Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum. 23 (S): 71 - 88 (2015)

PERTANIKA JOURNALS

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Journal homepage: http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/

A Literature Review of Rapport Management in Business Meetings

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ABSTRACT

A meeting is a planned communicative event where the participants' role is to achieve the discussed objectives. Business English (BE) is often used as the lingua franca for meetings. Studies on BE are becoming a growing interest but there are still limited readily available studies on business meetings, especially on those in the Malaysian context, and even fewer that describe rapport management in meetings. In a meeting, rapport is established when there is a shift in formality in the management of face, sociality rights and interactional goals. This may be the result of the display of the chairperson's power. BE, on the other hand, is used to achieve the communicative purposes that help to promote rapport. By reviewing past studies, this paper explores how the chairperson in local and other cultures establishes rapport through the use of politeness and other communicative strategies in conversational turn-taking. Conversational Analysis (CA) has been used widely to analyse audio and video recordings of meetings as it provides for microanalysis of such turn-taking. Past studies have shown that politeness, small talk, humour and the use of non-verbal expressions are elements of rapport management displayed by the chairperson.

Keywords: Rapport management, conversational analysis, chairperson, Business English

INTRODUCTION

Business English (BE) used in business meetings has been an object of research since the 1970s. A wide collection of studies has been done on conversational strategies such as humour and small talk used in business meetings involving the use of BE. Apart from that, studies on topic management, decision making and turn-taking have all

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 8 July 2015
Accepted: 28 October 2015

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ISSN: 0128-7702

been closely examined by analysts such as Clifton (2009), Du-Babcock, (1999) and Svennevig (2012a) in their analyses of the spoken texts of BE from business meetings. The majority of these studies have two criteria in common: the method of analysis and studies on rapport management.

A tedious but meticulous method, conversational analysis (CA) is a microanalysis tool that is used to make sense of the participant's actions towards a social order by first transcribing sample texts from actual conversations (Asmuss & Svennevig, 2009). CA is heavily dependent on transcribed samples to the extent that a wider range of symbols used for transcription were introduced by Jefferson (2004). This analytical tool allows for the understanding of the discourse community being studied as it allows for the analysis of the speech exchange system that is unique to a particular community (Schegloff, 1999).

CA is used to study these features of conversation and for that reason, it is an ideal analytical tool for studying BE in business meetings. With its growing popularity, studies on institutional settings such as the workplace environment have begun recognising its reliability and its dependence on audio and video data, making this approach compatible with technology as a method of data collection (Clifton, 2006). This reliance on technology gives this method an extra advantage as it allows conversational analysts to include non-verbal behaviours as part of their findings on what affects the social patterns of speakers. Apart from CA, studies on rapport management are a common topic among studies on business meetings.

Recently, there has been a steady rise in studies on humour, small talk and the turn-taking interaction between the chairperson and other meeting members, suggesting that rapport management in business discourse is a growing interest. However, studies in 2013 have shown that more interest is being given to studies on improving the teaching of business studies (Short et al., 2013; Drury-Grogan & Russ, 2013; Anderson et al., 2013), Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in Asian culture (Du-Babcock & Tanaka, 2013; Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013) and decision making (Baraldi, 2013). Therefore, rapport management is a gap that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, not many studies have been conducted on this in the Malaysian context.

This study explores rapport management for various reasons. Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) calculate the overall formality for a given situation, providing an idea of how members of a discourse community should act based on the formality of the situation. This theory allows its users to understand the setting via different situational variables such as the participants and the physical background. The understanding of both formality and rapport management allows us to understand how BE is used to manage what is said in the business context without being offensive.

The purpose of this paper is to review recent research into the development of BE as a lingua franca. Specifically, this paper reviews past literature on rapport management to better understand how participants in a meeting create a mutual understanding after taking into account the formality of the business meeting environment. This paper discusses previous research on (1) how rapport is established in business meetings and (2) how Business English is used in the Malaysian context to promote rapport.

Formality

Saville-Troike (2003) defined formality as an interlocutor's choice of register that is represented by different language forms and manners of speaking for the particular topic or setting. Her view on formality was that it is based on two broad ideas. Firstly, it is determined by setting. This is relative formality. Irvine's (1979) definition fits into this category. Secondly, word choices are used to represent the formality of the situations, and this is described as formality of language (Saville-troike, 2003). Marshall and Tsekouras (2010), in expounding their own views of formality, explained that it is rule-guided, and it determines specific patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, the tone of social interactions among interlocutors is used to exhibit formality or informality.

Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) developed a theoretical framework to understand the overall formality of a setting. Fig.1 shows that formality is a combination of several aspects happening at the same time. However, these aspects are based on two ideas of formality. Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) explained that formality of a setting, either written or spoken, is based on how one pays attention to form or the proper code of conduct that he or she adopts. This is surface formality. However, surface formality is best understood when it is represented by the language used, or deep formality.

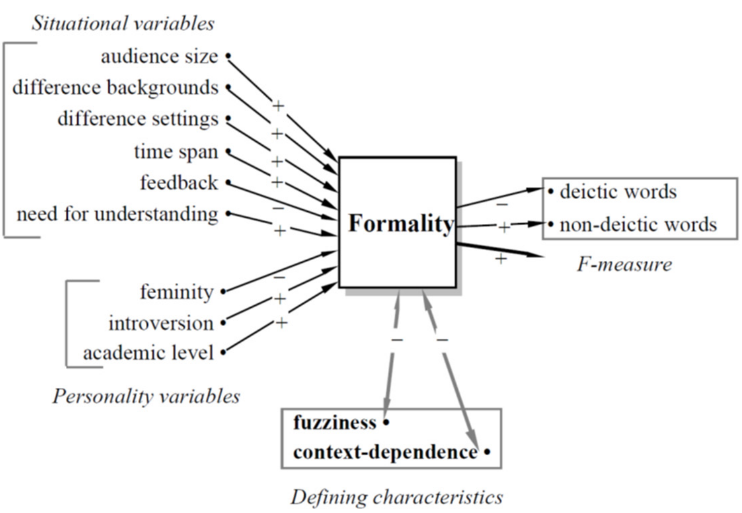

Fig.1: Heylighen and Dewaele's (1999) formality theory.

The first aspect of formality comprises the situational variables shown in Fig.1; these are the factors that contribute to the overall formality of a setting. This is combined with the language that is used in that setting in which formality can be measured by the *F-measure*. The combination of situational variables and the result of the *F-measure*, while based on the idea that the setting is to minimise shared contexst (elements of context-dependence and fuzziness), explains the overall formality of the setting. In conclusion, formality is formal language expressed explicitly to avoid ambiguity (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999).The advantage of having this theory is that it can accurately quantify the overall formality for any written or verbal communication. This theory gives an idea of what would affect rapport in a meeting.

Rapport Management

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on politeness explained that "it is in everyone's interest to maintain each other's face, which can be threatened and damaged through interaction with others" (Ogiermann, 2009). However, their theory emphasised the individual's face without considering the importance of culture or non-verbal communication. Their theory prioritised the individual's actions towards face with regards to whether it appeals to others or if the actions of the individual are viewed as unimpeded. Their theory lacks the potential to be used in specific settings such as that of a Malaysian business meeting. In a similar study, Planken (2005) studied the interpersonal relationship of members in a business meeting using a theory that built on the ideas of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory: Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management.

Rapport management has three main components: the management of face, the management of sociality rights and obligations and the management of interactional goals. The first aspect in rapport management is face. The definition of face can be understood as a person's sense of identity or self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Spencer-Oatey regarded this aspect of rapport management to have its own characteristics, such as personality traits or beliefs to name two, and these characteristics are sometimes viewed positively, negatively or neutrally. These face characteristics or values "vary from person to person and from context to context" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). These values represent the individual, group or culture that the individual belongs to.

The next component of rapport management is sociality rights and obligations. This aspect looks at how people regard themselves as having a range of sociality rights and obligations in relation to other people in the sense that negative rapport would be promoted if these rights were infringed (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Depending on the social situation and context, those in a business meeting would probably make adjustments to how they should perform in a meeting while taking cultural values into consideration as part of their rapport management. The third aspect of rapport management is similar to the general objective of any business meeting. Interactional goals in rapport management have a lot to do with people having their own specific goals to achieve when interacting with others. The desire to achieve them can significantly affect their perceptions of rapport because failure to achieve them can cause frustration and annoyance (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

The same applies when someone speaks to us in a manner that is inappropriate. This will affect our rights; the more severe the negative action towards our face such as insulting speech acts, the more threatened we feel our 'social identity' is (Matsumoto, 1988) i.e. the more we feel that our face is threatened. In 1989, Matsumoto argued that all use of language is potentially face-threatening:

> *Since any Japanese utterance conveys information about the social context, there is always the possibility that the speaker may, by the choice of an inappropriate form, offend the audience and thus embarrass him/herself. In this sense, any utterance, even a simple declarative, could be face-threatening.* (Matsumoto, 1989, p.219)

Matsumoto's argument is in relation to Brown and Levinson's theory as their politeness theory mainly concerns illocutionary politeness, while Matsumoto's discussions deal mainly with Japanese honorifics or the stylistics of politeness. Brown and Levinson focused on only one domain in their attempts to create a universally accepted theory on politeness but in rapport management, it is important to manage other domains as well, such as the illocutionary domain, discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain and non-verbal domain, as each plays a role.

These domains are represented by the manner of language that is used to exhibit clusters of co-occurring features, which are better known as communication style (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Brown and Levinson (1987) viewed communication style to be positive politeness while negative politeness viewed it as involvement (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) independence and Andersen et al. (2002) viewed it as expressiveness or distance. All these views share a commonality with the formality theory in that they describe the speaker's communication style as being either explicit or implicit.

Explicitness, as Spencer-Oatey (2008) explained, is the extent to which a message is coded unambiguously in the words that are chosen. From this explanation, we can begin to understand how rapport management is related to politeness and politeness with formality as formality is achieved by "being explicit in order to minimize ambiguity" (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). To put it simplistically, rapport management, which is based on the politeness theory, is a factor that helps explain the formality of a given situation.

Spencer-Oatey (2008), with her five-domain rapport management model, has explained how her model is related to Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness theory, and that through using certain styles or manners of communicating, rapport management can help describe the formality of a situation. Furthermore, she discussed the major factors that influence rapport management. These include the participants, message content, social roles and activity type (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). 'Participants', as a factor that influences rapport strategies, is explained by two minor categories to help show the relations of the participants within a group. These categories are power and distance. Power is seen in the relationship between the participants such as manager and worker. Those with more power will have more sociality rights i.e. the power to reward or control others. Relationship, therefore, can be seen as 'unequal relationship' (Olshtain, 1989) or 'equal relationship' (Wood & Kroger, 1991). Distance refers to the relationship between participants such as the relationship between two friends or between a person and a stranger. The social distance between the participants will affect how the participants are to be treated. In relation to participants, the number of participants will also affect the rapport strategies of the speaker as "more participants evinced a sense of being under surveillance" (Wasson, 2000, p.5).

The next factor to influence rapport strategies is message content. Spencer-Oatey (2008) used the term 'costs' to elaborate how the content of the speaker's message may affect the rapport of the speaker. This 'cost' feature within a message can affect a speaker financially, in relation to time, effort, imposition, inconvenience, risk and so on. If the cost is too high and creates an inconvenience, then the balance in the participants' relationship needs to be restored. Social or interactional roles, for example, sales assistant-customer or chairperson-committee member, also affect rapport strategies. By having a realisation of the social role, participants in the interaction would realise their rights and obligations, and the limitations of those rights and obligations as well (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Finally, type of activity affects rapport management strategies, as described by Gunthner (2007), who noted that communicative activities often have communicative genres that reflect the social and cultural values of the speakers. These communicative genres may display the social patterns of the five domains in rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

In business meetings, a communicative genre is applied to outline the specific turn-taking strategies. From there, participants would have an idea of how one should participate in the event and how their message should be formed, which may incorporate all five domains of rapport management. Depending on the type of business meeting, this will influence the number of participants and, quite possibly, who participates in the event. The more important meetings would have participants with higher positions, and this may create a wider social distance among the participants and make them aware of the rapport management strategies that need to be used because of this power gap between them. This promotes a higher degree of formality as the participants are less similar to one another (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). The significance of using rapport management is that it is more elaborate than the politeness theory and more suited for institutional settings such as business meetings. Nevertheless, it needs a tool to analyse its five domains, and it is here that conversational analysis (CA) plays an analytical role.

CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS (CA)

Using CA to analyse spoken discourse in business meetings provides advantages in studying their conversational features. Since these meetings can be sampled using both audio and video methods, an analyst is able to rely on technology to analyse non-verbal behaviours in the study of speakers' social patterns. Barske (2009) and Clifton (2009) have both used video recordings in order to collect data on body language that affected interactions in a business meeting. Many other studies followed a similar approach to data collection and argued that future studies should use a more integrated design (Markaki & Mondada, 2012; Nielsen, 2012; Svennevig, 2012a). These studies began using CA as it contributes to the understanding of interaction in the workplace. Furthermore, CA explains the structure of an organisation as it analyses spoken discourse in the business context (Asmuss & Svennevig, 2009).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper reviews how BE is used in rapport management with the given formality in past studies. To avoid possible confusion, BE can be characterised as general words used for business-related matters such as 'big' and 'manage' (Nelson, 2006). Previous studies on BE, especially by those before the turn of the century (Williams, 1988; Linde, 1991; St John, 1996) tried to provide more authenticity to BELF. That has not changed as research into BE has come a long way from learning how BE course books were not relatable to real contexts (Williams, 1988) to how a combination of BE and non-verbal communication is used to carry out communicative acts (Bjorge, 2012). The study of BE began as being a materials-led movement due to the rising need to improve BELF (St John, 1996). It was considered as such because BE was seen as a tool used in the office but there were problems in determining its role in the working environment when it was not the dominant language as studies have shown (Nickerson, 1998). However, recent studies have shifted this movement to being a research-led movement. In companies with a multicultural background, BE is the dominant language (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Planken, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2008). This setting allows researchers to analyse conversational strategies for the purpose of improving business discourse over a company's need to use BE. The next section of this review extends this discussion to past studies on BE in relation to conversational strategies used in a meeting and how it is used in the Malaysian context to promote rapport.

RAPPORT MANAGEMENT BETWEEN SUPERIOR AND SUBORDINATE

Spencer-Oatey's (2003) rapport management is derived from Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The study on politeness begins with Wasson (2000). Her study offers an idea of what is considered polite. CA was used to study the turn-takings of an American company meeting and Wasson used to analyse the degree of politeness in business contexts. Based on her findings, politeness can be said to be a result of the interlocutors' cautiousness towards the setting. Wasson described the speaker's sense of caution as speaking with care with regards to setting.

One factor Wasson identified was the speaker's concerns regarding being monitored or evaluated by their peers or superiors. Politeness in a meeting becomes evidently clear during disagreement between the majority of participants in a meeting and the selected speaker. This is represented by a long silence among the participants, indicating that the speaker needs to amend his or her own ideas in a polite manner (Wasson, 2000). When it came to decision making, Wasson (2000) observed that politeness was derived from the participant's attitude during the meeting. Participants would act as good team players because they favoured equality over aggression and dominating behaviour. This is due to the participants' unfamiliarity with one another; it also offers a chance to close that social gap. While it is not impossible that participants would do the opposite to gain favour or to build a reputation, it would be more profitable if participants worked together (Wasson, 2000).

This collaboration between participants may be viewed either positively or negatively. From a positive point of view, teamwork is being expressed in the meeting. Hence, creating a positive rapport but from a negative point of view may not be entirely favoured by the speaker due to the way it is achieved. Collaboration is seen when other participants would try to lighten the mood by inserting a joke or two once they realise the meeting has become tense due to the main speaker's poor idea. It may seem less formal or less polite but it maintains rapport in the meeting. However, if the main speaker still does not realise the problem then a long silence follows and this should catch the speaker's attention.

In a similar study, Friess (2013) identified similar results in politeness in a meeting between superiors and subordinates. His study indicated that there are two types of politeness strategy. The first is positive politeness strategy, where the participant tries to get along well with the other participants. If the participant is a subordinate, then there would be a high degree of politeness in order to gain favour and to save face. In the superior's point of view, positive politeness is seen when the participants alter their politeness strategies with current participants or when they meet with a new participant in order to welcome that participant. However, the opposite effect can also occur if the superior in the meeting wishes to establish dominance or to save his or her face. Consequently, this causes the participant to lose his or her face and resort to using negative politeness strategy as well, for example through the use of apologies.

Nielsen (2012) has shown that body gestures related to objects in a meeting room such as gazing at documents or slides on a projector are another form of turn-taking strategy. It is also quite possible that it affects the politeness of the participant. The following section deals with this paralinguistic aspect in business meetings and looks at the non-verbal domain of rapport management.

Combination of Verbal and Non-Verbal Expressions to Promote Rapport in Business Meetings

Markaki and Mondada (2012) focused on how speakers identified opportunities to speak in an international meeting by mentioning the participant's country, bodily orientations and gaze directions. All of which, the researchers believe, would bring attention to and ultimately allow the representative of a country to speak. Opportunities to speak are derived from the use of verbal and non-verbal expressions, organisation of talk such as mentioning a participant's country along with bodily orientations. According to Markaki and Mondada (2012), mentioning a participant's country will have the floor's attention in the form of a gaze towards the representative of that country; the same result would be achieved by gazing or pointing at a target participant.

The combination of verbal and non-verbal expressions helps to create the organisation of talk in a business meeting. These non-verbal actions further clarify that meetings are not necessarily strict and rigid despite turn-taking being controlled by the chairperson. It is up to the participants to decide how and when they should take up their turn. Yet, it should not be mistaken that the chairperson is someone who dominates most of the turn-taking in a meeting. With that, it should be noted that turn-taking in business meetings is organised by the chair and the chair extends the right to speak to other members.

Through studying linguistic choices and non-verbal expressions in an ethnographic study, Virkkula-Raisanen (2010) was able to display the combination of verbal and non-verbal communication being used for effective communication in a business meeting. Her study explains how segments of talk are highlighted in turn taking via body gestures and rising intonation. From her study, when a speaker needed to stress an important agenda, actions such as holding an object and displaying it to the other members were sometimes used to gain attention. Her findings also described how the combination of a few language features were being used at the same time. Participants may at times use non-verbal expressions with rising intonation to deliver a stressed segment of a speech. The use of physical movements such as checking the time may signal the closing of a meeting while the chairperson usually provides a brief conclusion or summary to end the meeting (Nielson, 2012). Another form of rapport management would be to use humour to create a positive rapport between participants but what exactly are the outcomes of using humour?

Using Humour in Rapport Management During Business Meetings

Humour is common in all cultures and its general purpose is to relieve tension or to act as a stress reliever. Brown and Levinson (1978) identify the main function of humour as being to create a positive self-image by amusing an audience through a shared idea of what is funny. Rogerson-Revell (2007), on the other hand, related the main function of humour to the management of rapport in business meetings as it helps to "construct a position of respect and status within the group" (Rogerson-Revell, 2007, p.5). While the use of humour in business is to build positive rapport, its general function as seen commonly in any culture, can still be applied in the business context as well. Grindsted and Annette (1997) discovered how humour was used strategically as a negotiating tool among Danish and Spanish participants in a simulated negotiation.

While humour is common in any culture, it varies as it is used differently in multiple business contexts (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Rogerson-Revell (2007) explained that humour was used to show the hierarchical difference between the chairperson and the other participants in a meeting in an intercultural context. After analysing several different meetings in an international airline corporation in Southeast Asia, it was learnt that humour varied in each of the meetings as each meeting used a different style to engage its audience via humour. This was partly due to the possibility that each type of meeting would have its own culture.

Despite that, the characteristics of humour remained evident in any type of meeting. According to Rogerson-Revell (2007), humour is often associated with how it shifts a meeting from being formal to informal. Meetings that use humour as a communicative strategy are seen as dynamic rather than static. They create a shift in interactive style from one that is more structured to one that is loosely relaxed and informal. The purpose of using humour to create this shift in an interactive style is usually seen during discussions of problematic or conflictual issues (Grindsted & Annette, 1997; Bateson, 1953). Kangasharju and Nikko (2009) viewed humour as a means to create a bond or "fellow-feeling" among participants in an attempt to close a topic smoothly in a positive atmosphere.

Humour may be seen as a linguistic strategy to diffuse language difficulties in an effort to ignore confusion or to stall in a meeting (Rogerson-Revell, 2008). One strategy is what Firth (1996) called the 'let-it-pass' strategy. Usually, this strategy is used among non-native English speakers. On the other hand, it is also used by the chairperson as a communicative tool. Holmes et al. (2007) described how the chairperson controls the use of humour during a meeting. It is possible that the chairperson has a major influence on rapport management as he or she provides the sociality rights to allow humour from the other speakers.

Overall, humour is used to create a more relaxed environment, to enable bonding and to provide more rights for other participants to take their turn at speaking. Besides humour, past studies have examined the use of small talk to manage rapport in a business meeting. The next section provides a lengthier review of this.

Small Talk Builds Rapport in Business Meetings

In business discourse, small talk serves as a topic initiator in business meetings. However, it has an even greater purpose in the development of a successful business meeting (Yang, 2012). In Yang's (2012) study, the overall function of small talk in business meetings is to help initiate the meeting and later, to help develop it. It achieves this through building an interpersonal relationship between the participants by building in-depth social communication with the participants (Yang, 2012).

Pullin (2010) also shared the same view on small talk. She explained that its overall functions are related to rapport management that it builds, maintains and reinforces in a peaceful manner. Choice of topic also has its importance (Planken, 2005; Pullin, 2010). Rapport can be easily achieved when there is common ground to interact or there are 'safe topics' between the participants. Pullin's study emphasised how safe topics achieved positive rapport, which eventually leads to successful negotiation. Examples of safe topics include food, music, pets and pop culture. By using safe topics to maintain business meetings, small talk can be used to also "develop it by linking the act of small talk with other sequences of talk" (Yang, 2012).

In short, small talk can be seen as a tool that creates opportunities for participants to help develop a meeting from the initial opening phase. By shaping the structure of a business meeting to be more dynamic, small talk achieves successful rapport management in the process. Although these past studies have expanded our knowledge of rapport management, the findings of these past studies are predominantly from western culture. Therefore, studies on Asian culture in relation to business meetings should be taken into account.

Related Studies on Business Meetings in Asian Culture

St John (1996) explained that each culture has its own perception of formality as the main objective to achieve effective presentation. Corporate culture, as she explained, is best noticed during a business meeting. To be an effective business communicator, there is also a need to understand the culture of the business environment. Studies on business culture reveal a deeper understanding of the differences of business meetings in the West and in the East. Nickerson (2005) highlighted in her study on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) that the differences between business meetings in the West and in the East are influenced by their national cultures and the company's practices.

A study by Fung (1993) examined the use of indirectness employed by participants from two companies in a business meeting. The study used the politeness theory as their theoretical framework to explain the how politeness is caused by the power status of the speaker (Takano, 2005). According to Fung (1993), those who used indirectness were perceived to be indecisive and of lower status but those with authority used indirectness as communicative strategy. Those in authority would exploit indirectness to pressure others to accept their viewpoints but at the same time it was also used to build rapport among participants. Moreover, indirectness was used during critical moments of negotiation in business meetings. It is a strategy used by higher-ranking participants to gain more support for their view.

Other studies have shown that Hong Kong natives were more participative in their meetings and their communication patterns were more elaborate when they spoke in their mother tongue but when they needed to speak in English, which was their second language, communication patterns in meetings were more linear and direct (Du-Babcock, 1999). In a later study on the use of BELF in Hong Kong, it was revealed that the Cantonese would rather use English if they needed to communicate with foreigners (Evans, 2013). These past studies showed how the role of BE is different in the West, where it is accepted as a lingua franca, but in the East, it is reserved as a tool to be used only when necessary. To answer the second research question in this review, the next section reviews past studies in the Malaysian context.

Business English in the Malaysian Context

Previous studies have shown that a culture influences the way BE is used in the business context. In Malaysia, how BE is used would have slight differences due to cultural influence. While Standard English is taught as a second language in schools and at tertiary institutions, many Malaysians feel more comfortable when they are able to use Malay (Izzuan, Baharum, & Tretiakov, 2007). What, then, is Malaysian Business English?

Nair-Venugopal (2007) gave a detailed explanation of the characteristics of Malaysian BE in her study on the Malaysian workplace despite not providing any relevant information on the study's methodology. She explained that Malaysian BE is defined by "how localized ethnic speech is combined with the characteristics of BE in business settings in which forms Malaysian Business English " (Nair-Venugopal, 2007, p.206). She referred to these localised ethnic speeches as "ethnolects, segmental phonology and prosody of the utterances of the members of the three major ethnic groups, Malay, Indian and Chinese" (Nair-Venugopal, 2007, p.207). Based on the findings, code-switching and code-mixing seemed to contribute mostly to the characteristics of Malaysian Business English. Features such as lexical shifts also related to code-switching as Malaysians replace one or two lexis with localised expressions.

While these previous studies provide an idea of how BE is perceived in Malaysia and in Malaysian business culture, this next study explains how BE is used in local business meetings. The study (Nor & Aziz, 2010) analysed how politeness strategies were used by the chair to maintain face of his or her subordinates. The study revealed that most of the politeness strategies used by the chairperson were negative politeness strategies. Negative politeness can be seen as being too direct and as the study shows, the chair used his authority to assert his decision with negative politeness while using other politeness strategies to minimise the hearer's face threat. Other politeness strategies include the use of 3rd person pronoun 'we' and hedging.

In short, BE in the Malaysian context is dependent on various cultures in the workplace environment. Its use, combined with the phonology and the prosody of utterances of each culture, describes how BE is used in the Malaysian context. The purpose of continuously conducting research in a similar field is to update the current state of knowledge. At present, it is understood that local BE courses lack authenticity, which is almost similar to the problems stated by Williams (1998). As such, the solution suggested by Izzuan et al. (2007), that is, to create simulated events, should be taken into consideration and be applied in current BE courses or run the risk of having future entrepreneurs who are lacking in communication skills.

DISCUSSION

The interesting aspect about studying business discourse in a meeting is how much there is to learn about formality. Most of the past studies considered in this review were on large meetings. Therefore, it is understood that the overall tone of these meetings was formal despite the fact that this claim was based on only one variable of formality i.e. audience or in this review, the participants in the past studies. While it is not an accurate claim as it did not use the F-score, sufficient information on formality can be gathered based on the participant's background and the number of participants (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999).

From that, one would have enough information to determine rapport management that participants in a meeting would have used if there was a superior-subordinate relationship in the meeting. These past studies showed that the chairperson or a superior had the highest authority over rapport management, which in turn affected formality. Both humour and small talk were described in past studies to have been used as effective strategies to manage rapport and ensure success in a meeting (Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009; Pullin, 2010). While both conversational strategies ensure positive rapport, only humour has ever been reported to affect formality (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Though it was not mentioned in past studies, small talk affects formality as it creates common ground for participants to build an interpersonal relationship via 'safe talk' (Planken, 2005). This common ground is more or less shared context among participants and according to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), the greater the shared context, the lower the formality.

The implicit-explicit manner of speech affects not only formality but rapport management as well. This manner of speech can also be termed as indirectness-directness (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). In Hong Kong, BE is not the most favoured lingua franca, and this leads to a more linear-direct meeting (Du-Babcock, 1999). However, in an earlier study indirectness was used by either superior or subordinate as a communicative strategy (Fung, 1993). It is still inconclusive how BE is used in the Asian context but its use has a direct effect on formality just as when Western companies use small talk and humour.

Fung (1993) described how those with authority used indirectness as a communicative strategy. Likewise, Rogerson-Revell (2008), Firth (1996) and Markaki and Mondada (2012) described how the chairperson dominates a meeting by allocating turn-taking opportunities or used conversational strategies such as humour to direct the flow of the meeting. Prior studies on the influence of the chairperson showed that those with authority were those who determined rapport management and eventually, the overall formality of the meeting.

CONCLUSION

This review found that generally, rapport is established when there is a shift in formality in the management of face, sociality rights and interactional goals. Previous studies revealed that the chairperson has great influence over these three domains in rapport management. In relation to face management, the chairperson uses communicative functions, humour and small talk to create a more dynamic meeting. The uses of such functions are tools employed by the chairperson to help diffuse problematic or conflictual issues (Grindsted, 1997; Bateson, 1953). Its use reflects the chairperson's hierarchical relationship in a meeting as the chairperson systematically uses it to build 'fellow-feeling' among meeting members in an attempt to maintain rapport (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). These communicative functions are not exclusive to the chairperson alone but through its use, the chairperson is able to provide more turn-taking opportunities or rights to speak to other meeting members.

Apart from the use of small talk in creating more rights to speak, the combination of verbal and non-verbal expressions by the chairperson can be seen as promoting rapport. As Svennevig (2012b) highlighted, the use of body gestures such as pointing by the chairperson are references to take up speaking rights. Either the next turn is initiated via self-selection or the non-verbal message conveyed from the chair's body gesture prompts the next speaker (Svennevig, 2012a) to take his turn. Actions such as holding an object or raising intonation may highlight the importance of an agenda (Virkkula-Raisanen, 2010). This also creates a shift in formality that the meeting needs to be more focused as it 'gathers attention' (Markaki & Mondada, 2012). In a way, the use of body gestures to control the distribution of turns creates order in topic management. However, negative rapport may arise when a participant in a meeting tries to achieve specific interactional goals when it is not approved by the majority of the meeting's participants.

As Wasson (2000) pointed out, participants in a meeting favoured equality or aggressive behaviour. As such, politeness is much needed in rapport management. In accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, participants would use different types of politeness strategy in relation to setting. In 2013, Friess noted that a chairperson may switch politeness strategies when welcoming new participants. The results from his study indicate that a chairperson or superior's use of either positive or negative politeness strategy will directly influence future interactional goals of other participants. From these past studies, it can be assumed that rapport is the result and display of the chairperson's power. BE, on the other hand, is used to achieve the communicative purposes that help to promote rapport.

However, with limited studies on BE in the Malaysian context, little can be elaborated on rapport management in Malaysian business meetings. With regard to the second research question of this review, the chairperson in Malaysian business meetings is more in favour of using negative politeness strategies over positive politeness strategies. Despite having limited local studies on rapport management, results from past studies on business meetings in various cultures have all shown that the chairperson has an important role in rapport management. Naturally, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to manage the distribution of turns, which results in rapport management. However, these past studies on rapport provide great examples of chairpersons managing rapport in a meeting. This is important as there have been cases of rapport being poorly established such as shown in the study by Spencer-Oatey and Xing (2004), where the participants in the study were considered to be disrespectful to their guests due to failing to take the setting into account.

This review of recent studies begs the question of what the next step in researching business discourse is to be. This review suggests that there are two choices that may be considered for future studies. As it stands, there is limited knowledge of Malaysian business discourse. While it is understood that Malaysian BE courses could use more authenticity in their syllabus, more studies on the participant's manner of speech used in Malaysian business meetings would fill this gap in knowledge. Du-Babcock's (1999) study on the role of BE in a meeting and Nor and Aziz's (2010) study on politeness strategies are different approaches to analysing manner of speech but this only shows the available possibilities.

Future studies in Malaysian business discourse should look into the conversational strategies between superior and subordinate. This would provide more information on rapport management and formality in the local context. More importantly, local BE courses would have the most to gain as information on the use of BE would provide the authenticity needed for BE courses. Presently, any local study on BE would still need high dependence on past studies that were based on Western culture. Recent studies examined in this review provide the necessary literature on studies on rapport management or BE. Adaptation of these past studies in future local studies would eventually lead to a more authentic BE course.

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