Total No. of postings for blog topics

\*\*Total No. of words for blog topics

Table 5.1 shows that in total the 36 blog issues received 734 postings that consisted of 84274 words. The gender topic generated the most number of postings (283) and number of words (34278). Generally, as is seen in the table, the number of postings for the blog issues does not necessarily reflect the number of words received. For example, Blog Issue

No. 1 *'Equal Rights to All'* received 56 postings (4479 words) but Blog Issue No. 35 *'The Beginning and the Ending'* received 31 postings (4954 words). This shows the number of blog postings cannot be used to gauge the number of words received for each blog issue. Nevertheless, the number of postings and words received under each blog issue could reflect the participation level and the length of discussion in blog forums. This will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

## **5.2 Perception towards Social Presence and Blogging Practices**

As mentioned in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, perception can influence interaction whether it is face-to-face or through a medium. This section will present the participants' perception of social presence and blogging practices in this study and suggest how perception of social presence and blogging practices can influence blogging activity. This section will be divided as follows:

- (a) Perception towards blogging practices
- (b) Perception towards of social presence

### **5.2.1 Perception towards Blogging Practices**

In this study, the participants' perception of blogging practices is based on the information elicited from the questionnaire and comments given in the interviews. The analysis of the data revealed that participants perceived blogging as:

- a social activity;

- an informative activity;
- an interactive activity; and
- a speaking activity

### 5.2.1.1 Blogging as a Social Activity

Table 5.2 shows the participants' perception of blogging as a social activity as revealed in Questionnaire II.

**Table 5.2: Perception of Blogging as a Social Activity**

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
2	I find it easy to make friends through blogging.	1 (2.4)	3 (7.3)	5 (12.2)	<b>27</b> <b>(65.9)</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(12.2)</b>	100

\*Questions N=41

As is seen in Table 5.2, the responses to Question 2 show that the majority of the participants (65.9% n= 27) generally agreed that they found it easy to make friends. This gives the impression of the social benefits of blogging. The responses to the interview questions indicated that some participants regarded blogging as a social activity. The response of the interviewees to Question 5 of the interview is reflected in Extracts 1 and 2.

#### **Question 5:** What does blogging mean to you?

Extract 1

Er...it is a good activity. . . **I can also chat with the people . . .**  
(MC Interviewee 1: 10 – 12)

Extract 2

. . . its like meeting up with friends.

(FKD Interviewee 3: 103)

As is seen in Extracts 1 and 2, the interviewees indicated they could ‘*chat with the people*’, and ‘*meeting up with friends*’ in blog forums. This shows that some participants considered blogging as a virtual place where they could socialize and ‘hang out’ with friends just as people would do in real life.

**5.2.1.2 Blogging as an Informative Activity**

Table 5.3 shows the participants’ perception of blogging as an informative activity as revealed in Questionnaire II.

**Table 5.3: Perception of Blogging as an Informative Activity**

\*Questions N=41

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
4	Blogging widens my knowledge on the issues discussed.	0	0	1 (2.4)	<b>20 (48.8)</b>	<b>20 (48.8)</b>	100
8	The discussions in the blog provoke my ideas and thoughts about the issues.	0	2 (4.9)	5 (12.2)	<b>21 (51.2)</b>	<b>13 (31.7)</b>	100

Table 5.3, shows that most participants (Agree: 48.8% n=20; Strongly Agree: 48.8% n=20) considered blogging to widen their knowledge on the blog issues. In addition, the participants felt blog discussions provoked their ideas and thoughts about the issues (Agree:

51.2% n=21). This suggests that the participants, in this study, realised the benefits of blogging at widening their knowledge. It was also revealed in the interviews that the participants also regarded blogging as an informative activity. The response of the interviewees to Question 1 is reflected in Extracts 3 and 4.

**Question 1:** Which blog issue was most interesting to you? Why?

Extract 3

. . . I can read what people think about a topic and their experiences . . . **we can also exchange information about a topic** . . . I can get more knowledge

(FKD Interviewee 3: 104 – 106)

Extract 4

. . . I can read about the latest news in the blog, just like the newspaper.

(MKD Interviewee 2: 61 – 62)

As is seen in Extracts 3 and 4, the interviewees indicated blogging as an activity that provides ‘*information*’ and the ‘*latest news. . . just like the newspaper*’. This shows the participants perceived blogging as a source of information and knowledge and therefore, blog participants can be expected to share ideas and opinion in blog forums.

### **5.2.1.3 Blogging as an Interactive Activity**

Table 5.4 shows the participants’ perception of blogging as an interactive activity as revealed in Questionnaire II.

**Table 5.4: Perception of Blogging as an Interactive Activity**

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
1	I enjoy interacting with the bloggers.	0	0	1 (2.4)	27 (65.9)	13 (31.7)	100
7	I like to interact in the blog because I get to meet many people.	0	4 (9.8)	3 (7.3)	27 (65.9)	7 (17.1)	100
13	Blogging gives the impression that I am taking part in a lively discussion.	0	0	6 (14.6)	<b>24 (58.8)</b>	<b>11 (26.8)</b>	100
17	I am always able to join in the interaction easily at any point of interaction when I blog.	0	2 (4.9)	3 (7.3)	26 (63.4)	10 (24.4)	100

\*Questions N=41

Table 5.4 shows, in Question 13 more than 80% of the participants agreed that blogging impressed upon them that they were taking part in a lively discussion. This shows that the participants in this study perceived blogging was interactive. Additionally, it was also revealed in the interviews that the participants also regarded blogging as an interactive activity. The response of the interviewees to Question 5 is reflected in Extracts 5 to 7.

**Question 5:** What does blogging mean to you?

Extract 5

. . . I can tell them what I want to say about what they discuss . . . (MC Interviewee 1: 11-12)
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Extract 6

. . . there are people reading my comment. . . sometimes <b>they like my views and agree with my comment</b> . . . (MB Interviewee 5: 176 - 178)
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Extract 7

. . . blogging means to me that I can write for other people to read and <b>they can also write for others to read and comment on their views.</b> . . . (FB Interviewee 4: 142 - 143)
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Table 5.5 shows the perception of the participants of blogging as two-way interactive activity.

**Table 5.5: Perception of Blogging as One to One Interactive Activity**

<b>*Qs No.</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree n (%)</b>	<b>Disagree n (%)</b>	<b>Not Sure n (%)</b>	<b>Agree n (%)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree n (%)</b>	<b>Total n (%)</b>
19	I always ask for clarification from a blogger if I needed further information on what s/he is saying in blog discussions.	<b>1 (2.4)</b>	<b>25 (61.0)</b>	9 (22.0)	3 (7.3)	3 (7.3)	100
20	I always direct my questions to someone specific in the blog.	<b>5 (12.2)</b>	<b>26 (63.4)</b>	6 (14.6)	3 (7.3)	1 (2.4)	100

\*Questions N=41

As is seen in Table 5.5, the responses to Question 19 and 20 show that most participants (Disagree: 61.0%) disagreed asking for clarification and they directed their questions to someone specific for further information in blog forums (Disagree: 63.4% n=26; Strongly Disagree: 12.2% n=5). This suggests that blog forums do not support one-to-one interactive strategy such as asking for clarification and directing questions to someone specific. This concurs with the views of Nilsson (2003), Shepperd & Miller (2005) that blogging support many-to-many interaction.

#### **5.2.1.4 Blogging as a Speaking Activity**

Table 5.6 shows the participants' perception of blogging as a speaking activity as revealed in Questionnaire II.

**Table 5.6: Perception of Blogging as a Speaking Activity**

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
11	I feel like I am talking to another person when I am blogging.	0	0	3 (7.3)	<b>32 (78.0)</b>	<b>6 (14.6)</b>	100
12	I use 'spoken' language when I blog.	0	<b>5 (12.2)</b>	11 (26.8)	20 (48.8)	5 (12.2)	100
15	I reply spontaneously as in speech when I interact with the bloggers.	0	<b>7 (17.1)</b>	4 (9.8)	23 (56.1)	7 (17.1)	100
16	The language that I use in the blog tend to be rather informal.	0	2 (4.9)	8 (19.5)	<b>27 (65.9)</b>	<b>4 (9.8)</b>	100

\*Questions N=41

As is seen in Table 5.6, the responses elicited for Question 11 shows that blog participants felt they were talking to another person when they blogged (Agree: 78.0% n=32). In addition, in Question 16, the participant considered the language they used in blogs was rather informal (Agree: 65.9% n=27). However in Question 12, 12.2% (n=5) of the participants disagreed they used spoken language features while in Question 15, 17.1% (n=7) of them disagreed they replied spontaneously as in speech when they interacted with bloggers. This shows that the participants in this study have mixed views and this seems to confirm the work of Nilsson (2003) that blogging falls on the continuum of spoken and written language.

It was also revealed in the interviews that the participants regarded blogging as an speaking activity. The response of the interviewees to Question 9 is reflected in Extracts 8 to 10.

**Question 9:** Did you feel like talking to others when you were blogging?

Extract 8

**I feel like chatting with people** and telling them about my opinion . . . ya, **I did feel like talking with someone.**

(Male Chinese Interviewee 1: Lines 22 - 23)

Extract 9

Yes. Its just like SMS [Short Message System] in the handphone..like we talk in the sms so **its like we talk in the blog**

(Male Bajau Interviewee 5: Lines 184 – 185)

Extract 10

. . . **its like the chatroom...we are talking but writing** in the chatroom.

(Female Kadazan-Dusun Interviewee 3: Line 110)

As is seen in Extracts 8 – 10 the interviewees perceived blogging ‘*like chatting with people*’ and felt ‘*like they were talking*’ and it was ‘*like the chatroom*’. In addition, they felt they were using similar short message system (SMS) as in the practice in mobile phones. Therefore, in this study, participants are expected to use informal language spoken as well as written language features which was natural in blog forums.

### **5.2.2 Perception towards Social Presence**

Social presence refers to the imagined presence of others felt by online participants and its influences interactivity in online communications (Rovai, 2002; Rourke et. al 2001). In this study, participants’ perception towards social presence is based on the information elicited from the questionnaire and comments given in the interviews.

Table 5.7 shows the participants' awareness of social presence in blogging as revealed in Questionnaire II.

**Table 5.7 Participants' Awareness of Social Presence**

<b>*Qs No.</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree n (%)</b>	<b>Disagree n (%)</b>	<b>Not Sure n (%)</b>	<b>Agree n (%)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree n (%)</b>	<b>Total n (%)</b>
32	When I get access to the blog, I know I am interacting with others.	0	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)	31 (75.6)	8 (19.5)	100
34	I am always aware of the presence of other bloggers when they post their comment	0	1 (2.4)	4 (9.8)	<b>31 (75.6)</b>	<b>5 (12.2)</b>	100
39	I know the blog I am interacting in is shared by other bloggers	0	0	3 (7.3)	24 (58.5)	14 (34.1)	100
49	I know I am accepted as a member in the blog group when others respond to my comments.	0	1 (2.4)	4 (9.8)	28 (68.3)	8 (19.5)	100

\*Questions N=41

As is seen in Table 5.7, the responses elicited from Question 34 show that participants were aware of the presence of other bloggers (Agree: 75.6% n=31). Therefore, it was possible for social presence to influence the participants' choice of words and what is said in blog forums because people violate the cooperative principles in order to bring about collaboration (Grice, 1975).

It was also revealed in the interviews that the participants were aware of the presence of others in the blog as reflected in Extracts 11 and 12.

Extract 11

**I know there are people reading my opinion** and when I see any comment...i think its nice ...

(Female Bajau Interviewee 4: Lines 143 - 144)

Extract 12

. . . **because there are people in the blog**...and when I see a comment...**I know someone has read my comment.**

Female Malay Interviewee 6: Lines 241 - 242)

As is seen in Extracts 11 - 12, the interviewees confirmed they were aware that *‘there are people reading’* their opinions and comments. According to Rourke, et al. (2001), an indicator of social presence is when participants mention and recognize the nicknames of others interacting online. Nicknames as an indicator of social presence is illustrated in the responses obtained from Questionnaire II as is seen in Table 5.8.

**Table 5.8: Nicknames as Indicators of Social Presence**

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
37	Each time I return to the blog I can recognize the bloggers through their nicknames	0	3 (7.3)	6 (14.6)	<b>23</b> <b>(56.1)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(22.0)</b>	100
38	I always respond to a blogger by his/her nickname	0	2 (4.9)	1 (2.4)	<b>29</b> <b>(70.7)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(22.0)</b>	100

\*Questions N=41

Table 5.8 shows that in Question 37 the 78.1% of the participants agree that they recognized bloggers through their nicknames. This view can also be substantiated with the responses elicited from Question 38 in which the participants claimed that they responded to bloggers

by their nickname (Agree: 70.7% n=29; Strongly Agree: 22.0% n=9). This shows that the recognition of nicknames is a strong indicator of social presence in this study.

### **5.3 Interactive Strategies in Blog Forums**

It has been said that text-only CMC is interactionally incoherent because of its limitations on turn-taking and reference, however, online users adapt to the medium of interaction in order to be interactionally coherent (Herring, 1999; Crystal, 2001). This section presents the interactive strategies and tactics employed by the participants that enable them to be interactionally coherent. The analysis of this section is based on the functional moves each segment of the blog postings appear to perform (Herring, 2004; Tan, 2006). As speech act theory states that language is used to perform an action, the interactive strategies will be categorized according to the functions they appear to perform (Herring, 2004; Tan, 2006; Job-Sluder & Barab, 2009). The categorization of functional moves is guided by Grice Principle of Cooperation, Lakoff's rule of rapport and Brown and Levinson Politeness Theory. The data revealed that the participants in this study generally blogged to attain the following interactive purposes.

- (a) to set blogging grounds
- (b) to introduce blog issues
- (c) to elicit responses
- (d) to give opinions
- (e) to defend opinions
- (f) to persuade others
- (g) to criticize views

- (h) to seek confirmation
- (i) to make concluding remarks

The list **does not** reflect any order of importance or frequency of occurrence in the blog postings. The data revealed that for each interactive strategy, blog participants used different tactics. As mentioned by Kim (1993), strategies are action sequences to attain certain interactive goals. These strategies are evident through the use of specific tactics or behavioural actions in a goal-directed interaction (See Chapter 1). For example, if one's interactive goal is to persuade others, there are a number of different tactics (i.e. using analogies, proverbs) that one can use.

### **5.3.1 To Set Blogging Grounds**

The findings from the data show that the participants conformed to interaction conventions of a blog discourse community when they posted their views in blog forums. The study found that the participants set the blogging ground through the following tactics.

Tactic 1: By using appropriate conventions of interaction;

Tactic 2: By using language behaviours acceptable to others; and

Tactic 3: By serving as gatekeepers.

#### **Tactic 1: By using appropriate conventions of interaction**

The conventions of interaction identified in the data are greetings, leave-taking and apology. According to Mullholland (1993), people set up good moods to establish or maintain bonds

with each other when they greet one another. In addition, in real life, acts of greeting and leave-taking are language forms used to initiate a conversation and to regularize subsequent interaction. The data revealed that acts of greeting were either directed to a particular participant or to all members of the blog community. The following examples show the case.

Example 1

**hi** narniafreak..cool down ok! u are not the only person who thinks like that! . . .

(FB9 B1:157)

Example 2

**hallo** 2 all my fellow friends..all of us are malaysia citizen . . .

(MB3B23:133)

Example 3

**Hello** everybody, i dont agree about house husbands. because near 99.9% of the boys dont know how to become house husbands . . .

(MK20 B17:72 - 73)

Example 4

**hi** everybody in this chat room...em for me ghost really exist in the world but we can't see them because they are invisible..i support best shota's comment . . .

(FM3 B3:96-97)

In Examples 1 - 4, the acts of greetings such as '*hi*' and '*hello*' are used to address either a particular participants (e.g. *narniafreak* as in Example 1) or the blog community at large (e.g. *everybody*, *all my fellow friends* as in Examples 2 - 4). These acts of greetings appear to set a friendly atmosphere in blog forums.

The data also found that blog participants indicated they were taking leave from the blogging arena before exiting blog forums. This is illustrated in Example 5 and Example 6 below.

Example 5

. . .BYE,..HAVE A NICE DAY

(FC18 B8:113)



Example 6

. . . bye2 CHAYO - CHAYO!!!!!!

(MB3B23: 139)

As is seen in Examples 5 and 6 the expressions ‘*BYE,..HAVE A NICE DAY*’ ‘and ‘*bye2 CHAYO - CHAYO!!!!!!*’, were used to indicate leave taking. This could be seen as a polite way to exit the blogging arena and the participants in the two examples appear sociable.

Another form of interaction convention identified in the data is the use of apologetic phrases. According to Mulholland (1993), apology is also a form of politeness. The data showed that the participants often appeared polite through the use of apologetic phrases (e.g. *I am sorry*, *Sorry*) when they disagreed with others. In most cases, the apologies were followed by reasons given by the participants to explain themselves. This is revealed in Example 7 from the posting on the blog issue ‘*English as Malaysian Language*’. In the blog issue it was argued that English could replace the national language in Malaysia so that all the different ethnic groups could be united with the use of one language i.e. English.

Example 7

. . . **u can still use english on other ocassions like parties, meetings but to change it into a national language. Sorry..**

(MC18 B14:41-42)

In Example 7, the apology marker (e.g. *sorry*) is followed by the reasoning that people should not replace the present national language but use English on occasions such as parties and meetings. The apology marker can be seen as a politeness tactic directed to the people in the blog forums as indicated by the pronoun ‘*u*’. This could be seen as a way the participant maintain the friendly atmosphere of the blogging ground.

This study found that some apology markers were directed to specific blog participants as indicated by nicknames such as *'Peaceful'* and *'ancoys'*. This is illustrated in the following two postings on the blog issue *'Black Metal'*. It was discussed in the forum whether Black Metal music was a religion.

Example 8

**Peaceful.i am sorry** if i dont agree with u.. try to think about the rhythm in black metal music.. i really2 think that u never heard the music before right? . . .  
(MK20 B10: 51-52)

Example 9

first of all **I want to say sorry to ancoyz** coz i don't agree with u, if it is true that black metal has become a religion in our world today . . .  
(MM10 B10:56-57)

In the above examples, the apology *'i am sorry'* and *'I want to say sorry'* is directed to the nicknamed participants *'peaceful'* and *'ancoyz'* respectively. The apologies appear as a 'softening' the disagreement and this too can be seen as a way participants set the blogging ground so that blogging occurred in an harmonious atmosphere.

## **Tactic 2: By using language behaviours acceptable to others**

It was revealed in the data that blog participants were often reflective of their own words and ideas when they posted their comments on blog issues. The participants appear to regulate their language behaviours so that they become more acceptable to others in blog forums. Examples of these are seen below:

Example 10

well, if in Latin America, they call **this kind of people as STUPIDO...Upps, I'm sorry for** that . . .  
(FK23 B29:71-72)

In Example 10, the expression ‘*upps*’ and the apology ‘*I’m sorry for that*’ suggests that the participant was aware of the inappropriateness of using the word ‘*stupido*’ in view that others were reading the comment. This idea is also illustrated in Example 11 below.

Example 11

. . . so when they bring their dirty and rude behaviours to the society, it creates a pain in the \*ss for others.. they need a good sp\*nking..that'll teach 'em a lesson

(MC18 B29:15 -17)

In Example 11, the reflective behaviour of the participant is seen when he masked certain words by using the asterisk to replace the letters (e.g. ass, spanking). It appears that these words are masked so that they look less offensive to the reader. Thus such social networking behaviours could be seen as way blog participants set the blogging ground so that blogging occurred in an harmonious atmosphere.

The findings show that the participants consciously regulated aspects of their argument that may appear offensive to others in the forums. This is illustrated in the following example.

Example 12

. . . because when people are dating [they use] words like i love you, you love me and some ‘**rosy’ word that i couldnt mention here** . . .

(MC17 B19: 231-232)

In Example 12, the participant appears to consciously regulate his argument when he refrains from mentioning the ‘*rosy word*’ that people use on dates, thus showing ‘respect’ to others who may find them offensive or inappropriate. The data revealed that ‘commotions’ or squabbles could occur if participants did not regulate their language practices. It was found that when blog participants were harsh or impolite to others, others were equally harsh towards them. The following chain of examples proves the case.

Example 13a

wei **bud4k cluster** u r totally wrong and u have been influence by black metal music. r u the leader or the president of black metal group???? **u better check ur brain there is something wrong with u . . .**

(MK25 B10:12-14)

Example 13b

**wei mimos i think that u have lost your mind, you are the one who have to check your brain,** do u know what black metal is, I dont think so . . .

(MM10 B10:29-30)

Examples 13a and 13b are excerpts from blog postings on the issue '*Black Metal*'. In Example 13a, the harsh remark '*u better check ur brain there is something wrong with u*' is retaliated in Example 13b with another harsh remark '*wei mimos i think that u have lost your mind, you are the one who have to check your brain*'. This shows that a direct harsh remark from one participant can be turned to become another direct harsh remark made by another participant. The examples appear to confirm that blog participants conform to collective practices in order to be part of the blog discourse community as was proposed in Chapter Four. This is also illustrated in the responses elicited from Question 51 of Questionnaire II. In Question 51, the participants were asked to report if they observed certain unwritten rules when they blogged. The responses of the participants to Question 51 are listed to ease the discussion.

**Question 51:** When I blog, I observe certain unwritten rules (e.g. good manners etc) even though I was not told about the proper way of blogging. Tick (✓) Yes or No

Yes

90.2%  
n=41

No

9.8%  
n=41

If 'Yes,' tick (✓) what are the rules that you follow when you blog

100% (n=37)

I do not use foul language (e.g. \*uck, \*ss etc.) in the blog.

97.3 % (n=36)

I do not use harsh language (e.g. stupid etc.) in the blog.

89.2% (n=33)

I do not criticize bloggers (e.g. you are stupid etc.) directly.

78.4% (n=29)

I do not give pervasive or weird views which are not normally acceptable by people.

As is seen in the above responses, 90.2% of the participants answered that they observed certain unwritten rules (e.g. good manners) even though they were not told about the proper way of blogging. This indicates that most participants avoided offensive language in blog forums, in addition to not criticizing bloggers directly. This shows that bloggers in this study were indeed a discourse community and to substantiate this claim in a response to the open ended part of Question 51, a participant wrote '*It is a bad thing to do when choosing bad words in the blog. We have to respect other people*'.

The above claim that blog participants observed unwritten conventions can also be illustrated from the responses elicited from Question 6 of the interviews as revealed in Extracts 13 – 15.

**Question 6:** When blogging, did you notice that bloggers observed certain unwritten rules (e.g good behaviors, manners etc.) when they interacted in the blog? If yes, can you explain what the rules were?

Extract 13

er...rules?...**I did not know of any rules** . . . but that is normal because we know how to talk to people so it is the same thing when we chat in the blog . . . yes, I know I must chat properly

(FKD Interviewee 3:107- 108)

Extract 14

**I am not sure of any rules** but we know we cannot behave badly in the blog. Well, everybody is reading it and we know what to write and what not to write . . . we cannot use some bad words . . . that is rude and people don like it.

(MKD Interviewee 2:63 – 65)

Extract 15

. . . nobody tell us about it but we know about it

(MKD Interviewee 2: Lines 68)

In the above three extracts, the interviewees mentioned that they were not aware of any specific rules such as good manners as evidenced in the expressions '*I did not know of any rules*', '*I am not sure of any rules*' and '*nobody tell us about it but we know about it*'. However, they were conscious of the need for proper social etiquette when they blogged.

In addition, the responses to Question 6 of the interview also revealed that the participants avoided using course or offensive language in their postings because they were conscious of the people reading their comments. The following extracts show this.

Extract 16

No, I have not been rude..er . . . because it is not a good thing to do in the blog...people are reading our message.

(MB Interviewee 5: 180 -181)

Extract 17

I know we cannot use bad words . . . **Not nicelah everybody will see us.** . . .  
(MC Interviewee 1: 17 – 19)

Extracts 16 and 17 show that the interviewees were conscious of the social presence of others because they refrained from using improper language in blog forums as *‘people are reading our message’* and *‘Not nicelah everybody will see us’*.

In Question 3 of the interview, the participants were asked the question: *‘Why do you think people should not bring up sensitive issues in the blog?’* to elicit information on socially accepted norms among Malaysians. This was deemed important as issues in blog forums can be related to the manner participants blogged. The extracts from the interview are listed to ease the discussion.

Extract 18

. . . because people will stop coming to the blog., it **become a place people wasting their time and no reason the chat in the blog**

(MC Interviewee 1: 7 – 8)

Extract 19

. . . **people become not serious in their blogging.** . . . they will just say what ever they want and not consider about other people.

(MK Interviewee 2: 53 – 55)

Extract 20

People can quarrel . . .

(FK Interviewee 3: Line 100)

Extract 21

I don't think people want to become bloggers. . . because **blogging becomes meaningless..**

(FB Interviewee 4: Lines 137 - 138)

Extract 22

. . . I think **misunderstanding can happen...people may quarrel** and tell you things..and **some people may tell us to shut up.**

(MB Interviewee 5: Lines 173 - 174)

Based on Extracts 18 – 22, the reasons given by the interviewees on why they thought people should not bring up sensitive issues in the blog can be summarized as follows:

- (i) blogging would not serve its rightful purpose for communication and participants would not visit the blog site;
- (ii) people may adopt a lackadaisical attitude and may not be serious in their interactions;
- (iii) people may get reprimanded and told to leave the blog;
- (iv) misunderstandings and quarrels may occur;
- (v) people may not want to blog; and blogging may become meaningless.

The responses of the participants show that the content of blog forums is related to the manner by which they participated in blog forums and acceptable language behaviors.

**Tactic 3: By serving as gatekeepers**

The analysis found that blog participants were reflexive towards any defective behaviour of blog participants, thus serving as gatekeepers. In the present study, the data revealed that



reflexive behaviours come in the form of a bald on-record politeness strategy when the concerned participants were confronted with face threatening acts (FTA). This suggests that blog members served as gatekeepers. This is illustrated in the comments given by the participants in response to a postings on the blog issue '*Bangsa Malaysia*'.

Example 14

here's the situation, honestly, the typical chinese think **malays are lazy and stupid** human beings . . . this is a fact. also from my experience . . .

(MC18 B11:11-12)

As is seen in Example 14, the participant made a remark that '*malays are lazy and stupid*'. The expression in Example 14 is inappropriate, and leads to blog members being reflexive as seen in Example 15.

Example 15

Hey skem, **you better watch your mouth**. Not all Malays are lazy . . . dont talk like this k . . .

(MK21 B11:67-68)

In Example 15 the phrases '*you better watch your mouth*' acts as an FTA and a warning directed to the participant nicknamed '*skem*'. The reflexive behaviour of participants is also illustrated in Examples 16 and 17.

Example 16

. . . For the skem, I think we btter **not talk about people here**...I think **your statement can make people angry** if u talk like this . . .

(MM8 B11:64-65)

Example 17

. . . as me-in-me said not all Malaysian are ok, but you **must keep your private opinion and experience for your ownself** . . .

(MK21 B11:68-69)

As is seen in the two examples, the participant nicknamed '*the skem*' was advised not to '*talk about people*' as his statement could '*make people angry*, in addition, to keeping private opinions and experiences at bay. These too could be seen as face-threatening acts as to criticize and to reprimand are tactics that people use to persuade others to mend their ways (Mullholland, 1993).

The analysis also revealed that the participants were reflexive when some participants misunderstood the blog issues. This came in the form of correcting a misconception as is seen in Example 19 and 20 in response to Example 18 from the blog issue '*Metrosexual Guys*'.

#### Example 18

Let's see in \*xxxx there are also this kind of **people**. they move in a group. i always observ to see what they do, there [they] always **act like girls** . . .

\*removed for anonymity

(MK12 B26: 11 - 12)

In Example 18, the participant seems to have misunderstood the term metrosexual guys as those people who '*act like girls*'. The participants in Examples 19 - 21 reacted by raising *terunasejati*'s awareness of the misconception of Metrosexual in Example 18.

#### Example 19

. . . **terunasejati**, i think **you are wrong**.. actually we are not talking about That kinda guys. . . . \*ps-dont involve any organization if you want to **comment it's actually sensitive**.. Let it be a little general k!.

(MK22 B26: 33; 41-42)

#### Example 20

. . . personally i think **terunasejati has mistakenly assume** what they really are

(FB10 B26:144)

#### Example 21

. . . And for 'terunasejati', for your information, metro sexual guys are not "pondan"[transvestite] k! **I think you have misunderstood or you didn't know what metro sexual is**. . .

(FB13 B26:235-237)

Examples 19 – 21, appear to be reflexive behaviors of the participants on the views given in Example 18. In Examples 19 – 21 the statements ‘*you are wrong*’, ‘*terunasejati has mistakenly assume*’ and ‘*you didn’t know what metro sexual is*’ appear to highlight terunasejati’s misunderstanding of the real meaning of ‘metrosexual’. This could be seen as a more democratic way of setting things right in the blog. Through these acts of reflexivity blog participants appear to serve as ‘gatekeepers’ in blog forums.

In the interview the participants were also asked on their course of action when they faced a sensitive issue in the blog. The following Extracts 23 – 24 are from Question 2 of the interview “Did you find any of the blog issues posted by the researcher in the blog sensitive? What was your action if you find them sensitive?”

Extract 23

. . . **I don’t comment.** If I comment I will hurt others. **But sometimes I tell them not to say things like that.**

(FK Interviewee 3: 98 - 99)

Extract 24

. . . **It’s not nice to give any comment.** People should know what they write is not good for others

(FB Interviewee 5:199 - 200)

As is seen in the above two extracts, the participants claimed that they refrained from giving any comments in the blog when they are faced with sensitive comments. In addition, in Extract 23, the participants claimed that she would ‘*tell them not to say things like that*’. This shows that in this study blog participants served as gatekeepers. The responses elicited from the interview also revealed that the participants, in this study

recognized the reflexive behaviors of others in blog forums. This is illustrated in the responses to Question 7.

**Question 7:** Based on your experience or observation what happened to bloggers if they did not conform to the unwritten rules of when blogging?

Extract 25

. . . **I think people will scold them.** . . . if its bad behaviour, its rude I think  
(FKDusun Interviewee 3:109)

Extract 26

. . . **I think they will get scolded.** . . . its like school rules that we have to follow...  
(MKD Interviewee 2: 67 – 68)

In Extracts 25 and 26, the phrases '*I think people will scold them*' and '*I think they will get scolded*' show that the participants were aware of some reflexive behaviours in blog forums. This seems to show that the participants, in this study, were bound to adhere to social networking practices acceptable to others. This is also illustrated in Extract 27 in which the expression '*I will surely scold the people if*' they were found to use bad language is representative of the reflexive behavior of blog participants.

Extract 27

I donno but it's a bad thing . . . did not see anything like that but **I will surely scold the people if he use bad language**  
(MC Interviewee 1: Lines 20-21)

In the closed ended Question 66 of Questionnaire II, participants were asked to indicate their course of action should they come across sensitive comments in the blog. The responses to Question 66 as listed reveal this.

66. What do you do when you see a comment in the blog which you feel sensitive to you? Tick (√) the following that reflects your action.

I don't give a comment on his/her view.

85.7% n=35
------------

I tell the participants about how I feel towards his comment

57.1% n=23
------------

I will give another negative comment directed to him/her

29.1% n=12
------------

N=41

As is seen in the above responses, 57.1% of the participants reported that they would express how they felt about the comment given by others in the event of a sensitive comment. The responses from the questionnaire show that some participants would serve as gatekeepers against any defective behaviors in blog interaction.

### 5.3.2 To Introduce Blog Issues

The data revealed that some blog participants tended to introduce blog issues before commenting on them. There were at least three tactics used by the participants as a form of short introduction before discussing blog issues. They are:

Tactic 1: By using short preambles;

Tactic 2: By using opinion statements; and

Tactic 3: By using rhetorical questions.

#### Tactic 1: By using short preambles

The data revealed that some participants gave short preambles to introduce blog issues. Examples 22 and 23 are excerpts of postings on the blog issue '*Equal Rights to All?*'. The

blog issue is on a proposition made, that Sabahans should be concerned for the homeless children that roam the streets of Sabah in terms of education and care. The following postings were made in response to the proposition made.

Example 22

**Children, they are the leaders of tomorrow. for me, they are like white cloth waiting to be coloured by the adult,the better the guidance they get,the better person they become and same goes the other way round. childrens are innocent,they shouldn't be the victim of this type of poverty. we should give them better education.it's not the matter of what citizen they are,what their race are or whatever it is.**

(FB10 B1: 1 – 5)

Example 23

**Nowadays, social problem always happen. For example theft and kids are always the victims when some adult are not responsible and try to exploit children. The government should take some steps to stop this problem from happening. The children should attend and learn in school. What do you think? We should give them good future as much as we can.** . . .

(FB11 B1: 134-139)

In Examples 22 and 23 the sentences in bold are short preambles given by the participants before addressing the issues that are underlined. These two examples show that the participants begin by giving preambles to initiate the discussion of the blog issues. The preambles appear to serve as background information before the participants address the issues in question.

### **Tactic 2: By using opinion statements**

The study found that the participants sometimes gave opinions as a form of introduction then moved on to develop their opinion in the rest of their posting. The following example is an excerpt of a posting on the blog issue ‘*Equal Rights to All?*’.

#### Example 24

**i think** it is so sad to see this homeless kids which **i think** they do not even know who their parents are! **i also think** that the goverment should do something about this. **Because** sometimes its kinda embarassing for us malaysian if the foreigners see this homeless street kids begging for money,food or even sells things like plastics beg to people.. right in the middle of the CITY! i saw one when i was at the traffic light. . .

(FB9 B1:6 - 10)

In Example 24, the use of opinion statements is reflected in the participant's use of the first person pronoun (*e.g. I*) and the private verb (*e.g. think*). The first-person pronoun '*I*' together with the private verb 'think' suggests that the participant was expressing her inner thoughts and feelings. This is also illustrated in Example 25 from a posting on the blog issue '*Ban Mobile Phones in Schools*'.

#### Example 25

**for me** it is a very good idea to ban the using of handphone in schools.This is because phone can make us lose our concentration in any lessons . . .

(MK24 B6 117–118)

In Example 25, the participants used opinion markers (*e.g. 'for me'*) to signal his personal opinion before developing his overall opinion on the blog issue.

### **Tactic 3: By using questions**

The data also revealed that questions are used to introduce blog issues. In using this tactic, the participants seemed to query or prompt themselves before building up their responses on the blog issues. This is illustrated in Example 26 and Example 27, which are excerpts of postings on the blog issue '*Cats and Dogs are all PETS*' and '*Beautiful people*' respectively.

Example 26

**Cats, dogs? i** dont prefer to keep either one of them inside my house because you see i'm not an animal lover . . .

(MM11 B12:60–61)

Example 27

**hmmm...beautiful? for me**, we as human beings, we are perfect creatures that GOD has made compared to other creatures in this world. why am i saying this? . .

(MC13 B4:106–107)

As is seen in the above examples, the questions '*Cats, dogs?*' and '*hmmm...beautiful?*' are followed by the first person pronouns '*i*', and '*for me*'. The use of the pronouns could indicate that the participants were querying or prompting themselves for their personal viewpoint on the blog issues. This is also reflected in Example 27 from a responses on the blog issue titled '*Anybody for a House Husband*'.

Example 28

**Being a house husband?** ohooo...**in my opinion**, a man should go to work. but he can help his wife at home. for me, with the co-operation between the husband and wife their love will become stronger. well, **for me**, men should not depend on his wife to buy all things. men are leaders of families . . .

(FC16 B17: 76–79)

In Example 28, the participants used the question '*Being a house husband?*' as a way to query herself to give her personal opinion '*in my opinion*' and '*for me*'.

### 5.3.3 To Elicit Responses

The findings show that blog participants attempted to elicit responses to opinions given in blog postings. This usually came in the form of questions at the end of a blog posting. The following chain of Examples 29 and 30 below show the case. In Example 29, the questions are numbered by the researcher in square brackets [ ] to illustrate the point.



Example 29

is it our responsibility to care for them?? [1] i dont think so...why? [2] coz they are not malaysians...simple right?! [3] why should we waste our time and money juz to look after them? [4]

(FM2 B1:232-234)

Example 30

**the children are still young so we must help them to grow.** 4 example the government must build school and orphanage 4 these children. another way the government must give them the Malaysian citizenship and give them good education. the people must give these children moral support, care and love

(FM7 B1:235-238)

Example 29 is from the responses on the blog issue *'Equal Rights to All'*. In the example, the two questions [1] and [2] – *'is it our responsibility to care for them??'* and *'Why?'* – were answered by the participant herself. However questions [3] and [4] – *'simple right?'* and *'why should we waste our time and money juz to look after them?'* were left unanswered. However it was found in the data, these questions, even when they were not answered by the participant, could elicit views from others as reflected in Example 30. In Example 30, the expression *'the children are still young so we must help them to grow'* appears to be a respond to the two questions in Example 29.

The view that when that when questions appeared at the final position of blog postings, they appear to serve the opportunity given for others to give their views is also illustrated in Example 31 from the posting on the blog issue *'Girls Should Make the First Move'*. In Example 31, the questions are numbered by the researcher in square brackets [ ] to illustrate the point. The issue discussed is about girls making the first move in a boy-girl relationship.

Example 31

. . . however, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. even if i said it's nothing wrong, what about other people especially the elders. will they be open up to the trend nowadays? [1] will they be cool enough to accept it? [2]

(FB10 B21:47-49)

In the above example, the two questions as indicated by the square brackets appear to solicit some answers from others in view that the questions were not answered by the participants. This shows that the participant could be seen as seeking consensus from others on her views. This idea is also illustrated in Examples 32 and 33 below which are postings on the blog issue *'The Hantu Affair'* and *'Battle of the Sexes'* respectively.

#### Example 32

. . . Let me tell a story that was can b classified as a true story.."There was once a gurl that like to chat very much.And one day she met a guy at the chatroom.They were jodoh 2 b 2gether [meant to be compatible to each other] After chat 4 a long time they made a decision to meet each other..On that day,the guy didn't show up,the gurl was so upset...So i let u guess what happen???? Hehehehe. **The guy was a 'hantu' [ghost] right?**

(FK25 B3:104-108)

#### Example 33

. . . personally, i admire strong women. they, we can said that, are more independent, because the strength and stamina they have. but being too much will takes away the charm and makes them ugly and not healthy. **which one is more important???**

(FC19 B18:166-169)

In Example 32, the participant tells a story of a guy who did not turn up for a date with the girl after meeting in an online chat room. The question *'The guy was a 'hantu' [ghost] right?'* seems like the participant was eliciting consensus from others. Similarly, in Example 33, the participant who posted the question *'which one is more important?'* could be seen as seeking a response on whether it was important for a woman to have *'charms'* or *'strength and stamina'*.

### 5.3.4 To Give Opinions

This is the fourth type of interactive strategy found in the data. It was revealed in the data that the participants gave their opinions or suggestions on the issues discussed in the blog. This study found that participants used the following tactics when they gave their opinion:

Tactic 1: By acts of reasoning

Tactic 2: By putting forward a suggestion

### **Tactic 1: By acts of reasoning**

The data revealed that the participants usually reasoned their opinions or viewpoints. According to Mullholland (1993) when people reasoned out an opinion, they appear reasonable. Example 34 is an excerpt from the responses on the blog issue '*Bangsa Malaysia*'. It was discussed in the posting that the people of Malaysia should be identified as Malaysians and not the present practice whereby Malaysians are identified according to their ethnic groups.

#### Example 34

First of all, we have to change our mindset towards 'Bangsa Malaysia'[Malaysian race]. Different people have different perception about 'bangsa'. Some people think that 'bangsa' [race] is only referring to their own race such as the muruts. They have to know that there is only one 'Bangsa' [race] in Malaysia and it is 'Bangsa Malaysia'[Malaysian race]. **Eventhough you're Malay, Chinese, Indian and so forth, but we are still one nation that is 'Bangsa Malaysia'** [Malaysian race].

(MM10 B11:5 – 10)

As is seen in Example 34, the participant reasoned out that though Malaysia consisted of many races, Malaysia is still a nation. In doing so, the participant appear reasonable. This idea is also illustrated in Example 35 and 36 from a posting on the blog issue '*Gay Marriage*' and '*Battle of the Sexes*' respectively.

#### Example 35

. . . However, instead of feeling angry and disgusted at these people, we should feel sympathy for them (NOT PITY!!) . . .

(MM8 B2:156-157)

Example 36

**Today's is the modern days. Everybody have equal right.** So it is up to the women whether they want to build their muscles and body shape or not. So to all the girl out there, DO NOT BOTHER WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOU. JUST DO WHAT YOU THINK IS GOOD FOR YOU!!!

(FC16 B18:48 -51)

As is seen in Example 35, the participant reasoned that people should sympathized with gays instead of being angry or disgusted with them. This view is also illustrated in Example 36 in which the participant appear to reason out her opinion that '*Everybody have equal right*' in this modern times. By reasoning their opinions, the participants in the two examples appear reasonable in their views.

## **Tactic 2: By putting forward a suggestion**

The data revealed that participants put forward suggestions as ways of giving opinions. This is illustrated in Example 37 from a posting on the blog issue '*Ban Mobile Phones in Schools*'.

Example 37

Although I agree with the fact that a lot of students tend to misuse the benefits of the mobile phone . . . **instead of banning them, perhaps only letting certain students who are vouched by someone with authority (a lecturer for example) to actually carry a mobile phone in class.**

(MM9 B6:1; 6-9)

In Example 37, the participant felt that mobile phones should not be banned in schools. Instead, he suggested that deserving students should be allowed to carry mobile phones in schools. The data also revealed that the participants made obligatory remarks in their suggestions. This seems to be a stronger form of giving suggestions than in the previous section. This is illustrated in Example 38 below.

Example 38

. . . So, **all of you must** understand that it is not easy for women to do something like that **We must** support them in every sports they want to be involve in. ooo ya, one more thing that **all of you must** know is that women need to go to the gym.  
(MK26 B18:8-13)

Example 38 is from a posting on the blog issue '*Battle of the Sexes*'. The issue discussed is about women who compete in male dominated sports such as boxing and muscle building. As is seen in Example 38, the participant changed the focus of his comments through the use of exclusive and inclusive subject pronouns. The exclusive '*all of you*' changes to an inclusive '*we*' and then back to the exclusive '*all of you*'. Inclusive '*we*' seems to suggest that everyone (including him) must adhere to the obligatory remark. In addition the sense of obligation and necessity is felt through the use of '*must*', which have a strong effect on the suggestions given.

### 5.3.5 To Defend Opinions

The data also revealed that the participants defended their opinion when a negative statement was directed to them. This is observable in the following chain of Examples 39a-39c from the posting on the blog issue '*Who should Pay on the First Date?*'

Example 39a

hmmmmm... well.. before everything goes crazy, **i want to ask you guys why must you pay on a date? why must guys pay for all that?** . . .  
(MC17 B19:99– 100)

Example 39b

**i dont agree with you EXPLODED** . . . Even though the world has change that deos not mean girls must first pay the expenses for the first date . . . think carefully girls out there, dont because of the love lose all your money..dont even do it for the first time date! . . . .  
(FK25 B19:174; 177; 180)

Example 39c

(PLAYGURLZ) . . . **dating is not just sitting in the restaurant eating expensive food with the romantic music and environment ok**, it can be in the different way such as going to the beautiful places like simpang mengayau, kundasang, and some thing like that... that only need a ride....and the cost of it only a few ringgit and can be covered by the guys lah ok . . .

(MC17 B19:230; 237– 242)

Example 39b is a disagreement made by a participant on a previous posting on a proposition made in Example 39a that guys should not pay for the bills incurred on a first date. In Example 39c, the participant seems to defend his opinion against the disagreement directed to him in Example 39b, by explaining his original views. This can be seen as an attempt to clear up any misunderstanding or to explain his earlier comment. In cases where there was no criticism, the data revealed that the participants usually defended their opinion using the following tactics.

Tactic 1: By giving explanations; and

Tactic 2: By making use of moral propositions.

### **Tactic 1: By giving explanations**

The data revealed that the participants usually gave an explanation to support their opinion.

Examples 40a – 40c are a chain of responses from the forum on the blog issue '*Equal Rights to All*'.

Example 40a

**i think the best way now is just send them back to their country.** There is also ministers in their country to settle their problem. when our goverment solve this problem what will happen to our own citizens rights.so our citizens rights comes first!!!

(FM2 B1:177-180)

Example 40b

**hey pingupink..y u think they must be sent back to their countries?** if this homeless street kids are sent back to their hometown..it will be the same cuz they are still young to do anything or think!!

(FB9 B1:200-203)

Example 40c

is it our responsibility to care for them?? i dont think so...why? **coz they are not malaysians...simple right?! why should we waste our time and money juz to look after them?**

(FM2 B1:232-234)

In Example 40b, the participant questioned the participant in Example 40a on her reasons why the children of illegal immigrants in the state of Sabah should be sent back to their countries of origin. In Example 40c, the participant defended her view given in 40a that these children were not Malaysians and they should not waste their money to look after them. Thus, by explaining the participant in Example 40c appears reasonable and this could possibly promote understanding among the participants who were not agreeable to her. This is also illustrated in Examples 41a – 41c from a chain of exchanges on the blog issue '*The Hantu Affair*'.

Example 41a

"Hantu" or Ghost.. erm . . . Movies or people that tell a story about ghost is not real.. **i cannot believe things like that..** we believe in God and we are not suppose to believe on those things.. thanx. 9 – 12

(MC16 B3: 10-12)

Example 41b

**I dont agree with u j-jay.You said that you dont believe that ghost are true.** I believe that a ghost exist in this world. I believe they lurk at night especially if they don't have a good death such as suicide. Honestly to say i had seen one when i was studying in a secondary school. I stayed in a girls hostel and I saw shadow walking in my room. I was terrified and never want to return to the school. **So, do you believe me?**

(FB13 B3: 32-27)

Example 41c

haha echikz.. u said that ghost exist just because you have seen it once... **do you think that it was really a ghost or your friend making fun to scared you..** seriously saying that i have never seen one.. even though im dying to see one.. ahahaha.. it must be a wonderful experience when you seen one rite?..

(MC16 B3: 38-41)

In Example 41b, the participant relates her story and questioned the participant in Example 41a on his conviction that on the non-existence of ghosts. In Example 41c, the participant defended his view by saying that the participants in Example 41b could have mistook her friends for ghosts. Thus, by giving the participant in Example 41c other alternative explanation, he appears reasonable which could possibly promote understanding among them in blog forums.

### **Tactic 2: By making use of moral propositions**

The data also revealed that the participants made use of moral propositions as a way of supporting their opinion. Examples 42 and 43 are excerpts of responses from the blog issue '*Respect Aging Parents*'. The issue discussed is about a son who mistreated his aging father.

#### Example 42

i agree with u guys, it just so sad to know the fact that many peoples nowadays dunno how to respect their aging parents, they really dunno how to treat them nicely, it hurts me a lot, **Respecting people is part of human being.** . . .

(FC16 B28:59 - 61)

#### Example 43

. . . Parent don't hope that they will be treated nicely, but all they want is all their children have a better life in the future.. **It is the children's job to look after them after they get old and weak physically**..Me myself, will always respect and love them until die. I will never treat my parents like that and what more to send my parents to old folks home . . .

(MK22 B28:31 - 35)

In Example 42, the participant made a moral proposition that '*Respecting people is part of human being*' and therefore supported that '*aging parents*' are to be respected. In Example 43, the moral proposition '*It is the children's job*' to look after parents when '*they get old and weak physically*' appears as an obligatory remarks for all blog participants.



### 5.3.6 To Persuade Others

The findings show that the participants employed at least nine different tactics to persuade others. However, overlaps do occur in the use of these tactics. For example, an analogy could be used to explain a point and at the same time persuade others to adhere to a certain view. It was found in the data that participants persuaded others by using the following tactics. The list does not reflect any order of importance or frequency of occurrence in the data.

Tactic 1: By being polite

Tactic 2: By using analogies

Tactic 3: By using mental images

Tactic 4: By using proverbs

Tactic 5: By providing examples

Tactic 6: By using logical reasoning

Tactic 7: By using intensifiers

Tactic 8: By referring to ‘credible’ sources

Tactic 9: By using statistics

#### **Tactic 1: By being polite**

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), politeness strategies are developed by people engaged in an interaction to save the hearer’s ‘face’. In this respect, the data revealed that the participants used politeness tactics to persuade others to accept their opinions. Example 44 is from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Selfish*’

Example 44

. . . **As you all know**, selfishness is also like egoism . . . So, they need some moral values in their lives as all of us live in an open atmosphere . . .

(MK24 B29:119; 122-123)

In Examples 44, the phrases '*you all know*' appears to show that the ideas in the postings are common knowledge known to all. In doing so, the participants may subtly persuade others that his views were in line with the common knowledge shared by others; hence this appears to be a way of being polite. This is also illustrated in Example 45 from a posting on the blog issue '*Black Metal*'.

Example 45

. . . **you know** Black Metal is not just music. But...**as we know** the sound of black metal makes people become super crazy . . .

(MK20 B10:45-48)

According to Mohd. Ali (2000), the use of '*you know*' and '*we know*' may invoke the prior information or background knowledge that participants shared with the addressee. '*You know*' and '*We know*' could be used to express certainty, which carries a similar meaning to '*as we know*' and '*as you know*'. When the '*know*' phrase was used, the speaker appears to invoke a prior agreement as a source for the worthiness of what was said and the addressee was expected to believe the speaker. The use of '*you know*' is primarily speaker oriented and face saving because the speaker does not anticipate a challenge from the addressee nor does the speaker want to be challenged (Mohd. Ali, 2000). Other politeness tactics that the participants used to persuade others were with the use of hedging devices such as:

Tactic 1.1: Use of tautology

Tactic 1.2: Use of quality hedges

Tactic 1.3: Use of ‘la’ and ‘bah’ particle

Tactic 1.4: Use of tentatives

Tactic 1.5: Use of code-switch and code mix

Tactic 1.6: Use of indigenized or domesticated English

### **Tactic 1.1: Use of tautology**

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), tautology encourages the hearer to look for an informative interpretation of the non-information utterance. In Examples 46 and 47, the participants expressed the utter truth *that ‘people are people’* and that *‘women are women & men are man’*. Therefore, when participants expressed what is universally known, this can be seen as a polite way of persuading others.

#### Example 46

. . . **people are people**, many of them will talk bad because they were jelous without realizing what they do . . .

(FK23 B5:89 - 90)

#### Example 47

. . . I JUST WANT TO SAY...**WOMEN ARE WOMEN & MEN ARE MAN...**  
U SHOULD ACT LIKE AS U ARE & FOLLOW THE TRADITION, DONT  
EVER CHANGE THE TRADITION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(MK22 B18:129-131)

### **Tactic 1.2: Use of quality hedges**

Quality hedges are used when participants do not take full responsibility of their utterances (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Thus quality hedges may appear to soften the force of the utterance or statement. The use of quality hedges as acts of persuasion is illustrated in Example 48 below.

#### Example 48

. . . But i also strongly disagree with you when you said that there is no "hantu" in this world. i have faced those "hantu" [*ghost*] before..**I am not forcing you to believe me but** i want you to know about this . . .

(MK25 B3:182-186)

In Example 48, the phrase '*I am not forcing you to believe me*' is used when the participant wanted others to earnestly believe he had genuinely experienced the presence of a ghost. However, quality hedges could take the form of a posting in which participants do not appear serious in what is said by them. This is revealed in Example 49.

#### Example 49

Hi there...ok.. **let's c..who shud pay ah..?!! erm.. for me lar kan... it doesnt really matter** wat.. as long as u r having fun together, money doent rily count kan..**i mean** it does count **lar** bcoz u need money jg kn to make the payment, **wat i meant is** the 1 yg who shud pay doesnt rily a big matter **bah** . . .

(FK26 B19:252-255)

In Example 49 the expressions '*ok.. let's c.. erm.. for me lar kan...*' '*lar*', '*bah*', '*i mean*' and '*wat i meant is*' appears that the participant was cautious in her comments and the participant appears to be doing her thinking as she wrote. In the example, the participants appear to soften the force of her utterance or statement by appearing tentative. This too could also be seen as a polite way of persuading others.

### Tactic 1.3: Use of '*lah*' and '*bah*' particles

The data also revealed that the participants used the '*bah*' and '*lah*' particle as politeness tactics. In the Malay language, the '*lah*' particle is used to bring about a softening or down playing effect on what is expressed (Mohd. Ali, 2000). The use of the '*bah*' particle is

peculiar to the people residing in the state of Sabah and has the same function as the ‘lah’ particle. According to Morais (1994), the function of ‘lah’ could be likened to that of ‘please’ in English, ‘*sila*’ in standard Malay and ‘*tolong*’ in colloquial Malay. The data revealed that the ‘lah’ particle could serve as a plea for other participants to consider what was said in the blog postings. The following examples illustrate the case.

Example 50

Yeaa..how can oo a man become a HOUSE HUSBAND??? hahaha..lucu oo..hmm..For me,it is really not good.It is so embarrassing to be a house husband!!**Come on la**..It is okay if your wife have more income than you but please think about your children...What will they feel???

(MK26 B17:195-198)

Example 51

. . . I really really 400% disagree that rich people are bad people!!! **Please la..!** There are so many friends of mine who are **so so so** rich but they are **so so so** KIND! HONEST! LOVELY!

(MK26 B36:54-56)

In Examples 50 and 51, the ‘lah’ particle appears to be a plea. In addition, the expression ‘*so so so*’ in Example 51 appears to emphasize the point in the persuasion. The data revealed that the ‘lah’ particle could be used to strengthen the preceding statement and to soften the impact of what said earlier. Example 52 shows this.

Example 52

. . . Do u really want a really beautiful wife that u need to worry whether she will be faithful to u or whatever?? **X la meh begitu** \*[is it not like that], *penat tau [tired you know]*..Really it will be exhausting. i had a very, not very la but quite gud looking guy, every time i leave him alone there will be a lot of gurls looking at him, that really pist me off.but what can i do . . .

(FK25 B4:93- 97)

\*only literal translation possible because of colloquial use of language

In Example 52 the ‘la’ as in ‘*X la meh begitu*’ strengthens the preceding statement that a beautiful wife could be a reason of worry for some people. However, the ‘la’ particle as in

'*i had a very, not very la*' brings a persuasive effect to claim that the boy friend was handsome but not that handsome.

In the following Example 53, the '*la*' (e.g. '*heiya...dont know la*') appears to persuade others to lament on the situation or the dirty habits of people.

Example 53

. . . therefore, why those 'selfish people' jz dont know how to appreciate n use it in a proper way instead of using it to wipe dirty stain or even wipe it on their sport shoe??!..**heiya...dont know la** what is happening with the world nowadays . . .

(FC19 B29: 111-113)

The data also revealed that the '*bah*' particle which is commonly used among the people residing in the state of Sabah can have the same effect as the Malay '*lah*' particle and it can be used as a persuasive strategy. This is illustrated in Example 54 below, in which the participant asked an obvious information question that may mean to have a humourous effect. According to Mullholland (1993), acts of humour have persuasive effects. In this case, the '*bah*' appears to bring out a humourous effect that seems to persuade others to assume that the participant was just pretending that he did not know what a '*hantu*' [*ghost*] was.

Example 54

Hurm...."hantu"??What is that??hahah..**no bha pura2** (*just pretending*) ja i ddon't know. Okay..about this hantu,yea i agree to Mr Johnathan about that phyhological thinking . . .

(MK26 B3:181-182)

The study found that the '*bah*' particle can be used to answer a rhetorical question as illustrated in Example 55 below from the posting of the blog issue '*Inner Beauty*'. It was

argued in the blog issue that people who advocated inner beauty are those who were not beautiful. In Example 55, the participant used the ‘bah’ particle to answer a rhetorical question ‘*would you want a handicaped partner plus a very ugly face to become your wife/husband?*’ to indicate ‘of course not’ or ‘no way’ This too can be seen as a persuasive tactic.

Example 55

. . . would you want a handicaped partner plus a very ugly face to become your wife/husband? **No bah.** . . .

(FC17 B4:44 – 47)

**Tactic 1.4: Use of tentatives**

The data also revealed that the participants were polite with the use of tentatives. This type of politeness tactics may serve to hedge or weaken an argument in order to safeguard from any counter-arguments (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In this study, it was found that a tentative can be used to express indirectness and doubt. This appears to weaken a persuasion. The following examples prove the case.

Example 56

. . . it means that you don't believe that there exist another life that we can't see or **maybe** coz you have never seen them..i mean ghost.me as a muslim believe if there is another life means that **maybe** something could happen right?coz we as a human can't see all things!!!

(FM7 B3:21 – 24)

Example 57

People in Malaysia are not fair, isn't it? **well, sometimes** dogs are **quite** dangerous. but dogs are also pets. for me, it should not be discriminated by people. we live in a multiracial country. i think the writers neighbours' should not behave like that . . .

(FC16 B12: 20-22)

Examples 56 and 57 are from the blog issue *'The Hantu (ghostly) Affair'* and *Cats and Dogs are all PETS!!!*, respectively. In the two examples, the tentatives *'maybe'*, *'well'*, *'sometimes'* and *'quite'* appear to soften the effect of the statements perhaps making them more acceptable to readers.

### **Tactic 1.5: Use of code-switch and code-mix**

Code switching and code-mixing are common linguistic strategies used in a multilingual setting such as in Malaysia and when code-switching occurred, it could be associated with positive politeness among others (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In code-mixing, people use pieces of one language while they are using another language. In code-switching on the other hand, people use different languages simultaneously in an interaction. The data revealed that participants code-switched and code mixed between the Malay language and English language as illustrated in Example 58 below.

#### Example 58

i dont agree that the sex education is important to teach in the school,bcoz in malaysian especially in the school and even in the **\*masjid/gereja already have a pendidikan moral kan...na apa lagi..kalau seseorang tak ada moral apa guna juga kan**, cases of sexual abuse such as molest, rape, incest, homosexual, pornography and birth out of wedlocks **\*mesti berlaku if someone tak ada moral.sex aducation for what!? berfikir secara rasional, sex education tak dapat menangan**i this kind of cases bcoz **sekarang zaman moden orang da tak bertamadun apa2 bole terjadi ka . . .**

(FK22 B30:223-228)

[Simple translation]

\*I don't agree with sex education because there is moral education in mosques and churches. Molestation, rape, incest, homosexual, phonography and birth out of wedlock happen because people do not have morals. Therefore sex education may not help to solve the problem.

Example 58 is from a posting on the blog issue *'Sex Education'*. In Example 58, the participant code-switched from English to Malay and it appears that the participant did this



so that the intended meaning can be understood by all and thus the comment could be seen as polite way of persuading others.

Example 59 is from a posting on the blog issue '*Dirty Habits*'. The study found the participant code-mixed English by using pieces of Malay idiomatic expressions. The use of idiomatic expressions such as '*makan gaji buta*' and '*tak sedap mata memandang*' appears to sum-up the ideas and can be understood easily. This too can be associated with persuasive strategy.

Example 59

i hv a friend who tend to litter around. u know y she does it? so dat the cleaners will not '**makan gaji buta**' [*to being paid without working*]. i dunno la, to me though we have workers to clean up the place but i disagree wit wat she did. not to brag or anythin but i definately wont do such a thing. it just seem wrong, i feel guilty u know if i litter, **tak sedap mata memandang**, [*not pleasant to the eyes*] like u know dat the trash is somehow missplaced u know..though the authorities has done a lot prevent dis problem, i still tink dat hygiene shud b taught startin from home.

(FB12 B20:82 – 87)

**Tactic 1.6: Use of 'indigenized' or localized English**

The analysis of the data also revealed that the participants used localized English or used English words following Malay grammatical structure. This is illustrated in Example 60 from a posting on the blog issue '*Mat Rempit*'.

Example 60

. . . I do have a friend who is a Mat Rempit.. Every day he and his members will go **racing-racing** [to race] and lepak-lepak.. [loafing] But they don't do crime.. but thinking of it, racing in public road is against the rules and regulation..and it is a crime . . .

(MK22 B25:29-32)

In Example 60, the participant localized ‘to race’ to ‘*racing-racing*’ to indicate the multiple numbers of racings. It shows that the participant was aware that in the Malay language, nouns are pluralized by doubling them, e.g. ‘buku-buku’ to indicate many books. This could be seen as a polite way of persuading because Malaysians are usually comfortable with the use of Malay linguistic features. This is also illustrated in Example 61.

#### Example 61

. . . i don't know what kind of people they are..but of course the mat rempit are just like us, they are human right? but the difference is they like to do things **together-gether** [*to do things together*]..and hurt people who is innocent.. who they think they are?

(FK21 B25:134 – 137)

In the example, the participant localized the word ‘together’ to ‘*together-gether*’ which is equivalent to doing things together ‘*bersama-sama*’ in the Malay language.

#### **Tactic 2: By using analogies**

It was also found in the data that the participants used analogy to get participants to see a point that had been raised from the usual. Example 62 is an excerpt from the blog issue ‘*Gender Equality*’.

#### Example 62

. . . Will there will b gender equality in future...Y not?? I once heard my English teacher saying to me this back then..she told me how she wished that **some day the Sun will rise from the opposite side from usual**. . .

(FK25 B13:97-100)

In the example the participant gave an analogy about the possibility of having gender equality in the future by quoting her teacher’s wish that the sun would ‘*rise from the opposite side from usual*’ - something that is never going to happen. The use of an analogy is also illustrated in Example 63 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Dirty Habits*’.

Example 63

Dirty habits are not human habits..**its like an animal that just throw its waste where ever it is**..it's very cruel of people to be like that . . .

(MB5 B20:14-15)

In the example the participant used an analogy about animals to express his disgust about the dirty habits. This seems to be a way to get across a strong statement to other participants.

**Tactic 3: By using mental images**

It appears in the data that participants used this strategy to invite others to put themselves in situations that were not usual for them, perhaps by imagining the situation and visualizing them. By inviting readers to use mental images, the participants seemed to establish a new set of circumstances and persuaded others to agree with them. Example 64 is an excerpt from the blog postings '*Is it not Hypocrisy*'. The blog issue is about people who sweep things 'under the carpet'

Example 64

. . . it's bad, don't you think so? **can you imagine, people** who have clever brains and show good behaviour in the outside, but when they go back home, they hit their children or wife! how bad it is...well, people always says "don't judge a book only by it's cover". . .

(FC16 B15: 4-7)

In Example 64, the participant asked others to imagine the 'Jekyll and Hyde' behaviours of people in the discussion of the blog issue. This seems designed to get others to imagine the hypocrisy of people. This may serve to persuade others to accept the views of the participant in the discussion. This is also illustrated in Example 65 below.

Example 65

. . . but we can't deny it. like what i just mention before, what if one boy born with a male physical but having a girl instinct? **can't you guys imagine how that feels.** They are also human like us, they do have the same feeling, emotion like us . . .

(FM4 B2: 197 – 200)

Example 65 is an excerpt from the blog postings '*Gay marriage*'. In the example, the participant argued that gays should not be condemned because their feeling towards a gay relationship is natural. In persuading others to agree with her, the use of visualization technique appears to conjure up images of feelings (possibly the pain) of people who are different from most others.

**Tactic 4: By using proverbs**

The data also recorded that the participants appear to persuade others to accept their opinion with the aid of proverbs. Proverbs are sayings that are made authoritative by their frequent use and therefore proverbs are considered truth that people must heed (Mulholland, 1993). This can be seen in Example 66 from a posting on the blog issue '*Kid Violence*'.

Example 66

Our elders owez say dat "**Melentur buluh biar dr rebungnya...which means dat we should teach d do's n dont's to our children when they r still child** . . .

(MM11 B24: 49-50)

In Example 66, the Malay proverb '*Melentur buluh biar dr rebungnya*' and its translation appear to subtly persuade others to accept the truth of the proverb and adduce general

support for the opinion. This idea is also illustrated in Example 75 from a posting on the blog issue '*Is it not Hypocrisy*' in Example 67 below.

Example 67

. . . well, people always says "**don't judge a book only by it's cover**". It means that we have to judge people not only from their outside behaviour but also how they behave when nobody is around...think about it!

(FC16 B15:7 – 9)

In Example 67, the proverb '*don't judge a book only by it's cover*' appears to indicate a subtle persuasion on the views given as proverbs are generally accepted sayings.

**Tactic 5: By providing examples**

The study found that the participants appear to persuade others with the aid of examples. This seems to support an opinion so that it becomes clearer and easier to understand. The use of discourse markers (e.g. 'for example') was commonly found in the blog postings as in the following examples:

Example 68

. . . the word 'ugly' or not beautiful does not exist in this world, because we are born into this world with different ability and beauty. **for example**, it doesn't mean if you're black then you are ugly.sometimes, some people say that 'BLACK' is beautiful!!!!!!

(MB1 B4: 4-7)

Example 69

. . . so i know how it feels when we admire a same sex person. the government can't stop this kinda feelings because it is also about the human instinct. **For example**, a boy born with a boy physical but instead he has a girl's instinct, feelings and he is kinda soft, delicate and very soft spoken.

(MK21 B2:80 – 83)

### **Tactic 6: By reasoning logically**

It was also found in the data that the participants reasoned out their opinion as a form of persuasive tactic. This appears to get others to agree with them. This is illustrated in Example 70 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Ban Mobile Phones in Schools*’.

#### Example 70

. . . why don't they use it! **even if** it is emergency or **if** they don't have money to make a phone call, the students can ask their teacher to use the phone from the school office. So, think about it . . . .

(FB11 B6:146-148)

In Example 70, the clause of condition and concession ‘*even if*’ gives a reason that students can use the office phone if mobile phones are banned in schools. According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1990), the argument that follows the ‘*even if*’ and ‘*if*’ expresses the contingent dependence of one circumstance upon another. The participant in Example 70 has used the cause of condition and concession to put forward his reason. This too can be seen as a subtle way to persuade others to see or accept his opinion. This idea is also illustrated in Example 71 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Black Metal*’.

#### Example 71

The music of black metal is not wrong but what the people do is wrong. many cases often associated with black metal and teenagers. **This is because the people involve do bad things after listening to black metal music.** So, what the people do is wrong not the music.

(MB4 B10: 25 -28)

In Example 71, the cataphoric reference ‘*this is because*’ appears to reason out why Black Metal music was banned by the government. This is also illustrated in Example 72 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Gender Equality*’ in which the cataphoric reference ‘*that is why*’

appears to give a logical reason why guys should not mess around with ‘*women’s emotions and physics*’.

Example 72

. . . i admit it that there are many girls out there who are very soft and sensitive. **that is why, when it comes to women's emotion and physics, there is no excuse for a guy to mess around with it** . . .

(FB10 B13:28 –30)

**Tactic 7: By using intensifiers**

The analysis of the interactive strategies also noted that the participants strengthened their persuasion with the use of intensifiers. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), in speech intensifiers usually have exaggerated intonation, stress and other aspects of prosody. In Examples 73 and 74 it appears that, the use of the upper case of the letters can intensify a persuasion.

Example 73

. . . not all families want to adopt kids. even couples that have been married for 5years and still dont have any kids, do you really think that they want to adopt? **I DON'T THINK SO!!!**

(FB10 B1:88– 91)

Example 74

They actually know about that.. But one thing which make them do those things, is plain **LAZY**.. because of this they just throw their waste where ever they want..

(MC14 B20:2 – 4)

In Example 75, the participant seems to use the exclamation mark (e.g. !!!) to intensify her persuasion.

Example 75

well for me i think it is not just malaysians who do this ...but the illegals right? well..not all m'sians vandalise like u all said..breaking public phone and toilet...!! maybe its just some of them that have no brains..or just have nothing to do at all!!

but the gvment must take serious actions and find out who cause this is to our country m'sia rite? we must take concern about this!!!!

(FB9 B9:67 –71)

### **Tactic 8: By referring to ‘credible’ sources**

It was also found in the data that the participants appear to persuade others by pointing out the source of their argument. These sources appear to support their point or enhance their position in persuading others. In Examples 76 and 77 below the source of reference such as websites and magazines appear to substantiate the claim made by the participants.

#### **Example 76**

recently....from what i have heard from **the news on tv** about the 9 11 attacks, there is one quote that attracts me that is "People are Dying Because the White House, EPA, and Giuliani Lied!" here the website that you can log in to. Lots of proves can be found here. You can watch the video too and read some articles about the true story behind the tradegy. <http://www.reopen911.org/>. . .

(MK25 B22: 50-55)

#### **Example 77**

. . . i am surprised honestly cause from **the magazines i read**, most of them are still in secondary schools, among 15-20 ages, well....they are too young to get involved in sex, really. So sex education may help them in making the right choice . . .

(FC16 B30:90 – 93)

### **Tactic 9: By using statistics**

The participants also used numerals or scales as a form of simple statistics to support their argument that could serve to persuade other. These were simple figures that could be easily understood by others. This is illustrated in the following examples.

#### **Example 78**

. . . i mean can you give your trust **100%** to others? i don't think so.

(FB10 B7:28)



Example 79

i've been to one of the ministry's of health activities on health awareness for quite some time ago... there, **100 %** of the medical cum health department encourage sex education. . . .

(FC19 B30:157 – 160)

Example 80

so.i think if the highest rate of how much trust you can give to your partner,on **the scale of 1-10**, i would say i give it a 6. . .

(FB10 B7:29 – 30)

In Examples 78 and 79, the percentage '*100 %*', seems to support and substantiate the argument and in Example 80, the '*scale of 1-10*' appears to imply a continuum. This seems to show that when statistics or scales are used to support an argument, they appear more credible and believable. This too could be seen as a persuasive tactic.

### 5.3.7 To Criticize Views

The data also revealed that blog participants sometimes criticized others and they were often direct in their negative criticism to indicate their strong feelings about the issue that was criticized. The participants also made criticisms that were aimed directly to the person/s instead of issue that was discussed. This study found that the participants used the following tactics when they criticize the views given by others.

Tactic 1: By way of not concealing thoughts

Tactic 2: By using hedging devices

#### **Tactic 1: By way of not concealing thoughts**

It was found in the data that participants were often direct and do not conceal their thoughts about the person/s that were criticized. This is related to Brown and Levinson's (1978) bald

on-record politeness strategy in which people make direct, up front interactive strategy by making no attempts to soften a request or making aggravating, threat-escalating clauses.

Examples 81 and 82, is from a posting on the blog issue '*Who should Pay on the First Date*'. The two examples are criticism aimed at the participant nicknamed '*EXPLODED*' who argued that girls should indeed pay for the expenses incurred on the first date.

Example 81

i dont agree with you **EXPLODED**, why must we pay on a date? maybe you never had a date... ish...malulah [*shameful*] expolded, **dont you have shameful feelings?????** . . . . .

(FK25 B19:174 -176)

Example 82

. . . **no one will take you as their boyfriend** or even a friend...trust me!!!! Even though the world has change that deos not mean girls must first pay the expenses for the first date, common lah..**tak gentlemen langsung!** [*cannot be regarded a gentleman*]

(FK25 B19:176 -179)

As is seen in Examples 81 and 82, the nicknamed participant *Exploded* was criticized directly if he had '*any shameful feeling*' and that '*no one will take you as their boyfriend*' and he was not a '*gentlemen*'. The criticism could be seen as Brown and Levinson's bald on-record strategy in which the participants did not to conceal their criticism. This can also be seen in Examples 83 and 84 below from a posting on the blog issue '*Ban Mobile Phones in Schools*' and '*gay marriage*' respectively.

Example 83

i totally don't agree with **taurus.your thought is quite limited in this issues**.not all bad things come from handphone.it only becomes bad when one misuses the benefits of this wireless handphone, i believe if youre a student , I bet you will not miss this chance right?

(FM4 B6:84 - 87)

Example 84

Ah..I see that **most of the posters** here are AGAINST gay marriage. And some Even took the privelege of calling them names. **Tsk, tsk. Shame, shame** . . .

(MM9 B2:151 – 152)

As is seen in Example 83, the criticism '*your thought is quite limited*' offered to the nicknamed person '*taurus*' appears direct. In Example 84, the criticism '*Tsk, tsk. Shame, shame*' appears to be directed to the blog community indicted by the expression '*most of the posters*'

**Tactic 2: By using hedging devices**

The data revealed that the use of hedging devices was prevalent when a negative criticism was offered. This can be seen in the following Examples 85 and 86 are from a posting on *the blog issue* '*English as a Malaysian Language*' and '*Mat Rempit [Illegal Bikers]*' respectively.

Example 85

I think **teruna sejati** does not understand what he says . . . . **Heyman**...If English is not the best language, why most countries use english to communicate and even in education? **Please think about it positively.**

(MB4 B14:31-33)

Example 86

i don't agree with you **Heaven.well**.my friend is also mat rempit but he not a pengemis! . . . . **Maybe** Its just a hobby for them.

(FK24 B25:123-126)

It is noted in Example 85, the participant offered his criticism to the nicknamed participant '*terunasejati*'. In doing so, the participant hedged with '*Heyman*' that makes the criticism appear friendlier. In addition the suggestion '*Please think about it positively*' could enable '*terunasejati*' to view the criticism positively. In Example 86, the use of hedging devices is

seen with the use of ‘well’ and ‘*maybe*’ that appear to downplay any negative effect of a criticism.

### 5.3.8 To Seek Confirmation

It was also revealed in the data that the participants sought confirmation on views posted either by a particular participant or the community of participants at large. However, it was found that the most prominent linguistic form used to seek confirmation is the use of yes/no questions to seek information from people who are expected to respond to the questions. This can be seen in Example 87 below.

#### Example 87

I want to ask something from **Sasouke**. Do you actually stand for this gay marriages kind of thing? You said about desire and the government cant stop it. True, but can you think why man are created for woman and vice versa. it is because, desires are for the opposite. not for the same.

(MM8 B2:125-128)

In Example 87, the participant asked a yes/no question to the nicknamed participant ‘*Sasouke*’ if she stood for gay marriage. The question seems to seek confirmation from the nicknamed participant. This idea is also illustrated in Example 88 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Equal Rights to All*’.

#### Example 88

**do you people here really think that adoption really works?** Think about it, there still are many malaysian kids who were abandoned by their parents and besides that,if they take these kids as an adopted child, **what will happen to their real children?** . . .

(FB10 B1:85 – 87)

In Example 88, the participant seems to direct two questions towards the blog community: ‘*do you people here really think that adoption really works?*’ and ‘*what will happen to their*

*real children?'* These two questions appear to be directed to the community of blog members.

### **5.3.9 To Make Concluding Remarks**

The data revealed that there were several ways the participants indicated they were concluding the blog postings. It was found in the data that the participants concluded their postings by using the following tactics:

Tactic 1: By using discourse markers; and

Tactic 2: By reaffirming a stand.

#### **Tactic 1: By using discourse markers**

The data revealed that the participants used discourse markers to conclude their postings. A striking feature of this tactic is the variety of discourse markers used to indicate they had come to the end of their comments. A selection of these is given below.

##### **Example 89**

. . . but, if they are negative people and curious about bad things, it is not useful to have and bring mobile phone in school. **as a conclusion**, for me, mobile phone is very useful and it is good to bring it anywhere..

(MB1 B6:113-116)

##### **Example 90**

i agree with television influence. yet still parents have to supervised their children's behaviour. children still cannot think what are consequences of life. **so** parents, keep an eye on your children...

(MC18 B24:41 – 43)

Example 91

. . . that is why, when it comes to women's emotions and physics, there is no excuse for a guy to mess around with it. however, when it comes to ability between the sexes, we can consider about the equality...**well, that's it**, that's my opinion!

(FB10 B13:29-32)

Example 92

**1st date gives you 1st impression right?** of course girls and boys want to have a good 1st impression. . . . **REMEMBER**,,,it is **1st date,1st impression**...make it good. if the guys can't pay for the entire dinner,just be frank and suggest to the girl to pay the bill together...fair enough huh?!

(FB10 B19:47-55)

In Example 89, a rather formal phrase (*'as a conclusion'*) appears to indicate the conclusion of the blog posting, whereas in Example 90, the participant appears to sum up his view with the conjunction 'so'. In Example 91, much more informal language (e.g. well, that's it) is used to indicate a conclusion. In Example 92, the participant used the upper cases '**REMEMBER**' as a way to recap her original argument that the '*1st date gives you 1st impression*'.

**Tactic 2: By reaffirming a stand**

The data analysis also found that the participants reiterated their stand as they finished giving their views on the issues. The data analysis found that participants reaffirmed their stand using the following two sub-tactics;

Tactic 2.1: By repeating key words; and

Tactic 2.2: By reinstating points considered important

### **Tactic 2.1: By repeating key words**

The data analysis revealed that participants repeated key words to restate what said at the beginning of their blog postings. The following Examples 94 and 95 are excerpts from the beginning and the ending part of the blog responses of the participant in question.

#### Example 93

i agree with u guys, it just so sad to know the fact that many peoples nowadays dunno how to **respect** their aging **parents**, they really dunno how to **treat them** nicely, it hurts me a lot . . .

. . . we should **respect** our **parents**, **love them**, take good care of **them**.... we wont be here without them, they should not be **treated** like a stranger or someone we hate, just because they look old. . . God, whats goin on with youngsters nowadays. **RESPECT YOUR PARENTS!! LOVE THEM**, please.

(FC16 B28:59-61; 69 – 74)

#### Example 94

**Selfish..I think** that type of **people** only think about themselves..They may think that they stay there only for a while . . .

. . . So in this case **i think** we can call them **Selfish** and **people** who dont care about cleanliness.

(FM4 B29:47-48, 51-52)

In Example 93, the participants repeated the key words and phrases *respect*, *parents*, and *treat them* in the latter part of the blog posting as they come to the end of their responses. Similarly, in Example 94 the participant repeated the key words and phrases '*selfish*, *I think*' and '*people*' in the concluding part of the blog posting. This appears to be a repetition of what was said earlier at the beginning of the blog posting.

### **Tactic 2.2: by reinstating points considered important**

It was also found in the data that some of the participants restated points they considered important. They did this by summarizing or paraphrasing words used in their earlier part of

their posting as an indication they had come to an end of the posting. This is seen in Examples 95 and 96 which are from the beginning and the ending part of the blog postings.

#### Example 95

. . . the word beauty exist in human life but people may not look physically but look deep inside people's heart, that most people don't have, which we call inner beauty.of course people notice us from our appearance . . .

. . . people will consider you as an ugly person. that's no use, right? so, as a conclusion inner beauty leads to outside beauty

(MC13 B4:109-111, 118-119)

#### Example 96

I think **that housewife shuldnt be paid a salary** because it is their duty to do house chores . . .

. . . for me it is a must for a husband to give his wife money but **not in the form of salary**

(MM10 B31:8, 13)

In Example 95, the participants repeated his stand that people look not into the physical beauty of a person of also the inside beauty found at the beginning part of the blog postings by summarizing the words at the concluding part of the blog posting. In doing so, the participant appear to recap his comments Similarly in Example 96, the participant repeated his stand '*that housewife shuldnt be paid a salary*' found at the beginning part of the blog posting by summarizing it to '*not in the form of salary*'. This appears to rephrase the proposition made at the beginning part of the posting.

### 5.4 Frequency of Interactive Strategies in the Data

This section presents the frequency of interactive strategies that were appeared in the data. As texts are structured and organized in form, content and structure (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004), it is possible to categorize text according to functional moves or purpose



served by a particular segment of the conversational discourse (Arcidiacono, 2007). Functional moves like agreeing, eliciting opinions from others, and suggesting act to point can be identified in a segment of a text (Herring, 1993; Herring, 2004). Therefore each segment of a blog posting is tagged with specific codes according to the functions they appear to perform (refer to Appendix I). Later these codes were counted manually with the aid of Microsoft word for their frequencies of occurrence. Table 5.9 presents the frequency of interactive strategies found in the postings on the 36 blog issues used in the present study.

**Table 5.9: Frequency of Interactive Strategies**

Nos.	Interactive Strategies	Total	<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>To set blogging ground</b>	<b>722</b> <b>(19.9%)</b>	3621 (100%)
2	To introduce blog Issues	358 (9.9%)	
3	To elicit respond on views	292 (8.1%)	
<b>4</b>	<b>To give opinion</b>	<b>639</b> <b>(17.6%)</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>To defend opinion</b>	<b>590</b> <b>(16.3%)</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>To persuade others</b>	<b>669</b> <b>(18.5%)</b>	
7	To criticize views	97 (2.7%)	
8	To seek confirmation	50 (1.4%)	
9	To make concluding remark	186 (5.1%)	

As is seen in Table 5.9, the analysis identified a total of 3621 interactive strategies in the data. The table shows the distribution of the interactive strategies is concentrated in the first, fourth, fifth and sixth types when the participants network socially in blog forums. This seems to imply that the interactive strategy ‘to set blogging ground’ (19.9%), ‘to give

*opinion*' (17.6%), *'to defend opinion'* (16.%), and *'to persuade others'* (18.5%), were mostly used by the participants in this study.

As this study recorded the strategy *'to set blogging grounds'* the most, this shows that most participants in this study observed interactive practices that were acceptable to others in blog forums. The analysis recorded the interactive strategy *'to seek clarification'* (1.4%) the least. This implies that blogs supported very little of these types of strategy when participants social network in blogs. The analysis of the data recorded as little as 2.7% interactive strategy to *'to criticize view'*. This shows that the participants in the *present* study did not use much of this strategy in blog forums. The minimal use of the strategy *'to criticize view'* implies could aid the building of camaraderie among blog members. This will be presented in Chapter Six.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter has presented a collection of interactive features in the study that enabled the participants to remain coherent. This study found that social presence or their perceived presence of others influence how the participants social networking. The interactive strategies and the various tactics found in the data are summarized in Table 5.10.

**Table 5.10: Summary of the Interactive Strategies and Tactics**

Interactive Strategies	Tactics
1. To set blogging grounds	by using appropriate convention of interaction by using language behaviours acceptable to others by serving as gatekeepers
2. To introduce blog issues	by using short preambles by using opinion statements by using rhetorical questions
3. To elicit responses	by using questions
4. To give opinions	by acts of reasoning by putting forward a suggestion
5. To defend opinions	by giving explanations by making use of moral propositions
6. To persuade others	by being polite by using analogies by using mental images by using proverbs by providing examples by using logical reasoning by using intensifiers by referring to 'credible' sources by using statistics
7. To criticize views	by way of not concealing thoughts by using hedging devices
8. To seek confirmation	by using real or information questions
9. To make concluding remarks	by using discourse markers by reaffirming a stand

As is seen in Table 5.10, the interactive strategies are action sequences used to achieve certain interactive goals. These strategies are manifested through the use of specific tactics or behavioral action.