



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِوَسِيْلَةِ سُنَّتِيْ اِسْلَامٍ اِنْبَارًا يَجْنِبًا مِلْدِيْنًا

INTERNET USE, INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE,
AND FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION
AMONG STUDENTS OF
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA: EXPLORING A NEXUS

BY

AMAD-ISMA-AEL WAESOHOH

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Human Sciences (Communication)

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge
and Human Sciences
International Islamic University
Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2009

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between Internet use, intercultural communication competence, and face-to-face communication. Data were collected from a random sample of 206 students of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) at the main campus, Gombak. The hypotheses were tested through Pearson Product moment coefficient zero-order, 4th and 7th order partial and through technique elaboration analysis. The results fully supported the relationships between indices of intercultural communication competence and the variables of face-to-face communication. This hypothesis supported the reasoning behind the Anxiety Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory. The results partially supported the relation between Internet use variables and the intercultural communication competence variables, and between the Internet use and the face-to-face communication variables.

()

206

." "

" ()

"

.

()

.()

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

.....
Fazal Rahim Khan
Supervisor

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

.....
Azmuddin Ibrahim
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Communication and is accepted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

.....
Norbaiduri Ruslan
Head, Department of Communication

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

.....
Badri Najib Zubir
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed
Knowledge and Human Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Amad-isma-ael Waesohoh

Signature Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION
OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

Copyright © 2009 by Amad-isma-ael Waesohoh. All rights reserved.

**INTERNET USE, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE,
AND FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION AMONG STUDENTS OF
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA:
EXPLORING A NEXUS**

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below.

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

Affirmed by Amad-isma-ael Waesohoh

.....
Signature

.....
Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I always feel grateful to Allah SWT for the blessings I have been receiving throughout my life and thankful for all human beings and living things in the world that have also been blessings by Him. I am blessed to have the opportunity to further my master's program and I am wishing for more opportunities to gain knowledge until the end of my life. I am also thankful to the Prophet Muhammad SAW who has guided us to the right path.

This dissertation could not have been completed successfully without guidance and intellectual discussion shared by my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Fazal Rahim Khan. I would like to sincerely thank him for sharing knowledge about research, for suggesting me in completing this dissertation, and most importantly for his precious time for research consultations. The thankfulness also goes to all lecturers of communication department and CELPAD whom I learnt a lot from, regardless of academic matters. I thank SLEU for teaching me and giving me the opportunities to learn more about life and study which has helped me to be able to survive in my study program.

I could not have been successful in my master's program without all kinds of support from my family members. I am grateful for everything they have done to me. Without them, I would not have been able to be here like I am today. I also would like to thank every single one of my classmates and friends who have been such great supporters and thank for their prayers.

I finally would like to thank everyone and everything in helping me to be whom I am today and definitely that comes from Allah SWT, the almighty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright Page	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the study	1
Research Question	4
Objectives of the study	5
Significance of the study	5
Outline of chapters.....	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Internet use	8
Intercultural communication competence.....	10
Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory	14
Face-to-face communication	16
Conceptual and theoretical framework.....	18
Internet use and intercultural communication competence.....	19
Intercultural communication competence and face-to-face communication.....	21
Internet use and face-to-face communication	24
Operational hypotheses.....	26
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	27
Sample	27
Data collection.....	28
Conceptual and operational definitions	28
Internet use.....	29
Intercultural communication competence	30
Face-to-face communication.....	35
Pilot-testing the research instrument	37
Data analysis strategies.....	37
Limitation of the study	38

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	39
Univariate description.....	39
Hypotheses Testing.....	49
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	70
Summary.....	70
Discussion of the findings	71
Recommendations	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
APPENDIX: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	83

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
3.1	Mean, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of the Indices of Intercultural Communication Competence	35
4.1	Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents	41
4.2	Mean and Standard Deviation of the Study's Variables	42
4.3	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients of Demographic Variables with Predictors and Criterion Variables	47
4.4.	Zero-Order and 4 th Order Partial Correlation Coefficients of Internet Use Variables with Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence	53
4.5	Zero-Order and 4 th Order Partial Correlation Coefficients of Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence with Dimensions of Intercultural Face-to-Face Communication	56
4.6a	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients of Internet Use Variables with Dimensions of Intercultural Face-to-Face Communication	61
4.6b	4 th Order Partial Correlation Coefficients of Internet Use Variables with Dimensions of Intercultural Face-to-Face Communication	63
4.6c	Significant 7 th Order Partial Correlation Coefficients of Internet Use Variables with Dimensions of Intercultural Face-to-Face Communication	67

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
2.1	An illustrative model of relationship between the study's predictor and criterion variables	18
3.1	A tree diagram of intercultural communication competence	33
4.1	An illustration of the role of intercultural communication competence in the relationship between Internet use and face-to-face communication variables.	69

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter, as an introductory chapter, gives an overview of the present study. This includes background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and an outline of chapter.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The present revolution in communication technology and human interconnectivity has tremendously enhanced the centrality of communication to human society. The advent of Internet further facilitates communication among people. At the same time its use can influence the cultural knowledge of users (Mollov, Schwartz, Steinberg, & Lavie, 2001; Ho, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Lee, 1998).

There has been a concern that the Internet use may impact on intercultural communication (Mollov, et al., 2001; Ho, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Lee, 1998). One advantage of Internet is to help people around the globe to communicate with greater ease. Potentially, this may lead to enhancement of intercultural communication competence and there is evidence in the literature also that time spent on the Internet enhances intercultural communication competence (Mollov et al., 2001; Ho, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Lee, 1998).

There are several types of online services which help individuals gain cultural knowledge, such as, web browsing, chat-room, discussion group, email, online news, blogging, social networking, and online entertainment. These services also help individuals to become competent persons in intercultural communication by using the

services constantly. For example, online interaction services allow people to exchange opinions and ideas with other Internet users from around the world. These can be both synchronous and asynchronous interaction modes opted by the users themselves based on their convenience. The synchronous online interaction service is an instant interactive use of Internet, for example; a chat-room service, therefore, the asynchronous online interaction service is a delayed interactive use of Internet, such as; discussion group; email service; and etc. (Bruckman, 2007; Kubey, Lavin, & Barrows, 2001). The interaction services allow users exchanging opinions and ideas. Because of the interactants can be online from anywhere in the world, they can learn many new cultural matters from the other interactants based on their cultural interests.

Youngsters have been shown to be addicted to the Internet easily and this includes university students (Kubey et al., 2001). The university students are very much exposed to the Internet application regardless of academic and non-academic uses. For example, social network service such as Facebook is very popular among youths because it allows them to make new friends from around the globe (Hass, 2006). This is beneficial to the users in gaining cultural knowledge and they will gradually become competent in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is one type of communication which involves individuals from different cultures and is accomplished through various modes. In an organization or institution where the members are from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, intercultural communication competence is crucial. Understanding how to communicate with people from different cultures helps us to explore and understand other people's perspectives. At the same time it increases our appreciation and tolerance of cultural diversity.

Multicultural universities around the world aim at achieving through a cultural mix of student population where the cross-cultural interaction among them is supposed enhance students' intercultural communication competence and prepare them for cultural diversity at work in the future (Ujitani & Volet, 2008). In addition, the ability to communicate and interact effectively with students from different cultures may have implication for the academic performance of students as well.

Being competent in intercultural communication also benefits individuals' interpersonal communication skills. Face-to-face communication is an interaction between individuals where the interactants can see the facial expressions of each other. It is vital to a human society as a lot of things can be accomplished through it. For example, a business deal can be closed easily, and communication skills too can be enhanced.

Face-to-face interaction can be influenced by many factors and the application of technology is one of them. On the bright side, the advancement of technology like the use of Internet can be beneficial to interpersonal interaction. Generally, the Internet users can learn a number of things concerning their interest. For instance, they can gain knowledge from available online facilities on how to use the different communication strategies to different personalities of interactants. Moreover, the interactants can overcome the lack of confidence in face-to-face interaction. For example, in cyber world the users can be anyone whom they want to be or even keep themselves as anonymous users. They do not have to reveal their real identity. They can practice it by using online chatting facilities in order to boost their confidence level for their anticipated interaction.

There has also been a concern that Internet use harms interpersonal interaction (Masnick, 2005; Nie & Lutz, 2000, in Cummings, Butler & Kraut, 2002). It is argued

that life is a zero-sum game where the more the time a person spends on the Internet the lesser the time he spends on other activities like less communicating face-to-face with friends and family members (Chu, 2003). For example, the Internet users will talk more frequently to other online users than their friends and family members. In addition, the more frequent use of the Internet may prone addictive to the users. As a result, such Internet users will feel more comfortable to communicate with people on the Internet than people in their real lives.

In addition, the most popular site among online social networking is *Facebook* and it does influence face-to-face communication (Firhad, 2009). According to a discussion program on Malaysian TV show titled ‘social networking: additive and popular why?’, *Facebook* ranks top among the social networking sites followed by *Twitter*; the fastest growing site at 1,382 percent in February, 2009; followed in that order by *MySpace*; *Blogs*; and *Friendster* (Firhad, 2009). More than 200 million users from more than 50 countries around the world have the opportunity to communicate with one another through the above sites. However, this positive application of the Internet may lead to negative results. Addition to virtual interaction and consequence absence of actual face-to-face interaction may make this Internet users shun and avoid of face-to-face communication.

The literature, therefore, seems to provide contradictory evidence on both positive and negative impact of the Internet use on interpersonal interaction.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this research is, therefore, to examine the relationships among the variables of Internet use, intercultural communication competence, and face-to-face communication through examining the following research question:

RQ: What is the relationship between Internet use, intercultural communication competence, and face-to-face communication?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to generate data in order to answer the above research question. Specifically, this study aims:

1. To examine the relationship between Internet use and intercultural communication competence.
2. To examine the relationship between intercultural communication competence and face-to-face communication.
3. To examine the relationship between Internet use and face-to-face communication.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Even though several studies have examined the three constructs individually (Matveev & Milter, 2004; Kubey et al., 2001) and some others have looked at pairs of these constructs together (Ho, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Lee, 1998; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001; Chu, 2003), a detailed literature search could not turn up a single study that has looked at the three pairs of relationships in a single study. Therefore, the present study will fill up this gap in the literature. This study in general will help explain the problem of lack of interaction among members in multicultural organizations and will examine the role of Internet use and intercultural communication competence in providing the intercultural face-to-face communication.

Face-to-face communication is important due to its potential for improvement of communication skills for all types of organizations. The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is no exception. The IIUM has students from diverse backgrounds and from various countries. According to Khairul Zarida (personal communication, March 26, 2009), staff of the International Students Division, foreign students' enrollment at the IIUM in semester 2, academic year 2007/2008, is from about 90 countries. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for students to communicate with each other in order to increase integration (one of the university's missions) based on mutual understanding.

According to Prof. Dr. Jamal Ahmed Badi, Director of the International Students Division of IIUM, there is less interaction between international and local students at the IIUM (Khan, 2009). Even the international students themselves do not communicate with other students who do not belong to their group, he opines. This scenario is viewed very seriously by the university authorities. Several programs have been organized and these programs aim at creating interaction between local and international students (Khan, 2009). Clearly there is a need to scientifically examine the problem. Therefore, the implication of this study will be useful to the university authorities to enable them to better understand this scenario of intercultural communication gap.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The present study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One as an introductory chapter gives an overview of the study. This includes background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and outline of chapters. Chapter Two provides a synthesis from the literature on the main concepts of

the study and highlights conceptual and theoretical framework and derives the hypotheses. Chapter Three discusses the methodology of the study. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five presents the conclusion of the study along with the discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to the major concepts of the study, viz, the Internet Use, Intercultural Communication Competence, and Face-to-Face Communication. Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory is also discussed and a conceptual and theoretical framework proffered for deriving the hypotheses of the study.

INTERNET USE

The Internet as a communication tool has been studied in many different ways. For instance, according to several cited studies, Internet use has been studied in relation to education, social events, interpersonal relationship, work productivity, parenting, occupation, and international travelling (Gallo, 2007; Sanders, Field, Diego, & Kaplan, 2000; Hiltz, 2008; Krout, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mudopadhyay, & Scherlis, 1998; Shah, Schmierbach, Hawkins, Espino, & Donovan, 2002; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Weiser, 2001; Wang, Bianchi, & Raley, 2005; Teo, 1998; Heung, 2003).

As noted by Friedman (2005), cited in Cheng (2007), the world is flat because technology allows anyone to access information and to do business from anywhere. The users can be informed and educated through various types of online services at their convenience. Generally, people use the Internet for many different reasons and one of the main reasons is for communication with others such as through email, and chats (Krout et al., 1998).

In addition, youths especially those who are at the university level are easily attracted to the Internet (Hilts, 2008; Kubey et al., 2001). This is because of the around the clock availability of its services. Since the population of this study is university students the Internet use is paid special attention according to their uses. Examples of online services are: email, chat-room, online news, social networking, online entertainment, and so forth. The Internet usage among university students is essential due to its impact that may affect their academic performance. As cited in Kubey et al. (2001), half of students who had been dismissed from Alfred University had excessive Internet use and that caused them to be terminated from the university. Similarly, Suhail & Bargees (2006) that found excessive Internet use can potentially lead undergraduate students to educational problem besides physical and psychological problems.

Internet use impacts the users in various aspects of their lives. Several studies found the impact of Internet use on intercultural communication competence (Grosse, 2002; Gross, 2003; Mollov et al., 2001; Ho, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Lee, 1998). Gross (2003) says Internet use helps overcome differences in race and ethnicity as well as time and space. Therefore, the Internet facilitates people in boosting up their competencies in intercultural communication. Grosse (2002) conducted a six-week intercultural team project participated by 90 graduate business students from different cultural backgrounds. He also interviewed four global executives based in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The findings suggested that email is the most attractive channel for communication because of clarity of communication among speakers of different languages. Based on his findings; Grosse (2002) recommended that the virtual team members should keep communication simple and clear, as well as take advantage of using different types of technologies. Similarly, they should always

check for clearer understanding and ask for clarification. Grosse (2002) suggests that understanding how communication works effectively in virtual intercultural teams helps team members achieve higher performance and avoid costly delays in projects and decision making. This also helps increase appreciation of and tolerance for cultural diversity.

Apart from the impact of Internet use on intercultural communication competence, the present study also examines the impact of the Internet use on face-to-face communication. It is frequently found in the literature that the Internet use more often has a negative effect on face-to-face communication. Cleveland (2007), cited in Hilts (2008), says spending time on the Internet takes away time from other activities. It is clearly seen that excessive Internet use leaves the users less spare time for interacting with people in face-to-face situation. As a result, the Internet users may have problems of building relationships with family members and friends. This is shown in Shim (2007). That author found a negative relationship between time spent on the Internet and time spent with family members. Although online communication tools have more advantages in terms of time and space (Gross, 2003), this should not come at the cost of face-to-face interaction. Face-to-face communication should continue to be practiced as it is an effective communication channel (Grosse, 2002). Grosse (2002) says this is one of the most effective communication channels because trust and confidence level can be built much easier than through other types of communication channels.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

In the intercultural communication literature, there has been a lack of consensus on how intercultural communication competence should be defined (Deardorff, 2006;

Wiseman, 2002). However, it has usually been defined along the lines of human relations, social skills, and self-presentation perspectives (Langmia & Durham, 2007). Several scholars from educational field see intercultural communication competence as an anticipated outcome of internationalization (Deardorff, 2006). A number of researchers believe intercultural communication influences interpersonal communication and may lead to an interpersonal conflict when talking to people from different cultural backgrounds (Shupe, 2007). Nevertheless, interpersonal conflict may undermine an individual's motivation for intercultural communication. A high level of motivation in intercultural communication potentially encourages interpersonal interaction. Shupe (2007) believes that an additional contribution to competency in intercultural communication is the closeness that a person feels with host nationals. This closeness in relationship is a key to successful adaptation to foreign cultures in intercultural situations.

Daly (1996), cited in Grosses (2002), conducted a study about multicultural team and found that effective communication occurred when team members heard what was intended to be said. Additionally, for effective communication to occur what is essential besides an ongoing communication are active listening skills, a regular feedback, and paying attention to what individuals and teams find acceptable and unacceptable (Iles & Hayers, 1997 in Grosses, 2002). Moreover, language proficiency and awareness of other cultures are advantages (Grosses, 2002; Matveev & Milter 2004) but cultural sensitivity is necessary for enduring intercultural communication (Charles, 2007 in Thomas, 2007; Grosses, 2002; Matveev & Milter 2004). Individuals should also never assume anything to avoid misunderstandings (Grosses, 2002). These strategies are certainly applied to all multicultural organizations as well as

multicultural educational institutions so as to ensure students' academic performance and survival in academic program.

Shupe (2007) studied about intercultural communication of international graduate students from 50 countries and found that interactions with people from different cultures associated with work satisfaction, socio-cultural and psychological distress, and health conditions. These consequences in turn affect on students' presence in academic programs in intercultural setting implying that intercultural communication competence is crucial in an educational institution. Terenzini & Upcraft (1996), cited in Deardorff (2006), testify to the importance of studying intercultural communication competence of students as in the authors' view such studies are either rare or not done effectively.

Several recent studies have examined intercultural communication competence of students (Tuleja, 2008; Langmia & Durham, 2007; Ujitani & Volet, 2008). Tuleja (2008) studied intercultural communication in business setting of 49 Master of Business Administration (MBA) students for their visiting program in China. More than half of the respondents were the United States-born, the rest were classified as international students. The study showed that even though 60 percent of them had overseas working and living experience, they chose to spend one month intensively studying and learning more about the host culture. They also wanted to learn about world markets in other cultures especially in China which was utmost importance to them. Though more than half of them had overseas experience, only about 30 percent of them stated to be very comfortable in dealing with ambiguities in cross-cultural context. The findings suggest that having overseas experience may not indicate the competency in communication in intercultural setting. Therefore, cultural

understanding (Tuleja, 2008) and intercultural communication competence are important in achieving business goals.

Furthermore, Langmia & Durham (2007) investigated intercultural communication between African and African American college students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities. The findings revealed that African American students characterized African students from a biased standpoint because of an unobjective stereotypical portrayal of sub-Saharan Africa in American media. African students stated that African Americans regarded themselves as being the best and stereotyped African students as knowing nothing. Moreover, African students said they were judged based on their accent and also because of a sense of superiority of the African Americans. Langmia & Durham (2007) said this void in communication was caused by the difference in cultural values and it led to misinterpretation of a similar event. However, both groups also showed a sincere desire to achieve intercultural dialogue that is essential.

Similarly, Barker & Hartel (2004) examined service experiences of culturally diverse customers, non-Anglo-Celtic/Saxon and immigrants from non-English Speaking Backgrounds, in selected locations of Brisbane City, Queensland, Australia. The findings indicated that accent of customers was associated with inability to speak or understand English and that led to mistreatment by service providers. Furthermore, customers with good command of English with skin color also had different service treatments.

Ujitani & Volet (2008) studied about intercultural relational development between Australian and Japanese undergraduates during one-year Japanese language program in Japan. It was found that both Australian and Japanese were confused about communication styles of each other in which Australians were too explicit and too