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Culturally appropriate communication in Malaysia: *budi bahasa* as warranty component in Malaysian discourse

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This paper discusses the Malaysian cultural appropriateness (CA), *budi bahasa* in communication. CA is a root anchoring Malaysian life and, indeed, all things Malaysian. Society inculcates the norms and taboos with clear-cut identification of the dos and don'ts in relational communication among (and between) Malaysians. Although Malaysians may practice different religious rituals or hold different ideologies, they still pay attention to being appropriate and polite in communication to respect each other's differences, a vital concern for those living in this multicultural country. In no small measure, *budi* (virtue/politeness) helps govern the rules of communication, but the term is nuanced, carrying with it multiple meanings derived from the cultural context. Traditionally, respect, care for other people's emotion, politeness and language use are among the criteria measuring a *budi bahasa* (man of culture). But, there are other measures as well. *Budi bahasa* (man of culture) is incorporated in the principles articulated in the *Rukunegara*.

Keywords: *budi bahasa*; Malaysian cultural appropriateness; Malaysian civility

Introduction

According to Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2010), culture is the rules for living and functioning in society and culture is human-made, part of which is considered as a set of rules. Culture's purpose becomes somewhat evident and provides a framework for imparting meanings to events, objects and people that enable us to make sense of our surroundings or sense of self (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel 2010, 10).

It is in light of the above that culture is being viewed as the meaning system and lifestyles of a particular group of people that includes traditions, beliefs and values (Thomas 2002). It is the collective learned and acquired mental programming of the mind which distinguishes members of one group from another through mode of thinking, feeling and acting (Bilal 2006). Cultural members in these regards are expected to respect and observe certain logic of appropriateness. March and Olsen (2004) said:

The logic of appropriateness is a perspective that sees human action as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior, organized into institutions. Rules are followed as they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. A person tries to fulfill the

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obligations in a role of a person, an identity, a membership in a community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. (March and Olsen 2004, 1)

Thomas (2002) suggests that the term ‘cultural appropriateness’ (CA) is consistent with cultural identity, communication styles, meaning systems and social networks of clients, program participants and other stakeholders. An important point to note is that culture refers to a different set of attributes compared to that of ethnicity.

CA is also about ‘sensitivity’ and ‘awareness’ towards other cultures which refers to the difference of their norms and taboos, different language preferences and civility. Resnicow et al. (2000, 272) identify ‘cultural sensitivity’ as the extent to which ethnic or cultural characteristics, experiences, norms, values, behavioural patterns and beliefs of a target population as well as relevant historical, environmental and social forces are incorporated in the design, delivery and evaluation of the targeted audience. In the context of relational communication, a culturally appropriate content is vital for an affective understanding between parties (Thompson et al. 2008). Researchers believe that the logic of practicing CA is very much related to ethical actions, an activity of choice that concerns with ‘good doing’ and ‘good action’. Such goodness may be morally or rationally justifiable according to the standard adopted by practitioners. Buchholz and Rosenthal (1998) explain:

...ethics is concerned with the justification of actions and practices in specific situations. Ethics generally deals with the reasoning process and is a philosophical reflection on the moral life and the principle is embedded in that life. [Morality] generally refers to traditions or beliefs [in] societies concerning right and wrong conduct. Morality can be thought [as a code of conduct that is] implicit or explicit about how people ought to behave. (Buchholz and Rosenthal 1998, 4)

CA that intimately intertwines with ethical consideration is an action of civility (Mackenzie and Wallace 2011) where one needs to observe respect, not to create ‘violence’ towards others. Generally speaking, in CA one needs to be sensitive of various cultural warrants – acceptable or nonacceptable cultural characteristics, norms, values, behavioural patterns and beliefs of the society.

CA as related to ethics, *budi* and *budi bahasa*

CA is seen as related to *budi* (virtue/politeness) in Malaysian cultural of communication ethics. Ethical and ethics are simply defined as a good doing and the way a human reacts with a good action towards something whether in speaking, working, or in a relationship between a human and another human and nature. Hence, a man who practices these ethical values in their lives will be identified as an ethical person who is identified in Malaysia as *berbudi bahasa* (man of culture), *berbudi pekerti* (mankind) and *beradab sopan* (politeness) (Che Mahzan 2009).

Ethics in Malay culture begin from an individual mental set that guides one’s behaviour which can be explained through ‘*budi* complex’ (Dahlan 1991). Tham (1970) states the ‘*budi* complex’ is the essence of Malay’s social relationships, which formulates norms of individuals and social behaviour which are composed of the qualities of generosity, respect, sincerity, righteousness, discretion, feeling of shame at the collective level and feeling of shame at the individual level. From this point of view, it can be seen that ethics relate ideally to the people’s behaviour in the way they

present themselves to others whether they want to be considered ethical or not, it depends on their self-consideration of members in their 'group' and culturally accepted in that group. There is where CA, ethics and *budi bahasa* (man of culture) take place.

Malaysian CA and Malaysian society

CA is a key to maintaining a harmonious relationship in Malaysian society. Some believe that such appropriateness revolves mainly around the concept of *budi*. Lim (2003, 88) has argued that the Malay word *budi* originated from Sanskrit's word, *buddhi*, which means wisdom, understanding or intellect. *Budi* can be understood as the Malays' ethics for living (Nik Maheran and Yasmin 2008). But, *budi* also is organic and has grown to mean many things over the centuries. *Budi* can also include *adab* and *akhlaq*, two Islamic concepts that are of great consequence in a country in which the majority of the people are Muslim.

Budi is not a simple term and perhaps more accurately should be labelled the 'budi complex'. Lim (2003) elaborated the term, *akal budi* (the polite common sense attitude) that helps explain the notion of *budi*. The concept of *budi* as a moral behaviour or a virtue also is embedded in *budi pekerti* (mankind). A person with good *budi pekerti* is considered as having a beautiful mind, good judgement, attitude and thinking. A man of *budi* (*budiman*) is a man with good 'mind-emotion-moral-goodness-practicality'. In the context of decision-making, a man with good *budi* is expected to be thoughtful, considerate and of good conduct. A *budiman* in Malay culture is a man of *bahasa*, or loosely translated as 'berbudi bahasa'.

For Malays, *bahasa* does not merely refer to 'language', but to a world view consisting of norms and beliefs. In their daily lives, Malays 'interpret' *bahasa* in several meaningful ways. *Ada bahasa* or 'having a language' means a cultured person or people of good manners. A person with *ada bahasa* is said to have a refined (*halus*) or good personality (*elok*). Conversely, a person without *bahasa* is considered to be rude or have an uncouth (*kasar*) or uncultured (*kurang ajar*) personality. Indeed, it is an insult (*penghinaan*) for Malay to be called *kurang ajar* because the expression denotes a poor upbringing (Che Mahzan 2009). A person without the feeling of *malu* is a person with low personal qualities of dignity (*maruah*) and self-esteem (*harga diri*).

Suffice it to say, then, Malay behaviours run deeply through the *budi* complex (Dahlan 1991). Tham (1970) claimed that:

The *budi* complex is the essence of Malays' social relationships, which formulates norms of individuals and social behaviour that is composed of the qualities such as generosity, respect, sincerity, righteousness, discretion, and feeling of shame at the collective and the individual level.

Tham (1977) also argued that the dichotomous binary conceptual set found in the categories *kasar* and *halus* 'suggests a contrast or opposition . . . denote attribute, quality, style, character, manner or nature' (Tham 1977, 53). Goddard (1997) introduced cultural scripts for the two groups: the *kasar* (coarse) way that involves *kasar* speech or behaviour, which disregards the normal standards and the *halus* (refined) way that shows an exemplary adherence to those standards. The *kasar* (coarse) way involves *kasar* speech or behaviour that disregards the normal standards and is outside of the cultural warrant, while the *halus* (refined) way is

concerned with *halus* speech or behaviour that demonstrates an exemplary adherence to that warrant.

In Malaysia, speaking in a direct way is considered to be *kasar* (rough). Indeed, to conduct a conversation indirectly is viewed as a preferred action of *halus*. Che Mahzan (2011) has said that sense making for *halus* includes a cultural script of Malay rules for speaking. Dahlan (1991) believed that a person must balance the harsh (*kasar*) and the refined (*halus*) to maintain communication appropriateness. Asma and Pedersen (2003) proposed that *kasar* (rough) or *halus* (refined) *bahasa* were related to the ethics of communication.

According to Goddard (1997, 189–99), the principles of a cultural script effectively work in tandem with communications appropriateness of a society. The existence of sensitivity in this regard guides a man in controlling and exploiting his sense making. The ‘sensitivity’ is more or less related to a person’s feelings towards others or the Malay’s, ‘ada perasaan’. Dahlan (1991) said that ‘rasa’, a person’s feelings, emerged due to his sensitivity and concern. The existence of ‘rasa’ guided a man to be rationale in his activities of controlling and exploiting nature and finally becoming part of nature (Dahlan 1991, vol. 1).

Goddard (1997) said that, through the ‘principles of scripts’, CA will be represented in different situations in scripts about speaking in social interaction, scripts about expressing feelings or scripts about expressing what you want. In some parts of the world, people do not mind an overt clash of wills; indeed, this clash even may be welcomed because of cultural values. But, Malay culture discourages people from verbally expressing how they feel. The ideal demeanour is one of good-natured calm. (Goddard 1997, 189–99).

Sensitivity towards a culture is derived from CA that is linked to fundamental cultural concepts. In Malaysia, interaction also comprises the social emotion of *malu* (shame, propriety, ashamed, shy, or embarrassed). However, Goddard (1997, 189–99) stressed that the translations of *malu* do not convey the fact that Malays regard a sense of *malu* as socially good and somewhat akin to a sense of propriety, which includes Malay social emotions of *malu* (roughly), shame and propriety, the Malay personal qualities of *maruah* (dignity) and *harga diri* (self-esteem), and the Malay ideas of *senang hati* (easy heart).

The concept that Goddard and Dahlan discussed as the gist of *budi* is clearly identified as the common norms and values of the Malay lifestyle; this means showing the appropriate practices of a person (Lim 2003). Other scholars endorse *budi* as the Malay dimension of relational communication that is the basis for a relationship, and *budi* has a special impact on Malay culture and Malaysians at large as well (Asmah 1987).

Based on that perspective, when *budi* is seen as CA, *budi* carries with it norms, values and codes of practice for the entire Malaysian lifestyle. Nowadays in Malaysia, particularly among Malay-Muslims, the meaning of *budi* is extended to include ethics.

The pivotal role of *budi* in shaping Malaysians’ lives is clearly mentioned in the *Rukunegara*, the national principles, particularly those elaborating upon good behaviour and morality. A polite attitude and sense of propriety should be practiced in constructing an individual’s discipline and a society with a high standard of morality in order to develop a harmonious community. This principle condemns arrogant behaviour or hurting someone’s or a group’s feeling. This principle ought to guide the society’s behaviour, which should be nourished and developed to suit the nation’s traits and sacred values (Kementerian Dalam Negeri Malaysia, 1970 *Rukunegara* [Malaysia’

Ministry of Home Affairs] <http://library.kdn.gov.my/documents/Rukun%20Negara.pdf>: 3).

Malaysian culture has proven that *bahasa* plays a significant role in communication, and Malaysia has a high-context culture in which people are less direct when communicating with others (Asma and Pedersen 2003). In Malaysian communities, especially among Malay-Muslims, *bahasa* is not just a language but it also presents an individual's world view, norms and beliefs (Che Mahzan 2009, 1). Among Malays, being ethical and polite are main practices in daily life. These practices are synonymous with *berbahasa* that calls for the two such criteria in an individual's behaviour. For example, *ada bahasa* (having a language) refers to a cultured person or people with good manners. According to Che Mahzan (2009) and Asmah (2002), a person with *ada bahasa* (having a language) is said to be having an *elok* (good) personality or is 'berbudi bahasa'.

The context, the topic of the discussion and also the time when the communication occurs are vital as well (Asma and Pedersen 2003). Malaysians practice more implicit communication, using non-verbal communication or body language (Asma and Pedersen 2003, 167). Asmah (1992) suggested that there were four types of indirect elements in Malaysian communication style:

- (1) beating-about-the-bush (a communicator takes a few minutes to talk about other things before arriving at his real intention),
- (2) the use of imagery (the use of world of nature and beauty especially in Malay poem),
- (3) the contradicting way (someone praises something or someone, but the person who was praised is supposed to deprecate the object of that praise),
- (4) the use of surrogate (the third-person effect).

A good illustration of the above characteristics can be seen in Asmah's (1992) explanation of Malay conversational styles. Malaysians who engage in the Malay linguistic scenery, Asmah noted, converse in the manner of indirectness, namely, via beating-about-the-bush, use of imagery, contradiction and surrogates or other indirect strategies in conveying messages.

This indirectness contrasts with Western cultural communicative practices in which directness is preferred. Direct communication is a taboo in the Malay culture because of concern for not hurting others' feelings or for saving face. Asma and Pedersen (2003) stated that Malaysians believe being too direct can be interpreted as being rude and even offensive. Saving face is closely related to *adab sopan* (politeness) in everyday communication style in Malaysia. The critical usage of language in communication is viewed as the basic factor for judging whether a person's is *beradab* (with a good manner) or not.

Several scholars have categorized measures of Malaysian CA. The values that they have examined are shown in Table 1.

Budi bahasa as mediating factor in Malaysian social contact

'Budi bahasa' (man of culture) is connected to the CA and civility in the Malaysian social contact. This concept helps explain how Malaysians react to social and cultural needs. Ekinci and Narmamatova (2010) suggested that the every individual must accept the behaviours, styles and rules that society determines. A person learns

Table 1. General norms and values of Malaysian' cultural appropriateness.

Sources	Positive items	Negative items
Nik Maheran and Yasmin (2008)	<i>Budi, adab, akhlaq</i>	
<i>Rukunegara</i> principle (1970)	Good behaviour and morality, polite propriety attitude, polite behaviour	Arrogant behaviour, hurting someone or a group's feeling
DeBono (2004) Lim (2003)	<i>Akal budi, budi pekerti</i> (mankind) mind, emotion, moral, goodness, practicality, <i>budiman; budi bahasa</i> (man of culture)	
Asma and Pedersen (2003)	High-context culture, less direct communication, <i>bahasa</i> , implicit communication, saving one's face, <i>halus</i> (refined) <i>bahasa</i> , ethics in communication <i>adab sopan, beradab</i> (with a good manner)	Direct communication – taboo in Malaysian, fear of hurting others', <i>kasar</i> (rough) <i>bahasa</i> , too direct – interpreted as being rudeness and even offensive
Che Mahzan (2009)	Individual's world view, norms and belief, <i>ada bahasa</i> (having a language), <i>halus</i> (refined), <i>elok</i> (good), <i>berbudi bahasa, berbudi pekerti, beradab sopan</i>	<i>kurang adab</i> (rude), <i>kurang ajar</i> (less educated)
Tham (1970)	Respect, sincerity, righteousness, discretion, feeling of shame	
Jaafar et al. (2004)	<i>jaga hati</i> , respect, <i>sopan santun</i>	
Dahlan (1991) Asmah (1997)	Behaviour-ethical aspect Four types of indirect words; beating-about-the-bush, use of imagery, contradicting and use of surrogate	
Asmah (2002)	<i>budi bahasa</i> (man of culture), good behaviour, languages, mental situation, <i>adab, akhlak</i> , behaviour	

these from a young age because he/she observes people's behaviour, speech and dressing styles. A person with 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) aligns his/her individual behaviour with the 'majority society' with the goal of becoming acceptable to the society in which he/she is living.

Traditionally, 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) seems to imply that the attitude and behaviour of a communicator is well mannered and courteous. How well mannered a person is reflects how well he/she meets the standard of 'budi bahasa' (man of culture). Of course, an individual tries to learn as much as he/she can. However he/she does not merely learn the cultural, but he/she also tries to adapt to communication technology that surrounds him/her. Globalization has made the social media more essential in everyday social contact for certain age groups and has become an essential relational communication medium with regard to the Malaysian social-cultural environment.

The above values more or less affect human socialization in Malaysia and the cultural environment that concerns civility in the Malaysian lifestyle. As commonly practiced, Malaysian society uses society's good values to measure the behavioural

standards of a person in the community and whether they meet the standard of 'berbudi bahasa' (Malaysia Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage 2005).

CA principles basically include the overall aspects of politeness, personality and noble kindness that are shown in the high level of social system in Malaysian society. The individual perceptions that mostly measure the standards or clusters of the society are based on the cultural civility principles. If the culture of a person contradicts that of the preferred cultural order in Malaysia, that behaviour is perceived as something that is a 'no' and that does not flow smoothly in the Malaysian social system.

Behaviour should fit the principles of 45 good values that the Malaysia Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage (2005) introduced as acceptable behaviour for Malaysian CA. Of the 45 good values, some are directly related to the values of 'budi bahasa' (man of culture), which fits under a Malaysian CA umbrella, an umbrella that encompasses many values. There are *keikhlasan diri* (self-sincerity), *hormat-menghormati* (respect), *semangat hidup bermasyarakat* (socialization living), *menghulur dan menerima kemaafan* (show and accept forgiveness), *tolong-menolong* (co-operate), *prihatin* (concerned), *sabar* (patient), *bertimbang rasa* (considerate), *toleransi* (tolerance), *bersimpati* (sympathetic), *merendah diri* (humble), *menghormati hak setiap individu* (respect the rights of every individual), *suci hati* (honesty), *berfikiran positif* (having positive thoughts), *amalan baik* (good practice), *benar* (true), *murah hati* (generous), *berlemah lembut* (gentle), *ikhlas* (sincere) and *berterusterang* (be frank). Hashim et al. (2012) states while the social personality trait in Malaysian heritage was shown mostly in the kindness of heart or 'psyche', it also existed in actions, character, 'budi bahasa' (man of culture), values, norms, thinking and knowledge.

The 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) concept is not just for select community groups. Traditionally, this concept has been considered the main instrument determining whether individuals are accepted in society. Thus, 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) has been considered the determining factor for social acceptance in Malaysian society.

Many previous studies have focused on the 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) in relation to Malay literature, looking at poetic metaphors and devices (Hashim et al. 2012). However, the 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) also derives from the content suitability aspect of speech related to cultural civility in Malaysia. 'Budi bahasa' (man of culture) is associated closely in the context of how others are treated, helps define associations among the people and locates a person on the social scale.

'Budi bahasa' in meta-communication

'Budi bahasa' can be seen in the self-presentational aspects of meta-communication signals connected with culture. Verbal communication is related closely to speech, conversation, and individual interaction and linked to language (*bahasa*) in Malaysia. Zulkifley (2012) argued that language and culture had a powerful symbiosis. No language could exist without being supported by a culture, and culture could only exist if there were a language to express and record it. There is no language that culture does not tint.

Language usage can also indicate the level of the adherence to *budi bahasa* (man of culture). Nasariah, Faizah, and Yusniza (2010) classified language according to formality: formal and informal. Others have divided language according to

politeness: polite language (*bahasa yang halus atau sopan*), coarse language (*bahasa kasar*) and abusive language (*bahasa yang kesat*). Whatever the case, using language in any of these categories is an oblique way of preventing unwanted impact.

Hashim et al. (2012) claimed that the nature of Malaysian social heritage was embedded in the heart of gratitude or 'psyche', and manifested in actions, character, values, norms, ideas and knowledge. The concept of *budi bahasa* (man of culture) has been considered a main determinant for the individuals to be accepted in community circles. The level 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) is highly regarded as a determinant of social acceptance for the people in Malaysia.

Many studies have assumed simplistically that 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) can be described as an expression of Malaysian poetry and literature; yet, 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) must be viewed not only as a poetic phrase, a simile or a metaphor, but as a living, breathing belief that helps define Malaysian cultural civility. 'Budi bahasa' (man of culture) is related closely to contextualizing behaviour and speech in the community and is connected both to individual Malaysians and the relationships between (and among) them.

'Budi bahasa' (man of culture) is part of daily Malaysian life, both in the context of verbal and non-verbal communication. Clearly, verbal communication is associated with speech, conversation and interaction between individuals. In Malaysia, for example, 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) is a major issue in CA. 'Cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) can be said to be present when a communicator uses the standard of language suitable to the communication context and the audience level (social class or age group) and when the communicator in the social contact respects the local culture during the communication session. 'Cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) is commonly practiced in routine relational communication. It also implies Malaysian norms and a lifestyle that emphasize the social contact to 'care for the feelings' of the audience that receives the speeches.

In Malaysian society, proper 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) is essential for maintaining good relationships. 'Cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) shows that the communicators do not arbitrarily use bad or harsh language in everyday relational communication. Sometimes, without realizing it, a communicator has hurt someone else's feeling when that communicator is insensitive to 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk).

Today, certain age groups seem to underestimate the value of 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) and do not apply it in an open communication in presenting themselves. Some people ignore the attitude of not 'offending' through 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk). Hashim et al. (2012) have argued that societies nowadays are relatively weak in terms of cultural education, damaging both conduct and character. The danger is that this lack of concern about conducting proper 'cultural order' in social relationships will lead to a gradual fading away of that order. Misuse of the elements of 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) has increased the use of unpleasant language, and the use of appropriate language continues to be ignored. The practice of 'sticking to the obvious' when referring to someone and speaking ill of them to someone else has contributed to the demoralization of the society — and the potential loss of 'budi bahasa' (grounded talk).

Openness in giving comments, talking behind somebody, and not using elements of 'cakap berlapik' (grounded talk) have increased use of unpleasant language. Some will continue to ignore growing impoliteness in the language. Nasariah, Faizah, and Yusniza (2010) believe that some Malay speakers, especially teenagers, ignore using what can be regarded as decent language in the cultural context.

Findings and discussion

The study was conducted involving 378 respondents who are the social networking users from three local Malaysian local public universities. The descriptive statistics was employed in preparing the frequency findings of each demographic item. As shown in Table 2, there is an obvious difference in terms of gender, 80.4% ($n=304$) are females while 19.6% ($n=74$) are males. The highest percentage for age group of the respondents is 21 years old which is $n=138$ and it is followed by $n=95$ (25.1%) who are in the age group of 22 years old. However, there is only 0.3% ($n=1$) that represents those who are in the age of 30 years old.

Further, in terms of variation in races, the researcher collected the data from $n=213$ Malays who represented by 56.3%, 31.7% or $n=120$ respondents were Chinese, $n=38$ were Indians (10.1%) and only $n=7$ or 1.9% were Bumiputras.

As for educational background, there were 58.7% ($n=222$) who had *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* (STPM)/Malaysia Higher Certificate of Education qualification, while matriculation graduates were 29.9% ($n=113$), 10.3% ($n=39$) were diploma holders, while 0.8% or $n=3$ had *Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia* (STAM)/Malaysia Higher Certificate in Religious qualification. Besides, there was one respondent who did not mention her educational background at all.

Table 2 also shows the Academic Performance of the respondents based on their cumulative grade point average (CGPA) (Culler and Holahan 1980; Chapell et al. 2005). The researcher categorized their ratio data into three classes which were 2.00–2.99 (Second Class Lower), 3.00–3.66 (Second Class Upper) and for the First Class group, the CGPA was around 3.67–4.00 (*Academic Handbook, Universiti Utara*

Table 2. Descriptive report on demographic item.

Variables	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	19.6
	Female	80.4
Age	19 years old	1.3
	20 years old	14.6
	21 years old	36.5
	22 years old	25.1
	23 years old	12.2
	24 years old	6.3
	25 years old	2.9
	26 years old	0.8
	30 years old	0.3
Race	Malay	56.3
	Chinese	31.7
	Indian	10.1
	Bumiputra	1.9
Education background	STPM	58.7
	STAM	0.8
	Matriculation	29.9
	Diploma	10.3
	Missing	0.3
Cumulative grade point average (CGPA)	2.00–2.99	13.2
	3.00–3.66	63.2
	3.67–4.00	10.1
	Missing	13.5

Table 3. Report on *t*-test of cultural appropriateness on gender.

Variables	Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Significance
Cultural appropriateness	Male	74	3.32	0.33	1.05	0.29
	Female	304	3.28	0.32		

$p > 0.05$.

Malaysia 2010/2011). The findings showed that the majority represented by $n = 239$ or 63.2% were in the group of Second Class Upper, 13.2% ($n = 50$) indicated that their CGPA was in the group of Second Class Lower and $n = 38$ (10.1%) were in the group of First Class, while the other $n = 51$ did not mention their CGPA.

H1: There is a difference between males and females in budi bahasa

The analysis was carried out to investigate the level of CA in two different groups of gender: male and female. Table 3 shows the average mean for CA level between males ($m = 3.32$) and females ($m = 3.28$). The results of the test show that the difference in CA between gender is $t = 1.05$, $p = 0.29$. The p value of less than .05 implies that the difference in mean is statistically not significant. As a result, the H_0 is failed to be rejected as there is no significant difference in gender among Facebook users in their level of CA while Facebooking.

H2: There is a difference between Malays and non-Malays in CA

t-Test was run to look at the different level of CA in Facebook in two different groups of race: Malays and non-Malays. Table 4 shows the average mean for CA level between Malays ($m = 3.32$) and non-Malays ($m = 3.24$). The result of the *t*-test for the difference in CA between two races, Malay and non-Malay, is $t = 2.44$, $p = 0.01$.

In this study, the difference in mean is statistically significant if p value is less than 0.05. As a result, the H_0 is rejected as there is a significant difference in terms of the race of Facebook users in their level of CA in Facebooking between Malays and non-Malays. Malay respondents indicated high level of CA compared to non-Malay respondents.

H3: There is a difference in academic Performances and CA

The researcher categorized the interval data into three groups of Academic Performances based on CGPA classes. One-way ANOVA was run for analyzing the data. Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in CA among Academic

Table 4. Report on *t*-test of cultural appropriateness on races.

Variables	Race	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Significance
Cultural appropriateness	Malay	213	3.32	0.34	2.44	0.01*
	Non-Malay	165	3.24	0.28		

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 5. Report on one-way ANOVA on Academic Performance on cultural appropriateness.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Significance	
Cultural appropriateness	Between groups	0.033	2	0.017	0.170	0.843*
	Within groups	31.768	324	0.098		
	Total	31.801	326			

* $p > 0.05$.

Performance groups ($F = 0.17$, $p = 0.843$). As a result, it fails to reject the H_0 , as there is no significant difference between Academic Performance levels of Facebook users and their levels of CA while Facebooking.

H4: There is a difference between facebook usage variation and CA

Further, the researcher tested the different levels of Facebook usage variations and the level of users' CA on Facebook. Table 6 shows that there is a significant difference in the level of Facebook usage variations and users' CA ($F = 13.50$, $p = 0.000$).

In other words, there is a significant difference between the different levels of users' Facebook usage frequencies and users' CA. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the frequency of Facebook usage and CA that led to the rejection of the H_0 . The difference in usage levels makes a difference in the users' CA.

Post hoc comparison results in Table 7 show the differences between the levels of frequency usage: very rarely, occasionally and very frequently and Facebook users' CA. There is a significant difference in users' CA level between the groups of 'very frequently' users and 'very rarely' users ($p = 0.000$) as well as between the groups of 'very frequently' users and the 'occasionally' users ($p = 0.000$). However, there is no difference between the groups of 'very rarely' and 'occasionally' users ($p = 0.229$).

H5: There is a relationship between CA and self-presentation

In Table 8, the findings showed that there was a significant relationship between the self-presentation and CA. According to deVaus (2002), the strength of the relationship between CA and self-presentation ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) can be interpreted as significantly strong relationship. The findings rejected H_0 as there was a relationship between these variables. Thus, it is obvious that the increases in CA will lead to the increases in self-presentation attitude.

Table 6. Report on one-way ANOVA on Facebook usage variation and cultural appropriateness.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Significance	
Cultural appropriateness	Between groups	2.568	2	1.284	13.502	0.000*
	Within groups	35.659	375	0.095		
	Total	38.226	377			

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 7. Report on post hoc multiple comparisons of Facebook usage frequencies on *budi bahasa*.

Variables	(I) Frequencies usage	(J) Frequencies usage	Mean difference (I-J)	Significance
<i>Budi bahasa</i>	Very rarely	Occasionally	-0.07512	0.229
		Very frequently	-0.27760*	0.000
	Occasionally	Very rarely	0.07512	0.229
		Very frequently	-0.20249*	0.000
	Very frequently	Very rarely	0.27760*	0.000
		Occasionally	0.20249*	0.000

* $p < 0.05$.

Conclusions

Cultural settings affect human interaction, whether consciously or unconsciously; cultural context is a key aspect in relationships among Malaysians. Traditionally, Malaysian society has used the community as a meter stick against which to measure the values of the subject, status, quality and standards of behaviour about a person or a group of people as good, valuable and worth.

Perceptions of 'budi bahasa' (man of culture) measuring the status of an individual or a group of people are based on the principle of cultural order. Respect, politeness and noble virtues are held in high esteem in the social system of Malaysia. Traditionally, if someone did not practice good principles and adhere to accepted practices of Malaysian culture, he/she was perceived as doing something wrong and was viewed as unacceptable in the social system.

Budi bahasa (man of culture) encompasses not only real life or face-to-face communication but should also encompass virtual communication on the Internet by means of the self-presentation process. This is a process in which a person communicates him/herself indirectly to an audience via social networking. The answers for the questions of, Should *budi bahasa* (man of culture) or the *budi* complex be practiced in virtual communication on the Internet?; Is how someone communicates 'self' via meta-communication devices such as pictures, emoticons, language usage and emotional expressions are also meter to measure adherence to Malaysian culture?; and Should those who use the Internet conform to a traditional lifestyle that emphasizes the social contact to 'care for the feelings' of others?, need to be explored further.

These are serious questions with respect to a younger Malaysian generation that spends most of the time on the Internet. The answers, perhaps, are the keys to

Table 8. Regression of Budi Bahasa on self-presentation.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			Correlations		
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Significance	Zero order	Partial	Part
Constant ^a	0.997	0.154		6.477	0.000			
<i>Budi bahasa</i>	0.588	0.047	0.545	12.592	0.000	0.545	0.545	0.545

^aDependent variable: self-presentation.

understand the future of the Malaysian culture in a globalizing world, particularly in the light of the temptations that social media such as Facebook provide for a behavior that may be seen by traditionalists as culturally inappropriate.

Notes on contributor

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