

The article entitled "Why we don't say what we mean: a study of verbal indirection in communication" by Jamaliah Mohd Ali is aimed at demonstrating how people encode and decode linguistic images in ways that suits them and this may vary between individuals which may lead to some misunderstandings during everyday interaction (p.1). The writer is of the opinion that this journal is only intended to Malay workers, businessmen or entrepreneurs as the researcher is focusing more on them in her study. This article is conceptual because the researcher's arguments are based on logical and persuasive reasoning.

This article is basically discussed on the communicative strategies in which indirectness plays a major role to maintain the face and politeness which causes misunderstandings amongst speakers. Western societies tend to associate indirectness with dishonesty and directness as honesty (p. 4), meanwhile Malay culture considers indirectness as a very important aspect to avoid crisis among speakers. Therefore, she has come out with some solutions to avoid miscommunication especially in business setting. For example, the workers have to be taught to express their feelings about working conditions to their superiors in a clear manner. This solution is appropriate as the researcher has mentioned earlier that the reluctance of the Malay workers to directly voice their discontent to the management as to show their respect (p. 6).

This research is built on theories and frameworks in the study that was conducted by Brown and Levinson (1978). The theoretical framework is explicitly designed to explain the role of indirectness in polite behaviour. According to Brown and Levinson, indirectness is used for several reasons including to avoid from invading someone's territory, for example by embarrassing him or her (Bruti, 2006). Jamaliah makes use of the theory to carry out the research in Malay culture to test the validity of the politeness theory.

The writer manages to find one research that was based on the same theoretical framework like Jamaliah did. For example, the research done by Félix-Brasdefer (2005), entitled "Indirectness and politeness in Mexican requests" also investigates the notions of indirectness

and politeness in the speech act of requests among native speakers of Mexican Spanish in formal and informal situations. However, this research is more convincing as the researcher used empirical evidence to support his arguments.

This article was written a few years back. The researcher might present her point of view based on the current situation at that time where indirectness is practised commonly among Malay workers, businessmen and entrepreneur. However, in today's world, the ideas and theories are still applied but not that common compared to the previous years. This is supported by Lailawati (2005) in her study where she says that Malaysian Malay culture is now going through changes especially in communication. The interactions seem to be more direct in order to achieve goals rather than to maintain the relationships.

Jamaliah presented her research results quite well as she built it on the appropriate foundation. The theoretical framework set by Brown and Levinson (1978) give a strong support to her research arguments. In the writer's opinion, the approach of giving examples, causes as well as solutions used by the researcher is suitable to the Malaysian Malay context. The writer agrees with the way the researcher used the local culture to explain the ideas even though she is not the first one to come out with the theory of indirectness. There are many researchers that had carried out research on the issues of indirectness in linguistic. The researcher has to admit that her idea is not fresh but she managed to make it 'new' by discussing it in the Malay context.

However, the research does not portray the whole Malaysian context as the researcher limits her study only on the Malay culture. Even though the Malays are the majority among the whole population of Malaysians, but still the concept of "saving face" includes a person's physical well being as well public self image (Galyan, 1999), regardless of gender, race or nationality. Furthermore, the results of her research do not reflect the overall Malay population as the researcher focuses more on the Malay workers and professionals. In addition, the research was conducted based only on her observations without any quantitative and qualitative

measurements to support her finding. Therefore, there are no strong justifications for her examples and description.

Basically, the article does make sense in a way that the researcher is discussing on issue that is quite reasonable from the social aspect. The writer, however, is of the opinion that the issues are not thoroughly discussed as the researcher only provided a few examples to show indirectness in the Malay culture without further explaining the exact reasons and consequences of it. Thus, the audience may be able to get the gist of it but somehow it is not enough to lead the audience into thinking about the issues critically.

Indirectness in communication is quite an important issue in human's life. It is because being honest is one of the hardest things for humans to handle. Some people seem not to be able to say what they mean to avoid looking foolish or sounding stupid. In the Malay culture, sometimes the show of tolerance and understanding via silence and avoidance of responses are valued more than objective and rational excuses (Maros, 2006). This is where they find that indirectness in interaction is still acceptable and this influences them not to speak what or how they really feel. However, as the writer mentioned earlier, more and more Malays nowadays no longer to follow the so-called rule of speaking in the Malay culture.

Generally, this article does have an effect on the audience. It gives them a general knowledge of verbal indirection in communication. Although the researcher did not really demonstrate the implication of being indirect during interaction, but it does remind the audience that indirectness sometimes can lead to undesirable repercussions (p. 6) where the messages that are conveyed are misunderstood. In conclusion, indirectness is worth to practise but there are times when being direct are necessary to fulfil the purpose of communication.

Reference List

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