

**INTERACTIONAL PATTERNS OF CHINESE SPEAKERS OF  
ENGLISH IN GROUP INTERACTION**

**LI LI**

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**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

Name of Candidate: **Li Li**  
Registration/Matric No: **TGB110079**  
Name of Degree: **Masters of English as a Second Language**  
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Field of Study **Discourse analysis**

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## ABSTRACT

Group discussion as a speech event is commonly used by young adults in various contexts throughout the process of tertiary studies. With the increasing number of such young adults from China pursuing their tertiary level education in Malaysia, this study seeks to look at how these foreign language users of English carry out group discussions, specifically focusing on their interactional patterns. In particular, the aims of the study are: (1) to investigate the features and the politeness strategies used in opening and closing sequences in group discussions; (2) to explore the speech produced by the Chinese speakers and ascertain if it reflects the characteristics of some Chinese cultural values; and (3) to identify gender differences and similarities in naturally-occurring speech in the group interactions between male and female Chinese speakers. This study is conducted at two universities in Malaysia with a total number of 12 postgraduate Chinese students who are speakers of English as respondents.

An analysis of the findings indicates that the sequential structures of the opening and closing sequences are distinct. They have some common features but differ in only some aspects such as sequential structure. The analysis also reveals that communication characteristics of the Chinese speakers such as being polite, implicit and listener-centred are evident in the opening and closing sequences. This implies that the Chinese cultural values still exist among the young adults. The gender difference in language use from this small sample group is noted to be wider in the same-gender group discussion as compared to the ones in the homogenous groups.

This study has provided some insights into the interactional patterns of Chinese speakers of English in group discussions at tertiary level and although the findings cannot be

generalizable, it is hoped that some aspects of the discourse features identified may be utilised to improve communication among such speakers in group.

## ABSTRAK

Perbincangan kumpulan sebagai ‘speech event’ biasanya digunakan oleh pelajar dalam pelbagai konteks sepanjang proses pengajian di peringkat ijazah tinggi. Dengan jumlah yang semakin meningkat, kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana pelajar ijazah tinggi dari negeri Cina yang melanjutkan pelajaran peringkat tinggi di Malaysia menggunakan bahasa asing iaitu Bahasa Inggeris untuk menjalankan perbincangan kumpulan, terutamanya pada corak interaksi mereka. Khususnya, matlamat kajian ini ialah: (1) untuk menyiasat ciri-ciri dan strategi kesopanan yang digunakan dalam urutan membuka dan menutup dalam perbincangan kumpulan; (2) untuk meneroka perbualan yang dihasilkan oleh penutur-penutur Bahasa Inggeris dari segi pengaruh aspek kebudayaan Cina dan seterusnya memerhatikan jika ia mencerminkan ciri-ciri nilai budaya Cina; dan (3) untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan dan persamaan jantina antara penutur lelaki dan perempuan apabila ia dikenal pasti melalui keaslian perbincangan di dalam interaksi kumpulan. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di dua buah universiti di Malaysia dan seramai 12 orang pelajar siswazah Cina telah bersetuju untuk menjadi responden.

Analisis ini menunjukkan bahawa struktur urutan pembukaan dan penutupan urutan adalah berbeza. Mereka mempunyai beberapa ciri-ciri yang sama tetapi ianya hanya berbeza dalam beberapa aspek, salah satu contoh ialah seperti struktur urutan yang sering digunakan diantara responden. Analisis juga menunjukkan bahawa ciri-ciri komunikasi penutur Cina apabila mereka berbicara dengan sopan atau apabila mereka menggunakan maksud tersirat mahupun dengan menjadi pendengar yang jelas dalam membuka dan menutup perbualan dan perbincangan.

Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa nilai-nilai budaya Cina masih wujud di kalangan anak muda. Perbezaan jantina dalam penggunaan bahasa yang telah dijalankan dengan sekumpulan

penutur yang kecil ini tidak boleh digunakan sebagai kesimpulan umum namun kita hanya boleh berharap agar ciri-ciri yang baik yang telah dikenal pasti dalam kajian ini seperti kesopanan tatasusila yang diamalkan akan terus menjadi ikutan generasi akan datang biarpun apabila mereka terdedah kepada sekatan bahasa agar ia dapat memperbaiki tahap komunikasi diantara perbincangan kumpulan jantina yang sama atau berbeza.

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“Persistence is the key to success”. These words of wisdom from an old Chinese saying inspired my efforts throughout this study that has spanned the last one year. This challenging journey took me down at a stage, and then has become valuable experience in my life.

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