CHAPTER SIX

CAMARADERIE AND INTERCULTURAL NETWORKING STRATEGIES IN A MALAYSIAN SETTING

6.0 Introduction

It was established in Chapter Five that social presence could influence the way blog participants use language. Chapter Six aims to give present how the social networking strategies identified in this study foster camaraderie and intercultural interaction. As data was collected from students at two public universities in East Malaysia, Sabah, the data represents interactive features of the four ethnic groups, namely, Malay, Chinese, Kadazan-Dusun and Bajau. The social networking strategies and tactics identified in the data are the multilingual/bilingual Malaysian way of blogging among young adults. The data for this chapter are those collected from blog issues on national and social topics because these topics were found to interest the participants in the pilot study.

6.1 Participants' Contribution of Blog Posts for National and Social Topics

This section presents the contribution of blog posts on blog issues categorized as national and social topics. Table 6.1 shows the blog issues and the number of participants who posted their comments for each of the blog issue.

Table 6.1: Blog Postings Received for National and Social Topics

*Ranking	Blog Issues	Blog Issues Type	No. of Postings	No of Participants
1	Equal Rights to All	Current	**56**	**23**
2	Sex Education	Current	30	27
3	Gay Marriage	Current	29	25
4	The "Hantu" [ghostly] Affair	*Musing*	29	25
5	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	Current	25	19
6	What Feeling is This?	Current	23	21
7	Selfish	*Musing*	23	18
8	What is Happening to Malaysia?	Current	23	22
9	Black Metal	Current	22	14
10	Malaysian Identity	*Musing*	20	14
11	Give Peace a Chance	Current	18	16
12	Kid Violence	Current	16	16
13	Mat Rempit (Illegal Bikers)	Current	17	16
14	English a Malaysian Language	*Musing*	15	14
15	The Sprit of Merdeka [Independence]	*Musing*	15	14
16	Cats and Dogs are all PETs!!!	*Musing*	12	10
17	Bangsa Malaysia [Malaysian Race]	Current	12	11
18	Dirty Habits	*Musing*	12	9
19	Are Chatrooms and SMS Bane or Boon?	*Musing*	11	11
20	What are the Kids Up to?	*Musing*	10	10
21	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	*Musing*	10	9
22	Is it not Hypocrisy?	*Musing*	10	9
23	Nuclear Power	Current	9	9
24	Respect 'Aging Parents!	*Musing*	**4**	**4**
TOTAL			451	366

*Ranking according to number of postings

In Table 6.1, the blog issues are either labeled current or musing. Current blog issues were 'hot topics' in the mass media (e.g. news paper) during the time of this study. Musing blog issues are those linked to participants' thoughts and day-to-day reflection. The blog issues

are rated according to the number of postings to reflect the number of blog postings received for each blog issue.

As is seen in Table 6.1, the 24 blog issues received 451 blog posts. It is noted from the first 10 blog issues ranked, the participants preferred blog issues that were current than musing in nature. Additionally, as seen in Table 6.1, the blog issue '*Equal Rights to All'* received 56 posting from 23 participants. However, the blog issue 'Respect 'Aging Parents!' received 4 postings from 4 participants. This shows, the number of blog postings received for each blog issue is not an indication of more participation from different participants.

6.2 Disclosure of Ethnic Identity

This part of the section presents the way participants disclose their ethnic identity in blog forums. As it was mentioned in Chapter Two, the characteristics of participants such as ethnicity could influence communication exchange; the purpose of this section is to show that the participants in the study were aware of the ethnic composition of the people in blog forums. The present study found that blog participants disclosed information of their ethnicity;

    (a)   by the use of nicknames; and

    (b)   by self disclosure.

(a) By the use of nicknames

The data revealed that blog participants revealed their ethnic identity through the nicknames displayed by the blog service provider each time they posted their comments. Examples 1 and 2 show the case.

Example 1
     malaywizard said…Gay marriages it's bad and jerk!! . .

<div align="right">(FM1 B2 64 –65)</div>

Example 2
     Bajaumalay said…hallo 2 all my fellow friends. . .

<div align="right">(MB5 B25 115 – 116)</div>

In the above examples, the display of nicknames *'Malaywizard'* and *'Bajaumalay'* identify the participants as Malay and Bajau, respectively. Therefore, blog participants could generally assume the cultural background of the participants based on the nicknames of the participants in blog forums.

(b) By self disclosure

It was found in the data that blog participants disclosed information of who they were. As is seen in Example 3 below, the participant used the expression *'InsyAllah...Amin [God's willing, Amen]* which is a form of prayer recited by people of the Islamic faith and therefore the participant appears to be someone from the Islamic faith.

Example 3
     . . . **InsyAllah...Amin** *[God's willing, Amen]*
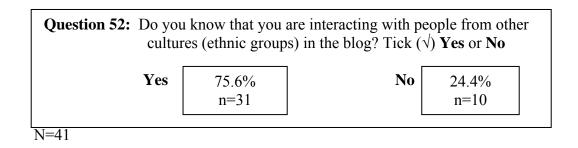
<div align="right">(MB2 B23: 25)</div>

The data revealed that the participants disclosed information about their ethnicity by expressing who they were. Example 4 is from a posting on the blog issues *'Malaysian Identity'*.

Example 4
     . . . im proud to be malaysian even **im a Chinese** in sabah . . .

<div align="right">(MC17 B23:96)</div>

In Example 4 the participant appear deliberate to disclose information that he was a Chinese because he wanted other participants to know who he was in the blog forum. It was revealed in Question 52 of Questionnaire II that some participants knew they were interacting with people from other ethnic groups. The responses of the participants to Question 52 are listed to ease discussion.

Question 52: Do you know that you are interacting with people from other cultures (ethnic groups) in the blog? Tick (√) **Yes** or **No**

Yes | 75.6% n=31 | **No** | 24.4% n=10

N=41

In response to Question 52, 75.6 % (N=41) of the participants indicated that they knew they were interacting with people from other cultures in blog forums. Based on the total responses, the participants indicated that there were three (3) different ways they knew the ethnic groups of other participants as shown below:

If **'Yes'**, tick (√) how do you know you are interacting with bloggers that come from other cultures (ethnic group)

34.9% (n=29) Through the use of nicknames *(e.g. bajaumalay*

33.7% (n=28) Through the use of certain words in the blog *(e.g. bumiputra)*

31.3% (n=26) When bloggers disclose information about themselves *(e.g. as a Malay)*

N=83

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The participants indicated that they knew the ethnic identify the participants through nicknames (24.9% n=29), through the use of certain words (33.7% n=28) and when bloggers on disclosed about themselves in their comments (31.3% n=26).

6.3 Participation of Ethnic Groups in Blog Forums

This section presents the contribution of words and participation from the ethnic groups in blog forums. The blog postings on the first 10 blog issues presented in Table 6.2 are ranked according to the number of participants.

Table 6.2: Number of Words and Participation According to Ethnic Groups

**Ranking	Blog Issues	No. Words (No. of Participants)				Total Words & Participants
		*M	*B	*KD	*C	
1	Sex Education	375 (6)	959 (6)	**885 (9)**	1427 (6)	3649 (27)
2	Gay Marriage	**1904 (5)**	621 (7)	388 (4)	**459 (9)**	3372 25)
3	The "Hantu" [ghostly] Affair	729 (6)	835 (7)	1110 (7)	482 (5)	3156 (25)
4	Equal Rights to All	814 (6)	**1552 (6)**	159 (1)	1954 (10)	4479 (23)
5	What is Happening to Malaysia?	638 (7)	603 (7)	220 (4)	522 (4)	1983 (22)
6	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	781 (4)	350 (4)	369 (5)	745 (5)	2245 (19
7	What Feeling is This?	298 (4)	705 (6)	786 (7)	371 (4)	2160 (21)
8	Selfish	307 (4)	327 (3)	958 (7)	426 (4)	2018 (18)
9	Malaysian Identity	119 (1)	650 (4)	485 (4)	971 (5)	2225 (14)
10	Black Metal	1046 (6)	259 (3)	504 (4)	75 (1)	1884 (14)

*M=Malay *B=Bajau *KD=Kadazan-Dusun *C=Chinese
* Ranking according to the number of participants

The table shows that on the blog issue *'Gay Marriage'*, five Malay and nine Chinese participants posted 1904 and 459 words, respectively. Similarly the blog issue *'Equal Rights to All'*, six Bajau participants posted 1552 words and nine Kadazan-Dusun participants posted 885 words on the blog issue *'Sex Education'*. This indicates that in this study, the number of words and participants cannot be used to gauge the preference for any blog issue by the ethnic groups.

The following sections present the social networking strategies that foster camaraderie and intercultural interaction. The sections will be discussed under the following headings.

(i)   Camaraderie in Networking

(ii)   Intercultural Networking Strategies

6.4 Camaraderie in Networking

Lakoff (1973) states that the linguistic choices made by people could narrow the social distance or bring about camaraderie among speakers. It was found that the view of Lakoff (1973) could also apply to online interaction contexts.   The data revealed that blog participants brought about camaraderie in blog forums the following ways:

(a)   by marking the common background with blog participants;

(b)   by narrowing the social distance among blog participants;

(c)   by supporting the views of others; and

(d)   by face saving.

Tactic 1: By marking the common background with blog participants

The data revealed that blog participants marked each other as members who shared a common background. The participants in this study are linked as members of the blog forums. Brown and Levinson (1978) state that the positive self-image of the addressee can be achieved by treating others as members. This study found the following tactics used by blog participants to mark each other as blog members:

Tactic 1.1: Use of deixis

Tactic 1.2: Use of identity markers

Tactic 1.3: Use of nicknames

Tactic 1.4: Use of address groups

Tactic 1.5: Use of pronouns to denote common background

Tactic 1.1: Use of deixis

Deixis is the marking of entities with respect to certain points of reference (Finegan, 1999). In this study, it was found that blog participants used deixis to recognize others as blog members. The following three examples illustrate the point.

Example 5
   hi **everyboy***[everybody]* in this **chat room**…em for me ghost really exist in the . . .
                                                                        (FM3 B3:96 -101)

Example 6
    Everybody out **here** please be realistic..not emotional! .   .   .
                                                                        (MC13 B1:239 -244)

Example 7
> Hello **everyone**, i just want to say that we must be sensitive to others if we want to be Malaysians . . .

<div align="right">(MK23 B1:68 -69)</div>

In Examples 5 - 7, the expression *'everybody'* served as a deixis in reference to blog participants within the context of *'here [the blog]'* and those in the *'chat room [the blog]'*. This appears to create the awareness that the participants were recognized as members who shared a common background in blog forums. In contrast, the data revealed that blog participants used exclusive deixis such as *'they'*, and *'them'* to refer to non-members of the blog. This is illustrated in Example 8.

Example 8
> . . . we must know to be successful in life we must be diligent like **them**. We must respect **them** because **they** are very diligent to accomplish what **they** want . . .

<div align="right">(MK22 B5:18 - 20)</div>

In Example 8, the use of exclusive deixis such as *'they'* and *'them'* seems to alert blog members that they are not part of the people mentioned in the discussion.

Tactic 1.2: Use of identity markers

The data also revealed that blog participants used identity markers to remind the participants of who they were.   The following examples show the case.

Example 9
> This topic is about **us - Malaysian people**. I wonder, why there is a lot of vandalism . . .

<div align="right">(FC16 B9:23)</div>

Example 10
> . . . Because sometimes its kinda embarassing for **us malaysian** if the foreigners see this homeless street kids begging for money,food or even sells things . . .

<div align="right">(FB9 B1:8 -9)</div>

Examples 9 and 10 are from the postings on the blog issues *'What is Happening to Malaysian',* and *'Equal Rights to All'* respectively. The identity markers (e.g. *'us Malaysian'*) marked the identity of the blog participants as Malaysians. This seems to bring about the feeling of a shared common background among blog participants.

In contrast, the participants differentiate themselves from others with the identify markers *'immigrants' 'Filipinos'* and *'Indonesian'.* This appears to invoke the feeling that blog members do not have any shared background with those people identified. This is illustrated in Examples 11 and 12 from the postings on the blog issue *'What Feeling is This?'.*

Example 11
> the **immigrants** will bring more problem to our country but sometimes we have
> to respect their efforts.It doesn't mean that i'm not my supporting my country but we
> can see that many of the **immigrants** that come from poor families work hard to
> achieve good life . . .

(FM6 B5:23 -26)

Example 12
> I think the public should take some attention on this situation, because its our
> responsibility to help this **Filipino** and **Indonesian** kids . . .

(FC14 B1:22-25)

Tactic 1.3: Use of nicknames

According to Rourke et al. (2001), when online participants mention the nicknames of others, it is an indication that the nicknamed person is recognized. In the present study, the mentioning of nicknames could indicate that the nicknamed persons are recognized as blog members, and therefore appears to promote friendship among the participants in blog forums. In Examples 13 - 15 below the nicknames *'narniafreak', 'Budak subang'* and *'Heaven'* refer to the nicknamed persons. This seems to show that they have been noticed

and their comments read by others, thus possibly promoting friendship among members in the blog forums.

Example 13
hye..what's up **narniafrea**k..haha..recognise me? . . .

<div align="right">(FM4 B14:62-64)</div>

Example 14
I like **Budak subang** coments about beauty . . .

<div align="right">(MM2 B4:56-57)</div>

Example 15
i feel sorry to hear that **Heaven** . . .

<div align="right">(FK23 B36:25)</div>

Tactic 1.4: Use of group address forms

It was also revealed that blog participants used address forms such as *'brother'* and *'guys'*. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), address forms such as *'babe, mom, luv, brother, sister, guys'* function to signal in-group membership. Example 16 is from a posting on the blog issue 'Gay Marriage'.

Example 16
. . . Don't blame me for looking at it in a different light than **you guys**. Perhaps, all I'm being is open minded.?

<div align="right">(MM9 B2:186 – 187)</div>

In Example 16 the address marker *'guys'* appears as a reference to blog members. This seems to invoke the feeling of equality among blog participants and promote in-group membership. This is also revealed in Example 17 below from a posting on the blog issue *'Think Before You Wed'*. The address marker *'dear girls'* appears to be friendly or casual to indicate female blog members.

Example 17
. . . but mind u **dear girls** out there. . . dont waste your life by marrying an old man like your father or grandfather . . .

(FK23 B34:18 – 20)

In this study, the data also revealed that address markers could also be used as a politeness strategy. This is seen in Example 18 from a posting on the blog issue *'Ban Mobile Phones in Schools'*.

Example 18
. . . i think student can bring their handphone to classes . . . take it easylah **brother**…hehehehe.

(MC16 B6:88 – 89)

In Example 18, the address marker *'brother'* seems to be used on blog members as a polite way of informing the participants to take things lightly and as an 'unfussy' way to solve the problem of mobile phones at schools.

Tactic 1.5: Use of pronouns to denote common background

This study found that blog participants used pronouns to point out they were members who shared a common background. As illustrated in Example 19, the expression *'our country'* could bring about the shared similarities among the participants.

Example 19
. . . Although **our country** has many different ethnics and culture, we still can be make it look like one Bangsa Malaysia *[Malaysian Race]*.

(MM27 B11:38-40)

In contrast in Examples 20 and 21 the expressions *'their country'* and *'their culture'* and the third person pronoun *'them'* seem to denote separation from the people who do not share common background.

Example 20
　　　as citizens,it is our responsibility to care for **them**. But we must send **them** back to **their country**. because they dont have documents to become students in our country. Maybe if we send **them** back, they will get education better than in their country

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(MC15 B1:26-28)

Example 21
　　　for me, the adoption scheme will bring a lot of bad influence from **their culture** which they have been bought from **their own country** because **their culture** is different from ours.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(FC16 B1:57-59)

The following Examples 22 – 23 revealed that when the participants claimed common background they appear to presuppose mutual knowledge on the topic that was discussed and remove threats of any negative face that the topic may induce (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

Example 22
　　　as citizens, it is **our responsibility** to care for them. But we must send them back to their country . . .

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(MC15 B1:26- 27

Example 23
　　　bahasa melayu is **our national language**... i think no one in malaysia would deny this fact . . .

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(FC18 B14:103-104)

Examples 22 and 23 are from the postings on the blog issue '*What Is Happening to Malaysia'* and *'English a Malaysian Language'* respectively. In Example 22 the expressions '*our responsibilityt'* and '*as citizen'* appears to confirm that blog members had the common background as Malaysian citizens.

Similarly in Example 23, the use of the inclusive pronoun 'our' seems to show that blog participants shared the mutual knowledge that '*bahasa melayu'* is the national language of the participant as well as the members of the blog. Thus, the participant in Example 23

appears to be linked with other blog participants as members who shared a common background.

Tactic 2: By narrowing the social distance among blog participants

Lakoff (1973) states that in order to bring about the feeling of camaraderie among speakers, it is important to narrow the social distance among them and this could be done by using informal language features. This view is echoed by Kramsch (1998) who states that a high degree of cooperation among participants occurs in informal interactions. In the current study, it was investigated how informal language features are used as blogs fall along the continuum of the spoken and written language (Nilsson, 2003). This concurs with the views of Mulholland (1993 that informal language is expected to bring about comfort where people are gathered together. This study revealed that blog participants used the following features to reflect the informal use of language:

Tactic 2.1: Use of spoken language features

Tactic 2.2: Use of emoticons, abbreviations, uppercases and symbols

Tactic 2.3: Use of short message system (SMS) style of writing

Tactic 2.4: Use of code- switching and code-mixing

Tactic 2.5: Use of localized English

Tactic 2.6: Use of jokes

Tactic 2.1: Use of spoken language features

It was mentioned in Chapter Three that online interaction falls along the continuum of spoken and written language (Nilsson, 2003). In this study, it was found that the use of

spoken language features reflected the informality of the blogging context and brought about an informal and care-free tone in the blog postings. This could possibly aid the building of friendship among blog participants. However, as blogs are typed texts, blog participants make use of orthography whether, conventional or unconventional to bring about the informal use of language. The following example reflects the case.

Example 24
    ok..**hallo my friends,** we meet again, hai ya about this topic i really like 2 post a comment, cause i like it**...hahahahahaummphhhhh** . . . i think the idea 2 have sex education in primary schools is not suitable, cause theyre still **young ma....think lah!!!!!!** . . .

    (MB3 B30:26-32)

In Example 24, the spoken language features used as those found in face-to-face interaction such as *'hallo'* and *'my friends'* appear to bring out the casual tone of the interaction. The use of the expression *'hahahahahaummphhhhh'* appears to approximate laughter could bring about of the casual tone of the interaction. This is accentuated with the use of the *'ma'* and *'lah'* particles. This idea is also illustrated in Example 25 below.

Example 25
    I **agRRRREeeeee...**.becoz nowadays,guys are more 'shy²'...**heheh!~**..they don't know how to express their feelingz to the **guRLs..**.they dont have any **guTzZzz!!...**so Ladies...U should make the First **MoVe.**.gentlemen,start **youR** engine!!...**AHaks!~**

    (FC18 B21:140-143)

In the above example, the expressions *'agRRRREeeeee...'*, *'guTzZzz!!...'*, *'guRLs...'*, *'MoVe'* and *'youR'* appear to bring the effect of speech sound quality through the repetition of the letters and intermingling the lower case and the upper case of the alphabets. The expression *'heheh!~.'* appears to be mimicking laughter.

Tactic 2.2: Use of emoticons, abbreviations, uppercase and symbols

It was also revealed in the data that the participants used emoticons, abbreviations, uppercases and symbols that reflected the informal use of language. It was noted that when this study was conducted, the use of emoticons like. ☺ was not a feature provided by the blog service provider, so participants come up with emoticons, such as **^_*** and **^_^** . As emoticons are universally used in other kinds of text-based communication, the use of emoticons in blog forums when emoticons are not features of a blog seems to show that blog participants adapted language to meet text-based interactive needs i.e. to communicate more that what made possible in blogs. This is seen in Examples 26 – 29 below.

Example 26
. . . God create us with His miracle and knowledge...can we say that His creation is bad, ugly or maybe we think God made a mistake when He create us.**.?????** If it is...what'sthe point we exist**???** **GBU *_^**

(FK22 B4:88 -91)

Example 27
. . . that is why the government in our country ban this black metal b'coz they are worried the young generation will follow the bad activities like sacrificing for the satan and forming a gangsterism group..... **(^_~)**

(FM3 B10:9 -11)

Example 28
. . . for me that's my opinion for a longlasting relationship!! **TRUST, HONEST, LOYAL**, and most important..you must also be **CARING** and **UNDERSTANDING!!** hheheheh.. **^_***

(FB9 B7:96-98)

Example 29
. . . . this god creature' does not exist!! is not to worship them..but just to believe that they **EXIST!!!!!!!** **^_^** . . .

As is seen in Examples 26 - 29, the abbreviation *GBU* (i.e. God Bless You), emoticons (***_^**), uppercases (*'TRUST') and* symbols (*'...?????')* are forms of informal language that could possibly bring about the relaxed and informal atmosphere in blog forums which could aid to promote camaraderie among the participants.

Tactic 2.3: Use of short message system style of writing

The data also revealed that blog participants used language marked by the short message system (SMS) as a way of commenting on the blog issues. SMS are usually written by simplifying words by way of removing vowels (e.g. tomorrow = tmrrw), approximating the sound of the words (e.g. online = on9) and using abbreviation (e.g. BTW = by the way). Studies show that students who are so used to communicate with their friends via SMS abbreviations transfer such language to their writing (Sergertad, 2002; Latisha, Norizul & Nazira, 2010). According to Crystal (2001), people often do this to send more words than made possible due to the constraints of space, time and cost in text-based communication such as the mobile phones. Though, bloggers may not be restricted to post messages in blog forums, in terms of space, Examples 30 – 31 show that the participants in this study used the SMS style of writing in blog forums.

Example 30
> i agree **dat wit diz sms** thing **goin** on youth nowadays are really gettin weak in communication skills..they tend to become shy **n** built a world of there own through **sms** where they can **b watever** they want to be..**sms** is another version of **chattin** through the internet **rite? wen u chat u** write in short forms **n wit** lots of gramatical order **n sum** will get so used to it till even wen talkin they talk like the way they chat like for instance **a fren** of mine instead of laughing she said **lol meanin** laugh out loud . . . (FB12 B16:109-114)

Example 31
> **. . . smhow galz** can do the payment **jg..niway**.. will **cntinua** later **coz i rily** have to go... i **hv** not finish yet.. **tp gtg** now... **btw**... **hv** fun **wit ur** dates . . .
> (FK25 B19:265-267)

Example 32
> . . . some may **b** lucky but **wat r ur** chances? some tend to take the risk **n i tink** its a stupid thing to do. i mean **u'll** be jeopardizing **ur** life here, **sumting dat u** cant get back. i **tink da** more advanced our world becomes the more problem will arise n the more complicated life would b in the future.
> (FB12 B16:120-124)

In the above examples, *'dat'* (that), *'wit'* (with), *'sms'* (short message system) *'n'* (and) *'wen'* (when) and others could denote the informal casual tone in the use of language among the participants in the blog. According to Lakoff's (1973) Rule of rapport the social distance among people is narrowed with the use of informal language. In this study, the use of informal language could possibly bring about the feeling of casual or simple way of interaction among the participants.

Tactic 2.4: Use of code-switching and code-mixing

According to Wardhaugh (1998), code-switching and code-mixing are used as a strategy to establish solidarity and relationship among people involved in a conversation. This could be seen as positive politeness because it marked personal involvement among participants (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In code-mixing, the participants use pieces of one language while they are using another language. In code-switching on the other hand, the participants use different languagse in the same conversation. Example 33 is a posting on the blog issue '*Nuclear Power*'.

Example 33
> . . . i think the supply of energy in the country is enough, even if we don't develop nuclear power....**kacau-bilau oh nanti** *[bring about disturbances]*... i will not proud to be a malaysian if the world is destroyed because of malaysia develop nuclear weapon **bagus da kehidupan sekarang AMAN & HAMONI** *[life is good now Peace & Harmony]* PEACE FOR MALAYSIA
>
> (MB4 B27:56-60)
>
> * only literal translation because of colloquial use of language

In Example 33 it can be seen that the participant code-switched between the Malay and English language across the sentence boundary. A possible explanation for the use of this tactic could be that blog participants were aware that others could comprehend what was

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intended in the two languages. In addition, this seems to be a politeness strategy because the Malay language is common to all participants. This appears to invoke group solidarity and reduce social distance among the participants. This is also illustrated in Examples 34 and 35 when the participants code-mix.

Example 34
    . . . All the children is really **"kasihan"**..Just think if its you in their place..How would you feel if people just ignore you..they dont even want to look at you. . .
<div align="right">(FB13 B1:304-306)</div>

Example 35
    . . . I believe, nowadays/todays malaysian do not really have the independent spirit....too sad **la kan**? myself **pun** *[also]* only listen but i cannot feel the merdeka spirit...But whatever it is, i'm proud to be malaysian... **MERDEKA! MERDEKA! MERDEKA!** *[Independent]*
<div align="right">(FK23 B33: 133-136)</div>

In Examples 34 and 35, the pieces of the Malay language *(e.g. kasihan, pun, la, kan)* used within the boundary of the same sentence seems to bring about the casual and informal language tone that could aid to invoke group solidarity and enhance camaraderie among the participants.

Tactic 2.5: Use of Localized English

The data revealed that participants used localized English or fitted local words into English grammatical a form of informal language use. By using localized English, it could denote the common cultural ground upon which the participants interacted. This is seen in the following two examples from the postings on the blog issue 'Mat Rempit [Illegal Bikers]'.

Example 36
> i don't agree with you Heaven..my friend is also mat rempit but he not a pengemis![begger] he is a bank officer.. i agree they like to go **lepaking** *[loafing]* and racing sometimes travel in convoi but they are not criminals. Its just a hobby. .
>

Example 37
> . . . **"rempiting"** *[illegal motorbike racing]* is jz another kind of hobby among the teens nowadays...it is like go-karting, cycling, chatting, etc . . .
>

In Examples 36 and 37, the use of localized English *'lepaking' and 'rempiting'* seems to simplify some terms which otherwise the participants may not have known the equivalent terms in English. Nevertheless, the use of localized English seems to promote the relaxed and unfussy feeling because the participants have a common cultural back ground. This could aid to promote camaraderie among blog participants.

Tactic 2.6: Use of jokes

The findings of the data show that blog participants brought about elements of closeness with one another by making jokes in the discussion of the blog issues. Since socio-emotional communication is reduced in text-based online interaction, participants can decrease the social distance among them with humor (Rourke, et al., 2001). In addition, it could allow group members not to take the differences between them too seriously (Mullholland, 1993). This is illustrated in Example 38 from a posting on the blog issue *'Battle of the Sexes'*. The blog issues discussed women who indulge in sports such as muscle building.

Example 38
> . . . at least if my wife has the muscle **nobody dare to do something bad to her**. **hahhahaha....but we might be boxing every day...**lets c who will win on it. **kekekekekke.... nice one...**
>

In Example 38, a witty comment is made by the participant that in the event his wife developed more muscles they *'might be boxing every day'*. This seems like a joke that could raise laughter and lighten the mood among blog participants. This idea is also illustrated in Example 39 from a posting on the blog issue *'House Husband'*.

Example 39
> i think it is a good idea..in this modern world anything could happen such as househusband.. why cant men do all the house work..teaching them to take care of the house and kids..**hahahaha..**but sometimes it is funny **when the wife go to work men stay at home with their mistress** (without their wife know about it) i agree with that men can be a househusband..hahahaha
>
> <div align="right">(MC16 B17: 17-21)</div>

In Example 39, the laughter token '*..hahahaha..*' suggests that the comment was a joke and the participant liked the idea of being a househusband because this could make way for mischievous deeds when his wife went to work and he was left alone at home. This too can be seen as a joke injected to bring about laughter among blog participants. This is likely to soften the mood among blog participants and in the process aid the reduction of the social distance among them. The data revealed that jokes are offered based on shared background knowledge among the participants.   Example 40 is an excerpt from the responses to the blog issue *'Metrosexual Guys'*.

Example 40
> . . . **Juz like the old joke in Malay** . . . *"Jika nampak hantu pucong melompat dalam kain kapan, napa tidak tolong Ia buka talinya...? Mungkin anda akan jumpa emas di dalam sebagai balasan kerana tolong dia untie the tali....Heheheheh...**Juz 4 a joke,old village joke**.
>
> <div align="right">(FK25 B26:113-116)</div>
>
> *Literal translation: If you see a ghost jumping out of its burial cloth covering why not untie its knot? Maybe you will find gold as a reward for helping it. **Note:** a cultural embedded joke about a ghost

In Example 40, the participant offered a cultural embedded joke as it could be understood by those sharing a common background and therefore the use of this tactic appears to reduce the social distance among blog participants.

Tactic 4: By supporting the views of others

The data revealed that the participants expressed their support of views given by others. These acts of support appear to bring about solidarity and the feeling that the people were equal to each other. In the present study, the data revealed that blog participants expressed their support of the views given by others using the following tactics:

> Tactic 4.1:   Use of expressions of support
>
> Tactic 4.2:   Use of quoting
>
> Tactic 4.3:   Use of identical expressions

Tactic 4.1: Use of expressions of agreement

The data revealed when participants used expressions that supported each other's view, this may eventually bring about the feeling of camaraderie among blog participants.   This is illustrated in the following Examples 41a – 41c from the postings on the blog issue *'Black Metal'*.

Example 41a
>   black metal?!!.. . . but now it not only music, **it has become a religion in our world**. . .
>   (MB7 B10:41-43)

Example 41b
> first of all I want to say sorry to **ancoyz i don't agree with u**, if it is true that black metal has become a religion in our world today why there is no action taken by the goverment . . .

<div align="right">(MM10 B10:56-58)</div>

Example 41c
> . . . its **TRUE** <u>that Black Metal have become a religion today, i</u>ts not that the government dont want to take action. . .

<div align="right">(MM8 B10:102-103)</div>

In Example 41b, the participant disagreed with the statement made by the participant in Example 41a that *'black metal'* music *'has become a religion'*. The use of expression of agreement is seen in Example 41c in which another participants highlighted the word *'TRUE'* in the upper case in support of the view given in Example 41a. This appears to promote camaraderie among the participants. This is also illustrated in the following three examples with the use of expression *'I agree'*.

Example 42
> hai **i do agree** with you ancoyz. . .

<div align="right">(MB2 B17:12)</div>

Example 43
> **i agree** with meow-meow . . .

<div align="right">(MM10 B17:22)</div>

Example 44
> I think **I agree** with J-jay . . .

<div align="right">(MM10 B17:29)</div>

Tactic 4.2: Use of quoting

In this study, it was found that participants supported each other's view by quoting each other. This is seen in Examples 45a and 45b from the postings on the blog issue *'Give Peace a Chance'*.

Example 45a

   . . . **everyone race themselves to achieve the best in their life** and gain satisfaction. . .

<div align="right">(FB10 B22:2 - 3)</div>

Example 45b

I think peace is rather a quite popular topic right now.I do agree with narniafreak**.."everyone race themselves to achieve the best in their life"**. . .

<div align="right">(FB9 B22:64-65)</div>

In Example 45b the participant quoted directly from the participant in Example 45a. This appears to support the participant's own line of argument based on the statement made by the previous participant. Thus the participant in Example 45b appears to be in agreement with the views given by another participant in Example 45a.

The data also revealed that participants restructured the words of the previous participants when they quoted each other's views. Examples 46a and 46b are from the postings on the blog issue 'Dirty Habits'. In the blog issue, the dirty habits of Malaysians who do not care for the environment was discussed.

Example 46a

   . . . Please la... If we do not change, others won't change too.. but **if you change, people will follow you to change their ways**. am I right . . .

<div align="right">(MC14 B20:5-6)</div>

Example 46b

yup i agree with blackcode.. **someone needs to start 1st for others to follow..** it's very easy because in Malaysia there are a lot of 'pak turut's' [people who follow blindly] . . .

<div align="right">(MC18 B20:9 -10)</div>

In Example 46b, the participant restructured the statement made by the previous participant in Example 46a and it shows that the participant completely understood the views given in Example 46a. In addition, in Example 436b, the participant emphasized the point by making humorous reference to the fact that there were many *'pak turut'* [people who follow blindly] in

Malaysia. This too could be seen as a tactic that built camaraderie among the participants in this study.

The data also revealed that blog participants gave equivalent words when they quoted each other's words. Examples 44a and 44b are postings from the blog issue *'Give Peace a Chance'*.

Example 47a
> . . . as Malaysian we should **"bersyukur"** *[grateful]* becoz in our country there is no war just like what is happening in other countries. . .
>
> (FM1 B22:91-89)

Example 47b
> **it's juz not enough to be 'bersyukur' or grateful** Pieces, we have to make an effort to help those who are suffering these wars. . .
>
> (MC18 B22:95 -96)

As is seen in Example 47b, the participant repeated the expression *'bersyukur'* from Example 47a and he gave an equivalent meaning in English (i.e. grateful). This gives the impression that the ideas in blog postings can be reinforced when participants quoted each other's words and phrases. This seems to be a way the participants acknowledged and confirmed they understood or supported the views given by others. In addition, the repetitions of words imply that the participants were actively reading the postings of others. This too appears to build camaraderie among the participants in this study.

Tactic 4.3: Use of identical expressions

The data revealed that when participants use identical expressions they appear to agree and support one another in the course of discussing the blog issues. The following excerpts are from the postings on the blog issue *'What Feeling is This?'*.

Example 48
    Jealousy is as most of have said; "is a **normal** thing". . .

<div align="right">(MM9 B5:33)</div>

Example 49
    it is normal to feel jealous**.** . .

<div align="right">(FB11 B5:77)</div>

Example 50
    . . . For me, the **feeling of jealousy** to the immigrant is a **normal** feeling.

<div align="right">(FM2 B5:108)</div>

Example 51
    Feel jealousy..It is a **normal** feeling..all people in this world have this feeling . . .

<div align="right">(MK25 B5:128)</div>

In Examples 48 – 51, the use of the word *'normal'* makes each of the expressions almost identical that it was normal to envy people. The use of identical expressions could be seen as a unifying factor that promotes camaraderie among the participants.   This is also revealed in Examples 52 - 53 are from the postings on blog issue *'The Spirit of Merdeka' [independence].*

Example 52
    In my opinion ..**Independence Day is not just like another holiday..**This holiday is not like Hari Raya, Christmas etc. . .

<div align="right">(FK24 B33:73-74)</div>

Example 53
    like others, i'm also like to say that **independence day is not just another holiday.** It is also a holiday for us to rest but the event is different from other holidays. . .

<div align="right">(MK21 B33:111-113)</div>

Example 54
    . . . i got to see the parade on the morning of 31st..awesome!!! so,above all...**independence day is more than another holiday to me..**the other day . . .

<div align="right">(FB10 B33:25-26)</div>

Example 55
    to me... **31st August is not just another holiday. it is independence day!** . . .

<div align="right">(FC19 B33:1)</div>

In Examples 52 - 55, the participants seem to be in agreement that Independence Day was not just another holiday. The participants in the examples appear to promote camaraderie with one another.

Tactic 5: By face saving

According to Kramsch (1998), in order to promote camaraderie, the face of the participants must be saved at all times. In this study, the participants seem to have used the following tactics to protect their positive and negative face:

    Tactic 5.1:   Use of yes/no questions

    Tactic 5.2:   Use of hedging devices

Tactic 5.1: Use of yes/no question

The data revealed that blog participants used yes/no questions that seem like a tactic that protected their positive face. By seeking a yes/no answer, the participants seem to seek the approval of others on the propositions made by them. The following Example 53 shows the case to be.

Example 56
    . . .   it's not wrong when a man becomes a house husband **am I right??**. . . .

<div align="right">(FM7 B17:59)</div>

Example 56 is a posting on the blog issues *'Anybody for a House Husband'*. In the example, the question, *'am I right?', appears* to be seeking the approval of other blog participants on the proposition made that it was not wrong for a man to become a house husband.   Hence, the use of yes/no question appears to protect the positive face of the participant. This is also illustrated in the following Examples 57 from a posting on the blog issue *'Anybody for a House Husband'*.

<div align="right">204</div>

Example 57
  . . . Why can't men be house husband.. It is nothing wrong **right?**. . .
                         (FM1 B17:56)

In Example 57 the question *'right?'* seems to draw the 'yes' answer from others on the proposition that men can become house husbands. In doing so, the question appears to remove any threat of FTAs (face-threatening-acts) thus protecting the positive face of the participants.

Tactic 5.2: Use of hedging devices

The data also revealed that the participants used hedging devices when they impeached upon the negative face of others. The following example is from a posting on the blog issue *'To Be or Not To Be'*. In Example 58, the participant nicknamed *'taurus'* gave her view that in a relationship one has to trust each other 100%.

Example 58
> **Taurus** says…For me i think....The feeling of loving couples can change when they are not commited.when we agree to love someone **we must put 100% trust on each other.** loving couples feel hurt and pain because they dont trust each other. . .
>   (FM7 B7:16-19)

The use of hedging devices is seen in what appears to be an FTA directed to *'taurus'* in Example 59 below.

Example 59
> **TAURUS**. . . you **CANNOT** trust your partner fully, **what i'm saying is**,just **don't** really put your trust 100%. **you know** it really makes me sad when a girl gets deceive by the words of her boyfriend with a promissing-sex!! . . .

                       (FB10 B7:82-84)

In Example 59, the participant stressed on the word *'CANNOT'* that *Taurus* should not fully

trust her partner appears to be a FTA. However, the participant appears to hedge in her

reason for not agreeing with *'taurus'* with the expressions *'what I'm saying'*, *'don't really'*

and *'you know'*. This seems to show that hedging devices could reduce the negative face of

a participant when an FTA was offered, thus meeting the face needs of others. This is also

illustrated in the following two examples.

Example 60
> Hi everybody,for me love is blind .Love is a natural feeling that every person
> has.Actually i dont agree with **taurus** that we must put 100% trust on our the
> person we love. How to trust people 100% **lah man**. . .

<div align="right">(MM12 B7:99-101)</div>

Example 61
> **taurus**: as for my opinion i think u're being too loyal without thinking when u're in
> love.u cant trust a person 100%, its perfect figure, n no one is perfect**lah my fren!** .
> . .

<div align="right">(FM8 B7:117- 118)</div>

In Example 60 and 61, the *'lah'*, particles and in-group markers *'man'* and *'my fren'* appear

to function as hedging devices. This implies that the participants were concerned for the

feelings of others when they performed an FTA. This could eventually bring about rapport

among the participants in the blog. Table 6.3 shows the participants' perception of blogging

to promote camaraderie as revealed in Questionnaire II.

Table 6.3: Perception of Blogging to Promote Camaraderie

*Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
43	I feel other bloggers are my friends even though I have never seen them face-to-face.	0	2 (4.8)	3 (7.3)	**32 (78.0)**	**4 (9.8)**	100
47	I realize that blogging widens my circle of online friends that come from different social background.	0	1 (2.4)	5 (12.2)	**28 (68.3)**	**7 (17.1)**	100

As seen in Table 6.3, the response elicited from Question 43 shows that more than 80% of the participants considered bloggers as friends. Additionally, the response from Question 47, show that the participants considered blogging widen their circle of online friends from different social background (Agree: 68.3% n=28). This suggests that in this study, there were elements of camaraderie in blog forums that could foster friendship in the context of different ethnic groups.

6.5 Intercultural Networking Strategies

As Kramsch (1998) defines intercultural communication as communication between people from different ethnic, social or gendered cultures, this study views intercultural communication as communication between different social, political and cultural groups. This is in view that in virtual intercultural communication identities of people such as their ethnicity and societal status are absent (Raymond, 2003). This section aims to present the social networking strategies that encouraged intercultural interaction among the participants in this study. It was revealed in Questionnaire II the participants were conscious on how to blog in an intercultural context. The responses of the participants are listed in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Perception of Blogging in Intercultural Context

Qs No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)	Total n (%)
42	I think that crisis can occur when bloggers are not sensitive of each other's culture.	0	1	2 (4.9)	25 (61.0)	13 (31.7)	100
48	Fellow bloggers have to respect each other's different culture.	0	0	4 (9.8)	20 (48.8)	17 (41.5)	100
59	Different cultures is one aspect that makes every blogger very careful of what they say when they blog.	0	2 (4.9)	5 (12.2)	27 (65.9)	7 (17.1)	100

*Questions   N=41

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As is seen in the above table, the responses to Question 59 show that more than 80% of the bloggers agreed that blogger were very careful in blog forums. In addition, the participants thought that crisis could occur when bloggers were not sensitive of each other's culture (Agree: 61.0% n=25). It was also revealed in the interview that the interviewees controlled their choice of words used in blog forums.

It was also revealed in the interview that the interviewees controlled their choice of words used in blog forums. This is indicated in the responses to Question 14 of the interview.

Question 14: When choosing how to respond to the issues, what did you consider about your choice of words? Tick (√) the top 3 from the list given	
The sensitivity of the topic that was discussed.	100% (n=13)
The feelings of other bloggers.	69% (n=9)
The race and culture of the bloggers.	38% (n=5)
The background knowledge of who the bloggers were.	23% (n=3)

As seen in the above responses, 100% of the interviewees indicated that they monitored their choice of words due to the sensitivity of the topic that was discussed in the blog. In addition, the interviewees indicated they considered the feelings (69%) race and culture (38%) of other bloggers on their choice of words in blog forums. This finding shows that the manner participants use language in blog forums, fostered intercultural interaction.

In Question 15 of the interview, the interviewees were asked if their language or topic of discussion would be different if bloggers consisted of one ethnic group. The response of the interviewees is reflected in Extracts 1 and 2.

Question 15: Would the language you use or topic of discussion be different if all the bloggers consisted of only one race? If yes, can you explain why?

Extract 1

> It will be different of course. . .
>
> (MC Interviewee 1: Line 32)

Extract 2

> . . . **it will be different** because I don have to think about the race of another person . . .
>
> (MK Interviewee 2: Lines 81 – 82)

As is seen in Extracts 1 and 2, the interviewees indicated their language would be different if blog forums consisted of one ethnic group. This implies that the interviewees controlled their language and topic of discussion in an intercultural context. This can be further substantiated with the following two extracts.

Extract 3

> . . . I think I will be **more careful** to talk about religion. .
>
> (MB Interviewee 5: Line 195)

Extract 4

> . . . **I have to be careful** when another race is watching what I am saying. . .
>
> (MC Interviewee 1: Line 33)

The interviewees in Extracts 3 and 4 indicated that they would be more *'careful'* about what they said in an intercultural context. Additionally as indicated in Extracts 5 – 8, the interviewees agreed they were careful because other participants   might not *'like it'* and there could be a *'fight'*.

Extract 5

> . . . Some **people cannot take it**-when we chat about their race.
>
> (MK Interviewee 2: Line 82)

Extract 6

> . . . what we say in private cannot be said in public . . . people **don like to hear it**
> (MC Interviewee 1: Lines 34 – 35)

Extract 7

> . . . I think other **people will not like it**
>
> (MB Interviewee 5: Line 196)

Extract 8

> . . . I think there **can be a flight**
>
> (FB Interviewee 4: Line 158.

As is seen in the above extracts, this study shows that social presence could influence the way blog participants used language and discussed blog issues in an intercultural context. This study revealed that the social networking strategies in the data encouraged intercultural interaction though the use of:

(a)   avoidance strategy;

(b)   inter-cultural strategy; and

(c)   politeness strategy

6.5.1 Avoidance Strategy

This study found that the participants used avoidance strategy when they could have been more direct in blog forums. The use of avoidance strategy could be related to Grice (1975) cooperative principle as blog participants seem to regulate their interactive practices in view

that the blog forums consisted of people from different ethnic groups. The data revealed that participants used avoidance strategy by utilizing the following tactics.

(a)   by expressing reluctance to comment

(b)   by indicating indirectness

(c)   by using indicators not to like a topic or ideas

Tactic 1: By expressing reluctance to comment

It must be noted here that issues on race and religion were not among the blog issues in the present study. However, the data revealed that participants raised these issues in the cause of discussion in blog forums. This study found that when participants brought up sensitive issues (e.g. race, religion), other participants were reluctant to give their comments.

The following example is from a posting on the blog issue *'Malaysian Identity'*. In the issue it was suggested that mixed marriages could help to bring about true Malaysian identity. The issue drew responses from the participants that mixed marriages involved the conversion of one's religion.

Example 62
. . . Hmm..**about marriage**..Hmm..**I am afraid** to comment on this because it involve our **religions** . . . <u>sorry to say to all of you my</u> <u>Muslim, Buddha and Christian</u> friends . . .
<div align="right">(MK26 B23:115-117)</div>

As is seen in Example 62, the participant seems to indicate his fear (e.g. *'I am afraid'*) of posting his view *'about marriage'* because the issue involved religion and is considered

sensitive. It appears that the participant apologized (e.g. '*sorry to say to all of you')* due to the awareness that any comments given on the issues would involve people from the '*Muslim, Buddhist and Christian'* faiths. The use of avoidance strategy is also illustrated in Example 63.

Example 63
. . . I like this topic but **I cant comment much its sensitive for me**. . . about the changing religion thing i cant comment much . . .

(FB12 B23:128-13)

In Example 63, the participant appears reluctant *(e.g. 'I cant comment much)* to give her views '*about the changing religion thing'*. The reluctance of the participant in Example 63 could be seen as an avoidance strategy in view that the issue involved '*religion'*. This shows that the blog participant appears to avoid expressing her view on religious matters as it can be sensitive in the Malaysian context (see Chapter Two).

Tactic 2: By indicating indirectness

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), indirectness is a form of politeness strategy. The data of the study revealed that indirectness came in the form of general statements and use of words that could not specify, identify or disclose information about the person the participants were referring to. This could be in line with the sensitivity of certain matters among people who were from different social or political backgrounds. This is illustrated in Example 64 from a posting on the blog issue '*What is Happening to Malaysia'*. The blog issue was on the dilapidated condition of the public buildings and amenities in Malaysia which usually comes under the jurisdiction of a specific minister such as the

Works Minister. The issue was reported in the local newspaper during the time of this study.

Example 64
      . . . You know ***this person** wasted the tax payers money...ya..we know all
      jalanraya [roads] and all building collapsing in Malaysia . . .
                                                                              (FB11 B9:43- 45)

In Example 64, the participant appears to have used the expression '**this person'* to avoid indicating the person that is being referred to when in fact, the participant could directly indicate the person(s) or the institution referred to such as the Works Minister or the Municipal Council. This could be seen as a way the participant used avoidance strategy.

The data shows that blog participants also used other types of expression to indicate indirectness as revealed in Examples 65 - 67 from the postings on the blog issue '*What is Happening to Malaysia'*.

Example 65
      well,it's not surpising that the buildings are damaged and dirty. **Whoever** is
      responsible must maintain public amenities like park, buildings etc . . .
                                                                              (FM8 B9:7- 8)
Example 66
      You know it has been happening. You see **some people**, probably the minister
      whos responsible on a project may probably pass the project to other contractors . .
      . . I don know but it could be true.
                                                                              (MC15 B9:72-76)
Example 67
      . . . it's so sad when **certain people** do not they job well, others will suffer. . .

                                                                              (FM8 B9:10)

As is seen in Examples 65 – 67, the expressions 'whoever' *'some people' 'someone'* and *'certain people'* do not specify the persons or the institution referred to when in fact they could be mentioned in the blog postings. Though the participants in Examples 65 – 67

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could use these expressions because they **genuinely did not know** the persons they were indicating, nevertheless, the expressions appear indirect in order to avoid any negative feelings directed to any individuals responsible for maintaining Malaysian public amenities. The use of indirectness is also illustrated in the following example from a posting on the blog issue 'Sex Education'.

Example 68
> i like that.."sex education among us" because lots of people out there still don't know about the kind of activity.. they just *"**hantam2 jak"** *[to hit aimlessly]*. . .
>   (MK25 B30:154-155)

In the example the phrase *'hantam2 jak',* which literally means 'to hit at something aimlessly' is a form of indirectness to indicate sexual intercourse. This seems to show positive politeness as a direct reference could be sensitive to some blog participants.

Tactic 3: By using indicators not to like topic or ideas

The data revealed that the participants avoided some issues by indicating they did not like the topics or ideas in the blog forums. This seems to be a more direct way of using the avoidance strategy. Example 69 is from a posting on the blog issue *'Is it not Hypocrisy?'* The blog issue is about the hypocritical attitude of people.

Example 69
> Hey…if you all say Malaysian are hypocrites, you are also hypocrites. <u>I **don like** this topic</u>..I am not hypocrite . . .
>   (FC16 B15:66- 67)

In Example 69, the participants indicated that he did not like the blog issue and therefore appears to refrain from commenting on the topic. As mentioned in Example 69, the

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participant does not like the topic because being a Malaysian he would be considered a hypocrite if he commented on the issue. Similarly, in Examples 70 and 71 below the expressions *'I don't want to comment'* and *'sensitive issue'* appear to indicate the participants may have avoided commenting on the blog issues the way they wanted for security and sensitivity reasons.

Example 70
    . . . I **don't want to comment** much on this because my words can get me caught under the ISA *[Internal Security Act]* . . .

                                                                                    (MC18 B9:5)

Example 71
    . . . this gay thing is **a sensitive issue** to me...haha. . .

                                                                                    (MM9 B2:185)

In Question 23 (open-ended) of Questionnaire II, the participants were asked to list three issues that they would try to avoid because they thought they were too sensitive to be discussed in blog forums. Table 6.5 shows the responses to Question 23. The categories of issues were assigned by the researcher based on the responses given by the participant.

Table 6.5: Sensitive Issues and Categories

Categories	Sensitive Issues	No. n (%)
Race, Religion and Customs	1. Degrading any religion, race or customs. 2. Promoting the success of a race or religious group 3. Food consumed by certain race	n (100%)
Politics and policies	1. The implementation of government policies. 2. The preferences and facilities provided by the government to certain ethnic groups. 3. The weakness of the government at implementing certain economic policies. 4. The special rights of the indigenous community (Bumiputera)	n (78.0%)
Sex	Sexual intercourse or sexual connotations	n (56.1%)
Personality and Lifestyles	1. Personal lives of others 2. Family 3. The corrupt practices of certain individuals background	n (7.3)

 N=41

As is seen in Table 6.5, all the participants (100%) indicated their sensitivity to race, religion and customs of others in blog forums. In view that intercultural competence defined as participants' awareness to engage in behaviour perceived to be appropriate and effective (Collier, 1989). This study found that the avoidance strategy identified is related to intercultural communicative competence as the participants in this study appear to be aware that sensitive issues might raise difficult feelings and conflict may occur if they do not conform to different cultures in this study. As such blog participants did not like discussing issues which was deemed sensitive. Therefore, the data of the present study suggests that avoidance of sensitive issues is an inherent part of social networking strategies for intercultural interaction.

6.5.2 Inter-cultural Strategy

In this study, inter-cultural strategies refer to networking practices that promoted understanding of each other's culture. The data revealed that the participants appear to promote understanding when they inform each other of their cultural practices or when they agreed with one another. The analysis of the data found that participants used inter-cultural strategy:

    (a)   by informing others of their cultural practices;

    (b)   by using alternative linguistic forms of greetings

    (c)   by glossing

    (d)   by informing others the incompatibility of some social practices discussed in blog forums

Tactic 1: By informing others of their cultural practices

The data revealed that the participants informed others of their cultural practices. In doing so, they got others to see their cultural practices. This is illustrated in the following two examples from the postings on the blog issue *'Gay Marriage'*.

Example 72a
> We all know that the gay couple, Elton John&David Furnish had got married. . . **In the islamic rule, this is wrong and is prohibited by Allah**. . .
>
> (FM6 B2:47; 51-54)

Example 72b
> oh my god!!it is very disgusting . . . **it is not only sin in islam but in all religion** . . .
>
> (MK25 B2:136-137)

In Example 72a the participant informed that gay marriage is prohibited in Islam. In Example 72b, the blog participant informed that gay marriage is *'not only sin in islam but in all religion'*. In doing so, the participants appear to inform each other of their cultural beliefs that could promote the understanding of each other's cultural beliefs. This can be seen as an inter-cultural tactic. This argument is substantiated with the following examples 73a – 73d from the postings on the blog issue *'The Hantu (ghostly) Affair'*.

Example 73a
> . . . But, **in the Muslim religion** we have to believe that there is a world which we can't see. Believe it or not i have not seen a 'hantu' or 'ghost' myself!. . .
>
> (MB2 B3:26-27)

Example 73b
> as a **muslim** we have been taught that there are others **creature that we cant see..that is syaitan** *[satan]* and genie . . .
>
> (MB1 B3:130-132)

Example 73c
   . . .   **Every religion in this world talk about satan and ghost.** Just because we can't see them it doesn't mean that they do not exist. The same goes with God, have you seen God? So why do you believe in 'Him'? Doesn't God exist???? . . .

<div align="right">(MK22 B3:109-113)</div>

Example 73d
   ok...hello everyone...For me, I believe that 'ghost' exist..**jus like muslims, xtians [*Christians*] also believe in ghost.**   There is good ghost like holy sprit and bad ghost like satan. But not all of us can see by our naked eyes . . .

<div align="right">(FC18 B3:114-116)</div>

In Example 73a and 73b, the participants informed others that the Muslims believe in the existence of ghosts. Similarly, in Examples 73c and 73d, participants informed that *'every religion in this world'* and 'xtians *also believe in ghost'*.   In doing so, it appears that they informed   each   other   of   the   universality   of   some   cultural   beliefs,   they   promote understanding on the discussion of the blog issue on the existence of 'ghosts'. This can be seen as an inter-cultural tactic.

The findings of the study also show that the participants informed others that some practices were pertinent to some cultural groups. In doing so, they got others to understand them in the discussion of the blog issue.. Examples 74 and 75 are from the postings on the blog issue *'Cats and Dogs are PETs!!!'*

Example 74
   . . .   dogs and cats are different animal but they are still pet.Yes, of course **as muslim we're not allowed to touch dogs because of religious issues**. . .
<div align="right">(FM6 B12:49-50)</div>

Example 75
   . . . **i'm a muslim and i don't touch dogs** but it doesn't mean that i hate dogs . . .
<div align="right">(FB10 B12:9-10)</div>

In Examples 74 and 75, the participants informed others that as Muslims they are not allowed to *'touch dogs'*. Thus, by informing, they get others to see their cultural beliefs in

the discussion of the blog issues and thus this could be seen as an inter-cultural tactic. This is also illustrated in the following example from a posting on the blog issue *'Bangsa Malaysia' [Malaysian Race].*

Example 76
      I don eat beef cos I am Buddhist . . .

                              (MC16 B11:48-49)

In Example 76, the participant informed that Buddhists do not eat beef and this appears to inform others of his cultural beliefs; this can help others to understand the participant in blog forums. This too can be seen as an inter-cultural tactic.

Tactic 2: By using alternative linguistic forms of greetings

This study found that when blog participants used alternative linguistic forms such as to greet, this could be seen as a polite way of addressing participants from different ethnic groups and hence encourage intercultural interaction among them. The following Examples 77 and 78 show the case.

Example 77
      . . . This is my own opinon. If you do not agree with me it's up to you...**A'kum and good evening**…...BYE...

                              (FB13 B1:310-311)

Example 78
      . . . However.There are also so many disadvantages of handphone and they are as what johnathan have mentioned.okay..that's all la k.hahaha... **bye2> Choy kin.**

                              (MK26 B6:157-159)

As seen in Example 77 the greetings *'A'kum' (greetings)* and *'good evening'* appear to be addressed to two different ethnic groups; one from the muslim culture and the other from

non-muslim culture. Similarly, in Example 78, the Kadazan-Dusun participant used the expression *'bye'* to indicate leave taking to all blog participants and *'Choy kin'* especially to the Chinese. Hence, such greeting forms appear to show respect for others and hence could be seen as an inter-cultural tactic.

Tactic 3: By glossing

The data also revealed that blog participants participants gave a short definition, explanation, or translation of a word or phrase that may be unfamiliar to others. Example 79 is from a posting on the blog issue 'Dirty Habits'.

Example 79

> . . . so i think malaysian are just like what chinese say **"wu yao ke jiu"**.
> It means there is no medicine that can treat them . . .
>
> (FC20 B20:55-56)

In Example 79, the participant translated the Chinese expression *"wu yao ke jiu"* so that it could be understood by non-Chinese participants. This appears to facilitate understanding as well as to promote intercultural interaction in blog forums. In addition, the data shows that blog participants translated words synonymous to certain ethnic groups in the course of discussing blog issues. This is illustrated in the following examples.

Example 80

> Truely i also think that immigrants people are more hardworking than us (local people)..For example, the Kadazan people like to ***aramaiti** (drink tapai and enjoy), But why should we feel jealous with them..We should take them as our role model . . .
>
> (MK25 B5:129-132)
>
> **aramaiti = a Kadazan-Dusun word literally to mean 'to enjoy', let's party' or 'good luck'*

Example 81

> Yeah, we see many metro guys nowadays who dress more girlish than girls, and make up more beautiful than ladies. (Don't know when they going to wear **telekung-headscarf**) . . .

<div align="right">(FM8 B26:59-61)</div>

telekung = Malay word to mean prayer outfit for Muslim women

Example 82

> . . . I know what did you mean by that. Chinese call it ***"kiasu"** or **selfish**..haha.. ya sometimes we have to be kiasu also but, this is tollay a different situation!

<div align="right">(MK26 B29:105-107)</div>

kiasu = Hokkein Chinese word literally to mean 'fear of losing'

In Examples 80 – 82 words such as *'aramaiti' 'telekung'* and *'kiasu'* are expressions that belong to certain ethnic groups and by explaining their meanings it appears that the participants ensured their intended meaning is understood by others. This too can be seen as a way participants promoted intercultural interaction in blog forums.

Tactic 3: By informing others the incompatibility of some social practices discussed in blog forums

The data revealed that participants also let others know of social practices that were not compatible to their own social pratices. The following example is from a posting on the blog issue *'Is it not hypocrisy?'* .

Example 83

> . . . <u>**We** are not a country like America where **we** can say whatever **we** want and whenever **we** want</u>. Here in Malaysia, **we** have **ethnic morales and faith** which we must hold on to . . .

<div align="right">(MC18 B15:12-13)</div>

As is seen in Example 83, the inclusive pronoun *'we'* appears to inform others that they were not in *'America where we can say whatever we want and whenever we want'*. The

expression appears to inform others that Malaysians need to hold on to some principles such as *'ethnic morales and faith'*. As such this can be seen as a way to promote the cultural understanding held by blog participants in comparison to non-Malaysian. The use of in-group markers such as 'we' 'our' and 'us' bring about social identity, group memberships that can invoke group solidarity (Mohd. Ali, 2000; Johnson, 1994). This idea is also illustrated in Example 84 from a posting on the blog issue *'Sex Education'*.

Example 84
> i think sex education not suitable in this country. why? because **we** have religion that provide us education to do good things. **We don't like to talk about sex openly like in western countries** . . .

(MM12 B30:1-3)

In Example 84 the participants stated that talking *'about sex openly'* is not acceptable in the social environment the participant came from. Therefore, this could serve to inform others that he may find it offensive if sex is discussed openly in blog forums. Thus this seems like an inter-cultural tactic as the participant informed others to avoid discussing sex openly. The idea in Examples 85 and 86 is also illustrated in the following examples from the postings on the blog issue *'Gay Marriage'*.

Example 85
> **Gay marriage**.....I think this thing should not happen la because **its not our culture** for a man to marry man. no benefit to them and also to the society. . .

(MK24 B2:216-217)

Example 86
> . . . In the USA, **gay marriages** are considered and approved by the governmentand their religion. But **it cannot happen in Malaysia** . . .

(FC15 B2:27-29)

In Examples 85 and 86, the participants informed others that *gay marriages'* were not accepted in the Malaysian socio-cultural environment. Therefore, this seems to set the

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background for others to understand them if they find the discussion on gay marriage offensive. Thus this could be seen as an inter-cultural tactic.

6.5.3 Politeness Strategy

This study found that blog participants seem to maintain both the negative and positive face of others that encouraged intercultural interaction. There is striking evidence in the data that participants appear to have used the following politeness strategies:

    (a)   Positive Politeness Strategy

    (b)   Negative Politeness Strategy

    (c)   Off Record Strategy

6.5.3.1 Positive Politeness Strategy

Positive politeness refers to the desire of the participants to gain the approval of others by portraying a positive self image or personality (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In positive politeness, redress is directed to the addressee's positive face so that the person's need is liked and understood. The present study revealed that the participants appear to have used the following positive politeness tactics:

    (a)   by expressing awareness of the cultural needs of others

    (b)   by explaining views when criticized

Tactic1: By expressing awareness of the cultural needs of others

The data revealed that blog participants seem to indicate awareness of the cultural needs of others. When this happens, participants seem to indicate their concern for others and this

could be seen as a politeness tactic. Examples 87 and 88 are from the postings on the blog

issue *'Bangsa Malaysia [Malaysian Race]'*

Example 87
> . . . As we see during any festive season in our country, many races are willing to gather around to celebrate it, eventhough it is not their culture. **We also cook halal food that everybody can eat.** Why? because we're living in the same country. . .
>
> (MM8 B11:32-34)

Example 88
> . . . We must be sensitive to other people. Like me-in-me said, **we also cook halal food for everybody to eat**. We can achieve it by celebrating all festivals without considering the race or religions of people . . .
>
> (MK27 B11:40-42)

In Examples 87 and 88, the participants seem to be aware that not all types of food were palatable to people from other cultures. The expression *'We also cook halal food that everybody can eat'* shows this. In using the expression, it appears that the participants acknowledged that certain foods were prohibited in other cultures and this can be seen as a positive politeness tactic.

Tactic 2: By explaining views when criticized

Another way, by which participants seem to save their positive face, is when they explained their views when they were criticized. This usually happened when the criticism offered was noticed by the concerned participant. Examples 89a – 89c are a chain of postings on the blog issue *'Malaysian Identity'*.

Example 89a
> **close all chinese, indian and methodist schools,** let us all learn under one roof. that way we are all united.
>
> (MC18 B23:44-45)

Example 89b
>   Hei theskem, let us **close all the chinese, tamil and methodist schools and**
>   **open up more sekolah agama rakyat** *[community religious schools]*, right?. . .
>
>   (FC20 B23:52-53)
Example 89c
>   .   .   .   **ur taking my comment negatively..okay..** let's look at indonesia.. and
>   thailand.. one language.. one type of school.. one national spirit.. the result..
>   asimilation or unity among all ethnics.. including chinese and indians speak the
>   national languages..when u cling to ur ethnic origins.. u create this racist spirit. . .
>   (MC18 B23:73-77)

In Example 89a, the participant suggested that in forming the Malaysian identity, all

Chinese, Indian and Methodist schools should be closed so that people could learn under

one roof.   In Example 89b, the participant appears cynical that by closing down these

schools, more *'community religious schools'* could be opened.   The act of positive

politeness could be seen in Example 89c, when the participant explained that his earlier

comment in Example 89a was taken negatively. This is positive politeness as the participant

explained his view so that his comment would be positively received by the participant in

Example 89b. This could minimize any misunderstanding and maintain friendship and thus

foster intercultural interaction among the participants in the study.

6.5.3.2 Negative Politeness Strategy

Negative politeness is the acknowledgment that people have freedom of action and others

should not intrude on their freedom (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Negative politeness is

redressive action directed to the addressee's negative face so that the person's freedom of

action is unhindered and his attention unimpeded. The findings in the data revealed that the

participants appear to have used the following negative politeness tactics:

(a)   by apologizing

(b)   by using counter arguments

(c)   by questioning

Tactic 1: By apologizing

According to Brown and Levinson (1978) when a person apologized, it served as an explicit admission that the participants had threatened the addressee's negative face (i.e., freedom of action and freedom from imposition). The data revealed that blog participants usually apologized if they appeared to have impinged upon the negative face of others. Example 90 is from a posting on blog issue *'Battle of the Sexes'*.

Example 90
> **Sorry** <u>i don really agree with you</u> **me-in-me.** Yes i do agree that "the muslim view that women should knows that all of their body part is "fully" Haram.." of cuz haram..but **what i want to say here** is that if your wife's muscles are more solid+big than you you will "habis" *[finish]* **right?** . . .

<div align="right">(MK26 B18:67-70)</div>

*only literal translation because it is culturally embedded

In Example 90 the participant apologized to the nicknamed participant *'me-in-me'* by using the expression *'sorry'*. This appears to be a direct form of apology for impinging upon the negative face of the participant and the expressions *'don really agree'* and *'what i want to say here'* appear to soften the impingement. In addition, the question *'right?'* seems to seek the approval of the nicknamed participant and this appears to offset any negative feelings the participants may have imposed.

The data revealed that blog participants usually apologized if they performed a face threatening act (FTA). This is also illustrated in Example 91 from a posting on the blog issue *'English a Malaysian Language'*.

Example 91
> I strongly disagree if english becomes a Malaysian language. I really   dont understand what Naz is thinking about**. I'm sorry to say this Naz**. English is not the best language . . .
>
> (MM12 B14:27-29)

In Example 91, the participant apologized for not agreeing with the nicknamed participant *'Naz'* that English was not the best language.   However, this study found that blog participants also did not specify to whom an apology was directed. When this occurs, it appears that the apology was directed to the blog community as illustrated in Example 92 from a posting on the blog issue *'The Hantu Affair [Ghostly]'*

Example 92
> .   .   . **im sorry** but **i dont believe anyone** who claim that they dont believe the existence of ghost....**sorry.**
>
> (FC17 B3:55-60)

In Example 92, the expression *'i dont believe anyone'* can be seen as directed to any blog members. This view can be substantiated with the following example from the posting on the blog issue *'Beautiful People'*.

Example 93
> .   .   . Some beautiful women can be materialistic. **I'm sorry** to say this. When you become poor they will leave you.
>
> (MM11 B4:74-76)

In Example 93, the participant appears to be aware that the view *'Some beautiful women can be materialistic'* may offend others and therefore offered the expression *'I'm sorry'* that appears to be directed to all blog members.

Tactic 2: By using counter arguments

The data also showed that when participants use counter arguments, this can be seen as negative politeness tactic. The following Examples 94a and 94b from the postings on the blog issue *'House Husband'* reveal this.

Example 94a
> i think it is a good idea..**in this modern world anything could happen such as househusband**.. why cant men do all the house work..teaching them to take care of the house and kids . . .

<div align="right">(MC16 B17:17-19)</div>

Example 94b
> **I know we live in the modern world** but, we can't take this things easy! <u>Muslim religion teach us to be responsible. Men have to look for money </u>and wife should work at house . . .

<div align="right">(MB2 B17:44-46)</div>

In Example 94a the participant stated '*in this modern world anything could happen such as househusband'*.   The use of counter arguments as a politeness tactic could be seen in Example 94b in which the participant used the expression *'I know'* to mean he agrees with the participant in Example 94a.   However, the participant in Example 94b argued in the underlined bit that the view given in Example 94a was not acceptable in the *'Muslim religion'* and therefore it was not proper for men to become *'house husbands'*.   The use of counter argument could possibly offset any negative feelings blog participants may have in view of the disagreement.   This is also illustrated in the following examples from the postings on the blog issue *'House Husband'* .

Example 95a
> a househusband? <u>i think this is not ideal in man's world</u> . In **islam** . . . **man is the leader in a family** instituion. . .

<div align="right">(FM5 B17:39-40)</div>

Example 95b
　　　.　.　.　**People know** that man is a leader in a house, **but it doesnt show that** man cannot **be a leader when he stays at home**!　.　.　.

<div align="right">(FC14 B17:50-52)</div>

Example 95c
　　　.　.　. By being house husbands, **it doesn't mean that** they fail to **be a good leader in their family**.　.　.

<div align="right">(FB13 B17:106-108)</div>

In Example 95a, the participant gave her view that in her cultural background *'islam'*, men are *'the leader in a family'* and therefore being a house husband *'is not ideal in man's world'*.　The use of counter argument as negative politeness is seen in Examples 95b and 95c in the expressions *'people know'*, *'but it doesnt show that'* and *'it doesn't mean that'* that men could still become leaders if they become *'House Husbands'*.　These expressions appear to be a redressive action directed to the participant's face in Example 95a so that his expression appears unhindered.

Tactic 4: By questioning

The data also revealed that participants used the questioning tactic as a form of politeness tactic. Example 96 is a posting from the blog issue *'House Husband'*.

Example 96
　　　.　.　. I only agree when the wife (women) work because to support her husband and not to be responsible to the family finance. **Do your religion teach you to be this?** To all men around Malaysia please don't become house husband because this is against the teaching of our religion .　.　.

<div align="right">(MK19 B17:119-122)</div>

In Example 96, the participant posted the questions '*Do your religion teach you to be this?*'. It appears that the participant compelled others to answer the questions. Therefore, by asking

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questions the participant appears tactful at getting others to accept the views given by him. This could be seen as another politeness tactic. This is also illustrated in Example 97.

Example 97
> Hello everyone..It's quite interesting topic..For me, it is ok for men to become 'House Husbands'. **It was his choice isn't it?!** . . .

<div align="right">(FB13 B17:106-107)</div>

In Example 97, the tag question '*It was his choice isn't it?!'* seems to control others diplomatically to answer 'yes'. This could be seen as a politeness tactic as the participant appears not to intrude into the freedom of others into agreeing on the topic.

6.5.3.3 Off Record Strategy

Off record strategies uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. In this strategy, participants are indirect and do not given one clear intention and therefore are open to a number of defensible interpretations (Brown and Levinson. 1978). In doing so, the participants seem to have left the interpretation of their views to other blog participants. This could be a way the participants take the pressure out of them. Example 98 is from a posting on the blog issue '*Is it not Hypocrisy'*.

Example 98
> . . . We can take examples from the path like the May 13th tragedy and and the Kampung Pandan incident, where clashes between races occured. This solemnly happened because **certain people** had crossed line. They touch a **few matters** that weren't meant to be touch. . .

<div align="right">(MC18 B15:14-18)</div>

In Example 98, the participant seems to use an off record strategy by not pointing out the people or the matter that he was referring to. The participant did not identify the people or the

matter by using the expression *'certain people'* and *'few matters'*. Therefore the participants had to interpret the expression based on their background knowledge. This could be in view of the sensitivity of the infamous racial riot in Malaysia on 13 May 1969. This is also illustrated in the following examples from postings on the blog issue *'Give Peace a Chance'*.

Example 99
> ya..nowadays,it's a serious world among **mxxxxx** countries. We hear war kill many innocent people, babies, children, young and old..all people are facing trauma . . .
>
> (MK21 B22:104-105)

Example 100
> I am sorry about this, but you notice that this war is among people who belong to **certain faith** in the middle east? Weel, think about this.
>
> (MC18 B22:32-33)

In Examples 99 and 100, off record strategy is seen when the participant appears not to point out the people they were referring to by masking the word '*mxxxxx*' and with the use of the expression *'certain faith'*.   This may indicate that the participants had left others to interpret the masked word and the expression *'certain faith'* based on their background knowledge. This view is also illustrated in Example 101 from a posting on the blog issue *'Should Housewives be Paid Salary'*.

Example 101
> . . . but sometimes, there. . . are **certain people** that not fair to the housewives. **sorry** if anyone uncomfortable reading this, many cases reported that housewives were abandoned after divorce and how do they live after that?. . .
>
> (MC16 B31: 31-33)

In Example 101, the apology 'sorry' seems to show that the participant felt uncomfortable giving her views and thus the expression *certain people'* does not give a clear indication of the people being referred to. Therefore, the interpretation of the expression is left to the participants.

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6.6 Frequency of Intercultural Networking Strategies in Blog Forums

Table 6.6 presents the frequency of networking strategies that aided intercultural interaction as found in the postings on the 24 blog issues used in this chapter of analysis. In view that texts are structured and organized in form, content and structure (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004), each segments of the blog postings are categorized according to functional moves or purpose served by a particular segment of the conversational discourse (Arcidiacono, 2007).   Later the categories were counted manually with the aid of Microsoft word for their frequencies of occurrence (refer to Appendix I).

Table 6.6: Frequency of Strategies for Intercultural Interaction

Social Networking Strategies	Malay	Bajau	Kadazan-Dusun	Chinese	Total	Distribution (%)
Avoidance Strategy	4 (28.6%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (14.8%)	4 (28.6%)	14	23.7
Inter-cultural Strategy	7 (35.0%)	5 (25.0%)	4 (20.0%)	4 (20.0%)	20	33.9
Politeness Strategy	7 (28.0%)	4 (16.0%)	5 (20%)	9 (36.0%)	25	**42.4**
Distribution of Strategies	18 (30.5%)	12 (20.3%)	12 (20.3%)	17 (28.8%)	**59**	100

As is seen in Table 6.6, this study has identified three social networking strategies namely; avoidance strategy, inter-cultural strategy, and politeness strategy that aided intercultural interaction in blog forums. These social networking strategies are realized in the 59 tactics identified in the data. As this study recorded the highest number of tactics (25:42.4%) in the use of politeness strategy, it implies that the participants in this study used more politeness strategy than other types of strategies in blog forums. The analysis also revealed

that the social networking strategies that encouraged intercultural interaction are almost equally distributed among the ethnic groups in this study.

6.7 Summary

As identity is not stable in online interaction, this study regards intercultural communication as communication between people from different social, political and cultural groups.   This chapter identified social networking strategies that are generally used by Malaysians to promote camaraderie and intercultural interaction.   In the use of camaraderie tactics, participants marked each other as members who shared a common background with the use of personal deixis (e.g 'everybody'), in-group identity markers (e.g. us Malaysian), inclusive diexis (e.g. 'our') and address forms (e.g. brother). In addition, they supported each other's view and were interactively involved with one another, in addition to saving each other's face. The social networking strategies that promoted intercultural interaction are summarized in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Summary of Intercultural Networking Strategies and Tactics

Intercultural Networking Strategies	Tactics
Avoidance Strategy	by expressing reluctance to comment by indicating indirectness by using indicators not to like a topic or ideas
Inter-cultural Strategy	by informing others of their cultural practices; by using of alternative linguistic forms of greetings by facilitating understanding of words or phrases by informing others the incompatibility of social practices discussed in blog forums

Politeness Strategy	**Positive Politeness Strategy**
	  by expressing awareness of the cultural needs of others
	  by explaining views when criticized
	Negative Politeness Strategy
	  by apologizing
	  by using counter arguments
	  by questioning
	Off Record Strategy
	by leaving the interpretation to bloggers' background knowledge

Table 6.7 shows that social networking strategies that encouraged intercultural interaction through the use of avoidance strategy, inter-cultural strategy and politeness strategy. The present study found that social networking strategies that aided intercultural interaction are used by all the participants in this study.